

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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Senegal Summary 21 September 2023

President Macky Sall (2012-present) announces on 10 September that prime minister Amadou Ba will run as the ruling Benno Bokk Yakaar coalition's candidate for the 2024 presidential elections. The decision prompts fragmentation in the coalition, indicating that Ba needs to shore up support within BBY before facing other election challenges. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) concludes a mission to Senegal between 31 August and 7 September to assess economic developments. The team, led by Edward Gemayel, notes that socio-political tensions have taken a toll on the economy, leading to a downward GDP growth projection from 5.3% to 4.1%. Attempts by Senegalese and other West African citizens to leave the country via illegal migrant boats have increased substantially in recent weeks, with over 1,000 people rescued/intercepted between 28 August and 6 September.

Ruling party presidential candidate chosen

President **Macky Sall** (2012-present) announced on 10 September that prime minister **Amadou Ba** will run as the ruling **Benno Bokk Yakaar (BBY)** coalition's candidate for the 2024 presidential elections. Following Sall's announcement in July that he would not run for a third term, his party, the **Alliance pour la république (APR)**, gave him the authority to choose the presidential candidate.¹ Sall appointed Ba as prime minister in September 2022, fulfilling a long-standing promise of reinstating the role. Ba was reportedly chosen as the presidential candidate over agricultural minister **Alu Ngouille Ndiaye**, **Conseil économique, social et environnemental (CESE)** head **Abdoulaye Daouda Diallo**, health minister **Abdoulaye Diouf Sarr** and former prime minister **Mahammad Dionne**.²

The decision has not met with universal approval. Ndiaye tendered his resignation from the government on 12 September and left the ruling APR, reportedly because he thought he would have made a better candidate than Ba.³ Presidential advisor **Youssou N'Dour** also resigned from his post after 11 years and left the ruling coalition two days before the announcement.⁴ N'Dour challenged former president **Abdoulaye Wade** (2000-2012) in the 2012 elections but has not announced whether he will contest the 2024 elections. In another blow to the APR, key ruling party member and **Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations** head **El Hadji Mamadou Diao** announced on 11 September that he would leave the ruling party and coalition and run in the 2024 presidential election under a new political movement, **Coalition d'un Sénégal nouveau**.

However, other BBY leaders have thrown their weight behind Ba. BBY communications coordinator **Pape Mahawa Diouf** told the media on 9 September that Ba's candidacy is not a surprise as his experience stood out. Ba served as finance minister between 2013 and 2019 and foreign affairs minister until November 2020. Although he was released from his ministerial duties in the November 2020 reshuffle, he remained active in BBY and in parliament. Notably, at the time, Ba was not considered a front-runner to succeed Sall as president. However, Ba's loyalty to the ruling party, coalition and Sall despite not being part of cabinet has seemingly paid off.

BBY coalition member party **Alliance des forces de progrès** leader **El Malick Diop** also voiced his support for Ba, noting:

¹ Africanews, 10 Sep 2023

² Le Monde, 9 Sep 2023

³ North Africa Post, 12 Sep 2023

⁴ RFI, 8 Sep 2023

“Amadou Ba is very well known to the Senegalese and at the national level as well. He has a lot of connections in almost all circles, religious circles, social circles, etc. He is very popular with young people, so he is an excellent candidate.”⁵

Regardless, Ba will face challenges in consolidating power within BBY and ensuring that there are no more defections that citizens could view as conflict within the ruling coalition. Ba also faces a challenging task in shoring up support among citizens for the ruling coalition – Sall’s last term has been marred with uncertainty over his running for a third term, deadly protests and democratic backsliding, a cost-of-living crisis and now bleaker economic growth (see below). The youth, a key voting demographic, are also growing increasingly disillusioned with the government’s promises of addressing the 20% youth unemployment rate and creating opportunities for young people to thrive economically, leading to a migration problem that is also marring Senegal’s reputation (see below).⁶

What will play in Ba’s favour is the weakened opposition. Popular opposition leader **Ousmane Sonko**, who would likely have been the opposition **Yewwi Askan Wi (YAW)** coalition’s candidate, remains ineligible to run in the election due to his court sentences. Other main opposition leaders running include disgraced former Dakar mayor **Khalifa Sall** and former president Wade’s son, **Karim Wade**.

