



OCCASIONAL PAPER NO 133

South African Foreign Policy and African Drivers Programme

January 2013

# **Franco–Senegalese Relations 2000–2012**

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**South African Institute of International Affairs**

African perspectives. Global insights.

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SAIIA gratefully acknowledges the Danish International Development Agency which generously supports the SAFPAD Programme.

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## ABSTRACT

France's oldest relationship in sub-Saharan Africa is with Senegal. The French presence in Senegal dates from the 17th century. In the 19th century the Four Communes of Senegal, along with France's other former colonies, gained the right to send a member of parliament to Paris. Since that time Senegal has occupied a special place in French relations with sub-Saharan Africa. Its first president, Léopold Sédar Senghor, maintained close and largely exclusive relations with France after Senegal achieved political independence in 1960. Since Senghor's standing down in 1980, Senegal has slowly diversified its foreign relations. At the same time, French African policy has undergone significant changes following the end of the Cold War. While Senegal maintains its special place in French relations with sub-Saharan Africa, France has also diversified its relations with the region, so that non-Francophone countries such as South Africa, Nigeria and Angola now occupy a prominent place in France's African relations. In addition, since the turn of the century French African policy has undergone a significant process of Europeanisation, although France remains Senegal's largest bilateral donor and largest foreign investor.

The paper sets out the historic, economic, cultural, military and political dimensions of the relationship, charts the ebb and flow of the relationship since the turn of the millennium and concludes that, despite substantial changes in recent years in the context of accelerating globalisation, the France–Senegal relationship remains an important one for both countries. Indeed, after a period of turbulence from 2000, the election of Macky Sall and François Hollande as presidents of their respective countries in 2012 may herald a new era of relative serenity in the relationship and a strengthening of co-operation between the two countries.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AFD	Agence Française de Développement
Cirad	Agricultural Research for Development ( <i>Récherché Agronomique pour le Développement</i> )
Ecowas	Economic Community of West African States
EDF	European Development Fund
EFS	French in Senegal Elements ( <i>Eléments Français au Sénégal</i> )
Eunic	EU National Institutes for Culture
Eurorecamp	African Peace-keeping Support ( <i>Renforcement des Capacités Africaines de Maintien de la Paix</i> )
FDI	foreign direct investment
GDP	gross domestic product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRD	Research Institute for Development ( <i>Institut de Récherché pour le Développement</i> )
NGO	non-governmental organisation
UCAD	Cheikh Anta Diop University ( <i>Université Cheikh Anta Diop</i> )

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Links between France and Senegal go back more than three centuries. Saint-Louis, the first permanent French settlement in Senegal, dates from 1659 and is named after King Louis XIV of France. Its geographical position meant that it commanded trade along the Senegal River and by the late 18th century its population had reached about 5 000, not counting slaves in transit. As it did in the island of Gorée to the south off the coast of Dakar, a mixed-race (*métis*), Franco-African merchant community grew up in Saint-Louis during the 17th and 18th centuries. It played a major role in shaping the economic, social, cultural and political life of the city.

In 1848 the French Second Republic extended the rights of full French citizenship to the inhabitants of Saint-Louis, Gorée, Dakar and Rufisque. Residents of these so-called Four Communes in principle enjoyed all the rights of native French citizens, although they retained their 'personal status' as Muslims and thus their right of recourse to African – and particularly Islamic – law. They were also granted the right to elect a delegate to the Chamber of Deputies (parliament) in Paris. They lost this right under the Second Empire (1852–1870) but regained it under the Third Republic (1870–1940). Until the fall of the Third Republic the Four Communes retained their status as the only part of France's empire in sub-Saharan Africa to enjoy parliamentary representation in Paris, and elect their town councils.

Political life in the Four Communes was dominated by the *métis* until 1914, when Blaise Diagne became the first African delegate elected to the Chamber of Deputies. The Four Communes lost their special status after the Second World War when the right to elect deputies to Paris was extended to the whole of France's empire in sub-Saharan Africa. Nonetheless, the Four communes remained the most 'assimilated', or 'Frenchified', part of France's empire in the region. Moreover, they played a major role as administrative centres during the French colonial period: Dakar was the seat of the Government-General of the federation of French West Africa from 1903 to 1960 and Saint-Louis served as the capital of the colonies of both Senegal and Mauritania.

In 1960, Léopold Sédar Senghor became the first president of an independent Senegal. He maintained close and exclusive links with France. When he stood down in favour of Abdou Diouf in 1981, his successor largely continued this policy, although making some limited efforts to diversify Senegal's foreign relations (eg towards Japan, which was at the time Senegal's second largest aid donor, and India). Diouf was defeated by Abdoulaye Wade in the 2000 presidential election. Unlike his predecessors, who were Socialists, Wade was a liberal. Elected on a political platform of '*sopi!*' ('change!'), he attached central importance to efforts to diversify Senegal's foreign relations, particularly economic relations, while retaining good – but no longer such exclusive – links with France.

The long history of economic, political, cultural and military links between France and Senegal, the established tradition of competitive elections and participatory democracy, and – paradoxically given the close relations with France – the development of a genuinely national political culture, are central to understanding the distinctive nature of what is sometimes referred to as the 'Senegalese exception': the special place that Senegal occupies within broader Franco-African relations and the representation of Senegal, in France and Senegal alike, as a model of democracy and stability.

