
ADAMA BARROW'S PRESIDENCY IN THE GAMBIA. RECAPITULATION OF FIVE YEARS OF THE NEW RULE

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Abstract

The Gambia, the smallest state in continental Africa, has been undergoing a through transformation since the beginning of 2017. This is the outcome of a change in many years' rule, initially of President Dawda Jawara (24 years) and then Yahya Jammeh (22 years), and the take-over of power by Adama Barrow.

The incumbent president, who has been holding the position for five years, bearing in mind numerous problems resulting from the heritage of his predecessors, among others abuse of power, ignorance for the constitutional rules, failure to observe the rule of law and violation of human rights, has set a goal for himself and his associates to prepare a strategy for the repair and development of the state, which could guarantee that the Republic of The Gambia transforms into a state with democratic foundations, ensuring safety and prosperity to all its citizens. It is obvious that such a short time to implement the new policy cannot produce spectacular successes, yet the purpose of the paper is to present an assessment of the first five years of Barrow's presidency. It is an attempt at answering questions as to which of the assumed goals show any progress and which still remain in the sphere of the new president's unre-alised aspirations.

In the text below, the author primarily uses three research methods. The task of the institutional and legal method is to analyse the functioning of the political institutions in The Gambia (reasonability of the adopted strategies, verification of the functions of state institutions with respect to the citizens; assessment of the effects of adopted premises; analysis of impact of quality of the state institutions on the efficient or inefficient functioning of the state). The system method is used to analyse a group of elements, i.e., the political system in the state, the relations of such elements (authorities, offices, parties, etc.) and their reciprocal impact, as well as impact on the environment and behaviour (level of residents' life, observance of human rights, degree of civil society). In turn, the method of statistical analysis is used to compare the statistical data prepared regularly by international institutions that assess the level of a state's correct operation.

Key words: *President, Presidency, Law-Abidingness, Democracy, Human Rights, Development, Progress, Republic of The Gambia, Security*

INTRODUCTION

After forty-six years of dictatorship in The Gambia under two presidents (Dawda Jawara, 1970–1994, and Yahya Jammeh, 1994–2016), an opportunity emerged on 19.01.2017 for improvement of the condition of the smallest state of continental Africa. Adama Barrow, the new president of the country, received 43.29% of the vote and defeated the autocratic incumbent Yahya Jammeh (who won 39.64% of the vote) and was sworn in at the embassy of The Gambia in Dakar. Barrow declared that he would hold office for three years (with the constitutional term of office of 5 years) as provisional president of the state. Being aware of numerous problems resulting from the inheritance of his predecessor, Barrow put forward an innovative strategy of the state's development aimed to curb the abuse of power, combat ignorance of constitutional principles, rectify the failure to observe the rule of law and prevent the violation of human rights [A. Jeng 2021]. He tasked himself and his associates with preparation of a strategy of repair and development of the state which would guarantee that the Republic of The Gambia transitions into a modern state, relying on democratic foundations, ensuring safety and prosperity to all its residents [L. Attanasio 2020]. After five years from the acceptance of office, it is hard to expect the situation in the country to radically improve, yet it is definitely clear whether the 'policy of changes' pursued by the new president is taking the country in the right direction and has brought at least minimum progress. Such assessment is all the more necessary as the new head of the country will most probably hold power in The Gambia for the ensuing five years, as on 04.12.2021 Barrow once again won the presidential elections, winning 53% of the vote and leaving his main rival, Ousainou Darbou, far behind with only 27.7% of the votes cast [A. Omasanjuwa 2022].

Such outcome of the presidential election may testify to the fact that Barrow – as president and head of the government – managed to convince over half of the country's population of his strategy, of the reforms that were introduced and the promises that he made, among others with respect to the introduction of a system of health insurance, the restoration of full civil freedom, plans to build transportation infrastructure, and to improve relations with the international community.

Unfortunately, when analysing the situation of African states and bearing in mind frequent tampering with election results, the percentage of support for the country's president is by itself not an accurate measure of the effectiveness of his governance or the actual political transformation and economic progress in the state. International think tanks that prepare rankings assessing the situation of the majority of countries in the world and verifying them on an ongoing basis every year may be of help in this respect.

FUND FOR PEACE, FRAGILE STATES INDEX

The starting point for estimating the profit and loss account of the new executive's rule in the course of the last five years are the data from a report published year by

year by Fund For Peace, an independent research organisation. In the Fragile States Index report, published since 2005, it analyses the degree of stability and the possibility of operation of a state through a framework of twelve indices (social, economic, political and military).

