



WEATHER IN THE SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA

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

TIMBUKTU INSTITUTE WEEK 2
JUNE 2026

TIMBUKTU INSTITUTE

African Center for Peace Studies
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Five years of Goïta, between celebrations of power, a security offensive and persistent challenges



MALI

Week 2 June 2026

The Palais des Sports in Bamako welcomed a large crowd who had gathered to celebrate President Goïta's five years at the helm of the country. There was a notable turnout of Malians, particularly young people, as well as delegations from all regions who turned out in large numbers to show their support. This event could be seen as an attempt by the ruling regime to demonstrate its deep roots within the population, which already shows it unwavering support. A review of achievements over recent years was presented, highlighting the construction and renovation of sports and youth facilities. The celebration of this five-year term highlights the desire to sustain the trust placed in the regime, a way of maintaining a climate of cohesion within the country – despite recent events – whilst remaining focused on new projects.

Operation DOUGOUKOLOKO: the path to ‘’ – a guarantee of security?

In an effort to maintain control over their territory, the Ministries of Defence, Justice, Territorial Administration, Security, Transport and the Environment have joined forces to issue a decree formalising the launch of Operation “DOUGOUKOLOKO”. Aimed at changing the approach to the movements of armed groups, this operation seeks to comb through every nook and cranny of all areas likely to serve as a refuge for the attackers. To this end, a measure has been taken: a total ban on civilian access to allow the armed forces to carry out their mission successfully. The vastness of the territory requires the most meticulous inspection and the anticipation of all kinds of attacks. This new decree comes at a time when coordinated attacks and strike forces by armed groups are wreaking havoc across the entire country; it is a means of halting their advance whilst ensuring the physical and moral integrity of the population.

Koro: the new refuge for exiles

“They arrived at our village on the day of our weekly market, ordering us to leave before sunrise.” This is the situation facing thousands of Burkinabés like Hamsetou: abandoning their homeland to survive. Since late May, the town of Koro, situated in central Mali, has become a refugee centre, having welcomed large numbers of people in recent weeks due to threats made by armed groups against these communities, forcing them to abandon everything they own at the risk of reprisals. More and more displaced people are arriving, which is complicating the organisation and reception of them. The deputy mayor has, in fact, launched an appeal for support to accommodate as many refugees as possible. This situation is a cause for concern, as it could be interpreted as a ‘victory’ for the attackers in power by gradually uprooting the inhabitants of the targeted areas. The authorities in both countries will have to tackle this twofold challenge: on the one hand, urgently putting a stop to this harassment; and on the other, taking the necessary steps to house and care for as many displaced people as possible.

Mali–Morocco: diplomatic relations are intensifying

Bamako and Rabat are collaborating in the spirit of complete unity. The two countries are moving forward as promising diplomatic partners for one another, promoting development in numerous sectors such as health, education, agriculture, religion and access to electricity. This alliance highlights the Malian government's desire to diversify its partnerships by exploring new horizons. Recognising Morocco's sovereignty over the Sahara further strengthens relations between the two nations, enabling Mali to seize new opportunities and plan new projects that will foster the country's development. Furthermore, this rapprochement reflects a shared commitment to consolidating their political and economic cooperation within a constantly evolving regional context. Through this strategic partnership, the two states aim to strengthen their exchanges and create a framework conducive to the implementation of projects likely to contribute to the development and stability of their respective territories.

Jouleybib de Nampala: Bamako steps up the hunt for jihadist leaders

The fight against armed groups has reached a new stage with the hunt for Jouleybib de Nampala, described as one of the main jihadist leaders operating in certain areas of Mali. This decision reflects the authorities' determination to step up the pressure on armed organisations by directly targeting their leaders. In seeking intelligence that could facilitate his arrest or neutralisation, the government is relying on a strategy combining military action with collaboration from the local population. This initiative comes against a backdrop of a surge in attacks against the armed forces and civilians, highlighting the importance for the authorities of reducing the capacity of armed groups to cause harm and restoring state authority in the targeted areas.



