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Senegal

# Desire for change in Senegal

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**The victory of Bassirou Diomaye Faye, the fruit of popular mobilization, has created a new political situation enabling the radical left to push for a real break with the past.**

From prison to the presidential palace, Faye has had a rather unusual journey. He has just won the presidential elections in the first round with over 54% of the vote, a unique event in the history of Senegal.

## Political continuity

The country has gone through two major political periods, that of the Socialist Party governments with Senghor and then Abdou Diouf, followed by that of the Liberals with Abdoulaye Wade and Macky Sall. Political labels aside, the policies pursued have been the same. A strong presidency that did not hesitate, during social or political crises, to use violent repression against opponents, resulting in death and imprisonment. Attacks on the press. Corruption that fuelled the clientelism on which successive governments were based, and which also served as a justification for dismissing political opponents. Which meant a justice system that did its bidding.

Macky Sall's government may have been able to create an illusion with its Senegal Emergent Plan, resulting in the launch of major projects such as the regional express train, the creation of a new international airport and the construction of a new city next to the capital Dakar. But this orgy of concrete has mainly benefited the most affluent and has done nothing to reduce poverty, which affects more than half the population, or to curb endemic youth unemployment.

## The limits of a programme

It is precisely these young people, who refuse to accept a future with no prospects other than to embark on a life-threatening immigration, who rallied for Faye's victory. Along with his mentor Ousmane Sonko, the popularity of their organisation PASTEF (Patriotes africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la fraternité), which was dissolved by Macky Sall, lies in its denunciation of the corruption of the country's elites.

Faye describes himself as an anti-system, breakaway candidate, promoting the country's political and economic sovereignty. Although Bassirou Diomaye Faye's political programme is particularly detailed, it is also highly technocratic and never mentions the need for citizen participation in building the promised new political order. The common thread remains the promotion and development of Senegalese companies, seen as the sources of the country's development. Although the future president has said that he is in favour of Senegal leaving the CFA franc, this measure, like the one he is proposing, will not be implemented.

The main demands for women's rights were not taken into account, reflecting a conservative vision of society.

The radical left-wing organisations that supported Faye's candidacy can draw on this popular mobilisation to push for a policy that responds to people's aspirations and needs.

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Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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