AFRICAN
FOREIGN POLICIES
Power and Process

edited by
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—G. M. K.
—T. L.
New Directions in Francophone West African Foreign Policies

Peter J. Schraeder

In 1995, Senegal hosted an international conference commemorating the 100-year anniversary of France’s creation of Afrique Occidentale Française (AOF—French West Africa), a colonial unit that grouped together the present-day countries of Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal. Although the primary purpose of France’s colonial enterprise of bolstering its power and influence did not survive the contemporary independence era, French policymakers nonetheless left behind an important foreign policy legacy: a unique and distinct group of Francophone countries whose leaders identify with a greater French-speaking community (la francophonie). This foreign policy legacy is not simply limited to the cultural realm but also incorporates economic, political, and military dimensions.

Understanding the foreign policy implications of this French colonial legacy in West Africa has been based on one of three sets of narrowly defined arguments: the overriding importance of the personal whims of authoritarian leaders—the so-called big-man theory of African foreign policy; the positions of the newly independent countries of Francophone West Africa within the larger geopolitical setting of the Cold War struggle between the United States and the former Soviet Union; or the continuation of dependency relationships between French policymakers and their West African counterparts. In essence, the formulation and implementation of Francophone West
African foreign policies was simplistically explained as primarily derivative of the personal interests of its leaders or the foreign policy interests of the French, U.S., and Soviet policymaking establishments. Such arguments were not limited to Francophone West Africa but instead captured the overall thrust of scholarship devoted to the African subfield of comparative foreign policy analysis.

Even if one were to accept the validity of these arguments during the Cold War era, three historical turning points suggest their declining utility in the post-1989 era. First, the third wave of democratic transition that spread to the African continent beginning in 1990 contributed to the democratization of Francophone West African foreign policy establishments by strengthening power centers outside of the presidential mansion that are capable of challenging the supremacy of African leaders. For example, the democratically elected members of national assemblies should be able to exert their newfound influence in shaping foreign policy agendas and provide a potential avenue of influence for historically weak representatives of civil society, such as the media, human rights organizations, and religious groups.

The demise of the Cold War served as a second historical turning point, signaling the end of superpower rivalry in Francophone West Africa. An important outcome was the growing unwillingness of the northern industrialized democracies to accept French portrayals of Francophone Africa as constituting part of France’s chasse gardée (exclusive hunting ground) to the exclusion of other major powers. As noted by Jeffrey Garten, a “cold peace,” in which the northern industrialized democracies compete for economic markets and influence in all regions of the world, including Francophone West Africa, has replaced the Cold War between the United States and the former Soviet Union. The foreign policy implication of this trend is that Francophone West African leaders should be able to take advantage of intensifying international competition to reduce the ties of external dependency.

A third historical event with equally important implications for dependency explanations of foreign policy was Paul Kagame’s assumption of power in 1994 under the banner of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a guerrilla army supported by Uganda and perceived by French policymakers as hostile to France and “under Anglo-Saxon influence.” According to French policymakers, the RPF’s military victory constituted the first time that a Francophone country had fallen to Anglo-Saxon influence. Some French policymakers even characterized Kagame’s military victory as the first of a series of falling dominoes that could successfully transform the foreign policy relationships of central Africa to the detriment of French foreign policy interests. This perception was reinforced in 1997 by the emergence of Laurent Désiré Kabila as the head of a new military regime in Congo-Kinshasa that was closely allied with Rwanda, Uganda, and the United States. Kagame’s victory was a poignant reminder that the process of regime change—regardless of whether carried out by the barrel of a gun or the ballot box—entails significant risks for France’s carefully crafted Francophone network in Africa: the potential replacement of staunchly pro-French, undemocratic elites with Francophone leaders less aligned to France and more sympathetic to closer ties with other great powers.

In this chapter I argue that traditional personal rule, Cold War, and dependency-oriented explanations constitute at best exaggerations and at worst mere caricatures of more complex and dynamic foreign policy processes. Other neglected factors, such as public opinion, religious beliefs, and regional interests, require attention to achieve a more nuanced and valid understanding of Francophone West African foreign policies. These factors are even more salient at the beginning of the new millennium as these leaders confront popular pressures for democratization and the intensification of international economic competition. This analysis draws upon the shared cultural experiences of nine Francophone West African states: the eight countries that historically composed France’s AOF colonial administration (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal) and Togo, which was placed under French colonial rule after Germany’s defeat in World War I.

Evolving Foreign Policy Principles

Three sets of foreign policy principles are essential to any comprehensive understanding of the contemporary foreign policies of Francophone West Africa. The preservation and strengthening of a greater, French-speaking community of nations—la francophonie—has served as the bedrock foreign policy principle throughout the independence era. The resilience of this cultural factor is demonstrated by the continued importance of French as one of the official languages
of government activity and by the self-classification of local elites as composing part of a larger French-speaking community. The most vigorous proponents of this culturally based foreign policy in the independence years were Ivoirian president Félix Houphouët-Boigny and Senegalese president Léopold Sédar Senghor, the leaders of the two most economically and politically influential countries in Francophone West Africa. Although the once privileged status of French is gradually being eroded in several countries by national-language movements intent on fostering indigenous languages and increasing the learning of English, the commitment of the Francophone West African elite to la francophonie remains strong.