Press freedom: the treatment of journalists raises questions

Two recent cases involving journalists have reignited concerns about press freedom in Mali. On the one hand, the journalist Chahana Takiou was placed in custody after criticising the transitional authorities, against a backdrop where relations between the media and the government remain marked by recurring tensions. On the other hand, Abdramane Keita was remanded in custody following comments relating to the jihadist figure Iyad Ag Ghali, a particularly sensitive subject in a country grappling with high levels of insecurity. In both cases, the authorities generally cite the need to uphold the law and maintain public order. However, these decisions are fuelling debates on freedom of expression as well as opinions on the country's security situation. They could help to a climate of heightened caution within the press and reinforce questions about the space afforded to critical voices in the current context.

Gao: FAMA crack down on suspected networks

During a special operation carried out in Gao, the FAMA arrested several individuals and seized NINA cards as well as a large sum of money. This action forms part of the authorities' ongoing fight against networks suspected of supporting criminal or terrorist activities in the region. The items seized could enable investigators to gain a better understanding of certain channels used for the identification, movement or financing of these networks. This operation demonstrates the security forces' determination to strengthen their presence in an area that continues to face significant security challenges. It also aims to curb activities that could undermine local stability and to reinforce the state's control over the territory. In a sensitive security context, this type of operation illustrates the ongoing efforts to combat persistent threats.

JNIM reaches a new technological milestone

The release of footage by JNIM showing the use of drones reveals an evolution in the armed group's weaponry. This demonstration highlights its constant adaptation to new technologies in the context of its activities. The use of drones could enable the group to improve its surveillance, intelligence and coordination capabilities on the ground, thereby posing an additional challenge to the security forces. This development underscores the need for states in the region to strengthen their counter-threat capabilities in order to maintain their operational advantage against constantly evolving adversaries.



Bola Tinubu on a precarious security and economic tightrope as 2027 approaches



Nigeria

In Nigeria, the 2027 presidential election is already emerging as the defining horizon for the country's political life. Seeking re-election, President Bola Tinubu is, however, facing a contest that looks anything but a foregone conclusion, against an opposition determined to throw a spanner in the works. Undoubtedly aware of this, the Nigerian head of state has been working for weeks to defend his record. On 12 June, to mark Democracy Day, Bola Tinubu issued a stern warning to armed groups operating within the country, urging them to "surrender or face the full force" of the state. His speech comes against a backdrop of deteriorating security, marked by a resurgence in child abductions and attacks on villages, mainly in the northern and central regions of the country. To tackle this, Tinubu announced the recruitment of more than 50,000 new police officers and a record budget of 5,410 billion naira allocated to defence and security. In terms of results, the president claimed that 13,000 militants had been neutralised over the past year and that civilian casualties attributable to insurgents had fallen by 81 per cent since 2015. These security announcements were accompanied by a defence of his administration's controversial economic reforms (the removal of fuel subsidies and the liberalisation of the exchange rate), which were presented as essential for stabilising public finances, despite their impact on the purchasing power of Nigerian households.

Three days before this address, on 8 June, two high-ranking commanders of ISWAP (Islamic State in West Africa), Ismail Mohammed and Abu Umar, surrendered to Nigerian forces operating along the Mangari axis in the Lake Chad region. The former was a close associate of the group's supreme leader, Baa Shuwa, whilst the latter specialised in the manufacture of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices. Their interrogations also confirmed the earlier neutralisation of a third senior figure, Mohammed Khalifa, a member of ISWAP's Shura Council. These various developments paint a picture of a Nigeria where politics and security will now proceed along a fine line until the presidential election.

Nigerian diplomacy in action

On 10 June in Addis Ababa, Nigeria and Ethiopia signed a bilateral agreement authorising the transfer of 100 Nigerian nationals detained in the Ethiopian prisons of Kaliti and Aba Samuel, so that they may serve out their sentences in Nigeria. The agreement, ratified by a delegation led by Foreign Minister Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu and Justice Minister Lateef Fagbemi, comes after several years of concerns regarding the prisoners' conditions of detention: overcrowding, deprivation of medical care and food, allegations of torture, and even arbitrary detention. The minister also reported the deaths of four Nigerian prisoners during the negotiation process, highlighting the humanitarian urgency of the situation. This diplomatic breakthrough is, however, tempered by the fact that Nigerian prisons themselves are the subject of similar criticism from NGOs, which regularly denounce their overcrowding and unsanitary conditions.

