



WEATHER SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA

**Analysis of the political and security situation in the Sahel
and West Africa**

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Summary

In June 2025, West Africa and the Sahel face a convergence of complex crises, marked by political, security and diplomatic trends that are reshaping the region, according to the *Sahel and West Africa Weather Forecast*. These dynamics, amplified by pre-election periods, terrorist threats and humanitarian crises, are putting pressure on regional stability and democratic prospects.

The terrorist threat is intensifying, carried by groups such as JNIM, Boko Haram and ISWAP, who deploy sophisticated tactics (kamikaze drones in Cameroon, infiltration in Mali) in countries such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon. These attacks, targeting both civilians and armed forces, are compounded by cross-border dynamics, making the fight against terrorism a complex one. Despite large-scale military operations, with successes such as the destruction of bases in Burkina Faso and Benin, the persistence of the threat is exacerbated by corruption and abuses of law enforcement agencies, particularly in Nigeria and Burkina Faso, which undermine public confidence and the effectiveness of security responses.

On the political front, pre-election tensions dominate. In Côte d'Ivoire, the ambiguity surrounding Alassane Ouattara's candidacy and the exclusion of opposition figures such as Gbagbo and Soro are fuelling fears of a democratic crisis. In Cameroon, the candidacy of 92-year-old Paul Biya and the resignations of ministers reveal fractures within the government. In Togo, the repression of demonstrations and the suspension of media outlets such as RFI and France 24, as well as in Guinea, where a constitutional reform is consolidating Mamadi Doumbouya's military power, reflect a rise in authoritarian excesses.

In Burkina Faso, the suspension of political activities by Ibrahim Traoré and, in Mali, the appointment of Assimi Goïta without elections, reflect a backward slide in democracy, while the imprisonment of opposition figure Succès Masra in Chad illustrates the pressure on dissident voices.

On the diplomatic front, a geopolitical redefinition is taking place. Military regimes in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger are adopting an anti-Western stance, accusing France of destabilization and strengthening their ties with Russia via the Africa Corps. The Alliance of Sahel States (AES) is asserting itself as a regional alternative, with an anthem, a motto and a project for a Sahelian Criminal Court to harmonize legislation against terrorism. Meanwhile, Senegal and Mauritania are diversifying their partnerships, concluding economic agreements with China and the EU, and security agreements with France, Spain and Morocco. Guinea is consolidating its relations with Côte d'Ivoire and China, while cross-border cooperation is intensifying, notably through joint Senegal-Mauritania patrols to counter terrorism.

These dynamics are taking place against a backdrop of humanitarian crises aggravated by massive displacements (1.1 million displaced persons in Cameroon, refugees in Burkina Faso) and climatic disasters, such as the floods in Nigeria (200 dead in Mokwa). The withdrawal of organizations such as the ICRC from Niger has made the population even more vulnerable. Despite some progress, such as the reopening of schools in Burkina Faso, restrictions on freedoms in Togo and inter-community violence in Chad weigh heavily on human rights. Civil society is resisting, but democratic prospects remain uncertain in the face of authoritarianism and security pressures.

Benin : Between security pressure and political turmoil

In the north of the country, the terrorist threat is clearly on the rise. Since the beginning of the year, the jihadist incursion has shown an unprecedented regularity, characterized in particular by a tactic of continuous harassment of the Beninese army forces. The first half of June saw two notable new attacks. Firstly, on June 4, an assault was launched on a police station in the village of Tanougou (Tanguiéta commune), during which three soldiers and two policemen were killed, according to a military source. On the other hand, on the night of June 11, the military base in the Basso district (Kalalé commune) was the target of an attack quickly claimed by the JNIM (Groupe de soutien à l'islam et aux musulmans).

Faced with this setback, Benin immediately launched a vigorous response. On the night of June 18-19, the Beninese armed forces (FAB) carried out a vast operation involving troops and helicopters in Park W. On June 24, a new large-scale operation in the Alibori department led, according to the FAB, to the dismantling of a terrorist base. Six terrorists were neutralized and a large military arsenal was seized after this special operation. Then on June 28, 2025, a new counter-offensive was carried out, resulting in the elimination of several terrorists and the seizure of large quantities of weapons and motorcycles, according to the Beninese army. This muscular counter-offensive sheds light on the immense challenges facing a country beset by security pressures which, for the time being, do not seem to be succeeding in reversing the curve of the growing threat. Earlier this month, the Chief of General Staff announced the appointment of Colonel André Dokoui Fofa as the new head of Operation Mirador.

Friction within the presidential camp?

During a visit to the town of Parakou on June 21, the Minister of Energy, Water and Mines, Paulin Akponna, made a controversial statement, to say the least. Pointing to a mismanagement of public funds involving the embezzlement of several billion CFA francs earmarked for water and electricity projects in the Borgou region, the Minister spoke of "siphoning off the national budget" by "delinquents of the Republic" and "crooked politicians". President Patrice Talon subsequently dismissed him by decree on June 26.

Government spokesman Wilfried Léandre Houngbédji explained: "If the remarks he made do not fall within the logic of a political leadership war, given their seriousness, Mr. Akponna must be released from any obligation of reserve or government solidarity to provide any useful information to the justice system". Following a summons served on him on June 27, Paulin Akponna will appear in court on July 16, following a defamation complaint lodged by his predecessor, Samou Seidou Adambi.