Regular Franco-African summits attended by the president of France and his African counterparts demonstrate the foreign policy dimension of la francophonie. These summits have been described as the “centerpiece” of Franco-African cultural relations, primarily because they are perceived as “family reunions” designed to strengthen already close personal relationships between the French president and his Francophone African counterparts. The careful nurturing of close, high-level personal ties is the cornerstone of each gathering and is equally important as regards the day-to-day decisionmaking related to French foreign policy toward Africa. Only three Francophone West African leaders—Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso (1996), Gnassingbé Eyadéma of Togo (1986), and Senghor of Senegal (1977)—have had the highly coveted honor of serving as the hosts of this Franco-African summit. Although critics assert that very few (if any) real gains, such as increased trade or investment, accrue to the host country, one should not downplay the diplomatic importance of these gatherings. Competition to host this meeting is not unlike that associated with hosting the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Olympics, or any other international meeting that places the international spotlight on the country in question. President Compaoré successfully sought to make Ouagadougou the site of the 1996 meeting, which conferred a significant amount of prestige on him and canonized Burkina Faso as one of the leaders of Francophone West Africa.

A second foreign policy principle that has been reinforced by the end of the Cold War is the pursuit of regional integration and development. One of the most important rationales for regional integration—promoting self-reliant development to reduce dependence on foreign actors—nonetheless has served as a point of dissension among the Francophone states due to their links with France. During the 1950s, for example, there were two extreme versions of this argument: Ivoirian president Houphouët-Boigny embraced the strengthening of economic ties with France, leading some to denounce him as “more French than African”; Guinean president Ahmed Sékou Touré emerged as the most critical opponent of what he perceived as the perpetuation of French neocolonialism in West Africa. The majority of Francophone West African elites put themselves between these two positions, albeit with a strong tilt toward the maintenance of ties with France. Despite these differences, all agreed that the productivity of their respective economies had been constrained by a system that favored trade with France at the expense of West African intraregional trade links. It is for this reason that the primary objective of early regional economic schemes was to promote intraregional trade with neighbors who shared a common set of development objectives—irrespective of geographic features, historical ties, or a common cultural heritage. By strengthening ties with like-minded neighbors, the Francophone states expected to create a stronger regional economic entity to bargain with foreign actors.

The cornerstone of economic cooperation in Francophone West Africa is the Union Économique et Monétair Ouest-Africaine (UEMOA; West African Economic and Monetary Union), which was established on August 1, 1994, and superseded the Union Monétaire Ouest-Africaine (UMOA; West African Monetary Union) and the Communauté Économique de l’Afrique de l’Ouest (CEAO; Economic Community of West Africa). Ultimately seeking the creation of a common market based on the free circulation of goods and people, the UEMOA serves as the Francophone core of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a much larger economic community originally established in 1975 that also includes Guinea and Mauritania and the non-Francophone states of Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. Although there is a clear geographical logic for creating a regional economic grouping that includes both Anglophone and Francophone states, the split between them ensured that several Francophone West African countries with French assistance would seek to counterbalance Nigeria’s overwhelming economic influence within the region. As a result, most of the core Francophone members of CEAO perceived it as a competitor to the ECOWAS vision of regional integration. With the death in 1993 of Côte d’Ivoire’s Houphouët-Boigny, the most
vociferous Francophone opponent of cooperation with Nigeria, the newly restructured UEMOA sought to form a greater partnership with both Nigeria and ECOWAS. This new trend in regional foreign policy was symbolically demonstrated by Nigeria’s decision in 1996 to take part for the first time in the Franco-African summit, held in that year in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

A common monetary policy is guaranteed by Francophone West Africa’s inclusion in the franc zone, a supranational financial system created in 1947 that links UEMOA member states, Equatorial Guinea, and six other former French colonies (Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Comoros, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, and Gabon). Under this arrangement, France serves as a central bank, and a common currency, the Communauté Financière Africaine (CFA) franc, is tied to the French franc and guaranteed by the French treasury. The potential pitfalls of deferring monetary policy to France were sharply felt for the first time in 1994 when French policymakers took the extraordinary step of devaluing the CFA franc by 50 percent. Strongly supported by international financial institutions and other foreign donors, the decision caused instability throughout the CFA franc zone largely because French authorities did not consult with African leaders in advance. The sensitivity associated with France’s decision to undertake such a drastic measure with no forewarning was demonstrated at the 1996 Franco-African summit, held in Burkina Faso. The only significant point of dissension at this summit occurred when French president Jacques Chirac sought to allay the fears of his franc zone counterparts by proclaiming that France would never again devalue the CFA franc. The response of the assembled franc zone leaders was both guarded and lighthearted, with President Pascal Lissouba of Congo-Brazzaville taking the lead in demanding that Chirac place this promise in writing—a clear reference to earlier promises obviously not kept when France devalued the CFA franc in 1994.

A third theme of Francophone West African foreign policies that is gaining momentum in the post–Cold War era is a commitment to conflict resolution. In the Cold War era, ideological differences significantly hindered a common approach to conflict resolution. The majority of conservative and pro-West regimes felt threatened by the more radical states such as Sékou Touré’s Guinea, Luiz Cabral’s Guinea-Bissau, and Modibo Keita’s Mali. The post–Cold War era is characterized by the emergence of a multiplicity of conflicts devoid of ideological overtones. These conflicts range from diplomatic disputes over shared border resources, such as that surrounding the discovery at the beginning of the 1990s of off-shore oil reserves along the disputed boundary between Senegal and Guinea-Bissau; the reemergence of once-latent border conflicts, such as the January 1998 border dispute between Benin and Niger over the Island of Lete; internal guerrilla conflicts that transcend national frontiers, such as the intermittent guerrilla insurgencies by Tuareg minorities in both Mali and Niger; military coups, including unsuccessful mutinies in the Central African Republic and Guinea in 1997; the complete collapse of any central authority as civil wars spill over into neighboring territories, as in the case of the spread of the Liberian civil war to Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Côte d’Ivoire; and military clashes as occurred in the 1989 border conflict between Mauritania and Senegal.

