

West Africa This Week – A weekly highlight on political, security, socio-political and health happenings across the West African region

August 19th to August 25th 2022

MALI, SENEGAL, AND BURKINA FASO

MALI

Political Dynamics

An acting Prime Minister appointed

Following the compulsory imposed medical rest of former Mali's Prime Minister, Choguel Kokalla Maïga, a decree of the Malian Transition President made public on August 21st has put Colonel Abdoulaye Maïga, as the present acting Prime Minister. Colonel Abdoulaye Maïga who is also the Minister of Territorial Administration is expected to combine the functions of Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization with those of the Prime Minister¹.

Choguel Kokalla Maïga had been facing criticism for several months from his former allies of the June 5 Movement-Rally of Patriotic Forces (M5-RFP), before information about his health circulated, evoking a stroke and then hospitalization in a clinic in Bamako. Following the unending speculations on his health, he was forced by his doctor to rest after 14 months of tireless work. Also, various groups and his allies also sought his resignation and he is strongly contested by the Malian opposition gathered in the Framework for the Exchange of Political Parties for a Successful Transition which had requested a Prime Minister that is non-partisan, consensual, competent, honest and with a proven knowledge of the political, economic and security dynamics of the country.

¹ <https://maliactu.net/mali-le-colonel-abdoulaye-maiga-nomme-premier-ministre-par-interim-decret/>

Mali acknowledges the definitive departure of Barkhane

The Malian Transitional Government has acknowledged the final withdrawal of the Barkhane Force and promised more success in the fight against terrorism². Recalling that France had unilaterally decided on June 10, 2021, to withdraw the Barkhane force from Mali by adopting a timetable, without consultation with the Malian authorities to which it was bound by Defense Accords, the Malian authorities justified the departure of France. Thus, Mali's demand for the immediate departure of France forces on February 18 2022 was on the grounds of the seriousness of the above-stated act by France.

Furthermore, the authorities noted that "the deterioration of the security situation in Mali and in the Sahel is an immediate consequence of the intervention of France and its allies in Libya". Hence, with the departure of Barkhane and the rise in power of the valiant Malian Armed Forces (FAMa), more successes will be engaged against terrorist groups, the security of the populations will be considerably improved and the assets will not weaken.

The Transitional Government also reiterated "its readiness to cooperate with all the States of the world in order to curb the terrorist threat, provided that this relationship falls within the framework of the 3 principles guiding public action in Mali, defined by HE the President of the Transition, Head of State, Colonel Assimi Goïta, namely: respect for the sovereignty of Mali, compliance with the strategic choices made by Mali, the defense of the interests of Malians in the decisions taken".

Updates on the 49 Ivorian soldiers arrested in Mali

Negotiations for the peaceful release of the 49 Ivorian soldiers arrested in Mali on July 10th are ongoing. Interventions and mediations have been made by the Togolese president, ECOWAS, AU, UN and other notable dignitaries but without attaining the much-expected happy ending.

Nevertheless, on August 24th, the interparliamentary committee of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) met in Abidjan and

² This was noted in a press release by Colonel Abdoulaye Maïga <https://maliactu.net/mali-le-gouvernement-prend-acte-du-depart-definitif-de-barkhane-du-pays/>

consequently, sent a delegation to Côte d'Ivoire and Mali on the dispute arising from the arrest of 49 Ivorian soldiers in Mali³.

The interparliamentary committee hopes to use parliamentary diplomacy in order to achieve a peaceful settlement of this dispute between the two countries. Will UEMOA succeed in attaining a happy ending between Mali and Cote d'Ivoire, without Cote d'Ivoire meeting the conditions set by Mali?

It can be recalled that the 49 Ivorian soldiers were tried on August 15 and charged with “attempting to undermine state security” by the investigating judge of the Bamako Anti-Terrorism Unit.

