An aerial photograph of a coastal city, likely Dakar, Senegal. The image shows a dense urban area with numerous buildings, mostly in shades of brown and tan. A wide, sandy beach runs along the left side of the frame, meeting the ocean. The sky is a clear, pale blue. The text is overlaid on the top left portion of the image.

Confederation at a
Crossroads: Navigating
the Senegambian Future,
1981

SENEGAMBIA

MUNUC 38

Model United Nations of the University of Chicago

CHAIR LETTER

Dear Delegates,

My name is Arnav Modak, and I am thrilled to be your Chair for Confederation at a Crossroads: Senegambia 1981. I was born in Pune, India but have spent most of my life living around the world—the Maldives, Oman, the UAE, and finally Mauritius. At the University of Chicago, I am a second year pursuing a double major in Economics and Chemistry. Outside of schoolwork, I love sports (in particular, volleyball and cricket), music, and indulging myself in good food.

I have been involved in MUN since my junior year of high school, and I've continued my involvement through MUNUC and ChoMUN (UChicago's college conference). Over the past year, I have been an Assistant Chair for *The Court of the Nizams: Hyderabad 1947* at MUNUC 37, and for *Enemies to Lovers?: Friends and Advisors of Cleopatra VII, 32 BC* at ChoMUN XXVIII.

I hope that our hybrid committee, which will incorporate general assembly and crisis elements and mechanics, will be an enriching experience for you. In particular, I look forward to hearing your ideas and seeing your character arcs develop. I expect that you are as committed as I am to furthering meaningful debate centered around taking Senegambia forward, towards a promising future.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Senegambian Confederation. The year is 1981, and **you** have been called upon to write a constitution for our new nation. Over the course of the conference, we shall navigate various challenges; either we shall be successful in our pursuit of unity and prosperity, or division and challenges will get the best of us...

In case you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me via email! Looking forward to meeting you all soon!

Sincerely,

Arnav Modak

Chair, Confederation at a Crossroads: Senegambia 1981

arnavmodak@uchicago.edu

CRISIS DIRECTOR LETTERS

Dear Delegates,

My name is Izyan Kazmi and it's with great enthusiasm that I take on the role of Crisis Director at MUNUC 38, hoping to facilitate an enriching experience for all participants. A little bit about myself: I was born in Pakistan and lived there for 5 years, and then spent 11 years in South Africa, followed by 2 years in the Philippines, so I'm the true embodiment of an "international school kid."

I am currently pursuing a degree in Economics at the University of Chicago, and I'm considering a minor in Chemistry too (subject to change at any moment). While I intend to pursue consulting as a career path, I am passionate about the use of data in sports (huge Liverpool fan), discovering new places to eat in Chicago, and going on random side quests (shout-out to late night Ubers to Jeni's).

I've been involved in MUN since 11th grade, and I am happy that I chose to continue that journey in college through MUNUC and ChoMUN. Over the last year, I was an Assistant Chair for *The Court of the Nizams: Hyderabad 1947* at MUNUC 37 and also an Assistant Chair for *Byzantine Brilliance: Court of Emperor Justinian 527* at ChoMUN XXVIII. I've found some of my closest friends and most meaningful connections throughout my MUN journey, and I hope you will find them during this committee as well.

Feel free to reach out any time before the conference if you have any questions via my email below! Looking forward to seeing you all soon.

Best,

Izyan Kazmi

Crisis Director, Confederation at a Crossroads: Senegambia 1981

izyan@uchicago.edu

Dear Delegates,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to MUNUC 38! My name is Weing Xi Lau, and I will be serving as one of your crisis directors for Confederation at a Crossroads: Navigating the Senegambian Future, 1981. In this committee, we will be exploring the challenges in integrating two nations—with different colonial histories, governance, and priorities—into one united confederation. The future of Senegambia is in your hands!

Some background on me, I am a second-year from Malaysia majoring in Economics. This is my second year staffing for MUNUC, as I served as an Assistant Chair for the Ad Hoc Committee of the Secretary-General last year. Aside from MUNUC, I am also involved in ChoMUN, where I served as Assistant Chair for the *JCC Enemies to Lovers?: Friends and Advisors of Cleopatra VII, 32 BC* at ChoMUN XXVIII. In my free time, I enjoy searching for the best strawberry matcha latte on campus, discovering my next favourite musical, and playing basketball.

