



An Oasis of Stability in a Sea of Turbulence: Has Senegal anything but Stability to look Forward to?

Executive Summary

Senegal, a country of 13.5 million people, is considered one of Africa's strongest democracies. It has successfully transitioned from one civilian rule to the other since 1960 when it gained independence from France and its political system has transformed into a multi-party democracy. All these despite tremendous social, political, and economic upheaval in many African states, especially bordering states like Mauritania, Mali, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau. Though the regional environment is extremely volatile, including threats posed by the growing radical Islamism in the Sahel-Saharan region, Senegal also faces enormous domestic challenges that make its socio-political stability fragile. In fact, Senegal is the site of the longest-running low-level separatist insurgency in Africa, a conflict that has defied many attempts to form terms for truce or outright settlement. It is because of this external and internal context that this report considers Senegal's stability a material contradiction. Senegal's stability, though tenuous, is likely to continue to hold due to a confluence of factors favorable to stability, including: its integrative national constitution; its legacy of democratic governance; the existence and dominance of non-radical Sufi brotherhoods; high-levels of interaction between civil authorities (and populations) and Senegal's military; and huge remittances from Senegal's diaspora communities. They neutralize potential threats to Senegal's stability including:

- An indigenous, long-running low-level insurgency in the Casamance.
- The presence of radical Islamists in the region and within Senegal.
- Disenchantment at dire economic conditions caused by many factors including high levels of corruption, illiteracy, resource paucity, inadequate infrastructural assets such as energy and water resources, and natural disasters.
- The presence of economic infrastructure operated or controlled by Western personnel, which gives extremists visible targets and motivations to attack.
- The gradual erosion of the hegemony of Sufi brotherhoods and the authority of the *Califs* and *marabouts* that lead them.
- The transnational character of terrorism and the porosity of Senegal's borders.

Many of these factors have helped to spread radical Islamism in the Sahel-Saharan region and produced unquantifiable disruptions and destructions in sovereign African states. This ACCT Special Report finds that although Senegal is not immune from the spreading radical Islamism or from the threats that they pose, it is highly improbable, because of its internal stability mechanisms, to become a theater of operations or a fallback zone for radical Islamists. To prevent extremist violence (opportunistic and planned), Senegal must develop local capacities for identifying and isolating radical Islamists and their ideas, deepen collaboration with other countries that are taken comprehensive actions against radical Islamists, develop more effective means of policing its borders, and introduce fundamental economic changes that address the problems and concerns of the country's poor, including the growing number of unemployed, illiterate youth.

Introduction

Senegal, a West African country slightly smaller than the U.S. state of South Dakota is largely considered a stable democracy and a relatively peaceful state. It is the only country in mainland West Africa that has never experienced a military coup d'état and has continued to transition from civilian rule to civilian rule with very minimal disturbances. This, despite the protracted low-level separatist insurgency in the Casamance, its internal diversity, the tensions generated by the last presidential elections, economic pressures including widespread poverty among the population and rising food insecurity, and the presence of dormant radical Islamist cells, makes Senegal an anomaly in a region the United Nations describes as the "conflict arc."¹ Yet, there are growing concerns that because of internal fragilities, its location within the conflict arc, and because it contributed troops to the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA), it is vulnerable to a range of potential threats that might destabilize it.

These fears are germane, especially considering that Senegal shares a border and a host of similarities with Mali. Besides sharing a troubled region, Mali and Senegal both have a shared cultural and political history from the Mali Empire to the colonial era. Both are highly Islamized and, until recently in the Malian case, are often characterized as model African democracies with Muslim majorities. The fact that Mali has experienced immense social, political, and religious turmoil since 2012 and the nature of Senegal's religious space, which though dominated by non-radical Sufi brotherhoods, contains numerous movements, including jihadist and Wahhabi extremists, increases the threat exponentially. Apart from Mali, Senegal also shares characteristics with Arab states such as Saudi Arabia, the Gulf Emirates, Morocco, Egypt, and Tunisia. Like these countries, Senegal is a member of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC); the Islamic Educational, Science and Cultural Organization (ISESCO); the Muslim World League (MWL); and the World Islamic Call Society (WICS). All of these countries, like Senegal, are regarded by Al-Qaeda and its affiliates as agents of the West and therefore, potential targets for terrorist attacks.

More importantly, the fact that Senegal like many countries in the sub-region, contributed troops to AFISMA, has set many analysts and policy experts wondering whether in the event of reprisal from global jihadists working with local radical groups, which at the moment are largely dormant, Senegal's security forces have the capacity to deal with the threats and their potential consequences. In that sense, considering the socio-cultural similarities between Mali and Senegal and the range of jihadist and Wahhabite forces traversing both states, what is the likelihood that Senegal will be directly threatened by extremists or become either a theater of operations or a fallback zone for extremists?

There are several reasons why these questions are important. First, Senegal has historically been a leader in West Africa and was the colonial capital of French West Africa. In that capacity and subsequently during the turbulent period of post-colonial state formation in Africa, Senegal's leaders played a significant role in linking the material conditions of the post-colonial state to prevailing ideological systems all over the world, including socialism. For example, the ideological and developmental concept of

“negritude” that was shaped by Léopold Sédar Senghor (Senegal’s first indigenous president), Aimé Césaire (the Martinique poet), and Léon-Gontran Damas (a Guianan poet and politician) helped to create unity around the concept and condition of “blackness,” which until then was an ideological concept with pejorative connotations. In helping Africans develop a more positive conception of the black identity, leaders like Senghor contributed enormously to the unleashing of African creativity that was expected to produce significant social, political, and economic developments all over Africa. The idea of “blackness” as integral to socio-economic development led many African states, including Senegal to adopt various forms of “African socialism” such as Tanzania’s *Ujamaa*, and many of these states sought to break their link with the West in favor of the East led by the Soviet Union. Despite adopting socialism and promoting “African Socialism,” Senegal under Senghor, continued to maintain strong ties with the West, especially France despite. In many ways, Senegal continues to play this unifying role by participating (and leading) in numerous state building (and peacebuilding) endeavors in Africa, including the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA), which transformed into the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The breakdown of peace and stability in Senegal would deal an incalculable blow to the democracy movement in Africa, which is on the upsurge and continues to be inspired by Senegal’s long-running political stability.