## ASPECTS OF FRANCO-SENEGALESE RELATIONS

The France-Senegal relationship is multi-dimensional and -layered and even a brief overview must take into account economic, cultural, military and administrative dimensions.

### **Economic**

France remains Senegal's most important trading partner and its largest aid donor. Many French companies are well established in Senegal and continue to make a significant contribution to its economy. Nonetheless, Senegal has diversified its economic relations in recent years. For example, while in 2003 90% of firms in the industrial sector were subsidiaries of French companies, the proportion had declined to 75-80% by 2012.<sup>1</sup> Similarly the banking sector, traditionally dominated by French institutions, in recent years has seen the arrival of newcomers (eg from Morocco and the Middle East), which now compete with the French banks. Hence while French companies have been major beneficiaries of the privatisation of formerly state-owned Senegalese companies and continue to play an important part in the Senegalese economy, efforts to diversify Senegal's economic relations have borne fruit. French companies continue to play a significant role, but within an economic landscape that has diversified considerably through increased international links, notably with India, China and countries in the Middle East. The US has also started to invest in Senegal for the first time, notably in the Senegal River valley.<sup>2</sup>

### **Trade and investment**

France is Senegal's biggest supplier of goods and services, largest foreign investor, second biggest client in Europe (after Switzerland) and fourth biggest client globally. Its share of the overall Senegalese market remains stable at 20%, despite Senegalese efforts to diversify by seeking new sources of investment and new suppliers of goods and services. In 2011, the value of French exports to Senegal was EUR 887 million<sup>3</sup> (an increase of 24% compared with 2010, and higher than French exports to Côte d'Ivoire), with refined petroleum products representing 25%, cereals 10% and pharmaceuticals 8% of the total; consumer goods and professional equipment were also significant French exports. The value of French imports from Senegal has been declining steadily in recent years and was EUR 96 million in 2011; about 80% of it is agrifood, especially seafood. France's trade surplus with Senegal is thus EUR 791 million, its largest in sub-Saharan Africa (South Africa excepted) and among the country's 15 highest bilateral trade surpluses. In addition, in 2010 France was the major foreign investor in Senegal with EUR 719 million, almost half of Senegal's total foreign direct investment (FDI).<sup>4</sup>

France's position as Senegal's main trading partner and main source of foreign investment did not change during the Wade presidency. By way of comparison, in 2004 France was at that time Senegal's biggest supplier of goods and services (EUR 535.4 million), its second largest client in Europe (EUR 637 million) and biggest foreign investor.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, the economic environment has become more competitive and France can no longer take for granted its position as preferred economic partner; for example in 2006 the French conglomerate Bolloré Investissements lost its contract to operate the port of Dakar to Dubai Ports World.<sup>6</sup>

### French companies in Senegal

More than 250 French firms operate in Senegal, over 100 of them subsidiaries of French companies (not all of them large) or with minority shareholdings in Senegalese firms; the remainder are mainly small and medium-sized French-owned businesses established locally under Senegalese law and usually with a private Senegalese partner. These firms produce in excess of EUR 2 billion of goods and services annually and account for 20% of total employment in the formal sector, with more than 90% of staff recruited locally (15 000 in permanent jobs and several thousand seasonal workers). They contribute 25% of gross domestic product (GDP) and 28% of tax revenues and account for 14% of Senegal's exports and 18% of its imports.<sup>7</sup> Major French companies in Senegal include Total (oil products) and the hotel group Accor.

**Table 1: Major French companies in Senegal, 2012**

France Telecom	Owns 42.3% of telephone operator Sonatel. The Senegalese government abandoned its plan to sell its 10% share in the company in 2009
Eiffage	Civil engineering company. Investing EUR 87 million in a EUR 202 million project to design, build and operate a new toll motorway from Dakar to Diameniadio
Sénégalaise des Eaux	Subsidiary of the Saur Group. Manages the water supply system on a 10-year lease contract from the Senegalese government
Société Générale de Banques au Sénégal (SGBS)	Subsidiary of Société Générale of France. Second-largest and most profitable bank in Senegal
Banque Internationale pour le Commerce et l'Industrie du Sénégal (BICIS)	Owned 54.1% by BNP Paribas, 24.9% by the Senegalese state. Third largest bank in Senegal
Sococim	Subsidiary of Vicat. Cement and aggregates producer

### French aid

France is Senegal's largest bilateral aid donor. It is also the second largest contributor to the European Development Fund (EDF); hence French funding makes up some 20% of the development aid Senegal receives through the EDF.<sup>8</sup>

Senegal is a priority recipient of French aid, largely through its long-standing links with France and its status as one of the poorest countries in the world (155th of 187 according to the 2011 UN Development Programme's Human Development Index).<sup>9</sup>

**Table 2: Main recipients of French bilateral aid (average 2007–2009) (EUR million)<sup>10</sup>**

1	Côte d'Ivoire	309
2	Iraq	260
3	Cameroon	193
4	China	167
5	Morocco	148
6	Turkey	138
7	Senegal	120
8	Lebanon	120
9	Congo	112
10	Vietnam	110

