



WEATHER IN THE SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA

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

OCTOBER 2024

In West Africa and the Sahel, the electoral question was at the center of debate in October. While in some countries, the number of mandates and the date of elections are the subject of controversy, others remain in the midst of an electoral period, with the Senegalese legislative elections consecrating the hegemony of Ousmane Sonko's Pastef party. Meanwhile, terrorism continues to worsen the regional security situation. A lull was almost hoped for, but today we are witnessing a resurgence of terrorist attacks, calling into question the effectiveness of the security partnership. Has this situation prompted many countries to renew their partnerships? In any case, the emergencies are no longer strictly security-related, not only in view of the natural disasters that are plunging many Africans into a humanitarian crisis, but also in view of the arrests that are putting the reduction of civic space and the threat to fundamental freedoms on the agenda. This October edition of the Timbuktu Institute's *Météo Sahel* looks back at these and other developments, with an analysis of the latest socio-political and security developments.

Benin

Boko-Homéky, a case with drawers

In Benin, there have been a number of new developments in the soap opera surrounding the alleged coup attempt by Olivier Boko and Oswald Homéky, former close friends of President Talon. On October 23, Beninese businessman Olivier Boko appeared again before the investigating committee of the Court for the Repression of Economic Offences and Terrorism (Criet). The hearing was to be followed by a new summons, scheduled for two days later. However, the Beninese businessman's lawyers were able to obtain a one-week postponement. Republican Guard commander Dieudonné Tévoédjrè, who had been released in the wake of the arrests of Boko and Homeky, was once again heard by the Criet's investigating chamber. He had already been heard on October 1, 2024. In the days following Boko's arrest, network coordinator Hosée Hounnibo expressed his indignation on social networks. On Monday October 7, he was arrested by agents of the Centre National des Investigations Numériques (CNIN), on charges of "inciting rebellion and harassment by electronic means." A week later, he was placed under a committal order after being brought before the Criet.

However, the controversy surrounding this alleged attempted putsch remains far from over within the political class, in this case the opposition.

According to former minister Candide Azanāï - now in opposition to the government - the conspiracy theory seems unlikely, and is more a case of "opportunistic political plotting".

". In a post published on his Facebook page, he declared: "There is no coup d'état, no attempted coup d'état, no preparations for a coup d'état (...) You don't need to go far to convince yourself that this September 23, 2024, was a staged event for unavowed purposes, linked to the 2026 electoral deadlines and the phobia of the post-2026 era." Elucidation or not, the possibility of a link between this affair and the 2026 presidential elections has also been voiced by some sections of Beninese public opinion. _____

_____ Reacting to these rumblings, government spokesman Wilfried Léandre Houngbédji was clear. "If by some extraordinary chance tomorrow the President himself changes his mind and wishes to continue, I'll tell him President, I've already told the Beninese that it's two. You've encouraged me. I'm not going to tell them you're coming back. It's not possible, so we'll find someone else," he declared. One thing is certain: the Constitution does not allow Talon to run for a third term, as he himself officially declared last February that he would not stand for re-election.

On October 28, Joseph Djogbénou, President of the Union Progressiste Le Renouveau (UPR) party, which is close to Talon, issued a press release announcing the dismissal of Christelle Houndonougbo from her position as the party's Director of Administration, for "serious misconduct". The reason, according to the document: "Christelle Houndonougbo has, on her own initiative and without having received special authority or any empowerment from the Party, let alone informed its President, engaged, pursued and concluded on October 8, 2024, a contract described as a "memorandum of understanding" which commits the party to a firm called "Particip GmbH"." Some members of the public are trying to establish a link between this event and Olivier Boko. Indeed, on the latter's birthday (October 2), she made a post on Facebook, affirming her solidarity with him. "A brother remains a brother in all circumstances. Even more so in times of great trial", she declared.

In the North, the security situation has calmed down. At the very least, no new attacks have been recorded. A parliamentary "Security and Defense" committee made up of members of parliament from both the opposition and the opposition parties, visited the North to assess the government's action against terrorism, in particular the Mirador plan. After a 4-day tour - from October 26 to 30 - in Banikoara, Kaobagou, Guimbagou, Matéri, Malanville, Porga and Koalou/Kourou, the commission's report is reassuring. "In terms of manpower, equipment, response plan and organization, we were all unanimous in welcoming what we saw. There wasn't a single dissenting voice," congratulated committee chairman Abdoulaye Gounou, a deputy from the ruling majority. Constant Nahum, an elected member of the opposition party Les Démocrates, echoed the same sentiment. "When the house is on fire, there are no opponents (...) We are safeguarding the interests of the people. The response on the Beninese side is striking (...) At present, there are no more attacks, but we are on red alert and on maximum alert", he moderated for his part.