I look forward to navigating the future of Senegambia with you and seeing all the amazing and creative ideas you bring to the table. From my end, I promise my utmost dedication to ensuring your experience at MUNUC is fulfilling and fun. That being said, I would like to call to attention to the importance of respect in this committee. We will not tolerate any behavior that is discriminatory, disruptive, or disrespectful to fellow delegates, staffers, or the committee environment as a whole. Let's work together to create an inclusive environment and enjoy this experience together!

Please don't hesitate to reach out and contact me or the other execs if you have any questions or concerns. Looking forward to meeting with you soon!

Best,

Weing Xi Lau

Crisis Director, Confederation at a Crossroads: Senegambia 1981

weingxi@uchicago.edu

SENSITIVITY STATEMENT

This committee will explore the newly formed Senegambia Confederation, a political union formed between Senegal and The Gambia in 1981. Delegates will have the opportunity to engage with a wide array of pressing issues that challenged the Confederation. Some issues that may arise during committee include disputes over border control, differing political ideologies between Senegal and The Gambia, and tensions surrounding economic integration and trade imbalances.

As we dive into complex and sensitive topics, it is essential that delegates maintain a respectful, inclusive, and responsible tone throughout committee proceedings. While we strongly encourage both historical realism and creativity, we expect all discourse—whether in directives, speeches, backroom arcs, or unmoderated sessions—to reflect twenty-first-century morals and values. Discrimination or harmful behavior in any form, including but not limited to **racism, colonialism, tribalism, religious intolerance, sexism, or homophobia**, will not be tolerated under any circumstance. In particular, Islam is the predominant religion in the region, and no Islamophobia, whether implicit or explicit, will be tolerated. Additionally, while slavery was historically present in the region, any justification or recreation of the practice is strictly prohibited. **No behavior may be justified through “historical accuracy.”**

If any participant feels uncomfortable or witnesses inappropriate conduct, we encourage you to reach out to the Chair or Crisis Directors. Our goal is to ensure this committee is a space where all participants feel safe, heard, and respected.

Let's work together to create an engaging, thought-provoking, and inclusive committee experience. We look forward to seeing the stories you bring to life in this unique chapter of West African history!

STRUCTURE AND MECHANICS

Hybrid committees comprise both General Assembly (GA) and Crisis elements. We understand that many delegates may not have experience with either. As such, we hope that this section of the background guide will clarify any points of confusion on committee structure and how it will pan out over five sessions. However, please do not hesitate to reach out if any questions remain.

Before Conference

Regardless of your experience, we encourage you to visit the MUNUC website to familiarize yourself with the terminology often heard during conferences. The website also provides advice on how to improve your speeches and note-writing. For this committee, you are not required to submit a position paper, but we encourage you to think about your goals for this conference beforehand—both as part of a larger coalition and as an individual.

As mentioned earlier, the committee will use two different Model UN formats over the five sessions: it will begin as a General Assembly (GA) during the initial two sessions of constitution writing and then transition to a traditional Crisis Committee for the remaining three sessions of the conference.

Put simply, GAs are characterized by coalition building—forming blocs to write a resolution and then voting on the finished product. We expect your constitution to include government structures, economic policies, and individual rights.

In contrast, Crisis Committees not only allow the “frontroom,” or the committee room, to pass directives, but they also allow you to implement personal objectives in the “backroom.”

Unlike GA resolutions, in crisis, the committee passes “directives,” which are much shorter and more focused in response to a crisis. Delegates send notes to the backroom detailing personal goals and how they want to accomplish them. Through writing notes to the backroom and passing directives, the actions you take significantly impact the overall arc of the committee.

During the first two sessions, the backroom will be open for 1–2 notes per session, where you can start developing your arcs and testing out your understanding of how backroom notes work. However, these notes will not affect the frontroom until we enter the crisis portion of the committee. Once we transition to crisis, the notes you write will begin to directly impact the committee. [MUNUC’s website](#) outlines the structure of a traditional committee and a crisis committee, and provides several resources to help get you onboard. We hope to make this transition as smooth as possible—*please reach out with any questions*.



Flag of Senegambia.¹

¹ Wikimedia Commons. “Flag of Senegambia.” Wikimedia Commons.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_Senegambia.png

Part One: Drafting the Constitution of a New Nation

The first part of the committee will be dedicated to drafting and passing a constitution for the Senegambia Confederation. When the first session begins in 1981, it will be the job of assembled delegates from Senegal and The Gambia to form a new confederation under a new constitution.