Following on from this, Minister Odumegwu-Ojukwu, speaking at a strategic seminar held on Saturday 14 June in Uyo (in the south of the country), set out the direction for the ambassadors-designate to ECOWAS countries: "Your posts are not routine diplomatic assignments. They are strategic deployments on the front line of our national interests." Her remarks centred on three priorities: the defence of democracy, cross-border security in the face of a Sahelian threat, and economic diplomacy; diplomats were urged to "aggressively pursue" the dismantling of non-tariff barriers. Ultimately, these various initiatives reflect a more operational approach to diplomacy, in which consular, security and economic issues are now aligned with a single strategy of projecting and stabilising Nigerian interests in the sub-region.

Between succession disputes and assertions of sovereignty : Paul Biya's Cameroon under pressure



Cameroon

Week 2 June 2026

Whilst the absence of a government since October 2025 appears to signal a restructuring of the country's institutional framework, the question of succession to power in Cameroon is crystallising into an open rivalry. This pits Franck Biya, the President's son (from his first marriage), against Chantal Biya, the current First Lady. At the heart of the matter is the post of vice-president, established by the latest constitutional amendment as the direct line of succession to the highest office in the event of the head of state's incapacity. Franck Biya, aged 54, is the subject of a discreet campaign to promote him within the corridors of power, whilst Chantal Biya is backing Ferdinand Ngoh Ngoh, who has been Secretary-General of the Presidency for fourteen years, for the same post. President Paul Biya, for his part, has never made a decision or revealed the outlines of his political legacy, leaving the two camps to clash whilst awaiting a succession whose terms remain rather vague. In a country that has not seen a change of government since 1982, this uncertainty surrounding the succession, given its context (the devolution of power), amply illustrates a system of power centred on the individual, which has long been dependent on internal power struggles rather than established institutional mechanisms.

Meanwhile, the country is entering its June parliamentary session against a backdrop of marked fiscal fragility. On 9 June, the second annual parliamentary session took place, with the agenda including a debate on the budgetary guidelines for 2027 and a likely amending finance bill for the current financial year. This session is taking place against a backdrop of severe budgetary pressures: tax, customs and extractive sector revenues remain insufficient, whilst the bulk of the budget is absorbed by the state's operating expenditure and the repayment of external debt. As at 31 March, the state owed more than 500 billion CFA francs to its domestic suppliers. Furthermore, the repeated announcements over the past six months of a cabinet reshuffle, which have yet to materialise, have hampered budget implementation and calls for tenders for public procurement contracts. Faced with these constraints, Yaoundé continues to resort to external borrowing and is in negotiations with the IMF for a new support programme.

A tougher stance on issues of sovereignty

Despite the current uncertainties, Yaoundé is attempting to project the image of a state seeking to assert its control over economic and security matters. After the French navy intercepted the oil tanker *Tagor* off the coast of Brittany at the end of May – on suspicion of circumventing Western sanctions on Russian oil sales by fraudulently flying the Cameroonian flag – Yaoundé reacted firmly. On 8 June, Transport Minister Jean Ernest Masséna Ngallè Bibehe “strongly condemned the fraudulent and abusive use of the attributes of Cameroonian nationality”, stating that the *Tagor* “does not appear in any of the official registers of vessels authorised to fly the Cameroonian flag”.

Furthermore, the Cameroonian government has initiated legal proceedings against more than a hundred mining companies operating on its territory, in what constitutes an unprecedented crackdown on regulatory breaches in the sector. In this announcement made on 10 June by the Ministry of Mines, a range of allegations were put forward: failure to pay royalties, non-compliance with specifications, mining outside authorised areas and breaches of reporting obligations. Several of the companies targeted are Chinese-owned, and their presence has regularly been linked to environmental damage and conflicts with local communities. There is also a budgetary dimension to this, in that potential recovery claims could amount to significant sums for a state whose room for manoeuvre is constrained by debt servicing and IMF requirements. This initiative is also part of a regional trend towards regaining control over extractive resources, observable from Bamako to Niamey via Ouagadougou. Its actual impact, however, remains to be assessed, given a judicial system whose slowness is regularly criticised, and where similar proceedings have never previously been successful.