The approach of Francophone West African policymakers to resolving these conflicts demonstrates an increased willingness to focus on diplomatic solutions that emphasize the regional dimension of a given conflict. Especially in the case of Liberia, a brutal civil war pitted the Ivoirian- and Burkina-supported forces of Charles Taylor’s National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) first against the dictatorship of Samuel K. Doe and subsequently against a Nigerian-led multinational military force sanctioned by ECOWAS and formally referred to as the Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). A series of Francophone-inspired diplomatic initiatives, most notably Senegal’s decision to include Senegalese troops in the ECOMOG force (1991–1993) and a series of Ivoirian-led peace talks in Yamoussoukro, Côte d’Ivoire, furthered the peace process but ultimately failed to achieve the peace. Success ultimately hinged on a regional Anglophone-Francophone rapprochement between Nigeria, Côte d’Ivoire, and Burkina Faso that was accepted by Taylor and blessed by the United States and France. This rapprochement was signaled in August 1995 by the signing of a peace accord in Abuja, Nigeria. Unlike in the Cold War era, when non-African powers often played the critical role, the resolution of the Liberian civil war demonstrated the rising importance of regional military powers, particularly Nigeria, as the new power brokers of African international relations. Although itself a military dictatorship at the time, Nigeria with the blessing of its neighbors underscored this fact again in March 1998 when a Nigerian-led military offensive reinstated the democratically elected government of President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah in Sierra Leone.
FOREIGN POLICY ACTORS

The predominance of big-man interpretations of West African foreign policies was based on two realities of the policymaking environment during the initial decades of the independence era. First, like their Western counterparts, each of these political systems was derivative of the widely shared belief that foreign policy constitutes the domaine réservé (privileged realm) of the leader—regardless of whether he is an elected president, a military leader who took power in a military coup d’État, or a reigning monarch. This belief led to highly centralized foreign policy establishments modeled on France under the constitution of the Fifth Republic, in which the president is granted a wide array of foreign policy prerogatives.

The authoritarian nature of most Francophone West African political systems also contributed to the intellectual popularity of the big-man theory of foreign policy. In the immediate post-independence decades, the majority of the first generation of African leaders systematically suppressed and dismantled centers of power that challenged the foreign policy supremacy of the presidencies. Efforts by these leaders to secure their authority included the stifling of a free press, the suspension of constitutions, the banning of opposition parties, the jailing of vocal political opponents, the dismantling of independent judiciaries, and the co-optation or jailing of legislative opponents. The net result was the creation of a highly centralized foreign policy apparatus that led to the promotion of highly personalized foreign policies.

Even if one accepts the validity of such personal rule–oriented explanations, the process of democratization at the bare minimum has ensured the progressive decline of the importance of personal rule as once highly centralized foreign policy establishments become increasingly democratic. As demonstrated by the relatively crude yet nonetheless useful democracy scores that Freedom House, a conservative think tank, compiles on an annual basis, the process of democratization ensured a progressive increase in political rights and civil liberties throughout Francophone West Africa from 1986 to 1996 (see Table 3.1). The figures correctly capture the emergence of Benin and Mali as the democratic leaders of Francophone West Africa. Especially in the case of Benin, the alternation of power in 1996 from the democratically elected administration of President Nicéphore Soglo to that of President Mathieu Kérékou revealed the growing consolidation of democracy. The scores also categorize Senegal and Burkina Faso as liberalizing yet imperfect semi- or partial democracies. Although figures for 2000 have yet to be released, Senegal’s alternation of power, as demonstrated by Abdoulaye Wade’s victory in the March 2000 presidential elections, suggests the further consolidation of Senegalese democracy. The remaining five countries of Francophone West Africa—Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Mauritania, Niger, and Togo—embody varying degrees of authoritarianism.

The foreign policy implication of the Freedom House scores is that democratization has strengthened power centers that can challenge traditional arenas of foreign policy. The countries achieving the best scores on the scale of democratization also embody increasingly

| Table 3.1 Levels of Democracy in Francophone West Africa (1986–1996) |
|--------------------|--------|---------|---------|-------------|
| Country            | Year   | Political Rights | Civil Liberties | Democracy Score |
| Benin              | 1986   | 7        | 7        | 14          |
|                    | 1996   | 2        | 2        | 4           |
| Burkina Faso       | 1986   | 7        | 6        | 13          |
|                    | 1996   | 5        | 4        | 9           |
| Côte d’Ivoire      | 1986   | 6        | 5        | 11          |
|                    | 1996   | 6        | 5        | 11          |
| Guinea             | 1986   | 7        | 5        | 12          |
|                    | 1996   | 6        | 5        | 11          |
| Mali               | 1986   | 7        | 6        | 13          |
|                    | 1996   | 2        | 2        | 4           |
| Mauritania         | 1986   | 7        | 6        | 13          |
|                    | 1996   | 6        | 6        | 12          |
| Niger              | 1986   | 7        | 6        | 13          |
|                    | 1996   | 7        | 5        | 12          |
| Senegal            | 1986   | 3        | 4        | 7           |
|                    | 1996   | 4        | 4        | 8           |
| Average            | 1986   | 6.4      | 5.6      | 12.0        |
|                    | 1996   | 4.8      | 4.1      | 8.9          |