In addition, his party, Le Bloc Républicain (a party close to the ruling class), has disassociated itself from his comrade Mr. Akponna, expressing "its total disapproval of this form of communication" with "remarks that do not reflect any republican spirit". In a subsequent press release, the now ex-minister acknowledged "the seriousness of these remarks", pleading a "grave political error". With the 2026 elections approaching, for which the opposition is busy negotiating, will this episode throw a spanner in the works? For the time being, one thing is certain: President Talon will not be seeking another term in office, as he reiterated on June 13 at a high-level seminar on local governance.

Burkina Faso : Intensification of the fight against terrorism and tightening of the screws on the political arena

Operations to combat terrorist groups, which began several months ago, intensified in June. Terrorists from Côte d'Ivoire were ambushed, resulting in the recovery of significant war materiel. These operations took place in the localities of Taparko, Kalana and Manni. At the same time, between June 8 and 10, armed groups in Sindo, Dida and Thiou were thwarted by defense and security forces. These operations continued throughout the month, inflicting heavy losses on these groups. Meanwhile, the ruling power is regaining ground thanks to these joint air and ground operations, which appear to be weakening the terrorist assailants, as witnessed by the terrorist who voluntarily surrendered on June 14.

Between May and June 2025, massive air strikes pulverized several bases terrorist in the northern part of the country, as part of the fight against terrorism. It was reported on the ground that this never-before-seen large-scale operation destroyed several bases from Djibo to Déou. In Serguessoouma, a building housing several terrorists was pulverized by a strike that eliminated its occupants. This is clearly a response commensurate with the attacks taking place in the Djibo area, which has been the epicenter of terrorism for several months. Since 2023, Burkina Faso has been confronted with repeated offensives by terrorist groups, resulting in considerable loss of life. This situation has plunged the country into growing insecurity, as is the case throughout the Sahel region.

...Ibrahima Traoré more than ever upright in the face of terrorists

Since the latest terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso, which caused numerous casualties, the leader of the transition has broken his silence on the situation that has shaken the country. On June 15, Captain Traoré visited the Thomas Sankara training camp in Pô to remobilize the troops following the painful events of May. The President took the opportunity to reiterate his commitment to recovering the entire territory of Burkina Faso, much of which has been undermined by terrorist groups. According to him, "Burkinabè will not negotiate with their enemies. We will fight and we will win. We will give up nothing, absolutely nothing". Since his accession to the supreme magistracy, Ibrahima Traoré has made the reconquest of the national territory his top priority.

Call to report any abuses by the forces of law and order

In recent months, the press has often reported cases of abuse by the defense and security forces. These abuses can have an inter-community dimension, and mostly involve violence against civilians, who are forced to flee their homes. Aware of this "scandalous" situation, the authorities have tackled this thorny issue head-on to help the victims. In a press release dated June 23, the Ministry of Security invited people to report abuses by the defense and security forces via the toll-free number 1020, which was made public on the occasion. According to the press release, "The Ministry of Security invites people who are victims or have knowledge of such behavior to report it accurately to the competent authorities, including the National Coordination for the Control of Defense Forces (CONACFP)".

Putting an end to certain political activities to kick-start the development process

Meanwhile, following the example of its counterparts in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Burkina Faso has decided to curb political activities on its territory in order to better lead the country towards development. Indeed, since coming to power in 2022, Captain Traoré has put an end to the activities of 200 political parties, in order to launch a truly popular and progressive revolution in the country. In a recent address to the nation, he declared that "never before has a country developed thanks to democracy". This raises the question of the future of the democratic model in the Sahel. What we might call the "dictatorship of development" is seducing a fringe of the population to the detriment of democracy. Is this due to a failure of the democratic model or to foreign propaganda? In any case, democracy has finally won over a large part of public opinion, including the intelligentsia.

A wind of hope blows with the reopening of schools

On June 19 in Ouagadougou, UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell took advantage of an audience with Burkina Faso's Prime Minister to congratulate the government on "the reopening of schools that had been closed due to insecurity". In Burkina Faso, more than 5,000 schools were unusable due to repeated terrorist attacks. The two leaders discussed ways of strengthening their cooperation, particularly in the areas of child protection, access to education and health services.

World Refugee Day: greater solidarity for greater integration

Around the world, June 20 is dedicated to the rights of refugees. This year, Bobo-Dioulasso hosted the commemoration of this day under the theme "*Solidarity with refugees: what strategy for better integration in Burkina Faso*". The event, organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UNHCR, was an opportunity for senior officials to reaffirm Burkina Faso's commitment to the rights and integration of refugees. It should be noted that Burkina Faso is experiencing a wave of displacement due to the deterioration of the security situation in recent years. According to the Minister, "*welcoming a refugee means restoring their human dignity, offering them a new chance and helping to build a better future*".

A new SSA anthem

In terms of institutional reform, the three countries that make up the Alliance of Sahel States are undergoing profound changes. The motto is now "One space - One people - One destiny". At the same time, the three countries have agreed on a common anthem called "Sahel benkan", which means "Sahel understanding". This hymn is an ode to the heroic past of the people of the Sahel, giving hope to the sons and daughters of the three countries for a brighter future. The anthem was sung this June in Ouagadougou during a solemn ceremony to raise the colors in front of President Traoré.

