



# Senegal: Background and U.S. Relations

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## Summary

Senegal, a small, semi-arid nation on West Africa's Atlantic coast, has long been viewed as one of the region's most stable democracies. Political trends under former President Abdoulaye Wade (in office 2000-2012) raised concerns among analysts and policymakers over possible democratic "backsliding," particularly in connection with Wade's attempt to win a third term in office in elections held on February 26. Popular anger over Wade's candidacy sparked demonstrations and rioting, leading analysts to question Senegal's stability and the potential for a free and fair vote. To many observers' surprise, voting was peaceful, and Wade lost to opposition candidate (and former protégé) Macky Sall in a run-off vote held on March 25. Wade did not contest the results, instead calling Sall to concede. Sall was sworn in on April 2, becoming Senegal's fourth president since independence in 1960. The election results and Wade's concession were internationally hailed as a victory for democracy in an often troubled region.

The State Department refers to U.S.-Senegalese relations as "excellent." U.S. bilateral engagement has increased in recent years. Bilateral assistance, estimated at \$98.8 million in FY2011, is focused on public health, food security, democratic governance, economic growth, rural development, and military professionalism. In addition, the United States signed a \$540 million Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact with Senegal in 2009. The United States has viewed Senegal as an anchor of regional stability and a potential partner in combating transnational security threats, such as terrorism, narcotics trafficking, and maritime piracy. Senegal is a significant contributor of troops to international peacekeeping missions, and thousands of Senegalese peacekeepers have received U.S. training through the State Department's Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program. During the later years of Wade's presidency, senior U.S. officials expressed concerns over negative governance trends and over Wade's decision to run for a third term, while Wade publicly objected to what he views as outside attempts to interfere in domestic politics.

Congress plays a role in guiding U.S. policy toward Senegal through its authorization, appropriation, and oversight of foreign assistance and executive branch policies. Some Members of Congress expressed concern regarding the decision to award Senegal an MCC compact in light of concerns over corruption and political trends under Wade. In the conference report accompanying P.L. 112-74, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2012, appropriators directed the allocation of at least \$50 million in development aid to Senegal, while also expressing concern over Senegal's failure, to date, to bring to justice former Chadian president Hissène Habré, who lives in Senegal and has been accused of crimes against humanity.

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## Background

Senegal has remained relatively stable but poor since gaining independence from France in 1960. It is an electoral democracy and among the few countries in Africa never to have experienced a coup d'état. Its relatively well trained and disciplined military numbers some 17,000 personnel. Senegal is seen as a diplomatic leader in Africa, particularly among Francophone states. The population is 94% Muslim, with most Senegalese adhering to one of four prominent Sufi orders. While ethnic and religious divisions exist, they play less of a role in politics in Senegal than in much of West Africa.

Senegal's first post-independence leader, Léopold Senghor, was a poet and politician celebrated as one of post-colonial Africa's most important intellectuals. Although a self-described socialist and pan-Africanist, Senghor cultivated close ties with the West—in particular, France—and resisted the Eastern Bloc influence then prevalent elsewhere in the region. Senghor presided over a de-facto one-party state through his ruling Socialist Party (PS) until 1981, when he stepped down and was succeeded by the PS's Abdou Diouf. Diouf continued Senghor's pro-Western policies and oversaw Senegal's gradual political liberalization. Still, elections in the late 1980s and 1990s were marred by alleged fraud, repression of anti-government activism, and in some cases violence.<sup>1</sup>

In March 2000, longtime opposition leader Abdoulaye Wade (pronounced "wahd") won presidential elections widely seen as free and fair. Wade's victory and the peaceful transfer of power to his Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) were hailed as a landmark for democracy in Senegal and the region, which had seen few democratic transitions between civilian leaders. During Wade's second term (2007-2012), however, Senegalese and international observers raised concerns over apparent democratic "backsliding." Wade ran for a third term in office in early 2012, but lost to Macky Sall, who had served in several senior government positions under Wade before joining the opposition. Sall was sworn in as president on April 2, becoming Senegal's fourth president since independence. The election results and Wade's concession were internationally hailed as a victory for democracy in an often troubled region.

Although government investments in infrastructure, reforms, and donor assistance have provided the conditions for economic growth in recent years, many Senegalese reportedly feel excluded from the resulting wealth, which they perceive as having been concentrated in the capital, Dakar, and among the political and economic elite.

**Figure 1. Map of Senegal**



Source: CRS.

<sup>1</sup> The current president, Abdoulaye Wade, was imprisoned in the mid-1990s on charges widely seen as politically motivated.

## U.S. Interests

U.S. policy toward Senegal focuses on encouraging democratic governance, economic growth and development, and military professionalism. The United States views Senegal as an anchor of regional stability and a partner in combating transnational security threats, such as terrorism, narcotics trafficking, and maritime piracy. U.S. engagement has increased in recent years, in part due to Senegal's identity as a moderate, majority-Muslim country in a region affected by violent extremism. Former President Abdoulaye Wade also pursued closer bilateral ties as part of a foreign policy that appeared broadly aimed at weaning Senegal from its traditional reliance on France. U.S. officials nevertheless criticized democracy and governance trends under Wade, and expressed concern over their potential to spark instability.

