

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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Senegal Summary 20 February 2022

The ruling Benno Bokk Yakaar (BBY) coalition wins 438 of 553 municipalities and 38 of 43 departments in local elections. However, the opposition Yewi Askan Wi (YAW) political alliance emerges victorious in the strategic urban centres of Dakar, Kaolack, Thiès, Touba and Ziguinchor. Assailants belonging to the Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC) separatist group kill four Senegalese soldiers and take nine captive in Bwiam (The Gambia). The African Development Bank (AfDB) signs four financing agreements amounting to 200.8 billion FCFA (\$347.8m) and aiming to fund several economic development projects. Senegal is experiencing a significant downward trend in Covid-19 infections, following a fourth wave of Covid in December.

Ruling BBY wins local elections but loses to opposition in major urban centres

The **Benno Bokk Yakaar (BBY)** ruling coalition emerged victorious in the 23 January local elections, securing an absolute majority in the number of councils and departments won.¹ However, the opposition **Yewi Askan Wi (YAW)** political alliance won the highly coveted urban centres of **Dakar, Kaolack, Thiès** and **Ziguinchor**.² The results are a clear indication of **Senegal's** evolving political landscape, as the opposition is steadily gaining influence and will look to build on these gains ahead of the June legislative election.³

The local elections were the first to take place since 2014 and saw voters elect mayors, deputy mayors, and municipal and departmental councillors across 557 municipalities, using the universal suffrage voting format for the first time.⁴ The BBY coalition, which includes President **Macky Sall's** (2012-present) party, the **Alliance pour la République (APR)**, was heavily favoured to win the election.⁵ The BBY matched this expectation, winning 438 of 553 municipalities and 38 of 43 departments.⁶ It performed particularly well in the northern **Fouta** region and **Senegal River Valley**, as well as **Walo** region in the west.

However, the BBY victory was overshadowed by the YAW alliance's victory in Dakar, Kaolack (centre), Thiès (west) and Ziguinchor (south).⁷ The most important of these was in Dakar. With an estimated population of 4 million (almost a quarter of Senegal's population), all the major parties sought to take control of the capital and seven candidates were fielded.⁸ For BBY, the extra motivation stemmed from the fact that Dakar has been under opposition control since 2009.⁹ The BBY chose health and social action minister **Abdoulaye Diouf Sarr**, who was also mayor of the commune of **Yoff**, as its candidate, while YAW selected **Taxawu Sénégal** party member **Barthélémy Dias**, mayor of **Mermoz Sacré Cœur** commune and protégé of former Dakar mayor **Khalifa Sall**, as its candidate.¹⁰ Sall served as mayor of Dakar from 2014-2017, before his arrest on allegations of corruption in 2017.

¹ Dakar Actu, 2 Feb 2022

² Dakar Actu, 2 Feb 2022

³ ARC Senegal analyst

⁴ Jeune Afrique, 20 Jan 2022

⁵ ARC Senegal Analyst

⁶ Dakar Actu, 2 Feb 2022

⁷ Jeune Afrique, 4 Feb 2022

⁸ ARC Senegal analyst

⁹ Jeune Afrique, 25 Jan 2022

¹⁰ Jeune Afrique, 20 Jan 2022

Other mayoral candidates included outgoing mayor **Soham El Wadini** and **Doudou Wade** of the **Parti Démocratique Sénégalais (PDS)/Wallu Sénégal** coalition (see *ARC Briefing Senegal Jan 2022*).

Before results for the Dakar mayoral contest were confirmed, the BBY released a communiqué in which it acknowledged defeat in Dakar. Dias' supporters celebrated his apparent victory on the night of 23 January,¹¹ with Dias stating:

*"Today Dakar has made a choice, but Dakar has also sent a very strong signal. We are going to strive for this mandate."*¹²

The results in Dakar saw Dias obtain 173,628 votes (56%) compared to 81,015 (26%) for Sarr, while El Wardini received only 4.4%.¹³ Overall, BBY had an underwhelming performance across Dakar, as Sarr also lost in Yoff¹⁴ and **Aliou Sall**, President Sall's youngest brother, lost his position of mayor in **Guédiawaye**. BBY was also defeated in the Dakar communes of **Pikine, Golf Sud, Rufisque** and **Yeumbeul Sud**, amongst others.¹⁵

