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# The Foreign Policy of Senegal Since 2000

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## **ABSTRACT**

After President Abdoulaye Wade became president of Senegal in 2000 some apparent changes in Senegalese foreign policy could be discerned. This paper considers the extent to which that policy changed under his administration. It examines significant trends in the foreign policy of Senegal; the role played in them by national institutions; and the domestic and international political backdrop.

A major issue is the extent to which foreign policy formulation and implementation was taken out of the control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of 'classical' diplomacy in favour of increased involvement by specialist elements from government and non-state organisations. This has occurred largely in response to an increased emphasis on economic issues that has also brought some realignment in Senegal's international relationships, away from traditional partners towards the emerging economic powers. There has also been a revival of Pan-Africanist thinking with concomitant stress on African continental, regional and sub-regional issues.

The paper examines the effects of increased personalisation of the foreign affairs function, in particular of the much greater levels of intervention by the executive at the expense of the legislature and judiciary. Such interventions may not be out of line with constitutional and other statutory provisions but may nevertheless reflect both a lack of sustained interest in foreign policy by legislators and a more fundamental shift in the parameters of control of foreign policy, in the quest for greater effectiveness in international dealings. The paper concludes, however, that in common with that of many other states, Senegal's foreign policy shows a degree of institutional continuity that tends to transcend temporary domestic and foreign political dynamics and interests.

Finally, the election of a new president in 2012 has to some degree marked a return to a more established and 'classical' foreign policy stance.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| AU     | African Union  |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community of West African States                    |
| G-8    | Group of Eight   |
| MAI    | Ministry of African Integration                              |
| MFA    | Ministry of Foreign Affairs                                  |
| NEPAD  | New Partnership for Africa's Development                     |
| OHADA  | Organisation for the Harmonisation of Business Law in Africa |
| OAU    | Organisation of African Unity                                |

## INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Senegal in West Africa covers an area of more than 196 000km<sup>2</sup> and has an estimated population of some 13 million. From an institutional and political standpoint it is best known for a multi-party system of relatively long standing by African standards (although somewhat restrictive during the 1970s, it became more open from the early 1980s). Senegal is very active on the international diplomatic scene, maintaining a relatively neutral approach and in particular maintaining close ties with France, its former colonial authority. Its international visibility is fairly high, as is shown by the large number of its nationals involved in institutions within the UN or in various regional organisations.

In 2000, peaceful political change came to Senegal for the first time in its history when Abdoulaye Wade defeated incumbent president Abdou Diouf in a presidential election that was generally regarded as fair. In that contest it was a desire for change, evident in the victorious party's slogan '*sopi!*' (meaning 'change!'), that prevailed. President Wade lost office 12 years later in the election of March 2012. It may nonetheless be possible to establish the extent to which Senegal's foreign policy under his administration was affected by this desire for change in domestic affairs, and to do this by measuring any shifts in that policy that may have taken place subsequent to the 2000 election.

Any transformations in Senegalese diplomacy would be of interest on two levels. In the first place the external policy of nation-states in general remains relatively constant because most of the time the long-term interests of the state tend to prevail over the vicissitudes of internal politics. Secondly, state diplomacy is often led by individuals whose views do not systemically reflect national political changes. In light of such factors it may be useful to investigate the extent to which the electoral transition of 2000 influenced Senegalese diplomacy; in other words, to assess the role of continuity and change in external policy.

This study revolves around three main areas, each of which must be examined separately:

- significant trends in the foreign policy of Senegal;
- the role of institutions; and
- the political reality.

The information in the present analysis originated in a June 2011 seminar organised by the South African Institute of International Affairs; it was a gathering of people who had directly participated in, or at least deeply considered, Senegalese external policy. The study is also the outcome of enquiries and documentary research, particularly within Senegal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The enquiry aimed to define the dimensions of Senegal's foreign policy, including its legal and institutional aspects; its practical and empirical nature; the political stakes in play; the occasional subjective or personal elements; and last but not least, the economic and financial dimension, which is subject to bitter dispute both publicly and behind the scenes.

## MAJOR TRENDS IN SENEGALESE FOREIGN POLICY

Firstly, it is useful to ask whether or not Senegalese foreign policy since 2000 has shown fractures or cracks, or if there is a continuity of policy albeit with different players. The aim is to discover whether from 2000 foreign policy largely ceased to be the prerogative of the MFA and of career diplomats, and was instead determined or co-determined by others.

Responses to this question demand delicate judgements. There is certainly competition between the MFA and various other participants, but it is not possible firmly to state that this has occurred only since 2000, even though it was more marked in some years of the Wade presidency. It is, however, clear that the MFA and career diplomats no longer hold a monopoly on external policy. This was particularly emphasised in presentations by Ambassadors Kéba Birane Cisse<sup>1</sup> and Seydou Nourou Ba<sup>2</sup> during meetings at the West African Research Centre in Dakar. There is no doubt that Senegalese external policy is now led by ministries other than the MFA, at least in certain areas of a 'technical' nature.