This portion will take up the first two sessions of the conference, and it will follow a traditional GA structure. By the end of the second session, the committee should have a comprehensive constitution. These critical sessions will determine the foundations of the new state and will establish the powers of the committee. The central question will be how to structure a powerful state that unites the vast diversity of peoples, economies, and local structures within the two nations. Everything—from the powers that the committee wields to the makeup of the armed forces—will be determined by the clauses of this final constitution. It is also important to remember that people from various positions will have different reactions to certain provisions. Structures that particularly favor certain groups, classes of people, or regions may displease others, with inevitable impacts during the crisis sessions.

Although crisis elements, including your individual resources and connections, will not be available during the period of constitutional debate, you should still work on developing your arc for use during the crisis portion through backroom notes. As you and your fellow delegates develop the structures that will govern your collective powers, remember that all of you will be able to use these structures to fulfill your own agendas. This is important not only because you want to shape the constitution in ways that benefit you in the coming crisis sessions, but also because you may intentionally create weaknesses or strengthen government institutions that you later hope to exploit. Compromise accordingly—everyone has their own preferences and

personal motives. It is essential to figure out what constitutional visions are compatible with your own in order to best shape the final document.

Voting Procedure

For the constitution to be approved and for the committee to move into Crisis, three conditions must be met: a simple majority of Senegalese delegates must vote in favor, a simple majority of Gambian delegates must vote in favor, and a simple majority of the entire committee must also vote in favor. A simple majority is defined as more than half of all non-abstaining delegates, meaning half plus one.

We encourage delegates to refrain from abstaining to ensure everyone has an impact on where the committee goes. This constitution should include how the voting will occur for any amendments and nationwide decisions. Will the confederation be run by a joint parliament or an executive council? You should also consider the procedure for either nation ending the arrangement, i.e. breaking away from the confederation. What you decide will determine the dynamics of the second part of the committee below.

Part Two: Holding the Senegambia Confederation Together

During the final three sessions, the committee will transition to Crisis, taking into account the structural changes made during the constitution-writing sessions. As the inaugural members of the congress of the new unified state, you will be forced to deal with the many problems created by that very state's structure. These problems will arise in the form of updates or crisis breaks. In crisis breaks, a variety of characters will appear before you, bringing a new challenge each time. The backroom will be notified every time a directive is passed, meaning that your

actions directly affect the types of crises presented. Moreover, your individual notes will influence these challenges as well, which is why it is important to prepare comprehensive objectives for yourself and the committee.

Notes are part of what sets Crisis apart from GAs. Two notepads will be made available to you at the beginning of the first session. Your notes will be directed toward an AC—one of our helpful MUNUC staffers—in our backroom. Most of the time, your notes will be in-character and directed toward a secretary, friend, family member, etc. At the beginning, you will want to build your resources and expand your influence in order to enact whatever plan you have. Note that since there are two notepads, you have the ability to develop two arcs simultaneously, allowing for more of your ideas to have an influence on the direction of the committee. You will alternate between notepads, handing in one and receiving the other one from our backroom ACs in each note run. Ultimately, you want your notes to result in a crisis break; this shows that you are proactively guiding the committee. If you ever feel lost or unsure if your plan is feasible, you can always write an out-of-character note to the backroom in addition to your in-character one.

As mentioned earlier, directives are shorter than resolutions, and are typically between one to two pages. Directives take specific actions, and those that pass will go into effect, so precise and careful wording is key. Keep in mind that, alongside directives, you will also be allowed to amend your constitution during the second part of the conference. Of course, you will have to follow the procedures that you agreed upon in the first portion, which will make this option more or less feasible.

Although the stated objective of this committee is to maintain a unified confederation, in the end, you are the ones who will determine the fate of the Senegambia Confederation. We look

forward to seeing how you grow over the course of MUNUC 38, and we cannot wait to see your responses to whatever crisis breaks we throw your way!

HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

Geographic and Ethnic Overlap



Map of Senegal, including the region of Casamance in the south.²

Senegal and The Gambia are two countries that have long been intertwined geographically, linguistically, and culturally. The Anglo-French Boundary Commission mapped out the current border between Senegal and The Gambia in 1891 and officially finalized it in 1904. The international boundary follows a narrow strip of land on either side of the Gambia

² Shaund. *Senegal Regions*. March 14, 2010.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Senegal_regions_%28fr%29.png.