Outside of Dakar, another major result for the YAW coalition was the victory of **Patriotes du Senegal pour le Travail, l'Éthique et la Fraternité (PASTEF)** MP **Ousmane Sonko** to become mayor of Ziguinchor, the largest city in **Casamance** region.¹⁶ Sonko, who obtained 52% of votes in Ziguinchor department in the 2019 presidential election, built on this support to defeat local APR/BBY representative **Benoit Sambou** and outgoing mayor **Abdoulaye Balde**.¹⁷ The YAW coalition also won in Thiès, popularly referred to as the "*Cité du Rail*".¹⁸ Koalack and the department of **Diourbel**, both heavily populated localities, also lost to YAW,¹⁹ while the Wallu Sénégal coalition won Senegal's second largest city, **Touba**.²⁰

Despite reports of instances of late-opening polling stations, unavailable electoral material, registered voters names not appearing on the electoral list and missing voter cards, the elections had no major organisational shortcomings.²¹ BBY applauded the peaceful nature of elections, which they described as "*democratic, free and transparent*".²²

The local election results were a disappointment for the ruling camp. The BBY failed to achieve its major objective of winning Dakar and Ziguinchor, despite spending 6 billion FCFA (\$10.3m) and having President Sall's personal involvement in the campaign.²³ Sall's ally and **Avenir** media group president, **Madiambal Diagne**, claims BBY lost in Dakar and across other urban centres because of poor candidate choice.²⁴ The most glaring example of this was in Dakar, where Sarr faced a challenge from his fellow BBY member and presidential chief of staff, **Mame Mbaye Niang**.²⁵

However, **Afrikjom Centre** think tank director **Alioune Tine** says the results are reflective of grievances stemming from the March 2021 anti-government protests following Sonko's arrest for alleged rape and sexual assault (see *ARC Briefing Senegal March 2021*).²⁶ Youth unemployment was a major theme of the protests, while President Sall and his regime were accused of favouring foreigners with respect to business opportunities, becoming more authoritarian and increasingly manipulating

¹¹ Le Soleil, 24 Jan 2022

¹² Africanews, 25 Jan 2022

¹³ RFI, 27 Jan 2022

¹⁴ Dakar Actu, 27 Jan 2022

¹⁵ Jeune Afrique, 4 Feb 2022

¹⁶ RFI, 24 Jan 2022

¹⁷ RFI, 24 Jan 2022

¹⁸ Dakar Actu, 28 Jan 2022

¹⁹ Jeune Afrique, 4 Feb 2022

²⁰ Dakar Actu, 31 Jan 2022

²¹ Sud Quotidien, 24 Jan 2022

²² Le Soleil, 24 Jan 2022

²³ Jeune Afrique, 4 Feb 2022

²⁴ Jeune Afrique, 4 Feb 2022

²⁵ Jeune Afrique, 27 Jan 2022

²⁶ Africanews, 24 Jan 2022

the justice system.²⁷ Tine believes the protests helped to reinvigorate the opposition, which has become more active and radical.²⁸

Université de St. Louis associate professor of political science **Maurice Dione** suggests that the electoral result could be the first step towards the YAW coalition establishing itself as a political force in Senegal.²⁹ Dione believes leaders such as Sonko and Dias will use their positions to propel their national political ambitions ahead of the June legislative election and 2024 presidential contest.³⁰ Although BBY performed relatively well and local elections have no bearing on national policy orientation, President Sall no doubt understands that the local elections were a barometer of his regime's popularity.³¹

BBY is increasingly becoming a party with a rural voter base, while losing the support of youths, who appeared to have voted for the YAW coalition in large numbers.³² President Sall will need to weed out internal discord in the party ahead of the legislatives in order to avoid a further slide that could create further momentum for the opposition.³³ It is unclear whether Sall will sack the nine ministers who lost in the constituencies in which they stood for election in his imminent cabinet reshuffle.³⁴

