Macky Sall’s African Tour

President Macky Sall who doubles as the president of Senegal and the current president of the African Union went on an African Tour this week. While the French President, Emmanuel Macron, had targeted Benin, Guinea-Bissau and Cameroon for his African tour, Macky Sall will be visiting Mali, Chad and Gabon1.

Consequently, he was in Mali on August 15 and was welcomed by the Malian Transition president, Colonel Assimi Goïta. The visit aimed at exchanging and working with the Malian authorities to ensure a successful transition, as well as supporting Mali’s integration in African and international activities. He used the opportunity to invite other African countries and the international community to support Mali in its relentless fight against terrorism.

LIBERIA

Political Dynamics

Liberia learns from Sierra Leone

The sudden political and violent unrest experienced recently in Sierra Leone because of citizens’ dissatisfaction with the poor economic and political situation of the country is serving as a lesson to other ECOWAS States. It can be recalled that similar unrest and protests were also experienced in Guinea, Mali, and Burkina Faso, before the democratic rule in these countries was eventually snatched by putschists. Taking a cue from the situation, organizations, individuals and political stakeholders and parties have taken to various platforms to advocate, reinforce democratic measures and call for peace. One of such is the opposition Alternative

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1 https://maliactu.net/mali-macky-sall-entame-une-tournee-africaine/
National Congress (ANC) in Liberia. The Party leader, Alexander B. Cummings, issued a statement on August 14 commending the restoration of calm and order in Sierra Leone while calling for respect for the rule of law and increased commitment to deepening the culture and values of democracy in Liberia and throughout the West African sub-region.

Liberian top officials involved in corrupt schemes

Three (3) Liberian government officials Nathaniel McGill, Sayma Syrenius Cephus, and Bill Twehway have been sanctioned by the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) for their involvement in ongoing public corruption in Liberia. They have been accused of using public offices for their personal benefits, thus undermining democracy. The sanction aligns with the United States’ commitment to hold corrupt actors accountable and bolster anti-corruption efforts in the implementation of the United States Strategy on Countering Corruption.

Nathaniel McGill is Minister of State for Presidential Affairs and Chief of Staff to President George Weah. He is reported to have been involved in numerous corrupt schemes, manipulated procurement processes, bribed business owners, received bribes from potential investors, and used government funds to run his own projects. Sayma Syrenius Cephus is the current Solicitor General and Chief Prosecutor of Liberia. Cephus is accused of shielding suspects of criminal investigations, tampering with and purposefully withholding evidence in cases involving members of opposition political parties to ensure conviction. Similarly, Bill Twehway is accused of orchestrating the diversion of $1.5 million in vessel storage fee funds from the NPA into a private account. He is the current Managing Director of the National Port Authority (NPA) and has been reported to have secretly formed a private company for loading and uploading cargo contracts. These three are sanctioned for being current government officials and involved in corruption schemes. Hence, all their property and interests in the United States are blocked and reported to OFAC. Additionally, at least 50% of entities they own directly or indirectly are also blocked.

2 https://allafrica.com/stories/202208150302.html
3 https://allafrica.com/stories/202208150357.html
SIERRA LEONE

Political Dynamics

Violent political unrest

Sierra Leone citizens took to the streets on August 10 to express their dissatisfaction over the perceived failure of the government and the poor economic condition of the country. The initially peaceful protest turned violent with the interference of security forces. Some protesters reportedly put up roadblocks, burnt tyres, and called for the resignation of President Maada Bio, who was away at the time. Consequently, at least 6 police officers and 22 civilians were killed, and the government imposed a nation-wide curfew to maintain order and calm. Accordingly, 113 people were arrested as shown in an interim report by Sierra Leone's police\(^4\). The violence was of course condemned by the regional bloc, ECOWAS, while also calling on Sierra Leoneans to adhere to law and perpetrators to be prosecuted. Prior to this, as at August 8, the streets of Freetown had been deserted following a month-long rumoured three-day nationwide demonstrations. The Medical and Dental Association was reported to be on a sit-down strike over the removal of their COVID-19 risk allowance, teachers were said to have been on strike for the government’s failure by government to increase their salary. All these must have accumulated to the reality of August 10.

Although the demonstrations were against high cost of living and thus, a call for the president to resign, President Bio, in an address to the nation, has accused the protesters of insurrection, staged to overthrow his democratically elected government. His accusation is based on the fact that economic crisis is a global issue, especially with the pandemic-related disruption in global supply chains and the knock-on effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The alleged premeditated unrest was blamed on the opposition party, the All Peoples Congress (APC)\(^5\). However, the APC quickly refuted the claims through a statement urging supporters to adhere to rule-of-law, and reaffirming their commitment to national cohesion and peace.