Congress has played a role in U.S. policy toward Senegal through the annual appropriation of foreign assistance and via the oversight of executive branch policies and strategies. Recent congressional interest has arisen over a number of issues, including

- socioeconomic development, health outcomes, and food security;
- democracy and governance trends;
- the management of bilateral assistance, in particular Senegal's Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact, amid concerns over corruption; and
- security issues, such as Senegal's capacity to counter transnational threats and Senegalese troop contributions to international peacekeeping.

### Senegal at a Glance

**Population:** 12.6 million (2011 est.)

**Area:** slightly smaller than South Dakota

**Gross Domestic Product:** \$14.7 billion (2011)

**Population Living Below National Poverty Line:** 50.8% (2005)

**Median Age:** 18 years

**Key Economic Sectors:** fishing, tourism, groundnuts (peanuts), phosphates, cotton

**Religion:** Muslim 94%, Christian 5% (mostly Roman Catholic), indigenous beliefs 1%

**Languages:** French (official), Wolof, other local languages

**Life Expectancy at Birth:** 59.8 years

**Literacy Rate:** 50% (2009)

**Adult HIV/AIDS Prevalence Rate:** 0.9% (2009 est.)

**Major Trading Partners:** France, Mali, United Kingdom, India, China

*Sources:* CIA World Factbook; World Bank Development Indicators database.

## Politics

Senegal has a political system that endows the presidency with significant authorities. The president appoints the prime minister and can dismiss him at will, and also appoints the justices of the country's highest appeals court and Constitutional Council. Former President Wade and his Democratic Senegalese Party (PDS), supported by a broad coalition known as *Sopi* ("Change" in Wolof), initially benefited from widespread support. One of Wade's signature achievements was the adoption, via a 2001 referendum, of a new constitution that reduced presidential terms from seven to five years and introduced a two-term limit. In 2007, Wade was easily reelected in a vote

that the State Department termed “open, peaceful, and highly competitive.”<sup>2</sup> However, opposition parties objected to aspects of the electoral procedure and boycotted subsequent legislative elections, leading to a parliament dominated by the PDS and allied parties.

During Wade’s second term (2007-2012), civil society groups, opposition figures, and analysts grew increasingly concerned over growing corruption and nepotism within the government, and over Wade’s increasingly unilateral exercise of power. Multiple amendments to the 2001 constitution by the ruling party-dominated legislature further concentrated power in the presidency. In 2006, an upper legislative chamber, the Senate, was created in which 65 out of 100 members are appointed by the president. In 2008, the presidential term was re-extended to seven years. Potential political rivals to Wade within the ruling party were stripped of their positions or, in at least one high-profile case (that of former Prime Minister Idrissa Seck), charged with crimes. Critics also alleged that Wade sought to undermine the independence of regulatory and oversight bodies, such as the electoral commission, the media regulator, and the judiciary.<sup>3</sup>

In 2009, Wade announced he would run for a third term in office, reversing earlier pledges to abide by a two-term limit. Opposition leaders, along with many members of the public, objected to this move as unconstitutional. However, Wade’s candidacy was upheld in January 2012 by Senegal’s Constitutional Council (whose members were appointed by the president), which ruled that the constitution was enacted after Wade’s election in 2000 and therefore came into effect only after Wade’s first term ended in 2007. The Council’s decision was criticized as opaque by European Union election observers, and opposition figures accused the Council of carrying out a “constitutional coup.” Still, 13 opposition candidacies were approved, including at least three that had been challenged by the ruling PDS.<sup>4</sup>

Public discontent with the government—already sparked by economic hardships and high unemployment, frequent power cuts, corruption, and Wade’s efforts to extend his rule—was compounded by perceptions that Wade was promoting his unpopular son, Karim, as a future president.<sup>5</sup> In June 2011, Wade proposed new constitutional amendments to shorten the presidential electoral system to one in which a plurality, instead of a majority, was required to win, and to make the post of Vice President a position jointly elected on a presidential ticket. Violent protests broke out in Dakar, and the proposals were withdrawn. The protests gave rise to a coalition of civil society and opposition parties focused on deterring Wade’s candidacy, known as the June 23<sup>rd</sup> Movement, or M23. The protests also brought attention to a rapper-led social movement calling itself “Y’En A Marre,” or “We’ve Had Enough,” which focused on encouraging youth voter turnout. The June 2011 protests were followed days later by rioting over electricity cuts in Dakar, which was curbed only after the military was called up to perform crowd control. Sporadic anti-Wade demonstrations and riots continued in Dakar and other urban centers through late 2011 and early 2012.

Tensions were high as Senegalese prepared to vote on February 26, 2012. Wade had publicly stated that he would easily win over 50% of the vote, while opposition and civil society leaders

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<sup>2</sup> State Department, “Background Note: Senegal,” updated April 5, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Penda Mbow, “Senegal: The Return of Personalism,” *Journal of Democracy*, January 2008; comments by Chris Fomunyoh of the National Democratic Institute at the Brookings Institution, February 16, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Reuters, “EU Mission Urges Clarity in Senegal Poll Ruling,” January 29, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Karim was given a cabinet appointment with an extensive portfolio during Wade’s second term, after he was defeated in the 2009 election for mayor of Dakar.

had declared a free and fair vote impossible, instead calling for mass “resistance” against Wade’s candidacy. To many observers’ surprise, voting was peaceful, and Wade garnered only 32% against 13 opponents, necessitating a run-off vote against opposition front-runner Macky Sall. Ahead of a second round held on March 25, all the other opposition candidates threw their support behind Sall. Instead of the close contest that many had anticipated, Sall won with nearly 66% of the vote. Wade did not try to contest the results, instead calling Sall to concede.

