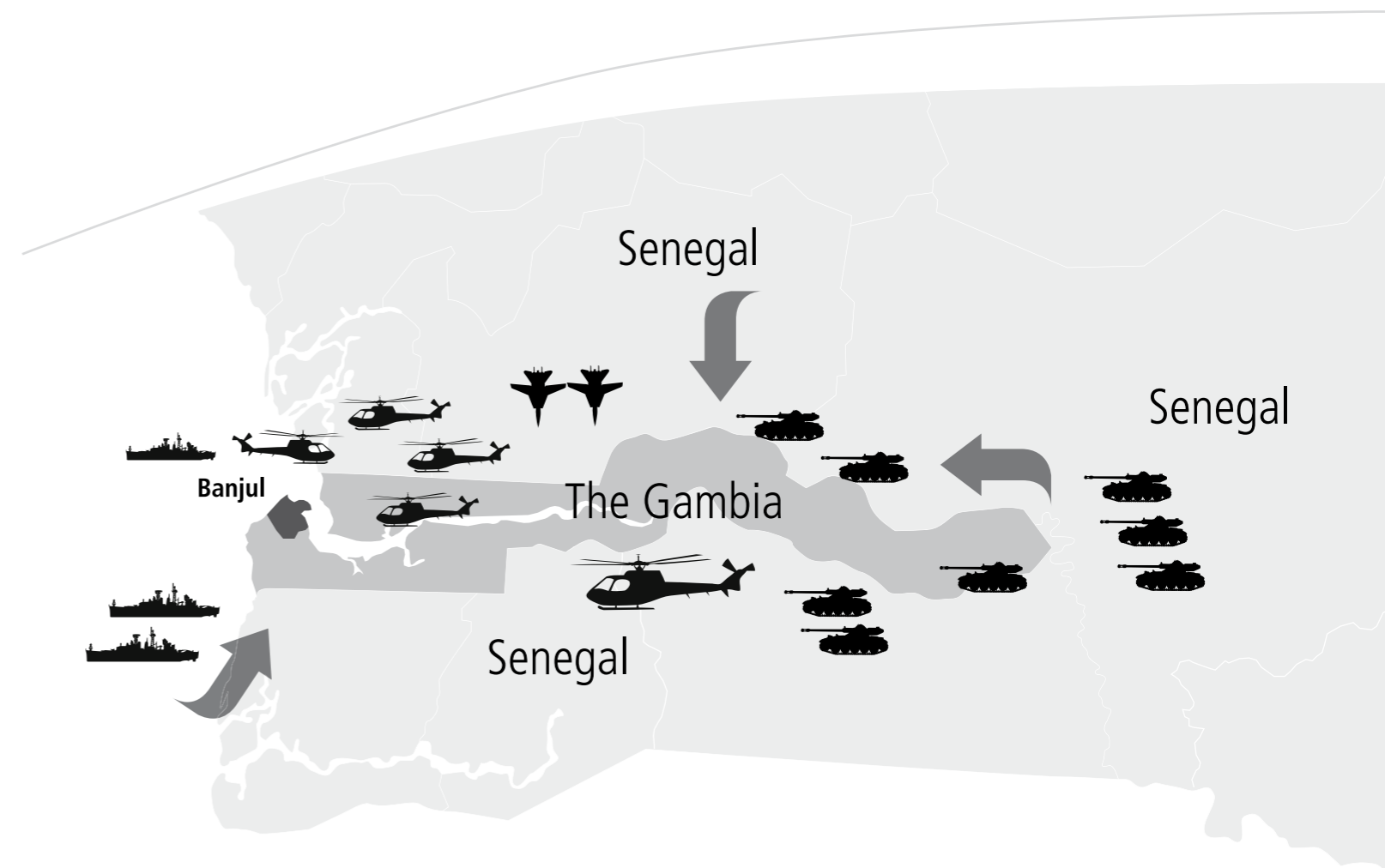


Edrissa Sanyang and Sanna Camara

## The Gambia after Elections: Implications for Governance and Security in West Africa



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The post-electoral crisis in The Gambia following outgoing President Yahya Jammeh's decision on December 9, 2016, to contest the presidential election results due to "evidence of fraud", has been peacefully resolved.

