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Senegal

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Citation

Hesseling, G. S. C. M. (2005). Senegal. In A. Mehler, H. Melber, & K. van Walraven (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara in [...]* (pp. 149-157). Leiden/Boston: Brill. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/9726>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Senegal



In 2004, general discontent with the president's policies continued, which was reflected in a proliferation of critical publications and counter-publications. It was also, again, a year of government reshuffles. On the positive side, were two important events: the abolition of the death penalty and the signing of a peace agreement between the government and the separatist movement in the Casamance. Continuing its economic liberalisation policy, Senegal made satisfactory macroeconomic progress and was eligible for important debt relief, but the majority of the population continued to live under the poverty line.

Domestic Politics

Since **Abdoulaye Wade** acceded to the presidency in March 2000, he has persistently been the subject of critical publications. During the past four years, at least seven books have appeared with Wade as their main subject. Almost all these books were a commercial success, ran into several reprints and resulted in animated debates in the national press. The book that kicked up the most dust was published in July 2003 and had a lasting effect into 2004. In his book 'Wade, un Opposant au Pouvoir: l'Alternance Piégée' ('Wade, a Member of the Opposition in Power: a Trapped Alternation'), the Senegalese journalist Abdou Latif Coulibaly painted a rather nasty picture of the president as a megalomaniac ruler, quick-

tempered and excessively self-assured. It is said the book contributed to the dismissal, in April 2004, of Prime Minister Idrissa Seck, considered to be its initiator. Actually, the discharge of Seck was the outcome of intensified political tensions between the president and his prime minister. Seck was considered a serious rival to Wade because of his extensive network of strategic individuals within the state apparatus and the PDS ('Parti Démocratique Sénégalais'). There were also problems with regard to public expenditures, not only in the city of Thiès, Seck's political base (where he also holds the office of mayor), but also in some state enterprises and local communities where Seck had placed his men. In April, Macky Sall, hitherto minister of the interior and local communities, replaced Seck and became the fourth prime minister since the political changes in 2000. He immediately undertook a **reshuffle of the government**. The announced dismissal of two ministers, Modou Diagne Fada, of environment, and Aliou Sow, of youth affairs, gave rise to violent protests by student and youth movements and both ministers eventually retained their positions. Consequently, the new government, the sixth under Wade's presidency, did not bring much change: Cheikh Adibou Fall was accorded the post of minister of the interior and two new ministries were created, the ministry of local communities and decentralisation with Aminata Tall as minister of state, and the ministry of the maritime economy with Djibo Ka as minister of state. Further modest cabinet reshuffles took place in July, August and November, in which many of the important positions remained unchanged. On 2 November, Cheikh Adibou Fall was replaced as minister of the interior by Ousmane Ngom. The team of ministers (39 in total, instead of the more limited team of 20 ministers to which Wade had committed himself during his election campaign, in order to reduce costs) was made up of members of the PDS and 'Sopi' (which means 'change' in Wolof, the dominant local language in Senegal) coalition that brought Wade to power, and includes one opposition minister. All were chosen for their unswerving loyalty to the president.

This practice of the president to surround himself with admirers and yes-men was also criticised by Coulibaly, and he specifically mentioned the president's family: his son Karim and daughter Syndiély were both officially nominated as his advisors, but his wife and the daughter of his sister were also blamed for having too much influence on the president.

Accusations of bad governance by Coulibaly even led to the creation of a parliamentary commission to examine the various claims made in his book. Wade was greatly affected by the book but instead of responding to the allegations himself, he encouraged a team of nine members, directed by the vice-president of the parliament, Iba Der Thiam, to formulate a reaction. Even before the parliamentary inquiry and the work of his 'club of friends' was complete, Wade and his cabinet mounted a counteroffensive of sorts by publishing a White Paper in which he proclaimed the accomplishments of his regime over the past four years. Fifty thousand copies of the White Paper, entitled 'Le Changement, Preuves en Main' ('The Changes, Evidence in Hand'), were printed, as were 250,000 copies of an accompanying illustrated pamphlet. The paper and pamphlet were presented to a crowd of almost

one million people gathered in Dakar for the fourth anniversary of Wade's mandate on 19 March. On that occasion, several political parties that had supported Wade in 2000 and had ministerial representatives in government refused to participate in the celebrations, thus demonstrating their dissatisfaction with Wade's policy. On 28 August, Iba Der Thiam and his team presented their attempted refutation of Coulibaly's allegations (without mentioning his name), also in the form of a published book: 'Un Procès d'Intention à l'Épreuve de la Vérité' ('The Truth as Evidence of Alleged Intentions').