### **Macky Sall: Senegal’s Newly Elected President**

Macky Sall, 51, is one of Africa’s few heads of state to belong to a post-independence generation. A geological engineer by profession, Sall rose to national prominence as a senior official in the Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) of former President Abdoulaye Wade. Reputed to be a protégé of the then-president, Sall served as Prime Minister (2004-2007) and Speaker of the National Assembly (2007-2008). He was ousted from the latter position following a public falling-out with Wade; one of the reasons behind the dispute was reportedly Sall’s decision to summon Wade’s unpopular son, Karim, for parliamentary questioning in connection with government spending on the 2008 Organization of the Islamic Conference summit in Dakar. Sall went on to found his own party, the Alliance for the Republic (APR), and emerged as Wade’s closest contender for the presidency, besting older opposition figures during the February 26 first-round vote. Following his victory, Sall pledged to serve only two terms and to reduce the presidential term from seven to five years—a reform previously undertaken, then reversed, by his predecessor.

## **Governance and Human Rights**

Former President Wade prioritized improvements in urban infrastructure, particularly in the capital, as he sought to position Dakar as a major transportation and service hub in the region. However, this strategy appeared unable to provide sufficient economic dividends to stave off rising expectations from a burgeoning, disproportionately youthful, urban populace.<sup>6</sup> Wade’s government also focused on improving health services and rural education. Senegal has been particularly praised for its HIV/AIDS programs, which were initiated in the mid-1980s—long before most—and have contributed to a relatively low rate of infection (less than 1% of the adult population).<sup>7</sup> Senegal’s anti-malaria program has also received plaudits. Still, many rural areas and some urban neighborhoods remain underserved by roads, electricity, sanitation, and drinking water. Gaps in service provision in Casamance have provided a basis for ongoing conflict there, though the government has attempted to improve services in the region, with donor assistance.<sup>8</sup>

Official corruption reportedly rose under Wade, and some analysts have critiqued the concentration of wealth in the capital and among a relatively small elite. Senegal’s ranking on Transparency International’s Corruptions Perceptions Index dropped from 71 in 2007 to 112 in 2011, out of 182 countries assessed. Senegal nevertheless continues to rank better on the Index than many of its neighbors. Several high-profile corruption scandals were reported in recent years.<sup>9</sup> Controversy was also sparked by Wade’s decision, in 2009, to construct a \$27 million monument to the “African Renaissance,” a 50-yard-high bronze statue overlooking Dakar.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Leonardo A. Villalón, “Senegal: Assessing Risks to Stability,” Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has attributed Senegal’s success at maintaining low HIV prevalence to “the confluence of a number of factors, including strong political leadership, early involvement and leadership among religious leaders, conservative cultural norms regarding sexual practices, and a comprehensive strategic approach implemented early in the epidemic.” *Health Profile: Senegal, HIV/AIDS*, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., USAID, *Evaluation of the USAID Peace-Building Program in Casamance and Sub-Region*, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> For example, in early 2010, Senegalese officials reportedly attempted to extort \$200 million from a Luxembourg-based telecommunications company, Millicom. In September 2009, Wade gave nearly \$200,000 in cash to the outgoing International Monetary Fund (IMF) resident representative during a meeting over dinner in September 2009. Wade (continued...)

Some analysts alleged that Wade's administration created opportunities for corruption through the privatization of parastatals, such as the national telecommunications agency, and by creating new "special agencies" in charge of aspects of state procurement, such as the Agency for Investments and the National Agency for the Organization of the Islamic Conference.<sup>11</sup> The latter, then headed by Wade's son, Karim, oversaw government procurement for large public infrastructure projects initiated ahead of Senegal's hosting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference summit in 2008, and was repeatedly implicated in corruption allegations.<sup>12</sup> In recent years, the government took small steps to combat corruption, such as establishing audit and anti-corruption commissions, an independent authority to oversee government procurement, and the adoption of a software tracking system for government accounting.<sup>13</sup>

The 2010 State Department human rights report identified the following as "major" human rights issues: poor treatment of detainees and prisoners; overcrowded prisons; "questionable investigative detention and long pretrial detention," lack of an independent judiciary; limits on freedoms of speech, press, and assembly; corruption and impunity; rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment of and discrimination against women; female genital mutilation (FGM)<sup>14</sup>; child abuse; child marriage; infanticide; trafficking in persons; and child labor. The State Department also documented abuses by rebel forces in Casamance.<sup>15</sup> Recent reports by Human Rights Watch have noted police abuses against gay men (and men perceived as gay), and the widespread abuse and economic exploitation of children at Senegalese Quranic schools, where tens of thousands of young boys, often separated from their impoverished rural families, receive religious instruction.<sup>16</sup> Amnesty International has accused Senegalese security forces of torturing suspects in custody in connection with criminal cases, civil offenses, and the conflict in Casamance, a practice that the government contends is rare and that it has promised to combat.<sup>17</sup>

Rights groups have also criticized the government for delays in prosecuting former Chadian President Hissène Habré, who lives in Senegal, for crimes committed under his leadership in Chad (1982-1990). In July 2006, the African Union directed Senegal to prosecute Habré after

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(...continued)

later admitted to giving the money as a "farewell gift," but denied he was attempting to influence IMF assessments.