Notes: Political rights (1–7), most to least free; civil liberties (1–7), most to least free; democracy scores (2–4), democratic; (5–10), partially democratic; (11–14), authoritarian.
democratic foreign policy establishments. Those achieving the worst scores constitute the most entrenched forms of personal rule. Drawing principally on Senegalese foreign policy making during the administration of Abdou Diouf (1981–2000), the following analysis reveals not only that personal rule progressively declines as Francophone West Africa democratizes but that personal rule–oriented explanations constituted at best exaggerations of more complex and dynamic foreign policy processes.18

Like that of many of its Francophone neighbors, the Senegalese constitution reflects a political system based on presidential dominance. Following the model of the French Fifth Republic, the Senegalese president is granted a wide array of foreign policy prerogatives.19 One must be careful, however, not to equate presidential dominance with the lack of influence on the part of other foreign policy actors. The formulation and implementation of Senegal’s foreign policy cannot be explained by mere reference to the personal interests and idiosyncrasies of the first two Senegalese presidents, Senghor and Diouf. Other, often downplayed foreign policy actors must be examined to gain a better understanding.

First, in most of these countries, an officially designated vice president or prime minister often complements the office of the president in the policymaking arena. The Senegalese constitution stipulates that the president is to appoint a prime minister to manage the day-to-day functioning of the government. Unlike his counterparts in other Francophone West African political systems, the Senegalese prime minister is not beholden to the national assembly. The prime minister also maintains a diplomatic cabinet under the guidance of a diplomatic adviser and therefore plays an influential role in the making of foreign policy. The Senegalese political system under Diouf constituted a significant change from that of the early 1960s, when the Office of the President and the Office of the Prime Minister were constitutionally independent of each other. During this period, an intensifying power struggle between President Senghor and Prime Minister Mamadou Dia led to the revision of the constitution in 1963 to create a system based on presidential dominance.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs usually is the largest and most active of the foreign affairs bureaucracies in Francophone West African policymaking establishments, taking responsibility for much of the day-to-day administration of foreign relations.20 Depending on his personality and bureaucratic skills, the minister of foreign affairs therefore is potentially a key player within the policymaking network. His direct access to the president combined with his links to the far-reaching foreign affairs bureaucracy provides him with bureaucratic tools to set the foreign policy agenda.21 In Senegal, for example, former minister of foreign affairs Ibrahima Fall was the driving force behind the Diouf administration’s adoption of a more “progressive” stance toward regional African issues, such as the decision to recognize the Marxist regime of Angola, then headed by President António Agostinho Neto.22 Moustapha Niasse, who succeeded Fall, carried these bureaucratic tools as well.

The Ministry of Defense is another foreign affairs bureaucracy that has played an influential role in Francophone West African foreign policies. In extreme cases, this bureaucracy has served as one of the sources of military coup d’êtats.23 In Niger, for example, Colonel Ibrahim Mainassara Baré achieved the dubious honor of leading the first successful military coup against a democratically elected government in Francophone West Africa since the beginning of the democratization process in 1990. In a throwback to an earlier era of authoritarian rule and practices, Colonel Baré announced that there would be multiparty elections in 1996, presented himself as the “civilian” candidate of the ruling party, and subsequently won grossly flawed elections to the congratulatory toasts of local French diplomats. The events in Niger signaled the reemergence of the military as a critical force in West Africa and the growing stagnation of the democratization process.

In Senegal, strong adherence to the republican ideal of civilian control of the military has not prevented military leaders from playing important behind-the-scenes roles in shaping its history.24 During the 1963 constitutional crisis between President Senghor and Prime Minister Mamadou Dia, pro-Senghor military forces prevailed over those preferring to depose the president. Under the Diouf administration, Army Chief of Staff General Taverez Da Souza was removed from office in 1988 amid charges that he had convened meetings with other high-ranking officers to discuss the potential necessity of military intervention to end the political disturbances following the 1988 presidential elections. These examples are not unique but instead are indicative of a bureaucratically important institution that increased its influence during the 1980s and the 1990s due to Senegal’s internal and external security problems.25

The legislative branch of government has played an increasingly influential role in Francophone West African foreign policies.26 Beginning in the 1980s, the Senegalese national assembly emerged as
an increasingly vocal arena of national debate. Largely reduced to the role of a rubber-stamp institution during the Senghor years (there was no opposition between 1964 and 1978), the national assembly has questioned government policies since the lifting of multiparty restrictions in 1981, particularly in the aftermath of the 1993 legislative elections, in which candidates from five opposition parties won a total of thirty-six seats in the 120-seat national assembly. The most important foreign affairs components of the national assembly include the Committee on Foreign Affairs, headed by Daouda Sow, and over twenty friendship groups that promote formal and informal contacts between Senegalese representatives and their foreign counterparts.

The Senegalese case nonetheless demonstrates ongoing constraints that potentially hinder a more effective role for Francophone West African legislatures. The willingness of Senegalese representatives to challenge the executive branch in the realm of foreign policy remains relatively lukewarm, and when a challenge occurs it is largely restricted to issues related to the Senegalese economy, such as the domestic costs and impacts of foreign-sponsored structural adjustment programs (i.e., the vast array of economic and political conditions designed to restructure African economies and political systems in the image of the northern industrialized democracies). Furthermore, the national assembly must cope with a weak constitutional role relative to that of the executive branch, as well as an ongoing negative public image as constituting nothing more than applaudisseurs (literally, “applauders” of government policies).

