

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

Senegal Monthly Briefing November 2021

Senegal Summary 26 November 2021

President Macky Sall (2012-present) announces the reintroduction of the position of prime minister, which he abolished in May 2019. Tensions emerge ahead of the January local elections. Senegalese security forces have arrested MP and Patriotes du Senegal pour le Travail, l’Ethique et la Fraternité (PASTEF) leader Ousmane Sonko, Grand Parti member Malick Gakou, and opposition electoral coalition Yewi Askan Wi (YAW) (free the people) member and mayor of Mermoz Sacré Cœur, Barthélémy Dias on multiple occasions. United States (US) secretary of state Antony Blinken pays a 24-hour working visit to Senegal, which sees Senegal sign four memoranda of understanding worth \$1 billion with US-based companies. Senegal has experienced a remarkable drop in Covid-19 cases;

Sall to reinstate position of prime minister...

President **Macky Sall** (2012-present) has declared his intention to reinstate the position of prime minister, which he scrapped in May 2019 following his election for a second presidential mandate in February of that year.¹ The move appears to be an acknowledgement that his decision to withdraw the post was a mistake.² A communiqué issued on 24 November following a council of ministers session stated that the reintroduction of the position aims to allow the executive to adapt to “*a new economic and socio-political environment*”.³ Noting that the prime minister will be accountable to parliament, the communiqué suggested that the move aims to build better relations between the executive and legislature.⁴

Constitutional revision is necessary to effect the change. A bill will be submitted as of 30 November, under an urgent procedure to enact the change.⁵ It is expected that the law will be adopted before 15 December.⁶

Sall promulgated a law in May 2019 abolishing the position of prime minister after the **Assemblée Nationale** (National Assembly) adopted the law to that effect.⁷ Then government secretary general **Maxime Ndiaye** said the amendment aimed to accelerate transformation, remove administrative bottlenecks and allow the president to have direct contact with administrative authorities (see *ARC Briefing Senegal May 2019*).⁸ Sall said abolishing the position would accelerate the decision making process and ensure greater efficiency in the coordination of the government agenda.⁹ However, there was speculation that Sall, who is set to leave office in 2024 upon completion of his second presidential mandate, did not want to give the impression that the appointed prime minister would be his potential successor.¹⁰ This could trigger infighting in the government and ruling coalition, which would hamper the execution of government action (see *ARC Briefing Senegal May 2019*).¹¹ Sall denied

¹ Sud Quotidien, 25 Nov 2021

² ARC Senegal analyst

³ Sud Quotidien, 25 Nov 2021

⁴ Sud Quotidien, 25 Nov 2021

⁵ Le Point, 25 Nov 2021

⁶ APS, 25 Nov 2021

⁷ Jeune Afrique, 18 Apr 2019

⁸ Jeune Afrique, 18 Apr 2019

⁹ Jeune Afrique, 18 Apr 2019

¹⁰ RFI, 18 Apr 2019

¹¹ RFI, 18 Apr 2019

reports in January 2020 that he intended to re-establish the position of prime minister.¹² However government secretary **Abdou Latif Coulibaly** said the “*drastic evolution*” of circumstances since 2019, including the onset of the **Covid-19** pandemic, had made the latest change necessary.¹³

Senegal has faced several challenges in the past two years, including Covid-19, recurrent floods in **Dakar**, the rise in clandestine migration and most recently the March anti-government protests. Sall is set to take up the rotating presidency of the **African Union (AU)** in 2022, and travelled to **Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo)** on 25 November to meet his **Congolese** counterpart and outgoing AU president, **Félix Tshisekedi** (2019-present), to prepare the transfer of power.¹⁴ Although Sall’s new AU responsibility appears to justify the recreation of the position of prime minister, opposition political movement **Agir** president **Thierno Bocoum** claims Sall made the decision based on his personal political motives.¹⁵ There is also speculation that Sall will use the appointment to quell rumours that he intends to pursue a third presidential term in 2024, despite the constitutional two-term limit.¹⁶