<sup>10</sup> Wade declared himself the "intellectual owner" of the monument and claimed he was therefore entitled to a 35% cut of future related tourism revenues, which he said he would donate to charity. The statue, reportedly constructed with North Korean labor, was inaugurated in April 2010 for Senegal's celebration of its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence. The statue sparked local opposition on political, economic, and esthetic grounds.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Tarik Dahou and Vincent Foucher, "Le Sénégal, Entre Changement Politique et Révolution Passive. 'Sopi' or not 'Sopi'?" *Politique Africaine*, December 2004.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Abdou Latif Coulibaly, *Contes et Mecomptes de l'ANOCI*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Oxford Analytica, "Senegal: Governance Concerns Rise Over Wade Agenda," July 29 2010; U.S. Embassy Dakar, "Senegal's Budget Process is Transparent [UNCLASSIFIED]," May 4, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> The 1999 Penal Law outlawed domestic violence and female genital mutilation, and the rate of FGM has reportedly decreased; however, implementation has been uneven.

<sup>15</sup> State Department, "2010 Human Rights Report: Senegal," April 8, 2011.

<sup>16</sup> HRW, *Fear for Life: Violence Against Gay Men and Men Perceived as Gay in Senegal*, November 2010; Human Rights Watch (HRW), "Off the Backs of the Children": Forced Begging and Other Abuses against Talibés in Senegal, April 15, 2010. In response to the report and related U.S. pressure over child trafficking, the government announced it would enforce a ban on street begging and brought seven Quranic teachers to trial. However, police sweeps and other enforcement efforts raised new child protection concerns.

<sup>17</sup> Amnesty International, *Senegal: Land of Impunity*, September 15, 2010; AFP, "Senegal: La Pratique de la Torture Existe Mais Est 'Minime' (Gouvernement)," September 16, 2010.



Belgium issued an international arrest warrant charging him with crimes against humanity, war crimes, and torture. Then-President Wade initially agreed to a prosecution, and the Senegalese legislature amended the constitution and passed legislation aimed at removing any legal obstacles. However, the prosecution stalled, initially due to Senegalese claims of insufficient donor funding. Debate over whether to extradite Habré to either Belgium or Chad is ongoing.<sup>18</sup>

Senegal has long been considered a regional leader in press freedom. In recent years, however, criminal prosecutions of journalists increased, along with physical attacks against members of the press and media outlets, allegedly biased enforcement of media regulation by state agencies, occasional efforts to suppress publications critical of then-President Wade, and verbal assaults on the media by senior officials.<sup>19</sup> Still, local media continue to express a diverse range of political opinions and frequently provide a platform for opposition views.

## The Economy

Senegal is a semi-arid, predominantly agrarian country with few natural resources. Key foreign exchange earners include fishing, peanuts, phosphates, tourism, and remittances from Senegalese workers abroad. Senegal is also highly dependent on foreign aid, which in 2007 represented about 23% of overall government spending.<sup>20</sup> Although government investments in infrastructure, reforms, and donor assistance have provided the conditions for relatively strong annual economic growth of 4-5.5% over the past decade, Senegal remains among the world's least developed countries (LDCs). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently estimated growth in 2011 at 4%, and projected a slight increase to 4.4% in 2012 due to infrastructure investments in energy and transportation.<sup>21</sup> In 2010, the IMF noted that Senegal's real GDP growth over the previous 15 years had lagged behind Africa's "best-performing, non-oil exporting countries" by at least 2% annually; the Fund attributed the difference to Senegal's relative deficiencies in a number of areas "including infrastructure, non-price competitiveness, and strength of fiscal institutions, as well as factors such as governance, the quality of institutions, and financial market development."<sup>22</sup>

Former President Wade undertook reforms aimed at maintaining macroeconomic stability, improving tax collection, enhancing competitiveness, and weaning parastatal firms off public subsidies. In 2009, the World Bank named Senegal one of the world's "top ten reformers," citing regulatory and trade reforms.<sup>23</sup> Still, bureaucratic burdens, corruption, rigid labor laws, chronic electricity shortages, a lack of transparency in public contracting, shortfalls in judicial independence and efficiency, and opaque land titling procedures potentially hinder further

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<sup>18</sup> See HRW, "The Case Against Hissène Habré, an 'African Pinochet,'" at <http://www.hrw.org/justice/habre/>.

<sup>19</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists, *Attacks on the Press in 2009*.

<sup>20</sup> State Department, "Background Note." According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Senegal received over a billion dollars in official development assistance in 2009, excluding debt relief.

<sup>21</sup> IMF, *Senegal: Second Review Under the Policy Support Instrument*, December 2011.