Second, Senegal is typically considered a traditional ally of the West. With its geo-strategic location at the western limit of the continent and gateway to the Sahel and Saharan regions, Senegal continues to be central to Western efforts to route extremist forces in the region. This affinity to the West has the potential to make Senegal, which enjoys enormous Western investments and aids, a target of Al-Qaeda and its affiliates. For example, many anti-Western elements within Senegal are sorely vexed that it contributed forces to AFISMA in support of the French effort against “jihadists who protect the interests of Islam”² and which in their view makes the leadership of Senegal ‘infidel’ and therefore unworthy to lead. Since 2007, Senegal has seen an increase in the number of radical Islamic cells operating in the country. For instance, in February 2011, two suspected members of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) were arrested in Dakar. Similarly, ten suspected members of a terrorist network were arrested in Dagana in, northern Senegal in July 2012. This led Mankeur Ndiaye, Senegal’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, to suggest that dormant terror groups exist in Senegal.³

Third, many prior studies have suggested reasons why Senegal has remained relatively stable and peaceful. These studies focused non-dialectically on single factors such as the professionalism of Senegal’s military but never agreeing on any one causal link. Political stability in such a volatile region is likely due to a confluence of factors and not any one factor alone. Thus, examining how the combination of multiple interacting factors has helped to either create (such as the conflict in the Casamance), or douse (as witnessed during the last fractious elections), potential conflicts and prevent a slide into disorder and instability is an important consideration. This report will also help explain why and how radical Islamists within and outside Senegal have been unable to take advantage of internal fragilities to foment trouble.

Finally, it is important to examine how local and sub-regional conditions and contexts have impacted or have the potential to impact Senegal's relations with the West, particularly the United States. This is crucial since Senegal's internal stability has historically hinged on the global context, specifically Senegal's relations with the West. For example, the U.S. State Department describes U.S. relations with Senegal as "excellent"⁴ and bilateral relations between both countries have increased over the last decade due in part to Senegal's profile as a moderate, pro-West Muslim country in a volatile region characterized by Islamist extremism and anti-West sentiments. It is this relationship that has helped Senegal access millions of dollars in foreign assistance from the U.S. principally to assist democratic governance, economic growth, rural development, public health, food security, reconciliation in Casamance, and military professionalism. Also, due to the fact that it is a significant contributor of troops to international peacekeeping missions and because the U.S. is concerned that Senegal may not have the capacity to counter threats posed by this regional context, Senegal has received U.S. military training through the Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program. Thus, how this relationship impacts and is impacted by prevailing domestic conditions in Senegal will be examined in this report.

This report comprises four sections. This introduction is the first section and includes the discussion of theory. Section two focuses on threats to Senegal's stability and peace and section three examines the stability framework in Senegal showing how (and why) despite the region's high volatility, Senegal has remained relatively stable and peaceful. The final section presents the conclusions of this study. Threats to Senegal's stability are typically low-level but with the potential to become medium-level if major contradictions are not resolved, including the over-concentration of power in the presidency, poverty and unemployment, porous borders, and rising Islamic radicalism among Senegalese youths.

Theoretical Framework

The questions may be asked, why, despite its political stability and relative internal peace and security, Senegal still manifests internal fragilities that may destabilize it? Why, despite decades of smooth civilian-to-civilian transitions, relatively credible political institutions, and a military largely considered professional (by African standards), there are still doubts whether Senegal has the capacity to deal with threats posed by Islamic jihadists in the region? These are important questions that strike at the heart of the stability-conflict paradigm in Senegal and may be explained by the theory of the rentier state.

Typically, rentier states in Africa are those states like Nigeria that are rich in mineral wealth like oil, which are mined and exchanged in the global market for cash, food, and other commodities produced in these other countries. According to Jensen and Wantchekon, "Rents are typically generated from the exploitation of natural resources, not from production (labor), investment (interest), or the management of risk (profit)." ⁵ Rarely has the rentier paradigm been used to describe states like Senegal that are mineral

resource-poor, the exception being the work by Jonathan DiJohn, which examines mineral resource-dominant but poor countries like Senegal.⁶

In relation to Senegal, “rent” may be understood in two related senses: in terms of the nature of accumulation where income or profits are generated from non-productive activities; and as deriving from non-market forces, including government intervention. According to Catherine Boone “rentier activities are defined as politically mediated opportunities for obtaining wealth through non-productive economic activity.”⁷ Senegal’s political leaders have mastered the practice of obtaining power and perpetuating themselves in power through a sophisticated program of patrimonialism in which benefits and opportunities are exchanged for access to power. Through this strategy, a clientelistic relational system developed that with each electoral cycle is renewed and or reinvigorated. Boone suggests, “rentiers are clients of the state, co-opted and controlled. Because the source of their wealth is not self-sustaining and self-reproducing, they are dependent on the discretionary exercise of state power.”⁸ For example, the unchecked public-sector control of marketing, the provision of credit, and new agricultural technology and strategy not only inhibits production incentives, but also depresses agricultural yield and threatens food security in Senegal. This political economy has an associated logic: the stream of publicly controlled resources is almost inevitably diverted toward personal needs, the expansion of clientelistic networks, and the imperatives of economies of affection linking real and perceived kinfolk.^{9 10 11}

It is for this reason that Senegal’s political institutions remain fairly underdeveloped where the executive (or the president) condenses all of the powers of the other institutions and channels these powers in ways that offer rewards and opportunities to friends while diminishing the share of economic and social opportunities available to the mass. At a time of great social, economic, and cultural ferment and trepidation in the Sahel-Saharan region, this clientelistic system may severely encumber the state’s capacity to absorb shocks and ability to deal with radical Islamism.