Local reports suggest the new prime minister will be appointed after the January 2022 local elections.¹⁷ Some of the names suggested include two technocrats: former economy and finance minister **Amadou Ba**, and current economy, planning and cooperation minister **Amadou Hott**.¹⁸ It is unclear whether Sall will select a technocrat or prefer that a politician occupy the position.¹⁹

... amid concern over violence ahead of January local elections

Political tension is increasing in the lead up to local elections scheduled for 23 January. Police arrested opposition MP and **Patriotes du Senegal pour le Travail, l’Ethique et la Fraternité (PASTEF)** leader **Ousmane Sonko**, **Grand Parti** member **Malick Gakou** and **Barthélémy Dias**, mayor of **Mermoz Sacré Cœur** and member of the **Yewi Askan Wi (YAW)** opposition electoral coalition, on 10 November. All three politicians were released a few hours later.²⁰ The incident stemmed from Dias being summoned to appear at the **Palais de Justice de Dakar** (Dakar Courthouse) for his appeal regarding a 2011 murder, to which he has been directly linked. On the way to the courthouse, Dias was accompanied by Sonko, Gakou and hundreds of supporters.²¹ However, security forces used tear gas to disperse these individuals and subsequently arrested the trio.²² Sonko and YAW coalition member Dakar mayor **Khalifa Sall** condemned the arrests,²³ while the ruling **Benno Bokk Yakaar (BBY)** presidential coalition accused the opposition group of trying to start an insurrection.²⁴ There were fears that the mobilisation of opposition supporters on the basis of a judicial hearing could lead to protests similar to those that took place in March (see *ARC Briefing Senegal March-April 2021*). However, calm was established, and police released the opposition trio from custody.²⁵

A week later on 17 November, police arrested Dias, who was set to be confirmed as YAW’s mayoral candidate for Dakar, while he was distributing flyers as part of the coalition’s *dox mbokk* (door to door) campaign and held him at the **Pieppeul** police station in Dakar.²⁶ The **Préfecture de Dakar** (Dakar Prefecture) justified his arrest on the basis that he was holding a public gathering without

¹² APS, 25 Nov 2021

¹³ RFI, 24 Nov 2021

¹⁴ Jeune Afrique, 25 Nov 2021

¹⁵ RFI, 24 Nov 2021

¹⁶ ARC Senegal Analyst

¹⁷ Jeune Afrique, 25 Nov 2021

¹⁸ Jeune Afrique, 25 Nov 2021

¹⁹ Sud Quotidien, 25 Nov 2021

²⁰ RFI, 10 Nov 2021

²¹ RFI, 10 Nov 2021

²² Jeune Afrique, 10 Nov 2021

²³ Jeune Afrique, 10 Nov 2021

²⁴ RFI, 10 Nov 2021

²⁵ Dakar Actu, 10 Nov 2021

²⁶ Dakar Actu, 17 Nov 2021

having obtained the required authorisation.²⁷ Dias' lawyer, **Khoureychi Ba**, accused local authorities of abusing his client's rights and exercising partisan behaviour. Ba said police had not arrested the BBY mayoral candidate for Dakar, health and social action minister **Abdoulaye Diouf Sarr**, despite his regularly holding public gatherings.²⁸

In the increasingly tense climate, the **Cadre Unitaire de l'Islam**, a collective of the leaders from the various Muslim brotherhoods, held a meeting on 15 November during which they expressed concern about the increasing use of physical and verbal violence ahead of the 23 January local elections.²⁹ Collective president **Cheikh Ahmed Tidjane Sy** said tensions persist, despite calls for calm in the aftermath of the March protests.³⁰ Sy called on political actors to act in the greater interest of the country, preserve peace and adopt a non-violence stance. The collective pledged to formulate a non-violence charter for circulation to all political parties participating in the upcoming local elections.³¹