IMF concludes mission

The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** concluded a mission to Senegal between 31 August and 7 September to assess economic developments in Senegal. The team, led by **Edward Gemayel**, noted that socio-political tensions have taken a toll on the economy, leading to a downward GDP growth projection from 5.3% to 4.1%.⁷ The IMF is referring to the violent demonstrations that broke out in June following the sentencing of opposition leader Sonko. The government had forecast growth of 7% for 2023, based on the oil and gas sector starting activities; however, these activities have been postponed to at least the second half of 2024.⁸

The IMF noted that while annual inflation fell to 5.7% in July, increased prices of staple foods such as rice, onions and sugar will increase inflation. Average inflation is anticipated to reach 6.1% compared to initial forecasts of 5%.⁹ Looking forward, the IMF is more optimistic over Senegal’s growth, with forecasts of 8.8% in 2024 if oil and gas operations commence, of 6% if they do not. The delay of oil and gas activities and anticipated economic growth is likely to be an election issue.

The IMF and Senegalese authorities reached a staff-level agreement in May for three financing agreements totalling \$1.9 billion (see *ARC Briefing Senegal May 2023*). The financing facilities will include a 36-month **Extended Fund Facility (EFF)** and **Extended Credit Facility (ECF)**, worth approximately \$1.52 billion, in addition to the **Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF)** worth approximately \$327m. The IMF confirmed that reviews for these programmes will take place in October.

Migrant issues highlight awareness of challenges facing citizens

Attempts in recent weeks by Senegalese and other **West African** citizens to leave the country via illegal migrant boats have increased substantially, with over 1,000 people rescued/intercepted between 28 August and 6 September.¹⁰ The boats are all destined for **Europe** and take off from Senegal before sailing north to **Mauritania** in a bid to reach the **Canary Islands** before continuing to mainland Europe. This common corridor has prompted **Spain** to contribute 10 million euros (\$10.65m) per annum to Mauritania to help stem illegal migration.¹¹ In some cases, citizens from

⁵ RFI, 10 Sep 2023

⁶ The Financial Times, 19 Sep 2023

⁷ Agence Ecofin, 8 Sep 2023

⁸ Le Quotidien, 9 Sep 2023

⁹ Agence Ecofin, 8 Sep 2023

¹⁰ Le Quotidien, 7 Sep 2023

¹¹ Le Quotidien, 30 Aug 2023

other West African countries such as **Gambia** join the trips. The Canary Islands reported that in August, 2,962 migrants arrived compared to 1,075 in August 2022.

Recent incidents include:

- On 14 August, the **Cape Verde** navy rescued a stranded boat off the coast of Cape Verde. The boat had left Senegal in July and had 37 survivors of the 101 passengers who attempted the journey;
- On 24 August, the Spanish navy intercepted a boat carrying 168 migrants in Mauritanian waters. The migrants were detained in Mauritania before being repatriated to Dakar;
- On 6 September, the Senegalese navy intercepted a boat carrying 118 migrants off the coast of **Saint-Louis**;
- On 15 September, the **Moroccan** navy intercepted a boat carrying 250 Senegalese migrants, which reportedly left Senegal on 21 August.