Senegal’s Threat Analysis and Potential Strategic Response

The threats confronting Senegal are both internal and external. The internal threats include the over-concentration of power in the presidency; economic cleavages including rising unemployment and poverty; growing radicalism; and the long running low-level insurgency in the Casamance. The external threats include the “bad-neighborhood” syndrome and organized crime, including illegal trafficking of narcotics and weapons.

The Inefficiency of Hyper-Centralization

Senegal’s governance structure is highly centralized, due in part to the French Gaullist legacy and in part to the post-independence need to build a strong nation-state. It’s centralist constitutional design, which discourages the assertion of ethnic and tribal identities and loyalties, has helped to mediate several shocks that had the potential to produce instability and insecurity. One of these shocks is the secessionist rebellion in the Casamance region that though is contained and has not spread to other regions, is still the longest running insurgency in Africa. Another was the extremely fractious 2012

presidential elections that in other West African countries would have factionalized along ethnic lines and devolved into violence. A third shock was the rain-induced flooding that produced widespread population displacement around Dakar, Senegal's capital city.¹² The hyper-centralization of political power also has immense negative effects. For example, it vests the president with a high degree of executive power, which has been (ab)used in the past to take unpopular unilateral decisions, some of which have helped to address internal shocks superficially by buffering them temporarily and thus, helping to avert large-scale violence. However, the superficial and temporal nature of these fixes means that they are incapable of addressing underlying vulnerabilities within the system.

Although Senegal has never had a coup d'état, the degree of presidential impunity often impacts governance. For example, there are reports that the presidency repeatedly used security forces to suppress political opposition and in instances where police brutality that resulted in fatalities were recorded, the state did not investigate or embark on any corrective measures either to sanction officers or to ensure that such incidents never reoccurred.¹³ Also, there is at present no constitutional provision for the legislative confirmation of judges. As a result, the president unilaterally nominates judges, "promotes like-minded judges to senior positions, and posts troublesome judges to remote jurisdictions."¹⁴ Absent of legislative oversight, the judiciary self-censors, which makes the judiciary structurally and functionally dependent on the executive, an inadequate and ineffective "counterbalance to the power of the presidency."¹⁵ It is this inherent weakness that former President Wade used to amend the constitution, which enabled him to run for third term, an action that almost destabilized Senegal. A 2013 USAID assessment concludes that Senegal's central democratic, human rights, and governance (DRG) problem is the hyper-centralization of power, which:

Weakens consensus on the political system, undermines rule of law, reduces competition, thwarts political accountability, constrains inclusion, and reduces government effectiveness, leading to an array of problems including pervasive corruption, poor service delivery, sporadic civil disturbances, and the lack of resolution of the conflict in Casamance.¹⁶

Unless President Macky Sall and the new political class actively engage the issue of political reforms that moderates and balances the power of the president through the strengthening of other institutions, including the legislature and judiciary, the people and country will remain "persistently susceptible to shocks" including the potentially destabilizing activities of radical Islamists who may be waiting to take advantage of apparent state weakness. However, the immediate risk to security and stability posed by this inordinate concentration of political power in the presidency is low. Senegal continues to be seen internally and externally as a model African democracy, which informed President Obama's June 2013 visit to the country. Still, unless an equitable balance of power is achieved among Senegal's key institutions i.e. the executive, legislature, and judiciary, this low-level risk may become a high-level threat as was almost witnessed during the run-up to the 2012 presidential elections. This point cannot be overemphasized.

Religious Radicalism

Senegal has continued to draw upon a long political tradition derived from its French experience that dates back to the mid-19th century. This tradition has resulted in the separation of religion and state, which is guaranteed by the constitution. Although Muslim networks constitute an immensely powerful political block, politics in Senegal has never been driven by religious convictions, sentiments, or principles. For example, while former President Wade belonged to the Mourides, the predominant Sufi brotherhood in Senegal, he continued to defend secularism throughout his presidency. Similarly, current President Macky Sall, a devout Muslim, has continued to take steps to preserve Senegal's secular constitution and to prevent radical Islamists from wielding influence. The state is helped by the four Islamic brotherhoods – Qadiri, Tijani, Mouride, and Layenne – that have acted as obstacles to the spread of radical Islam in Senegal.

Despite this context, there is a steady increase in radical Islamist rhetoric in Senegal. The growing radicalization movement in Senegal has grown out of three related moments: pan-Islamic solidarity wherein radical Islamists seek to take ownership of all international Islamic causes; opposition to the Sufi brotherhoods through rejection of all Islamic religiosities that do not conform to Salafist ideology; and anti-Western attitude particularly dissatisfaction with the Western model of secular democracy that Senegal practices.¹⁷

In the past, Islamists and fundamentalists sought to gain influence over the brotherhoods in the mosques through a narrative centered on reform. When this strategy failed, they switched focus to more mundane issues of leadership and values, including the need to inject Islam into the management of the state as well as the desire to curb or prevent homosexuality. For example, in a new study conducted with 400 Senegalese in Dakar, its suburbs, and the towns and surrounding areas of Thies, Mbour, and Saint Louis, at least 30% of respondents said they had been told they were not practicing “true” Islam.¹⁸ This signifies a growing trend of criticism against the established Sufi orders by political Islamists including the Salafi-Wahhabi movement, Al-Falah,¹⁹ who insist that the brotherhoods promote the worship of individual imams or *marabouts* instead of the Prophet Mohammed. In Thies, for instance, many respondents spoke about a mosque where men are worshipped, not the faith. There are indications that “more and more fundamentalist groups, such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), are tapping into national causes and giving them a religious spin, to create national ideologies,”²⁰ and this is part of a “new strategy”²¹ that has the potential to radicalize many of Senegal's youths that are suffering poverty and unemployment. The new strategy includes a long-term agenda to indoctrinate youths through investments in schools that will transmit parallel or competing ideas, including radical Islamist ideas.