As Senegal's largest bilateral aid donor, France gave EUR 119 million in 2010, ahead of the World Bank (EUR 83 million), the US (EUR 77 million) and the EU (EUR 63 million). Total French aid to Senegal was EUR 152 million, of which about 80% was bilateral aid and 20% multilateral (EUR 33 million). In 2010, Senegal was the world's 12th largest recipient of French aid and the fourth largest in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>11</sup>

Leaving aside debt cancellation, French bilateral aid to Senegal has been relatively stable since 2003, averaging some EUR 120 million annually. In 2010, French bilateral aid consisted of 51% in grants (EUR 62 million, not counting debt cancellation and fees), 33% in fees (EUR 39 million), 8% of debt cancellation (EUR 9 million) and 8% loans (EUR 9 million). Debt cancellation is a relatively small part of the aid budget, following a EUR 284 million debt cancellation programme in 2004.<sup>12</sup> Under Wade's presidency no budget support was provided to Senegal after December 2008, when the country was on the verge of bankruptcy due to hidden budget arrears linked to the organisation of the 11th Islamic Conference in Dakar in 2008. At that time France provided budget support and also supported the Senegalese government in its negotiations with the IMF for a EUR 125 million loan.<sup>13</sup> Following the election of Macky Sall as president of Senegal in March 2012, France again promised budget support. The newly-elected president's first overseas visit was to Paris in April 2012, during which it was announced that France would provide Senegal with a EUR 130 million loan for budget support, phased over three years and channelled through the Agence Française de Développement (AFD). The French government also promised to support the Senegalese government in its negotiations for new funds from the IMF and in its request for financial support from the EU.<sup>14</sup>

Support for the productive sector is a French priority. It has four main aims: first, to improve the business environment and the performance of Senegalese firms in order to provide jobs for a rapidly growing population of working age, secondly to improve general competitiveness, thirdly to develop those sectors with the greatest economic potential and fourth, to help Senegalese firms assume social responsibility obligations. Infrastructure (including energy), agriculture (eg. irrigation projects), education and health are priority areas.<sup>15</sup>



This is, however, only part of French development aid to Senegal. In addition, the Ministry of the Interior provides funds for joint development (*développement solidaire*), which mainly finances programmes for assisting migrants to return to their countries of origin and set up businesses there, or helping migrants living in France to invest in their country of origin.<sup>16</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also provides funds, for the promotion of the French language and culture; some 80 local authorities in France are twinned with counterparts in Senegal and provide local development aid, while a number of French non-governmental organisations (NGOs) also work on development projects in Senegal, often with funds provided by the AFD.

## Cultural

The promotion of French culture and language – *la Francophonie* – in Senegal, and support for higher education, remain prime areas of action for the French government. To this end, France supports a number of education institutions in Senegal and itself remains the preferred destination for Senegalese students, more than 9 000 of whom currently are studying in France. The maintenance of cultural relations with France was a priority for Senghor and Diouf, Wade's predecessors in office. Wade, however, sought to diversify Senegal's cultural relations as he did in the economic field, turning to China to build the new national theatre and North Korea to build the African Renaissance Monument.<sup>17</sup>

### Cultural co-operation

At EUR 2.175 million, the French budget for cultural co-operation with Senegal is significant. In 2011, EUR 1.8 million of it went to support the operating costs of the Instituts Français and Alliances Françaises (including expatriates' salaries), EUR 300 000 to support 'cultural diversity' and EUR 75 000 to audiovisual and media expenditure.<sup>18</sup>

The French Institute of Senegal combines the operations and activities of the former French Cultural Centres and Franco–Senegalese Associations in Dakar and Saint-Louis. Its function is to promote both French culture and language and Senegalese culture. It is also a member of the EU National Institutes for Culture (Eunic) group created to co-ordinate the cultural activities of EU member states.

In addition, there are 13 schools in Senegal that teach the French curriculum, organised as part of a network led by the Lycée Jean Mermoz in Dakar which includes one school in Banjul (Gambia). In 2011–2012 there were 6 400 pupils attending these schools (3 426 French, 2 027 Senegalese and 936 other foreign nationals).

A special Priority Solidarity Fund (*Fonds de Solidarité Prioritaire*) supports the creation of professional degrees, doctoral schools and employability and entrepreneurship training.

### Senegalese students in France

In 2010–2011 there were 9 842 Senegalese studying in France (113 on government grants, including 71 studying for doctorates),<sup>19</sup> an increase from 9 298 (161 on government grants) in 2009–2010. France is therefore still the most popular destination for Senegalese students,<sup>20</sup> although growing numbers now choose other countries, notably the US and Canada. The Espace Campus France provides consular help for students to obtain visas. Support is also provided for partnerships between Senegalese and French research institutes operating in Senegal, such as the development agency Institut de Recherche pour

le Développement (IRD), the agricultural research association Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (Cirad), and the Institut Pasteur.

### **France in the Senegalese media**

French current affairs and political debates are closely followed in the Senegalese audiovisual and print media. There are also internet-based news sites such as Rewmi.com, seneweb.com and facedakar.com that are widely used, especially by young people. Senegalese within Senegal and from the diaspora can follow developments in Senegalese and French current affairs and politics through these media. Blogs are also widely used to express views and generate debate about current issues.