The fact that such an intense and occasionally heated public debate about the president and his politics was possible, showed that Senegal was living up to its reputation as a country where freedom of expression is respected. But during the year, the limits of tolerance towards the press also became apparent. In July, privately owned newspapers decided on a 'day without the press'. On that day (12 July), their newspapers were not published and private radio stations replaced their news bulletins with music as part of the strike. This was to protest the arrest of the editor of 'Le Quotidien', Madiambal Diagne. His paper wrote of alleged corruption in the customs service and interference in the judiciary, and Diagne was charged with publishing confidential reports and correspondence, false information and news 'which could cause serious political problems'. Although he was released within three weeks, the private press considered his arrest to be part of a government campaign to muzzle it, and editors of other newspapers feared that they would be next. They especially criticised President Wade for his slowness or unwillingness to 'clean up' the Penal Code and the Code of Penal Procedure in order to adapt them to the democratisation process in the country, especially as he was himself – when still in opposition – several times the victim of the much decried Article 80 of the Penal Code, which allowed for the arrest of journalists who publish news 'which could cause serious political problems'. At the end of the year, the president promised to decriminalise press offences.

However, the imbroglio involving the president and the press was no obstacle to the International League for Human Rights, an American NGO, which granted Abdoulaye Wade the **international award for human rights** not only for his perseverance during his years in opposition (from 1974 till 2000) against the hegemonic power of the Socialist Party, but also because of his role in the resolution of conflicts in Africa (Madagascar, Darfur, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau). Many Senegalese journalists and personalities (including the well-known musician Youssou Ndour), as well as a number of African heads of state and Kofi Annan, attended the ceremony on 22 September. Previous award winners included Nelson Mandela, Jimmy Carter and Andrei Sakharov.

Although the constitution prohibits the creation of political parties on the basis of religion, on 20 February Modou Kara announced **the creation of a new party** 'le Parti de la Vérité pour le Développement' (PVD). Modou Kara's full name is Cheikh Modou Kara Mbacké Noreyni, and he is a descendant of the founder of Senegal's most influential brotherhood, the Mourides. The Mourides and other Islamic brotherhoods claim the allegiance of more than 90% of the population. Kara is very popular among young people and as the

leader of an Islamic mass movement 'le Mouvement Mondial pour l'Unité de Dieu' (MMUD), established in 1995, he claimed to have 500,000 followers or 'taalibe'. His announcement resulted in passionate debates in the press. In June, the 'marabout des jeunes' presented his new party at a press conference, stressing his intention to innovate the relationship between Islam and politics and to defend the interests of the pauperised urban youth, disappointed by the promised 'sopi' under the regime of Wade. In his speeches, he presented himself, however, not as a marabout, but as a citizen and his followers as citizens, taalibe.

Islamic influence also manifested itself in other ways. Firstly, it was apparent in the revival of the public debate on the reform of the 'Code de la Famille' (Family Law) of 1972, which was last revised in 1984. Muslim fundamentalists again advocated the adoption of the shariah. In March, a collective of 17 Islamic associations called for the prohibition in Senegal of 'Sexe d'Allah', a book written by a French female journalist who ventured that, through the centuries, Muslims always cultivated love and sensual pleasures.

Towards the end of the year, two major events occurred. On 10 December – the international day celebrating the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 – the Senegalese National Assembly voted for the **abolition of the death penalty**, thus joining the 12 other African countries that had already made this 'choice of civilisation', as it was portrayed in the national press.

On the threshold of the new year, 30 December, Interior Minister Ousmane Ngom and the leader of the 'Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance' (MFDC), Father Diamecoune Senghor, **signed a peace pact** aimed at ending one of West Africa's longest-running insurgencies. The secessionist struggle in the **Casamance** had started in 1982, and was fuelled by complaints among the Diola, who form the majority in the Casamance, that their region was being marginalised by the government in Dakar. However, the MFDC was also obsessed with historical arguments and claimed that colonial France did not include the Casamance in Senegal and always granted it special status. As early as 1993 France had denied this. This protracted, low-intensity war between the Senegalese forces and MFDC resulted in the killing of several thousand people, including many civilians, and the forced displacement, internal and external, of tens of thousands of people. Spill-over effects were felt in the neighbouring countries, The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. From the late 1980s, many attempts were made to negotiate an agreement (ceasefire agreements were signed in 1991, 1993 and 2001), but the serious fragmentation of the independence movement was one of the main obstacles to achieving a definitive settlement of the conflict. In July 2004, the National Assembly voted in a law providing an amnesty for all MFDC combatants, and in September, MFDC, in collaboration with national and international human rights movements, organised a large reconciliation forum in the main city of the Casamance, Ziguinchor, to lay the foundations for further negotiations. This forum was, however, not attended by officials from the government. The signing of the peace deal on 30 December could be the beginning of the end – at least that was what most ordinary Casamançais who