The primary evidence for this is the open acknowledgement that a degree of authority over diplomatic representatives exists in ministries outside the MFA. Thus Article 1 of Decree No. 2000–296 of May 2000 indicates that the jurisdiction of the minister of foreign affairs exists only 'subject to international assignments involving other ministers as per their Decree of Assignment, notably, the Minister of Economy and Finance and the Minister of African Integration'.

Secondly, decrees dated 7 September 2007 laid down the parameters of those areas of international activities subject to the jurisdiction of other departments of government. This is the first and undoubtedly the most startling sign of a dilution of responsibilities formerly held by the MFA and career diplomats.

Another fact must be highlighted at this point: that although there is already a department of regional integration within the MFA there is also a Ministry of African Integration (MAI) responsible solely for African integration, and in effect a ministry of African external relations. Four comments may be made on the MAI as an institution.

Firstly, it serves to claim for itself a substantial share of foreign policy from the MFA, given that a major portion of Senegalese diplomacy is already directed towards sub-regional integration organisations regarded as partners of the MAI. Often, the latter's responsibilities are not delegated by the MFA, which tends to enhance the autonomy of the MAI. Secondly, the MAI has had an intermittent existence – sometimes it seems to be a functioning institution, sometimes not. Thirdly, the MAI seems to enjoy a degree of continuity: its existence was first noted at the end of the 1980s and references to it began to appear in government circles well before the 2000 election. Finally, this kind of institution is not unique to Senegal; the Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso each has this type of autonomous ministry.

A further sign of the domination of technical factors in foreign policy is a practice that has existed for some years of training groups of specialist diplomats at the National Administration School of Senegal in Dakar. At one time, diplomatic training focused exclusively on wider questions of state sovereignty, which were essentially political. More recently, however, foreign policy issues have become increasingly international in nature and their resolution less and less a national prerogative. In formulating its foreign policy the state has had to take account of this change and the training of diplomats reflects this new specialisation. Today, therefore, Senegalese students of diplomatic affairs can

choose to specialise in narrower areas such as the environment, multilateral economic negotiations or sub-regional integration. This incontestably points to a change in the formulation of Senegal's foreign policy.

Enquiries in the department of legal and consular affairs at the MFA indicate that in practice, staff from 'technical' ministries do become associated with international negotiations. There are four steps to this process. First, once aware that negotiations are in train, the MFA requests the ministry responsible for the area concerned to select and appoint appropriate members to the Senegalese delegation; the technical ministry then ratifies the MFA proposal, which gives a legal basis for establishing the composition of the delegation; the department of legal and consular affairs at the MFA prepares the protocols and full powers of negotiation; finally, a nominal roll of approved delegates (which always includes at least one member of the MFA), together with documents delineating powers of negotiation, is submitted to the prime minister for signature.

A further factor indicative of the increasingly technical nature of foreign affairs is the appearance of a new type of Senegalese diplomatic body, responsible for promoting the national economy, and the incorporation of non-governmental institutions in its initiatives. Chambers of commerce, for example, operate throughout Senegal and can readily help define the scope of any overseas economic partnership; similarly the National Agency for the Promotion of Investment, which is attached to the presidency, is particularly useful in foreign initiatives. Clearly, structures such as these have their own methods of operation that in practice, and taken together, amount to a public relations policy directed towards foreign investors. In the past such a function would have originated in the MFA and been implemented through Senegal's overseas diplomatic representatives. This is no longer always the case (the tourism sector, for example, now develops its own relationships with foreign partners through government channels). The best-known practical example of this new approach is the Coastal and Tourism Zone Planning and Promotion Company of Senegal. Its authority was considerably extended by a decree of 2004. Seven years later it independently signed an agreement for \$142 million with a US-based global agency for sustainable tourism; in doing so demonstrating the extent to which Senegalese foreign policy can improve its effectiveness by co-opting non-state players.

Such developments point to a reduction in the authority of the MFA and a dilution of its influence in formulating and conducting foreign policy. That this policy is driven by technical, rather than traditional diplomacy was further underscored after 2000, through the shaping of an increasingly economy-centred policy with new foreign partners.

It can be categorically stated, however, that it was not the political changes of 2000 that prompted the new approach. Integration of the economic with the diplomatic is a worldwide phenomenon and developments in Senegal reflect this general global trend. Many aspects of technical predominance had been apparent before 2000 and the political events of that year merely confirmed, or in some way reinforced, them. In analysing significant trends in Senegal's foreign policy, therefore, a distinction must be drawn between changes arising from developments worldwide, and those that relate specifically to one particular country.