Burkina Faso

Between endemic insecurity and the ongoing reduction of civic space

In Burkina Faso, the question of the Ivorian neighbor's attempt to destabilize the country has resurfaced and taken on a new twist. The Burkinabe government has brandished evidence to the attention of the population and the international community. On national television (Radiodiffusion Télévision Burkinabè), the authorities transmitted a video showing the confession obtained from Major Ahmad Kinda following his arrest. Kinda is the former head of the Special Forces and is considered to be one of the "brains behind the latest attempt to destabilize the country". There is no shortage of criticism of the government's attitude. But the junta's supporters do not seem to approve of the attacks on the country's leaders. These supporters of the military regime are hunting down voices critical of the regime, issuing threats and sometimes attacking recalcitrants. They are called the Bataillon d'Intervention Rapide de la Communication (BIR), with the aim of defending the ruling military. Detractors are now warned against their actions and allegations against the current government. Moreover, treason is now a crime. Taking part in the day of patriotic commitment, the Head of State was keen to denounce what he described as the most serious crime against the Nation.

He took advantage of this solemn occasion to cite the assassination of former strongman Thomas Sankara as an example of state treason. In a fitting tribute, the people's representatives voted unanimously on October 29 to revise Burkina Faso's motto. From "Unité - Progrès - Justice" to "La Patrie ou la mort, nous vaincrons".

On the security front, arrests for terrorism continue to generate debate, with the conviction of eleven people. On October 4, a communiqué from the Pôle Judiciaire specialized in the repression of acts of terrorism announced prison sentences ranging from 7 to 21 years' imprisonment, with fines ranging from two to five million FCFA. The new authorities seem to have taken the issue of bringing terrorists to trial head-on, with 67 cases involving 110 people (press release). Despite all these arrests, terrorism continues to gain ground, plunging the population into insecurity. It is largely this situation that explains the wave of refugees seeking refuge in the north of Côte d'Ivoire. At the same time, the army's civilian auxiliaries have been targeting the Peul ethnic group, increasing the number of refugees in this part of the country.

Meanwhile, in the vicinity of Markoye, a large-scale operation enabled the army to catch terrorists on October 10. Adama Oumarou, mastermind of the Islamic State in the Great Sahara, was neutralized along with some twenty of his acolytes.

Addressing the nation on October 5, the President of Burkina Faso's transitional government took advantage of the second anniversary of his accession to power to announce new equipment for the army, designed to improve security in a country beset by growing insecurity. He promised ten times more effective military equipment and an increase in manpower to reconquer areas which, it should be remembered, are for the most part occupied by jihadists. The day after he addressed his compatriots, an attack was recorded in the north-east of the country in Manni. This deadly attack, which targeted the town's main market and left at least 10 people dead and more than fifty wounded, is of growing concern to the population, who are in deep distress.

Another attack killed 79 people in Seytenga, plunging the country into a three-day national mourning period. The month was also marked by the kidnapping, on October 10, of two lawyers, Me Gontrand Somé and Me Christian Kaboré, on the RN1 on their way to Bobo. The Defense and Security Forces (FDS) seem to have taken the problem of insecurity seriously, even if the situation remains worrying. It should be noted that the new authorities have turned to Russia for a military partnership following the "failure" of Western countries, notably France, to combat terrorism in the Sahel countries. Terrorist attacks have multiplied under the Traoré era, leaving the population deeply insecure, with the number of terrorist attacks rising to 2,900 over a two-year period.