Considering the implications of Jammeh's refusal to step down, the UN Security Council, the AU and ECOWAS took the unanimous decision to consider all their options, including military intervention, to enforce the will of the Gambian people. By January 17, all efforts to bring the crisis to a peaceful end seemed exhausted: the National Assembly - dominated by Jammeh's APRC Party - declared a state of emergency, granted a three-month extension of his mandate, and imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew. On January 19, 2017, President-elect Adama Barrow was sworn in at the Gambian Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, in the presence of members of the diplomatic corps in Dakar, Mr. Mahamed Boun Abdallah, the Senegalese Prime Minister, and Mr. John Dramani Mahama, the Chairman of the ECOWAS commission. At the same time, ECOMOG coalition forces comprised of military personnel from Senegal, Mali, Togo, and Nigeria, entered Gambian territory. Last-minute mediation efforts by the presidents of Mauritania and Guinea Conakry, and the head of the UN West Africa office, Muhammad Ibn Chambas, finally achieved the desired outcome. Jammeh agreed to go into exile in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, a country whose authoritarian government has one of the worst human rights records in the world. The agreement provided Jammeh and his supporters with a "package deal" with a wide range of personal guarantees ensuring his dignity, security, personal safety, and other rights. President Barrow and his

team, however, refused to broker any sort of immunity deal with Jammeh.

These events must be regarded as a historical milestone for both governance and security in Africa, since this was the first time in ECOWAS- and AU-history that the option of military power was used - with the firm backing of the international community - to enforce the political will expressed in elections largely seen as free and fair in an African country. The circumstances in this case were somewhat specific of course, since ECOWAS had never recognized Jammeh as a legitimate political leader because he gained power as a young lieutenant through a military coup. Senegal had a strong interest in resolving the security issues related to the protracted "Casamance-Congot", as well as the trafficking of arms and drugs. Compared to its neighbours, The Gambia is quite small, hence the limited size of the army with its five thousand men. Then there are roughly one thousand presidential guardsmen who are handpicked for their political and tribal loyalties and who are better trained and equipped than the rest.

The success of rebuilding The Gambia will depend as much on the reconciliation process and the way it is organized, as on whether the Gambian people will indeed be ready to accept that for the sake of peace it was apparently necessary to provide the representatives of the ruling party with far-reaching warranties. A proper start for the new government will be hampered by the fact that the state coffers are apparently completely empty. ECOMOG is committed to staying on in The Gambia for a period of six months to ensure a smooth transition.

## INTRODUCTION

The Gambia used to pride itself on being the Smiling Coast of Africa, playing host to both the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (Nelson Mandela Building) and the African Center for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (Zoe Tembo building). The country's other claim to fame is as a resort destination for mostly European tourists, with tourism as its most important source of revenue, ahead of agriculture. But when, on July 22, 1994, a group of reckless young military officers overthrew a stable, democratic government of thirty years, things started taking a turn for the worse in The Gambia.

The military junta constricted the democratic space and decimated the inherently weak democratic institutions (the executive, the legislature and the judiciary; the press, the political parties and civil society organizations) by means of decrees and draconian laws. The human rights- and rule-of-law implications have been formidable, with a growing number of detentions without trial, abductions, kidnappings, false imprisonments, extra-judicial killings, executions, and unbridled corruption. On top of that, policies with a profoundly stifling effect on academic freedom and freedom of expression were implemented. The basic social services that governments usually provide were either non-existent or in a very poor state. The private sector was literally destroyed, and no longer able to drive the national economic growth. Today, the country is among the poorest in the world.

On its northern, southern and eastern side, the country borders on the Republic of Senegal, while in the West, it has a 48-kilometer-long opening onto the Atlantic Ocean. Throughout recent history, Gambia's different ethnic groups mainly composed of 36% joola and 45%

### The Gambia

**Capital:** Banjul  
**Population:** 1.9 million  
**Area :** 11,000 sq km  
**Currency:** Dalasi  
**No. of Ethnic Groups:** 9  
**Religions:** Muslims (90%)  
 Christians (5%)  
 Animists & others (5%)  
**GDP:** \$1.0 Billion  
**GNI Per Capita:** US\$ 510  
**Inflation rate:** 5.00%  
**GDP growth rate:** + 4.7%  
**Human Development Index (rank / 187) :** 165  
**Human Development Index (scale 0 to1):** 0.439

Source: African Development Bank (2015)

mandingo have intermarried and lived peacefully together, with each of them following their unique cultural traditions. The majority of the population are practicing Sufi-Muslims who live in peaceful co-existence with the other religions.

The main source of livelihood is subsistence agriculture – crop cultivation, animal husbandry, and an under-exploited fishing sector. Over the years, agriculture has been losing ground to urban dwelling where people engage in cottage industries and/or other handicrafts, while the young and politically active are compelled by economic or political realities to migrate to Europe/America.