Bilateral Cooperation between Mali and Iran

The Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hossein Amir-Habdollahian, accompanied by the Iranian Vice President of Trade, Industry of Mining and Agriculture and more than 30 Iranian businessmen were in Mali from August 22 to 23 on a working visit⁴. Meeting with Malian authorities, exchanges were on strengthening Mali's cooperation with Iran in defence, security, higher education and scientific research, rural development, mines, energy and water, health, transport, infrastructure, industry, trade, housing, town planning, culture and tourism, communication and of the digital economy. The Iranian Vice President of Trade, Industry of Mining and Agriculture underlined Iran's preparedness to also intervene in Mali in the fields of cotton and meat processing as well as in the supply of basic necessities. Mali is said to be first in livestock at the level of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) space and second in the ECOWAS space but without meat processing plants and milk factories. The Iranian-Malian cooperation may thus be a win-win project with a lot of economic benefits.

Senegal's support to Mali

Mali appears to be the campaign ground the ruling and opposition parties of the Senegalese political class. The Senegalese President, Macky Sall as in Mali on August 15 during his African tour as president of the African Union and a

³ <https://maliactu.net/militaires-ivoiriens-arretes-au-mali-les-deputes-de-luemoa-offrent-leur-mediation/>

⁴ <https://maliactu.net/maliiran-vers-un-renforcement-de-la-cooperation-bilaterale/>

neighbour of Mali. In his words, he was there to bring salvation and solidarity to Mali, and also to call for the support of the entire African and international community in Mali's relentless fight against terrorism.

Almost a dozen of days after, Ousmane Sonko, leader of Patriotes africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la fraternité - African Patriots of Senegal for Work, Ethics and Fraternity (PASTEF), the main opposition, took to the media on August 25, to express his support for the Malian Transition president Assimi Goita⁵.

During a press conference on the outcomes of the legislative elections of July 31, during which PASTEF won 56 seats within the Yewwi Askan Wi (Yaw) coalition, Sonko seized the occasion to congratulate President Assimi Goita for his victory against those who sought to humiliate him. Encouraging the Malian President to persevere in the fight against terrorism, he assured him that they will win the war against the jihadist gangrene by the grace of God and the determination of the Malians and the efforts of all Africans. He used the occasion to announce his candidacy for the presidential election in February 2024 while promising the people of Mali that "if this problem is not solved by 2024, if we are elected President of the Republic, we will send troops to support our Malian brothers and put an end to this gangrene. This is contrary to the action of Macky Sall who had repatriated the few Senegalese elements who were at the Mali within the framework of the MINUSMA.

SENEGAL

Political Dynamics

Resignation in PDS political party

While political parties in Senegal are preparing for the 2024 elections, the Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) seems to be suffering from an internal conflict. Toussaint Manga, Deputy of PDS has announced his resignation from the party in a letter addressed to the national secretary general and made public on August 21⁶. This thus marks the end of his activism within the PDS.

⁵ <https://maliactu.net/senegal-lopposant-ousmane-sonko-apporte-son-soutien-a-assimi-goita/>

⁶ https://www.seneweb.com/news/Politique/pds-toussaint-manga-annonce-sa-demission_n_386169.html

Responding to his resignation, the PDS Ziguinchor chapter/branch pointed out Toussaint Manga's inconsistencies and irregularities and affirmed that the party "suffered in Ziguinchor under his leadership"⁷.

Candidacies for President 2024

The declaration of candidacy for the presidential elections in 2024 has begun! The Yewwi-Wallu inter-coalition is presenting PASTEF and Les patriotes leader, Ousmane Sonko, in the hopes of having a single candidate for the inter-coalition⁸.

However, the leader of Le Grand Parti, Malick Gakou, is already opposing single candidacy within the Yewwi Wallu inter-coalition and the accumulation of mandates⁹. Given Malick's candidacy in 2019, his well-functioning and represented party, some Yewwi Askan Wi members are calling for mobilization around the candidacy of Malick Gakou.