The threat posed to security and stability in Senegal by the gradually radicalizing religious space, is low. It is low because the established Sufi brotherhoods have near hegemonic control over Senegal's religious populations and have resisted every attempt by fringe radical elements to seize control and impose their radical views on the

population. However, Senegalese researcher Bakary Sambe suggests that the mystical Sufi brotherhoods, whose chants of prayer and poetry often fill the night air in Dakar, are no longer the “solid ramparts against violence and extremism they once were.”²² According to Sambe, Senegal’s youths are looking for a religious model that is more modern, more open, and more rational, characteristics that he says the brotherhoods lack. The brotherhoods are increasingly appearing outdated and their discourse and logics are becoming increasingly stale to a population yearning for change. The fringe reformist movements are filling the gap and attracting more and more restless youths to their fold. They ascribe to a political Islam influenced by the Internet and exterior models and express a desire to create, within Senegal, what they call a “truly Islamic society.”²³

Although near term risk from radical Islamists is low, there is evidence of a trajectory toward a longer-term threat. Several factors account for this, including: 1) the significant proportion of survey respondents (30%) who say they have been exposed to radical Islamic ideas; 2) the presence of a small but growing segment of the population (mainly of youths located in the low-income suburbs of Dakar) who express support for regional jihadist groups like MUJAO; 3) the 35-40% of interviewees in Thies and the environs of Dakar who oppose the French-led intervention in Mali and blame Senegal for taking part in it;²⁴ 4) the admission on January 18, 2013, by Senegal’s Minister for Foreign Affairs that dormant terror cells exist in Senegal; and 5) a recent report which shows that Senegal has a literacy rate of 39.30%, which ranks it 45 out of 52 African countries²⁵ - a factor that may be capitalized on by extremists who prey on vulnerable populations. This gradual elevation of risk should be countered by alleviating the unemployment, poverty, and illiteracy that render Senegal’s youth susceptible to extremist influence. More effective policing of Senegal’s borders will help prevent the radical elements that are fleeing Mali from entering Senegal to cause trouble.

Socio-political integration and Corruption

Since the presidency of Abdul Diouf, Senegal’s political space has been considerably liberalized. Citizens eagerly participate in political activities and join political parties, which for the most part are fragmented. Political parties in Senegal depend more on personalities than ideas, which makes them potentially polarizing. This weakness often leads to the formation of new political parties (and coalitions) and the “cross-carpeting” or migration of politicians from one party to another while holding positions in government, a puny practice described in some quarters as *political nomadism*.²⁶ A recent example is President Macky Sall, a long-time member of the Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS), which in collaboration with smaller parties formed the Sopi Coalition (Wolof for ‘change’) and controlled political power in Senegal from 2001 to 2012. In December 2008, President Sall founded his own political party, the *Alliance for the Republic* (APR-Yaakaar) after falling out with President Wade and the ruling PDS.

Political nomadism thrives on the existing clientilistic or patronage system, a legacy of of the first three presidents of Senegal – Senghor, Diouf, and Wade – who used this system to govern. The patron-client relationship between these leaders and the marabout leaders of the Sufi brotherhoods provided popular support for these leaders and helped to legitimize their rule.²⁷ Though counter to Western concepts of institution building, this political culture provides some benefits for stabilization. For example, it deepened

political engagement among many Senegalese by establishing and maintaining personal connections between the state and local populations, who tend to identify with particular leaders. This is crucial since the articulation (and negotiation) of interests is done more through well-differentiated interest groups, especially such urban groups as student, market, and teachers unions than through political parties. However, the personalization of political power has negative consequences that affect stability and peace in Senegal. For instance, the agglomeration of power has promoted a culture of corruption, which worsened during President Wade's second tenure. President Wade's son, Karim Wade, was charged in April 2013 for corruptly enriching himself to over \$1.3 billion of public funds. Even President Sall was accused by former Prime Minister Idrissa Seck of misappropriating \$3.5 million in public funds.²⁸ Power is appropriated by a few individuals and maintained through corruption, funding the various patronage networks comprised of traditional religious and community leaders, and fueling the rhetoric of radical Islamists who denounce the illegitimacy of this system.

Although the problems associated with political and social integration in Senegal constitute a low-level risk to Senegal's political stability, corruption poses a medium-level security challenge. This may be behind President Sall's recent sacking of the government of Prime Minister Abdoul Mbaye on August 1, 2013, and the immediate appointment of anti-graft campaigner, Aminata Toure, to replace him.²⁹ Corruption constitutes medium-level risk because the level of poverty and unemployment is a reflection of the level of corruption in Sub-Saharan African countries. Corruption erodes the ability to provide basic infrastructure and to create a climate conducive to local and international investments, which, in a resource-poor country like Senegal, translates into low capacity utilization, unemployment, and poverty. Unemployed youths are susceptible to recruitment by radical groups and opposition politicians may use them to cause disaffection against the government. For example, opposition politicians like the former Minister of Health under President Wade, Modou Diagne Fada, who is the present opposition leader in parliament and other PDS leaders accuse President Sall of political "witch-hunt" because of the president's resolve to try officials of the Wade regime for corruption.³⁰ Unless corruption is tackled and corrupt leaders are brought to justice, officials of government will continue to siphon money from the coffers of the state and increasingly alienate youths, a situation that may be exploited by extremists.