## The Economy

When Jammeh seized power in 1994, the Gambian economy was one of the fastest growing economies in the sub-region, and its per capita GDP was ranked third (behind Ivory Coast and Cape Verde) in the 16-member ECOWAS regional grouping. Today, The Gambia is ranked 16<sup>th</sup> – at the bottom of the table.

## Tourism

The Gambia prides itself on being one of the top tourism destinations in Africa. The contribution of tourism to GDP grew from 12% in 1994 to 22% in 2012. However, the impact of global economic dynamics, and health warnings such as the Ebola crisis in 2014, as well as travel advisories, frequent human rights violations, etc., have led to a drop in the GDP growth rate to just 0.9% in 2014.

## The Historical Background

The Gambia is situated on the west coast of Africa as one out of four former British West-African colonies - along with Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria. The Gambia became a British protectorate in 1820 and a colony in 1886, after the Berlin Conference. After gaining independence on February 18, 1965, it acquired its own head of government, with the Queen of England remaining as head of state. In 1970, it became a republic, and up until 1994, it was one of the few countries in the sub-region that enjoyed a stable form of democracy, free of civil strife.

## The SeneGambia Confederation

In November 1981, Senegal and the Gambia formed a nominal Confederation called 'Senegambia' that lasted until 1989. The terms of the agreement required Senegal and The Gambia to take the following steps toward union: integrate the military and security forces; form an economic and monetary union; coordinate foreign policies and communications, and establish confederal institutions. Despite the merger, each country would maintain its independence, but The Gambia had growing concerns over its autonomy, which led to the dissolution of the confederation.

## THE MAKING OF JAMMEH

While President Jawara was on vacation in London in 1981, a coup attempt by a socialist-driven rebellion, led by Gambian dissident Kukoie Samba Sagnia, turned bloody. Thanks to intervention by the Senegalese military the rebels' grip on power in Banjul was crushed after only 24 hours, but it came at a huge loss of life, not only to both parties, but also to the civilian population. Until then, the country had no proper army, but just a Field Force unit that was ill equipped to carry out the functions of an army.

As a young Lieutenant in 1994, Yahya Jammeh joined a branch of the security services known as the Gendarmerie, a French-styled paramilitary force trained in Senegal under a confederal agreement drawn up between the two countries soon after the 1981 putsch. Upon the amalgamation of the armed forces and the police in the early 90s, Jammeh rose to the rank of commissioned officer. In early 1994, as head of the Military Police, he benefitted from US military leadership training, and in July of the same year, he, together with four others, formed the military group that staged the takeover of Gambia's establishment after 30 years of unbroken rule. Next, he set up the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC). The morning edition of The Daily Observer after the July 1994 coup headlined: "We will not introduce Dictatorship in this Country".

Upon coming to power in 1994, Jammeh ruled by decree, suspending the constitution and all existing political parties. The council wanted a four-year transition period, but the people demanded the transition be limited to two years, through a national consultative council. Two of the five-member military council opposed to Jammeh's political agenda were accused of

plotting a coup against the council and imprisoned for nine years. To be able to contest elections in 1996, Jammeh transformed himself into a civilian politician and started a political party named the 'Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction' (APRC).

Early efforts by moderate factions to counter the military council's consolidation of power failed, but when Jammeh reneged on his promises to fellow soldiers, there was an attempt to overthrow him just four months after his own coup. Most of the officers involved in the November 1994 counter-coup were assassinated and buried in unmarked graves at various barracks around the country.

During the transition, local government and traditional institutions were kept under strict control. The military committed many atrocities, such as assassinations and the imprisonment and torture of political opponents. In May 1995, Finance Minister Ousman Koro Ceesay was found dead in his burnt-out official car. Just prior to this incident, he had made a final journey accompanying the president to the airport. No culprits were ever brought to book.

In April 2000, 14 students were gunned down during a mass protest demanding justice for student victims of killings and rape. Soldiers found to have committed these crimes were indemnified by the state. An amnesty clause embedded in the 1997 constitution for previous atrocities committed during the transition, did nothing to get rid of the impression that the government was either unwilling [to discipline the culprits], or eager to instill fear into the minds of the people.

## INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS

When Jammeh was planning to hold elections in 1996, he first transformed himself into a civilian head of state by resigning from the army, together with the two other members of his military council. Upon winning the elections, he designated his two colleagues to oversee local governance and the military institutions, while appointing a female vice president.