During the Wade presidency two issues played a major role in shaping Senegalese perceptions of France particularly among young Senegalese: the treatment of Senegalese immigrants in France and the related problem of French visas. This became a matter of significant public debate in March 2003, when a number of Senegalese illegal immigrants were repatriated from France by air. Recognising the strength of public feeling on the issue, President Wade retaliated by expelling nine French citizens from Senegal.<sup>21</sup> The issue came to the fore again during civil unrest in France in the autumn of 2005. Nicolas Sarkozy, who had been re-appointed as Minister of the Interior, was accused of having provoked the unrest by calling young delinquents from housing projects in the Paris suburbs a 'rabble' and suggesting the cleansing of the suburbs with a Kärcher industrial cleaning machine. After the accidental death of two youths of immigrant origin, which sparked riots, Sarkozy first blamed delinquents and gangsters but, after the rioting, made a number of announcements on future immigration policy, including selective immigration and greater tracking of immigrants.<sup>22</sup> This singling out of immigrants and the tightening of visa regulations, especially for Senegalese wanting to study in France, was especially badly received by young Senegalese.

Public debates in France are widely followed in Senegal and often create a bad impression of France. For example, a debate about halal meat in the 2012 French election campaign, and Sarkozy's demand that it be labelled as such, was met with widespread incomprehension in Senegal.<sup>23</sup> Continuing debates about 'selective immigration' and public statements by French politicians that Islam is 'incompatible with secularism' (*laïcité*) also create a bad impression.<sup>24</sup>

In sum, there is a perception that France lost ground in Senegal during the Wade presidency and that it has lost something of its past aura as the 'dream destination' for young Senegalese wishing to travel overseas.<sup>25</sup> It has reduced its support to French schools – although this is still substantial – and, although it remains the most important destination for Senegalese students, it is no longer their automatic choice.

### **Military**

The French military presence in Senegal has been reduced from 1 300 pre-positioned troops to 450 (the Troupes de Marine, successors to former overseas colonial units, made up the bulk of the troops but have now left).<sup>26</sup> The intention is to reduce further the military presence to 300 over the coming months. The Forces Françaises du Cap Vert were renamed the Eléments Français au Sénégal (EFS) with effect from 1 August 2011. The EFS no longer have the capacity to intervene; their mission is rather to work with

West African armies in support of regional security co-operation, notably through the EU African Peacekeeping Support programme (Eurorecamp). The EFS is described as a centre for regional military co-operation (*pôle opérationnel de coopération à vocation régionale*) and comprises specialist support units and a regional co-operation unit that will provide equipment and facilities for operational training and plan military training exercises.<sup>27</sup> Its equipment and facilities will also be available for peacekeeping operations to the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas) regional brigade of the African Standby Force. Although the mission of the EFS is now a regional one, Senegal is nonetheless a significant beneficiary of its presence, which also provides any necessary protection for the 25 000 French nationals living in Senegal as well as the large numbers of visiting French holidaymakers. In addition there are currently 20 French military advisers on detachment to the Senegalese Ministry of Defence.

Defence and military co-operation agreements between France and Senegal signed at the time of political independence have been renegotiated and one of the first acts of the incoming president in April 2012 was to sign new agreements that had been negotiated by his predecessor.<sup>28</sup> These changes notwithstanding, Senegal remains a significant beneficiary of French military co-operation.

### **Reduced French military presence**

During an official visit to South Africa in February 2008 then French president Sarkozy announced in a speech to the South African parliament that all defence and other military co-operation agreements linking France to its allies (mostly former French colonies) in sub-Saharan Africa would be renegotiated, and with a view to making them more transparent there would no longer be any secret clauses: the new agreements would be published in full.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, plans were announced to reorganise and reduce the permanent French military presence in Africa, the new focus being on support for the African Peace and Security Architecture. With bases in Djibouti and La Réunion – covering East and Southern Africa respectively – certain to be maintained, a decision became necessary on which of the existing bases, in Libreville or Dakar, would be retained as a permanent military base in West Africa.

Against the background of the 2010 anniversary of political independence, however, President Wade pre-empted the need for such a decision when he stated that it was no longer appropriate for French troops to be stationed in Senegal and presented their departure as the culmination of the independence process begun 50 years earlier.<sup>30</sup>

The renegotiation of the existing defence and military co-operation accords was a drawn-out and difficult process. Wade resented the fact that Sarkozy had made his crucial announcement on renegotiation in South Africa, an Anglophone country not affected by the measure, but in truth the difficulties largely stemmed from a lack of trust on either side. Wade apparently suspected France of already having chosen Libreville over Dakar despite its public position that the decision was yet to be made, while the French (and indeed many Senegalese) suspected Wade of manipulating the situation for economic and political advantage.<sup>31</sup>

Wade's pan-Africanist discourse of national liberation, which he used to justify the demand for French troops to vacate their base on the coast at Cap-Vert near Dakar, was seen as a smokescreen for Wade's real motive, which was to gain control of the valuable piece of real estate on which the French military base was situated.<sup>32</sup> At the same time

Wade exploited the issue to enhance his political popularity within Senegal by adopting a 'sovereignist' position in relation to France's military presence in the country. In keeping with his thesis of national liberation, President Wade demanded, and obtained, a symbolic handover of French military facilities to the Senegalese army. At a ceremony on 9 June 2010 the French flag was lowered and the Senegalese flag raised at the Cap-Vert military camp; however, it was publicly emphasised that the handover was 'symbolic'; indeed no date was fixed for the real handover to take place and the continuity of Franco–Senegalese military relations was underlined.<sup>33</sup> Behind the scenes, and in contrast to his public position, Wade was keen for the French army to maintain a presence.<sup>34</sup>