Cameroon : Between political negotiations and security challenges

After a period of hesitation, the 92-year-old president finally cleared the air on Saturday June 28 by announcing his candidacy for the October 2025 presidential elections. With Cameroon's elections fast approaching, current president Paul Biya seemed to have been preparing for a new term for some time. On Tuesday June 24, the president in office since 1982 declared: "Let us together make Cameroon a land of great opportunities for economic and social development, in peace and unity". In addition, questions about his ability to lead the country have been raised by several civil society players. They question not only his ability to lead the country, given his advanced age, but also his legal legitimacy to stand for election.

Indeed, on June 18, Léon Theiller Onana, an activist and town councillor for the Rassemblement démocratique du peuple camerounais (RDPC), declared that he had initiated procedures to request the holding of a ruling party congress before the October polls. He believes that the President's candidacy would be "legally inadmissible", going so far as to demonstrate that "any candidacy emanating from within the ranks of the RDPC would be vitiated", due to the party's statutory irregularity. Indeed, the ruling party's last congress dates back to 2011, which would legally prevent its participation in the elections.

On the other hand, the opposition candidate Mouvement pour la Renaissance du Cameroun (MRC) Maurice Kamto warns of the early signs of a refusal of democratic alternation. In an alarmist statement published on Facebook on June 17, he denounced a "military coup project announced" by the current government. It considers that the refusal to publish the electoral lists by ELECAM, the independent body responsible for organizing, managing and supervising the entire electoral process, is the first proof of a democratic failure. What's more, he goes so far as to warn France and the UN about their position. In his view, the decision to support the current government could call them into question if they were forced to remain in power.

The masks come off: two ministers resign and announce their candidacy in the presidential elections

Less than 24 hours after stepping down as Minister of Employment and breaking with President Paul Biya, Issa Tchiroma Bakary sprang a surprise by announcing his candidacy for the presidential elections. In a "Letter to Cameroonians", he outlined the main points of his future political program. Then it was the turn of the Minister of Tourism and Leisure, Bello Bouba Maïgari. Without having declared his resignation, the Minister and President of the National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP) broke with his 30-year alliance with Paul Biya's party (RDPC) by announcing his candidacy. This decision comes after much pressure from UNDP supporters. They want the party to present a presidential candidate, while denouncing the "poor governance" and "corruption" they blame on the current government. There seems to be a desire for change in Cameroon.

Kamikaze drones and separatist conflicts: evidence of persistent insecurity?

In parallel with the climate of political tension in Yaoundé, the country's security situation remains unstable, particularly in the Far North, North-West and South-West regions. On June 9, the Boko Haram terrorist group carried out a kamikaze drone attack on a Cameroonian military camp. This was the terrorist group's third consecutive drone attack since the end of March 2025. No casualties have been reported for this latest attack. In parallel, on June 24 and 25, a brigade and a health center were set on fire in Sagmé, in the country's Far North, . The attack was carried out by suspected Boko Haram terrorists, and resulted in no fatalities. Meanwhile, the deadly conflict between separatist Anglophone groups and the forces of law and order has continued to rage severely since 2016, leaving the population in a climate of fear. Since the beginning of the crisis, 6,000 people have reportedly lost their lives and hundreds of thousands have had to flee their homes.

This insecurity is compounded by a fragile socio-economic context: up to 74% of young people are affected by unemployment, according to the chairman of the National Assembly's Education Committee.

In addition, insecurity is at the root of massive population displacements which, according to a new report by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), are vastly underestimated in Cameroon. Indeed, the country tops the list of the world's most neglected crises in terms of the number of people displaced. In 2023, there will be 1.1 million internally displaced persons, in addition to hundreds of refugees from Central Africa. **This instability could have significant repercussions on voting and voter registration.**

Cameroon is living through a key moment in its history. The time for political change seems to be upon President Paul Biya, in the face of a population eager to exercise its right to vote. Pre-electoral agitation cannot overshadow the social, economic and security issues that remain, above all, at the heart of Cameroonians' concerns. The next few weeks will be crucial in ensuring that the democratic electoral process runs smoothly and without interference.

Côte d'Ivoire : The beginnings of a political crisis ?

Alassane Ouattara's "neither yes nor no" regarding his 4th candidacy continues to fuel fears of a political crisis in the country. In Côte d'Ivoire, the population is still holding its breath over the candidacy of the current President of the Republic. Chosen with great fanfare by his peers and supporters, ADO has yet to give his approval. He has released a message that still plunges Ivorians into uncertainty as to his participation in the October 2025 presidential election: *"I have heard you"*. Taking part in his party's major congress on June 21 and 22 at the Ebimpé stadium, in front of a huge crowd that had come to invest him as a candidate, he announced that he would make a decision in the coming days concerning a fourth attempt. *"I thank you for your confidence. In the coming days, after careful consideration, I will make a decision in my soul and conscience"*, declared the Ivorian president to supporters determined to see him return to the helm of the country. ADO (84) is still keeping things vague. In recent weeks, however, his support has been growing among influential political figures.

Such is the case of Sidi Touré, executive vice-president of International Libéra and the Alliance of Liberal Parliamentarians, who is lending his support in the face of public opinion. In a motion approved unanimously, these supporters of Alassane Ouattara say: *"We recognize in his candidacy the continuity of an enlightened leadership, faithful to liberal principles, guarantor of peace, progress and national unity"*. To justify their choice, they point to the economic results achieved by the current regime, notably in terms of growth, progress, modern infrastructure and stability. However, it remains to be seen whether or not he will stand for election to preside over the destinies of the Ivorian people for the next five years. This congress of the Rassemblement des houphouëtistes pour la démocratie et la paix (RHDP) takes place in a tense pre-electoral context marked by the withdrawal from the presidential race of some of Côte d'Ivoire's leading political figures, such as Thiam, Gbagbo, Soro and Blé Goudé.