Senegal signs four MOUs worth \$1 billion during US secretary of state's visit

United States (US) secretary of state **Antony Blinken** undertook a 24-hour working visit to Senegal on 20 November. The trip to Senegal was part of Blinken's three-country **African** tour, which saw him make stops in **Kenya** and **Nigeria** before concluding in Senegal.³² Discussions between President Macky Sall and Blinken focused on strengthening partnerships between the two countries, the ongoing pandemic, relaunching inclusive economic growth, and promoting democratic governance and respect for human rights in the region.³³ Blinken held a press conference with his Senegalese counterpart, foreign minister **Aïssata Tall Sall** (no relation to President Macky Sall). Sall praised US-Senegal relations and expressed her desire for the US to take more interest in the country.³⁴ Sall referred to the \$550m subsidy provided by the US to improve access to electricity and upgrade electricity infrastructure through the **Senegal Power Compact**, falling under the **Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)** (see *ARC Briefing Senegal September 2021*).³⁵ Sall also expressed Senegal's desire to be a beneficiary of President **Joseph Biden's** (2021-present) landmark **Build Back Better** initiative.³⁶

Blinken's visit saw the signature of four memoranda of understanding (MOUs) between the Senegalese government and four US-based companies, to carry out US-financed projects worth \$1 billion.³⁷ The projects include the 200 km highway linking Dakar with the northern city of **St. Louis**.³⁸ The road network, popularly referred to as **La Côtière**, is outlined in Senegal's long-term economic development agenda, the **Plan Sénégal Émergent (PSE)**, and will be undertaken in two phases, including a 114-km stretch from **Tivaouane Peulh-Loumpoul** and the remaining 86 km from **Loumpoul-St. Louis**.³⁹ The highway will connect with the Dakar-**Bosso** road network. **Bosso** is a town near the border with **Mauritania**.⁴⁰ **Agence des Travaux et de Gestion des Routes (Ageroute)** (road works and management agency) director general **Mor Gueye** indicated in October that work on the highway would start in mid-2022 and be completed in June 2025.⁴¹ Blinken claimed the highway will provide better access to St. Louis, "a region set to become a hub for agricultural as well as oil and gas activities":

²⁷ Dakar Actu, 17 Nov 2021

²⁸ Jeune Afrique, 17 Nov 2021

²⁹ RFI, 15 Nov 2021

³⁰ RFI, 15 Nov 2021

³¹ Dakar Actu, 15 Nov 2021

³² Bloomberg, 20 Nov 2021

³³ Dakar Actu, 20 Nov 2021

³⁴ APS, 20 Nov 2021

³⁵ Lejocos, 6 Sep 2021

³⁶ Dakar Actu, 20 Nov 2021

³⁷ Bloomberg, 20 Nov 2021

³⁸ Agence Ecofin, 22 Nov 2021

³⁹ Agence Ecofin, 22 Nov 2021

⁴⁰ Agence Ecofin, 22 Nov 2021

⁴¹ Agence Ecofin, 22 Nov 2021

“St. Louis will also facilitate trade between Senegal and North Africa.”⁴²

According to Blinken, the MOUs aim to promote technology transfer, improve the state of roads, digital communications and job creation. US-based **Motorola Solutions** will build a national communications network and also work with Ageroute to develop a road traffic management system, which will help reduce traffic, increase mobility and reduce accidents.⁴³ US-based **ABD Group**, which specialises in infrastructure development in Africa, will build several bridges in **Zuguinchor** and **Tobor**, with the aim of establishing trade corridors with neighbouring countries.⁴⁴ ABD will also train Senegalese, for whom at least 30% of jobs related to the project will be reserved.⁴⁵ Blinken said the US would finance initiatives to assist women and youth who wish to undertake activities in the domains of health, energy water, sanitation and hygiene, noting that US projects in Senegal are based on shared values such as *“democracy, transparency, accountability, rule of law, competition and innovation”*:

“When the public, private and voluntary sectors cooperate and join forces, they let us achieve positive and lasting results.”⁴⁶

Africa has traditionally been low on the US foreign policy agenda, a situation that deteriorated during the administration of former President **Donald Trump** (2017-2021). However, since former president **Bill Clinton**'s (1993-2001) trip to Senegal in 1998, successive US presidents (excluding Trump), as well as all secretaries of state, have visited the country.⁴⁷ Senegal is the only francophone African nation that has sustained such high-level interactions with US-authorities during this timeframe, as US-focus on Africa has largely been focused on **Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa**. Despite the US' apparent sustained interest in Senegal, it is not a coincidence that Blinken's visit came shortly before the 8th edition of the **Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)** was due to be held in Dakar from 29-30 November.⁴⁸ **China** has become a leading trade partner with Senegal, and the US seems keen to regain influence in the country. Sall said Senegal is willing to work with everyone, so *“the US should not expect to displace anyone, anytime soon”*.⁴⁹

Senegal experiences significant drop in Covid-19 cases

Senegal has experienced a remarkable drop in Covid-19 cases, registering single digit infection rates throughout the week of 20-26 November. A total of seven new Covid-19 infections were recorded from 22-26 November.⁵⁰ At the time of writing, Senegal had confirmed 73,975 Covid-19 cases in its population of 17.32 million, with 72,082 recoveries and 1,885 Covid-19-related deaths.⁵¹

Senegal's Covid-19 vaccine rollout has significantly tapered off, despite Senegalese authorities' efforts to procure more vaccines. The health ministry reported on 26 November that it had administered a total of 1,322,091 vaccine doses.⁵² On 24 October, it reported having administered 1,284,485 doses, compared to 1,226,082 vaccine doses by 20 September.⁵³ This indicates that just under 100,000 vaccines have been administered over the past two months, despite the delivery of two consignments of vaccines on 15 November.⁵⁴ The **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** donated 302,400

⁴² Agence Ecofin, 22 Nov 2021

⁴³ APS, 20 Nov 2021

⁴⁴ APS, 20 Nov 2021

⁴⁵ APS, 20 Nov 2021

⁴⁶ DW, 22 Nov 2021

⁴⁷ Jeune Afrique, 18 Nov 2021

⁴⁸ DW, 22 Nov 2021

⁴⁹ APS, 20 Nov 2021

⁵⁰ Ministère de la Santé et Action Sociale, 22-26 Nov 2021

⁵¹ Ministère de la Santé et Action Sociale, 26 Nov 2021

⁵² Ministère de la Santé et Action Sociale, 26 Nov 2021

⁵³ Ministère de la Santé et Action Sociale, 21 Sep 2021

⁵⁴ Dakar Actu, 15 Nov 2021

doses of the US-manufactured **Johnson & Johnson** vaccine, while the US donated 265,590 doses of its **Pfizer** vaccine.⁵⁵

Planner

29-30 Nov 2021 **8th edition of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)**

17-19 Dec 2021 **Istanbul (Turkey) Turkey-Africa Summit**;

2021 **Dakar (Senegal) 7th Forum International de Dakar sur la Paix et la Sécurité** (Dakar International Forum for Peace and Security (TBA));

23 Jan 2022 **(Senegal) Municipal elections**;

2022 **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

25 Nov 2021 **Dakar (Senegal) Agence Ecofin. Société Nationale de Nommercialisation des Oléagineux (Sonacos)** (national groundnut company) signs \$45m financing convention with the **Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC)**;

21 Nov 2021 **Dakar (Senegal) Dakar Actu. Barthélémy Dias**, mayor of **Mermoz Sacré Cœur**, is invested as the **Yewi Askan Wi** opposition coalition mayoral candidate for Dakar;