### **Co-operation for conflict resolution**

The Wade presidency saw significant Franco–Senegalese co-operation on conflict resolution. Wade's activism in foreign affairs, especially before the end of 2009 (after which he became increasingly preoccupied by domestic affairs in the run-up to the 2012 presidential election), and French concerns about security and stability, particularly in Francophone Africa, provided a platform for France and Senegal to co-operate on resolving conflict in the region.<sup>35</sup>

Examples of such co-operation include the 2003 Linas-Marcoussis negotiations, in which Senegal and France worked together in an effort to resolve the domestic political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire; Darfur, where French and Canadian governments provided transport for Senegalese peacekeepers; the 2008 coup in Mauritania, in which France and Senegal had convergent security interests in terms of maintaining stability in that country; and the 2009 uprising in Madagascar, when President Wade acted as mediator and France provided logistical support.<sup>36</sup>

France and Senegal stand to gain from working together when their agendas converge, for example to obtain co-signature of UN resolutions. It is also worth underlining that Senegal normally aligns its position to that of Western countries and this did not change during the Wade presidency. There is, however, no systematic co-operation between France and Senegal in multilateral forums for conflict resolution. Moreover, French and Senegalese permanent representatives on multilateral organisations receive their instructions from their respective governments, so that actual co-operation is often a matter of 'corridor diplomacy' outside meetings, rather than the product of instructions from Paris or Dakar.<sup>37</sup>

'Corridor politics' can also be a significant part of Franco–Senegalese relations in multilateral organisations in which France has an interest but no membership. This is the case notably with Ecowas, where France will often lobby francophone member states for support.<sup>38</sup>

### **Administrative**

The number of French experts in Senegal was reduced significantly during the Wade presidency as France moved to a policy of '*partenariat*' (co-operative partnership) that is seen as consistent with an approach to African governments that emphasises African solutions to African problems.<sup>39</sup> Those remaining work mainly in cultural and technical co-operation fields (there are no longer any French political advisers within the government of Senegal) moreover, an increasing number now work for multilateral

agencies rather than the Senegalese government. Further reductions in the number of French specialists, particularly in education, are expected.

### **French experts in Senegal**

The number of French experts working in Senegal has about halved since 2007. There are some 120 currently at work, 20 of whom are military personnel on two- to four-year contracts. Another 20 are teachers in Franco-Senegalese schools and are scheduled to be phased out, and a further 20 are 'technical assistants' who in practice often work as teachers. Of the remainder, between 30 and 40 work at the bilateral level with the Senegalese government and some 20 to 30 are in multilateral organisations, such as UN agencies.<sup>40</sup>

During the early years of the Wade presidency there were two French advisers in politically sensitive positions: the legal adviser to the president, and the military adviser. The role of the legal adviser was to advise the president on the legality of proposed constitutional changes. Although Wade was keen for the post to continue, the French government considered it an anachronism and was concerned that it made France complicit in constitutional changes that the Wade administration was putting forward for reasons of political advantage. It was abolished in 2009.<sup>41</sup> The post of military adviser was abolished in the context of a political reorganisation at the Ministry of Defence that has moved towards the policy of 'co-operative partnership'.

## **FRANCE IN SENEGAL'S FOREIGN RELATIONS**

Each of the two countries continues to be an important part of the other's foreign relations, with regular official ministerial visits in either direction. France's largest embassy in sub-Saharan Africa is in Dakar and Senegal traditionally sends one of its most senior diplomats to Paris.

French politicians and diplomats like to hold up Senegal as a model of democracy and stability in Africa and an example of what Franco-African co-operation can achieve. Franco-Senegalese relations remain strong; nonetheless, there was a distinct cooling in relations during the latter part of the Wade presidency as French concerns about governance issues increased. The Sarkozy government also was not prepared to support Wade's project to prepare his son, Karim Wade, for his succession.<sup>42</sup>

### **Presidential visits and ambassadorial appointments**

During Wade's time in office there were two official French presidential visits to Senegal: those of Jacques Chirac (February 2005) and of Sarkozy (July 2007). Wade made four visits to Paris, respectively in May 2000, June 2001, April 2003, and February 2006. The last two were billed as 'private'.

Ambassadorial appointments between the two countries became a political bone of contention during the Wade presidency. For example, President Wade requested, and obtained, the recall of two ambassadors, Jean-Didier Roisin in 2005 and the widely respected and popular Jean-Christophe Rufin in 2010, who were seen as too critical of the Senegalese president. It is also reported that he asked for Jean de Glinasty to be replaced

on the grounds that he was a friend of former president Diouf. On the Senegalese side, ambassadors Kéba Birane Cisse and Maïmouna Diop were two of Senegal's most respected and senior diplomats; however, when in 2008 the latter was replaced by Maïmouna Sourang Ndir, a close collaborator of Wade with no diplomatic experience, the change was widely criticised as a political appointment guaranteed to ensure Wade's close control over policy towards France.