Ivory Coast

Upheaval with political and diplomatic Ouagadougou in the run-up to the presidential elections

Last month, Abidjan formally denied the Burkinabe authorities' accusations of a desire to destabilize their country. As a reminder, the military authorities had openly accused Côte d'Ivoire of participating in a campaign to destabilize their country. Following the Council of Ministers meeting at the end of September, Amadou Coulibaly, the government spokesman, reassured the population in the following terms: "Côte d'Ivoire is a land of hospitality, a land of welcome (...). It has no intention of doing so, since, in any case, it is here that all countries experiencing difficulties see their nationals come" (press release) The north of Côte d'Ivoire recently welcomed a number of refugees from Burkina Faso, notably the Peuls. There are more than 6,000 of them, and they have left their belongings and livestock behind to settle in accommodation sites. According to one of them, "(...) We have been well received, we feel good here". This part of Côte d'Ivoire has become a "resettlement site" for migrants who left Burkina Faso for security reasons. This calls for greater vigilance, particularly in the fight against terrorism. As a reminder, the Chargé d'Affaires of the Côte d'Ivoire Embassy in Ouagadougou was recalled by the Director of Cabinet of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, without the Ivorian authorities being informed.

Gbagbo and the ASS....

A number of political events also marked the news in Côte d'Ivoire during the month of October. The possibility of the outgoing President standing for re-election continues to cause controversy among observers and the political class. According to Laurent Gbagbo, the current President has blatantly violated the Constitution by seeking a fourth term. He called it a "horror", given that the country's laws limit the number of terms to two. Despite his confused position on whether or not to participate, Gbagbo is still determined to play a certain role in the forthcoming presidential elections, by standing as a candidate like the others. Among other things, he promises to improve relations between Côte d'Ivoire and the ESA if he is promoted to the country's head of state. He is thus positioning himself as a candidate who supports the military in Ouagadougou, despite the accusations of destabilization levelled at Houphouët's country. Furthermore, one of his relatives has been kidnapped by unidentified individuals. According to a press release from the Parti des Peuples Africains - Côte d'Ivoire (PPA-CI), Charles Rodel Dosso was kidnapped from his home in front of his family. They accused the current regime of using "dictatorial drift" to muzzle the opposition since its accession to the supreme magistracy.

Many observers and members of civil society continue to call for peace and calm for peaceful elections. Meanwhile, political parties are urging people to register en masse for the elections, to ensure a high turnout. In Côte d'Ivoire in October, the figures for voter registration were worrying: 1 in 3 people were not registered, and 4 million people of voting age were not on the electoral roll. This is what prompted political players and members of civil society to call for an extension of the deadline. It should be noted that there was no great rush on the ground, which prompted the authorities to extend the deadline to November 17. This measure is designed to encourage Ivorians to register en masse.

Dialogue and suspicion ...

At the same time, rivalries and internal upheavals are being noted on both sides. On the side of the government, Alassane Dramane Ouattara (ADO) has instructed his high representative to initiate mediation within the party in the regions. The aim of this mission is to put an end to internal quarrels and maintain cohesion between militants. On the opposition side too, mediation missions have been launched to reconcile positions.

On October 3, elected members of the Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire organized a luncheon for the two main protagonists - Tidjane Thiam and Jean-Louis Billon - to reconcile.

The aim of the meeting was to convince the former Ivorian Trade Minister to abandon his bid to run in the next presidential election. At the same time, points of contention were raised between the opposition and the Independent Electoral Commission. The October 2 meeting on the revision of the electoral roll, attended by the political class and the opposition, led to heated debates. Many observers have no confidence in the Independent Electoral Commission to organize free and transparent elections.

Meanwhile, a problem that rocked the University caught the attention of the authorities during the month. On October 30, the government issued a decree to dissolve student union associations following the scuffles that took place on the university premises, with all their attendant damage. In fact, a raid on the site led to the seizure of a large arsenal of edged weapons that had been stockpiled for the purpose of "committing crimes and spreading disorder" within the campus and even off-campus. This situation is worrying people in this pre-electoral period, where violence is increasingly noted.

Mali

Visit new generals, Wagner and the security concerns

In Mali, the news of October was marked by the promotion of Colonel Assimi Goïta following a decision taken by the Council of Ministers on October 16, 2024. Raised to the rank of five-star army general, he becomes the country's highest-ranking officer after Moussa Traoré and Amadou Toumani Touré, who all came to power through coups d'état. During the ceremony, General Assimi Goïta also elevated the five officers who took part in the overthrow of Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta's regime in 2020 to the rank of Lieutenant General, as well as government spokesman Abdoulaye Maïga to the rank of Major General. Despite the question of his probable participation in the next presidential election, on which he has still not made up his mind despite the proposal made by his supporters in the recommendations at the end of the consultation days initiated by the authorities, the Malian President of the transition was keen to take part in a parade in his pick-up truck, to the delight of his supporters, who turned out in large numbers to cheer him on.