\(^4\) [https://allafrica.com/stories/202208150044.html](https://allafrica.com/stories/202208150044.html)
\(^5\) [https://allafrica.com/stories/2022081300015.html](https://allafrica.com/stories/2022081300015.html)
Although calm and peace have been restored, and activities have resumed in most affected areas, the Gambia High Commission still advised Gambian citizens in Sierra Leone to stay home and avoid non-emergency travels until further notice⁶.

MALI

Political Dynamics

Bilateral cooperation between Mali and Niger

The Ambassador of Niger to Mali was in Mali on August 16. He was received by the Malian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. Their discussions centred on reviving political relations between both countries and resolving security challenges and socio-economic issues bothering the two neighbouring countries⁷. Therefore, solidarity was reinforced between both countries to enhance overcoming the differences in political approaches and consolidate integration.

MINUSMA operations in Mali

The Transitional authorities had suspended all rotations of MINUSMA military and police contingents, including those already scheduled or announced, for national security reasons on July 14, following the arrest of 49 Ivorian soldiers in Bamako, qualified by the authorities of the transition as "mercenaries", while Abidjan reassured that "these soldiers are regularly registered in the workforce of the Ivorian army and were in Mali, as part of National Support Elements (NSE) operations”⁸.

Thus, during a high-level meeting on August 13 between the Transitional Government and MINUSMA, new procedures were agreed “to better manage the movement of contingents and national support elements” for the resumption of

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⁶ https://allafrica.com/stories/202208150195.html
⁸ https://maliactu.net/mali-la-minusma-annonce-la-reprise-de-toutes-les-rotations-de-contingents-suspendues-par-le-gouvernement/
MINUSMA rotations on August 15. Flight requests were approved by the Malian authorities signaling a renewed and better coordination between both teams.

However, while the suspension of MINUSMA rotations has been lifted, Germany announced the suspension of most of its military operations within the MINUSMA framework, specifically helicopter transport flights. This is reportedly in response to a new refusal of flight issues by the Malian authorities\(^9\), to which the Malian Minister of Foreign Affairs has refuted, claiming that Mali did not refuse the overflight of its territory to the planes of the German contingent.

On the other hand, about 20 soldiers from the Grand Duchy integrated in the MINUSMA and EUTM operations have decisively extended their stay in Mali\(^10\). The Grand-Ducal team is stationed in Bamako and responsible for maintaining operational satellite links made available by Luxembourg to Minusma and used to connect the four regional command posts (Gao, Kidal, Mopti, Timbuktu) to the headquarters of Bamako. The engagement of the Luxembourg army in MINUSMA was extended until March 2024 in March 2022. They are also participating in European Training Mission (EUTM) in Mali whose mandate will end in December 2022.

The final departure of the French Barkhane from Mali

Following the 72-hour ultimatum of permanent departure given by les Forces Vives de Gao to the French Barkhane on August 14, the last batch of French army in Mali finally left the city of Gao on August 15. They are reported to be heading in the direction of Niger and the departure aligns with the decision of the French President on February 17, 2022 during which he announced the reorganization of the Barkhane force outside Mali\(^11\).

The ultimatum stemmed from accusations from Les Forces vives de Goa on “the heavy involvement of French forces in the terrorist attacks in the region of the three borders, in particular in the last ones in Tessit, having caused 42 Malian soldiers to be killed”. The Forces vives de Gao also asked "the Malian authorities to file a complaint against the French authorities for complicity in the murderous attack on Tessit and all other murderous attacks against the populations and the

\(^9\) [http://bamada.net/participation-de-l allemagne-aux-operations-de-la-minusma-nous-suspendons-jusqua-nouvel-ordre-nos-operations-de-reconnaissance-et-les-vols-de-transport-par-helicoptere](http://bamada.net/participation-de-l allemagne-aux-operations-de-la-minusma-nous-suspendons-jusqua-nouvel-ordre-nos-operations-de-reconnaissance-et-les-vols-de-transport-par-helicoptere)

\(^10\) [https://maliactu.net/le-luxembourg-reste-au-mali/](https://maliactu.net/le-luxembourg-reste-au-mali/)

\(^11\) [https://maliactu.net/barkhane-quitte-gao-dernier-bastion-de-larmee-francaise-au-mali/](https://maliactu.net/barkhane-quitte-gao-dernier-bastion-de-larmee-francaise-au-mali/)
Malian Defense and Security Forces”, while demanding "from the Malian authorities the clarification of the missions of the foreign contingents making up MINUSMA, and failing that their immediate departure from Mali”\(^\text{12}\).

**Russian soldiers in Gao**

With the departure of the last detachment of the French Barkhane, members of the Russian security forces were reportedly seen in Gao. A document drafted by the command of the German Federal Defense Force, dated August 16, underlines the presence of two planes at Gao airport, including an L-39 Albatros and an Embraer 314 Super Tucano\(^\text{13}\). Subsequently, 20 to 30 people in military uniforms not belonging to the Malian forces were seen unloading equipment from a transport plane. With suspicions that the L-39 should be operated by Russian forces, it was concluded that the foreign soldiers are Russians.