<sup>22</sup> IMF, "IMF Executive Board Completes Final Review Under PSI with Senegal and Approves New Three-Year PSI," Press Release No. 10/469, December 3, 2010.

<sup>23</sup> World Bank, "Top Ten Reformers from *Doing Business 2009*," at [[www.doingbusiness.org](http://www.doingbusiness.org)].

growth.<sup>24</sup> Critics also objected to Wade's focus on "prestige" projects, such as a new international airport and highways in Dakar.<sup>25</sup>

Senegal has continually faced challenges in alleviating poverty and addressing the burden of disease. Senegal ranks 155 out of 187 countries assessed by the 2011 U.N. Human Development Index. Nineteen percent of the population is undernourished, and 31% of the population lacks reliable access to clean water, according to the World Bank. Senegal suffers from food insecurity, attributable in part to a dry and unpredictable climate, poor water and land management, demographic pressures, and periodic locust infestations. It relies on imports for 70% of its food supply—the highest rate in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>26</sup> The effects of global climate change are expected to further worsen food insecurity in Senegal, as in much of the region.<sup>27</sup> Discontent over socioeconomic conditions has contributed to a high rate of emigration, particularly among young men and often in highly unsafe travel conditions.<sup>28</sup>

## Security Issues

Senegal's primary internal security concern is unrest in the southern Casamance region, the location of a three-decade, low-level separatist insurgency. Casamance is cut off from much of Senegal by The Gambia, a separate country, and is ethnically and religiously distinct. It was historically populated by the Diola ethnic group, who largely follow Christian and animist beliefs, in contrast to Senegal's Muslim majority, who speak Wolof as a lingua franca. A landmark peace agreement was signed in 2004, but violence has resurged since 2009. The main rebel organization, the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC), has been increasingly fragmented in the wake of the death of its longtime leader, Father Augustin Diamacoune Senghor, in 2007. Fighters and ex-combatants reportedly also engage in banditry and organized crime, including trafficking in arms, narcotics, and timber.<sup>29</sup> A Senegalese military source alleged in late 2010 that rebel fighters had displayed "new equipment... such as rocket launchers, mortars, and machine guns."<sup>30</sup> While the conflict remains locally contained, it has hurt the regional economy, which is ordinarily a tourism destination, and caused population displacements in rural areas.

Transnational security threats include narcotics trafficking, organized crime, and the regional presence of violent extremist groups. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), an criminal-terrorist network with ties to Al Qaeda and roots in Algeria's 1990s civil conflict, is active in neighboring Mauritania and Mali, but has not carried out attacks in Senegal. Many analysts believe that there is little indigenous support for Islamist extremism, given Senegal's history of

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<sup>24</sup> See, e.g., State Department "2011 Investment Climate Statement," March 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Oxford Analytica, "Bolter Senegal Opposition Still Lacks a Clear Leader," July 1, 2011.

<sup>26</sup> U.S. government, Feed the Future, "Senegal FY2010 Implementation Plan," at [http://www.feedthefuture.gov/documents/FTF\\_2010\\_Implementation\\_Plan\\_Senegal.pdf](http://www.feedthefuture.gov/documents/FTF_2010_Implementation_Plan_Senegal.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> U.N. Development Program and Government of Senegal, *Changement Climatique, Sécurité Alimentaire et Développement Humain*, 2010; Oxfam Senegal profile, December 2009.

<sup>28</sup> See International Organization on Migration (IOM), *Migration au Sénégal: Profil National*, 2009.

<sup>29</sup> U.N. Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Transnational Trafficking and the Rule of Law in West Africa: A Threat Assessment*, July 2009. MFDC factions long financed themselves through proceeds from the sub-regional trade in hashish, but the entry of cocaine and other narcotics into the region has reportedly altered existing trafficking networks and the dynamics of the conflict.

<sup>30</sup> AFP, "Violence Surges in Casamance as Peace Process Stays Blocked," December 29, 2010.

religious tolerance. The State Department reported in 2011 that “Senegal cooperated with U.S. counterterrorism efforts.”<sup>31</sup>

The U.N. Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 2009 assessed the value of illicit trafficking flows through Senegal at 8.2 times larger than GDP.<sup>32</sup> The trafficking of cocaine from South America to Europe via West Africa is widely viewed as a significant potential threat to regional stability and the rule of law. Cocaine reportedly enters Senegal either overland or by sea via neighboring Guinea-Bissau and Guinea, or directly by air. Though Senegal’s law enforcement agencies are relatively effective compared to many in the region, they are considered to lack the capacity to effectively prevent or prosecute organized crime and related financial crimes, such as money laundering and terrorist financing.<sup>33</sup>

The drug trade is thought to benefit from regional smuggling networks that are also leveraged for duty-free cigarettes, counterfeit prescription drugs, small arms, and persons.<sup>34</sup> Senegal is a source, transit, and destination country for trafficking in persons, notably children and women subjected to forced labor, forced begging, and sex trafficking. In 2011, the State Department classified Senegal as “Tier 2” under the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA, P.L. 106-386), an improvement from its “Tier 2 Watchlist” ranking in 2010.<sup>35</sup>

## Foreign Relations

Senegal has long benefited from close partnerships with Western donors. Former colonial power France is its largest source of bilateral development aid, followed by the United States.<sup>36</sup> While France transferred a long-held military base in Dakar to Senegalese control in 2010 and initiated a withdrawal of all but 300 of its troops (from 1,000 previously), military cooperation is set to continue. Former President Wade pursued non-traditional sources of economic support, notably from the Middle East and China, while maintaining strong ties to longtime partners. This strategy appeared to be motivated by a desire to emphasize independence to a domestic audience, an effort to maximize aid flows, and a hedge against conditions placed on Western aid flows.