Opponents of the regime of the now General Assimi Goïta, denounce a self-elevation on the part of the president of the transition and his lieutenants. Moussa Mara, the former Prime Minister under IBK, is denouncing this, and is now speaking out in a discreet, sometimes anonymous manner to avoid repression. "I'm doubly saddened.

The first problem is that Malian traditions mean that you don't elevate yourself, others do. The fact of gratifying oneself greatly diminishes the merit of the gratification," he asserts.

The era of nationalization seems to be a reality even in Mali's telecommunications sector. While the Malian government is claiming 165 billion CFA francs from SOTELMA, the latter is in turn demanding money. In this confrontation, the company, which along with Orange constitutes the two largest telephone operators in Mali, risks having its license, which expires this year, withdrawn. As a reminder, Malian Minister Alousseni Sanou categorically refused the compensation proposed by SOTELMA on the grounds that it would involve "charges of different kinds, the amounts of which have not yet been validated." After revealing the new mining code to the general public in 2023, Mali's transitional government is facing up to any mining company present in the country for strict compliance with the code. As a result, three gold producers active in Mali - Allied Gold, B2Gold and Robex - have decided to bring their operations into strict compliance with the new mining code.

In Mali, as in the other two AES member countries, deadly attacks continue to multiply despite the organization's initiatives, and despite the collaboration between the military and Russian mercenaries from the Wagner group. Indeed, after the JNIM attacks in Bamako in September and the clashes between the Malian army and Wagner mercenaries against the pro-independence rebels of the Cadre Stratégique Permanent pour la Défense du Peuple de l'Azawad (CSP-DPA), relations between FAMA and Russia seem to be deteriorating.

Following the recapture of Kidal in November 2023, the Malian armed forces are continuing their reconquest of the national territory, which has been one of the transitional government's priorities since 2020. Indeed, the large-scale clashes in July between the Malian military and their Russian allies against the separatists of the North, reportedly caused many casualties both on the side of the Malian army and on the side of the separatists located at Tinzaouaten on the border with Algeria. "Azawad fighters control the situation in Tinzaouatene and further south in the Kidal region. The Russian mercenaries and the Malian Armed Forces (Famas) have fled. Others have surrendered", Mohamed Elmaouloud Ramadane, spokesman for the CSP- DPA, told AFP. While the separatists spoke of a Malian army helicopter being hit and crashing to the ground, the Malian military reportedly spoke of an "emergency landing" of the helicopter.

When AFP announced: "The CSP people are still in Tinzaouatene. The army and Wagner are no longer there", was it to announce a failure on the part of the Malian army? If not, one might well ask to what extent the Malian army and the Russian mercenaries of the Wagner group have carried out an offensive operation described as a "coup". "Revenge" by Jeune Afrique? In its defense, t h e Malian army carried out this operation in October 2024 with a view to to recover the bodies of fallen fallen during the recent clashes. One wonders whether the collaboration between the Malian army and the Wagner group is conducive to the strategy of recovery of the territory by Mali's transitional government. Some even point to the beginnings of a breakdown in collaboration. With good reason, certain high-ranking Malian army officers are reportedly complained the behavior of mercenaries mercenaries who, in the loops of Telegram loops a " lack professionalism" of the Malian military. According to Mathieu Olivier in Décryptage en vidéo, "Since Wagner's arrival, there has always been a kind of contempt for the Malian army on the part of the Russian mercenaries.

They They arrived in a position of saviors, so they didn't have a very good image of the Malian army. According to Mr. Olivier, the two allies did not get off to a bad start. W h i l e there is talk of a rift between Mali and the Wagner group, the Senegalese President, who has been designated by ECOWAS as facilitator of its relations with the AES, has entrusted this task to his special envoy Abdoulaye Bathily.

travelled to Burkina Faso and Mali to express Senegal's solidarity with the numerous terrorist attacks faced by ESA countries.

While the judge's request for Étienne Fakaba Cissoko's provisional release was refused by the public prosecutor's office due to the seriousness of the charges against him, one of the most outspoken voices of the ruling party is seeing his health deteriorate due to the difficult conditions of his detention. As a reminder, he has been charged with "attacking the credit of the State", "insults" and "spreading false news disturbing public peace".