The national assembly’s role in foreign affairs is also seriously hampered by the lack of economic resources, especially the lack of a sufficient budget that would allow committees and representatives to hire staffs and independently conduct research and fact-finding missions. “If we want the national assembly to truly play its constitutionally mandated role,” explains Representative Sémou Pathé Guéye, “we must put an end to the disastrous conditions under which Representatives work.” As is further lamented by Iba Der Thiam, representatives do not even enjoy something as simple as individual offices within which they can work and privately receive members of their constituencies.

The formulation and implementation of foreign policies in Francophone West Africa are also influenced by a wide variety of non-governmental actors. The print and broadcast media, for example, have flourished in the liberal political environment associated with transitions to democracy during the 1990s. In Senegal, the reporting of the daily government newspaper, Le Soleil, is now challenged by the publication of two privately funded daily newspapers, Le Sud and Wat Fadji, as well as by a host of sporadically published newspapers such as Le Témoin and Démocraties. These private newspapers play an important agenda-setting role and, at the very least, offer a more critical perspective of day-to-day issues in foreign policy. For example, the German government’s March 1996 decision to include Senegal in the list of nondemocratic countries for which requests for political asylum would be routinely considered was picked up by the press and turned into a public debate, prompting Minister of Communication Serigne Diop to hold a widely reported special meeting with the German ambassador to Senegal.

The growing number of immigrants from Francophone West Africa in Western countries is beginning to have an impact on their foreign policies. Although exact numbers are unavailable, the seriousness with which the Senegalese government treats the growing number of Senegalese living and working abroad is demonstrated by the telling June 1993 decision to rename the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of Senegalese Abroad. Senegal’s tilt toward warmer relations with the United States during the 1980s and the 1990s has certainly been influenced by the large numbers of Senegalese in the United States, who are now capable of mobilizing financial resources for a variety of business undertakings in Senegal. In 1996 the Senegalese government aided in the creation of an investment consortium of Senegalese living in the United States as a unique means of attracting greater investment in Senegal and promoting trade links between the two countries.

Public opinion has also exerted an influential, albeit intermittent, influence in African foreign policies. As witnessed in other African countries, the strengthening of the democratization process portends greater popular input in policy as public opinion becomes critical in the overall policies of the new generation of leaders. In Senegal, it has been argued that public opinion, fueled primarily by broadcasts by Radio France Internationale, was the primary factor that led to bloody clashes between Senegal and Mauritania in 1989. Despite the fact that this conflict was neither desired nor promoted by President Diouf of Senegal or President Ould Taya of Mauritania, both
were confronted by violent clashes that spiraled out of control. In a sense, both of these leaders, as well as the foreign policies of their respective countries, became prisoners of public opinion.24

Finally, one must also take into account the impact of religious groups and leaders on Francophone West African foreign policies. In Senegal, religious leaders known as marabouts historically have constituted an integral part of the domestic political system and play both informal and formal roles in foreign policy.25 For example, the marabouts played an informal role in reducing tensions between Senegal and Mauritania in the aftermath of the 1989 border conflict by undertaking an unofficial form of shuttle diplomacy across the river that separates the two countries. In a formal sense, one of President Diouf’s closest advisers was Moustaffa Cisse, a marabout who served as the former Senegalese ambassador to Egypt and to Saudi Arabia.

The power of the marabouts comes from the population’s belief in the spiritual powers of these personal religious guides. The marabouts enjoy almost complete financial autonomy from state control due to a highly complex system of alms collection by taalibe (disciples), who, depending on their charisma and power, are capable of channeling enormous amounts of money into a designated cause. The marabouts are, therefore, capable of mobilizing a potent reaction to undesired foreign policies (and supporting others) with little or no fear of state retribution. In the mid-1980s the Diouf administration was forced to withdraw an invitation to Pope John Paul II to visit the country because leading marabouts threatened to call upon their taalibe to occupy the runways at the international airport. Although the pope subsequently visited Senegal several years later in 1991 to the wide acclaim of both Muslims and Christians, the marabouts had served notice that sensitive issues had to be raised with them in advance if the Diouf administration wished to avoid embarrassing public confrontations. Thus, to understand the formulation and implementation of Senegal’s foreign policy, and that of other West African countries with sizable Muslim populations, one must take into account the role of religion.

The election of Abdoulaye Wade as president of Senegal in March 2000 promises to further strengthen Senegal’s democracy and place it among the ranks of democratic Benin and Mali. Wade’s election under the banner of the Parti Démocratique Sénégalais (PDS; Senegalese Democratic Party) ushered in an era of change in which, for the first time since independence, a party other than the Socialist Party controlled the reins of power. Although it is still too early to assess the impact of Wade’s election on Senegalese foreign policy, Wade has promised to oversee the complete restructuring of Senegalese institutions, including strengthening the role of parliament and restricting the powers of the presidency. If carried out, this consolidation of Senegalese democracy will enhance the democratization of the foreign policy establishment. At the bare minimum, it will promote the foreign policy role of the National Assembly and deepen the involvement of a wide variety of nonstate actors in foreign policy making.

FOREIGN POLICY RELATIONSHIPS

The combined effects of democratic transition (however imperfect) and the demise of the Cold War have contributed to the gradual transformation of Francophone West Africa’s foreign policy relationships. The foreign policies of the democratically elected Soglo administration of Benin (1991–1996) and President Alpha Oumar Konaré of Mali (1992–present) demonstrate the growing trend of democratic transitions fostering a second generation of leaders less aligned to France.

