



WEATHER SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA

POLITICAL AND SECURITY NEWS ANALYSIS OF THE SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA

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In the wake of the latest political and security developments in West Africa and the Sahel, the Timbuktu Institute's "Météo Sahel" publication returns this time with an analysis of recent events in the region. In the midst of debates on irregular immigration, the phenomenon is back with a vengeance, wreaking havoc among the youngest members of the population, as a sign, among other things, of the ineffectiveness of public employment policies. At the same time, elections, as a means of popular expression in a democracy, are intimately linked to the issue of political violence in Africa, so much so that violent demonstrations downstream, and even upstream, seem to be the rule. In countries that have shunned this electoral tradition through enduring transitions, instability looms, with changes to fundamental laws widely decried. Meanwhile, the threat of terrorism is far from abating, given the increasing number of attacks, some of which have been described as unprecedented in terms of their heavy human toll. The Political-Security Weather of July and August is characterized by a dynamic analysis of current events, noting the similarities from one country to another and the diplomatic antagonisms that states are gradually overcoming.

MAURITANIA

Elections and political tensions pass, but problems remain unresolved

President Ghazouani's re-election came as no surprise to a dispersed opposition. While popular protests to reject the election results continued, [the African Union Commission's July 02 communiqué](#) congratulating outgoing President Mohamed Cheikh El Ghazouani on his re-election, testified to the "international" validation of the presidential results by the African Union. Among the stakes of this election, the presidency of the African Union was a major one. The Mauritanian president, who is standing for re-election in his own country, and who holds the post of chairman of the African Union, would, if defeated, have led to an upheaval at the head of this African organization.

As observers feared, [political violence broke out in several towns, including Kaédi, Rosso Zoueirat and Boghé](#), all opposition strongholds. This followed a call for peaceful demonstrations and rallies by the main opposition figure, Biram Dah Abeid, who rejected the results of the presidential election, accusing the authorities and the Electoral Commission of corruption, at a [press briefing on July 02](#). The post-election violence resulted in the death of three individuals, several injuries and numerous arrests. Nevertheless, in a [press release dated July 09](#), the Mauritanian Ministry of the Interior assured that all national demonstrators involved in the post-election violence

had been released, and that foreigners had been detained "pending completion of the applicable legal procedures".

Following the re-investiture of President Ghazouani, [the appointment of Mokhtar Ould Diay as Prime Minister](#) of the new government was announced on August 2, for this former minister in charge of the presidential cabinet and campaign coordinator for the 2023 legislative elections. This appointment is also seen as a "break with the previous administration". An expert in public finance, the new Prime Minister is expected to focus on the far-reaching economic reforms to be undertaken. To achieve this and meet the many challenges, [the formation of the government on August 06](#) will be based on the skills, expertise and experience of the twenty-nine ministers appointed, not without the promotion of young people.

[The state of health of the former President, Mouhamed Ould Abdel Aziz, is considered critical by his lawyers](#). They denounce the "complete isolation" of their client, who is being held in undignified conditions. In addition, the request for release submitted by the former President's lawyers on health grounds was rejected. At a press conference held on August 17, Me Clédor Sène and his colleagues deplored the silence of the international community and human rights NGOs.

On August 16, the ruling INSAF party elected its new Chairman at an extraordinary session. Sid Ahmed Ould Mohamed succeeds Melâïnine Ould Eyih. A former housing minister, he believes that one of the most urgent priorities is "the construction of a state governed by the rule of law and effective institutions".

Migration continues to pose real problems for the Islamic Republic. Indeed, the fight against illegal migration at sea remains a major concern for European countries, and a central issue in international relations. This is the rationale behind the Spanish Prime Minister's African tour, which included stops in Mauritania, Gambia and Senegal.

Pédro Sánchez and his government are calling on their partners to do more to limit the number of people leaving the country. Mauritania has become the main transit point for would-be immigrants to Europe. According to the Spanish Ministry of the Interior, the number of arrivals in Spain, by sea and air, is 31155 migrants up to mid-August 2024, an increase of 66% compared to the same period last year. The CRIDEM article of August 06 also tells us that "this year, 13,000 migrants embarked from the Mauritanian coast towards the Canary Islands". The memorandum signed by the two countries on August 28, as part of the visit by the Spanish Prime Minister, aims to regulate the migratory phenomenon by providing a framework for cooperation on migration issues of common interest.