In addition to the many challenges facing Mali, the country is facing flooding along the river in Bamako and especially in Gao in the north, which is affecting agriculture with submerged fields, but is also likely to delay the start of the new school year, already postponed to November 04, 2024, with almost 400 schools flooded or damaged. In a country with at least 330,000 displaced persons, it seems difficult to find accommodation for all those affected. The death toll has risen to 84, with worrying weather forecasts.

Mauritania

Mauritania: the challenges of closer cooperation with Senegal

The historic relationship between Senegal and Mauritania has been strengthened by the discovery of gas on the maritime border in 2015. This marked a new page in the history of the two countries. Since then, the authorities of both countries have stepped up their meetings and exchanges, as witnessed by the first Forum Economic Forum (FESM) held in Dakar from September 30 to October 1. At this meeting, Mr. Mohamed Mohamed Maalamine Khaled, Minister of Energy and Petroleum, expressed his complete satisfaction with the significant progress made on the "Grand Ahmeyim" or "Tortue" joint gas project between Mauritania and Senegal, and announced that the project was 95% advanced, which should lead to first production in 2025. Another reassuring aspect of this cooperation is the involvement of the Organization for the Development of the Senegal River (OMVS), which is responsible for the hydroelectric aspect.

In addition to joint economic opportunities, this gas project, signed six years ago, strengthens the cooperative ties between the two neighboring countries. The Mauritanian-Senegalese Mauritanien-Sénégalais (FESM), which was attended by Senegal's Minister of Energy, Oil and Mines and his Mauritanian counterpart, Mohamed Mohamed Maalainine Khaled, is part of this process.

As for domestic politics, past presidential elections have clearly demonstrated the weakness of the opposition due to its fragmentation in the face of a ruling party that has federated several political forces around itself. With a view to strategic reorganization, Biram Dah Abeid of the Rassemblement des Forces Démocratiques (RFD) and Mohamed Ould Maouloud of the Union des Forces de Progrès (UFP) expressed their desire to strengthen their political cooperation and the unity of the anti-system opposition. This common wish became a reality on October 10, when a UFP delegation led by Maouloud visited the headquarters of the "anti-system" coalition headed by abolitionist leader Dah. Following discussions behind closed doors, the two leaders held a press conference to publicly display their good understanding, despite accusations from both sides during the media war that accompanied the presidential elections.

However, political issues aside, Mauritania, like its Senegalese neighbor, had to contend with a sudden rise in the river's water level, leading to flooding that had a direct impact on riverside communities, rendering them uninhabitable and causing extensive material damage.

The government's response was swift, as the Ministerial Committee responsible for monitoring implementation of the National Emergency Response Plan met under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Mokhtar Diay to provide an effective response to the scale of the disaster. As a result, the first action taken was to send a government delegation to the disaster site, bearing the President's message of solidarity, while assessing the extent of the damage.

In addition to promises of food distribution and medical care, temporary shelters have been set up to accommodate the displaced.

To avoid future flooding due to rising river levels, the government is working to strengthen early warning systems and hydraulic infrastructures.

Niger

Between sovereignist impulses and security challenges

Bilateral relations between Niger and France have entered a cycle of gradual deterioration since the military coup of July 26. After the departure of French forces and the expulsion of the French ambassador from Niger territory, the transitional government moved on to the debaptization of emblematic places in Niamey bearing French names. For Colonel-major Abdourahmane Amadou, Minister of Youth and spokesman for the current regime, these names linked to France plunge the people back into painful memories of the suffering and bullying of colonization. As a result, Avenue Charles de Gaulle now bears the name of Djibo Bakary, a political figure who made a major contribution to Niger's independence, and a plaque bearing the effigy of Thomas Sankara replaces the portrait of Parfait-Louis Monteil, a French explorer and commander. The demarcation with the French heritage is also perceptible in the change of the national anthem, the song "Lan Nigérienne" composed by the Frenchman Maurice Albert Thiriet giving way to "Pour l'honneur de la patrie".

On the security front, however, the Transitional Government is still encountering difficulties in the field, where attacks against the population and the defense and security forces continue to make headlines. Located 245 km from Arlit, the border town of Assamaka and surrounding areas have been targeted by terrorist groups.

JNIM and FAL (Forces Armées Libres) on October 19. Six soldiers and one civilian were killed. In addition, the FAL are said to be led by the former Minister of State, Risa Ag Bola, who is currently in asylum in France. For some, this corroborates suspicions that France is supporting armed groups with the aim of halting the rise of the Alliance of Sahel States, further damaging relations between Niger and France.

