

Political transitions in west Africa: a retrospective analysis of the Gambia's regimes from 1965 to the present.

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Résumé

Cet article scientifique cherche à mettre la lumière sur les différents régimes politiques qu'a connu la Gambie de l'indépendance à nos jours. Ce pays de l'Afrique de l'ouest et ancienne colonie anglaise a attiré l'attention du monde entier avec le changement démocratique qui est survenu du 9 janvier 2016. Ce dit changement a mis fin aux vingt-deux ans de régime dictatorial du Président Yahya Jammeh qui était venu au pouvoir par coup d'état en 1994. Donc, à travers cet article, nous avons mis en exergue les trois régimes qui se sont succédé en Gambie.

Mots clés : Transitions, Régimes, Démocratie, Dictature, Indépendance

Abstract

This scientific article seeks to shed lights on the different political regimes that the Gambia has known from independence to the present. This west African country and former British colony drew the attention of the entire world following the democratic change that occurred on January 9, 2016. The above mentioned change put an end to the twenty-two dictatorial regime of President Yahya Jammeh who came in power in 1994 by undertaking a coup d'état. Then, through this article, we have laid a special focus on the three regimes that have taken place in the Gambia.

Key words : Transitions, Regimes, Democracy, Dictatorship, Independence

Introduction

Before the independence of the African countries, many African people were deprived of their freedom, happiness and lands. Thus, Europeans submitted native Africans to centuries of domination, exploitation, ill-treatment and slavery. Europeans advanced the arguments according to which they had a mission to purify and civilize African people. Then, after many centuries of domination,

exploitation, African countries began to reach their independence. In fact, the year 1960 is indeed of paramount importance in Africa insofar as it witnessed the accession to independence of many west African countries. In other words, the beginning of the 1960s saw many African colonies gained their independence even if some other countries got 5 years after. It is the case of the Gambia which achieved its independence on 18 February 1965 from England and has known many political upheavals from its independence to the present. Hence the following topic “*Political transitions in West Africa : A Retrospective Analysis of the Gambia’s regimes from 1965 to the present.*”

The choice of such a topic is motivated by a strong desire to discover the reason why the Gambia did not get its independence in 1960 like many west African countries. This paper also aims at laying emphasis on the different regimes which have taken place in this former British colony. In other words, this paper aims at analysing the political regimes of the Gambia from 1965 to the present. Through a critical and retrospective analysis, the present article is going to be built around three parts. In the first part, the stress will be laid on the Gambia’s politics from 1965 to 1994. As for the second one, we are going to point out the 1994 coup d’état and Yahya Jammeh’s reign. In the last one, the focus will be on the post Jammeh era.

1. The Gambia’s Politics from 1965 to the 1994 coup d’état

It is of paramount importance to remind that African countries were colonized by European powers such as France, Portugal, England, to name but a few. As for the Gambia which is the country under study, it was under the British rule up to 1965. In fact, the Gambia is a west Africa’s country that is surrounded by Senegal and this fact urges some people to say that the Gambia is an enclave of Senegal. Its area is 10,689 square kilometres (4,127 sq mi). On 1 January 2015, a study stated that the current population of The Gambia was estimated 1, 923, 088 people (<http://countrymeters.info/en/Gambia>).

According to Momodou Bah, The Gambia became the Africa’s 36th Independent State, and the 115th member of The United Nations (Bah, 2015: 1). The Gambia got its independence from England on 18

February 1965. Then, compared to Guinea Conackry, Mali and Senegal, it delayed to achieve its international sovereignty and the reason why it became independent five years after is, according to Momodou Bah, that the British administration usually postponed the Gambia’s independence and wanted to merge it with other countries due to the fact that the country is very small and it lacks natural resources. In this regard, Bah writes : *“It obtained its independence peacefully despite threats of merging it with other countries because of its small size.”* (Bah, 2015: 7).