NIGER

One year after the coup, the military are still struggling to cope with insecurity

To mark the first anniversary of the Conseil National pour la Sauvegarde de la Patrie's (CNSP) stewardship of the transitional government, the Prime Minister held a press briefing at his office on August 10 to take stock of the situation. For him, the union of the people around the CNSP is the greatest satisfaction to be noted at the end of this special year, because all the components of society have formed a shield around the nation. For him, managing current affairs and ensuring the smooth running of the country in all sectors, relying solely on his own forces, would be proof that Niger would not need any outside help. The Prime Minister also welcomed the departure of foreign armed forces from Niger and the resumption of cooperation between Niger and financial institutions. The solidarity of African and foreign countries such as China was also a great help when the embargo was imposed, he maintained.

However, on July 25, on the eve of the anniversary of the putsch, the management of the transitional government was criticized by human rights defenders. Indeed, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the International Federation for Human Rights noted that "human rights are in freefall" in Niger, and called for the release of all political detainees and respect for fundamental freedoms, especially those of the media.

A week after this anniversary, the first technical reshuffle of the government team made news on August 17. The dismissal of the Minister of Petroleum, Barké Bako Mahaman Moustapha, for unknown reasons, gave rise to speculation. His replacement by Dr. Sahabi Oumarou is said to be part of a drive for reform and initiatives to optimize management of oil resources and improve energy policy.

In early July, an attack on a base of the Nigerien Defense and Security Forces (FDS) in Tahoua, positioned as part of Operation SHARA, resulted in the death of at least six soldiers. The information bulletin issued by the FAN (forces armées nigériennes) states that the riposte forced the enemy to retreat. An earlier communiqué, dated July 3, reported the arrest of around 100 terrorists in response to the deadly attack orchestrated ten days earlier by the Coalition of Armed Groups.

In the Mehana region, serious atrocities cost the lives of 14 civilians (on August 13), particularly in Gangania, Amara, Mamassey, Tchibi Bero, Tchibi Kaina and Bandabarey, localities close to the so-called three-border zone. The "lakal-Kaney" operation led to the arrest of two terrorists and the recovery of stolen cattle. Also in Torodi, in the Tillabéri region, a notorious criminal was arrested by the FDS following clashes with terrorists. In Dosso Kourégou, a village in the same region, seven civilians were killed by terrorists on motorcycles.

At Koutoukalé prison, inmates including terrorists escaped from the high-security prison with weapons following a mutiny on July 11. This event testifies to the fragility of security in the country, both inland and in border areas.

Caused by various factors such as conflict, climate change, economic instability and disease, food insecurity affecting 3.4 million people is the other threat facing Niger.

On the international front, the war between Ukraine and Russia seems to have invaded the Sahel. In Mali, Ukraine's support for armed groups to confront Wagner has led to unprecedented diplomatic crises. In response, Niger, a member of the Alliance of Sahel States, announced that it was severing diplomatic relations with Ukraine with immediate effect.

Generally speaking, the security situation has deteriorated considerably with the Transitional Government celebrating its anniversary at the helm of Niger, in a context where "the number of jihadist attacks has increased", demonstrating that the problem of insecurity is far from over. The withdrawal of American troops, a pillar of the fight against insurgents in the Sahel region, has probably had an effect on control of this area.

IVORY COAST

Between electoral deals and security pressures

In Côte d'Ivoire, political intrigue continues to dominate the news. Alliances are emerging, especially within the opposition, where the slogan seems to be "anything but ADO", or even allying with the "devil" to counter the outgoing president. As proof of this, the Bonoua appeal has met with a favorable response, insofar as the leader of Générations et Peuples Solidaires has decided, through a communiqué issued on August 9, to join the dynamic launched by Gbagbo for unity and rallying within the opposition. Indeed, Guillaume Soro is ready to "engage in discussions to define the modalities of a sincere collaboration with the African Peoples' Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PPA-CI) as well as with all the political forces of the opposition" to, he says, achieve "transparent and free elections" (Communiqué). The aim of this union within the opposition is to put an end to Alassane Ouattara's reign. As things stand, these two key opposition figures remain ineligible for the forthcoming presidential election. The two main opposition leaders, despite their antagonisms, have decided to unite to demand a reform of the electoral code. Indeed, a joint press conference with civil society was organized on August 9 to unite and demand a reform of the electoral system before the 2025 presidential elections.