In addition, on October 10, General Tiani signed a controversial decree temporarily disqualifying nine leading figures on charges of plotting against the State and the transition. The latter, no less close to the former President of the Republic, deprived of their nationality and in exile since the coup d'état, are known to have questioned the legitimacy of the Conseil national pour la sauvegarde de la patrie (CNSP). This decision is based on the national file adopted in September to list possible individuals linked to acts of terrorism and attacks on the interests of the State. According to the NGO Human Rights, these nine "fugitives" from justice are victims of an "irregular procedure", and see this decree as an infringement of their fundamental rights.

Nigeria

Between tragedies and reforms : the Nigeria facing the humanitarian and economic challenges

Nigeria is going through a period of major humanitarian and economic crises, compounded by tragic incidents and economic reforms. On October 1, 2024, a shipwreck near Mokwa, in the north-central part of the country, claimed the lives of at least 16 people and left many missing. Around 150 survivors were rescued, but the incident highlighted the dangers of poorly regulated rivers and often overloaded boats, a common phenomenon in the country, especially in the rainy season. Barely two weeks later, a tanker explosion in the state of Jigawa killed 140 people, revealing the inadequacy of safety measures for fuel transport, a problem that the authorities are calling for to be reviewed to avoid such tragedies.

In addition, another tanker explosion in northern Nigeria, near Majia, killed 94 people and injured around 50 others, according to police. The accident occurred when the truck driver lost control to avoid a collision. The situation escalated when local residents, attempting to collect the spilled fuel, pushed away police officers. Such incidents are frequent in Nigeria, where precarious road infrastructures and illegal fuel siphoning practices increase the risk of accidents and loss of life.

Meanwhile, the state of Kogi has been hit for the past month by severe flooding which has destroyed infrastructure, left almost two million people homeless and ruined thousands of hectares of farmland. Despite the efforts of local authorities, the needs of those affected remain immense, and appeals for help are multiplying to avoid food shortages and epidemics, particularly of cholera. In response to this emergency, the UN has released \$5 million for flood victims, in addition to funds already allocated by the Nigerian Humanitarian Fund to support displaced populations. These natural disasters are exacerbating the economic challenges facing the country, where inflation and food insecurity are gaining ground.

Nigeria's already fragile economic situation is worsening as poverty rates rise sharply. According to the World Bank, 56% of Nigerians now live below the poverty line, compared with 40.1% in 2018, a direct consequence of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's economic reforms. By removing petrol subsidies and harmonizing naira exchange rates, petrol prices have tripled, with a recent 16% increase in October. This situation is causing growing discontent among the population, who are suffering from high inflation.

30%, while salaries remain unchanged.

Faced with this economic crisis, Nigeria's two main trade unions have decided to suspend their call for a national strike. This decision follows the government's announcement of measures to offset the soaring cost of living, in a context where inflation has reached 25%. By temporarily abandoning this mobilization, the unions hope that the new government initiatives will ease the economic burden that is weighing ever more heavily on the population.

Despite this economic crisis, Nigeria is seeking to strengthen its ties w i t h international partners t o stimulate growth. President Bola Tinubu

will make a state visit to France in November to promote Nigerian companies and attract French investment. This move is part of a strategy to attract foreign capital by relying on major Nigerian companies, such as Dangote and AccessBank, which play a central role in this policy of economic diversification. By reducing its dependence on public subsidies, Nigeria hopes to strengthen its economic resilience while consolidating its image as an attractive destination for international investors.

Senegal

Towards PASTEF domination of the Assembly and Senegalese politics

Following the dissolution of the National Assembly by Senegalese President Bassirou Diomaye Faye and the announcement of early parliamentary elections to be held on November 17, 2024, the election campaign was officially launched on Sunday October 27 at 00:00 and ran until November 15. In all, forty-one lists of coalitions and political parties competed for 165 seats in the National Assembly, with the crucial issue at stake for the ruling party. "I am dissolving the National Assembly to ask the sovereign people for the institutional means that will enable me to give substance to the systemic transformation I have promised them", declared the Senegalese President. The coalitions and political parties each set off on their campaigns with a well-defined itinerary. Four alliances in particular were set to compete for control of the National Assembly. Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko, leader of the Pastef les Patriotes party and head of the list, had to contend with other coalitions before triumphing at the end of these elections by winning the maximum number of seats in the National Assembly. Pastef's decision to stand alone in the elections was a political ploy on the part of Ousmane Sonko to test his popularity with the Senegalese people, especially as this was the first time he had stood alone.