had suffered through the conflict for many years were hoping. At the time of the signing it was still unclear which factions of the MFDC supported Diamecoune. Hints of division within MFDC were confirmed on the eve of the signing ceremony. The head of the external wing of the MFDC in Paris, Mamadou Nkrumah Sané, wrote an open letter to Diamecoune, in which he labelled the peace agreement as nothing more than “une déclaration de guerre contre notre pays, la Casamance” (“a declaration of war against our country, the Casamance”). And Magne Dieme, the self-promoted head of the ‘Front Nord’ of MFDC, also openly distanced himself from the peace agreement. For President Wade, who made peace with the Casamance a priority when he came to power, the agreement of 30 December could be claimed as a success for his policy. However, he still had to convince the international donor community that it constituted a real ending of the troubles in the Casamance in order to gain full access to the promised aid money necessary for the recovery programme and mine-clearing operations in the region.

Foreign Affairs

In foreign affairs, 2004 could be labelled the year of **French-American competition**, with Senegal wanting to show it was no longer under the heavy influence of France by mounting a charm offensive on the United States.

Since Wade’s coming to power, **Franco-Senegalese relationships** have become very unstable. Abdoulaye Wade still felt a kind of resentment against ‘Paris’ because of French diplomacy’s dismissive treatment of him when he was Senegal’s main opposition leader, and the public friendship between Jacques Chirac and his predecessor, Abdou Diouf (of whose youngest daughter Chirac is godfather). Besides these personal considerations, there were other reasons for the deterioration in the relationship between Senegal and its former colonial power. In general, the Senegalese blamed France for the difficulties Senegalese encountered in obtaining visas to study or work in France. And in 2003, there had been serious confrontations between Senegal and France over the massive expulsion of Senegalese immigrants from France, their humiliating treatment by French customs officers and Senegal’s response in expelling not only a French journalist but also some French people staying in Senegal without proper documents. From the French side, Abdoulaye Wade was accused of becoming too close to George W. Bush: “Bush is a friend and we understood each other from the beginning. He even telephones me just to know if I am fine,” Wade declared in the French newspaper ‘Le Figaro’ in February 2004. A more specific example of Senegal’s good relationships with the US is the agreement, signed in 2003, that neither country would extradite the other’s nationals to the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

In an attempt to thaw Franco-Senegalese relationships, Abdoulaye Wade had a private lunch at the Élysée with his counterpart Chirac on 19 February, with the result that Chirac promised to make an official visit to Senegal during the year (it was later postponed to 2005). Chirac’s last official visit to Senegal dated back to 1995, whereas Bush had honoured

Senegal by making a very short visit there on 7 July 2003. In the course of 2004, both countries took measures to resolve the problem of clandestine immigration by air, and France facilitated the issuing of special visas for Senegalese students.

The warming of Franco-Senegalese relationships was confirmed on 6 December in a message from Jacques Chirac, delivered by the French ambassador to the US at a gala dinner in Washington hosted by the National Democratic Institute, a non-profit-making organisation close to the American Democratic Party, in which he congratulated his friend Abdoulaye Wade ('Monsieur le Président et cher ami') for winning the W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award for 2004. During the afternoon of the same day, Wade had a **working session at the White House** with President Bush to discuss economic collaboration between the US and Senegal; investments in the context of the Millenium Challenge Account; Iraq, Darfur, the Ukraine, and Côte d'Ivoire; the war against terrorism; and Franco-American relationships. According to one of the confidants of Wade, the latter advised the American president that it was now opportune to improve his personal relationships with Jacques Chirac.