It follows from the recent report, published last year, that between 2017, i.e., the year when Barrow became president, and 2021, a more or less clear improvement is noticeable in the situation of eleven out of twelve analysed categories. This greatly improved the country's grade in the rankings (by over 7.5 points) and moved it from the 37th position to the 56th place (a higher position entails fewer problems, in line with the analysis of 178 countries around of the world). Although The Gambia is still assigned to the 'High Warning' category, in 2017 the country's total score amounted to 89.4 points, which gave it the penultimate position (before Egypt), just above classification to an even worse group identified as 'Alert'; in 2021, with the score at 80.5 points, it is still in the same group, yet Turkey, with a result better by a mere 0.8%, is in another, better category, namely 'Elevated Warning' [M. Sanchez, N. Fiertz 2022]. According to the analyses of Fund for Peace, over the last five years, the category where regress was observed is in the degree of demographic pressure, where the adverse movement was assessed at only one-tenth of one point (0.1). Aggravation of the problem is not surprising, as – first of all – it reflects the current tendencies in many states, especially those in Sub-Saharan Africa (the average birth rate in this area of the continent is 24%), and secondly it attests to the high birth rate in The Gambia, where in the 1960s the population was just a half-million; by the 1990s, the country's population had doubled, while in the last three decades it has grown to almost 2.5 million (2,490,896 in 2022). It is estimated that if this birth rate persists, in 2040 the number of residents in this country will exceed 4 million, which raises a question about to the degree to which this growth will become a problem for the economy of The Gambia [D. Batterman, S. Cockey, A.E. Deleersnyder, ... 2021].

The greatest improvement in the country may be noted in the category of the observance of human rights and rule of law, because a change of 1.3 points (on a scale from 1 to 10) was recorded. A progress of 0.9 points is noticeable in as many as three categories defined as group grievance, uneven development and state legitimacy. The situation in the public services and external intervention in the state's affairs improved by 0.6 points, by 0.7 points with respect to the criterion of human flight and brain drain, by 0.5 points in the refugees internally and displaced persons indicators, and by 0.3% points in the context of the operation of the security apparatus and in economic decline, while the factionalised elites index improved by only 0.1% [D. Batterman, S. Cockey, A.E. Deleersnyder, ... 2021].

Summing up, it is clearly noticeable that in the aspect of civil liberties, social satisfaction and the rule of law, the situation in The Gambia has been gradually improving over the course of the last five years.

DEMOCRACY INDEX

Wishing to analyse the process of state democratisation, as declared and promised by Adama Barrow, it is worth relying on another research unit that is of use in assessing a state's condition, namely the Economist Intelligence Unit which is part of the organisation that publishes the weekly magazine *The Economist*. Since 2006, the magazine has published an annual report, the so-called Democracy Index, where the level of democracy in 167 countries around the world is analysed and countries are categorised into one of four types of regime: full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regimes and authoritarian regimes.

It also follows from the analysis of this organisation that even though The Gambia is still classified as a hybrid regime, the situation there is gradually improving [C. J. Edie, 2000]. This is reflected in the ranking of 2021, where The Gambia moved up by as many as 12 slots, from the 113th position in 2017 to the 101st position in 2021, and recorded an overall improvement by almost half a point (0.46 on a scale from 1 to 10). The individual components of the analysis allow for concluding that the quality of civil freedoms in the country grew by 1.18 points, the degree of political participation by 1.11 points, and the quality of functioning of the government by 0.36, while for the last four years the political culture in the country has remained on the same level at 5.63 points, while the quality of the election process and political pluralism dropped by almost half a point (0.48).¹

Improvement of the rule of law in the country has been confirmed by the report of Fabian Salvioli, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, who, with a view to examining progress in repairing the effects of mass violations and abuses committed during the Yahya Jammeh regime, paid an official visit to The Gambia in November 2019. The human rights expert, for the sake of an in-depth analysis of the situation, met with government officials, representatives of legislative authorities, judges, security forces, the national human rights institution, representatives of civil society, groups of victims, scientists and representatives of the international community. The expert concluded that the new administration of the state introduced a number of remedial measures already in the first 100 days of Barrow's administration, along with the so-called best practice and later, with the support of international community, has consistently initiated domestic processes aimed at addressing past abuses, which may be exemplified by establishment of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission [L. Salvioli 2019].