For him, the election campaign was fundamental to the future of the Pastef "Project". Among the opposition coalitions, the "Sam sa Kaddu" coalition stood out as the one that attracted the most attention and was seen as being able to tip the balance, despite its results falling far short of its leaders' expectations. It was made up of Anta Babacar Ngom, Pape Djibril Fall and Khalifa Sall, all of whom were presidential candidates backed by the Parti d'Unité, de Rassemblement (PUR), Taxawu Sénégal, and Bougane Gueye's Gëm Sa Bopp, an emerging leader. The latter was arrested and sentenced to a _____ suspended sentence of one month's imprisonment for trying to break through a gendarmerie roadblock and travel to Bakel to support flood victims. As a reminder, the south-east of the country, in particular Bakel and Kidira, was placed under orange alert, with thousands of people displaced by flooding due to the overflowing of the Senegal River and the Falémé, one of its main tributaries.

Meanwhile, Amadou Bâ, Macky Sall's former Prime Minister, was at the helm of the Jam ak NJariñ coalition, supported by Aminata Mbengue Ndiaye of the Socialist Party. The Liberals were in the Tàkku Wàttu Sénégal coalition without Idrissa Seck, but with Abdoulaye Wade and Macky Sall. This raises the question of whether the hatchet has been definitively buried between Karim Wade's PDS and Macky Sall. As head of the Takku wallu Sénégal list, Macky Sall signed his return to the political scene at a time when the question of his almost improbable trial before the High Court of Justice is being raised by certain Pastef militants: "We have the means to make him pay; we're going to make him pay! He's done some extremely serious things, and they're there. The documentation is there. The people he dealt with are there. The people he may have sacrificed are here. and these are the people who will testify against him, these are the people who will produce documents that will prove his case", threatened Fadilou Keita, General Manager of the Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations (CDC).

The provisional results of the parliamentary elections, which are currently uncontested, put Ousmane Sonko's Pastef firmly in the lead, with the prospect of an overwhelming majority with no real counterweight in the Hemicycle. The new regime thus has all the cards in its hand to govern and roll out the vision 2050 presented a few days before the official opening of the campaign.

Sonko- Diomaye: A duo threatened by duality? Between fantasy and political reality

The question observers are asking is whether the breakaway scenario advocated by Bassirou Diomaye Faye's regime is realistic. Indeed, the Vision Sénégal 2050 project was presented by the President of the Republic Bassirou Diomaye Faye and his Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko on October 14, 2024 at the Abdou Diouf International Conference Center in Diamniadio. To paraphrase the authorities, this ambitious project symbolizes a rooted youth that is looking to the future with greater serenity. Doubts about the realism of the "rupture" can be put to rest by the renegotiation of oil and gas contracts with multinationals, initiated at the beginning of the second half of the year by the President of the Republic, who has set up a strategic contract review committee made up of senior Senegalese government officials. Meanwhile, the \$1.8 billion loan that Senegal agreed with the IMF in June 2024 has apparently still not been cashed in, and this could hamper the Vision Sénégal 2050 project. All the more so as an American rating agency has placed Senegal under watch after the audit of Senegalese public finances presented at a press conference by Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko and Economy Minister Abdourahmane Sarr, who reportedly described a worrying situation in Senegal's finances attributable to the former regime led by Macky Sall.

In addition, Senegal is more than ever faced with the phenomenon of irregular emigration. On October 21, a pirogue carrying 150 migrants reportedly disappeared in the Atlantic. Despite the support of exile aid associations, the boat had been missing for at least 10 days.

Chad

Bloody Boko Haram attack amid political turmoil

In Chad, the recent security setback has been severe. At least forty soldiers killed. That's the death toll from a deadly attack by the terrorist group Boko Haram on the evening of October 27, against a Chadian army base in the Lake Chad region in the southwest of the country. Located on the island of Barkaram, not far from the border with Nigeria, the base was set on fire by the attackers, according to local sources. Contrary to the Chadian presidency's count, local sources report that "some sixty soldiers lost their lives and dozens were wounded. This is one of the most ferocious attacks recorded in recent years. As proof of this, President Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno promptly arrived on the scene. In the immediate aftermath, he declared three days of national mourning, and at the same time launched Operation Haskanite to "pursue and hunt down the assailants to the very end. In the face of this tragedy, the entire political field did not hesitate to show patriotic solidarity. Three days after the attack, a gathering of civil society organizations (CSOs) from the Lake Chad basin took place in Ndjamena. The steering committee of this meeting, which advocated greater involvement of local communities, presented a plan

of action "to complement state initiatives, to address complex challenges, the task ahead of us is considerable, as we strive to implement meaningful change, and overcome the complexities of the challenges we face."