Navy captain **Djibril Diawara** told the media after the 6 September interception that these rescues have become a near-daily occurrence for the navy:

“These are operations which, today, mobilise most of the resources of the national navy given the scale of the phenomenon.”¹²

Most of the people attempting the dangerous crossing are between the ages of 18 and 24, and either unemployed or working low-paying jobs. One individual, **Sambia Diaye**, told the media following the 6 September rescue that it was his second attempt at crossing and that he would try again in pursuit of a better life.¹³ In July, interior minister **Antoine Felix Abdoulaye Diome** announced a ten-year plan to tackle illegal migration, outlining five focus points: prevention, border management, repression of traffickers, measures to support and protect migrants and the return and reintegration of irregular migrants.¹⁴ However, this plan is not likely to succeed if those who attempt the voyage do not see their lives improved by employment opportunities and the prospect of economic gain. Many who attempt the trip are young and face limited growth prospects, leading them to search for a better life. The recent surge in attempted crossings is indicative of the cost-of-living crisis facing citizens; while Senegal is expected to achieve significant economic growth from its hydrocarbons sector, this is still a distant reality and many young people appear to have lost confidence in the administration to offer them other opportunities.

¹² RFI, 7 Sep 2023

¹³ RFI, 7 Sep 2023

¹⁴ Africanews, 28 Jul 2023

Planner

2024 **(Senegal) Grand Tortue Ahmeyim (GTA)** offshore gas field production of natural gas set to begin;

2024 **(Senegal) Sangomar** offshore oil field production set to begin;

25 Feb 2024 **(Senegal)** Presidential elections;

Chronology

18 Sep 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Quotidien**. Chamber of mines urges all stakeholders to continue dialogue following a violent demonstration over mining jobs in **Khossanto** on 11 September which left two people dead and at least 15 injured;

17 Sep 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Sika Finance**. Senegal and **Gambia** sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the fisheries and aquaculture sector aimed at improving revenues and strengthening their bilateral partnership;

17 Sep 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Sika Finance. Direction de la Prévision et des Etudes Economiques (DPEE)** (department of forecasting and economic studies) reports that Senegal's trade balance in the first half of 2023 reached 1,611.1 billion FCFA (\$2.62 billion) compared to 1.643 billion FCFA (\$2.67 billion) for the same period in 2022, while the budget deficit decreased to 614.5 billion FCFA (\$1 billion) from 771.4 billion FCFA (\$1.25 billion) for the same period;

15 Sep 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Lejecos**. Senegal and the **United Kingdom** through their national civil aviation authorities sign an agreement to increase the number of flights between them;

15 Sep 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Jecos. European Investment Bank (EIB) and Compagnie Financière Africaine (COFINA)** Senegal sign a 10 million euro (\$10.65m) agreement to help strengthen developments of agricultural value chains;

11 Sep 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) RFI**. Former Dakar mayor and presidential hopeful **Khalifa Sall** begins a pre-campaign tour in **Louga**;

11 Sep 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Quotidien**. Senegal dispatches a rescue team to **Morocco** following the deadly earthquake there on 8 September;

5 Sep 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Sika Finance**. Economy ministry reports that mobilised resources increased by 11.6% in the first half of 2023 to reach 1,834 billion FCFA (\$3 billion);

5 Sep 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Soleil**. President **Macky Sall** begins a short tour of **East Africa** and is set to visit **Kenya** and **Tanzania**;

4 Sep 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) RFI**. Opposition leader **Ousmane Sonko** ends the hunger strike he undertook to protest political oppression by the government;

31 Aug 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Africanews**. Justice ministry confirms that the conviction of opposition leader **Ousmane Sonko** remains final and he is ineligible to run in the 2024 presidential election;

28 Aug 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Quotidien**. Reports emerge of smuggling networks in areas adjacent to the borders of Senegal, **Mali** and **Mauritania** that are operating to recruit people into terrorist groups;

26 Aug 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Agence Ecofin**. **Chinese** defence group **China North Industries Corporation (Norinco)** opens an office in Dakar to support its business expansion into **West Africa**, which is traditionally reliant on **Russian** arms companies that are now under sanctions;

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Please contact us by email info@africariskconsulting.com or call + 44 (0) 20 7078 4080

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