

## Topic Page: [Senegal](#)

Definition: **Senegal** from *Collins English Dictionary*

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**1** a republic in West Africa, on the Atlantic: made part of French West Africa in 1895; became fully independent in 1960; joined with The Gambia to form the Confederation of Senegambia (1982–89); mostly low-lying, with semidesert in the north and tropical forest in the southwest Official language: French. Religion: Muslim majority. Currency: franc. Capital: Dakar. Pop: 13 300 410 (2013 est). Area: 197 160 sq km (76 124 sq miles)



Summary Article: **Senegal**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Image from: [This flag was adopted in 1960 when Senegal became... in Philip's World Factbook 2008-2009](#)

Country in West Africa, on the Atlantic Ocean, bounded to the north by Mauritania, east by Mali, south by Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, and enclosing the Gambia on three sides.

**Government** Under its 2001 constitution, as amended in 2007 and 2008, Senegal has a multiparty system with free and fair elections and a presidential executive. The president, who is head of state and government and

commander-in-chief of the armed forces, is elected by universal suffrage and serves a five-year term (reduced to a five-year term from 2019), with a restriction to two consecutive terms. Until 2012 there was a two-chamber legislature, comprising a 165-member lower house, the national assembly, and a 100-member upper house, the senate. The national assembly comprises 90 members elected for five-year terms by simple majority vote in single- and multi-member constituencies, 60 elected by party-list proportional representation, and 15 by overseas voters. The senate was abolished in 2001 and was re-established in 2007 with 65 members appointed by the president and 35 indirectly elected by local and regional councils. In September 2012, it was abolished again, to save funds urgently needed for flood relief. The president appoints a prime minister and has the power to dissolve the national assembly. Senegal's ten regions enjoy a high degree of autonomy, each having its own appointed governor and elected assembly and controlling a separate budget.

**History** Islam was introduced to Senegal in the 11th century and today 95% of the population are Muslims. Portuguese explorers arrived in the 15th century, and French settlers in the 17th. Senegal had a French governor from 1854, became part of French West Africa in 1895, and a territory in 1902. In 1959 it formed the Mali Federation with French Sudan.

**Independence** Senegal became an independent republic in September 1960, with Léopold Sédar Senghor, leader of the Senegalese Progressive Union (UPS), as its first president. Senegal maintained close links with France, allowing it to retain military bases. In 1962, prime minister Mamadou Dia was imprisoned after attempting a coup, and a new constitution gave President Senghor, who also became prime minister, increased power. The UPS was the only legal party from 1966 until in December 1976 it was reconstituted as the Senegalese Socialist Party (PS) and two opposition parties were legally registered.

Senghor retired from politics in 1980 and handed over power to Abdou Diouf, who declared an amnesty for political offenders and permitted more parties to register. The opposition centrist Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) began to win assembly seats and strongly opposed Diouf's decision in 1983 to abolish the post of prime minister (the post was reinstated in 1992).

**Senegambia confederation** In 1980 Senegal sent troops to the Gambia to protect it against a suspected Libyan invasion, and it intervened again in 1981 to thwart an attempted coup. As the two countries came closer together, they agreed on an eventual merger, and the confederation of Senegambia came into being in February 1982. The envisaged integration of the two countries never, however, developed and in 1989 the confederation was dissolved.

Since 1982 the government has faced violent guerrilla resistance in the Casamance region in the south. In April 1989 violent border disputes, with more than 450 people killed, led to a severance of diplomatic relations (until 1992) with neighbouring Mauritania. Over 50,000 people were repatriated from both countries in May 1989. In 1993, following further clashes with separatist rebels in Casamance, the government agreed a ceasefire, which held until 1995.

**Opposition to Diouf and peaceful transition of power** Diouf served four terms as president 1981–2000 and encouraged broader political participation and a reduced role for government in the economy. Following disputed elections in 1998, which were won by the ruling Socialist Party amid claims of fraud by the opposition, a new opposition alliance was formed – the Alliance of Forces for Change. This comprised the PDS, the African Party for Democracy and Socialism (PADS), and the Convention for Democrats and Patriots. The national assembly passed a law in 1998 allowing Abdou Diouf to be 'president for life', but he was defeated in the March 2000 presidential elections by Abdoulaye Wade, leader of the opposition PDS since its founding in 1974 and a challenger in each of the presidential elections from 1983. Diouf received 42% of the second round vote, as against 58% for Wade, and accepted defeat, enabling a peaceful transfer of power in April 2000.