River, extending about 200 miles inland. The Gambia's width ranges from about 30 miles at the river's mouth to just 7 miles deeper inland. As a result, Casamance—Senegal's southern province—is geographically separated from the rest of the country.³



*Map of The Gambia.*⁴

Despite the political separation and imposed borders, Senegal and The Gambia remain closely connected through shared cultural and linguistic heritage. Many ethnic groups like the Wolof, Mandinka, Sereer, and Peul (interchangeable with Fula) can be found on both sides of the border. The language Wolof serves as a widely spoken lingua franca in both countries, alongside other major regional languages like Mandinka, Pulaar, and Jola. Senegal and The Gambia also share similar natural landscapes such as coastal mangroves and Sahelian savanna grasslands.

Today, Dakar and Banjul are the capitals of Senegal and The Gambia, respectively. Dakar was established as a French military post in 1857 on the Cape Verde Peninsula. It rapidly developed due to its strategic position as a port and the construction of Western Africa's first

³ Edmun B. Richmond, "Senegambia and the Confederation: History, Expectations, and Disillusions," *Journal of Third World Studies* 10, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 172–194, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45193442>.

⁴ Peter Fitzgerald, Gambia regions map (Wikimedia Commons, February 21, 2009), licensed under CC BY 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gambia_regions_map.png

railway in 1886, which connected the old colonial capital of Saint-Louis to Dakar. By 1902, it became the federal capital of French West Africa. After Senegal gained independence in 1960, Dakar remained its capital and has since become an important center for industry, services, and culture.⁵

Banjul was formerly known as Bathurst before being renamed in 1973. It was established by the British in 1816 on St. Mary's Island at the mouth of the Gambia River, serving as a base to suppress the transatlantic slave trade and oversee regional commerce. The town later became the capital of The Gambia colony and protectorate, and by 1947, had its own town council. When The Gambia gained independence in 1965, Banjul was officially granted city status and continued as the country's national capital. Now, it is The Gambia's main hub for commerce and transportation.⁶

Pre-Colonial History

Between the 8th and 15th centuries, the Senegambian region was highly influenced by West African Empires like the Ghana Empire and the Mali Empire. By the eighth century, desert caravan trade from the Sahara brought Islam from the north, which continues to be the predominant religion in Senegal and The Gambia to this day.

In the eighth century, the Upper Senegal valley was a part of the Ghana Empire, which gained its wealth from the trans-Saharan gold trade. At the same time, the region came under pressure from the Sanhaja Berber confederations, based in what is now Mauritania, who controlled key trade centers in the area. These trade rivalries and worsening desertification in the

⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica, s.v. "Dakar," last modified July 18, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Dakar>.

⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica, s.v. "Banjul," last modified July 18, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Banjul>.

Sahel encouraged various ethnic groups and communities such as the Sereer, Wolof, Peul, and Tukulor to settle in or migrate farther south of the Senegal Valley.⁷