From the PASTEF camp, it is worthy of note that even though Ousmane Sonko has already announced his candidacy for the 2024 presidential election, the person who will defend the colours of PASTEF will be officially appointed on July 1, 2023 during the investiture and renewal congress of the party's leadership¹⁰. Moreover, Sonko has been accused of rape followed by death threats against the masseuse Adji Sarr. This, at a time when the former mayor of Dakar, Khalifa Sall, of the Yewwi Askan Wi (Yaw) coalition was sentenced to 5 years in prison for an embezzlement of 1.8 billion CFA francs.

Similarly, Karim Wade of the Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) has also announced his candidacy. However, Karim Wade is said to be in exile in Doha having been convicted in the case of tracking down ill-gotten gains.

Responding to the latest declared candidacies, in a press release made public on August 24, the presidential majority coalition warned its political opponents and potential candidates for the 2024 presidential election¹¹. The Benno Bokk Yaakaar coalition noted the multiple candidacies and recalled that "their final validation is the exclusive responsibility of the candidacy control and validation bodies,

⁷ https://www.seneweb.com/news/Politique/pds-me-wade-enregistre-un-nouveau-coup-d_n_386214.html

⁸ https://www.seneweb.com/news/Politique/presidentielle-2024-le-depute-oumar-sy-l_n_386170.html

⁹ https://www.seneweb.com/news/Politique/le-grand-parti-contre-la-candidature-uni_n_386261.html

¹⁰ https://www.seneweb.com/news/Politique/presidentielle-2024-ousmane-sonko-modifi_n_386441.html

¹¹ https://www.seneweb.com/news/Politique/presidentielle-2024-benno-bokk-yaakaar-a_n_386414.html

provided for by the Constitution and the Electoral Code, to offer Senegalese citizens the exclusive freedom to choose their next President of the Republic”, it was specified in the document. BBY also remarked that “being a candidate for the presidential election cannot confer any impunity, nor place anyone above the laws, justice and institutions of our country”. Could this be understood as a subtle insinuation that the Constitution and the Electoral Code would be used to disqualify specific candidates in the 2024 elections?

It would be recalled that 50-year old Sonko was removed from the public service as an Inspector of taxes in August 2016, but then he became a major political player during the presidential elections of 2019 during which he came 3rd with an anti-imperialist discourse that resonates with the youths. His summons to the gendarmerie for this rape case that the presidential coalition is alluding to had been at the origin of the bloody events of March 2021 with 14 deaths. And supporters are already of the opinion that this is the presidential coalition’s attempt to dismiss Sonko from the 2024 presidential election.

The Leadership and Installation of the National Assembly

The Senegalese President, Macky Sall has put an end to the suspense revolving around the investiture of the 14th legislature of the National Assembly. A decree issued on August 24th has indicated that the long-awaited event will take place on September 12¹².

The presidency of the 14th legislature promises to be fiercely contested. Benno Bokk Yakaar (the presidential coalition) was able to retain the majority with 83 deputies. But this remains narrow since the seats of the opposition together are 82: 56 in Yewwi Askan Wi, 24 in Wallu, 1 in AAR Senegal (Thierno Alassane Sall) and 1 in the coalition Le Servateurs (Pape Djibril Fall). Also the 82 deputies from the presidential coalition were recently received by the president at the palace.

The high points of September 12 would include the election of the president of the Hemicycle and of course the installation of the deputies. Who will occupy the presidential seat of the National Assembly? Additionally, after leaving the office of the Prime Minister vacant for 8 months, President Sall is expected to appoint a Prime Minister after the installation of the 165 elected deputies and form a new government. Who would be appointed Prime Minister? These 2 figures have received numerous speculations worth looking into.

¹² https://www.seneweb.com/news/Politique/assemblee-nationale-macky-sall-a-fixe-la_n_386422.html

BURKINA FASO

Political Dynamics

Positive Steps by the Burkinabe Transition Government

The delegation of the African Union has been in Burkina Faso since August 17 on an assessment mission. Still under suspension from ECOWAS and the Afriacn Union following the coup d'état led on January 24 by soldiers against former President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, accused of "inefficiency" in the fight against terrorism, Burkina Faso is currently undergoing a political transition. With respect to this, the transition authorities welcomed the AU delegation and on August 25, they presented the Roadmap of the Transition to the latter¹³.