**The French-Malian Political Crisis**

The political/diplomatic tension between France and Mali appears to be taking a permanent route. The climax was attained earlier this year with the expulsion of the French ambassador to Mali over virulent remarks toward Malian authorities. Amidst the budding tension, France denounced the proximity between Bamako and Moscow and accused the Malian authorities of fraternizing with militiamen from the Russian paramilitary company "Wagner". On the Malian end, the Wagner accusation was denied with the affirmation of Russian military “instructors” supporting FAMa. An accelerated turn of events between the parties has led to the departure of the last military detachment of the French forces, while the Russian forces are suspected to be taking over.

After a series of violent verbal exchanges between the Malian Transition president and the French president with the former responding harshly to allegations and accusations by the latter, Mali has gone on to accuse France of “repetitive and frequent violations of Malian airspace by French forces, by flying aerial vectors such as drones, military helicopters and fighter planes, without authorization from the Malian authorities”, thereby undermining international peace and security. Mali revealed the possession of more than 50 recordings of deliberate cases of violation of Malian airspace by foreign aircraft, notably operated by the French forces, in different forms. France was also accused of arming and informing terrorist

\(^{12}\) [https://maliactu.net/mali-les-forces-vives-de-gao-accordent-un-ultimatum-de-72-heures-a-barkhane-pour-quitter-la-ville/](https://maliactu.net/mali-les-forces-vives-de-gao-accordent-un-ultimatum-de-72-heures-a-barkhane-pour-quitter-la-ville/)

\(^{13}\) [https://maliactu.net/mali-des-forces-de-securite-russes-aperceuces-a-gao-medias/](https://maliactu.net/mali-des-forces-de-securite-russes-aperceuces-a-gao-medias/)
groups, subversion by publishing images collected by their drone, false accusations of deaths, dangerous maneuvers around the Malian plane, perceived as attempts to intimidate and acts of aggression against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a Member State of the United Nations. Additionally, evidences of these accusations are ready to be presented to the UN Security Council.

Responding to the accusations by Mali, the French Government on August 17 has stated that France has obviously never supported, directly or indirectly, terrorist groups, but rather intervened in Mali between 2013 and 2022 to fight against terrorist groups, at the request of the Malian authorities. Therefore, France liberated many Malian towns that had fallen into the hands of terrorists, thereby improving the security situation in Mali.

With these developments, the French-Malian crisis has taken a full swing. What impacts would these have on the already weak security, economic and political situation in Mali? How can Africa take advantage of the France, Russia and China influence in the continent?

The ill-health of the Malian Prime Minister

The 64-year-old Malian Prime Minister Choguel Maïga was reportedly hospitalized following a slight health discomfort. The office of the Prime Minster confirmed his fast recovery. The Prime Minister has recently been accused of serving his self-interests and criticised by many political leaders calling for his resignation and by many of his former allies in the June 5 Movement - Rally of Patriotic Forces (M5-RFP).

On the issue of his health, the Communication unit has claimed that he is only observing a period of rest after long months of interrupted commitment to the nation and called on the public to regard the insinuations about his health as rumours aimed at arousing political and administrative tension.
**Risks of Security Dynamics**

Scores of deaths in the Assaylal attack

Assaylal in Menaka region was drowned in sorrow on August 12 following an attack by armed men affiliated with Daesh. At least 7 civilians were killed during the attack\(^\text{19}\). The Touareg Idaksahak community where Assayla is located has been the target of recent attacks as more than a dozen civilians were coldly murdered by armed men between August 7 and 8.

However, as of August 16, the provisional death toll of the attack in the village of Assaylal in Ménaka region of Mali had risen from 7 to 20\(^\text{20}\).

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Sierra Leone and Liberia are post-conflict societies awaiting presidential elections in 2023. In view of this, the government and political stakeholders should take effective measures in investigating the triggers and causes of protests and violence. Resolving such issues could ensure a peaceful democratic transfer of power and prevent another coup in the region.

- With respect to the perceived poor economic situation, the government should develop or implement action plans towards promoting youth employability and innovativeness. An idle man, they say, is the devil’s workshop.

- Perpetrators of violence should be identified and prosecuted justly to avoid or discourage repetitions of similar acts of violence.

- Regional and international communities should be encouraged to jointly fight against terrorism.

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\(^{19}\) [https://maliactu.net/mali-7-civils-tues-a-assaylal-dans-la-region-de-menaka/](https://maliactu.net/mali-7-civils-tues-a-assaylal-dans-la-region-de-menaka/)