The king of **Morocco**, Mohammed VI, visited Senegal on 29 June where, in the presence of Abdoulaye Wade, he laid the foundation stone of the 'Université du futur africain' (to be named after his father, Hassan II) in Sebikotane, about 40 kilometres from Dakar. Morocco and Senegal have long had good relationships, not only because the Tidjani brotherhood – the most important one in terms of members in Senegal – was founded in Morocco, but also because the joint venture between Royal Air Maroc and Air Sénégal International, established in 2001, had proven by 2004 to be a real commercial success.

Relations with neighbouring countries, more particularly with The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Mauritania, were considerably improved in 2004. Senegal's relations with both **The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau** were long dominated by the conflict in the southern Casamance region. Both countries not only hosted several meetings between the government of Senegal and MFDC, but were also a refuge for large numbers of displaced persons. Moreover, during the conflict Guinea-Bissau was often accused of allowing MFDC members to train on its territory. Since his election, President Abdoulaye Wade's main strategy has been to make direct contact with the different factions within MFDC, without intermediaries: Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia were excluded from the peace process. The signing of the peace agreement in December may contribute to an improvement of relations with these countries. With regard to **Mauritania**, relations have improved progressively since the serious crisis between the two countries in 1989. An indication of improved relations was the decision by Mauritania's government to award 270 temporary fishing licences to Senegalese fishermen in June.

Finally, Abdoulaye Wade continued to intensify his **diplomatic influence** in West Africa and across the continent, not only in the context of NEPAD, but also by contributing to peacekeeping activities: Senegalese troops played an important role in the UN operation in Côte d'Ivoire that started in April.

Socioeconomic Developments

In general, Senegal made satisfactory economic progress, with an estimated **growth rate** of more than 6% (President Wade mentioned a growth rate of 6.7% in his state of the nation address). The major sources of foreign exchange remained tourism, fishing and phosphates. Senegal received about 900,000 tourists in 2004, the majority (60%) from France. Since many tourist activities take place in the Casamance region, it is expected that the return of security after the peace settlement might increase the development of this sector in coming years. Although Senegal's contribution to the international fish market is relatively small, the fishing sector, including processing, contributed more than 30% to the export of (semi-) processed products: small-scale fishing accounted for about 45% of fish exports. In this sector also, the return of security in the Casamance, the main fishing area, might have positive influence. In the mining sector, the extraction of phosphates remained the dominant economic activity, contributing about 3% of world exports of phosphates. Gold has been discovered in the southeast at Sabodala. In October, the Senegalese authorities awarded gold exploration permits to Australia's Mineral Deposits Limited (MDL) and a Canadian-Saudi entity, Euro Mines.

However, the economic success could also be partly attributed to the ongoing crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, resulting in the diversion of more **foreign investments** to Dakar (direct foreign investment has doubled over the last three years). Meanwhile, the Senegalese government continued the process of economic reform and liberalisation by improving the business environment and adapting the relevant legislation. In February, a new 'Code des investissements' (Investment Code) and 'Code Général des Impôts' (taxation law) were adopted to replace the previous laws, whereas a totally new legal instrument was introduced in June, when the 'Law on BOT (Build, Operate and Transfer)' was adopted. This law, whose official name is in English, is meant to boost investment in public infrastructure by formulating public-private partnerships. In order to coordinate activities in this field, various structures were created, such as APIX, 'Agence de Promotion des Investissements et des Grands Travaux' (Agency to Promote Investments and Public Works) and CPI, 'Conseil présidentiel sur l'Investissement' (Presidential Council for Investments). The intended long-term projects, to start from 2005, included the construction of a new international airport about 40 kilometres from Dakar, a toll highway between Dakar and Thiès (about 70 kilometres) and new railway projects. Attempts to privatise public sectors such as electricity (Société d'Électricité du Sénégal) and groundnut-oil production (Sonacos, Société nationale de commercialisation des oléagineux du Sénégal) were unsuccessful in 2004, probably because of the ever-increasing debts of these parastatals.

In the **agricultural sector**, Senegal, like other West African countries, faced one of the most damaging locust outbreaks in 15 years. On 3 September, an emergency meeting with ministers from 12 affected countries in the sub-region took place in Dakar. Senegal decided to use its national armed forces to help combat the spread of desert locusts in West Africa.