Diplomacy on all fronts : Wadagni accelerates Benin's regional rapprochement



Benin

From one capital to the next, President Romuald Wadagni is continuing the relentless marathon of his diplomatic offensive aimed at fostering good neighbourly relations. No sooner had he been sworn in than, with characteristic strategic acumen, he began weaving his diplomatic web, framing his actions within a framework of rapprochement and consultation at regional level. This is evidenced by the visits he made earlier this month to his neighbours (Nigeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire). Building on this momentum, Wadagni's diplomatic itinerary included three further stops the following week: Senegal, Mali and Guinea-Bissau. This tour, it appears, focused on UEMOA member states, with the aim of strengthening economic and trade cooperation within the regional bloc and deepening consultations on regional security issues.

Welcomed in Dakar on 9 June by his Senegalese counterpart Bassirou Diomaye Faye, Romuald Wadagni held bilateral talks devoted to strengthening relations between the two countries. Discussions centred on prospects for economic and financial cooperation, the common challenges facing the sub-region, and ways to consolidate and expand the partnership between Cotonou and Dakar. Following this brief meeting, the Beninese President set off for Bamako on the same day. Received by his Malian counterpart Assimi Goïta, the two heads of state discussed the revival of bilateral cooperation, particularly in the areas of trade, ports and customs. Furthermore, they also agreed to organise the second session of the Benin-Mali Joint High Commission in order to boost economic exchanges and logistics networks between the two countries. Furthermore, security issues featured prominently in the discussions. Faced with the persistent terrorist threat in the Sahel, Wadagni and Goïta – whilst reaffirming their commitment to respecting the sovereignty of states – expressed their willingness to strengthen cooperation in the areas of intelligence, territorial surveillance and security coordination. “Africa moves forward when its people talk to one another,” Goïta stated on his X account following the meeting. Finally, Wadagni's busy day of diplomacy concluded in Guinea-Bissau, with the Beninese president also becoming the first foreign leader to be welcomed at the new presidential lounge at Bissau airport. Together with his counterpart Horta Inta-A Na Man, the two presidents discussed strengthening bilateral cooperation, economic opportunities and the challenges of regional integration in West Africa.

Wadagni : taking the helm

It is clear that, in a region plagued by persistent security challenges and geopolitical realignments, Benin is seeking to position itself as a bridge – particularly between ECOWAS and the states of the Sahel Alliance (AES). Indeed, the complicated relations that have prevailed in recent years between Benin and the AES did not lend themselves to such a role. But at present, their renewed rapprochement offers Cotonou a fine opportunity to position itself as a 'peacemaker' or mediator in the region. In this context, such a stance reflects a clear sense of pragmatism; Cotonou intends to preserve its diplomatic and economic room for manoeuvre in an increasingly fragmented West African environment.

On the domestic front, President Wadagni is seeking to set a tone of discipline and integrity. Indeed, during his first working meeting with the ministerial advisers to the Presidency, he called on his colleagues to place the public interest at the heart of their work. Emphasising the need to set an example, consistency between words and deeds, and attention to vulnerable groups, he reiterated that their mission is, above all, to 'serve Benin and the Beninese people'. Marking the end of the election period, the Head of State urged his advisers to look beyond regional or community considerations and work in the service of the nation as a whole. This appeal is all the more significant given that many in the public sphere describe these ministerial posts as 'political rewards'.



Côte d'Ivoire : A programme of reforms and the emergence of a sovereigntist agenda



Côte d'Ivoire

Since the dissolution of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI), the outcome regarding the arrangements for managing the electoral process remains uncertain. To avoid remaining in a state of limbo, a coalition of around ten political parties, meeting on 8 June, proposed the creation of a 'High Electoral Council' to replace the current arrangements. Led in particular by the former First Lady, Simone Ehivet Gbagbo, with the support of political figures such as Charles Blé Goudé and Ahoua Don Mello, this initiative envisages the establishment of a body comprising 11 members drawn from civil society (professional, economic and legal circles), recruited through a transparent call for applications and approved by the National Assembly, with no partisan representation within it. Its members would be appointed for life and tasked with organising elections and conducting an annual review of the electoral register, with the stated aim of strengthening confidence in the electoral system and preventing recurring crises linked to elections. However, the proposal – which has been raised in the past without success – does not enjoy unanimous support and has been put forward without the involvement of the main opposition parties, the PDCI and the PPA-CI.