The economy is taking off, but poverty continues to gain ground. That's why the fight against poverty is one of the main themes of the candidates' statements, along with education, health and agriculture, among others.

The security situation has been front and center in the media over the last two months. The authorities seem to be taking on board this nagging problem, which continues to worry the population, particularly in the North. Addressing the Ivorian people's representatives at their congress last June, the President of the Republic was keen to point out that the security index had fallen from 6.8 in 2012 to 1.2 in 2024, reflecting a considerable advance "despite the difficult security situation in the sub-region". He then added, "We will spare no effort to ensure that Côte d'Ivoire continues to remain a land of peace, hospitality and security for all its daughters and sons, and for all the inhabitants of our beautiful country; for without peace, there can be no sustainable development" (ADO speech to parliament, June 18, 2024).

With regard to the jihadist threat, the country's authorities are managing security emergencies relating to the persistent threat in the north, as well as the reception of refugees from Burkina Faso. To this end, they have decided to

reinforce their legal arsenal by setting up a new anti-terrorist section in Abidjan. According to the government spokesman, this legal mechanism "aims to deal with acts of terrorism, as well as crimes directly linked to this threat and those relating to organized crime". This initiative comes at a time of rising tension between Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. This is due to Captain Traoré's accusation of a plot orchestrated from Abidjan and Cotonou. In July, Côte d'Ivoire turned back at least 173 exiles from Burkina Faso to the north of the country, where migratory flows have been increasing recently.

In terms of public health, as of August 20, 28 cases of monkeypox had been recorded by the INHP. According to health sources, the situation is not alarming at the moment. This epidemic is wreaking havoc, particularly in Africa, where cases have been recorded in at least 13 countries.

BURKINA FASO

Between an upsurge in terrorist attacks and uncertainties about the transition

At the close of the Council of Ministers meeting on August 21, 2024, the transitional government decided to return to the country's motto from the time of Thomas Sankara: "La patrie ou la mort, nous vaincrons" ("Fatherland or death, we shall overcome"). This reflects the sovereignist vision of Captain Traoré and his supporters, who have expressed the need to "strengthen patriotic sentiment" and "revive the flame of civic commitment".

Meanwhile, extremist groups continue to sow terror. On August 24, some 300 people were killed in the Sanmatenga province, in what was described as "the most devastating terrorist attack ever perpetrated in Burkina Faso". The deadly attack plunged the area into deep turmoil, heightening people's concerns about the jihadist threat. The UN Security Council condemned the attack, which was claimed by the JNIM, a wing of al-Qaeda present in the Liptako-Gourma area and attempting to conquer more and more territory.

Prior to this event, another terrorist attack was recorded in the east of the country on August 8 near Diapaga. The ambush killed at least 100 soldiers.

These recurrent attacks call for a renewed effort on the part of both the state and local populations. The government, for its part, has for some time been in a position to get to the bottom of the problem. The Minister of Defense has stated that the State is now in control of 69% of Burkina Faso's territory, a great leap forward compared with 2022, when 60% of the territory was under the control of jihadist groups.

At the same time, the regime is taking an authoritarian stance in the fight against terrorism, especially as something unprecedented has taken place in the land of men of integrity. It has been reported that magistrates have been requisitioned by the army to combat the terrorism that is destabilizing Burkina Faso. However, this decision is not welcomed by many observers and civil society players, who see it as a serious attack on the independence of the judiciary. For example, the "Servir et Non se Servir" movement has denounced what it describes as arbitrary and punitive forced conscription, which sets a dangerous precedent for the country. In the same vein, members of the country's magistrates' union denounced this act as both humiliation and intimidation, and at the same time expressed concern about the future of justice under the current regime.