Abdoulaye Saine goes further regarding the willingness of the British administration to merge the Gambia with other countries. Saine writes : *“So, when The British were set to leave, they proposed to join The Gambia with Senegal.”* (Saine, 2008 : 34)

The reason put forward by the British administration to delay the Gambia’s independence urged President Yahya Jammeh to say: *“The Gambia is one of the oldest and biggest countries in Africa that was reduced to a small snake by the British government who sold all our lands to the French.”* (Daily Observer newspaper, 26 July 2010)

The Gambia’s independence was obtained peacefully and Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara, the first President of The Gambia, has played an important role in the Gambia’s struggle for independence. In fact, Jawara who was a veterinary surgeon and was graduated from Glassgow University got involved in the Gambia’s politics by creating a political party named Progressive Party (PPP) in 1958. His political commitment resulted in his appointment as the Gambia’s first Prime Minister when the country got its self-rule in 1963. Then, in June 1962, Dawda Kairaba Jawara was sworn in as the Gambia’s Prime Minister. (Jawara, 2009 :225). Momodou Bah goes further regarding the Gambia’s achievement of independence when he writes :

The first republic began with Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara. He was the Prime Minister between 1963 and 1965. When the Gambia became independent, he became its first President but the country was still under the jurisdiction of her Majesty, the Queen of England. He took the overall command when The Gambia attained the republican status on 24 April 1970. Subsequently, he was the President of the Republic of The

Gambia until he was deposed in a military backed-coup on July 22 1994. (Bah, 2015: 30).

Jawara was sworn in as the Gambia's first president and becomes undoubtedly, the father of independence. According to Bah in his master II dissertation he defended on May 27, 2015, the Gambia has experienced four different administrative governments but with only two presidents.

- From 1965-1970, despite its independence, the administration was still under the Jurisdiction of her Majesty, the Queen of England.
- However, between 1970 to 1994, The Gambia was the master of its own destiny, as it took its matters under its own hands through a republican administration under President Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara who was the leader of the People's Progressive Party (PPP).
- The next administration was from 1994 to 1996 which marks the end of the first republic. This was a transition period under a military junta led by Lieutenant Jammeh, the Chairman of The Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC).
- The fourth administration came under the second republic following elections which ended the transition government.

This being mentioned, Jawara's presidency was marked by ups and downs. Nine months after his arrival to power, he held the first referendum which aimed at changing the independence's constitution to a republic one. This referendum gave the following results: 61,581 votes were cast in favour of the proposed change and 31,921 votes were against the change. As a consequent, the 1965 referendum failed to secure the necessary two-third of the actual votes. (The Gambia News Bulletin, 30 April 1970, p. 4).

This means that other ways and means had to be found so as to allow the Gambia to become a Republic. In so doing, another referendum took place from April 20 to 23 and the Gambians had the opportunity to answer to a thirty-four- worded question : *"Do you wish The Gambia to become a Republic in accordance with the terms of the constitution of The Gambia Bill which was passed in the House of Representatives on December 18, 1969 ?"* (The Gambia News Bulletin, 30 April 1970, p. 4).

This referendum gave satisfactory results insofar as the Gambians chose to be the masters of their own destiny. The results showed 84,968 votes in favour of a republican status with 35,000 against. The 60,000 abstainers in 1965 dropped to 13, 181 in 1970. (Jawara, 2009 : 274)

On 24 April 1970, The Gambia became a sovereign republic and Sir Dawda took the oath of office as the first President of the Republic of The Gambia and he uttered the following words :

I, Dawda Kairaba Jawara, do swear that I will well and truly execute the function of the office of the President, that I will preserve and defend the Constitution and that I will do right to all manner of people according to the law, without fear or favour, affection or ill-will. So, help me God. (The Gambia News Bulletin, 30 April 1970, p. 6)

Then, Jawara became officially the first President of the Gambia and was expected to satisfy his compatriots’s needs. Jawara and his government were now responsible for their country’ destiny. In other words, they were expected to bring positive changes in all fields of their communities. This independence had brought a great joy to the Gambian people, for there was more optimism that after decades of foreign rule, political freedom and independence would provide a voice of all citizens in the political process.