"Bad Neighborhood Syndrome"

Senegal is trapped within the so-called "arc of instability"³¹ that stretches "across Africa's Sahara and Sahel regions."³² Although it is a member of several state Islamic networks, never-the-less Senegal is a traditional ally of the West and wields regional influence disproportionate to its size, resource endowments, and population relative to most of its neighbors. In fact, Senegal has been able to exert influence equivalent to the economic and military powers of South Africa, Nigeria, and Egypt, and is seen as a model for other African states.³³

Despite its relative internal stability and because of its location within the conflict arc, Senegal is increasingly indicating "structural, institutional and geopolitical vulnerabilities"³⁴ that may make it the "target of radical Islamists who have occupied northern Mali"³⁵ and other countries in the region. For example, on May 23, 2013, two

car bombs were detonated in Agadez and Arlit – both in Niger – by a group led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the AQIM-affiliated militant leader responsible for the Algerian national oil company attacks. The attack in Arlit, the site of a French-run uranium mine, is prescient for Senegal, which like Niger hosts economic, military, and diplomatic assets of interest to France. Also, like Niger, Senegal contributes troops to the International Support Mission to Mali (MISMA), which radical Islamists have vowed to recompense with violence. The vulnerability of Senegal to these threats is accentuated by the porosity of Senegal's borders with its neighbors, including Mali, Mauritania, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and The Gambia due to insufficient human and material resources. This has created conditions favorable to the cross-border infiltration by radical Islamists, their ideas, and their weapons.

The “bad neighborhood syndrome” poses a medium-level threat to Senegal's security and stability due to the potential long-term impact of regional instability on Senegal's fragile operational environment. Within the last decade, for instance, open sources indicate that nearly a dozen AQIM affiliates have been arrested inside Senegal.³⁶ There is some possibility that others have eluded the security dragnet and are already active within Senegal. This may contribute to recent findings that indicate an increase in radical Islamist rhetoric in Senegal.³⁷

Growing economic pressures

The outcome of Senegal's 2012 presidential election was largely determined by the economic and social perturbation and chaos in Senegal that was precipitated by high levels of youth unemployment, growing poverty, recurrent power outages, the weakening of democratic institutions, and the decision of President Wade to seek a third term. The rejection of Wade at the polls, in favor of President Macky Sall, a little over a decade after he was enthusiastically elected to reform and expand access to education and create job opportunities for millions of unemployed youths, indicates a growing despondence among the country's youths about their economic prospects in Senegal. The unemployment situation had become so untenable that it spawned an illegal immigration wave towards Europe and this situation was aided by crisis in the energy sector, which affected foreign direct investment inflow. It is frustration at the worsening economic conditions and the desire by citizens to redress this that led to President Sall's election victory in 2012 and the type of support that President Sall receives from this expectant population will be determined by how well he addresses the crisis in the energy sector and high rates of illiteracy, which are factors in the growing youth unemployment and population-wide poverty.

This is important given the socio-demographic characteristics of the country. At least 68% of Senegal's 12.9 million people are under 25 years of age³⁸ and 86.5% of school-age children are enrolled full-time in primary school, which means that approximately 13% of school age children or 429,159 children are out of school.³⁹ Senegal's annual population growth rate is 3%, which means that approximately 100,000 young people enter the labor market each year,⁴⁰ much faster than the economy can absorb them. This situation is worsened by the fact that at least 57% of Senegal's population lives in rural areas where they lack access to basic social infrastructure, including schools (which accounts for the high illiteracy rate especially among women and girls), health care,

drinking water, and roads. Fifty-one percent of Senegal's population is engaged in agriculture, which contributes only 16% of the GDP. As a Sahelian country, Senegal's foreign exchange mainly comes from the exportation of primary products such as peanut oil, phosphates, and halieutics.⁴¹ This socio-demographic structure poses systemic challenges to the new government's efforts to address unemployment and poverty, which offers immense first and second nature challenges to peace and stability in Senegal.

Economic fissures represent a low threat in the short term with the potential to grow over the long term. The economic challenges facing President Sall's government are multiple, and nearly insurmountable in five years.⁴² Although the government of President Wade undertook critical economic reforms aimed at macro-economic stability, improving the management of public finances, enhancing the competitiveness of key sectors, and weaning parastatal firms off public subsidies, all of which earned Senegal a place in the World Bank's "top ten reformers"⁴³ list in 2009, the economy has continued to groan under the weight of corruption, rigid labor laws, lack of transparency in public contracting, incapacitated judiciary, opaque land titling procedures, and redtapism.⁴⁴ It is not coincidental, then, that the IMF in 2010 observed that Senegal's real GDP growth over the previous 15 years had lapsed behind Africa's "best performing, non-oil exporting countries" by at least 2% annually.⁴⁵ The IMF attributed the difference to Senegal's relative deficiencies in "infrastructure, non-price competitiveness, and strength of fiscal institutions, as well as factors such as governance, the quality of institutions, and financial market development."⁴⁶ The result of all these is the non-satisfaction of local needs for employment, income, and food, which may lead to street protests and demonstrations that extremists may exploit to cause trouble.

There is also an urgent need for President Sall's government to accelerate economic growth by modifying Senegal's economic structure considering that the country is resource-poor, suffers from severe human resource deficits, is periodically ravaged by natural disasters including flooding, has an inefficient energy sector, and persisting conflict in the more resource endowed Casamance. Along this line, President Sall will face several challenges, including how to reform the agricultural sector, which accounts for 16% of GDP and employs more than two-thirds of the labor force,⁴⁷ to make it amenable to the needs of rural populations that have disproportionately higher poverty rates than urban areas. For example, Senegal continues to depend on imports for 70% of its food needs, a rate higher than any country in sub-Saharan Africa⁴⁸ and which indicates its continuing inability to grow its own food to meet the needs of local populations. One solution that has been applied and that has achieved varying levels of success is "micro-gardening," a practice in which vegetables such as tomatoes, mint, courgettes, and cucumber are grown on small tables covered with hybrid soil consisting of fertilizer, peanut shells, rice husks, and iron-rich clay that requires little water.⁴⁹ This approach, which was first reported in 1999 by the Food and Agriculture Organization, has engaged over 5000 families and if expanded, has the potential to help millions of Senegal's poor escape the stultifying poverty that makes them unable to feed themselves.