CORRUPTIONS PERCEPTION INDEX

Another litmus test for the rule of law in a country is the Corruptions Perception Index. This is a report that is prepared on a yearly basis by Transparency International – an international, independent, non-governmental organisation that expos-

¹ https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2021/#mktoForm_anchor (22.12.2022)

es, investigates, and fights corrupt practices in the public sphere. The Corruptions Perceptions Index studies rely on sixteen different analyses and assessments from eleven institutions (World Bank, World Economic Forum, African Development Bank, Economist Intelligence Unit, Freedom House, Global Insight, Bertelsmann Foundation, International Institute for Management Development, Political and Economic Risk Consultancy, The PRS Group, and World Justice Project).

Furthermore, they also take into account surveys – evaluations from businessmen and assessments of study results carried out by groups of analysts. Following the report published in 2021, the improvement of the situation in The Gambia is indisputable. The data presented in the report at the end of 2017, i.e., the year when the corrupt Yahya Jammeh made way for the presidency of Adama Barrow, showed that The Gambia was 130th out of 180 analysed states, with a score of 30 points [C. Pring, J. Vrushi, 2019]. Four years later, in 2021, it had moved to the 102nd position (28 positions higher), with 37 points. Given the fact that the average result for the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa is 32 out of 100 points, it may be noted that The Gambia does not stand out in positive terms, yet improvement in the ranking by as many as 28 points confirms progress in this aspect as well [M. Bak, 2021].

BERTELSMANN STIFTUNG'S TRANSFORMATION INDEX

Another measure of the political and economic situation in countries around the world is Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index. It is a measure of the stage of development and management of the processes of political and economic transformation in developing countries and in countries undergoing positive changes around the world. Since 2006, the BTI report has been published every two years by Bertelsmann Stiftung. Its last edition was in 2020 and covered 129 countries. The index measures and compares the quality of government actions. The ranking, based on independently recorded data, analyses successes and failures on the path to constitutional democracy and market economy and reports on the social and political support of the citizens. To this end, the 'Status Index' is calculated based on the general level of development in reference to the features of geography and market economy and the 'Management Index' pertaining to political management by the decision-makers. In line with the report published by Bertelsmann Stiftung in 2020, which covers a period from 1 January 2017 to 31 January 2019 [H. Hartmann, 2020], the situation in The Gambia, in the context of its positive transformation, is greatly diversified. Considerable improvement is noted with respect to the freedom of speech in the media. During Jammeh's presidency, the media landscape did not present an extensive range of opinions. The single state-owned television station, radio stations and private press were regularly threatened (even with the use of physical violence). The new president allowed the media to proliferate; what is more, diverse political and social views are now presented by various new privately-owned television and radio stations

and publication houses. On the other hand, funding their operation is a different issue [D. Sanga 2022, M. Stańczyk - Minkiewicz 2015].

Furthermore, the new government clearly sets apart the executive, the legislative and the court system, which was not the case at all during Jammeh's presidency, because the National Assembly was dominated by the governing party, Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC), while judges were intimidated and forced to issue rulings influenced by the elites [Adbul Jalilu Ateku, 2020].

At the present moment, the National Assembly is more diversified with respect to party representation. The new government is also attempting to make the system of justice more professional. The executive authority respects the independence of the courts and does not interfere in their decisions, as was the case during the previous president's rule. According to the BIT report, the democratisation of institutions has been clearly visible since 2017; they have been performing their tasks more adequately as assessed by proponents as well as opponents of the new government, who also highlight growing trust in state institutions, i.e., the presidency, police, army and National Assembly. Civil participation is also visible [S. Doner, 2020].

WORLD BANK

According to the economic overview, as part of a programme monitored by the employees of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), The Gambia achieved highly satisfactory results between 2017 and 2019. Quick and considerable reduction of the budget deficit and redemption of debt on the part of major multi-lateral and bilateral creditors allowed the country to get out of debt and economic crisis. This also paved the way for a comprehensive credit instrument approved by the management board of the IMF on 23 March 2020. The fiscal deficit in the country was reduced from 6.2% of the GDP in 2018 to 2.6% of the GDP in 2019.

In line with the report prepared on the basis of data from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the International Peace Institute and the World Economic Outlook, during only the first three years of Barrow's presidency (2017–2019), the GDP per capita grew from USD 1,489.5 to USD 1,624.5 (a rise of approx. USD 140), while the GDP of The Gambia rose from 4.6% to 6.6%; the inflation dropped from 8.0% to 6.5%, while on account of the fact that the country takes actions aimed at improvement of the investment climate and facilitation of trade, foreign BIZ investments grew from 0.4% of GDP to 1.8% of GDP. The Gambia also enjoys a good position in the region as far as import and export procedures are concerned. Nevertheless, the level of unemployment in the country has remained unchanged.