Moreover, there was a widespread belief that with the independence, new African governments would be able to use political resources so as to provide their citizens basic social and economic services such as education, health care, housing, employment. Unquestionably, Dawda K. Jawara and his collaborators were expected to develop and well-rule their country. That is the reason why he laid a special focus on the agricultural sector so as to develop his country. In this vein, Momodou Bah writes:

Jawara believed that the increase in food and crops was an underpinning factor in the welfare of the people. He said “Only a strong, healthy and well-fed people could find the energy and the will to contribute to the nation-building.” For this reason, he put agriculture on the top of the list. Until 1970, about 80 per cent of the Gambia’s foreign exchange came as grants-in-aids from Britain. (Bah, 2015 : 31)

Thus, Jawara seemed to be eager to develop his country, to ameliorate his compatriots' living conditions. He even invited them to get fully involved in this national development. Bah adds :

In May 1977, President Jawara declared *Operation Tesito* (*A Mandinka word meaning tying your waist*) calling on all Gambian citizens to participate fully in the national development. This operation was meant to boost the national development through the people's participation in partnership with government. Moreover, this operation also meant not only full and enthusiastic participation of government and its people in national reconstruction, but it also meant to reduce less dependence on outside resources, inspire people to improve themselves and their surroundings without excessive dependence on central government. (Bah, 2015 : 33)

Despite all his efforts and commitment to develop the Gambia, thus to improve his people's living conditions, Jawara was not spared by criticisms. He was even the target of some of his compatriots who were looking for ways and means in order to overthrow his power. One of them was Kukoi Samba Sanyang. In fact, on July 30, 1981, Kukoi and his men orchestrated a coup d'état while President Jawara was in the United Kingdom to attend the wedding of Prince Charles, heir to the throne, and Lady Diana Spencer. (Jawara, 2009 : 309)

Happily for Jawara, the above mentioned coup d'état was unsuccessful due the intervention of the senegalese soldiers. Jawara asked for help by informing Abdou Diouf, the senegalese Head of State. The latter reacted favorably by sending his troupes (300 men) to invade Gambia. In just four days (from July 31 to 4 August), the Senegalese troupes and forces loyal to the Jawara government unseated Kukoi Samba Sanyang and reinstated President Jawara. (Jawara, 2009 : 314)

But, one must acknowledge that the coup d'état was not bloodless because a week of violence left several hundred people dead. As for the intervention of Senegal, Momodou Bah is of the opinion according to which President Diouf did not intervene at random. On the contrary, *it must be admitted that Diouf's intervention was also due to his fearness of the rebellion being extended to Senegal.* (Bah, 2015 : 33)

The senegalese heroic intervention had to be praised by all the Gambian citizens and President Jawara wanted to express his

gratefulness towards President Diouf. That is why, in the wake of the coup, Jawara invited President Diouf for an official trip to The Gambia. Jawara’s intention was to make a nationwide tour with Diouf for the Gambian people to show their gratitude to him and the Senegalese people for their heroic and masterclass military intervention. (Jawara, 2009 : 343)

Jawara was so proud of the senegalese help that he expressed his strong desire to unite Senegal and the Gambia in a confederation. According to President Diouf, it was Jawara who first came up with these integration tuffs. However, the decision was made official at Kaur in what later became known as ‘The Kaur Declaration’. On 17 December 1981, the agreement was ratified and came into force on 1 February 1981. (Diouf, 2014 : 165)

As a result, Senegal and the Gambia signed the 1982 Treaty of Confederation. Hence the Senegambia confederation which aimed at uniting the armed forces of the two countries. Unfortunately, this confederation did not last given that it came to an end in 1989. Roughly speaking, from 1965 to 1994, the Gambia was led by President Dawda Kairaba Jawara who was reelected five times. The Gambia was among the few African countries where a multiparty system prevailed after independence and a country in which opposition groups and the media worked harmoniously in pursuits of their ultimate gold and civic rights. The country’s good reputation of democracy, peace, political stability, respect of law and human rights were praised. However, after the 1981 unsuccessful attempt to overthrow Jawara’s regim, the Gambia was shattered by another coup d’état on July 22, 1994, thus putting an end to the Jawara era.