Opposition unites to face down the government

For their part, the opposition parties are organizing to resist and stand up to the RHDP, which is reportedly seeking to prevent some of its leading figures from taking part in the next presidential election. They have joined forces to form the Coalition pour une alternance pacifique en Côte d'Ivoire (Coalition for a peaceful changeover in Côte d'Ivoire), coordinated by the PDCI leader from Europe, where he is currently based. Together with Laurent Gbagbo, he has set up a joint PPA-CI-PDCI front to confront the RHDP. The two leading opposition figures who have left their mark on Ivorian political life have decided to pool their forces and coordinate their actions in an agreement made public on June 19. The joint communiqué signed by Sébastien Dano Djédjé, executive chairman of the PPA-CI, and Noël Akossi Bendjo, vice-president and general coordinator of the PDCI-RDA, states that the two parties have decided to create a common front *"aware of the need to pool their forces to meet the challenges linked to the electoral process"*.

Their main demands include the reinstatement of rejected candidates on the electoral roll, the revision of the electoral roll for the year 2025, and the urgent opening of a political dialogue including all political forces and civil society, among others, in order to organize *"democratic, peaceful and credible"* elections. According to them, *"The PPA-CI and PDCI have decided to join forces to ensure that the government heeds the message of Ivorians, at a time when the future of our country is truly at stake"*.

At the beginning of this month, the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) officially published the final list of candidates, thereby eliminating the AS square from the Ivorian political scene: Thiam, Gbagbo, Blé Goudé and Soro. This decision was criticized by the political class and important figures from civil society. According to Tidjane Thiam, it is *"indicative of Côte d'Ivoire's abandonment of democracy"*. There is every reason to believe that the country is heading for elections without a representative opposition.

To guarantee inclusive elections, the government makes promises and threats

On the government side, pledges of inclusive elections have been made, but with eligible candidates for the next presidential election. This was revealed by the government spokesman at the "Rendez-vous du RHDP" on June 18 in Cocody, specifying that "no one is going to exclude anyone". According to Kobenan Kouassi Adjoumani, who made some threatening remarks: "Those who are not eligible and who want to force the issue, should abstain, because it won't work." He also took the opportunity to remind all stakeholders of the need to organize elections calmly, as the country's stability depends on it. Côte d'Ivoire, which has experienced painful electoral periods in the past, now finds itself at a crossroads.

At the same time, former minister Jean-Louis Billon shows no signs of letting up. Although he has declared his candidacy for the presidential elections, despite his party's instructions, he has embarked on a major mobilization tour to collect the sponsorships needed to validate his candidacy. On June 28, he visited the towns of Tanda, Kouassi-Datékrö and Sandégué, where he repeated his key message: economic nationalism and improved living conditions for his fellow citizens, once elected. Taking the floor, he delivered a message full of hope and commitment. "I know your expectations, I see your suffering. Tomorrow, when I am elected, I will be the president of all Ivoirians, without exception. I can assure you that no one will lose their job...", he insisted. Another candidate has been declared in recent days: that of Diaby Amadou, nicknamed by many the "Ivorian Macron". At a press conference in Cocody on Friday June 27, the leader of the Association pour la Promotion des Actions de Développement (APAD) argued for the need to create sufficient wealth to meet the challenges country's current and future. The economist's ambition is to facilitate access to financing and combat youth unemployment, which accounts for over three-quarters of the population.

Doumbouya in Abidjan: behind the scenes of a state visit

On the diplomatic front, the president of Guinea's transitional government arrived in Côte d'Ivoire on June 18 for a two-day state visit. The visit marked a decisive turning point in the consolidation of bilateral relations between the two countries. After Rwanda, Gabon and Senegal, the President of Guinea's transitional government came to Côte d'Ivoire to give concrete expression to his pro-African commitment at the United Nations in New York: "*We are pro-Africa*". This friendly working visit between Conakry and Abidjan was an opportunity for the two men to discuss the economic, political and security situation in their respective countries and in the Sahel region. The Ivorian President expressed his deep conviction to his Guinean counterpart that political stability is the key to sustainable development. He affirmed that Côte d'Ivoire was following the situation in Guinea with great interest, and expressed his "*wish to see Guinea regain its former luxury and continue its march towards economic and social progress*". Turning to security, Colonel Doumbouya took stock of the worrying situation and the threat to coastal countries. Reiterating his unwavering commitment, he assured us that he was more than ever "*determined to continue providing assistance to enable the countries of the Sahel to meet their humanitarian and security needs*".

Guinea : A long march towards a return to constitutional order?

Guinea's political transition is entering a decisive phase, with recent developments suggesting a dynamic more geared towards consolidating military power than towards a genuine return to democracy. Although the transitional authorities have reaffirmed their commitment to respecting the electoral timetable, the events of June 2025 reveal certain contradictions likely to weaken confidence in the ongoing process.

Rewriting constitutional rules

On May 30, the National Transitional Council (CNT), which acts as Guinea's parliament, discreetly adopted - almost unanimously - a draft constitution that could soon become the country's new fundamental law. The text envisages extending the presidential term of office from five to seven years. According to CNT President Dr Dansa Kourouma, who spoke at a press conference in Conakry on June 29, this term is renewable once only. However, many Guineans remain concerned. Some fear that, without proper public debate or institutional opposition, this rule could later be changed to allow a president to remain in power without a clear limit. If the new constitution is approved in the September 21 referendum, General Mamadi Doumbouya, the current head of state, could stand in the December presidential election, even though the current charter prevents him from doing so.