In the first years of Barrow's presidency, the bank system also noted progress in the area of high-risk loans, as according to the indices, a drop from 5.9% to 4.7% was recorded in 2018.

Overall, the level of social security in The Gambia remains low. Pension benefits are available only sporadically and exclusively to a small group of people (i.e., those

who worked for governmental or nationally significant private institutions for over ten years). The situation concerning disability benefits, compensation or other social services (on account of damage to health, unemployment or family leave) is even direr: they are not available at all or are available to a small portion of the population. According to analysts, progress is noted in the context of access to water, which is currently guaranteed to 90% of Gambians. Unfortunately, the level of medical care is still a problem, especially in rural areas in the upper part of the country, which is inhabited by over 230,000 people. There is only one hospital in the region and several smaller paramedic centres – all extremely under-financed with a huge shortage of pharmaceuticals, personnel, beds, etc. [N.M.B. Sanyang, 2021].

COUNTRY INDICATORS FOR FOREIGN POLICY (CIFP)

To allow for the implementation of accurate and effective international projects to improve the situation in dysfunctional and unstable states, a team from Carleton's Country Indicators for Foreign Policy project initiated extensive cooperation with the Canadian government to implement three basic objectives. The priority for the team of this academic and governmental project was to prepare efficient tools used to monitor, evaluate and forecast the situation of failed and fragile states. Furthermore, an important element was analysis of the measures implemented in the states and used to guarantee progress in the aspect of security and economic growth. An equally important task was working out a methodology for the evaluation of performance of an individual state. This was primarily meant to categorise the states with respect to the areas of greatest problems and risks and the necessary activities that need to be implemented in relation to this, as well as to highlight the areas of comparative strength – the stability of the state, which may form the foundation for international efforts for purposes of development. Eventually, the research team of the project engaged in theoretical and statistical research regarding the nature of the relationship between state fragility and selected key variables. In the researchers' opinion, this is significant for an accurate analysis of the problem on account of the fact that the history of a state's conflicts has significant impact on its internal problems, along with ethnic, economic, and ecological divisions, etc.

In line with the global ranking of instability prepared by the CIFP in 2020 pertaining to 2019, out of fifty most fragile states around the world, The Gambia took a weak 21st place with a score of 6.33 points. In turn, it follows from a detailed analysis verifying the data between 2017 and 2019 that among the twenty most problematic and fragile states in the world in 2017, The Gambia was in 17th place with 6.72 points (while the worst, Southern Sudan, was in first place with a score of 7.85). A year later, the situation had worsened, and The Gambia took 13th place, yet with a marginally lower result at 6.63 points; however, by 2019 The Gambia had disappeared from the infamous twenty and was not included in this ranking on account of the considerable improvement of the situation in the state [D. Carment, K. Muñoz, Y. Samy, 2020].

In 2019, it was not included in the group of 20 most authoritarian states of the globe or states with the highest index of violations of the rule of law. However, it still occupied the second position with 7.38 points (first place: São Tomé and Príncipe) in the ranking of the so-called capacity (to guarantee resources for the residents: energy, health care, education, etc.). In this case, it is ahead of such countries as Somalia, Chad and Eritrea [D. Carment, K. K. Muñoz, Y. Samy, 2020].

These international analyses of research teams outside of the African continent offer an insight into the current situation in The Gambia, yet it seems that it is also important to take account of the assessments of African organisations on this issue. Here, the Ibrahim Index of African Governance is the first to come to mind.

IBRAHIM INDEX OF AFRICAN GOVERNANCE

The purpose of this organisation set up in 2007 is to explore the quality of governments in African countries. Analysis of over 100 indices verified by over 30 independent African and global institutions offers a reliable and comprehensive basis for compilation of a report pertaining to the quality of governance in African countries. In the report, the analysts attach special significance to the scale of delivery of public services to citizens, institutions and the private sector. Furthermore, the index helps determine the methods and the efficiency of governance, defines the quality of goods guaranteed to citizens and the exercise of political, economic and social functions with respect to them.