The locust crisis, combined with deficient rainfall, resulted in disappointing yields of cereals and cotton (which declined 22% and 9% respectively). However, and in spite of the adverse natural circumstances, the production of groundnuts, sesame and cassava rose (28%, 56% and 121% respectively). On 25 May, the National Assembly adopted new agricultural reform measures, 'La loi d'Orientation Agro-Sylvo-Pastoral', aimed at a better agricultural production system. A first draft bill was released in 2003 on the initiative and under the supervision of the president himself. This 'Projet de Loi d'Orientation Agricole' was submitted for comment to representatives of the agricultural sector. They particularly criticised the top-down approach during the preparation phase and the fact that consultation about the draft bill was limited to experts, thus excluding the real stakeholders in rural development. After many workshops and information sessions at the local level, organised by the agricultural sector representatives, extensive and elaborate suggestions for improving the draft bill were sent to the president and the minister of agriculture, and most of them were subsequently integrated into the final law. As the revised title indicates, the act no longer focused only on agriculture, but also on forestry and cattle breeding. The most salient feature of the new act was its integrated vision of rural economic development, aiming at diversifying rural production (including rural tourism) and placed in the context of poverty reduction. In this respect, attention was given to the equal treatment of the men, women and youth working in the rural economic sector, including the development of a system of rural social security, the importance afforded professional training, modernisation of local and regional markets and development of public services in rural areas. But as a 'loi d'orientation', the act was mainly a framework for future government politics and most of the proposed measures would be implemented from two to ten years of the date of its promulgation. One of the most challenging provisions in the act was Article 23, which stated that "A new land tenure policy shall be elaborated and a land reform act submitted to the National Assembly within two years of the date of promulgation of this law." The planned land reform act would include specific provision for animal husbandry and pastoral activities. Finally, the act provided for the creation of a 'Conseil Supérieur d'Orientation Agro-Sylvo-Pastorale', chaired by the president, to monitor its implementation. This council was also commissioned to organise a yearly agricultural conference, bringing together all stakeholders in the rural development sector, and particularly representatives of professional organisations, civil society and development partners (Article 77).

In past years, Senegal had realised full internet connectivity, thereby creating a mini-boom in **information and technology-based services**. Dakar became an eldorado of call centres and e-business, creating thousands of new job opportunities. In Johannesburg in September, a Senegalese enterprise in this sector, Manobi, was declared 'Top ICT Company 2004' and granted the 'Award for the Most Innovative African Company'. The company provides local farmers and traders with up-to-the-minute market prices for their crops through their mobile telephones, and provides fishermen with information about

weather conditions. Pastoralists can track their cattle herds using cell phones and Global Positioning Systems.

The motor of Senegal's economy, however, was heavily based on **migration**. Since many Senegalese migrants are illegal and a great number of the remittances are made through informal transactions, exact figures are unavailable. However, it is estimated that the Senegalese diaspora, amounting to about one to three million, contributed between 5% and 10% to the gross national product.

In the course of the year, Senegal became eligible for **debt relief** on several occasions. In February, Senegal reached its completion point under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, and as a consequence IMF and the World Bank supported \$ 850 m. in debt service relief. In June, an additional debt relief of \$ 430 m was provided by the Paris Club creditors. Finally, in November, Senegal received relief for its entire debt with France, i.e., CFAfr 185.5 bn. On that occasion, the national press proclaimed triumphantly: "Le pays ne doit plus un centime d'Euro à la France" ("Our country does not owe one eurocent to France"), adding that the US only forgave part of Senegal's debt. Dakar committed itself to allocating the resources made available by debt relief to pro-poor expenditure programmes, as outlined in its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which has four strategic pillars: (1) wealth creation through economic reform and private sector development; (2) capacity building and development of social services; (3) improvements in the living conditions of the poor; and (4) implementation of the strategy and monitoring its outcomes. In order to meet these objectives, Senegal created a 'Comité National de Politique Economique'.

In spite of this economic success story, the daily living conditions for the majority of the poor people in Senegal hardly improved. According to the Human Development Index, Senegal, ranking 157 out of 177, still belonged to the category of countries with low human development. About 65% of the population was still living under the poverty line and life expectancy at birth was just above 52. On the other hand, the percentage of people infected with HIV/AIDS, estimated at 1.5%, was remarkably low in comparison with other African countries. Another success in the health sector was the vaccination rate of 99% of children against poliomyelitis. However, at the end of the year a million people living in bad hygienic conditions in Dakar were struck by cholera. The country faced deep-seated urban and rural problems of chronic unemployment (unemployment figures were estimated at 40–50%). The price increases of certain daily products such as bread, kerosene and fuel created some social unrest.

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