On the other hand, speculation is mounting about the duration of the transition. For many observers, the time has not yet come to organize elections to hand over power to civilians. Following the conclusions of the Ouagadougou National Conferences, boycotted by most opposition parties, the head of the transition will lead the country for a further 5 years from July 2, 2024. This extension has sparked controversy among politicians and the general public, who continue to believe that Captain Traoré is determined to stay in power despite the directives of the Transition Charter. The junta authorities are accused by a certain civil society of having extended the transition without first evaluating it.

CHAD

N'Djamena fixes its foreign policy under water

Chad continues to face up to the terrorist onslaught, year in, year out. At the beginning of July, the Chadian army declared that it had carried out operations in the Lake Chad province, neutralizing more than 70 terrorists and destroying the largest Boko Haram base in the area. According to the army, this base contained five camps. Washington also provided the Chadian army with communications equipment. Harris radio chargers, multi-band Harris radios, small intelligence and field information tablets, as well as aircraft systems control and analysis equipment, were all donated by the US military.

Meanwhile, the country is facing major flooding. In the north of the country, in the Tibesti province, torrential rains "swept away thousands of stores and vehicles", reports Agence France Presse (AFP). The toll: at least 60 dead. The waters did not spare the capital N'Djaména. The torrential downpours damaged numerous public and private infrastructures, and rendered some main roads impassable.

At the same time, community dissension between farmers and breeders shows no sign of abating. Quite the contrary, in fact. The latest incident was in the sub-prefecture of Goré, in the Logone Oriental region of southern Chad.

Six people were killed and four wounded in new violent clashes. Between 2021 and 2024, the NGO International Crisis Group recorded 1,230 deaths and more than 2,000 injuries, due to agro-pastoral violence in the south and center of the country.

On the diplomatic front, N'Djaména and Tripoli are trying to mend fences, with the aim of strengthening cooperation between the two countries, which are linked by strong historical ties. With this in mind, discussions between the Chadian President and the head of Libya's national unity government focused on the reopening of their respective diplomatic representations, as well as the construction of frameworks for consultation on cross-border security issues. In addition, the Chadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that N'Djaména had repatriated, by special flight, 157 of its nationals detained in neighboring Libya, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations and the Libyan state.

On the other hand, two months after the presidential election, opposition politician Succès Masra has finally come out of his silence. During a live chat on social networks, the former prime minister was quick to castigate the outcome of the electoral process.

"They were in the minority, but they had a weapon of destruction to try to stifle the majority (...) By violating laws, by refusing to make the results file available to candidates, by refusing to make copies of the minutes available, by preventing people from filming the minutes", he lamented. In this connection, the platform of opposition political parties known as GCAP (Groupe de concertation des partis politiques) has published a manifesto criticizing the texts on the new administrative and electoral boundaries. These texts have been denounced as "irregular and iniquitous" by the GCAP.

At the same time, the suspension of the main news media, Tchadinfos, prompted a number of reactions. The reason was "a complaint from Mr. Abakar Manany, former advisor to the Head of State, demanding the withdrawal of all articles concerning him, which Tchadinfos refused to do", reports the Chad Online Media Association (AMET)

According to Tchadinfos managing director Mamadou Djimtebaye, the complainant, through his lawyers in South Africa, "contacted our hosting provider in the United States to suspend us". Subsequently, the media's editor-in-chief, Oumar Ali Badour, was arrested on August 7, detained by the intelligence services and then released 24 hours later.

Finally, a preliminary investigation into President Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno's suspected ill-gotten gains has been opened in France. This investigation follows revelations by the French media outlet Mediapart, which in November 2023 reported spending in excess of 900,000 euros on suits, shirts and luxury clothing. According to the investigation, these payments came from a mysterious company called MHK Full Business, registered in N'Djamena and with an account at the Banque Commerciale du Chari (BCC).

BENIN

Thaw between Cotonou and Niamey, security pressure in the north

Diplomatic relations between Benin and Niger are on the road to a clear thaw. First of all, the mediation of former Beninese presidents Nicéphore Soglo and Yayi Boni was a good omen. Back in Cotonou, they were also received by the Beninese Head of State, Patrice Talon. What emerged from this meeting was a willingness to "take the necessary steps to rapidly re-establish the dialogue desired by all parties".