A final challenge is how to restructure the economy so that it is not solely dependent on primary produce extraction that is always dependent on the shocks of the international

commodity market. Restructuring implies diversifying the economy and revenue streams, limiting the economy's vulnerability to exogenous shocks, and addressing problems in the energy sector.⁵⁰

Low-Level Insurgency – Casamance

Senegal's primary security concern has been the long-running, low-level separatist conflict in the Casamance region, which has defied several peace agreements, including the landmark 2004 peace agreement that momentarily stopped the conflict. An agriculturally fertile region with more natural resources relative to the rest of Senegal, the Casamance borders Guinea-Bissau to the south and is cut off from northern Senegal by The Gambia. A unique aspect of the Casamance and the main contributor to the conflict is that it is religiously and ethnically different from northern Senegal. Historically, members of the Diola ethnic group, who are largely Christian and animists, in stark contrast to the overwhelming Muslim majority in the north, primarily inhabit it. Although the Diola constitute the majority in the Casamance, they are only 4% of the Senegalese population and are spread out into neighboring Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia.⁵¹ This is not surprising considering that Casamance was originally part of The Gambia River complex but was arbitrarily separated from The Gambia in 1889.⁵² During the colonial and early independence periods, Casamance was largely neglected and suffered from Wolof cultural hegemony, which continues to inspire the resistance or separatist movement in the region.

Central to the conflict in the Casamance is the idea of cultural, political, and economic marginalization. The Diola insist that the socio-economic and political institutions in Senegal privilege the majority ethnic groups, especially the Wolof and a Wolof-dominated elitist class but disadvantage the Diolae. Thus, the prevailing sociopolitical structure of Senegal was incapable of protecting the rights and interests of people in the Casamance, hence their quest for the creation of a separate state. From the late 1960s and through the 1970s, several independence movements developed. Inspired by new government policies that transferred some ancestral agricultural lands to northern Muslims of Wolof, Serer, and Peuhl ethnic groups, several separatist movements emerged in the 1980s including the *Mouvement des Forces Democratiques de Casamance* (MFDC), which comprised mostly Diola separatists and was formed following the brutal suppression of non-violent protests by the Senegalese government.⁵³

Since the early 1990s, several armed factions of the MFDC have emerged and have sporadically engaged Senegalese security forces and themselves in violent conflict. One faction, *Attika*, operated out of Guinea-Bissau and attacked mainly Senegalese security forces and government infrastructure such as airports. The other faction, *Front Sud*, comprising primarily Diola youth affiliated with The Gambia, laid ambush for Senegalese troops and non-Diola civilians. These groups have received support from the governments of Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia as well as Iran. For instance, in 2010, the Nigerian government intercepted a large shipment of arms from Iran meant for rebel fighters in the Casamance. Over the years, the conflict has resulted in about 3000-5000 civilian deaths,⁵⁴ including deaths caused by landmines that continue to hinder regional economic growth and development. It has also resulted in frequent refugee flows primarily to Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia. So far, the conflict has continued to elude

attempts to institute lasting peace, including the 2004 peace agreement that temporarily suspended the conflict. One possible reason for the apparent intractability of the conflict is the involvement of transnational criminal organizations. For instance, the lucrative South America to Europe trade in narcotics through Guinea-Bissau is a growing source of funds for insurgents who also take advantage of porous borders to traffic in arms.

The threat posed by the separatist violence in Casamance to security and stability in Senegal is low. This is because the Casamance conflict is highly localized and involves mainly non-Muslim separatists. As a result, it poses little existential threat to Senegal at large. However, the persistence of the conflict may embolden extremists who view the continuation of the conflict as evidence that Senegal's military is weak and can be defeated. Extremists may capitalize on this weakness to stage low-level insurgencies in the northern parts of Senegal.

Organized Crime

There is growing concern about the impact of drug trafficking and other forms of organized criminal activity on security and political stability in Senegal. The porosity of Senegal's borders with its neighbors, especially Guinea-Bissau and its political and economic structure continue to attract and nurture illicit activity. For example, the high levels of corruption, youth unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, and lack of access to basic services such as health care, drinking water, and electricity and the insurgency in the Casamance are vulnerabilities that organized criminal organizations have exploited to conduct the illicit drug trade that link producers in South America with markets in Europe. The drug route from South America to Europe enters Senegal through Guinea-Bissau and Guinea by air, sea, and overland.

The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) suggest that the total value of illicit drug flows through Senegal is more than eight times the value of Senegal's GDP.⁵⁵

⁵⁶ This means that the drug trade presents opportunities for enrichment that far outweighs benefits from Senegal's formal economy and have the potential to distort the country's economic and governance incentives since people who seek to maintain their access to the financial benefits that such illicit flows create and poor, unemployed youths who seek access to opportunities that are not legitimately available, are involved in the burgeoning business. Senegal's relatively good transportation and telecommunication infrastructure as well as its porous border, which has permitted the establishment of regional smuggling networks, facilitate the involvement of Senegalese in drug trafficking. The route through which illicit drugs enter and leave Senegal are also used to smuggle duty-free cigarettes, counterfeit prescription drugs, small arms, and persons.⁵⁷

The transnational illicit flow through Senegal represents a significant long-term threat to Senegal's security and stability that over time may undermine state capacity, the rule of law, and peace. Although Senegal's security forces have been effective in countering the trade as recent seizures demonstrate,⁵⁸ the continued porosity of Senegal's borders and festering poverty continue to make the illicit drug trade a significant existential threat to peace and stability in. The threat is likely to increase exponentially with immense disruptive potential if elements of the Senegalese military enter the lucrative trade, like their counterparts in Guinea-Bissau did.