Separatists kill four Senegalese soldiers in The Gambia

Assailants belonging to the **Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC)** separatist group killed four Senegalese soldiers and took nine captive in the locality of **Bwiam (The Gambia)** on 24 January.³⁵ This was the first major incident between the MFDC and Senegalese forces in nearly a decade and could lead to calls for a definitive end to one of **Africa's** longest running conflicts.³⁶ Since coming to power in 2012, President Sall has stated his intention to end the MFDC rebellion. The MFDC, which has been waging a low intensity rebellion since 1982 with the aim of obtaining independence for the Casamance region,³⁷ on 14 February released the soldiers it had taken hostage following mediation efforts by **Italy-based Sant'Egidio** Catholic community.³⁸

The Senegalese soldiers belonged to a contingent of the **Economic Community of West African States Mission in The Gambia (ECOMIG)**.³⁹ ECOMIG was set up in January 2017, in the wake of former Gambian president **Yahya Jammeh's** (1994-2016) refusal to step down from office following his defeat in the December 2016 presidential election.⁴⁰ Senegalese army spokesperson **Lt. Col. Saliou Ngom** said the Senegalese soldiers were undertaking a security operation to fight timber trafficking.⁴¹ MFDC members allegedly attacked the soldiers during the mission, which took place in a stronghold of a radical faction of the MFDC led by **Salif Sadio**.⁴²

The MFDC handed over the bodies of the Senegalese soldiers to the **International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC)** on 30 January for repatriation to Senegal in the presence of representatives of the Gambian government and Sant'Egidio.⁴³ Sant'Egidio, which has a well-established track record for intervening in conflict situations, had been tasked by all parties involved to negotiate for the release of the bodies as well as the detained Senegalese soldiers.⁴⁴ Sant'Egidio is best known for fostering the

²⁷ Africanews, 24 Jan 2022

²⁸ Africanews, 24 Jan 2022

²⁹ RFI, 24 Jan 2022

³⁰ RFI, 24 Jan 2022

³¹ ARC Senegal analyst

³² Jeune Afrique, 9 Feb 2022

³³ Jeune Afrique, 9 Feb 2022

³⁴ Jeune Afrique, 27 Jan 2022

³⁵ VOA, 25 Jan 2022

³⁶ ARC Senegal Analyst

³⁷ VOA, 25 Jan 2022

³⁸ Dakar Actu, 14 Feb 2022

³⁹ VOA, 25 Jan 2022

⁴⁰ VOA, 25 Jan 2022

⁴¹ RFI, 25 Jan 2022

⁴² RFI, 25 Jan 2022

⁴³ RFI, 1 Feb 2022

⁴⁴ RFI, 1 Feb 2022

peace agreement that ended the war in **Mozambique** in 1992.⁴⁵ In 2012 it secured the release of eight individuals taken hostage for a year by the MFDC.⁴⁶

Almost three weeks after the attack on the Senegalese soldiers, an anonymous source from the MFDC declared to **France**-based publication **Jeune Afrique** on 13 February that the soldiers would be released.⁴⁷ The captives were taken to **Bajagar** village (The Gambia) on 14 February, where they were received by representatives from ECOWAS, the Gambian government and Sant'Egidio.⁴⁸

Although the MFDC has claimed it was attacked by the Senegalese army,⁴⁹ there is evidence that suggests the incident was linked to timber trafficking.⁵⁰ The MFDC is known to carry out illegal logging as part of its war economy activities.⁵¹ After its extraction, the illegally-logged wood is transported to The Gambia for subsequent export to **Asia**.⁵² Timber trafficking has likely contributed to enabling The Gambia to become **Africa's** second-largest exporter of rosewood, and generated an estimated \$300m from 2013-2019.⁵³ The Senegalese government has previously claimed that illegal trade in protected wood was carried out with the support of former president Jammeh, who was allegedly involved in the trade with **Switzerland**-based logging company **Westwood**. In January 2018, 14 loggers were killed in an ambush in a protected forest in the **Bayotte** area in the Casamance region.⁵⁴ In March 2020, a **British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)** documentary alleged that illegal logging in the Casamance Region had led to the loss of 1 million trees and 10,000 hectares of forest over the last six years (see *ARC Briefing Senegal March 2020*).⁵⁵

Ngom stated that ECOMIG operations have immobilised 77 trucks carrying illegally logged timber.⁵⁶ President Sall has also declared that he will do whatever it takes to preserve Senegal's forests.⁵⁷ The latest events could serve as a catalyst to find a lasting solution to the Casamance conflict. Sadio's unconditional release of the Senegalese soldiers was a positive development, which he said demonstrates his willingness to end the conflict.⁵⁸