As local government minister, Rtd. Captain Yankuba Touray oversaw the dismantling of the system of traditional tribal chiefs, whose role it was to uphold the socio-cultural values of the various population groups within the country. When appointing district chiefs, the president, instead of letting the different communities elect them from their midst, would exercise his personal authority, basing his choices on personal loyalties. This has helped centralize powers in the hands of the executive.

Jammeh purged the army, by removing talented and influential officers based on their ethnic background and loyalties, and replacing them with his own tribesmen. Rtd. Captain Edward Singhateh, the first defense minister under the AFPRC Council, continued to oversee this purging process. The original commands and various units were reconfigured to neutralize all traditional influences within the army and replaced with new ones.

At the parliamentary level, unlike during the first republic, when ministers were picked from a group of elected representatives in parliament, the second republican constitution introduced a direct appointment method for constituting cabinet. Jammeh alone would choose his cabinet ministers and fire them at will.

Another policy Jammeh introduced saw his party members losing their assembly seats once he expelled them from the party. Assembly members and councilors were nominated by the party executive and approved by Jammeh, instead of being selected by the communities and constituencies they represented – they automatically lost their parliamentary seats notwithstanding their electoral mandates.

Having set aside an existing agreement between the Commonwealth and its member governments that made provision for judges to be hired from member states under a technical assistance program, Jammeh began hiring his own judges and prosecutors, mainly from Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, etc., to serve in the Gambian judiciary. As had happened in the military, the learned Gambian judges, magistrates and prosecutors delivering independent decisions on cases were all relieved of their duties and replaced with foreign professionals. These foreign members of the judiciary were tasked with presiding over political cases, but they lacked any consideration for justice or for Gambian sensibilities and values. When making their decisions, they mainly favoured Jammeh.

## COLLECTIVE SECURITY

### Individual freedoms

According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), The Gambia is one of the top three exporters of migrants to Europe, together with Nigeria and Eritrea, two other sub-Saharan African countries in conflict situations. Each year, thousands of young people leave the country in search of better economic and social conditions outside The Gambia, particularly in Europe. The majority of those who leave are not victims of persecution, but are driven away by the stifling environment with its lack of freedom and economic opportunities, which means they are not secure at home.

The Italian government claims that 8,454 migrants from The Gambia arrived in Italy in 2015, ranking The Gambia in fifth place for migrant arrivals in Italy after Eritrea, Nigeria, Somalia, and Sudan. The number of Gambians living in the diaspora is estimated at 135,000, or seven percent of the population. A large proportion of them did not want to return, due to the conditions created by 20 years of Jammeh's rule.

In June 2016, Amnesty International published a report entitled "Dangerous to Dissent" that decries the continuous, brutal clampdown on dissent in the country at the hands of Jammeh's government. The organization urged ECOWAS to take action to ensure that its own rules were respected and fully observed. It also urged ECOWAS to launch a Commission of Inquiry into the repression of opposition protests in Banjul last April that resulted in the deaths and torture of opposition activists in state custody, as well as the imprisonment of up to 30 activists and the entire executive of the UDP, the main opposition party.

### Arms Trafficking

One of the sanctions in the 2004 UN Security Council resolution 1532 targets New Millennium Airlines in The Gambia for its purported role in gun running and the smuggling of blood diamonds inside Charles Taylor's RUF network in Sierra Leone.

While consolidating the power base of his rogue government, Jammeh also engaged in international arms trafficking. One of his many business associates who gave him access to weapons from unauthorized markets was the notorious Tajik arms dealer Victor Booth, who was arrested in Thailand in 2008 and extradited to the US in 2010.

In October 2010, 13 shipping containers carrying Iranian weapons and heading to The Gambia were impounded by Nigerian port authorities in Lagos. The manifests showed that the shipment came from Iran, and was addressed to Kanilai Family Farms, the president's personal agricultural enterprise. This was not the state purchasing weapons, and there was certainly no license from the Gambian government. In his testimony to the court in Lagos, an Iranian diplomat confessed that several other shipments had already been delivered to Banjul.

When Senegalese troops clash with the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) in Africa's oldest internal conflict that dates back to 1982, the arms and ammunition recovered can often be traced to the arms shipments that came from Iran through Banjul. And when the Polish arms trafficker Konrad Dadak was apprehended in Spain in June 2016, he told authorities that he was using the Gambian president's private jet to conduct his business.

## Drugs

The first time West African authorities dealt with drug trafficking was when they impounded an international consignment in Mauritania during the early days of the AFPRC administration. A container of illicit hard drugs, en route from South America and disguised as a fertilizer shipment addressed to the Ministry of Agriculture and government of The Gambia, was seized by Interpol in 1995.