Senegal is an active member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), having headed the organization in the 1970s and hosted the annual summit twice (in 1969 and 2008). Ahead of the 2008 OIC summit, Senegal benefitted from substantial infrastructure assistance from Arab Gulf countries. Despite previously warming relations with Iran, Senegal cut diplomatic ties in February 2011, stating that a military investigation showed an Iranian arms shipment seized in Nigeria had been destined for Casamance rebels based in The Gambia.<sup>37</sup> Although Wade had

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<sup>31</sup> State Department, “Country Reports on Terrorism 2010,” August 18, 2011.

<sup>32</sup> UNODC, *Transnational Trafficking*, op. cit.

<sup>33</sup> State Department, *2011 Money Laundering and Financial Crimes Country Database*, May 2011.

<sup>34</sup> UNODC, *Transnational Trafficking and the Rule of Law in West Africa*, op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> State Department, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2011*, June 27, 2011. See CRS Report RL34317, *Trafficking in Persons: U.S. Policy and Issues for Congress*, by Alison Siskin and Liana Sun Wyler.

<sup>36</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) statistics on official development aid. The 2009 U.S. MCC compact may push the United States ahead as its funding is disbursed.

<sup>37</sup> AP, “Senegal Cuts Ties with Iran Over Weapons Shipment Believed to Target Senegalese Forces,” February 23, 2011.

previously cultivated a close relationship with Muammar al Qadhafi, he embraced Libya's Transitional National Council in May 2011, earlier than most of his African counterparts.

Senegal cultivates a position of regional diplomatic leadership and has generally refrained from direct involvement in neighboring conflicts, apart from conflict resolution efforts. Still, tensions occasionally arise with neighboring Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia over those countries' alleged links to Casamance rebels and over a border dispute with Guinea-Bissau. In 2011, relations with Guinea appeared strained after Guinean President Alpha Condé accused Senegal of hosting an armed plot against him. (Senegal vehemently denied the allegation.) In 1989, tensions over grazing and fishing rights along the border with Mauritania sparked riots and vigilante reprisals in both countries, resulting in large-scale, ethnically based forced expulsions from Mauritania into Senegal. The two countries have pursued a rapprochement in recent years, and the United Nations has facilitated the return of displaced populations. Former President Wade brokered a 2009 political agreement in Mauritania that paved the way for elections following a military coup. As of January 2012, over 1,500 Senegalese troops (nearly one-tenth of Senegal's total armed forces) and 745 police were serving in U.N.-mandated peacekeeping missions, notably in Darfur, Sudan; Côte d'Ivoire; the Democratic Republic of Congo; and Haiti.<sup>38</sup>

## U.S. Relations

The State Department describes U.S.-Senegalese relations as “excellent.”<sup>39</sup> The U.S. Embassy in Dakar is the third largest in Africa, and the United States is among Senegal's top donors. Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush visited Senegal during their tenures, and President Wade met President Bush at the White House in June 2001. President Barack Obama congratulated newly elected President Macky Sall on his victory in March 2012, stating that “domestic and international observers report that the election was carried out transparently, freely, and reflects the will of the Senegalese people.” He also recognized outgoing President Wade for “his leadership and friendship to the United States during his presidency.”<sup>40</sup> Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also congratulated Sall, hailing the Senegalese people on their “peaceful, democratic election,” and thanking Wade “for his twelve years of leadership and dedicated service to the Senegalese people.”<sup>41</sup>

U.S. officials occasionally criticized democracy and governance trends under Wade. The State Department's FY2013 aid budget request for Senegal referred to “the gradual erosion of governance and transparency,” indicating that bilateral assistance would “play a crucial role in consolidating democratic outcomes resulting from the 2012 presidential and legislative elections while continuing to support Senegal's efforts in anti-corruption, transparency, and good governance.”<sup>42</sup> In May 2010, the U.S. Ambassador to Senegal suggested that Senegal had to reduce corruption in order to retain MCC assistance, provoking a hostile, though short-lived, public response from Wade.<sup>43</sup> The Obama Administration was initially silent on Wade's third-

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<sup>38</sup> United Nations, *U.N. Mission's Summary Detailed by Country*, January 31, 2012.

<sup>39</sup> State Department, “Senegal: Background Note,” op. cit.

<sup>40</sup> The White House, “Statement By the President On Senegal's Elections,” March 26, 2012.

<sup>41</sup> State Department, “Senegal: Statement By U.S. Secretary Clinton on Presidential Elections,” March 26, 2012.

<sup>42</sup> State Department, FY2012 Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations.