Senegal signs financing agreements with African Development Bank

The **African Development Bank (AfDB)** has signed four financing agreements with the Senegal government amounting to 200.8 billion FCFA (\$347.8m).⁵⁹ The agreements were signed on 27 January in Dakar, between AfDB president **Dr. Akinwunmi Adesina** and Senegalese economy, planning and cooperation minister **Amadou Hott**.⁶⁰ The agreements include the **Programme d'appui à l'Accélération Industrielle, à la Compétitivité et à l'Emploi (PAICE)** (support programme for industrial acceleration, competitiveness and employment) and the **Programme de Désenclavement des Zones Agricoles et Minières (PDZAM-1)** (programme to open agricultural and mining areas).⁶¹ These two initiatives will receive a combined 200.36 billion FCFA (\$347m).⁶²

⁴⁵ Jeune Afrique, 15 Feb 2022

⁴⁶ Jeune Afrique, 15 Feb 2022

⁴⁷ Jeune Afrique, 14 Feb 2022

⁴⁸ Dakar Actu, 14 Feb 2022

⁴⁹ Jeune Afrique, 15 Feb 2022

⁵⁰ Jeune Afrique, 15 Feb 2022

⁵¹ VOA, 25 Jan 2022

⁵² RFI, 12 Mar 2020

⁵³ RFI, 12 Mar 2020

⁵⁴ Le Monde, 14 Jan 2018

⁵⁵ RFI, 12 Mar 2020

⁵⁶ RFI, 25 Jan 2022

⁵⁷ Dakar Actu, 14 Feb 2022

⁵⁸ Jeune Afrique, 15 Feb 2022

⁵⁹ Financial Afrik, 28 Jan 2022

⁶⁰ Financial Afrik, 28 Jan 2022

⁶¹ Financial Afrik, 28 Jan 2022

⁶² APS, 28 Jan 2022

Hott said the PAICE aims to accelerate the competitiveness of small, medium sized and micro enterprises (SMMEs) and to increase public investments and public-private partnerships (PPPs).⁶³ PAICE will be structured around four components, namely strengthening value chains, setting up a competitiveness task force in Dakar and in six other regions, as well as providing technical assistance and access to finance for SMMEs.⁶⁴ PDZAM-1 will contribute towards the economic development and transformation of Senegal's northern regions, by promoting rice production and mining activities.⁶⁵ In partnership with the **Japanese Embassy** in Senegal's "*Invest in Africa*" programme, the government will allocate 450m FCFA (\$770,400) to support 120 SMEs, with priority to firms operating in the agribusiness, oil, security and textile sectors.⁶⁶ The fourth agreement, signed on the 27 January, was a 2.3 billion FCFA (\$3.9m) accord to support women's empowerment.⁶⁷

Significant drop in Covid-19 infections

Senegal is experiencing a downward trend in **Covid-19** infections, according to statistics provided by the health and social action ministry.⁶⁸ On 19 February, the ministry stated that it had recorded a total 85,545 Covid-19 confirmed cases in Senegal's population of roughly 17 million, with 83,454 recoveries and 1,958 deaths,⁶⁹

The national vaccination campaign has stalled amidst the reduction in the infection rate, with a total of 1,437,986 doses administered as of 19 January.⁷⁰ Senegal nevertheless continues to procure vaccine supplies, with **Spain** donating 302,400 doses of the **United States**-manufactured **Johnson & Johnson** Covid-19 vaccine on 10 February.⁷¹

Senegal has no major restrictive measures in place since March 2021 and has not instituted vaccine passports.⁷² In December, director general of health **Dr. Marie Ngom Ndiaye** ruled out the possibility of imposing a lockdown of the population stating it would be "*useless*", as an estimated 80% of Senegalese have been exposed to Covid-19 (see *ARC Briefing Senegal Jan 2022*).⁷³