As Guy Carron de la Carrière, former director-general of the Paris-based foreign trade agency *Centre Français de Commerce Extérieur*, noted: the dominant impression is that of reduced state involvement in the markets, with the laws, or the 'dictatorship' being

imposed upon democratic authorities .... [I]n the same vein, the notion of an ‘economic war’ is ... [useful].<sup>3</sup>

Leaving aside legal and institutional edicts and the impression of stable diplomatic processes they convey, it is possible to detect less unambiguous aspects in the conduct of Senegalese international relations. Foreign policy is a game in which battles are fought for influence, with high financial stakes in play. An example might be the effect on Senegal’s relations with China, of the affair that came to be known as the ‘billions of Taiwan’. As an incentive to the establishment of diplomatic relations with Taiwan, Senegal seemingly requested \$7 billion in financial support from Taipei. Once granted, the loan followed a circuitous route, and the money finally passed between heads of state in the form of a personal gift between friends, to be invested in ‘social sectors’. Media reports confirm that there is no trace of these funds in the public treasury. During the 2012 presidential election campaign this transactional incident in Senegal’s foreign policy was particularly troublesome for two candidates, both of them former prime ministers under President Wade.<sup>4</sup>

## LAW AND STATUTE

Senegalese foreign policy is usually carried out in compliance with the general, established practice of an all-powerful executive authority determining the conduct of foreign affairs, in line with law, statute and convention. Nevertheless, elements peculiar to Senegal serve to reinforce the monopolisation of external policy by the executive and, more specifically, by the presidency.

### **The executive**

The president is at the heart of the foreign policy apparatus and his functions in that area are many and varied. First, in a symbolic and general way, the head of state is responsible for ensuring territorial integrity and national independence: the importance of this part of the presidential function is mentioned twice in Senegal’s constitution. In taking the oath of office the president commits to ‘devoting all [his] efforts to protecting territorial integrity and national independence’ and ‘making every effort for the realisation of African unity’ (Article 37 of the constitution). In addition, when setting out the general functions of the president, the constitution refers to ‘guaranteeing the regular operation of institutions, national independence and integrity of the territory’ (Article 42). Under the same provision, the president ‘determines the policy of the nation’. Clearly, foreign relations are part of this national policy; hence the presidency is the constitutional entity that in practice defines the direction of Senegalese external policy.

‘Territorial integrity and national independence’ are included in another duty of the president: that of taking measures deemed necessary in the event of a sudden crisis. Exactly what would constitute such a crisis is not specified in the constitutional text (Article 52) but it is clear that the international dimension is implicit and there is a strong possibility that events to which the text refers might derive from, or refer to, some aspects of foreign policy. Indeed, this is made explicit in a reference in the constitution to an event through which ‘the institutions of the Republic, independence of the Nation, integrity of

national territory or the implementation of international commitments are threatened in a serious and immediate manner.’

There exists, therefore, at least the hypothetical possibility that issues linked to foreign incidents could play a part in the event of such a crisis. In that case, too, it is the president who is supposed to react. Endowed with ‘exceptional powers’, as the text states, he is charged to ‘take any [required] measure ... to re-establish the regular operation of public authorities ...’. Similarly, the presidency is the institutional authority through which the state’s power of legation is exercised: that is, laws under which ambassadors are accredited abroad and those by which Senegal receives ambassadors of other countries. The president thus has an overall remit for diplomatic relations; and nothing in that area can be considered formally without his specific authorisation.

There is a further provision in the constitution that reflects the unfettered power of Senegal’s head of state. Under the provision that opens the chapter on international treaties, it is the president who ‘negotiates international commitments’ (Article 95). Of course, in practice the president does not take part himself and is merely kept informed of negotiations; hence this provision should not be interpreted literally. That said, the wording of this presidential authority is moot: it lays down that under the constitution the president of Senegal is charged with keeping a watchful eye on the country’s diplomacy.

Another distinctive aspect of Senegalese policy, not always found in the constitutions of other African countries, is the use of the term international ‘commitments’ rather than, as is normal in other countries, international ‘treaties’. The notion of an international commitment is very wide. It covers not only arrangements that Senegal concludes with other states or international organisations, but also, by extension, actions which may be obligatory on member states of organisations to which Senegal belongs. Thus, for example, an obligatory resolution of the UN or a ruling by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) may constitute an international commitment by Senegal and logically the president should be advised of it. This condition helps strengthen the head of state’s hold on the conduct of Senegal’s external relations.

In the same vein, it should be noted that the presidency is the authority which approves and ratifies Senegal’s treaties and agreements. The distinction between ‘treaties’ and ‘agreements’ is inherited from France, which inserted this provision into its own constitution in 1958. In doing so it gave the new French government the power to represent France diplomatically, a power that had been previously solely in the hands of the president; thenceforward the government, represented by the prime minister or the minister of foreign affairs, was to approve agreements and the head of state ratify treaties.

This distinction was included in the constitution Senegal adopted after it became independent in 1960, but it has not had the same practical effect as in France. There are indeed treaties and agreements that require ratification or approval, but in Senegal this is always done by the same person: the president of the republic. The distinction made in Article 98 of the constitution therefore has no practical value, but nevertheless comprises an additional irrelevance that reinforces presidential hyper-power over Senegal’s foreign policy.