In Benin, Soglo’s victory led to the formation of an administration that was interested in promoting closer ties with the United States. Some critics of French policies in Africa note that this is the reason local French diplomats provided significant support to Soglo’s predecessor, Kérékou, who emerged victorious in the 1996 presidential elections. Although he ultimately accepted the 1996 election results, Soglo remained sharply critical of the “northern countries” (read France), which he partially blamed for his defeat at the hands of Benin’s former dictator. Regardless of France’s ultimate role in the 1996 presidential elections, however, Kérékou’s reemergence did not signal a return to the same Beninois-French relationship that existed prior to 1991. As already discussed, the strengthening of several competing institutional actors, most notably a vibrant national assembly, has contributed to growing pluralism in Beninois foreign policy.

The demise of the Cold War has similarly fostered the rise of a pluralistic economic environment in which France, Germany, Japan, and the United States compete for economic influence in Francophone West Africa. The emergence of this “cold peace” derives from
Western recognition of the rising importance of the pursuit of economic self-interest and has contributed to international competition in the lucrative petroleum, telecommunications, and transport industries of West Africa. From the perspective of French policymakers, the penetration of U.S., German, and Japanese companies constitutes at best an intrusion and at worst an aggression into France’s chasse gardée. To West African leaders, however, such competition provides them with greater maneuverability to reduce some of the ties of inherited dependency. For example, the Diouf administration in 1995 withstood intense French pressures to maintain preferential treatment for French petroleum companies and signed contracts with South African and U.S. companies to exploit oil fields discovered off Senegal’s southwestern coast. The behavior of the Diouf administration is not unique but rather indicative of a more competitive foreign policy environment that is less receptive to French foreign policy interests.

The diversification of Francophone West Africa’s foreign policy relationships is captured by the evolution of foreign assistance from 1965 to 1995 (see Table 3.2). Three trends stand out. Not surprisingly, France has been the largest bilateral aid donor, distributing nearly $1.3 billion to Francophone West Africa in 1995. The upsurge in French foreign aid levels from $433 million in 1985 to more than $1.2 billion in 1990 represented the determination of French policymakers to bail out clients on the verge of financial bankruptcy and to ensure the victory of pro-French elites in confrontations with pro-democracy movements. In Côte d’Ivoire, for example, French aid increased to $416 million in 1990 to ensure that President Houphouët-Boigny and his ruling Parti Démocratique de la Côte d’Ivoire–Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (PDCI-RDA; Democratic Party of Côte d’Ivoire–African Democratic Assembly) would successfully manage the democratization process by winning the October 1990 multiparty elections. Aid was subsequently increased in the aftermath of Houphouët-Boigny’s death to ensure that his dauphin (chosen successor), President Henri Konan Bédié, would emerge victorious in the highly flawed October 1995 presidential elections.

The willingness of French policymakers to provide financial support for their privileged nations in Francophone West Africa has fostered a cultural foreign policy bond not easily broken. For example, when newly elected French president Jacques Chirac made his first presidential tour of Africa in July 1995, the only two West African stops on his itinerary were Côte d’Ivoire and Senegal—the linchpins of French foreign policy in the region. In a testament to the continued salience of la francophonie, Ould Taya of Mauritania and General Lansana Conté of Guinea traveled to Dakar, and Kérékou of Benin, Compaoré of Burkina Faso, Eyadéma of Togo, and former president Ousmane Mahamane of Niger traveled to Abidjan to meet with Chirac during his visit. Only the Malian president, Konaré, refused to make the trip on the principle that Chirac’s itinerary implied an unacceptable hierarchy in France’s relationships with Francophone West Africa.

The foreign aid figures nonetheless demonstrate the success of West African leaders in currying the favor of other foreign powers. In 1995, this region received 7 percent of its bilateral aid from Japan ($313 million), Germany ($282 million), and the United States ($150 million). Japanese policymakers in particular have pursued an extraordinary foreign aid policy in their quest to translate Japan’s extraordinary economic power into political influence and leadership on a global scale. Toward this end, Japanese foreign aid to Francophone West Africa has increased approximately sixfold from the relatively modest $50 million in 1985. Once criticized for a neomercantilist approach that relegated Africa to a producer of natural resources for Japan’s industrial growth, Japanese foreign policy is beginning to be seen by West Africans as vital to the region’s economic development. The emerging Japanese presence in Francophone West Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>1965 (%)</th>
<th>1975 (%)</th>
<th>1985 (%)</th>
<th>1990 (%)</th>
<th>1995 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>85 (44)</td>
<td>230 (30)</td>
<td>423 (24)</td>
<td>1237 (33)</td>
<td>1287 (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>11 (06)</td>
<td>65 (08)</td>
<td>136 (07)</td>
<td>316 (08)</td>
<td>282 (07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>0 (00)</td>
<td>3 (00)</td>
<td>30 (03)</td>
<td>211 (06)</td>
<td>313 (07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>34 (18)</td>
<td>45 (06)</td>
<td>267 (15)</td>
<td>171 (05)</td>
<td>150 (05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other DACs*</td>
<td>5 (03)</td>
<td>71 (09)</td>
<td>262 (14)</td>
<td>515 (14)</td>
<td>455 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilateral</td>
<td>58 (30)</td>
<td>293 (38)</td>
<td>547 (30)</td>
<td>1287 (34)</td>
<td>1813 (42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilateral</td>
<td>0 (00)</td>
<td>73 (09)</td>
<td>137 (07)</td>
<td>60 (02)</td>
<td>1 (00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>193 (100)</td>
<td>780 (100)</td>
<td>1831 (100)</td>
<td>3799 (100)</td>
<td>4301 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: International Monetary Fund, Geographical Distribution of Financial Flows to Developing Countries, various years.