2-The Gambia from the 1994 coup d’état to the 2016 election

Dawda K. Jawara ruled the Gambia for almost thirty years during which he tried to develop his country by all means necessary despite criticisms related to his leather caste and the marginalization of the people from the protectorate. Hence the name of his political party: People’s Protectorate Party (PPP). He was committed to improving his compatriots’ living conditions. That is the reason why he did not delay to look for aids and economic partners. Bah says :

The Jawara government started opening up for more partnership and bilateral cooperations. In such, his government received more support from the People’s Republic of China, the Federal Republic of Germany, and Nigeria, Islamic Solidarity Fund, Islamic Development Bank etc. (Bah, 2015 : 31)

As far as Human rights are concerned, they were respected and opposition members were not frightened. The Gambia was, at that time, among the few countries where the multiparty system prevailed. Thus, the country’s democracy was praised in the African continent. Jawara writes:

It was, however, envied for its democracy, rule of law and respect for Human Rights. Given The Gambia’s good reputation as a democratic, peaceful and stable country, in 1987, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) decided to locate the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) in Banjul. (Jawara, 2009: 251-252).

As mentioned above, the 1960s is of paramount importance in the history of the African continent. This period marks the independence of many African countries. In so doing, by the 1970, half of African independent countries saw the emergence of military leaderships taking over the reins from the civilians. The process by which a military group or junta seizes the power is commonly called coup d’état. The Gambia was not spared by such a phenomenon. But, if the coup d’état undertaken by Kukoi in 1981 was not successful, the one which was undertaken by Yahya Jammeh on July 22, 1994 was successful. In other words, another political wind blew in the Gambia in 1994, giving birth to the second Republic. On July 22, 1994, Jammeh and some other soldiers performed a successful and bloodless coup d’état that put an end to Jawara’s reign. In this regard, Bah writes :

On the morning of 22 July 1994, the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC) led by Lieutenant Yahya A J J Jammeh (the chairman), Lieutenant Sana B. Sabally, Vice Chairman, Lieutenant Edward Singhateh and Lieutenant Sadibou Hydera as members, toppled President Jawara in a bloodless coup. (Bah, 2015 : 50)

After the coup, Jammeh and his collaborators tried to justify the reasons why they undertook the coup. In so doing, the usupers claimed that these events came against the backdrop of an unimaginable wealth and opulent lifestyles for some, and abject poverty, hunger and malnutrition for a great number of Gambians. (Daily observer, 25 July 1994)

They also pointed out the rampant corruption that gained ground in the country to justify their illegal act. Thus, they promised to fight against all the evils that could hinder the economic development, democracy, In this vein, Momodou Bah writes :

The AFPRC under the chairmanship of Lieutenant-Colonel Yahya Jammeh pledged to combat rampant corruption, bureaucartic ineptitude, economic decadence, and government ineffectiveness and indifferences in The Gambia. It also promised to transform the Gambian society once and for all. Rule of law, Democracy and good governance were what the junta government had promised to the Gambians when they took power. (Bah, 2015 : 50)

Then, from 1994 to 1996, the Gambia was in a transitory phase under the military command. In other words, it was under the control of the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC) led by Lieutenant Yahya who was not, at all, ready to hand over the power to the civilians. On the contrary, he took delight to rule the country despite all the fines that were taken against him by the international community. He promised to organize elections in which he was going to be candidate as a civilian. That is the reason why, in 1996, he created his own party called Alliance for Patriotic Re-orientation Council (APRC). To prepare the forthcoming elections, he used all means necessary to get the maximum of supporters. In this perspective, Bah says : *“the now retired Lieutenant-Colonel Jammeh brought together supporters of the military coup and defectors from banned political parties in order to contest in the forthcoming elections....”* (Bah, 2015 : 51)

The general elections which were held on September 9, 1996 resulted in the victory of Yahya Jammeh as the second President of the Republic of the Gambia and Dawda Jawara to write : *“He controversially won the general elections with a large majority, 33 out*

of 45 seats accounting for 51.12 per cent of the votes. On Friday 18 October 1996, Yahya Jammeh was sworn in as President of The Republic of The Gambia.” (Jawara, 2009 : 400)