Two other external trends increase the influence of the president. The first of these is the practice of summit diplomacy, in effect meetings between heads of state, possibly accompanied by ministers of foreign affairs who in reality play no important role. These meetings are not merely ornamental and they are not solely related to protocol; but

increasingly are forums where critical decisions are made. In principle there is nothing to stop heads of state taking up any given issue, thereby short-circuiting more traditional diplomatic networks such as those of the MFA or its diplomatic representatives abroad. It is a new style of diplomacy that while certainly not unique to Senegal, obviously tends to reinforce the hold of the executive in general, and the president in particular, over its international policy. Summit diplomacy is frequently characterised by initiatives such as the use of special envoys and other emissaries, which is disruptive of traditional foreign policy channels. In the recent past, Senegal has frequently participated in this new kind of diplomatic game: its dispatch of emissaries to Ivory Coast in the 2002 civil war there, and personal mediation in the internal political conflict in Mauritania after its coup d'état in 2008, are cases in point.

The second trend is linked to efforts by continental African organisations – among others – to establish a so-called ‘supreme body’ through a system of conferences of heads of state and government. It is hard to discern wherein this supremacy actually lies, but the establishment of such institutions has the effect of accruing supplementary powers to meetings of heads of state; and their attendant actions and decisions take on a quality that can extend to arrogating to themselves a form of immunity from jurisdiction (as is clear from the practices of some African organisations).

Clearly, the powers of the Senegalese president in external policy are very important. Per contra, the authority of government institutions under the control of the prime minister is non-existent in foreign policy terms. It might have been more appropriate to place the treaty-agreements mentioned earlier under the aegis of the head of government or the MFA, which is a properly constituted diplomatic body; but such devolution of powers of diplomatic representation has not yet taken place (although presidential monopoly control within the executive in practice derives from the functions granted different ministers). Other, devolved powers vested in the legislature and judiciary are in striking contrast to the presidential authority cited above, but even so the legislature has been stripped of an important part of its rights with regard to foreign policy.

### **The legislature**

The tenuous hold of parliament over external policy is demonstrated by the substantial number of agreements concluded by Senegal that are completely out of parliamentary control. These are so-called ‘simplified’ or ‘executive’ agreements, which come into force not through a specific Act of Ratification but merely on the signature of a representative of the state. This practice originated in the US, where such agreements have always been presented as reflecting a desire to avoid bottlenecks in the legislature. Such concerns – as well as the desire for speedy implementation – exist in other countries and Senegal is no exception; the constitution recognises the possibility of concluding agreements without the consent of parliament. Article 95 gives the president power to ratify or approve international commitments ‘possibly’ [*sic*] on parliamentary authorisation: the word ‘possibly’ in this context indicates that such authority need not be sought. Indeed Senegal, in line with several other countries, increasingly resorts to simplified agreements, often signed by members of the executive (particularly ministers), but never subject to parliamentary scrutiny. Despite constitutional amendments in 1963, 1970, 1991, 1998 and (particularly) 2001, the provisions applying to the conduct of external relations have

never varied. On a strictly legal and formal level, therefore, there is a high degree of continuity in the organisation of Senegal's international relations; the government has consistently operated on the basis of established provisions.

In practice, like other parliaments in the world, the Senegalese legislature has expressed itself in terms of foreign policy only through the act that authorises the president to ratify or approve treaties and agreements. In those cases there is a set procedure. First, through the MFA, the authorities conclude and sign an international treaty or agreement; the legislature plays no part in negotiation procedures. The government (invariably through the MFA) then prepares and submits a draft bill based on the signed agreement, for ratification or approval; this text is adopted by the council of ministers, thereby becoming a draft bill. Finally, parliament adopts the text, which then becomes an 'act of authorisation of ratification' that often consists of a single article, reading: '[T]he President of the Republic is authorised to ratify the treaty ... concluded by Senegal.'

Should parliament reject the act of authorisation the president is obliged to submit to its authority. In turn, if the act is adopted the president can ratify it by solemnly expressing the commitment of Senegal to its provisions and signing the document, which then becomes the 'letter of ratification'. This process notwithstanding, some categories of the treaty cannot be enacted without parliamentary intervention. According to Article 96 of the constitution these include:

'peace treaties, trade treaties, treaties or agreements in relation to international organisations, those which commit state finances, those which amend provisions of a legislative nature, those which are in relation to the state of people, those which consist of the transfer, exchange or attachment of territory.'

Withal, the power of the Senegalese legislature is greatly attenuated. One reason for this is that foreign policy does not always interest parliamentarians, whose institutional culture lends itself more to purely national matters, often those linked to local or parochial concerns. There is no strong evidence to indicate that Senegalese politicians are interested in diplomatic issues. True, the government may be induced into a declaration on some aspect of foreign policy, but in the main this happens only through requests from individual members of parliament – there is no institutionalised framework for discussion of diplomatic issues, or at least not one that is ever used. The establishment of so important an institution as an overseas ministry has not changed this. One might hope that current intensification pressure on the international relations portfolio might lead the representatives of the people to become more interested in foreign issues. For the moment, however, foreign policy is seen as outside the range of parliament, and no doubt partly for this reason the quality of human resources allocated to it requires improvement. It is equally evident that parliamentarians are not informed from the outset of matters that might interest them: for example parliament was entirely excluded from any discussion of two recent agreements on the socially significant issue of migratory flows, that were concluded respectively with France and Spain and implemented by way of simplified agreements.