The silence of the main national institutions and the lack of transparency surrounding the draft constitution point to a strategic effort to consolidate power under the guise of legal reform. On June 14, Mamadi Doumbouya announced the creation of the Direction Générale des Elections (DGE). This new body is responsible for organizing both the referendum and the presidential and legislative elections in December.

However, its credibility as an independent and neutral institution is questionable, as it is entirely controlled by the executive, its management being appointed by presidential decree and its activities placed under the authority of a ministry. An institution created to guarantee the fairness of elections is itself subject to the influence of those in power, and risks being used as a tool for consolidating power.

Emerging alliances

At the same time, Guinea is striving to consolidate its regional and international partnerships. Recently, Guinea and Senegal signed a cooperation agreement covering several sectors, from security to culture. On June 17, General Doumbouya travelled to the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire to meet President Alassane Ouattara, notably to discuss regional security issues, in particular the advance of groups such as JNIM and the Islamic State in the Sahel. China also reaffirmed its support at a press conference in Conakry, where Chinese ambassador Huang Wei presented details of his mission to Guinea. New initiatives in the fields of infrastructure, health and public safety, testifying to a growing strategic partnership. Through these diplomatic efforts, Guinea is demonstrating its determination to reassert its sovereignty and consolidate its place in the regional and international arena. In the run-up to the referendum and elections, one crucial question remains: **will it be the restoration of democracy in Guinea, or the legalization of an authoritarian regime?**

Mauritania : Multiplying alliances, alerts and border vigilance

In June 2025, Mauritania consolidated its military cooperation with several key partners, strengthened its border controls in the face of armed threats, and signed two migration agreements with Senegal. On the diplomatic front, the installation of a Ukrainian embassy in Nouakchott illustrates new dynamics of influence in a context of rivalry with Moscow. Economically, Nouakchott is pursuing a strategy of external attractiveness, marked by its membership of the AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank), new budgetary support from the World Bank, and the updating of its fisheries agreements with the EU and Morocco. **This policy aims to project the image of a stable state open to partnerships, in a region marked by instability.**

Intensifying regional and international military cooperation

In terms of security, Mauritania stepped up its military cooperation with several international partners in June 2025. On June 24, Nouakchott hosted the fourth meeting of the Mauritanian-French Joint Military Committee, during which both parties agreed to extend their cooperation until 2027, including training, logistics and naval and air capabilities. This extension underscores the mutual trust between the two parties, as well as Paris' desire to maintain a stable base in a strategic area of West Africa. As part of the Cooperative Security Activity (CSA) Mauritania, Spanish instructors from the 19^e special operations brigade supervised practical training for parachute commandos in Nouakchott. On June 3 and 4, 2025, a Moroccan military delegation was received in the Mauritanian capital to strengthen security cooperation and intelligence sharing within the framework of the Mauritanian-Moroccan Joint Military Commission. **The multiplication of these partnerships shows that Mauritania is positioning itself as a central player in the Sahelian security system.**

Security threats and cross-border cooperation

On the ground, the Mauritanian army has stepped up control of its borders with several operations in sensitive areas. On June 3, a Mauritanian drone intercepted a Polisario convoy in the Lebriga area, which had been closed since May 21. On June 11, 2025, a stock of around fifty Grad missiles concealed by the Polisario was seized by the army Mauritanian in the region. These actions are part of a series of measures taken to secure border areas. **They also reflect a desire for strategic anticipation, at a time when security pressure is increasing on the Saharan borders.**

In the same spirit of regional vigilance, two new agreements have been signed between Mauritania and Senegal to control migratory flows. The first aims to make it easier for Senegalese living in Mauritania to obtain residence permits, and to guarantee the free movement of students and skilled workers. The second concerns the fight against irregular migration and human trafficking, as Mauritania remains a transit point to Europe. On June 20, 20 illegal migrants were arrested while attempting to reach Spain. **These agreements reflect a pragmatic approach aimed at reconciling security imperatives with regional mobility.**

Political tensions and rivalries for influence

One of former president Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz's lawyers has lodged a complaint with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, denouncing the inhumane treatment inflicted on his client, including isolation, lack of medical care following heart surgery and a ban on visits. The move comes after the Nouakchott Court of Appeal sentenced the former president to 15 years in prison for corruption in May 2025. **This high-profile case is polarizing the domestic political scene and rekindling tensions between former power networks and the current regime.**

On the diplomatic front, Ukraine is strengthening its presence in West Africa with the opening of an embassy in Nouakchott, the delivery of food aid to the Mbera camp and a proposal for military cooperation. This approach, based on partnership, aims to establish lasting ties with Mauritania in a regional context marked by strong Russian involvement, notably in neighboring Mali. **It is also in line with Kyiv's new African strategy, adopted in 2024, which aims to counter Moscow's growing influence on the continent.**

Finally, in a move more focused on economic geopolitics, Mauritania signed up to) in Beijing the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB, becoming its 103rd member. Earlier this month, the World Bank announced a \$50 million grant to boost the efficiency of public spending and modernize social services.