20 Nov 2021 **Dakar (Senegal) Bloomberg. United States (US) secretary of state Antony Blinken** confirms Senegal has signed construction deals amounting to \$1 billion with US-based construction firms including **Bechtel Corp.** and **Cubic Transportation Systems** to carry out four public works projects including the 200 km **Dakar-St. Louis** highway;

20 Nov 2021 **Dakar (Senegal) Dakar Actu. United States** secretary of state **Antony Blinken** holds face-to-face talks with President **Macky Sall** during his visit to Senegal;

17 Nov 2021 **Dakar (Senegal) Dakar Actu.** Police arrest and subsequently release for the second time in just over a week **Mermoz-Sacré-Cœur** mayor **Barthélémy Dias**, candidate for the mayor of Dakar for the **Yewi Askan Wi (YAW)** opposition coalition, for allegedly organising an unauthorised gathering;

17 Nov 2021 **Dubai (United Arab Emirates) APS.** State-owned **Air Senegal** managing director **Ibrahima Kane** and global aircraft acquisition contract financing company **Macquarie** managing director **John Willingham** sign a delivery protocol for five **A220** aircraft ordered from **France-based Airbus**, for the benefit of Air Senegal;

16 Nov 2021 **Dakar (Senegal) RFI. Cadre Unitaire de l'Islam**, an association that brings together the leading Muslim brotherhoods in Senegal, has expressed concern over rising political and social tension ahead of the January 2022 local elections;

12 Nov 2021 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Quotidien.** **Japan's** ambassador to Senegal, **Arai Tatsuo**, says his government will contribute upwards of 40 billion FCFA (\$69.3m) towards the third phase of the **Projet d'Amélioration de la Productivité du Riz dans la Vallée du Fleuve Sénégal (Senegal River Valley rice productivity improvement project)**, which will be launched in March 2022;

10 Nov 2021 **(West Africa) Agence Ecofin. Mauritanian** petroleum ministry director general of hydrocarbons **Moustapha Béchir** reports that stakeholders are in the process of making

⁵⁵ Dakar Actu, 15 Nov 2021

modifications to the second phase of the **Grand Tortue Ahmeyim (GTA)** gas field development project, overlapping Mauritania and **Senegal's** offshore waters

10 Nov 2021 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Sika Finance*. Senegal recorded a budget deficit of 1,076.8 billion FCFA (\$1.867 billion) at the end of September 2021, a 148.8 billion FCFA (\$258m) or 12.14% year-on-year reduction

7 Nov 2021 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Dakar Actu*. The health ministry reports that Senegal registered zero **Covid-19** related deaths and no new Covid-19 infections on 6 November;

5 Nov 2021 **Dakar (Senegal)** *APS*. Senegal raises 55 billion FCFA (\$97.1m) through a treasury bill issue on the **West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)** regional financial market;

3 Nov 2021 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Dakar Actu*. The Senegalese navy intercepts a canoe 86 km off the coast of **St. Louis**, carrying 82 people travelling clandestinely to **Spain**;

29 Oct 2021 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Agence Ecofin*. The **Islamic Development Bank (IDB)** signs an agreement with Senegalese authorities to reallocate \$16.6m funding from a \$75.2m loan, towards rural electrification and projects and improving access to drinking water in Dakar;

29 Oct 2021 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Lejocos*. The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** in its "*Regional Economic Perspectives Sub-Saharan Africa: One Planet, Two Worlds, Three Realities*" report projects that Senegal will attain 10.8% economic growth in 2023, the third highest figure in sub-**Saharan Africa** for that year;

27 Oct 2021 **Banjul (The Gambia)** *Agence Ecofin*. **Organisation pour la Mise en Valeur du Fleuve Gambie (OMVG)** (Organisation for the development of the **Gambia River**) has inaugurated the \$700m **Soma** sub-station, which will have a 225/30 kV power generation capacity and supply electricity to **Guinea-Bissau, Senegal** and The Gambia;

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