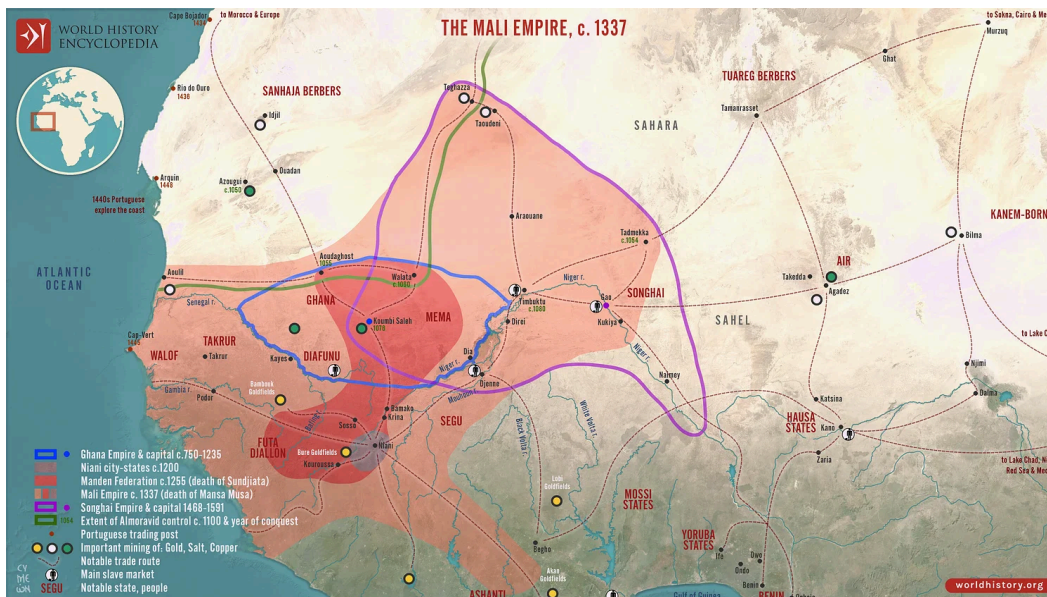
*Wolof warrior.*⁸

After the fall of the Ghana Empire, the twelfth century onwards saw direct influence from the Mali Empire. The Mali Empire had some notable impact on the region, like transforming kinship-based societies in the Senegambia into states and integrating the region into wider, long-distance trade networks that stretched across the Sahara, along the Niger Bend, and down to the coastal mangroves. At some point during Mali's expansion westward, the Kaabu kingdom was founded along both sides of the Gambia River.⁹

⁷ Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, trans. Ayi Kwei Armah (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁸ Mark Cartwright (illustrator). "Wolof Warrior." Illustration of a mid-19th-century Wolof warrior. Public domain. Published on World History Encyclopedia, November 20, 2019.

⁹ Ibid.



Map of the Mali Empire and other West African empires.¹⁰

However, the Mali Empire's influence was not as strong in northern Senegambia. Around the mid-fourteenth century, a succession crisis led to the formation of the Jolof Confederation, a decentralized alliance that brought together Wolof Provinces like Waalo, Kajoor, and Baol. By the end of the fifteenth century, various political units had emerged across Senegambia—the Denyanke kingdom in the middle and upper valleys of the Senegal River; the Jolof Confederation between the Senegal and Gambia Rivers; and the Mali Empire to the south of the Gambia River. In this southern region, the Kaabu Kingdom had gained significant political power, becoming the largest kingdom in the region still made up of smaller kinship-based states. During the sixteenth century, the rise in trade between Europe, Africa and the Americas led to major changes in the region, contributing to the decline of Mali's authority, the growing independence of Kaabu, and the eventual breakup of the Jolof Confederation.

¹⁰ Moss, Gabriel. "Map of the Mali Empire, c. 1337 CE." World History Encyclopedia. Published February 20, 2019. <https://www.worldhistory.org/image/10129/map-of-the-mali-empire-c-1337-ce/>

Colonial History

The first Europeans to lead an expedition into the Senegambia region were Portuguese sailors in 1455. They attempted to sail up the Gambia River but were chased away by hostile inhabitants. Subsequent expeditions, however, managed to sail farther inland, leading to the creation of trading settlements as sailors chose to remain behind, taking African wives and gradually becoming isolated from metropolitan Portugal. These Afro-Portuguese families would serve as important mediators of future trade between Europeans and Africans.¹¹



*Portuguese carrack ships.*¹²

¹¹ Richmond, Edmun B. "SENEGAMBIA AND THE CONFEDERATION: HISTORY, EXPECTATIONS, AND DISILLUSIONS." *Journal of Third World Studies* 10, no. 2 (1993): 172–94. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45193442>.

¹² Unknown Artist. "Portuguese Carrack Ships." Illustration of mid-16th-century Portuguese carrack ships (public domain), uploaded by Mark Cartwright, June 4, 2021. World History Encyclopedia. <https://www.worldhistory.org/image/14186/portuguese-carrack-ships/>

The mid-16th century saw the arrival of British, French, Dutch, and Swedish trading companies as a result of trade possibilities in the region. Despite trade being negligibly profitable, a struggle ensued between the French and British for colonial control over the area, with both powers establishing a number of trading posts along the banks of the Senegal and Gambia rivers, as well as the Senegambian coast. In 1816, Capt. Alexander Grant of the British Navy established the town of Bathurst through the purchase of Banjul Island from the Chief of the Kombo. Bathurst would serve as a British naval base to restrict the Atlantic slave trade (slavery having been abolished within the British Empire in 1807).¹³

By the 1880s, France and Britain enjoyed de facto control over the areas constituting modern-day Senegal and The Gambia, respectively, although occasional skirmishes continued to occur. These would be formally resolved through the Anglo-French Convention of 1889, which allowed for the creation of an international boundary between Senegal and The Gambia.¹⁴ The region, now decisively divided into two separate territories, would be directly and indirectly governed by the British (from Bathurst) and the French (from Dakar) until independence. Influenced by nationalist movements elsewhere in Africa and Asia, calls for self-governance and independence from colonial rule gained traction within both nations through the 1950s and 1960s. Senegal gained independence (within the short-lived Mali federation) on the 4th of April 1960. The Gambia would follow suit five years later, gaining independence on the 18th of February 1965.