Subsequently, Niger's transition leader Abdourahamane Tiani sent a delegation to meet the Beninese president. The Niger authorities are proposing the creation of a tripartite commission to look into resolving the crisis. In another sign of détente, Benin's new ambassador to Niger, appointed in June 2023, was finally able to hand in his credentials. In addition, according to certain sources, the loading of Niger crude oil from the Sèmé Kpodji pipeline could well resume. However, the border between the two countries remains officially closed, although Benin and Nigeria have now opened a bypass to facilitate the flow of goods.

In the north of the country, the jihadist threat continues to loom ever larger. On the night of July 24-25, a terrorist attack in the W National Park killed at least five rangers and seven soldiers, according to the NGO African Parks.

This South African organization, which specializes in park management in Africa, has been looking after Benin's parks since 2017. As a reminder, in January 2024, the Beninese government reported a toll of 43 civilians and 27 soldiers killed, in jihadist attacks.

The Beninese news was also punctuated by a bizarre affair: the "Frère Hounvi affair". Real name Steve Amoussou, "Frère Hounvi" - who has since been in exile in Togo - is particularly known for his biting criticism of President Talon's governance. In fact, on the evening of Monday August 12, the cyber-activist was "kidnapped" in Lomé by hooded individuals, taken away and then detained at Cotonou's economic and financial brigade. Alerted to national public opinion, the Beninese opposition immediately called for mobilization to secure the release of "Frère Hounvi". Togolese civil society also voiced its indignation at the arrest, judging it to be "a serious violation of the rules governing the conditions of arrest". Finally appearing on August 20 before the Criet (Court for the Repression of Economic Offences and Terrorism), "Frère Hounvi" is being prosecuted for "direct provocation to rebellion, initiation and publication of false news on social networks and harassment by electronic means." He will stand trial on October 7.

The day after Independence Day, the President pardoned 27 opposition activists arrested and put on trial following the electoral violence of 2019 and 2021. However, there is still no release in sight for the two leading opposition figures: Reckya Madougou and Joël Aïvo. Meanwhile, the publication of a report by Amnesty International has brought the country's appalling prison conditions back into the spotlight. According to the NGO's Executive Director: "Eleven prisons are three to six times overcrowded. There is a lack of water, and the right to health is not respected. Several people in detention have served between 5 and 20 years in prison without being tried."

GUINEA

From historic trial to uncertain political transition, Guinea in turmoil

Almost three (03) years after the coup d'état in Guinea, the ruling military is still keeping a lid on the transition and the return of civilians to power. The military regime has agreed with ECOWAS to a 24-month transition period ending in December 2024, but is struggling to meet its commitments. Indeed, with a timetable of ten (10) points to be respected as a prerequisite for the return of civilians to power, by putting in place reforms for the country's stability and laying the foundations for a new social contract, so far only one point has been respected, namely "the drafting of a new constitution".

No sooner had the first draft of the new Constitution been published than the political class was divided by it. While the government defends a Constitution for "posterity", the opposition denounces a text "tailor-made" for the head of the junta, which could enable him to run for the supreme magistracy. These suspicions are in line with a series of concordant clues observed on the Guinean political scene for some time. These clues include the absence of transitional provisions, notably relating to article 46 of the transitional charter, in the draft constitution.

This article stipulates that "the President and members of the National Committee of the Rally for Development (CNRD) may not stand as candidates in either the national or local elections that will be organized to mark the end of the Transition", before adding that "the aforementioned provision is not subject to any revision".

In addition, there is a desire to weaken the main opposition parties, which have bitterly competed with the former ruling party in all elections over the last ten years. Most of these political parties face "judicial persecution" or have seen their leaders forced into exile. Added to this is the restriction of freedom, enforced disappearances and arbitrary arrests of any dissenting voices who venture to criticize the management of public affairs by the transitional authorities. What's more, the large-scale infrastructure projects whose completion deadlines are tied to the end of the transition period - which some interpret as a way for the junta authorities to capitalize on a material balance sheet - are seen as a springboard for competing for the Guinean people's vote. Although the draft constitution introduces a number of new features, such as limiting presidential terms to two, and establishing a new parliament with two chambers (the National Assembly and the Senate), it has not aroused much enthusiasm.