A second, more institutional reason for limits on legislative power is that parliamentarians have no authority to amend international texts submitted to them. Should they require a draft to be modified or changed in detail they are obliged to approach the executive authority that originally negotiated the agreement, which in turn

should initiate talks with the other party to effect the change. There is no evidence in official records of parliamentary debates of any such approach having taken place.

Finally, there is nothing in Senegalese law that enables, let alone obliges, parliament to follow up on the application of agreements that it has ratified. In most countries it is to be expected that any amendment or revocation of such an agreement would itself be subject to fresh debate by parliamentarians. This process does not exist in Senegal, which adds to the impression that parliament is not an important factor in external policy.

### **The judiciary**

The judiciary authority of Senegal influences foreign policy only in a very peripheral and indirect way. Courts and tribunals are not involved in determining such policy; although in fulfilling their duty to pronounce on legal matters they can examine international agreements. Such scrutiny takes place for two main reasons.

The first is to ensure that international commitments comply with the constitution. It is of course to be expected – in Senegal as in many other countries – that before concluding international agreements, national authorities ensure conformity of the agreement with both national and international standards (most importantly with the constitution) because national laws form part of the international legal structure. Hence legal scrutiny is preventive in nature, to ensure that before the state commits itself to an international agreement the latter must be examined in the light of the state's own laws. In Senegal, this control is exercised through the office of the constitutional counsel, who is a judge of the constitutional court. It must however be noted that such juridical intervention in foreign policy is extremely rare. To date, despite the establishment in 1992 of a special constitutional tribunal, there has been only one case of direct confirmation of legal compliance: a decision in December 1993 on the treaty establishing the Organisation for the Harmonisation of Business Law in Africa (OHADA).

The general failure by the constitutional counsel to intervene in legal aspects of foreign policy is a matter for regret. One way to improve the situation could be to give members of parliament the right to question the judge on the constitutional conformity of any foreign agreement (importantly, the OHADA opinion was delivered at the request of the president, not parliament). Parliament already enjoys this right of scrutiny over domestic law; hence one might extend the principle of parliamentary notification to treaty issues and hope that over time the innovation would not become a dead letter. Deputies from minority parties might even find an ally of sorts in the constitutional counsel.

The second reason for judicial scrutiny of an international treaty instrument is 'regulation of agreements': the procedure by which judges decide, at the request of a litigating party, to strike down any national regulation that would contravene an international commitment of the state. At present, the regulation of conventions in such disputes is deplorably bad. This is undoubtedly related to ignorance of Senegal's international commitments on the part of lawyers and magistrates. In the 36 years of its existence (1960–1992 and 2009 to the present) the Supreme Court of Senegal has delivered only five decisions on international treaties.

There is a striking contrast between the number of international instruments likely to be applied in Senegal, and the absence of disputes in relation to them. Few litigants are prepared to seek guidance from arguments at international level which would help

them win cases before Senegalese courts. For example, there is little doubt that legal instruments on freedom of movement adopted by sub-regional organisations such as ECOWAS and the West African Economic and Monetary Union could be useful in domestic legal processes concerning nationals of their member states. It would, however, appear that no legal decision has been delivered regarding acts such as those relating to three ECOWAS protocols (respectively of 1979, 1986 and 1990) concerning the free movement of people; even though incidents of victimisation of immigrants at border zones are commonplace. In addition, although the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has bound Senegal since 1985, the country's family code still contains somewhat discriminatory provisions that fail to take into account this international commitment. As far as can be ascertained there has been no important judgement on any of these points, even though the primacy of international over national law is enshrined in Article 98 of the Senegalese constitution.

### BEYOND LAW: THE POLITICAL REALITY

Legalistic and doctrinal scrutiny of Senegal's foreign policy is clearly only one of several possible approaches and it is worthwhile moving beyond formal provisions to focus on practicalities. The question then becomes one of examining wider developments and characteristics of Senegalese diplomacy since 2000. From that standpoint, three main trends emerge.

#### **Economic and commercial**

The first of these is the importance in modern diplomacy of economic and commercial considerations. This is based on an increasingly pressing need for national economic development, as well as the cultivation of emerging countries as new diplomatic partners. Against this background, in the first decade of this century Senegalese diplomacy has revived a concept that originated in the 1970s when there was much talk of a new international economic order. This is the idea of South–South dialogue.

Senegal is now heavily involved in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which is based on a sense that processes of development aid or assistance have reached their limit, and that the African continent is rich rather than intrinsically poor and has everything to gain from economic exchanges between its nations. NEPAD also rests on the idea that the involvement of three or four of the continent's leading economic powers can have beneficial effects on the development of other African countries. It is true that almost 10 years after it was established, in terms of concrete results, NEPAD has fallen short of the hopes placed in it. Undeniably it has its limitations, including the excessive importance attached to individuals and an inadequate institutional or consensual foundation. Nevertheless, as a project it is a good example of the mobilisation of Senegalese diplomatic resources to commercial or economic ends.