David Perfect goes further regarding the outcomes of the 1996 general elections in the Gambia when he says :

The election was won by Jammeh who took 56% of the vote to the 36% of Darboe, with Bah and Jatta trailing far behind. The APRC also won the first election to the new National Assembly (which had replaced the House of Representatives) in January 1996, taking 33 out of 45 seats. Although gaining 34% of the national vote, the UDP won only seven seats ; the NRP won two seats, the PDOIS one, and two independents were also successful. (David, 2010 : 55)

Jammeh’s election was a byword for a hell to many gambian citizens. Once in power, he put some old political parties under suppression. Hence the restricted number (4) of parties that took place in the 1996 elections. Then, the first major step he undertook to strengthen his regime was to organize a referendum which aimed at changing the prevailed constitution, and suiting the President’s policies, thus, empowering him. Then, in 1997, the third referendum of the Gambia took place and the results were in favor of President Jammeh. The promulgation of the Constitution of the second Republic of the Gambia became operational on January 16, 1997.

Unfortunately, these military leaders often turn over to become dictators. Additionally, they become alienated and use very repressive means against the masses they are supposed to rule, to those who dare to satirize their policies. This was the case of Yahya Jammeh whose regime was marred by tortures, imprisonment of opposition leaders, and journalists. President Jammeh used very repressive means in order to execute, intimidate or send to jail whoever raises his voice. Close collaborators of dictators are often targeted. This was the example of General Lang Tombong Tamba who was a close collaborator of President Yahya Jammeh. Unfortunately, he was on the list of the thirty-nine prisoners Jammeh intended to execute. In this perspective, the Senegalese newspaper “le Quotidien” gives us much information when it says:

Le gros lot est constitué par des Gambiens (39) dont onze parmi eux sont des prisonniers politiques qui ont été arrêtés pour certains en 1997 et jugés le 28 octobre 1998 pour attaque contre le camp militaire de Kar-tong et pour d'autres au mois de Novembre 2008 et jugés pour trahison et tentative de coup d'état. Le plus célèbre de prisonniers politiques est le Général Lang Tombong Tamba, condamné à une peine capitale pour sa présumée participation à un coup d'état raté en 2009. Le Général Tamba, était à un moment donné, le bras droit de Yaya Jammeh. (Le Quotidien, Friday, August 2^{4th}, 2012, number 2879, p.5)

Such a dictatorial attitude bothered the members of the Associations gathering all the Gambian Civil Society (CSAG) who raise their voices so as to satirize the situation which prevailed in the Gambia when they say:

Etant donné que le gouvernement de Yaya Jammeh utilise la peine de mort et les autres peines sévères comme outil pour faire taire les dissidents et l'opposition, nous estimons que toute exécution constitue un autre indicateur de la brutalité du régime du Président Jammeh qui est décidé à écraser tous ceux qui ne sont pas avec lui. ("Le Quotidien", Friday, August 24th, 2012, number 2879, p. 5)

Alioune Tine, the former General Secretary of RADHHO and a Senegalese intellectual expressed his anger related to the execution of nine prisoners in the Gambia under the orders of President Yaya Jammeh. Let's mention that among these nine executed prisoners, there were two Senegalese namely Djibril Bah and Tabara Samb, the only woman. Tine said:

Aujourd'hui, avec cette nouvelle, le doute n'est plus permis. Yaya Jammeh ne jouit plus de ses facultés mentales. Et en laissant faire, on va assister à d'autres dérives beaucoup plus graves. Il faut tirer toutes les conséquences de cet acte criminel and audacieux qui est en fait un assassinat... Il faut montrer que Yaya Jammeh est une personne qui n'est plus crédible. Et il faut qu'il quitte le pouvoir. Trop, c'est trop. (L'Observateur, Tuesday, August 28th, 2012, number 2681, p.5)

Under Yahya Jammeh, journalists were not spared by his brutal and dictatorial regime. On the contrary, the Gambia was a hell for the experts of media despite the important role they play.