In 2020, the Ibrahim Index foundation analysed the performance of fifty-four African countries over the last ten years, i.e., from 2010 to 2019 inclusive. To this end, the foundation's research team compiled 237 variables measuring the management concept according to forty different sources. They were verified in order to develop seventy-nine indicators, which are ordered according to four basic categories: security and rule of law, political participation and human rights, sustainable economic development, and social development as well as sixteen sub-categories that comprise the overall management result. Accounting for all the data compiled from these sources, i.e., 372 various management parameters in total, an assessment was made of the situation in each of fifty-four countries over the decade in question.

The results of the analysis are divided into three main types: result, rank and trend. When studying the data, all the types were taken into account, because every type of result offers context for the remaining ones. For example, by looking only at the rank or the result without accounting for the trends and the important trajectories that the selected countries are following may be overlooked.² It is also necessary to

² For example in the IAG 2020 ranking, the Republic of South Africa is in the top ten of states with the highest score in 2019 (6th place) with a result of 65.8 (out of 100). Yet in the last ten years, this is also the eighth most degraded state on the continent with respect to the overall management, which dropped by -0.9 in this period. In the same way in which the trends should be taken into account when looking at the results and rankings, it is important to take into account the result and the rank when looking at the trends. For example, Somalia recorded seventh improvement with respect to size in the last ten years (+5.7) and eighth improvement with respect to size in the last five years (+2.6) with respect to the overall governance, but still occupies the bottom of the ranking table, in 54th place.

take into account classifications of trends that examine the trajectory of a state or a group in any measure in the course of the last five years (2015–2019) in the context of its trajectory in the course of the last ten years (2010–2019), because they may help identify the early signs of direction and speed of a trajectory of a state or a group of states.

It follows from the report that in comparison to the other fifty-three states, The Gambia is developing the most rapidly, which may prove that the policy of Adama Barrow is heading in the right direction. Nevertheless, in the overall ranking it currently is in 16th place with 55.9 points out of 100 and is behind the following countries: Mauritius, Cape Verde, Seychelles, Tunisia, Botswana, Republic of South Africa, Namibia, Ghana, Senegal, Morocco, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Benin, Kenya and Algeria. However, in the last ten or – more precisely, five – years, it progressed 9.2 points, which puts it in the lead with respect to the pace and the efficiency of change [N. Delapalme, C. Rocca, D.F. Fernández, ...2020].

Furthermore, in the context of social participation, civic participation and citizen equality, The Gambia gained an even better position – 12th – in the ranking, with a score of 57.1 and a growth of almost 19.5 points in the analysed decade; in the last five years, 2.5 more points were added to the score, for a total of 21.9 points. The situation is similar in the context of gender equality; The Gambia is in 19th place, but with a score of 57 points it is in 4th place after São Tomé and Príncipe, Zambia and Gabon on account of the rate of improvement. With respect to security, protection of the state's residents, governance and justice, the country also outperformed other states, progressing by 14.2 points (by 19.6 points within the last five years) with a total score of 58.0 points and 16th place in the rankings. As far as the fight against corruption is concerned, it is the sixth country – with a score of 50 out of 54 points – that is dealing effectively with the problem. In the same report, it follows from the analysis pertaining to the bases of economic potential that The Gambia – in 14th place on the list – has 57 points and 4.7 points of growth. With respect to infrastructural development, it occupies the 18th place, and the same applies to the quality of public administration – the 18th position (7th with respect to the rate of changes), and with respect to business environment, it is in 16th place (categorised as bouncing back). Unfortunately, the studies are not equally satisfactory in the context of development – namely, the improvement of living conditions – because in this case, between 2010 and 2015 (administration of Y. Jammeh), The Gambia was in 27th place in the middle of the ranking with a score of 51.4 points and a negative tendency, i.e., a drop by -1.8 points, which put it in the group of states categorised as slowly deteriorating. Luckily, in the next five years (2015–2020: the four years of the Barrow administration), the situation started to systematically improve and the country was categorised as improving (bouncing back). The same refers to the quality of health care, where the problem is even greater because The Gambia is in 37th

place out of 54 countries, and in terms of the level of health care-social support it is in 19th place [N. Delapalme, C. Rocca, D.F. Fernández, ... 2020]

The situation is slightly better in the case of education, while as the fourth country with the fastest-improving index it holds the 18th position in the ranking (even though the rate is still insufficient, because according to the Literacy Rate Report of the UNESCO – the World Bank Statistical Institute– in 2021 the literacy tuition in the country was at 50.80% and in 2017 at 50.78%, i.e., without statistically significant change).³

Furthermore, in the context of sustainable development, The Gambia is almost dead last: it is in 44th place and is defined as a slowly deteriorating state. Hence, it follows from the studies published in the report that the chances for the progress of a state are not always compatible with opportunities to improve the citizens' situation.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX

This state of affairs is also corroborated by the Human Development Index (HDI) report, which proves that the systemic (institutional) progress of a state does not go hand in hand with improvements in the living standards of its citizens. Unfortunately, in this respect progress in The Gambia is not so spectacular. The Human Development Index is a report on social development prepared on a yearly basis by the UN as part of the United Nations Programme for Development; it analyses the quality of life of a country's citizens with respect to life expectancy, level of health, access to education and standard of life measured according to the GDP *per capita*.