¹³ The National Archives. 2019. "1833 Factory Act." Nationalarchives.gov.uk 1 (1). <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/default.htm>.

¹⁴ Richmond, Edmun B. "SENEGAMBIA AND THE CONFEDERATION: HISTORY, EXPECTATIONS, AND DISILLUSIONS." *Journal of Third World Studies* 10, no. 2 (1993): 172–94. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45193442>.

The Senegalese and Gambian Economies

At the time of Senegalese independence, Senegal possessed a relatively well-developed economy with a large agricultural base and a strong manufacturing sector. In particular, peanuts served as the country's primary cash crop, while the industrial sector revolved around food-processing—specifically the production of peanut oil. Prior to independence, the Senegalese economy was largely dominated by the private sector; French companies controlled not only the peanut industry within Senegal, but also the import of European goods into the country.



*Leopold Senghor.*¹⁵

Leopold Senghor, Senegal's first President and a stalwart of the African Socialism movement, strongly pursued a policy of agricultural socialization. He aimed to transform “the rural population into an educated, productive citizenry which can contribute its rightful share to

¹⁵ Pic, Roger. Léopold Sédar Senghor (Pic, 5). 1975. Photograph. Bibliothèque nationale de France. Public domain. Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:L%C3%A9opold_Senghor_Pic_5.jpg

the social, economic, and political life of the country.”¹⁶ This entailed the promotion of partnerships between peanut farmers, incentivised through government programs. These programs offered loans and credit; tools, machinery, and expertise; and a system allowing the government to buy crops from them at fixed rates. The crops were subsequently sold to processing industries and exporters. His program was largely successful, with Senegal boasting over 14,000 farmer partnerships by 1963. These helped provide Senegal’s rural population with greater autonomy, rather than being reliant on French commercial organizations. Even so, a lack of technical expertise and conflicts of national and local interests meant that peanut production had not grown as expected, an issue further exacerbated by the impending loss of French price support for peanut exports.¹⁷

¹⁶ Walter A. E. Skurnik. “Léopold Sédar Senghor and African Socialism.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 3, no. 3 (1965): 349–69. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/159548>.

¹⁷ Ibid.



Peanuts in Senegal ready for sale.¹⁸

Within the industrial sector, Senghor's government aimed to reduce Senegal's reliance on imported manufactured goods by promoting their production domestically. Domestic firms were incentivized through the creation of separate tax laws for large corporations versus small-medium enterprises (SMEs). These helped make it more profitable for companies to invest in manufacturing locally.

In contrast to Senegal's relatively well-developed economy, The Gambia possessed a low-income, low-cost economy promoted during the colonial period by Great Britain. The economy was dominated by the agricultural sector with little to no manufacturing present, as it was considered uneconomical to produce goods for The Gambia's small population (around

¹⁸ Fortier, François-Edmond. "Rufisque – Les arachides en gare (AOF)." Photograph of groundnuts storage at the train station in Rufisque, Senegal, early 20th century. Public domain. Picryl.

300,000 people). As in Senegal, agriculture was dominated by a single cash crop, with the economy revolving around the cultivation and export of peanuts.¹⁹

Prior to Gambian independence, whether The Gambia would be able to survive as an independent country was a contentious topic for the British government. In particular, The Gambia's single-crop agrarian economy, combined with its small population, small size, and lack of natural resources, led many to question the feasibility of an independent Gambian state without significant foreign aid. These worries were further compounded by then-United Kingdom Prime Minister Macmillan's desire to reduce the financial burden placed upon the United Kingdom by its colonies through decolonization; providing foreign aid to The Gambia would counteract this plan. As a result, the United Kingdom was particularly favorable to the integration of The Gambia into Senegal, believing that the larger and better-developed Senegalese economy would be able to support that of The Gambia.²⁰

However, in the years preceding and immediately following Gambian independence, high peanut prices and bountiful harvests presented the Gambian economy as being in a relatively stable position. This impression was furthered when, despite the Macmillan government's concerns, Britain continued to support The Gambia's liabilities. Concurrently, the Senegalese economy was stagnating as a result of poor economic planning, mounting deficits, and falling national revenues. Despite its growing manufacturing sector, Senegal was still largely dependent on the erratic peanut trade. This was also when France ended the support system it provided the Senegalese economy.²¹ The Gambia's seemingly successful economy and Senegal's simultaneously faltering one furthered opposition to integration with Senegal in Bathurst.