Nevertheless, during his first years in power, Jammeh was friendly with journalists who were often invited to the State House during press releases in order to allow the power to spread their messages and justify the coup d'état. Bah writes :

President Jammeh came into power in a coup d'état knowing fully that, he had to cooperate with the press in order to disseminate the junta's messages and justify their actions further. Jammeh cooperated with them in the beginning because he wanted the people to believe and trust in them by exposing the rampant corruption and other vices of the PPP regime. (Bah, 2015 :55)

Unfortunately, this collaboration, cooperation with journalists did not last because the press began to satirize some actions undertaken by the junta which did not delay to harass and intimidate journalists in order to urge them to be submissive or less critical to his regime. But whatever it was, the journalists were among his main targets and Momodou Bah to write :

Eventually, the honeymoon between the junta and the press gradually comes to an end when the press started criticizing certain actions of the junta. From there on, the junta started cracking down the press. Its first victim was the Dailey Observer, which culminated in the arrest and deportation of its owner and editor, Kenneth Best, to his country of origin, Liberia which was under war. Almost all the other non-Gambian journalists and staffs working at the Daily Observer had eventually fled the country. However, the harassment and intimidation of journalists did not only stop with the Daily Observer but the "Foroyaa" and many other independent media. (Bah, 2015 :56)

The most famous case was that of the editor of *The Point*, Deyda Aidara who was assassinated in December 2004. We can say without any shadow of doubt that President Jammeh was not kind with journalists who were victims of tortures, harassment, intimidation, imprisonment and even death.

Jammeh has reacted strongly to any media criticisms of his government, using legislation and harassment and allegedly even violence to curb the activities of some media houses. For example ; two media houses, Teranga FM, a community radio

station at Sinchu Alagie in Kombo North district of the Western Region, and The Standard, a private daily newspaper, were ordered to cease operations in August and September 2012. (Bah, 2015 :61)

Thus, seeing the brutality and violence Jammeh's regime resorted to, human rights activists have never delayed to point out other problems including poor prison conditions, denial of due process, prolonged pretrial and incommunicado detention, restrictions on privacy and freedoms of speech, press, and assembly, violence against women and girls, to name but a few. But despite all the above mentioned cases, Yahya Jammeh did well in terms of infrastructures. Some Gambians even say that the Gambia has relatively enjoyed more infrastructures under the Jammeh's regime than Jawara's.

As far as the political field is concerned, from 1996 to 2011, Jammeh was the winner of all the four presidential elections in which he took part. But, in 2016, he, unsurprisingly, lost the presidential election which was won by Adama Barrow, the first Gambian President who is democratically elected.

3-The Gambia from 2016 to the Present

The year 2016 is a landmark in the political history of the Gambia and it remains an unforgettable year in the memory of many Gambian citizens. On December 9, 2016, a new democratic era blew in the Gambia with the election of Adama Barrow as a Head of State. Then, he became the first Gambian President who was democratically elected, thus creating an indescribable jubilation among many Gambians who were fed up with the dictatorial regime of Jammeh who, like a real democrat, had initially accepted surprisingly his defeat. However, President Jammeh changed his mind and decided to stay in power by pointing out some irregularities and he declared a national emergency. This reversal had surprised more than one person and resulted in some scenes of violence. A state of emergency was declared and many political officials went into exile, and Barrow, the election winner was welcomed by Senegal.

Given the chaotic political situation that prevailed in the Gambia, many organizations had grabbed the bull by the horns so as to abide

by the will of the Gambian voters. Thus, on January 19, 2017, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted the resolution 2337 (2017), calling on the Gambian parties and stakeholders to respect the will of the people and the results of the December 2016 vote; which recognized Adama Barrow as the elected President of The Gambia.

As far as ECOWAS is concerned, first of all, it had decided to solve the Gambian post-electoral crisis by resorting to negotiation and mediation in order to convince President Jammeh to leave the power peacefully. This is the reason why a delegation composed of Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and Nana Akufo-Addo of Ghana as well as his predecessor John Dramani Mahama went to meet Jammeh on January 13, 2017 to persuade him to leave the power. These mediators had cited the African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, which states that any refusal by an outgoing president to leave the power to the winner of a democratic election, or which creates constitutional amendments or legal acts that violate the principles of democratic transition are considered “unconstitutional changes of government” which will result in “appropriate sanctions from the AU.”