The debate is polarized around the possible candidacy of Mamadou Doumbouya, head of the military junta and President of the transition. It is against this backdrop that the main opposition parties and civil society organizations, grouped within the Forces Vives de Guinée (FVG), are calling for the resumption of demonstrations to "protest against the junta, accused of wanting to seize power". To counter these demonstrations, the junta has taken new restrictive measures that are likely to prolong the tug-of-war between the government and the opposition.

Following a historic trial, the Guinean courts have just handed down a verdict that will be echoed across the continent, hailed by all human rights organizations. The court tried and convicted political leaders accused of "crimes against humanity" following the events of September 28, 2009. These crimes were perpetrated by the security forces to suppress a political demonstration organized by the opposition in Conakry, against the desire of the then head of the military junta to run in the presidential election. This repression marked a dark page in Guinea's modern history, but with this trial, the courts have delivered "a historic verdict", as Human Rights Watch put it.

TOGO

Between persistent security threats and political reforms

Togo is at a crossroads between the fight against terrorism and political reform. Security pressure due to the advance of terrorist groups from the Sahel towards coastal countries has exposed the country to jihadist attacks. The north, bordering Benin and Burkina Faso, is paying the price of extremist violence orchestrated by fighters from the Etat Islamique au Grand Sahara (EIGS) and the Groupe de Soutien à l'Islam et aux Musulmans (GSIM). In the face of rising jihadist fury, the Togolese government is taking a resilient stance in the fight against violent extremism by adopting a mixed approach.

To respond to this crisis, it combines a military approach with human security strategies. The latter took shape with the adoption, in 2022, of the emergency program for the Savanes region. The aim of this program is to reduce social inequalities between major cities and border regions, in order to combat the marginalization that leads to extremism. In addition, local authorities have incorporated extremism prevention into their communal development plans, with the aim of integrating "security aspects into development projects to better protect local populations and guarantee sustainable development in a context of heightened vulnerability", according to Lieutenant-Colonel Yanani Tiekabe.

Despite the efforts made in the fight against terrorism in the north of the country, Togo suffered another attack in August; although the Togolese army has relied heavily on anticipation, using human intelligence to thwart the planned attacks by extremist groups. However, sustainable development approaches are relevant in the fight against violent extremism when used as a preventive means to prevent jihadist groups from finding fertile ground for their development within local communities. Jihadist groups often take advantage of tense political contexts, when public opinion is preoccupied with other imperatives, to advance discreetly.

Public opinion in Togo is polarized by the political reforms between a new Constitution, the country's integration into the Commonwealth, the resignation of the government and the appointment of a new transitional government team for the full establishment of the 5th Republic. Faced with these reforms and the uncertainties that accompany them, periods of transition can lead to political unrest. The new Constitution, which marks the end of presidential rule in favor of a parliamentary system, was adopted by parliamentary vote, in a "monocolored" national assembly

following the boycott of legislative elections by the Togolese opposition in 2018. Indeed, the boycott of these elections by the main opposition parties seems to have created a gulf between voters and political organizations, which have since struggled to mobilize the popular masses in the face of what they describe as a "constitutional coup d'état" by those in power.

CAMEROON

A country on several fronts...

In Cameroon, the Boko Haram terrorist group has been losing ground in recent weeks, with the surrender of almost 300 fighters who have laid down their arms and surrendered to the Mixed Multinational Force (MMF). Despite this positive momentum, clashes have not ceased, as in the locality of Dзамadzaf, close to the border with Nigeria, where 2 people were killed following a deadly attack by elements of the Boko Haram armed group, who then fled to neighboring Nigeria after their exaction.

Meanwhile, an inter-community conflict in the far north of the country between the inhabitants of Doré Cissou, mainly of the Massa ethnic group, and the inhabitants of Dama, mainly of the Mousgoum ethnic group, resulted in the death of two people and the wounding of some fifteen others in an extremely violent confrontation.

Beyond the terrorist issue and inter-community tensions, the opposition is facing major difficulties after legislators approved the postponement of legislative and local elections until 2026. Indeed, this decision will have a significant impact on the 2025 presidential election, as the country's electoral code stipulates that a presidential candidate must be nominated by a political party represented in the National Assembly, Senate, Regional or Municipal Council, or obtain the recommendation of at least 300 personalities.