Factors for Stability in Senegal

Determining the domestic and external factors that contribute to a nation's stability relative to its neighbors is always a challenge, theoretically and methodologically. For example, it is tempting to focus on relations between Senegal's political institutions and the Sufi brotherhoods and how that relationship neutralizes extremist discourse in Senegal. Yet, this focus could be misleading if that relationship is not placed in the proper context or if they are not linked to other forces operating systemically to deflect tensions over failing economic policies, the fear of Western Cultural hegemony, and the political marginalization of a section of society. In this section, the factors that have helped to create and sustain peace and stability in Senegal are examined. Emphasis is not on individual factors but their combination; that is, how they all combine to neutralize threats and bolster peace and stability in Senegal.

Integrativist Approach to National Development

Article 1 of the Senegalese constitution says: "[t]he Republic of Senegal is laicistic, democratic and social."⁵⁹ This idea was borrowed from the French constitution of 1958, itself based on the December 5, 1905, "Law of the Separation of Church and State," where France defined itself as "non-confessional."⁶⁰ These ideas have found full expression in the political and social organization of Senegalese society, despite being 95% Muslim. Although Islam continues to influence society in Senegal, the Western and secular model of the state that was established through colonialism has become hegemonic and subsumes religion and other traditional forms of authority.

Today, Senegal has a highly centralized political system, which has helped it to mediate potentially destabilizing shocks and prevent a slide into disorder and violence. Power, for the most part, is concentrated in the presidency and is often used to marginalize local institutions that in other parts of Africa often feud with the state for authority and control over local resources. The hyper-centralization of political power was a deliberate strategy adopted by Senegal's post-independence leadership to forge national unity and cohesion and to avoid the disorder that typically follows the decentralization of political power in Africa. For example, in many decentralized or accommodative systems, national unity and cohesion have been imperiled by failure to harmonize differences (ethnic, cultural, religious, language, etc.) leading to the assertion (and creation) of competing identities, ideologies, and interests with immense disruptive moments. In some of these countries like Nigeria, the formation and assertion of identity, such as ethnic identity, has continued to militate against the development of a national or Nigerian identity, critically imperiled the quest for nationhood, and enabled extremists and warlords to fight over resource-rich territories.

Four broad lessons emerge from Senegal's integrative political system. First, the emergence of a strong presidency helped to foster social cohesion. The strength of this approach has been tested repeatedly, including during the last presidential elections and has continued to show remarkable resilience. Second, the constitutional design helped to diminish the importance of ethnicity and religion as tools of political control. For example, despite being about 95% Muslim, Senegal's first president, Leopold Senghor,

was a Christian from the Serer tribe, which make-up only 14% of the Senegalese population.⁶¹ Because of this, Senegal, which prides itself as a secular state, has never witnessed the type of religious and ethnic tensions that have often produced fractious political contestation and armed conflicts in other African countries. Third, the integrative political system has helped to moderate exogenous and endogenous shocks and prevent conflict. For example, the design helped to reduce ethnic differences by promoting the use of the French and Wolof languages as the official languages instead of multiple languages, which helped to forge unity around popular usage of Wolof and French. In that sense, the Wolof language was not the property of a specific ethnic group – the Wolof – that could be used to mobilize ethnic identity, but a national language that facilitated communication and exchange among members of the different ethnicities.⁶² Finally, because of the integrative nature of Senegal's political system, intermarriage among ethnicities is so pervasive that scholars frequently discuss the "de-ethnicization" of Senegalese society.⁶³ Similarly, interfaith marriages such as between former President Abdou Diouf, a Tijani, and his wife Elizabeth, a Catholic, are common and this is fundamental to intergroup peace and stability.

The Muslim Brotherhoods

Since the 1950s, Islamists in Senegal have criticized the nature of the state in Senegal, especially its Western secular form. Senegalese democracy is often held up as a model for other African states and is accepted and supported by the most entrenched religio-political movements in Senegal, including the Sufi brotherhoods of the Tijaniya, Muridiya, Qadiriya, and layene. This means that criticism of the secular model of the state almost exclusively comes from Senegal's Islamists, who seek to replace the state (and supplant the established Sufi brotherhoods) with a model of the state founded on "pure" Islam based on the *sharia*. However, this desire has been resisted and or thwarted by the proximity of the Sufi brotherhoods to the political state. It was this close alignment, facilitated by the "exchange of services"⁶⁴ that enabled Leopold Senghor and his successors, Abdou Diouf and Abdoulaye Wade, to win and retain political power. For these leaders, close collaboration with Sufi brotherhoods was a *sine qua non* and they emphasized the symbolic presence of the state at all important Islamic festivities, including the annual pilgrimage of the *Murides*, the *Magal* in *Touba*, and the *Gamou* of the *Tijanis*.⁶⁵ For example, following his election victory over President Abdou Diouf in March 2000, President Abdoulaye Wade, a liberal Mouride who faced significant opposition from the Tijaniyya brotherhood, went to Touba the spiritual center of the Mourides, to thank the Calif for his prayers.

Thus, the careful nurturing of relations between the political state and the Sufi brotherhoods has resulted in the development of a "nominally liberal political culture"⁶⁶ that is "familist"⁶⁷ and resentful of the radical Islamism that has inspired much of the violence in the Sahel-Saharan region. The pan-ethnic, transcendent, inclusive, universalizing nature of Senegal's Sufi brotherhoods,⁶⁸ which is continuously under assault from Islamists, has helped to prevent the radicalization of Senegal's Muslims and to preserve its peace and stability. However, as has been suggested the influence of the Sufi brotherhoods is waning giving room for upsurge in radical Islamism in Senegal.⁶⁹

Historical Circumstance and Democratic Precedence

Senegal has a long democratic tradition dating back to colonialism. Its status as French colonial administrative headquarters gave it preeminence among French colonial states and this history continues to inspire pride among Senegal's people. Indeed, the colonial legacy and the statecraft of the first indigenous Senegalese government led by Leopold Senghor have ensured a close relationship between Senegal and the West and fetched many millions in aid and development dollars for Senegal. Without these huge foreign investments and assistance, Senegal, which is resource-poor, would have experienced great challenges meeting the needs of its people; challenges that have often produced armed conflicts in other parts of Africa. Although the presence of huge foreign assets in Senegal is part of growing concern about (and perhaps motivation for) possible attacks by radical Islamists, this has been a major factor in Senegal's political stability. For Senegal, efforts to counter the threats posed by radical Islamists must include strategies for deepening the relationship between Senegal and the West, especially strategies to build more resilient democratic institutions, eradicate corruption, and develop human capacities. Moreover, the fact that Senegal lacks natural resource wealth, which in other African states is frequently the cause of armed conflict, helped Senegal avoid the "resource curse" and encouraged it to seek alternative sources of revenue by deepening its relationship with the West, especially the U.S. and France.