⁶³ APS, 28 Jan 2022

⁶⁴ APS, 28 Jan 2022

⁶⁵ APS, 28 Jan 2022

⁶⁶ APS, 28 Jan 2022

⁶⁷ Sika Finance, 30 Jan 2022

⁶⁸ ARC Senegal analyst

⁶⁹ Ministère de la Santé et Action Sociale, 18 Feb 2022

⁶⁹ RFI, 30 Dec 2021

⁷⁰ Ministère de la Santé et Action Sociale, 18 Feb 2022

⁷¹ Ministère de la Santé et Action Sociale, 10 Feb 2022

⁷² ARC Senegal analyst

⁷³ RFI, 30 Dec 2021

Planner

21-26 Mar 2022 Dakar (Senegal) 9th World Water Forum

June 2022 (Senegal) Legislative elections;

2022 (Senegal) Sangomar offshore oil field: production of crude oil set to begin;

2023 (Senegal) Grand Tortue Ahmeyim (GTA) offshore gas field production of natural gas set to begin.

Chronology

17 Feb 2022 **Dakar (Senegal) APS. Turkish** ambassador to Senegal **Ahmet Kavas** declares commercial trade between Senegal and Turkey reached \$500m;

14 Feb 2022 **Dakar (Senegal) Dakar Actu.** Members of the **Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC)** separatist group have released seven Senegalese soldiers, who were part of **Economic Community of West African States Mission in The Gambia (ECOMIG)**, whom they took captive on 24 January;

11 Feb 2022 **Dakar (Senegal) Financial Afrik. Direction Générale du Trésor et de la Comptabilité Publique (DGTCP)** (director general of treasury and public accounting) raises 35 billion FCFA (\$60.4m) through a treasury bond issue on the **West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)** regional financial market;

10 Feb 2022 **Dakar (Senegal) Ministère de la Santé et Action Sociale. Spain** donates 302,400 doses of the **United States**-manufactured **Johnson & Johnson** Covid-19 vaccine to Senegal;

10 Feb 2022 **Dakar (Senegal) APS. European Commission** president **Ursula von der Leyen** announces a €150m (\$171m) investment plan for **Africa** at a news conference in Dakar;

4 Feb 2022 **Dakar (Senegal) Sika Finance.** Business information service Sika Finance reports, Senegal had a budget deficit of 961.1 billion FCFA (\$1.6 billion) at the end of 2021 compared to the figure of 903 billion FCFA (\$1.5 billion) in 2020;

3 Feb 2022 **Dakar (Senegal) APS.** President **Macky Sall** has instructed the economy and finance ministers to ensure the launch of the second phase of Senegal's first-high speed railway, the **Train Express Regional**, "as soon as possible";

31 Jan 2022 **Dakar (Senegal) La Tribune Afrique. African Development Bank (AfDB)** president **Akinwunmi Adesina** says the institution will provide finance of \$3 billion to the **African** pharmaceutical industry;

30 Jan 2022 **Dakar (Senegal) Sika Finance.** The **African Development Bank (AfDB)** signs four financing agreements with the Senegalese government worth 201 billion FCFA (\$345m) to support the implementation of various development projects;

28 Jan 2022 **Dakar (Senegal) Financial Afrik.** Senegal raises 55 billion FCFA (\$94.4m) through a treasury bill issue on the **West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)** regional financial market;

27 Jan 2022 **Dakar (Senegal) RFI.** Opposition **Yewwi Askan Wi (YAW)** alliance candidate **Barthélémy Dias** is confirmed winner of the Dakar mayoral contest, with 173,628 votes to 81,015 for health minister and **Benno Bokk Yakaar (BBY)** ruling coalition candidate **Abdoulaye Diouf Sarr**;

27 Jan 2022 **Dakar (Senegal) Dakar Actu.** President **Macky Sall** announces the imminent organisation of a presidential council on large-scale projects in the digital domain;

26 Jan 2022 **Dakar (Senegal) Financial Afrik. Benin's** President **Patrice Talon** pays a state visit to Senegal and meets President **Macky Sall**, with both leaders pledging to boost relations between the two countries;

24 Jan 2022 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Jeune Afrique*. Provisional electoral results suggest the opposition **Yewi Askan Wi (YAW)** coalition has won the mayoral race in the capital, Dakar, while the **Benno Bok Yakaar (BBY)** presidential coalition has admitted defeat in the contest;

23 Jan 2022 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Dakar Actu*. Senegal holds its first local elections since 2014;

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