Note: a. Development assistance countries (OECD countries).
is best symbolized by the inauguration in 1995 of a massive Japanese embassy overlooking the ocean in Dakar. A Japanese diplomat once remarked that he could not help but be struck by the symbolism of the potential replacement of traditional Western influence with Asian forms of capitalism as he watched the setting sun from one of the dozens of new offices with large picture windows facing West.38

One of the most striking trends demonstrated by the foreign aid figures is the emergence of multilateral organizations, in particular the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, as key players in Francophone West Africa. As of 1995, these organizations were the largest source of foreign aid in terms of both raw totals ($1.8 billion) and as a percentage of overall aid (42 percent) from all sources. Multilateral aid from the IMF and the World Bank has been accompanied by structural adjustment programs (SAPs), which have deepened the political conditionalities imposed on West African states. In turn, the terms of the debate have shifted away from previous questions such as whether Marxism or African socialism is favorable to capitalism and whether single-party or multiparty regimes can better promote the welfare of their respective peoples. The consensus today favors the creation of capitalist, multiparty political systems. The critical dilemma confronting newly elected democratic leaders is the extent to which they will work with international financial institutions. If they wholeheartedly embrace SAPs to ensure the future economic health of their societies, they are bound to alienate important political actors in their political systems and jeopardize their chances of prevailing in subsequent democratic elections. In Benin, for example, Soglo’s defeat in the 1996 presidential elections after only one term of office came about because of his strong support for SAPs. Yet if these same leaders refuse to embrace SAPs, they risk losing access to international capital and potentially re-creating the economic conditions that led to the overthrow of their predecessors.

The ability of Francophone West African leaders to decrease the colonial ties of dependency and take advantage of the pluralistic economic environment of the cold peace is demonstrated by the evolution of trade patterns from 1965 to 1995. As indicated by the general trends presented in Table 3.3, Francophone West Africa’s overall exports significantly expanded from $600 million in 1965 to nearly $7.7 billion in 1995. France emerges as Francophone West Africa’s largest bilateral trading partner, in 1995 importing nearly $1.3 billion (17 percent) of goods from the region. But this figure represents a significant decline from the early independence era, when France accounted for 42 percent of Francophone West Africa’s exports. Together Germany ($428 million), the United States ($381 million), and Japan ($204 million) accounted for 14 percent of Francophone West African exports in 1995. The figures also signal the rising importance of the Asian market (not including Japan) in the post–Cold War era, absorbing $498 million (6 percent) of Francophone West African exports in 1995.

The import patterns of Francophone West Africa also offer interesting insights (see Table 3.4). As was the case with exports, its overall imports significantly expanded—from $622 million in 1965 to nearly $10.3 billion in 1995. France’s portion of those imports dropped from 52 percent ($323 million) to 26 percent ($2.6 billion) during that same period. This trend clearly demonstrates the growing pluralism of Francophone West Africa’s trading patterns. The most notable difference between import and export patterns is that the United States emerges as the second largest bilateral source of imports in 1995 ($330 million), followed by Germany ($351 million) and Japan ($278 million). The 1995 U.S. figures, the highest for the 30-year period, are perhaps indicative of the Clinton administration’s aggressive trade policy in the region—a trend that undoubtedly was strengthened by the U.S. Congress’s passage in 2000 of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act.39 The importance of the Asian market (not including Japan) once again emerges in the post–Cold War era, serving as the source of 13 percent ($1.3 billion) of Francophone West African imports.

| Table 3.3 Francophone West African Exports, 1965–1995 (millions of U.S.$) |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| France          | 252  | 672  | 924  | 1128 | 1292 |
| Germany         | 42   | 170  | 298  | 350  | 428  |
| Japan           | 6    | 156  | 484  | 2044 | 2595 |
| United States   | 58   | 156  | 484  | 2044 | 2595 |
| Other DACs      | 133  | 256  | 1772 | 2044 | 2595 |
| Africa          | 69   | 265  | 718  | 1727 | 1839 |
| Asia            | 7    | 12   | 127  | 351  | 498  |
| Middle East     | 7    | 15   | 12   | 45   | 101  |
| Other           | 53   | 265  | 538  | 465  | 465  |
| Total           | 600  | 2159 | 3000 | 6301 | 7690 |

Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook, various years.
Table 3.4 Francophone West African Imports, 1965–1995 (millions of U.S.$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>1965 (%)</th>
<th>1975 (%)</th>
<th>1985 (%)</th>
<th>1990 (%)</th>
<th>1995 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>323 (52)</td>
<td>154 (39)</td>
<td>1442 (29)</td>
<td>2350 (32)</td>
<td>2651 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>38 (06)</td>
<td>168 (06)</td>
<td>278 (06)</td>
<td>364 (05)</td>
<td>351 (03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>8 (01)</td>
<td>103 (02)</td>
<td>189 (04)</td>
<td>215 (02)</td>
<td>278 (03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>47 (08)</td>
<td>213 (07)</td>
<td>412 (08)</td>
<td>315 (04)</td>
<td>630 (05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other DACs</td>
<td>67 (11)</td>
<td>461 (16)</td>
<td>1181 (24)</td>
<td>1581 (21)</td>
<td>1872 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>54 (09)</td>
<td>255 (09)</td>
<td>819 (16)</td>
<td>1328 (18)</td>
<td>2320 (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>22 (04)</td>
<td>75 (03)</td>
<td>422 (08)</td>
<td>827 (11)</td>
<td>1346 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>6 (01)</td>
<td>7 (00)</td>
<td>2 (00)</td>
<td>12 (00)</td>
<td>30 (00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>44 (07)</td>
<td>344 (12)</td>
<td>351 (07)</td>
<td>438 (06)</td>
<td>706 (07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>609 (100)</td>
<td>2780 (100)</td>
<td>5016 (100)</td>
<td>7430 (100)</td>
<td>10294 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook, various years.