In the report from 2021, The Gambia was evaluated negatively: among 189 states, it placed 174th with a score of 0.500; in 2017, its score was 0.480, which put it lower still, in 173rd place. As far as concerns life expectancy over the last three years, the average life expectancy of the residents grew by two years, from 61 to 63, which obviously is a cause for optimism, given the country's population increase, yet it is still unsatisfactory as compared to neighbouring Senegal, where the expectancy is almost 69 years [P. Conceição, 2022].

The expected years of education grew by half a year from 9.3 to 9.9, while the actual dimension of education improved by only two months, from 3.7 to 3.9. With respect to the wealth of the citizenry, according to the GDP per capita, personal income grew by only 150 dollars a year, which is definitely an outcome of unemployment where progress was very slight, even though it was one of the primary goals of the Barrow administration according to promises made during the first campaign in 2016 and reiterated a number of times in 2021 [P. Conceição, 2022].

³ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). UIS.Stat Bulk Data Download Service. Accessed October 24, 2022. apiportal.uis.unesco.org/bdds, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.ZS> <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/literacy-rate-by-country>, (13.12.2022).

CONCLUSION

In spite of the fact that – as mentioned at the beginning – when fighting for the second term of office, Adama Barrow managed to acquire 53% of the vote, yet in the opinion of many Gambians, the country still suffers from economic stagnation in many respects. Some residents feel disappointed with Barrow's policy, claiming that they hoped for faster and multi-dimensional changes.

Without doubt, the plans for the country's rapid economic progress were also hindered by the pandemic. Although The Gambia experienced no major problems with Covid because the scale of infections in the country was very low as compared to other countries on the continent the fact that the global COVID-19 pandemic has had serious socio-economic consequences for almost every country in the world, especially for developing ones such as The Gambia, one may expect that the speed of beneficial changes in the country will be greatly slowed and, in some cases conditions may even revert to the time before Barrow's presidency. This is visible, for example, in the case of the inflow of cash from other regions of the world. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, The Gambia – with its strong dependence on tourism – has experienced a significant slump in the number of tourists, especially from the key markets in Europe, as well as disruptions in trade and an overall drop in the prices of goods. All of this exacerbates the already bad quality of the residents' life, the poor access to the labour market and low wages and salaries; as mentioned before, the residents cannot count on social assistance on the part of the state, because there is practically no social welfare system.

However, Barrow's government took some steps to protect life and livelihood. As part of the response to the COVID-19 crisis, the World Bank guaranteed a support package with a value of USD 10 million, while the IMF supported the country with a quick loan with a value of USD 21.2 million. Furthermore, the IMF granted the Gambia debt service relief under the Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust with a value of USD 2.9 million. The European Union disbursed USD 9.7 million for budget support subsidies, while a draft of social registry prepared by the World Bank received additional USD 6 million. The Gambia's government also applied for postponement of the debt servicing as part of the G20 initiative, which could guarantee – from the creditors supporting this initiative – from USD 2.19 million to almost USD 6.68 million, if multi-lateral and private creditors support the initiative.⁴

In line with the analysed reports, in the context of the rule of law, freedom of media, social trust and observance of human rights, the situation in the country is gradually – and in some cases even spectacularly – improving. Unfortunately, this is not reflected in a clear improvement in the quality of life for the people of The Gambia. The promises made by Barrow in 2016 – when he was running for president – did not come to fruition to the degree that he predicted, but it must be admitted that there were also adverse circumstances in the form of COVID-19. The beginning of the

⁴ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/gambia/overview> (11.11.2022).

second term is the time of further consequences of the pandemic, coupled with the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, which has also been felt across the African continent (for example, limited food supplies, especially grain, from Ukraine and the Russian Federation, as well as downsized international investment). All of this hinders the president and his associates. Meanwhile, the second term of office will end in just three years and time will come for Barrow to account for a decade of his actions over against the promises he made.

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