Since then, there have been numerous allegations of Jammeh's involvement in the illicit drugs trade. According to WikiLeaks, a landing fee of \$3 million is paid to Jammeh for every haul that arrives from South America. The discovery in June 2010 by the Gambian anti-narcotics agency of 2 tons of cocaine at an underground warehouse on an island off the coast of Banjul must count as further proof of these allegations. The members of the drug-ring arrested in connection with this discovery were mainly South Americans and other foreign nationals. A fish processing- and exporting-company was found to be associated with exporting the drugs to Europe. Most of those that were imprisoned, were later released by Jammeh.

Jammeh also maintained close connections with General Jose Americo Bubo NA Chuto from Guinea-Bissau, who has now been apprehended through a sting operation by the US DEA off the coast of Bissau. Prior to this, whilst the regional trafficking was ongoing between Banjul, Bissau, and Dakar, General NA Chuto enjoyed Jammeh's personal protection and was given sanctuary in Banjul for many years.

## GOVERNANCE

### Term limits

The 1997 Constitution of The Gambia clearly defines the three separate and independent arms of government, giving the press an oversight function as the fourth. The draft of this constitution, that was approved through a referendum in 1996, limits the president to two five-year terms in office. However, this draft constitution was doctored in the dead of night to suspend the two-term limit for the presidency, and, since Jammeh was just a little over 30 years old at the time, the minimum age requirement of forty that applied to anyone seeking office.

After the presidential elections of 2001, the constitution was again amended, this time to omit a second round of voting, should the electoral candidate fail to win a 50+1 percent majority. In the same vein, the upper age limit for seeking office was pegged to 65 years.

Furthermore, when in May 2015, ECOWAS made the groundbreaking decision to institutionalize term limits as a way of promoting stability and the peaceful transfer of power, The Gambia and Togo were the only two of the sixteen member states that refused to sign the agreement.

### The Media

For the Gambian people, the independent media were their last bastion of defense against tyranny and oppression.

Post-independence, the media enjoyed relative freedom under the rule of law, with no reports of physical attacks or killings - this con-

trasts sharply with the days under Jammeh. During the first republic, the editor of The Torch newspaper for example reported on the corrupt practices of senior members, and even went to court to give evidence against a sitting vice president in the mid-1980s.

However, the ruling People's Progressive Party maintained its grip on power for 30 years, winning consecutive elections with questionable transparency and fairness. The opposition parties were unable to bring about a change of government through the ballot box, and the people grew weary of a government that was refusing to leave. Hence Yahya Jammeh's coup in 1994 had received popular approval from people hoping for change and a new beginning. In reality, however, Jammeh consolidated his power-base, and in the worst way imaginable, he prevented a peaceful, democratic change of government for 22 years.

During this period, the independent media were deliberately targeted and weakened through calculated attacks, assassinations, and kidnappings. The community of exiled professionals was growing. After journalist Deyda Hydera was shot and killed, no one was brought to justice. Private media premises (e.g. Radio 1 FM at Ebrima Sillah's house) were attacked by arsonists and burnt down by perpetrators swearing allegiance to the president. In 2006, Ebrima Chief Manneh disappeared and has not been found since being arrested by plain clothes security men, an incident which coincided with the sudden closure of independent media outlets like Citizen FM, Sud FM and The Independent newspaper that has had a presence in The Gambia since 2001.

When Jammeh started orchestrating plans to seek a fifth term in office, Gambian civil society, due to the total loss of the independent media

as a critical voice, had to rely on the more than one hundred Gambian journalists living in exile to fill that crucial role. Today, the online and social media have taken on the role of the independent media, and they definitely contributed to the drive for change in the December 1<sup>st</sup> elections.

In reaction to high volumes of activity during the run-up to the election, WhatsApp was blocked in The Gambia. After users were advised to install virtual private networks (VPN) to circumvent the blockade, the government enforced a VPN blockade as well. Unable to block WhatsApp completely, the government soon instituted an entire internet shutdown before voters went to the polls. Calls into and out of the country have also been disabled through the international telecommunications gateway.

## ELECTIONS

### The Election Process

Since becoming a republic and acquiring a constitution in 1970, the country has been going to the polls every five years to choose its President and members of Parliament. Initially, the local government ministry was in charge of elections, but this changed in 1996, when, for the first time, the new constitution made provision for elections to be conducted by an independent electoral body that extended the franchise to all Gambian nationals of eighteen and older, both in- and outside the country. Now, twenty years later, Gambians residing outside the country did not enjoy the right to vote. In the knowledge that the majority of the diaspora were opposed to him, Jammeh reckoned that this policy would secure him an easy victory at the polls.