In the fishing sector, vital to the national economy, Nouakchott consolidated its agreements with the European Union and **Morocco**, including commitments on sustainable stock management, traceability and scientific cooperation. In Vienna, at the OPEC Forum for International Development, President Ghazouani called on donors to invest in Mauritania, particularly in renewable energies, marine resources, sustainable agriculture and digitalization. **These economic initiatives reflect a desire to diversify partners, in response to the country's historical dependence on Western donors.**

Mali : Are the jihadists seeking to disperse anti-terrorist efforts?

Faced with the multiplication of jihadist offensives increasingly organized, attempting to conquer even more territory and potentially supported by foreign powers, the Malian Armed Forces are trying to counter them. The FAMA, which is under attack in every corner of the country, stopped an attack by members of the JNIM. In the central Malian town of Boulikessi, the takeover of a barracks was claimed by the al-Qaeda-linked Groupe de Soutien à l'Islam et aux musulmans. FAMA air patrols are said to have "neutralized columns of vehicles and motorcycles", while the JNIM attackers are said to have resisted, leaving with "weapons and at least two hostages". In downtown Timbuktu, an attempted infiltration of the camp claimed by the JNIM was thwarted on June 02 by the Malian armed forces, who announced at least 13 dead on the side of the assailants in a communiqué issued by the military authorities. "The General Staff of the Armed Forces informs the public that on Monday June 2, 2025 at around 10 a.m., the Fama foiled an infiltration attempt by terrorist fighters at the Timbuktu camp," the Malian armed forces state in the text.

In southern Mali, in Mahou (Sikasso), 5 soldiers were reportedly killed after being attacked by dozens of jihadists, who also set fire to a military vehicle. The military source reports that the situation is under control, insofar as the attackers have been repulsed, have lost men and have left their weapons and ammunition behind.

Clashes continue between the Malian armed forces and FLA independence fighters in northern Mali. The events are said to have occurred on June 13. While the Malian army claims that the situation is under control, FLA spokesman Mohamed Elmaouloud announced: "Our troops carried out a targeted action against an Africa Corps patrol on Friday. We inflicted significant material damage and human casualties on the enemy".

From Wagner to Africa Corps, towards a new form of Mali/Russia collaboration

The Malian army, aided by the Kremlin-controlled paramilitary force Africa Corps, has to contend not only with the JNIM, but also with attacks by the Front de libération de l'Azawad (FLA). Since the dispute with Evgueni Prigojine, boss of the Wagner group, who died in 2023, Russia has replaced Wagner with Africa Corps in all countries where Russian paramilitary forces are present on the African continent. The announcement was made on June 6 regarding Wagner's withdrawal from Mali, where Africa Corps is trying to convince the authorities in the face of increasing attacks by JNIM and FLA against the Malian armed forces.

On June 23, General Assimi Goïta, on an official visit to Russia Vladimir Putin received the President of Mali. This visit is "part of the strengthening of bilateral relations between Mali and Russia", according to the Malian Presidency's Facebook page, which also announces the signing of several agreements of common interest between the two countries.

In addition, with the proliferation of terrorist attacks and crimes, particularly in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, the ESA Ministers of Justice have agreed to set up a Sahelian Criminal and Human Rights Court. Local media are also reporting a desire to harmonize criminal legislation in the ESA region on terrorism, cybercrime, money laundering, human trafficking and attacks on state sovereignty. Persons convicted of crimes or serious misconduct will be included in a common file to facilitate the work of the future Sahelian Criminal Court.

Thanks to a bill adopted by the Council of Ministers, General Assimi Goïta could become President of the Republic without going to the polls. In any case, this is what was announced by the Council of Ministers, a law which would confer on him the status of President with a renewable 5-year mandate. This decision comes at a time when a certain Mr. Saidou known as Cheikhna Diallo is said to have lodged a request for the removal from office of the executive power led in Mali by General Assimi Goïta with the Constitutional Court, a request that was rejected by the High Court, which declared itself incompetent.

Niger : An assertive geostrategic break with the West?

Ever since the military regime took power in Niger, the military authorities have been critical of Western powers. Abdourahamane Tiani openly accuses the West, particularly France, of seeking to destabilize the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), which he sees as a bulwark against foreign interference. This rhetoric is in line with a logic of rupture with former partner powers, now perceived as obstacles to national and regional sovereignty.

These accusations have their roots in the diplomatic tensions between Niger, Côte d'Ivoire and Benin. Indeed, the Niger authorities accuse Benin of harboring French troops on its territory, with the alleged aim of carrying out hostile actions against the military authorities; this, according to them, justifies the continued closure of the border. Further on, General Tiani adds:

"on January 25 and February 3, 2025, representatives from France, the United States, Nigeria, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, as well as delegates from armed terrorist groups such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa (ISWAP) met in Abuja. The aim of these meetings was to strengthen the financing, arming and logistical support for these groups to carry out destabilizing actions against SSA countries".

According to the authorities in Niamey, this stance is justified by evidence of subversive activities orchestrated by the West, including economic sabotage, disinformation campaigns and indirect support for armed groups. Tiani believes that Western powers want to prevent the SSA from asserting itself as a sovereign regional alternative. These elements fuel a nationalist discourse that reinforces the military regime's internal legitimacy in the face of international sanctions.

However, this strategy of accusation and rupture can be seen as a way for the Niger authorities to strengthen their political base and divert attention from certain internal challenges. By constructing an external threat embodied by the country's former Western partners, the military authorities are creating a dynamic of mobilization around national sovereignty, while consolidating regional alliances with Mali and Burkina Faso. It's a geopolitical repositioning that breaks with the classic security cooperation promoted by Western powers.