The stress on commerce in diplomacy is also manifested in Senegal's alliances with newly industrialising states, bonds that are very firmly centred on economic ties. The former Senegalese diplomat Ousmane Camara has drawn attention to the renewal of co-operation between Senegal and countries from the Persian Gulf, as well as with

members of the BRICS group (Brazil, India, Russia, China and South Africa).<sup>5</sup> Senegal has also intensified its relationships with countries such as Iran, Morocco and Dubai, to an extent that seemingly causes concern among traditional economic partners such as France. The most striking example of this realignment was the decision to entrust to Dubai interests the construction of the ambitious Diamniadio development scheme: an economic and commercial project that aims to create thousands of jobs within an industrial site of more than 2 500ha about 40km from Dakar, and to open up the Dakar region as a whole. Companies associated with the Dubai Ports World group signed a memorandum of agreement with the Senegalese government in December 2006. It is anticipated that the site will host 600 companies within five years and total funding for the project, largely sourced through the US foreign aid agency Millennium Challenge Corporation, is estimated at \$1 billion.<sup>6</sup>

Dubai also has powerful interests in other sectors, including Senegal's hotel industry. According to the Chamber of Commerce of the Emirates, commercial exchanges between Senegal and Dubai increased from \$14.2 million in 2003 to \$184 million in 2009.<sup>7</sup> Personal relationships between the Emirates authorities and President Wade's son are no secret: the latter is a powerful government minister with an accumulation of portfolios covering infrastructure, transport, energy and international co-operation. The diplomatic alliance with Dubai is therefore the result of a combination of economic and personal associations.

Other similar developments have taken place: For example, Morocco was selected as a strategic partner for the former national air transport company Air Sénégal International, and an Indian enterprise was selected to manage freight at the port of Dakar (to the detriment, it was suggested, of the French investment and industrial group Bolloré, which has a powerful presence in Africa). The new economic and commercial ties with China, also, are important enough to have produced immediate and marked effects in Senegal's domestic economy, particularly with regard to availability of consumer goods.

Since 2000 Senegal has frequently been invited to diplomatic meetings with a strong economic thrust, such as the summits of the G-7 (Group of Seven) and G-20 (Group of Twenty) groupings, and Senegal was also invited (with other African states including Algeria, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Malawi and Nigeria)<sup>8</sup> to the June 2010 Toronto G-8 (Group of Eight) summit and to the 2011 G-8 meeting in Deauville, France. The declaration adopted at the end of that meeting led to important economic negotiations with other African countries present.<sup>9</sup>

This economic emphasis in diplomatic affairs is not, of course, confined to Senegal but relates to more general developments worldwide: it is clear that the era when diplomacy mainly centred on matters of sovereignty and high politics has come to an end.<sup>10</sup> While Senegal is no exception to this global rule, it nevertheless remains true that the new thrust of its diplomacy is a significant aspect of the country's recent history. As noted earlier, the development imperative helps explain this shift, but it is also fair to add that President Wade was himself interested in economic matters and in general African affairs<sup>11</sup> and was familiar with the new trend.

### **Pan-Africanist developments**

The second main tendency in the country's new diplomatic stance arises from a renewed interest in Pan-Africanism and African economic and political integration. Pan-Africanist

thinking in Senegal goes back to 1963 and the establishment at the meeting in Addis Ababa that established the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which was charged with bringing about the union of African nations. This prompted changes in Senegalese foreign policy strategies that were approved at the highest level. The re-emergence of the Pan-African theme, however, comes after some decades in which it was more or less forgotten. This may be due both to factors concerning the African continent as a whole, and those particular to Senegal.

General factors include the development of African international organisations and that of the OAU. Although some change was evident from the beginning of the 1990s, it was only after 2000 that those organisations were subject to substantial changes arising from a perceived need for wider integration among African nations. In pursuit of this end, member states felt it necessary to concede a degree of national sovereignty, and consequently to surrender wider powers and jurisdiction to the new institutional structures. This was true of sub-regional organisations but primarily of the OAU, which in 2000 changed its name to the African Union (AU). Behind the change of name lay a change of philosophy, as member states acknowledged the need to strengthen the organisation. At the same time, thinking within the AU turned to the establishment of the first elements of a 'government of Africa'. This new environment was bound to influence national diplomacy, and governments in turn were obliged to make pronouncements on the changes in train; hence the question of Pan-Africanism once again arose as a topic of discussion between states.

Senegal tacitly accepted the strength of its involvement in the new structure by joining states such as Libya in calling for immediate African political unity. This represented a change in the Senegalese position from the 1960s to the 2000s. In 1963 when the OAU was founded, Senegal was itself going through a gradual, progressive shift towards national unity, as the then President Léopold Senghor had acknowledged at the Addis Ababa conference. By 2000, however, Senegal's domestic situation had changed radically and the country featured among advocates for the immediate establishment of political decision-making structures at a global level. Clearly this position, taken with factors such as NEPAD, leads to Senegalese diplomatic positions so avant-garde that they might be seen as somewhat reckless in their allegiance to the cause of African unity. The political analyst Abdou Lô has drawn attention to this aspect,<sup>12</sup> while the former Minister of Foreign Affairs Cheikh Tidiane Gabio<sup>13</sup> has noted the high stakes nature of this Pan-Africanist orientation, as well as pointing out some more subjective aspects, such as disagreements among institutional or personal leaders that are more or less cloaked from the public gaze.