**Constitutional change** Wade appointed Moustapha Niassé, who had finished third in the first round of the presidential election, as his prime minister, in a coalition government. In January 2001 voters overwhelmingly approved by national referendum a new constitution which guaranteed the right to form political parties and gave equal property rights to women for the first time.

In March 2001, after falling out with Niassé, Wade appointed Madior Boyé as the country's first woman prime minister. The president's Sopi (Change) coalition, won three-quarters of the national assembly's seats in the April 2001 elections. Wade had pledged to improve literacy and health levels and to address poverty. He sought to boost the economy through liberalizing economic reforms, including privatizations. But progress was slow. In November 2002 he replaced Boyé as prime minister with Idrissa Seck, who was replaced in turn by Macky Sall in April 2004.

**Wade's second term** In December 2004 President Wade had success in agreeing a ceasefire with Casamance separatists, followed by a peace agreement in 2005. He faced internal opposition when 14 PDS deputies defected in April 2005. But he was re-elected president in February 2007 with 56% of the first-round vote. His Sopi coalition went on to increase its parliamentary majority in the June 2007 national assembly elections, with 69% of the vote. This was helped by a boycott by the leading opposition parties, who claimed that Wade had manipulated the electoral list to win the earlier presidential elections. After the election, President Wade appointed the former finance minister, Cheikh Hadjibou Soumaré, as prime minister.

In July 2008 the constitution was amended to increase the length of the presidential term from five years, as originally set in the 2001 constitution, to seven years, with effect from 2012. It also clarified that Wade could stand for re-election in 2012, as the limit of two consecutive presidential terms was applicable to elections after 2001.

**Wade loses support** The opposition made gains in the local elections of March 2009. This persuaded Soumaré to resign as prime minister, being replaced by Souleymane Ndiaye, of the PDS. Opposition to President Wade grew further after he announced in November 2010 that he would be a candidate in the 2012 presidential elections. There were violent protests in July 2011 which successfully thwarted an attempt by Wade to amend the constitution so as to lower the percentage of votes needed for a first round victory from 50% to 25% and to introduce an elected position of vice-president, which might potentially be filled by his son, Karim Wade. There were further violent protests in the capital in January–February 2012, after the constitutional court ruled that Wade could run for a further term.

**Sall is elected president** Against this backdrop, the 85-year-old Wade finished ahead in the first round of the presidential election in February 2012, with 35% of the vote. But he resoundingly lost the March 2012 run-off round to former prime minister Macky Sall, who led the Alliance for the Republic (APR), formed in 2008 when he left the PDS. Sall, who won 65% of the run-off vote, promised a return to presidential terms of five years, with a limit of two terms. This change was later approved by voters in a March 2016 referendum.

In April 2012 Sall appointed a technocrat banker, Abdoul Mbaye, as prime minister, and his government included as tourism minister Youssou N'Dour, the world-renowned singer. The pro-Sall United in Hope coalition went on to win a landslide victory in parliamentary elections in July 2012, winning 119 of the 150 seats.

However, 2013–14 saw frequent changes in prime minister. In September 2013 Sall dismissed Mbaye and replaced him with Aminata Touré, who as justice minister had been instrumental in bringing corruption charges against Karim Wade in April 2013. (These changes were to result in Wade's conviction and imprisonment in March 2015 for illicit enrichment when a minister.) In July 2014 Touré was replaced by a technocrat, Mohammed Dionne.

In April 2014 peace was restored to the Casamance region in the south, where separatists declared a unilateral ceasefire.

The pro-Sall APR retained its parliamentary majority in the elections of July 2017, winning 125 of the 165 seats, with 49% of the vote. After the election, Dionne continued as prime minister.

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"Senegal." *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*, edited by Helicon, 2018. *Credo Reference*, <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/senegal>. Accessed 23 Oct. 2019.