**Table 3: Diplomatic representatives 2000–2012**

Senegalese ambassadors to France		
Term of duty	Ambassador	
1996–2001	Kéba Birane Cisse	
2001–2008	Doudou Salla Diop	
2008–2012	Maïmouna Sourang Ndir	
French ambassadors to Senegal		
Term of duty	Ambassador	French President at time
1999–2003	Jean de Gliniasty	Jacques Chirac
2003–2005	Jean-Didier Roisin	Jacques Chirac
2005–2007	André Parant	Jacques Chirac
2007–2010	Jean-Christophe Rufin	Nicolas Sarkozy
2010 to present	Nicolas Normand	Nicolas Sarkozy (to May 2012)

Presidential visits between the two countries also became a source of tension. Chirac, who was a close friend of Wade's predecessor, Abdou Diouf, refused to visit Senegal between 2000 and 2005. Following his defeat in the presidential election of 2000 Wade in turn refused to support Chirac's choice of Diouf to replace former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali as head of the powerful Francophone International linguistic and cultural association (*Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*). Relations between the two countries were also made worse by President Chirac's failure to attend Senghor's funeral in December 2001, widely seen by many Senegalese as a snub. The fact that Chirac then made an official visit to Mali and Niger in October 2003 without making a stop in Senegal was similarly badly viewed. During this period President Wade was developing a good relationship with US President George W Bush. Following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the US Wade organised a conference on terrorism in Dakar and refused to follow France in condemning the US-led invasion of Iraq. Bush made an official visit to Senegal in July 2003.

Against this background, Chirac's official visit to Senegal in February 2005 represented an attempt to restore good relations. This was especially important as France's relations with Côte d'Ivoire, one of its other key allies in West Africa, had become increasingly problematic since the election of Laurent Gbagbo as Ivoirian president and the worsening of the political climate in that country. It was also seen by some Senegalese as an attempt to make amends for Chirac's failure to visit Senegal in 2001 and 2003. Wade's decision

to support the controversial French intervention in Côte d'Ivoire in November 2004 and Chirac's decision to replace Roisin as ambassador, as Wade had requested, helped to reduce tensions between the two countries and smoothed the way for the visit; it represented mainly an opportunity for Chirac to highlight the importance of France as Senegal's biggest bilateral trade partner, to remind the Senegalese that France had cancelled EUR 286.1 million of Senegalese government debt in 2004 and to promote his ideas for Africa to have two permanent seats on the UN Security Council and for sustainable development in Africa. He also obtained Wade's support for his proposal for a global tax to fund development.

In July 2007 President Sarkozy's first official visit to Africa included three countries: Libya, Senegal and Gabon. Having been snubbed by France during the first five years of his presidency, Wade was pleased that Senegal was Sarkozy's first destination in sub-Saharan Africa and that he would give a keynote speech at Cheikh Anta Diop University (UCAD) in Dakar on a theme that was dear to Wade: the renaissance of Africa. Sarkozy also used the opportunity to praise Senegal as a model of stability, peace and democracy and to describe France and Senegal as two 'brother countries' (*pays frères*). In return, Wade praised Sarkozy for his support for Senegal's position at the 2007 G-8 summit in Germany, in favour of the development of education and infrastructure in Africa and for a permanent African seat on the UN Security Council. He also agreed to support France's candidate, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, for managing director of the IMF and to take back Senegalese illegal immigrants living in France.

Finally, there was the customary celebration of the important economic links between the two countries.<sup>43</sup> The trip is, however, remembered in France and Senegal alike mostly for the speech made by the French president at UCAD, in which he famously declared that Africa's problem was that it 'had not sufficiently entered into history'.<sup>44</sup> The speech was widely criticised by French and Senegalese intellectuals and in the local press for its alleged obsolete and patronising view of Africans and it had a lasting, negative impact on perceptions of Sarkozy in Senegal.

### **Ebb and flow of relations under President Wade**

Wade's anti-colonial 'liberationist' discourse notwithstanding, he was in many ways close to France. He has a French wife and his children are French. Yet he felt that he was not accepted in France in the way that Senghor and Diouf were; hence his relationship to France when president was in some ways an ambiguous one. He is a Francophile who felt, as president, that his love was unrequited.

Immediately after his election in 2000 Wade's relations with France were good and his actions indicated that he intended Senegal to remain at the heart of France's traditional sphere of influence in Africa. His first official visit outside Africa was to France. Wade's relations with Chirac, however, were somewhat strained, partly because he suspected France of supporting his political adversary in the 2000 election. His attention subsequently turned towards building good relations with the US and with emerging global powers, notably India, China and Middle Eastern countries. His relations with France, and more specifically with Chirac, improved from late 2004 onwards, as those between France and Côte d'Ivoire deteriorated. The period 2005-2007 thus marked a notable easing of tension between Wade and Chirac. Wade welcomed Sarkozy's promise

of a renewal of France's Africa policy and was delighted to welcome the newly elected president to Senegal on an official visit in July 2007. Sarkozy's UCAD speech, however, created a poor impression. Although Wade sought to excuse the speech, pointing out that Sarkozy had not written it himself, many Senegalese were not prepared to be so indulgent.