Of course, assessment of the Pan-Africanist issue as it affects the recent external policy of Senegal must be qualified. More precisely, one might query the nature of Pan-Africanism per se. If an abstract political idea such as this is to have a chance of quickly becoming concrete reality, it must reflect the material economic interests of member states and a sense of the practicality of the solidarity between them. It is by no means evident that when Pan-Africanism re-emerges into the fierce light of rigorous intellectual scrutiny, it will correspond with the new economic realities; nor is it clear that in the real world an institution based on political solidarity can maintain its economic cohesion. Several observers have pointed to aspects of co-operation between various parties in Africa that tend to put the Pan-African project at risk; a case in point is the extreme weakness of co-operation between Senegal and states in central Africa.<sup>14</sup>

### Personal influence

The third tendency in today's Senegalese diplomacy is an increased personalisation that centres on the presidency. Given that the legal and institutional environment of Senegal in itself makes for a strong presence on the diplomatic scene of the head of state – to the point where other powers are drastically reduced – this would be the case regardless of the individual in power. What is in question is more a matter of the personal approach of the head of state, and of his diplomatic style; subjective factors that must be taken into consideration alongside the more objective elements that guarantee the pre-eminence of the head of state in the conduct of international relations. Personalisation of Senegalese diplomacy under the Wade presidency resulted in the conjunction of legal and constitutional elements with personal considerations. Of the four heads of state that Senegal has had to date, President Wade is undoubtedly the one whose conduct of foreign policy has been the most individualistic.

Such an approach certainly can have its advantages, particularly in the context of mediation or conflict resolution, when the confidence inspired by the mediator may carry some weight. It can, however, also present problems in that endorsement by individuals often means setting aside legal mechanisms and procedures; and also because the behaviour of the person concerned can act as an obstacle to negotiation albeit simultaneously building confidence. It is obvious that this may give rise to tensions with other states by crystallising enmities or misunderstandings between the parties.

Some statements by President Wade caused concern in certain quarters: at the opening of a forum on racism, xenophobia and intolerance in Dakar in January 2001<sup>15</sup> the president declared that 'the *Burkinabe* are experiencing at this time in the Ivory Coast what no African is experiencing in Europe.' This statement was sufficiently incendiary to all but torch the diplomatic relationship between Senegal and Ivory Coast.<sup>16</sup> During a 2010 diplomatic storm that arose when former Chadian President Hissène Habré, whose extradition had been requested by Belgium, took refuge in Senegal, a statement by the president exposed contradictions in the Senegalese position. 'Frankly, I regret having accepted [the presidential] portfolio,' he declared, 'because I did not obtain the ... support that I was seeking. At the next AU summit, I will say "take back your post", or I am going to send Habré back to some other place ... I am clearly saying this, I am going to get rid of him'.<sup>17</sup> A third instance arose after the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti when the president made a purely personal decision that Senegal should host several Haitian university students. In a speech on 13 October 2010 at the foot of the 'Monument of the African Renaissance', President Wade declared:

'[W]e estimated that it was necessary to give our brothers and sisters from Haiti the right to escape from the recurring disasters in their country and establish themselves at home, in Africa ... I wanted to put words into action to demonstrate the humane relationship ... which unites Africa with its Diaspora'.

This personalisation of foreign policy has induced something of a malaise among a number of people, to the extent that several former diplomats voiced regret over the 'relegation of the administration' through a game of personal alliances that can leave outsiders with no institutional anchor.

These facts do not, however, translate into a politicisation of public office in the realms of foreign policy. Although President Wade was able to make a very personal impression on diplomacy and to attract into the diplomatic corps some individuals of a more quotidian background, it cannot be said that political rot has entirely taken over the diplomatic function. Essentially, the Senegalese diplomatic cadre continues to emerge by way of open competition within the civil service and promotion is according to fairly transparent criteria: alarm bells on the politicisation of personal careers have not yet sounded.

Unquestionably it is this last aspect that explains why, even if diplomats are concerned about certain directions of foreign policy, they do not react in a hostile manner and as a unified body. There is in Senegal a culture of high public office, a respect for authority and a sense of duty that together do not make for revolt against authority. Diplomats are not formed into a more or less specific union, they do not express themselves publicly about their country's diplomatic choices and they cannot contest the way in which the authorities, and particularly the president, represent Senegal overseas. Undoubtedly this attitude towards authority owes much to the fact that access to diplomatic careers remains relatively stable.

The present situation does not call for a wholesale re-think of the legal structures that govern the conduct of international relations in Senegal. On the contrary, this paper simply indicates that the president of the republic, while he must remain a major diplomatic authority, is nevertheless accumulating too much power in that area as a consequence of a more general problem: the outrageously presidential and personal nature of the entire political system in Senegal, as well as in other comparable countries.