Maurice Kamto, Biya's main challenger in 2018, does not seem to be satisfied with these conditions, given that his party boycotted the last municipal and legislative elections for lack of electoral reforms. With this major adversary out of the way, it would seem that the way is clear for the nonagenarian President.

In addition, a prefectoral decree signed by the Prefect of the Mfoundi Department has sparked considerable controversy and raised major concerns about the rights and freedoms of Cameroonian citizens. The document, which prohibits temporary residence in the Mfoundi department for anyone calling for an uprising against the institutions of the Republic or dangerously insulting them, has been perceived by the Cameroonian opposition as a worrying authoritarian drift. This perception is shared by the UN's Chief Human Rights Officer, who is visiting Cameroon and has placed particular emphasis on the fight against impunity in this country, stating that it is "absolutely essential" to strengthen trust between citizens and the State.

GAMBIA

Burning cases before civilian and military judges

After many years of legal wrangling, the families of the forty or so migrants massacred on Gambian soil in 2005 have regained hope with the decision by ECOWAS to require the Ghanaian authorities to disclose all information relating to the massacre of these migrants, who were on their way to Europe and landed in Gambia before being arrested and then executed by the security forces of former President Yahya Jammeh. An investigation was launched at the time, but the findings have remained secret to this day. It is therefore with great hope that the families of the victims have welcomed the decision.

At the same time, authorities at the highest levels of the state are not immune from justice. The case of the arrest of a former general, alleged member of the death squad nicknamed "Jungler", a paramilitary unit responsible for carrying out illegal assassinations to intimidate the population and repress the opposition under Yahya Jammeh, is a clear example. This ex-general of the Bora Colley brigade had fled after the fall of President Jammeh in 2017. A communiqué from the Gambian army informs us that the accused turned himself in to the military police. He has since been arrested and appears to be cooperating with the military police in investigations concerning him.

SENEGAL

The "Project" and the reform project put to the test of day-to-day power management

In Senegal, President Bassirou Diomaye Faye takes stock of his first 100 days in power. This is an opportunity for the leader of "Gem sa Bopp", Bougane Gueye, to look back at what he calls "the failures of the new regime", especially concerning the measures taken since his election. The leader of Gueum Sa Bopp speaks of an "illusory project" in the face of "increasing misery", describing the gloomy record of the new regime headed by Bassirou Diomaye Faye, with illegal immigration continuing to claim victims off the Senegalese coast, and winter flooding still awaiting solutions.

At a time of increasing criticism, President Bassirou Diomaye Faye announces "systemic" reforms at both national and regional level. In Senegal, the President did not fail to recall the place he and his government intend to give to justice at the closing ceremony of the Assises de la Justice, whose general report revealed consensus, but also disagreement on certain points. The event resulted in 30 recommendations, including the establishment of an autonomous Constitutional Court to replace the Constitutional Council, with members elected rather than appointed by the President of the Republic. President Diomaye Faye's first appearance at the ECOWAS summit was also an opportunity for Senegal's newly elected president to reiterate the importance

of implementing reforms that will bring ECOWAS closer to the populations of its member countries. He also stressed the importance of reviewing the institution's sanctions against Niger and Mali, given the consequences this could have on the economies of these countries. The meeting between Gambian Vice-President Muhammad B.S Jallow and Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko also provided an opportunity to discuss ECOWAS. The Senegalese head of government invited the three ECOWAS member states, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, to reconsider their decision to leave the organization, as West African countries would benefit more from remaining together in the same organization.

Following Ousmane Sonko's appointment as Prime Minister of Senegal, he was criticized for failing to make his general policy statement (DPG). For the new Prime Minister, the articles of the Rules of Procedure (RI) of the National Assembly setting out the modalities of the Prime Minister's DPG have been deleted since 2019 when the post was abolished. Hence the urgent need to update the RI and reinstate the articles in question in the internal regulations. With this in mind, an initiative by the Wallu parliamentary group, led by Nafissatou Diallo, was brought to the attention of the President of the National Assembly, with the aim of updating the Rules of Procedure following the restoration of the post of Prime Minister.