<sup>43</sup> Wade criticized the Ambassador's statement and, referring to MCC aid, said the United States should “take it and give it to some country where people don't mind being insulted.” Reuters, “U.S. Tells Senegal Aid Hangs on Anti-Graft (continued...)”

term candidacy (which he announced in 2009 while visiting Washington, DC, to sign Senegal's MCC compact), but grew more critical in public statements delivered during the weeks leading up to the February presidential contest. Following the Constitutional Council verdict upholding Wade's candidacy, senior State Department officials called on Wade to step down, portraying his candidacy as a potential threat to Senegal's democratic tradition.<sup>44</sup> Similar statements were made by French officials. Administration officials reportedly also privately petitioned Wade to step down, as did some Members of Congress. Wade responded by declaring that he would not accept "orders" from foreigners.<sup>45</sup> The Senegalese Foreign Ministry summoned U.S. Ambassador Lewis Lukens in early February after a media interview in which Lukens referred to Wade's candidacy as "regrettable." On February 14, Ambassador Lukens met with President Wade, after which the Senegalese presidency stated that Lukens had "declared that the United States never asked President Wade to leave and supports no candidate."<sup>46</sup>

Senegal is eligible for trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA; Title I, P.L. 106-200), although exports to the United States are minimal. Senegal hosted the fourth annual AGOA Forum in July 2005. A bilateral investment treaty entered into force in 1990. U.S. direct foreign investment in Senegal is estimated at more than \$150 million.<sup>47</sup> U.S. bilateral imports for consumption totaled \$6.7 million in 2011; bilateral exports totaled \$262.5 million.<sup>48</sup>

## **U.S. Assistance**

U.S. bilateral foreign assistance to Senegal has increased significantly in recent years, from under \$60 million in FY2008 to an estimated \$106.7 million in FY2012 (**Table 1**), in addition to a 2009 MCC compact worth \$540 million. The increase largely reflects growing allocations for food security and health assistance; Senegal is a focus country for the Obama Administration's Feed the Future initiative and the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI). Other areas of focus for U.S. bilateral aid include democratic governance; economic growth; rural development; countering violent extremism; and military effectiveness. In the lead up to 2012 presidential election, U.S. aid (about \$850,000) provided support to domestic election observation groups.<sup>49</sup> Bilateral aid currently looks set to decrease; the Administration has requested \$89.8 million for FY2013.

The conference report accompanying the FY2012 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 112-74) recommended the allocation of "not less than" \$50 million in Development Assistance funding for Senegal. At the same time, the report noted conferees' concern "that [former Chadian president] Hissène Habré has not been extradited for prosecution for crimes against humanity," and directed the Secretary of State to submit a report on "steps taken by the Government of

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(...continued)

Effort," May 27, 2010; AFP, "Senegal President Snaps at US Over Corruption Comment," May 29, 2010.

<sup>44</sup> Reuters, "Senegal Leader's Poll Bid Could Risk Stability-US," January 30, 2012; State Department Daily Briefing, January 30, 2012.

<sup>45</sup> AFP, "Présidentielle: Le Sénégal N'Acceptera 'Pas de Diktat' de l'Etranger (Gouvernement)," February 1, 2012.

<sup>46</sup> AFP, "Senegal's Wade Meets Critical US Ambassador," February 14, 2012.

<sup>47</sup> State Department, "2011 Investment Climate Statement," op. cit.

<sup>48</sup> U.S. International Trade Commission data, accessed on February 10, 2012.

<sup>49</sup> Remarks by Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson, State Department Senegal roundtable, February 17, 2012.

Senegal to assist in bringing Habré to justice” (see “Governance and Human Rights” section above.)

**Table 1. U.S. Bilateral Assistance for Senegal, Selected Accounts**

appropriations, \$ thousands (not adjusted for inflation)

|                       | <b>FY2008</b> | <b>FY2009</b> | <b>FY2010</b> | <b>FY2011</b> | <b>FY2012<br/>(est.)</b> | <b>FY2013<br/>(requested)</b> |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>TOTAL</b>          | 57,859        | 93,754        | 109,480       | 98,813        | 106,660                  | 89,772                        |
| DA                    | 21,798        | 55,834        | 56,528        | 44,600        | 50,000                   | 33,900                        |
| ESF                   | 0             | 0             | 400           | 0             | 0                        | 0                             |
| Food for<br>Peace     | 4,070         | 3,355         | 0             | 0             | 0                        | 0                             |
| GHCS (State<br>Dept.) | 1,535         | 1,535         | 1,768         | 1,535         | 1,535                    | 1,397                         |
| GHCS<br>(USAID)       | 29,279        | 32,043        | 48,350        | 51,253        | 53,950                   | 53,400                        |
| FMF                   | 0             | 0             | 300           | 399           | 325                      | 325                           |
| NADR                  | 0             | 0             | 1,143         | 0             | 0                        | 0                             |
| IMET                  | 1,177         | 987           | 991           | 1,026         | 850                      | 750                           |

**Source:** State Department Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, FY2010-FY2013.

**Notes:** This table reflects bilateral assistance administered by the State Department and USAID. It does not include aid disbursed from regional accounts (such as funds allocated for TSCTP) or funded through agencies other than the State Department and USAID, such as the MCC (see below) or DOD.

**Accounts:** DA=Development Assistance; ESF=Economic Support Fund; GHCS=Global Health and Child Survival; FMF=Foreign Military Financing; NADR=Nonproliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs; IMET=International Military Education and Training.