From 1994 to 2001, the Jammeh administration was not recognized by the US government, due to its questionable democratic record. The United States and Gambia's main opposition parties, as well as the international observers did not certify the 1996 elections as free and fair. In 2001, however, the biggest opposition party (UDP) conceded defeat to Jammeh in a telephone call from the leader of the party, clearing the way for the US to recognize the elections as reflecting the will of the people.

Even though demands for electoral reforms have been ignored by Jammeh throughout the electoral cycles since 2001, the opposition parties have continued to contest each one of them, including 2011 and 2016. Conflicted by the process leading up to the 2011 elections, which according to an ECOWAS press release was "deemed not to have been conducive to the conduct of free, fair and transparent

polls", the international community chose not to observe both the Presidential and National Assembly Elections. Thus, the ECOWAS Commission informed President Jammeh of The Gambia about its decision not to dispatch an ECOWAS observer mission to the presidential election that took place in the country on November 24, 2011.

Jammeh and the APRC dominated Gambian politics through intimidation, repression and politicized security forces that were oppressing the opposition parties. Although in mid-2015, Jammeh pardoned more than 300 prisoners (security-, political-, and common criminals), some key political opponents remained incarcerated, including the UDP's national treasurer and two other UDP members. The three were convicted of sedition in 2013 and have allegedly been tortured in custody.

In June 2016, political activists, human rights groups, and civil society from Senegal and The Gambia met with political leaders in Dakar to discuss President Jammeh's governance issues, as well as his refusal to implement electoral reforms and the continuous clampdown on opposition protests. The outcome was a further call for electoral reforms and the cessation of clampdowns.

### Electoral Procedures

The Gambia still uses to a voting system that works with marbles and ballot drums that have the various party colors and candidates' portraits of attached to them. The system is a legacy from the colonial era and has been used throughout the first republic as well as under Jammeh's second republic.



Many analysts argue that the size of the ballot drums and the marbles make the system prone to fraudulent activities, such as switching and stuffing while they are transported from polling stations to counting centers. Under Jammeh, on completion of the vote, election officials and the security personnel attached to each polling station would escort the drums to the counting centers, which were usually government institutions such as governors' offices and controlled areas throughout the country.

Before the count, all the ballot drums would be collected. Unlike the agents of the ruling party, the opposition polling agents usually did not have the resources to provide escorts for the ballot drums, which means that more often than not, it was the APRC's agents and IEC staff members who ended up as escorts. A similar situation used to occur at counting centers, either due to the opposition party's lack of funds or because intimidation prevented them from covering all the counting centers across the country.

During the counting, the votes are tallied in sieved counting trays of 250 and 500 votes per tray. They are then approved by each one of the represented party agents, before the figures are sent to the IEC chairman who announces the results through the state media.

## Election 2016

The diaspora became a crucial player in the election process, even though they continued being denied the right to vote. Many of them were very active on social media long before the election campaign began, and their remittances to family members in the country were used as leverage to counter the fear element that

compelled the electorate to vote for Jammeh.

Through the online crowd-funding tool GoFundMe, it took the diaspora just 24 days to raise over \$50,000 in support of the opposition campaign. The pre-election ECOWAS assessment mission stressed the need to raise funds to match the "vast resource imbalance" between the incumbent and the collective opposition, an issue that was a key factor in the 2011 presidential election (abuse of incumbency).

The State has always refused to provide security for the opposition candidates during political campaigns. Rather, the opposition had to hire their own security guards for their personal protection, while supporters relied on their numerical strength to resist and defy intimidation from the ruling party and elements of the security services.

Human rights groups and election observer missions have documented instances of intimidation by members of the military, the police, and the intelligence services throughout the entire electoral process, from the registration of voter rolls, to the voting itself, and the counting of ballots. The security services used to campaign openly by wearing ruling party T-shirts and by displaying their loyalty through slogans like "We will die for you!" – referring to President Jammeh.

The Gambia Opposition For Electoral Reform (GOFER) was a coalition of seven opposition parties that came together to demand electoral law reforms to even out the electoral landscape in favor of free and fair elections in The Gambia in 2016. In 2011, individuals and civil society groups in the diaspora started to engage with the opposition parties in The Gambia for the purpose of drafting a coalition strategy to effect change through the ballot

box. The development partners were also involved, in an advisory capacity, by offering their assistance and support in setting up the coalition and keeping it going for the duration of the 2016 elections.