Still driven by a strong desire to put an end to the Gambian crisis, ECOWAS also sent the Mauritanian President, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, to Banjul, for a final attempt to persuade Jammeh to step down from power. Unfortunately, these diplomatic initiatives did not yield the expected results as Jammeh stuck to his position of remaining in power illegally. Seeing that the peaceful methods the ECOWAS had undertaken were a real failure, the organization then decided to resort to violence to remove the outgoing president. In so doing, it held an emergency summit on January 9, 2017 which targeted the departure of Jammeh and urged the organization to use all necessary means to respect the results of the 2016 presidential election.

As a result, on January 18, 2017, ECOWAS leaders announced their intention to deploy forces to the Gambia, under the banner of the West African Economic Community (ECOMIG) military intervention in the Gambia to implement the results of the elections. This decision seemed not to scare Jammeh because he considered the ECOWAS decision a “declaration of war” and he promised a military response.

Having realized that Yahya Jammeh was not on the verge of giving the power to the winner, the armed forces of Senegal, Nigeria, Ghana, Mali and Togo gathered together on the border between Senegal and the Gambia, declaring their decision to move forward unless a political solution is found. The next day, when the forces crossed the border with orders to advance on Banjul, Jammeh finally abandoned his post. Then, on January 22, 2017, Yahya Jammeh who threatened to retaliate militarily, left Banjul on a plane for the last time as the President of the Gambia, after 22 years in power. Adama Barrow who had taken the oath of office in the premises of the Gambian embassy in Senegal, officially became the third President of the Republic of the Gambia. Had it not been the diplomatic and military pressures from ECOWAS, Jammeh would never have left the power. So, without any shadow of doubt, there is no exaggeration to say that ECOWAS played a leading role in the resolution of the Gambian post-electoral crisis.

From 2016 to the present, Adama Barrow is the President of the Gambia and since his election until now, he refuses that the ECOWAS defense and security forces leave Gambian land for security reasons. However, despite certain accusations relating to his lack of courage, his subordination to the Senegalese President and his excess of tolerance unlike his predecessor, Barrow was re-elected in 2021 during the first round and human rights and democracy are not jeopardized.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper which is devoted to the Gambia has allowed us to have a wider overview of this west african country which was colonized by England. It aimed at discovering the reason why the Gambia was among the last african countries to achieve its independence. It also aimed at pinpointing the different political regimes that the Gambia has known from independence to the present. In this regard, this country which achieved its independence in 1965 is ruled by three Presidents of the Republic. Dawda Kairaba Jawara who is nicknamed the father of the country ruled from 1965 to 1994, a year during which Lieutenant Yahya Jammeh undertook a successful coup d'état and became the second President of the Gambia. Before that coup, in 1981, Kukoi Samba Sagna undertook a coup d'état which

was unsuccessful due to the intervention of the Senegalese armed forces.

Jammeh's regime was marked by tortures, harassment, intimidation, imprisonment, lack of freedom, to name but a few. He behaved like a real dictator insofar as opposition parties existed only by name and journalists were excluded from the country, others were sent to jail or killed. In 2004, the assassination of Deyda Aidara, the editor of *The Point*, is a good illustration of Jammeh's dictatorial, and oppressive regime. But, in 2016, Adama Barrow put an end to Yahya Jammeh's regime seeing that he won the presidential election and became the third President of the Gambia. In the eyes of many Gambians, the election of President Barrow is a byword for freedom, and end of dictatorship. It is necessary to wonder if, despite the political upheal that occurred in 2016, the Gambia has become a real democratic country.

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<https://www.rfi.fr>
ACHPR = African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
AFPRC = Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council
APRC = Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction
AU = African Union
ECOWAS = Economic Community Of West African States
UDP = United Democratic Party
UN = United Nations
NRP = National Reconciliation Party
OAU = Organization of African Unity
PDOIS = People's Democratic Organisation for Independence
RADDHO = Rencontre Africaine de la Défense des Droits de
l'Homme