## CONCLUSION

In common with virtually every country on the globe and in particular those in Africa, Senegal has seen elements of its foreign affairs reflect more general developments. The domination of technical aspects of foreign policy, and today's stress on economic diplomacy, which by its nature is less focused on matters of national sovereignty per se, has already been noted, as has the more Pan-Africanist dimension of foreign policy since 2000.

Moreover, since March 2012 when President Wade was defeated in the polls by former Prime Minister Macky Sall, Senegal has gone through a second major political change. In the short time since then some changes in foreign policy, not necessarily spectacular or revolutionary, have become apparent.

The first is that Senegal has reverted to a more traditional diplomatic approach. In this respect three developments can be observed. The first of these is the restoration of a prioritised relationship with France. The very first trip by the new head of state outside of Africa was to France. Beyond the obvious symbolism, this visit resulted in significant financial support from France in the wake of President Sall's assessment that Senegalese public finances were in a worrying state. This first visit took place only days after President Nicolas Sarkozy lost the French presidential election, and a second took place soon after Sarkozy's successor François Hollande assumed office. Senegal–France bilateral agreements have already been concluded, with an ease and smoothness that has prompted some domestic criticism. (Unquestionably these developments are related to Senegal's support for Jean Ping, the Gabonese candidate campaigning for a renewed term

as president of the African Union Commission and who in the event was defeated by his South African rival Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. By supporting a candidate from another French-speaking country Senegal embellished its Francophone credentials.)

Secondly, under the new president there is noticeably more concern that Senegal should maintain a good name among international institutions. The new broom is demonstrating his regard for good governance, which explains a wave of audits and other enquiries aimed at exposing the illicit enrichment of previous leaders – relevant jurisdiction in this area dates from 1981, but has never been seriously applied – and ensuring the repatriation of wrongfully acquired property. France and the US were quick to offer their assistance in this endeavour.

Third is the restoration of ‘good neighbour’ relationships. In an interview with *Jeune Afrique* in June 2012<sup>18</sup>, President Sall clearly indicated a shift from the previous government’s approach to managing these relationships, which had been less than optimal with countries such as Gambia – an enclave of Senegal – or Mauritania. Indeed, the president’s very first journey abroad took in first Gambia then Mauritania. None of these new developments, of course, implies that some established aspects of foreign policy will not survive. Existing relationships with Kuwait, for example, were reinforced through a July 2012 agreement with the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development to provide \$8 billion in loans to Senegal.

While at first glance it might appear that the new political environment that arose after 2000 also changed Senegalese foreign policy, closer study shows that this rather simplistic view must be rejected. Political change did not, in and of itself, jeopardise the policy continuity associated with more classical conventional diplomacy in Senegal.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Ambassador KB Cisse, ‘Les institutions et les structures qui définissent la politique extérieure du Sénégal’. (details of place and date unavailable).
- 2 Ambassador SN Ba, ‘La politique étrangère du Sénégal en Afrique de l’Ouest et en particulier avec ses voisins immédiats’. (details of place and date unavailable).
- 3 Carron De La Carriere G, ‘Omniprésente économie’, in Charillon F (ed.), *Politique étrangère: nouveaux regards*. Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2002, pp. 244–245.
- 4 The money received from Taiwan apparently would have been transferred to the account of a son of the envoy of the head of state, the French businessman Pierre Aim. A communiqué from the Office of the President of the Republic dated 5 February 2006 admitted to the receipt of funds. For details, see *Le Témoin* (Niamey), 12–18 December 2006. Press reports on this affair resulted in no denial or legal proceedings from the authorities. For more recent developments, see *Le Quotidien* (Dakar), 7 December 2011.
- 5 Carron De La Carriere G, *op. cit.*
- 6 Republic of Senegal, *Projet de la Plateforme du Millénaire de Diamniadio*. Poverty impact analysis, final report. Dakar: Agence de Mise en Oeuvre de la Plateforme du Millénaire de Diamniadio, 16 May 2007. p. 4.
- 7 *La Gazette* (Dakar), 22 September 2010.
- 8 See <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20100625>.
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- 12 Lo AK, 'La politique étrangère du Sénégal au sein de l'Union Africaine et pour le projet des Etats Unis d'Afrique'.
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- 14 Kaba I, 'Les relations entre le Sénégal et les pays de la Communauté Economique des Etats de l'Afrique Centrale (CEEAC)'.
- 15 'L'Afrique de l'Ouest dans la zone des tempêtes', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 2001.
- 16 Alphonse Djédié, diplomatic adviser to Ivory Coast President Gbagbo, declared: 'One has the right to support one candidate, but ... [not] to conspire with a view [to] destabilisation'. The Embassy of the Ivory Coast in Dakar published a communiqué denouncing 'an unfriendly act', <http://french.peopledaily.com>, accessed 10 November 2010.
- 17 See [www.afriqueavenir.org](http://www.afriqueavenir.org), accessed 11 December 2010.
- 18 See *Jeune Afrique*, 2685, 24–30 June 2012, <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/JA2685p026-032.xml0/>.

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