

# Political Risk Update: July 28, 2021

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## Tunisia: Political tensions ease as prime minister accepts dismissal

### Event

Prime Minister Hicham Mechichi said on July 26 that he had agreed to step down from his position after President Kais Saied dismissed him and suspended parliament on July 25.

### Outlook

Mechichi's acceptance of his dismissal lowers political tensions significantly and will make it easier for Saied to install a new prime minister. The country faces a massive health crisis and a dire economic situation, neither of which Saied appears able to address. Yet, working with a new handpicked premier and with parliament suspended, Saied will be held directly responsible for any governance failures.

### Analysis

Mechichi's decision came after clashes between supporters of the president and those of the largest parliamentary party, Ennahda, in front of the parliament. Saied also dismissed the ministers of defence and justice on July 26. The president's dismissal of the premier and suspension of parliament could delay a possible deal with the IMF that would go some way towards easing the financial pressures on the country. Tunisia is facing default without extensive external financing, as well as an out-of-control COVID-19 health crisis.

## Madagascar: Arrest of alleged coup plotters will strengthen President Rajoelina

### Event

Police in Madagascar announced on July 26 that they had arrested the US CEO of Madagascar Oil, the country's largest oil and gas company.

## Outlook

The arrest of French and US nationals and their alleged involvement in an assassination plot will bolster Rajoelina's position in the short term by enabling him to point to foreign threats to Malagasy sovereignty as a means to solidify power and counter growing opposition voices.

## Analysis

This latest arrest follows last week's detention of two former French military officers on charges of attempting to assassinate Malagasy President Andry Rajoelina and of plotting a coup d'etat. The former French officers had apparently looked to Madagascar Oil for help in financing their efforts to overthrow the current government. Police say they discovered assault weapons, ammunition, EUR220,000 and incriminating documents in the home of one of the officers, who is also a Malagasy citizen. The seriousness of the plot, which apparently involved the hiring of mercenaries to assassinate the president and a number of other high-ranking authorities, and the extent of its preparation remain unclear. Rajoelina has lost popularity over the past year due to his handling of COVID-19 issues and his mismanagement of a major famine in the south of the country.

## Burkina Faso: Army operations carry political risks

### Event

On July 26, Burkinabe authorities announced the provisional results of a major military operation targeting jihadist groups.

### Outlook

The government is under intense pressure to show results from its action against jihadists, which will lead to an increase in the tempo of military operations. However, whatever success is achieved will be short term at best. Jihadist groups will continue to benefit from security force abuses and the inability of Burkinabe authorities to reinvest peripheral areas with legitimate state authority.

### Analysis

According to an army communique, the military has killed several dozen jihadists and captured substantial quantities of ammunition, vehicles and communications equipment in south-eastern Burkina Faso. Radio France International has confirmed through local sources that the fighting has been intense, but that the army has managed to push jihadist fighters away from at least one village that they had blockaded. This comes after major protests against the government's failure to improve security conditions or stem the spread of jihadist insurgency, which now extends across western, northern and eastern Burkina Faso. In early June, the village of Solhan and its environs in the north-eastern Yagha province saw a massacre of 160 people by jihadist fighters. Furthermore, displacement in the country has reached unprecedented levels, with some 1.3 million people internally displaced.

## Turkey: Government faces a rise in COVID-19 cases

### Event

Representatives of the hospitality and entertainment sectors urged the government on July 26 to make a vaccination certificate mandatory for entering such indoor venues as restaurants, cafes, nightclubs, gyms, cinemas, concert halls and wedding centres from September 1.

### Outlook

The pandemic may intensify in the autumn, as people spend more time indoors. The vaccine programme is reducing deaths and hospitalisations, and 64% of adults have received at least one dose, but Turkey may not reach the required mass immunisation level until early 2022.

### Analysis

The pandemic is spreading again: new cases reached 14,230 on July 25, three times the level of three weeks before and recalling the 60,000-plus rates in April and May. Turkey began 'normalising' on July 1 after a 17-day full lockdown and night-time and weekend curfews. The surge is being attributed to COVID-19's more contagious Delta variant and to people travelling to relatives during the nine-day Qurban Bayram (Eid-al Adha) holiday that ended on July 25, with Turks and foreigners flocking to tourist resorts. While some 90% of hotel staff have reportedly been vaccinated, cases are higher in those provinces, especially in the east, that have lower vaccination rates. Restaurant and Entertainment Association head Kaya Demirer is arguing that employees who refuse to be fully vaccinated should be sent on unpaid leave.

## Pakistan: Poll result is a small boost for Imran Khan's PTI

### Event

Elections were held on July 25 for the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) legislative assembly.

### Outlook

The official result is yet to be declared, but Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party appears to have gained a narrow majority. This would be in line with a general trend of voters backing the party that leads the national government but Khan will nevertheless frame it as a notable win that constitutes an endorsement of his steadfast efforts to internationalise the Kashmir issue.

### Analysis

AJK is one of two territories (the other is Gilgit-Baltistan) in Pakistan-administered Kashmir (Kashmir's sovereignty is disputed by Pakistan and India). Polling for the legislature took place in 33 constituencies in AJK and twelve constituencies covering areas of Pakistan's four provinces where only immigrants from Indian-administered Kashmir are eligible to vote. The election appears to have given the PTI a narrow win in the legislature. This is an improvement in its performance in 2016, when it took just two seats in an election won by the party forming the national government at the time, which was the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz). Khan,

who became premier after the PTI's victory in the 2018 general election, has throughout his tenure sought to mobilise external support for Pakistan's position on Kashmir, although without much success.

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