¹⁹ Richmond, Edmun B. "SENEGAMBIA AND THE CONFEDERATION: HISTORY, EXPECTATIONS, AND DISILLUSIONS." *Journal of Third World Studies* 10, no. 2 (1993): 172–94. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45193442>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

Unfortunately, the temporary relief provided to the Gambian economy could not last, and the Gambian economy began to struggle almost immediately after independence. In particular, the agricultural sector—which employed the vast majority of Gambians—struggled as a result of land scarcity, furthered by population growth. Moreover, deforestation contributed to significant erosion and soil degradation, further affecting the size and quality of harvests. The forlorn situation was worsened by droughts and falling peanut prices in international markets throughout the 1970s.²²

Dakar and Banjul's Trade Policies

The Senegalese government developed industrial free-trade zones in regional capitals through the mid-1970s. These zones were designed to attract investment by providing firms with tariff exemption. Additionally, the Dakar Industrial Zone Corporation supported firms within these zones with technical, legal, administrative, and marketing expertise.²³

Senegal's government also tried implementing a policy called import substitution, which encouraged domestic production rather than importing from other countries. People needed special licenses to import, and there were very high tariffs on imported goods—sometimes up to 300%. Since the companies passed the price of the tariffs onto the people in Senegal, those foreign goods became much more expensive, allowing Senegalese industrial goods to compete with them. This bolstered the local economy but raised the price of those goods relative to what they could be under a policy of free trade.

²² Kebbeh, C. Omar. 2013. "The Gambia: Migration in Africa's 'Smiling Coast.'" Migrationpolicy.org. August 15, 2013. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/gambia-migration-africas-smiling-coast>.

²³ Newman, Carol, John Page, John Rand, Abebe Shimeles, Måns Söderbom, and Finn Tarp, eds. 2016. Manufacturing Transformation. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198776987.001.0001>.

Because Senegal had trade deals with France and the European Economic Community, goods from those places were allowed in more easily. In return, France bought a lot of Senegal's exports—about 85% of Senegal's exports went to France in 1965. But this system meant Senegalese people couldn't always buy from the cheapest seller, so everyday goods became more expensive—between prioritizing trade with France and Europe and tariffs encouraging domestic production over imported goods, living costs were almost 50% higher in Senegal than in nearby Gambia.

By 1980, this policy wasn't working well anymore. Senegal's market was too small for industries to grow big enough to be efficient, and all the taxes and trade barriers made Senegal's industries less competitive. The government also had to spend a lot of money helping these industries through tax breaks and support. As a result, industry barely grew (0–2% per year), and both government and private companies started losing interest in investing in these industries. As opposed to Senegal, The Gambia possessed a liberal trade policy with few trade barriers and tariffs. While The Gambia provided a small concession to the UK in the form of a Commonwealth Preference Margin until 1977, goods could be imported relatively easily from most countries through licenses granted in a straightforward manner. The Commonwealth Preference Margin and colonial ties meant that the UK was a major trading partner for The Gambia: 60 percent of Gambian exports were destined for the UK while 40 percent of The Gambia's imports originated in the UK. Still, unlike Senegal, The Gambia's liberal import policy allowed Gambia to buy goods from the cheapest source, resulting in a lower cost of living than in Senegal. However, the agrarian economy and a lack of industry also led to significantly lower wages (approximately 80% lower, according to some estimates).

Previous Agreements

Knowledge of the two nations' shared ethnic and cultural backgrounds prompted thoughts of an eventual unification even before The Gambia's independence in 1965. The British continued to question The Gambia's economic viability as an independent state, prompting enthusiasm towards the idea of a unification between the two neighbouring countries. This led to official contact, regarding the possibility of integration, between the newly independent Senegal and British officials in 1961. This resulted in the appointment of a United Nations Inquiry in order to determine possible grounds for unification. Subsequently, this developed into a United Nations Technical Assistance Mission in 1963, with a final report considering the economic, fiscal, and political aspects of unification submitted in 1964.²⁴

Following The Gambia's independence in 1965, Senegal and The Gambia signed a Treaty of Association on 19th of April 1967 in Bathurst. This was not the first bilateral agreement between the two nations; The Gambia had previously signed a mutual defense pact with Senegal immediately after independence. The 1967 treaty was a step forwards from that initial agreement. While it did not establish a political or military union, it laid the groundwork for regular communication and institutional coordination between the two governments. The signing of the treaty eventually led to the establishment of an Inter-State Ministerial Committee in 1968, assisted by the Senegalo-Gambian Permanent Secretariat, which was tasked with promoting further cooperation between the two governments. The treaty also required that the heads of government of both nations meet once a year, alternately in Dakar or Bathurst, to examine various aspects of cooperation. This reflected the strong willingness of both nations to work closely together and form a strong friendship.