The most surprising trend to emerge from the trade statistics, however, is the growing importance of African markets in Francophone West African trade. As demonstrated in Table 3.3, Francophone West Africa’s exports to Africa steadily rose from $69 million (11 percent) in 1965 to $1.8 billion (24 percent) in 1995. Imports from Africa also increased—from $54 million (9 percent) in 1965 to over $2.5 billion (25 percent) in 1995 (see Table 3.4). The fact that nearly 25 percent—a figure that is still rising—of Francophone West Africa’s trade is with the African continent clearly suggests the growing fruits of the region’s commitment to regional integration and development. Ironically, the 1994 devaluation of the CFA franc, so vigorously opposed by West African elites, appears to have strengthened this trend by making less expensive, regionally produced products more attractive to import. This trend remains consistent across the past three and a half decades, suggesting the prospects for even greater levels of trade cooperation and regional integration in the future. The trend is indicative of the growing realization among West African elites that any enduring solutions to the region’s myriad foreign policy challenges must by necessity begin within the region itself.

- **FRANCOPHONE WEST AFRICAN FOREIGN POLICIES IN PERSPECTIVE**

The Cold War’s end and the process of democratization have significantly affected the formulation and implementation of Francophone West African foreign policies. The evolving commitment of its elites to three foreign policy principles—la francophonie, regional integration, and conflict resolution—suggests the beginning of the bridging of the historic gap between Francophone and Anglophone West Africa. Nigeria’s attendance at the 1996 Franco-African summit, increased cooperation between the UEMOA and ECOWAS, and the settlement of the Liberian civil war are examples of enhanced cooperation within greater West Africa. It is ironic that growing Francophone-Anglophone rapprochement among West African elites is happening against the backdrop of rising Francophone-Anglophone tensions at the continental level, such as in the OAU and within the international system, as witnessed by growing tensions between Washington and Paris.

The case of Francophone West Africa demonstrates that personal rule theories are incapable of providing complete explanations of African foreign policies in the post–Cold War era. The process of democratization in particular has strengthened the role of new domestic players, the actions of which require additional research. One of the most fruitful avenues in this regard is the role of national legislatures (especially if one includes the transient national conferences that were influential in the process of democratic transition in numerous Francophone West African countries). National legislatures have served as arenas of national debate, particularly in those countries, such as Benin and Mali, that significantly liberalized their political systems during the 1990s but also in those semidemocracies, such as Senegal and Burkina Faso, that permitted an autonomous legislative role. If President Wade is successful in achieving his promised reforms of the Senegalese political system, the Senegalese legislature should play an increasing foreign policy role beginning in 2001. The primary reason behind this newfound legislative role is the creation of democratic political systems that embody the concept of separation of powers among the various branches of government. But it is thus far not clear whether the newly empowered legislatures will largely restrict themselves to the national arena—calling to mind the old maxim that “politics stops at the water’s edge”—or if they will continue to have a growing voice in the realm of foreign affairs.

Francophone West Africa also demonstrates the declining importance of Cold War and dependency-oriented explanations of African foreign policies. Aid and trade relationships have been diversified, and foreign powers, not to mention the region’s elites, are no longer content to defer to France’s foreign policy objectives in the region.
The net result is that Francophone West African elites have greater degrees of maneuverability in foreign policy. After the 1994 devaluation of the CFA franc, even those leaders who favored maintaining close ties with France rather than with other Western powers faced the reality of the end of unparalleled French financial support. The CFA’s devaluation underscored the pitfalls of relying too closely on France and emboldened West African elites to diversify foreign policy relationships by courting Berlin, Tokyo, and Washington.

### NOTES


11. The UEMOA’s membership includes eight nations: six of the former AOF states (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Niger, and Senegal), Togo, and, since May 1997, Guinea-Bissau.


14. The UEMOA portion of the CFA franc zone is partially managed through a subregional central bank, the Banque Centrale des États de l’Afrique de l’Ouest (BCEAO; Central Bank of West African States), based in Dakar, Senegal, as well as by a regionally focused development bank, the Banque Ouest-Africaine de Développement (BOAD; West African Development Bank), based in Lomé, Togo.


19. For example, he is recognized as the commander in chief of the armed forces (Article 39); is empowered to name Senegalese diplomats abroad and accredit those from foreign countries (Article 40); and is authorized to negotiate, ratify, and approve international agreements (Article 75) except in certain specified realms, such as peace treaties and agreements with international organizations, that require ratification by the national assembly (Article 76). See Cheikh Tidiane Thiam, *Droit Public du Sénégal* (Vol. I): *L’état et le Citoyen* (Dakar: Les Éditions du CREDILA, 1993).

21. Elhadj Mboj, “Senegal’s Foreign Policy.” Typed notes of a presentation made at the University of Wisconsin, Madison (no date).
22. Ibid.
27. For an overview, see Thomas M. Callaghy and John Ravenhill, eds., Hemmed In: Responses to Africa’s Economic Decline (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
29. Ibid.
31. See the series of articles and op-ed pieces in Le Soleil, Le Sud, and Wal Fadji during the week of March 11–18, 1996.
34. It has also been argued that negative public reactions to the deaths of Senegalese peacekeepers taking part in ECOMOG operations in Liberia played a significant role in President Diouf’s decision to withdraw these troops in 1993. See Mortimer, “Senegal’s Role in Ecomog,” p. 300.
38. Personal interview, Dakar, Senegal, 1996.