The African Union delegation expressed satisfaction with the quality of the Roadmap, stressing clarity of the situation that Burkina Faso is going through and undertaking to support Burkina Faso in the implementation of its Roadmap for the good conduct of the Transition.

In a press release after the meeting by the Burkinabè Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was specified that key priorities of the Transition are, among others, security, the restoration of the integrity of the territory and the return of the displaced internal to their localities. The press release also indicated that the delegation will also meet with African ambassadors, representatives of political parties, customary and religious and youth leaders.

The Transition Timetable

The national political class of Burkina Faso, along with the minister in charge of public freedoms and the Prime Minister, have gathered to review and discuss the chronogram of the transition¹⁴, which ends in July 2024 with the elections. In attendance were the former Leader of the Political Opposition in Burkina Faso (CFOP-BF), Eddie Komboigo, the former Alliance of Political Parties and Formations of the Presidential Majority (APMP) represented by Bala Alassane Sakandé, the non-affiliated former Opposition (ONA) represented by Pr Abdoulaye Soma, former Prime Minister Luc Adolphe Tiao and the most recent political parties led by Abdoulaye Mossé.

¹³ <https://maliactu.net/burkina-faso-la-feuille-de-route-de-la-transition-presentee-a-lunion-africaine/>

¹⁴ Le gouvernement et la classe politique se concertent pour arrêter le chronogramme de la transition <https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article115612>

The gathering served as an avenue for the government to present the terms of reference for the development of the timetable. Thus, the government is working with the political class on the development of the transition timetable.

Former Presidential Candidate fights against France

The only female presidential candidate in the 2020 presidential elections in Burkina Faso, Yeli Monique Kam has been accused along with Hermann Zoungrana of the Naaba Wobgo movement, of participating in a banned public demonstration. Therefore, appeared before the Ouaga I High Court but the judgment of their case was postponed to September 16¹⁵.

Yeli used the occasion of the hearing to announce that France is the "godfather of terrorism" in the Sahelian zone and that the Naaba Wobgo movement will do everything to make this France leave Burkina Faso. Thus, the fight of the movement is against France and their departure from Burkina Faso.

Security and Societal Dynamics

Attack in Tuy/Houndé

Unidentified armed individuals attacked the town of Houndé, in the Hauts Bassins region on the night of August 25 to 26, 2022¹⁶.

The territorial brigade of the gendarmerie was attacked and detainees have been reportedly released. Significant material damage has also been recorded.

The dissolution of the Central Armed Forces Group

A decree¹⁷ by the President of Faso, Lieutenant-Colonel Paul-Henri Damiba on August 12 has dissolved the Central Armed Forces Group (GCA) with the assurance that members of this troop will be redeployed in the army and the general staff of the armies. Although this approach may not entertain the same motive, the similarity with the dissolution of the BIA by Blaise Compaoré after the

¹⁵ <https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article115602>

¹⁶

<http://tuy/Hound%C3%A9%20:%20La%20brigade%20territoriale%20de%20la%20gendarmerie%20attaqu%C3%A9e%20https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article115610>

¹⁷ The full decree can be found here <https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article115582>

coup cannot be ignored. Thus, one questions the motive behind this action. Could the Faso Transition President be experiencing division within the army?

Suspicious aroused by the dissolution of the Central Armed Forces Group (GCA) were intelligently doused by the creation of the 26th commando infantry regiment (RIC) by the President of Faso, by decree n ° 2022 0611 PRESS-TRANS/PM/MDAC¹⁸. This corps will be based in the garrison of Boromo, Balé province in the Boucle du Mouhoun and has been highly appreciated by citizens of Burkina Faso.

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¹⁸ <https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article115583>