In early June 2025, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) officially announced the closure of its offices in Niger and the departure of all its staff. This decision came after pressure from the military authorities, who had demanded the organization's withdrawal. This early departure is a serious blow to humanitarian assistance capacity in a country already weakened by the terrorist threat and socio-political crises. In an interview on national television, the President asserted that the international organization had taken part in the meetings conspiratorial organized with terrorist groups Boko Haram and ISWAP in Abuja against SSA member states.

Meanwhile, Niger once again suffered a major attack in the border area with Burkina Faso, on the Makalondi Torodi axis. According to reports, nine civilians were killed in an assault attributed to jihadist groups. **This bloody action illustrates the upsurge in violence in south-west Niger, and reflects a dynamic escalation of the cross-border terrorist threat in the region.**

As a result, the country finds itself at a critical juncture: on the one hand, the withdrawal of the Red Cross, which drastically reduces the capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies; on the other, the intensification of jihadist attacks, which directly threatens civilian populations.

In short, General Tiani's accusations against the West reveal a desire to redefine the balance of power in the Sahel, in a context of contestation of the established security order. While these remarks reflect a real distrust of former partners, they also serve an internal political strategy of legitimization. This shift marks a profound ideological break in Sahelian security governance, the consequences of which are still uncertain.

Nigeria : Between insecurity and vulnerability

Nigeria continues to face a security threat, particularly in its eastern region, where the army has stepped up its operations against terrorist groups. In recent air and ground raids, some sixty fighters have been killed, mainly in Borno and Yobe states, historic strongholds of Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa (ISWAP). These operations, such as "Bita", are aimed at containing the resurgence of violence and disrupting enemy logistical bases, in a context where military pressure remains an almost inescapable lever in the Nigerian state's security strategy.

Paradoxically, Nigeria's military efforts are undermined by dysfunctions within its security apparatus. More than thirty Nigerian military and police officers were recently arrested and imprisoned for arms and ammunition trafficking, corruption and complicity with criminal groups. This scandal highlights the fragility of defense institutions and systemic corruption, which weaken the effectiveness of security policies and not only indirectly fuel armed violence, but also strengthen their resilience while facilitating rebel groups' access to arms and ammunition.

On the environmental front, Nigeria, like many other countries, is at risk from climatic hazards that increase the vulnerability of its populations. Recent torrential rains, which caused catastrophic flooding and death as a result of climate change and anarchic urbanization, resulted in considerable loss of life and property in Mokwa. The town was hit by a torrential downpour on May 31, 2025, which left 200 dead and over 500 missing. This death toll is further exacerbated by human activities, as well as non-compliance with town planning regulations and poor environmental management at central government level. These factors combine to weaken local resilience mechanisms.

The political-security and structural conjuncture reveals a state in tension, whose foundations are weakened by corruption, bad governance and structural challenges. The fight against armed groups cannot be effective without far-reaching reform of security institutions and an integrated approach that takes account of the social factors fuelling instability in Nigeria.

Senegal : Vigilance and debate following terrorist attacks on the border with Mali

With the proliferation of terrorist attacks in both northern and southern Mali, not to mention central Mali, border countries such as Senegal are not immune. This is what General Meïssa Sellé Ndiaye has announced. "We have all noticed that our country is surrounded by a ring of fire. Many of the bordering countries are experiencing great insecurity. In fact, some of them have almost been destroyed," announced President Macky Sall's former aide-de-camp.

To this end, Senegal has carried out patrol operations with Mauritania and Mali, according to the army manual published by DIRPA. With recent aggressions intensifying, particularly in Kayes, very close to Senegal, and attacks in the rest of Mali, neighboring countries like Senegal are taking the lead to ensure the safety of their populations.

However, Dr Bakary SAMBE, Regional Director of the Timbuktu Institute, had already warned of the increase in JNIM attacks and the risks to Mali's neighbor Senegal. Indeed, he believes that the sophistication of the tactics, the logistical robustness and the JNIM's ability to exploit socio-economic dynamics, testify to the urgent need for Senegal to mount a regional response incorporating cross-border cooperation, information exchange and increased investment in socio-economic resilience to counter this multi-dimensional threat.

Senegal : strengthening international cooperation

On another note, Senegalese Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko visited China as part of a drive to strengthen economic cooperation between China and Senegal. "In 2024, China became Senegal's leading economic partner, with imports from the Middle Kingdom reaching 842.2 billion CFA francs, up 8.3% on the same period the previous year", according to the Agence nationale de la statistique et de la démographie (ANSD). Mamadou Diop Decroix, finds these visits by the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister interesting, as Senegal is at a time when it must "rethink its international cooperation." Ousmane Sonko's visit to China comes at a time when there is talk of Senegal's over-indebtedness, which economist Amath Ndiaye, a lecturer at UCAD's Faculty of Economics and Management, refutes.

Meanwhile, the Senegalese press is hoping for a dialogue with the government, because according to Ibrahima Lissa Faye, coordinator of Senegal's press associations, the reforms undertaken by the state are only weakening media groups.

Chad : A cloak of silence over the violence in Mandakao?