This Boko Haram strike occurred in the shadow of internal political turmoil, crystallized around the upcoming legislative and local elections. Scheduled for December 29, several opposition parties had called for a postponement, citing the recent deadly floods, a poisonous political climate and doubts about the reliability of the electoral process. These criticisms were ignored by President Déby, who firmly maintained the date. Reacting to the news, opposition politician and former prime minister Succès Masra announced that his party "Les transformateurs" would not be taking part in the ballot. "Participating in the elections today, under these conditions, would be tantamount purely and simply to serving as a guarantee for the installation of apartheid [in the country] and a guarantee for a result that is already in the computers of the camp opposite," he denounced on October 20, at a ceremony organized to commemorate the bloody repression of October 2022.

This decision was greeted as a bolt from the blue by some of the opposition.

"How is it that the same code presented and discussed in the Council of Ministers while he was Prime Minister, validated by him, he can come back today, question it and demand its modification?" wonders the coordinator of the Groupe de concertation des partis politiques (GCAP), Max Kemkoye. Adding that "it's a case of political zizanie, so it's a step backwards that's understandable, but won't achieve anything in the sense that all Chadians have understood his position."

The ship of the presidential coalition is also taking on water. This is due to the decision of the MPS (Mouvement patriotique du salut) - a member of the "Tchad uni" coalition - to go it alone in the December 29 elections. "This announcement signals the death of the Tchad uni coalition, whereas yesterday we were standing side by side, now we're going to be fighting each other on the ground! This is ingratitude on the part of the secretary general of the MPS. He's pulled the wool over our eyes. But as we know him well, we're not surprised," defended Malloun Yoboïdé Djilaki, president of the Parti démocratique et socialiste pour l'alternance (PDSA). The Union sacrée pour la République (USPR) was equally disappointed.

"To say that everyone will go their own way and that we'll meet up again for the harvest is not normal: we could have held the meeting in the morning and then gone our separate ways.

same reasoning for
for the presidential elections", laments the party leader. President Déby has also dismissed several senior security officials. These include No. 2 on the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Chad, the General Staff of the Army and his two deputies, the Director General of the Police and his two deputies, the Director General of the Gendarmerie, and Nos. 2 and 3 of the National Guard.

At the same time, the humanitarian situation is not exactly rosy. The country continues to cope with the consequences of flooding, with an unprecedented flood level of 8.18 m in the Chari River. Since July, more than 500 people have died and 1.9 million have been affected by the floods. Things are getting tougher on the other side of the border with Sudan. The UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) has noted a new influx of over 20,000 Sudanese - in the first week of October alone - into the province of Wadi Fira. According to the UNHCR, the urgent need is to raise \$80 million to build three new reception sites. But the UN agency deplores the fact that, so far, it has received only 11% of the \$214 million needed in 2024 to stem the humanitarian crisis.

Togo

Resurgence of terrorist attacks in the North

Since 2021, northern Togo, which borders Burkina Faso, has faced recurrent incursions by terrorists affiliated to the Groupe de soutien à l'Islam et aux Musulmans (GSIM) or the Etat islamique dans le Grand Sahara (EIGS). Despite the efforts of the defense and security forces to counter these attacks in the Savanes region, two terrorist attacks were recorded within two weeks of each other, resulting in loss of life and material damage. This situation is worrying the local population, as one resident of the Kpendjal-Ouest area told RFI: "Not a week goes by without an incident, it's impossible".

The recurrence of attacks in the north of the country has made this region the epicenter of irruptions by armed jihadist groups. These incidents are increasing the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and causing a humanitarian and socio-economic crisis for populations who have fled their villages. _On the political front, the opposition platform Dynamique pour la majorité du peuple (DMP) continues to demand that "light be shed" following the public meeting organized at the headquarters of the African Peoples' Democratic Convention, where Togolese and African political figures were injured.

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