In addition to the State Department and USAID, other agencies that fund and implement assistance programs in Senegal include the Defense Department (DOD), the Department of Agriculture, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Senegal also hosts some 200 Peace Corps volunteers, the largest contingent in Africa. Senegal further benefits from multilateral assistance through international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the African Development Bank (AfDB), which receive substantial financial support from the United States. In 2004, Senegal became eligible for \$850 million in multilateral debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative.<sup>50</sup>

U.S. security assistance has focused on military professionalization, counterterrorism, maritime security, and peacekeeping training. Thousands of Senegalese peacekeepers have received training through the State Department’s Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program. Senegal is also one of 10 participant countries in the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP), a multi-year, interagency program aimed at defeating terrorist organizations in North and West Africa by promoting democratic governance, discrediting terrorist ideology, and strengthening regional counterterrorism capabilities. Through its

<sup>50</sup> International Monetary Fund and International Development Association, “Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative – Statistical Update,” March 31, 2004.

complementary Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans Sahara (OEF-TS), DOD conducts multinational and bilateral exercises with the Senegalese armed forces. Senegal has benefited from several DOD “Section 1206” security assistance packages, including two multi-country counterterrorism programs and three regional maritime security programs.<sup>51</sup> Senegal also benefits from a DOD State Partnership Program with the National Guard of Vermont.<sup>52</sup>

### **Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact**

Senegal has been eligible for MCC assistance since the start of determinations in 2004.<sup>53</sup> In April 2009, the MCC awarded Senegal \$13.39 million to support the development of a compact. In September 2009, the MCC approved a five-year, \$540 million compact aimed at encouraging economic growth through improvements in infrastructure and agricultural production. The compact, which entered into force in September 2010, focuses on road rehabilitation and expanding irrigation in two geographic regions that are considered to hold potential for commercial agriculture, the Senegal River Valley and the Casamance region.

During former President Wade’s tenure, some Members of Congress expressed concerns over Senegal’s MCC compact in light of perceived democratic backsliding and rising corruption.<sup>54</sup> MCC officials have defended the compact, noting that Senegal has performed in the top quartile on most MCC indicators, including “control of corruption”; that Senegal’s government is highly committed to the compact’s policy objectives; and that Senegal is also “a good investment bet” for the MCC’s food security and global health initiatives. MCC officials also state that there are ample policy tools at their disposal to monitor MCC disbursements and to ensure Senegal’s compliance with good governance standards.<sup>55</sup> In March 2011, MCC CEO Daniel Yohannes testified before Congress that Senegal had reformed certain procurement procedures in response to U.S. pressure.<sup>56</sup> MCC disbursements have nonetheless been slower than initially anticipated due to procurement-related corruption concerns as well as technical issues. MCC officials also continue to monitor political conditions ahead of elections.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006 provides the Secretary of Defense with authority to train and equip foreign military and maritime security forces. See CRS Report RS22855, *Security Assistance Reform: “Section 1206” Background and Issues for Congress*, by Nina M. Serafino.

<sup>52</sup> See CRS Report R41957, *The National Guard State Partnership Program: Background, Issues, and Options for Congress*, by Lawrence Kapp and Nina M. Serafino.

<sup>53</sup> Eligibility is based on policy performance, relative to the median for low-income countries, on criteria related to political freedom, government effectiveness, and economic governance. See CRS Report RL32427, *Millennium Challenge Corporation*, by Curt Tarnoff.

<sup>54</sup> See, e.g., David Freddoso, “Specter: Senegal Shakes Down Americans. Twice,” *The Washington Examiner*, March 16, 2010; House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, Hearing on the Millennium Challenge Corporation, April 14, 2010, transcript via Congressional Quarterly (CQ); and Chuck Neubauer, “For Senegal: U.S. Aid, 164-Ft. Statue,” *The Washington Times*, August 15, 2010.

<sup>55</sup> “Millennium Challenge Corporation Hosts Post-Board Public Outreach,” March 25, 2010, transcript via CQ; MCC response to CRS inquiry, September 22, 2009.

<sup>56</sup> House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, Hearing on the Proposed Fiscal 2012 Appropriations for the Millennium Challenge Corporation, March 15, 2011.

<sup>57</sup> MCC response to CRS inquiry, February 10, 2012.

## **Outlook**

The 2012 presidential election was widely viewed as a key test of Senegal's reputation as a stable democracy. Many Senegalese saw the vote as a potential watershed for the country's political future, in which Senegal would either further its democratic consolidation or potentially experience a flawed election that could damage its international image. To the delight of many Senegalese and international observers, the conduct of the elections—and incumbent President Wade's eventual loss to Macky Sall—appeared to prove that, despite widespread concerns over the erosion of democratic institutions in recent years, the system retained the potential for fairness. Electoral processes will again be tested in legislative elections slated for mid-2012. Yet the extent to which Sall will (and can) address Senegal's deeper governance shortfalls and widespread economic hardships remains to be seen. Despite economic growth over the past decade, political instability, corruption, insecurity in Casamance, and the potentially distortive effects of transnational drug trafficking could pose barriers to socioeconomic development and security. Events in the turbulent surrounding region may also impact Senegal's trajectory.

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