There seems to be no let-up in the general outcry over the inter-community violence in Mandakao canton in the western Logone region. While the authorities continue to defend the theory of premeditated killings instigated by Succès Masra, the report of the fact-finding mission of the Collectif des Associations des Droits de l'Homme (ADH) presents a different version of events. According to the report, "testimonies gathered from local residents, administrative officials and relatives of the victims seem to favor a classic farmer-herder conflict, which degenerated, as often happens in Chad", reports *RFI*. Shortly after the publication of this investigation, the public prosecutor at the Tribunal de Grande Instance in Ndjamená, Oumar M. Kedelaye, issued a ban on journalists and members of civil society travelling to Mandakao to investigate the case on June 14. The prosecutor justified his decision "in view of the sensitivity" of the case, insisting that "any other parallel approach" to the official investigation could be liable to prosecution.

Meanwhile, new massacres occurred between Tuesday June 10 and Thursday June 13 in a village in the canton of Molou, in the Ouaddaï province, in the east of the country. More than twenty people were killed in inter-community violence. According to local sources, the local authorities initially tried to hush up the affair by paying a diya (Islamic financial compensation) to the victim's family. It also took the combined pressure of the media, civil society and several Ouaddaï MPs for a mission comprising four ministers, including those of Public Security, Justice and the government spokesman, to visit the scene on Monday June 17. These two tragic events, during which the Chadian government has, according to some sections of public opinion, been evasive, raise questions about Ndjamená's ability to ensure the safety of the country's interior populations.

Success Masra still in prison

After being remanded in custody at the end of May, opposition politician and former Prime Minister Succès Masra was heard - on June 3 - for the first time since his arrest. Charged with "inciting hatred and revolt" and "forming and aiding and abetting an organized gang", he is accused of inciting the massacre of 42 herders by farmers on May 14 in his native Western Logone region. On June 24, Succès Masra announced that he had gone on hunger strike. In a letter entitled "Lettre d'une prison du Tchad" ("Letter from a Chadian prison"), the opponent denounced the "unjust and illegal" arrest, and justified his decision by his desire to "liberate the energies of a people trapped in inequality". His legal team continues to denounce the many irregularities in the judicial process. Meanwhile, after more than eight months in detention, Robert Gam, Secretary General of the Parti Socialiste Sans Frontières (PSF) - of the late opponent Yaya Dillo - has been released.

Togo : Between suspicion of "disinformation" and strong internal tensions

In Togo, the Haute Autorité de l'Audiovisuel et de la Communication (HAAC) suspended the broadcasting of Radio France Internationale (RFI) and France 24 for three months on Monday June 16, 2025. The French media are accused of repeated breaches of journalistic rigor and disinformation. HAAC attests that "several recent broadcasts have relayed inaccurate, tendentious or even contrary to established facts, undermining the stability of republican institutions and the country's image". The suspension follows media coverage of the crackdown on demonstrations on June 5 and 6.

The demonstrations denounced the arrest of dissidents, rising electricity prices and constitutional reform. The demonstrations were broken up by the police using tear gas, and resulted in a number of arrests. The Front Touche Pas À Ma Constitution (TPAMC), made up of members of civil society and the opposition, declared that it "condemns in the strongest possible terms the massive and arbitrary arrests carried out on June 5 and 6" and "orders the release of all political detainees".

Violent clashes

Further mobilizations took place on June 26, 27 and 28. Despite the government's warning of sanctions against any form of "civil disobedience or revolt by the people, a source of disturbance to public order", young people returned to the streets. Small groups of demonstrators blocked streets, burned tires and set up barricades across the capital.

According to Togolese civil society organizations, the demonstrations left seven people dead and dozens injured. However, the authorities have yet to provide any official feedback. They have described the allegations as "unfortunate attempts at recuperation", and state that forensic analyses have established drowning as the cause of death. Further demonstrations are scheduled for Tuesday July 1, the start of campaigning for the municipal elections to be held on July 17.

NGOs warn of the Togolese regime's authoritarian excesses

The Observatory for the Protection of Defenders Human Rights and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) are sounding the alarm over the violence and exactions perpetrated by the forces of law and order. FIDH denounces "excessive and disproportionate use of force". It also highlights certain "procedural flaws" in the arrests made. Arrests and detentions deemed arbitrary were recorded for some fifty demonstrators during the events of June 5 and 6.

For example, the committed rapper Tchala Essowè Narcisse, known as Aamron, who had broadcast comments deemed virulent against President Faure Gnassingbé and incited demonstrations, before being arrested and interned in a psychiatric center for "aggravated depression". According to those close to him, the diagnosis was wrong, and they protested at the irregular incarceration procedure due to the lack of an arrest warrant. The rapper was one of the initiators of the protests in early June. He was finally released on Saturday June 21.

Meanwhile, on June 17, Amnesty International called on the authorities to investigate allegations of torture. Statements denied by the government, which advocates the legitimate application of the "rule of law" and would condemn any act of abuse if complaints were made. However, testimonies gathered by Amnesty International attest to the contrary. *"We were lying on the ground; there were six or seven agents around us. They poured water over us and beat our buttocks with cords"*, say detained demonstrators. Indeed, for several months now, human rights conditions seem to have been deteriorating in Togo.

Despite these accusations, the Minister of Territorial Administration declared, following the June 28 demonstrations: "I would like to congratulate our fellow citizens for their good behavior and also the professionalism of our security forces and above all reassure them that the government will take all necessary measures to protect Togolese citizens."

In the light of these recent events, it is appropriate to describe the human rights situation in Togo as worrying. Although the authorities deny any abuses, it is clear that freedoms of expression, press and demonstration have been curtailed in recent months. Despite the sanctions, Togo's young people remain more than mobilized, and support from civil society is widespread. The revision of the Constitution, which is widely contested, has led to sharp tensions between the government and the opposition.

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