Relationship between Civil authorities and the military

General Lamine Cisse, Senegal's former Chief of Defense Staff, says that the key to Senegal's stability is the strong relationship among Senegal's security forces, civil authorities, and the population,⁷⁰ where the army plays a mediating role connecting the people and civil authorities together. This innovative role is captured by the concept of *Armee-Nation*, which embodies and promotes collaboration between the Senegalese army and government and civilians.

The root of *Armee-Nation* is traceable to the relationship between President Leopold Senghor and his Chief of Defense Staff, General Jean Alfred Diallo. Both leaders determined that the military must play a major role in Senegal's socio-economic development in addition to its traditional role of defending the state against external threats. More importantly, both leaders held the strong belief that the army must at all times be subordinated to civilian leadership. These ideas were incorporated into the military's mission statement, which is to safeguard the peace; to protect the Senegalese people; and to assist the population in economic and social development. In that context, both leaders worked together to identify important development projects and to assign the military to fulfill these missions.

Today, the Army, unlike most African armies, is engaged in numerous civil projects in healthcare, infrastructural development, agriculture, education, and environmental protection. For example, apart from training retired military personnel in effective agricultural techniques, the military has dug wells, constructed lakes and water retention basins, operated large farms that employ thousands of retired military personnel and civilians, and engaged in ambitious development projects such as artificial precipitation. In the field of education, the military through *Armee-Nation* is involved in the

construction, restoration, and maintenance of educational facilities in collaboration with Senegal's Ministry of Education. The school of military medicine, for example, has trained thousands of medical doctors that are deployed to health centers and hospitals across the country and its mechanical and civil engineering program at the Polytechnic School in Thies trained many engineers before it was transferred to the University of Dakar.⁷¹

The amenability of the military to the domestic needs of the Senegalese people and the military's professionalism has endeared it to the people and created enormous goodwill, trust, and camaraderie between the military and civilians. The stabilizing significance of this factor cannot be overemphasized, especially when relations between the militaries and civilian populations of many African countries are characterized by mutual suspicion, distrust, and non-cooperation. For example, the battle between Boko Haram and Nigeria's security forces is complicated enormously by the refusal of segments of the local population to cooperate with the army because of the Army's historic poor relationship with civil authorities and civilian populations.

Remittances from the Diaspora

Remittances from Senegal's diaspora provide significant financial in-flow and help fund the local, informal economy. A 2005 data put the number of Senegalese emigrants at 463,403 with the top ten destinations being The Gambia, France, Italy, Mauritania, Spain, Gabon, the United States, DR Congo, Guinea-Bissau, and Nigeria. Between 2000 and 2006, the official remittance flow into Senegal more than doubled and has continued to rise.⁷² In 2007, over \$902 million were remitted, which is three times the level of direct foreign investment in Senegal.⁷³ And in 2010, \$1.4 billion were remitted accounting for 10% of GDP.⁷⁴ These remittances "have been the lifeblood of the economy for the past 20 years"⁷⁵ and are critical in buffering the economic challenges of the state by providing alternative income sources for a significant segment of the population, which reduces the burden on the state, deflects public angst against the state, and insulates vulnerable populations from susceptibility to the tactics and logics of extremist recruiting. However, due to the financial crisis, there is concern that the remittances are drying up and causing "lots of unhappiness,"⁷⁶ especially in central Senegal "where there are entire villages which survive solely on the money their relatives earn in Europe and the United States."⁷⁷ If the remittances dry up at the same time that commodity prices have risen sharply without corresponding rise in employment or disposable income, there is no telling how this might affect people's susceptibility to radical Islamist ideas and the near term socio-political stability of Senegal.

Conclusion

Senegal presents a unique challenge in the study of conflict and peace. It represents an oasis of stability in the midst of tremendous chaos. But this image is paradoxical. Senegal is the site of the longest running, low-level armed insurgency in Africa at the same time that it is one of Africa's longest running democracies. The fact that the conflict in the Casamance has not led to the derailment of Senegal's political system suggests this

system is resilient. It is also signal that the state or its security apparatus is weak, a weakness that radical Islamists seek to exploit in order to extend their influence in Africa.

The fact that the Sahel-Saharan region has become the hotbed of Islamic fundamentalism is not welcome news for Senegal, who shares border with Mali, the site of recent violent conflict between Al-Qaeda-backed radical Islamists and a coalition of African forces supported by France. Senegal also shares border with Mauritania with whom it engaged in conflict in 1989 that was caused by desertification. Mauritania has experienced multiple military coups and has considerable Al-Qaeda influence.⁷⁸ In addition, Senegal shares border with Guinea-Bissau, which is regarded as Africa's first 'narco-state',⁷⁹ Guinea with a history of military coups, authoritarian rule, and human trafficking,⁸⁰ and The Gambia with whom it formed a short-lived union, Senegambia, between 1982 and 1989 and that has a history of authoritarian rule. This bad neighborhood and the ease of movement across these countries contribute to concern that Senegal, despite its stability, is susceptible to the corrosive regional chaos and instability. Evidence for this possibility is Mali, which until recently showed similar characteristics as Senegal. That Mali could implode in the manner that it did suggests very strongly that stability and peace in Senegal, like most countries in the region, are mostly tenuous and must be guarded jealously.

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