The renewed deterioration in relations between the two governments after 2007 was not a direct result of the Dakar speech but rather reflected growing concerns in France and the West generally, about corruption and poor quality governance in Senegal. A highly critical report on these issues, written by Rufin, was leaked to the press and further exacerbated the situation.<sup>45</sup> Wade hoped that the replacement of Rufin as ambassador would improve matters: he counted Sarkozy as a friend and hoped that, with a more pliant ambassador, he would enjoy improved relations with the French president. It soon became clear, however, that even if the new ambassador was less outspoken than his predecessor, Sarkozy was not prepared to support Wade's plans to alter the voting system and the constitution in order to organise a 'dynastic succession' and hand power to his son.

### **Relations with the emerging global powers and Middle Eastern countries**

President Wade's most significant foreign policy achievement was to diversify Senegal's foreign relations, particularly at an economic and diplomatic level. Middle Eastern countries, especially Kuwait, played a major part in funding the infrastructure works (new roads, tunnels, hotels) that were necessary to enable Dakar to host the 2008 Islamic Conference meeting. Wade opened Senegal to Asian investment and diversified the country's trading relations and its banking sector. It now has an assembly plant to build Iranian cars; India is a major investor in Senegal's iron ore mines and Indian concerns are majority shareholders in its phosphate mines.<sup>46</sup> Senegal also now sources imports from an increasing range of suppliers beyond France. For example, it buys buses from India and China and an increasing proportion of consumer goods imports from South Korea. Diplomatic relations with the US and Asian countries have also been strengthened as part of the diversification process.

The impact of these new linkages on Franco-Senegalese relations is that the latter are now less exclusive in nature. France, however, remains a major part of Senegal's foreign relations, albeit within the new, much more diversified foreign relations landscape. The long history of relations between the two countries, the presence of so many French nationals in the country, the significant French economic and diplomatic presence and the continuing importance of the French language – although increasingly challenged by the growing spread of English – mean that relations between the two countries remain strong. The impact of this diversification, however, has inevitably been to reduce French leverage, especially as many of Senegal's new sources apply less economic and political conditionality to their partnership with Senegal than does France.

## **PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN OF 2012**

In the run-up to the 2012 presidential election a key concern for Wade was to prepare the way for his son to succeed him. Karim ran for the post of mayor of Dakar in the 2009 municipal elections with a view to obtaining for himself a political power base from which



he could later become president. After he was defeated Wade appointed him to head a new super-ministry in the government (Minister of State for International Co-operation, Regional Development, Air Transport and Infrastructure), that gave him sway over the country's main economic sectors. In 2010, control of energy resources was added to this already vast portfolio making Karim de facto controller of swathes of government policy.

There were a number of problems with this plan. First, many Senegalese rejected what they saw as an increasingly overt attempt to impose a dynastic succession. Secondly, in order for it to work, Wade *père* had first to obtain the agreement of the Constitutional Court to change the constitution, so that he could run for a third term. Thirdly, to be reasonably sure of victory he needed to change the voting system to a single round of voting; although he could be reasonably sure of topping the ballot in the first round, there was a danger that all the opposition candidates would support the second placed candidate in the second round and thus deny Wade victory.

Resentment about these and a number of other issues came to a head on 23 June 2011, when mass demonstrations broke out across Dakar. Frequent power cuts and the cost of food and fuel were continual sources of discontent, but when Wade announced his plan to introduce a law making it possible to elect a president and vice-president on a single ticket with just 25% of votes cast, civil unrest was unleashed across the capital. Wade was forced to withdraw the bill. The diffuse resistance movement subsequently became known as M23 and emerged as the focus of opposition to Wade's plans for constitutional change and a dynastic succession. Its slogan was 'Wade, out' (*Wade dégage*) and its demonstrations often led to violence, as a result of which some six people died and a number of others were injured in the run-up to the elections. Such political violence had rarely been seen in Senegal and each side accused the other of responsibility for it.<sup>47</sup>

The remainder of the election campaign took place in an atmosphere of widespread distrust. There was unrest again, although on a lesser scale, in the run-up to the constitutional court's ruling in January 2012 on whether Wade could stand for a third term, although it was widely expected that the court would rule in Wade's favour as he had himself appointed its five members.<sup>48</sup> There were also fears that Wade would attempt to steal the election, as his counterpart Gbagbo had done in Côte d'Ivoire, by declaring himself the victor after the first round of voting.

Against this background of mutual suspicion and distrust, France was suspected of pursuing its own agenda behind the scenes. The opposition feared that France favoured Wade and would not prevent his claiming victory in the elections, particularly as the French ambassador who had succeeded Rufin refused to make any public statements about Wade's plans for constitutional reform on the grounds that it was a matter for the Senegalese people. On the other hand, Wade worried that France had decided to drop him; France had refused to intervene on his behalf when the 23 June movement threatened to topple his regime in June 2011 and doors were closed to him in Paris.<sup>49</sup> Against this background, some interpreted his decision to break ranks with the African Union and make an unannounced visit to Libya in June 2011 to try to persuade President Muammar Gaddafi to stand down, as a desperate attempt to curry favour with the French.<sup>50</sup> In the end, it was increasingly clear that France, along with most Western nations, did not support Wade's plans for constitutional change and would not intervene in the election. The election passed off smoothly for the most part, with President Wade obtaining a lower

proportion of the vote in the second round than in the first, albeit on a higher turnout. He conceded defeat to Sall on the evening of the election on 25 March.