While he was waiting for the National Assembly's rules of procedure to be updated for his DPG, the Prime Minister launched a message to young people following the arrest of more than 57 irregular migrants from various West African countries on the Senegalese coast. These events followed a Senegalese navy patrol in Saint-Louis, northern Senegal, where fishermen are denouncing an ecological and economic disaster caused by the gas platform managed by the British oil group BP and Kosmos, due to the scarcity of fish in the area. While some accuse the new regime of favoritism in certain appointments, others are raising their voices, even accusing President Bassirou Diomaye Faye and his Prime Minister of being "liars" and "manipulators". The appointment of Sophie Nzinga Sy, daughter of the current Minister of Foreign Affairs and African Integration, to head the Agence pour la Promotion et le Développement de l'Artisanat (APDA), is also described as favoritism; an accusation refuted by the spokesman for the Presidency of the Republic, who speaks of the meritocracy advocated by the State of Senegal instead of the nepotism of which the State is accused.

In the interests of transparency, Senegal has set up a commission to review and renegotiate contracts signed with foreign companies operating in key sectors.

The Commission was set up on August 19, 2024. A commission has been set up to review hydrocarbon contracts, especially since Senegal has been exploiting oil since June, with gas soon to follow. The aim of this Commission is to ensure that the exploitation of mining, gas and oil resources is of maximum benefit to the population. Hence the creation of a commission of experts appointed by the Prime Minister.

The press sector is also going through an unprecedented crisis. According to the owners of Stades and Sunu Lamb, two dailies are no longer on sale on Senegal's newsstands for economic reasons. Some are talking about bank accounts being frozen, while reporters believe they are more affected. This follows President Diomaye Faye's call on August 14 for "appropriate remedial measures" to help ensure the full application of the press code and to contribute to the smooth running of press enterprises. This is reflected in the media's restriction of press freedom, in addition to the freezing of the accounts of certain press organizations, which deplore the crisis they are going through, as well as their working conditions, which are deemed precarious.

NIGERIA

Between the return of Boko Haram and the accumulation of crises

The news of July and August 2024 in Nigeria is marked by attacks and demonstrations linked to galloping inflation. The latest terrorist attacks suggest that the lull was short-lived after all. First there were attacks in three regions of Borno State, which local authorities attribute to Boko Haram, leaving at least eighteen people dead and dozens injured. Although the Nigerian state claims to have arrested extremists, the group continues to launch attacks from the border regions with Cameroon, using the same modus operandi.

These borders remain porous due to disputes between the two countries, which have pledged to finalize the delimitation of these land borders by 2025, in line with UN recommendations. Despite territorial disputes over a 36km segment, Cameroon and Nigeria have agreed to collaborate on hydrocarbon exploitation along their maritime border.

On the economic front, to alleviate social pressure, Nigerian President Bola Tinubu more than doubled the minimum wage for federal employees and civil servants in response to the soaring cost of living. Despite these efforts, demonstrations broke out in several towns to protest against poor governance and the rising cost of living. Following these demonstrations in the north of the country, acts of vandalism were also reported.

The police intervened to disperse the demonstrators, but they continue to demand the cancellation of certain reforms, such as the suspension of fuel subsidies. The purchase of a new presidential aircraft in the midst of an economic crisis is not helping the social situation.

According to Amnesty International, the protests left at least 21 people dead, while the Nigerian authorities reported 13 dead. During the protests, the defense and security forces were accused of violence against protesters. Although investigations are underway, the police and military authorities deny any responsibility. However, on Tuesday, the Nigerian police announced the arrest of over 90 demonstrators in the north of the country, some of whom were waving Russian flags. This move has been criticized by the Nigerian army as Russian interference, prompting the Nigerian domestic intelligence service (DSS) to open an investigation into the origin of the flags. However, the Russian Embassy in Nigeria has denied any involvement whatsoever in these demonstrations.

It was against this backdrop that Nigerian President Bola Tinubu on Sunday August 4, 2024 called for dialogue to put an end to the demonstrations, which he described as "political".

However, the demonstrators, unhappy with the lack of response to their demands, rejected this call. As Nigerians continue to denounce bad governance and the high cost of living, the police have warned that they will crack down on any further demonstrations. Despite this, the growing "End Bad Governance" movement in Nigeria continues to hold demonstrations.

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