Two different strategies were advanced for the coalition during the run-up to the 2016 election cycle: one was to boycott the elections if there were no meaningful reforms, and the other was to contest them, whatever the conditions, and following up the process with civil disobedience, since it was deemed to be rigged anyway. Jammeh was caught in a conundrum, since he didn't know if the opposition would boycott or contest the election. His strategy was to fund a candidate to legitimize the election process, should the opposition choose to boycott. Instead of meeting the demands of the opposition parties for electoral law reforms which would level the playing field, Jammeh implemented his own reforms, designed to his advantage. He raised the deposit for presidential candidates from GMD 10,000 to GMD 1 million, but finally, after international condemnation, reduced it to GMD 500,000. He also introduced on-the-spot vote counting, and replaced an incumbent IEC chairman whose term of service exceeded the constitutional requirements.

Finally, the strategy to contest the elections gained the upper hand, since boycotting would not have prevented Jammeh from holding elections with his sponsored candidate. The choice of a single candidate for the collective opposition was made through a selection process at a convention in the presence of all aspirants from the composite political parties of the coalition. Since the chosen candidate was to represent all of the opposition parties, it was decided that he should run on an independent ticket.

Adama Barrow, the flag-bearer of the UDP, the biggest opposition party, emerged victorious over the socialist party's Halifa Sallah, Hamat Bah from the NRP and Dr Bojang from the NCP. Together, they presented their candidate to the electorate and mounted a 2-week campaign for change.

The final official results showed Barrow winning a 43.3% plurality, achieving a 3.7% margin of victory over Jammeh's 39.6% – with a third candidate, Mamma Kandeh, receiving 17.1% of the votes. After the election, 19 opposition prisoners were released, including Ousainou Darboe, the leader of Barrow's United Democratic Party (UDP).

Since the victory on December 1<sup>st</sup>, president-elect Adama Barrow and his team have not been offered any state protection. Rather, he has to rely on private security guards hired from neighboring Senegal, who, according to Gambian law, cannot even be armed to be able to provide maximum security. As Barrow moves around and gets on with the affairs of state, he is constantly surrounded by large crowds of supporters.

Since Jammeh's refusal to accept the results and step down, heavily armed soldiers have been deployed all around town, and there are sandbags piled high everywhere, fortifying strategic locations.

## The Transitional Period

On October 14, 2016, the opposition parties agreed to forge a coalition to challenge President Yahya Jammeh's bid for a fifth term in office. In a statement to the media, the opposition parties declared that they had signed a joint agreement to select a coalition candidate at a convention that was to take place on October 30<sup>th</sup>. The overriding function of the transition government was to re-establish the democratic structures and institutions that Jammeh had so decimated to smithereens. To reach this goal, it was of cardinal importance to bring the 1997 draft constitution back to life in its original form, i.e. before it was doctored by Jammeh and his junta. The overall objective of the transitional government would be to implement constitutional reforms, restructure the institutions of governance (including the electoral system, the judiciary, the media, the legislative, the state and parastatals), without forgetting about security policy reforms.

The coalition government pledges to proactively pursue economic transformation programs aimed at injecting fiscal discipline and boosting investor confidence. It will further implement a plan to turn the youth into a productive segment of the population that - instead of resorting to backway migration to Europe - plays an active role in the nation's development. The new government also seeks to integrate the Gambian diaspora, by creating investment incentives in all sectors of the economy, and by providing smooth access to public- and private sector employment.

All these objectives will be pursued within the framework of a three-year national transitional program before fresh elections will be organized. Cabinet positions will be divided among the political parties that make up the coalition,

and all appointments, decisions and other matters must be based on consultation between the coalition members.

The timeframe of three, instead of five years is meant to shorten the transition period and allow earlier elections in which candidates from all parties will separately seek fresh mandates from the population to serve a full five-year term.

Following the Dec 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 elections that saw Adama Barrow emerging victorious, the incumbent Jammeh initially conceded defeat only to renounce that concession a week later.

## THE IMPLICATIONS OF A JAMMEH VICTORY

When, in 2013, Jammeh decided to leave the Commonwealth, dismissing it as a "neo-colonial institution", he seemed bent on pushing The Gambia further and further into isolation. In May 2014, side-talks within the ruling APRC camp about the possibility of Jammeh being crowned king and styling himself King of the "Kingdom of Gambia" reached the National Assembly, where during an adjournment debate, a member from Banjul called for Jammeh to be crowned king. The debate was supported by APRC surrogates within the assembly and provided the main news headlines for the next day.