Meanwhile, whilst the issue of electoral governance remains unresolved, the Senate's legislative agenda has moved forward on a more consensual basis. Indeed, on 8 June, the Ivorian Senate's Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs adopted three draft laws concerning the reform of public procurement, the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the repeal of the tax to support the development of refining activities. The first bill aims to strengthen the powers and governance of the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority in order to improve oversight and transparency in public procurement and public-private partnerships. The second bill provides a framework for Côte d'Ivoire's integration into the tariff dismantling mechanism of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), with a gradual removal of customs duties on the majority of non-sensitive products; whilst this is expected to have a budgetary impact, it offers prospects for economic growth and increased exports. Finally, the third bill confirms the abolition of the refining tax, which has become obsolete following the repayment of the debt owed by the Ivorian Refining Company. Through these reforms, the Senate aims to support the modernisation of economic governance, regional integration and the optimisation of the Ivorian energy sector.

A sovereignist voice on the political scene

Ahoua Don Mello, who was recently expelled from Laurent Gbagbo's PPA-CI, is reportedly, according to **Jeune Afrique**, preparing to set up a new sovereignist political party, scheduled to be launched by August 2026. Currently based temporarily in Russia, he is said to be steering this project by establishing both the internal organisation and funding networks, with the support of close associates tasked with drafting the party's constitution and setting up the administrative framework in Côte d'Ivoire. The initiative is also said to be based on a strategy of gradual mobilisation, targeting trade unions, community leaders, disillusioned political figures and the diaspora, through organised networks in Europe, Africa and the United States, whilst local cells are being set up under the guise of associations or think tanks. Names are currently being considered for this new political formation, whose ideological orientation is intended to be resolutely sovereignist and pan-African. Whilst sovereignism has driven a major geopolitical realignment in the Sahel in recent years, the emergence of such a structured political movement in Côte d'Ivoire – a country reputed to be pro-Western –



Between regional mediation and a civic space under pressure



Togo

In West Africa, mediation frameworks have remained unstable and fragmented in recent years. Against this backdrop, Togo is seeking to establish itself as a hub for diplomatic convergence and the facilitation of multilateral dialogue. This dynamic reflects a strategy of gradual and continuous integration into regional mediation mechanisms, aimed at strengthening Lomé's visibility and legitimacy within African crisis management frameworks. With this in mind, on 7 and 8 June in Lomé, the key players in regional and international mediation on the crisis in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) met for a [session to assess the peace process](#). Alongside the Togolese mediator, representatives from the EAC, SADC, ICGLR, the African Union and the UN reviewed the progress of the various ongoing initiatives, notably the AU roadmaps and the parallel processes in Washington and Doha.

The discussions highlighted limited progress, with several commitments still only partially implemented, notably regarding the protocols to the Doha Agreement and the effective withdrawal of armed forces from eastern DRC. Furthermore, the absence of binding mechanisms – considered one of the main limitations of African mediation – was also noted, as was the slow implementation of the ceasefire verification mechanism. Against this backdrop, representatives of the UN and regional organisations emphasised the need for better coordination of existing initiatives in order to enhance the effectiveness of the peace process in a region still marked by persistent armed violence. Separately, but in a similar vein, on 9 June, Togo and the European Union held their fourth round of political dialogue within the framework of the ACP-EU partnership, focusing on issues of peace, security, democratic governance and economic cooperation. The discussions provided an opportunity to assess Togo's efforts in the areas of conflict prevention, building community resilience and combating terrorism, with European support in these areas reaffirmed.