## THE FUTURE OF FRANCO-SENEGALESE RELATIONS

Senegal's financial situation was so precarious when Sall became president that he immediately went to Paris to request a budget support loan.<sup>51</sup> The request was granted by then-president Sarkozy, and his successor, President François Hollande announced a further EUR 92.6 million in grants to the Senegalese government in October 2012, during his first official visit to Africa. President Hollande received a warm welcome and at a joint press conference both presidents emphasised the two countries' shared interests in the sub-region, notably with regard to Guinea-Bissau and northern Mali, and both underlined the strength of bilateral co-operation between the two countries.

According to President Sall '[our] bilateral co-operation functions extremely well. French support for our economic and social development efforts is constant. We intend to work together to consolidate this traditional and fruitful partnership'. In response, President Hollande pointed to Senegal as a model of democracy in Africa and also emphasised the strength and special nature of the relationship between the two countries.<sup>52</sup> Senegal will require further budget support if its economic situation and public finances are to improve, yet France has its own problems of weak economic growth and a large public sector deficit. It is therefore likely to be unable to provide support to the new Senegalese government on the scale needed. Nonetheless, Hollande's visit appears to signal a new warmth in relations between the two countries and could herald the beginning of a period of closer co-operation, notably in the security field where both presidents pointed to their countries' shared interest in seeking solutions to problems in Guinea-Bissau and Mali.

Significantly in this context, in May 2012 President Sall appointed Senegal's former ambassador in Mali, Mankeur Ndiaye, ambassador to France. Ndiaye had been involved in negotiating with the Malian military junta, the evacuation to Dakar of ousted former president Amadou Toumani Touré.<sup>53</sup> Given shared French and Senegalese security interests in northern Mali, the appointment of an ambassador with first-hand experience of the political situation in Mali is clearly important, as he will be well placed to voice to the French government Senegalese concerns regarding Mali.

This co-operative approach notwithstanding, two issues face the new administrations in France and Senegal that could present difficulties. The first of these arises from the sinking of the Senegalese government-owned ferry *Le Joola* off the coast of Gambia in 2002 which claimed at least 1 863 lives, including 22 French nationals. Under French law arrest warrants can be issued in cases where French nationals are victims of alleged crimes abroad. In 2008, at the request of relatives of the French victims, French Judge Jean-Wilfrid Noel issued international arrest warrants for nine Senegalese accused of bearing some responsibility for the ferry's sinking. The dossier is still with the judge and, if he decides there is a case to answer, the high-ranking Senegalese officials held responsible will be charged and called to appear before the court later this year. Sarkozy warned Wade in August 2011 of this possibility and the latter was visibly annoyed at the ensuing press conference, accusing the Senegalese press of whipping up criticism of the government over

its handling of the affair.<sup>54</sup> It remains to be seen how this will be handled by presidents Sall and Hollande.<sup>55</sup>

The second issue is that of Senegalese illegal immigrants in France, who do not understand why Senegalese consuls-general in France are signing orders that allow for their expulsion from France. The problem lies in an agreement signed by Wade on 'selective' immigration (*immigration choisie*) a policy advocated by Sarkozy as interior minister and later president.<sup>56</sup> During his presidency consuls-general sought to sign fewer of these orders but found themselves under pressure from the Ministry of the Interior, which was urging expulsions in order to show that illegal immigration figures were coming down. Senegalese immigrants want to establish both Sall's position on this issue and Hollande's response. (Mali, by contrast, has refused to sign the selective immigration agreement until the situation of Malian illegal immigrants in France is regularised.<sup>57</sup>)

## CONCLUSION

The paper began by drawing attention to the long history of links between France and Senegal. The special relationship between the two countries predates the colonial period and has continued into post-colonial times. The Wade presidency was in many ways a difficult one for the relationship as successive French governments have sought to reform French–African relations since the turn of the millennium and put them on a more 'normal' footing.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, under the banner of *sopi*, Wade tried to introduce changes in Senegal, not least in the country's foreign relations. Personal relationships have also played a part: Wade's relations with Chirac were often difficult and those with Sarkozy rapidly soured after 2007. Despite these problems, however, Franco–Senegalese relations remain strong and both countries continue to attach great importance to the relationship. In this respect, the fact that President Sall's first overseas visit was to Paris and President Hollande's first trip to Africa was to Dakar was no coincidence. Indeed 2012 may well mark the beginning of a period of greater serenity in the France–Senegal relationship and may herald enhanced co-operation between the two countries.

## ENDNOTES

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  - 16 See <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/senegal-233/france-and-senegal/other-types-of-cooperation-6520/>, accessed 23 October 2012.
  - 17 The African Renaissance Monument was the brainchild of President Wade. Costing EUR 23 million it is the tallest statue in Africa, and has been widely criticised. The monument was inaugurated 4 April 2010 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of independence.
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- 41 Personal communication, former French official in Dakar, Paris, April 2012.
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## SAIIA'S FUNDING PROFILE

SAIIA raises funds from governments, charitable foundations, companies and individual donors. Our work is currently being funded by, among others, the Bradlow Foundation, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, the European Commission, the British High Commission of South Africa, the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the International Institute for Sustainable Development, INWENT, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Royal Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank, and the Open Society Foundation for South Africa. SAIIA's corporate membership is drawn from the South African private sector and international businesses with an interest in Africa. In addition, SAIIA has a substantial number of international diplomatic and mainly South African institutional members.

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