During the week-long 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, Jammeh released new banknotes bearing his portrait, and conferred the title "Babili Mansa" on himself (a pre-eminent title in Mandinka, meaning 'the king who builds bridges', as in acquiring powers that span across seas).

Another implication of a Jammeh victory would have been his subtle plan to establish a Jola hegemony across the 3Bs (Banjul-Bignona-Bissau), the only areas in the continent of Africa where the Jola tribe can be found. Jammeh has had a strong and influential hand in both the Casamance and the Bissau crises, where he portrays himself as a God-sent leader with the capability to "liberate members of the Jola tribe" from their perceived suffering in the 3Bs.

Thirdly, the proclamation of The Gambia as an Islamic state would have been followed up with the establishment of Sharia as the national law of The Gambia in place of the constitution.

As if he knew trouble was brewing, since he may face formal prosecution by the Interna-

tional Criminal Court, in October 2016, he made a unilateral declaration to withdraw The Gambia from the Rome Statute. However, due to poor calculations, he did not realize that the withdrawal would only take effect one year after a state submits its formal intention.

## SECURITY AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES UNTIL 2020 AND BEYOND

The coalition has announced plans to create a new republican army as well as an alternative security apparatus trained to respect and protect the population, in the same spirit in which the rest of the institutions will adopt the new dispensation and its principles of respect for basic human rights and liberties, the rule of law, democracy, and good governance.

The coalition is committed to this ideal, which means they will ensure the security forces receive the necessary orientation to help them understand that this is a new dispensation. "A government that comes through democracy will earn the respect of governments all over the world. The Gambia is a small country and we are not at war with our neighbors...it means the armed forces will now have to go through training opportunities to develop their capacities to better serve the civilian population and peacekeeping missions around the world," a spokesperson said.

The members of the police, the army, and the security apparatus will receive training to enable a large number of them to leave the armed forces, to be educated to earn better incomes and to live prosperous lives as civilians, loyal to the new government.

A key component of the transition program and its smooth implementation is a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, similar in scope and terms of reference to the one constituted in post-Apartheid South Africa. To mitigate the deliberate fermentation of ethnic schisms by Jammeh during the past two decades, the Gambian population must be orientated to understand, reasonably sanction, and forgive the excesses of the 22 years of Jammeh's dictatorship.

These cannot be properly understood, however, unless the impact of the flagrant stoking of minority dominance and its effect on the social fabric of Gambian cultural settings has first been appreciated. There were the systematic allocations of administrative positions and opportunities in favor of one ethnic group against the rest. The pitting of interests to superimpose the cultural preferences of one ethnic group over another, for the sole purpose of creating divisions that are meant to sustain the dictatorship against the unified opposition to quell his stranglehold on power. The brutal nature of Jammeh's rule traumatized the population to an extent that can hardly be imagined in the sociocultural context of the Gambia. We have no alternative but to see Jammeh's misdeeds as deliberate machinations and to invoke forgiveness and reasonable sanctions where necessary.

The assumption of office of the next administration after the transition in 2020 should consolidate these reform programs, initiated by the transition government, and further enhance the security considerations for all bilateral and multilateral stakes in the region.

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## FES Peace and Security Series No. 20

### About the FES Africa Peace and Security Series

The lack of security is one of the key impediments to development and democracy in Africa. The existence of protracted violent conflicts as well as a lack of accountability of the security sector in many countries are challenging cooperation in the field of security policy. The emerging African Peace and Security Architecture provides the institutional framework to promote peace and security.

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### About this study

With special focus on the political-security environment in their country, Edrissa Sanyang and Sanna Camara have discussed every sector of Gambian society in this study. This is an introspective analysis by two major actors with deep concerns about Gambia's current state. They are both profoundly aware of the fact that the 2016 presidential elections carried so many expectations, so many hopes on the part of the Gambian people. The background to this is President Yahya Jammeh, who after gaining power through a coup d'Etat

gradually turned into a power-hungry dictator. All his election wins were rigged, and he ruled The Gambia with a rod of iron. Incidents of arbitrary imprisonment, human rights violations, attacks on the freedom of the press, kidnappings, torture and assassinations were the order of the day, right from the start of his assumption of power. This state of affairs made it imperative, not only to highlight the atrocities and abuses in this study, but also the need for a democratic and transparent changeover.