A restricted civic space

In Togo, restrictions on civil society appear to have become increasingly systematic in recent years. Recent developments point to a civic environment in which the scope for free expression and dissent appears to be increasingly restricted, thereby fuelling an ongoing debate on the nature of the rule of law in the country. [In an open letter](#) published on 11 June, several human rights organisations, including the FIDH and the OMCT, called on the Togolese authorities to guarantee the safe return, free from reprisals, of human rights defenders forced into exile following the political tensions and crackdowns observed during recent protests. The letter condemns the legal proceedings, intimidation and harassment targeting these civil society actors, and demands that these be dropped and that independent investigations be launched into the reported violations. The signatory organisations further emphasise the need to provide lasting protection for civic space and to re-establish dialogue between the state and civil society actors. Beyond the humanitarian dimension of the appeal, this letter highlights a structural tension between the consolidation of state authority and the guarantee of civil liberties, the resolution of which is key to Togo's democratic credibility.



Between regional ambitions and institutional tensions in Dakar



Senegal

Against a backdrop of ongoing shifts in the regional balance of power, Senegal is working to strengthen its position, with its sights set on playing a central role in the current dynamics. It is in this context that Dakar is currently conducting a diplomatic offensive in West Africa to bolster General Birame Diop's candidacy for the presidency of the ECOWAS Commission for the 2026–2030 term. Following stops in Freetown and Abidjan, Foreign Minister Cheikh Niang's tour continued on 8 June in Lomé, where he was received by the President of the Togolese Council, Faure Gnassingbé. Conveying a message from President Diomaye Faye, Senegal's foreign minister officially presented the candidate nominated by Senegal and sought the support of the Togolese authorities. This move forms part of a broader regional strategy aimed at strengthening support for the Senegalese candidacy in the run-up to the upcoming ECOWAS elections. According to Dakar, this campaign aims to promote a candidate deemed capable of contributing to the revitalisation of the regional institution, given the major security and political challenges in West Africa. It also comes at a time when Senegal, which currently holds the chairmanship of the ECOWAS Commission, makes no secret of its desire to play a greater role within the regional organisation.

Meanwhile, on 10 June, President Diomaye Faye received an envoy from his Mauritanian counterpart, Mohamed El Ghazouani, as part of efforts to strengthen political dialogue between the two neighbouring countries. The special envoy, the Mauritanian Minister for Foreign Affairs and African Cooperation, Mohamed Salem Ould Merzoug, delivered a message from the Mauritanian Head of State. This meeting forms part of the ongoing regular exchanges between Dakar and Nouakchott, which maintain strategic and structured diplomatic relations. In this instance, the discussions reaffirmed the two countries' shared commitment to strengthening their cooperation in several priority sectors, notably the economy, energy, fisheries and security, within a regional context characterised by a high degree of interdependence. Beyond being a diplomatic gesture, this meeting illustrates the depth of Senegal-Mauritanian relations and the desire of both countries to strengthen a partnership described as fraternal, in the face of the political, economic and security challenges facing the sub-region.

Institutional balances in flux

On the domestic front, amid escalating tensions between President Diomaye Faye and his former Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko, a coalition comprising trade unions, intellectuals and civil society actors has appealed to public opinion to warn of the risks of an institutional crisis. At the heart of the controversy lies Sonko's reinstatement to the National Assembly – the legality of which is contested by the opposition – and which enabled his election as Speaker. The signatories believe that only the Constitutional Council can resolve this dispute and restore a climate of political calm. They are urging it to rule swiftly on the appeal already lodged by opposition MPs, in order to prevent the conflict from turning into a protracted power struggle between the presidency and the parliamentary majority.

Meanwhile, two Pastef MPs, Ismaila Diallo (First Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly) and Cheikh Thioro Mbacké (Third Deputy Speaker), have announced their resignation from their posts as Deputy Speakers of the National Assembly of Senegal. On the one hand, Ismaila Diallo justifies his decision on the grounds of a “sense of responsibility and loyalty” to his commitment. For his part, Cheikh Thioro Mbacké describes it as a decision taken after careful consideration, motivated by “personal and political considerations”. However, both elected representatives remain Members of Parliament. Whilst the underlying reasons for these moves are not yet entirely clear, they appear to be a new episode in the political manoeuvring within Parliament, where the Pastef intends to wield its legislative power in the political dispute pitting it against the Head of State.