²⁴ Ebrima Manneh, "The Senegalo-Gambia Permanent Secretariat – A Truly Senegambian Affair," The Point (The Gambia), June 10, 2009, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/the-senegalo-gambia-permanent-secretariat-a-truly-senegambian-affair>

Under the treaty, the Senegalo-Gambian Permanent Secretariat was led by an Executive Secretary, who is appointed by joint decision of both governments. By tacit agreement, the Executive Secretary was always a Senegalese national, while the Deputy Executive Secretary was Gambian.²⁵ The Secretariat was based in Bathurst. As a result of the treaty, the Secretariat facilitated around 30 cooperative agreements between the years 1965 and 1982, covering various sectors such as trade, customs, and infrastructure. Overall, it strengthened interactions across all levels of society—connecting policy makers, political leaders, professionals and business tycoons from both countries.²⁶

The Gambian Coup

The 1981 Gambian Coup attempt was unique as it was plotted by civilians, with support from The Gambia Field Force, a faction of the paramilitary police. Lasting eight days, the coup represented a major turning point in The Gambia post-independence as it revealed serious weaknesses in the state's military defense.

At the time of the coup, President Alhaji Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara was abroad in London, attending the wedding of Prince Charles and Princess Diana. In his absence, a group of radicals took over parts of the capital, Banjul. The coup was led by Kukoi Samba Sanyang, a former politician who had turned to Marxist ideas. His support came largely from dissatisfied youth, former Field Force members, and others frustrated by widespread government corruption and an increasingly elitist political system.²⁷

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Oladotun Emmanuel Awosusi and Muhammed Lenn, “An Analysis of Latent Factors Influencing Gambia-Senegal Relations beyond Colonial Dichotomy,” *International Affairs and Global Strategy* 75 (August 31, 2019), accessed July 28, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.7176/IAGS/75-05>

²⁷ Arnold Hughes, *The Attempted Gambian Coup d'État of 30 July 1981*, originally written in 1991, published August 1, 2011, and edited for online use, *MyBasse*, <https://mybasse.webnode.page/news/analysis-the-july-30-1981-gambian-coup/>

By the late 1970s, there was growing dissatisfaction among radicals in The Gambia. This eventually led to the rise of more extreme forms of opposition. The radicals took more direct actions like burning government vessels, engaging in political graffiti, and circulating a free underground newspaper, *The Voice of the Future*. They also formed new political organizations like The Gambia Socialist Revolutionary Party (GSRP). Kukoi Samba Sanyang joined the GSRP sometime in 1980, after attempting to stand against the ruling party as a politician with limited success. It was the GSRP that eventually planned the coup, with Kukoi Sanyang leading its execution.

When the coup was launched in the early hours of July 30, 1981, rebels captured key sites in central Banjul. Kukoi Samba Sanyang took advantage of captured radio stations to denounce the Jawara administration, and later to criticize the Senegalese military intervention. Throughout the coup, the rebels took 105 hostages, including the president's wife and children. The coup also resulted in widespread disorder, leading to looting, robbery, and multiple killings.²⁸

President Jawara flew to Dakar within 24 hours of the coup's announcement and invoked the 1965 defense agreement with Senegal. Senegalese President Abdou Diouf responded by initiating *Operation Foday Kabba II*, deploying nearly 3,000 soldiers to the Banjul area. Despite significant rebel resistance and casualties on both sides, the coup was successfully suppressed by 6th of August. Of the estimated 500 deaths, around 30 were Senegalese soldiers, while the others were mostly civilians and rebels. In retrospect, Senegal's intervention was crucial in preventing the coup from gaining broader public support or escalating into a national uprising.²⁹

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

In many ways, the events of 1981 exposed just how vulnerable The Gambia was on its own. With weak military defense and real risks of political instability, the country could not defend itself without outside help.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In this committee, the most fundamental question you will have to consider is what you would like to emerge as the future of political cooperation between Senegal and The Gambia. There are three potential options for a new Senegambia (unless you come up with something else): complete political integration, a loose federation with shared institutions, or a treaty of friendship focused on cooperation without political unification. These options present varying degrees of association between the two nations, ranging from the formation of a new, unified state to a treaty allowing for some level of policy coordination.

Complete political integration—Senegal’s preferred option—would entail The Gambia ceasing to exist as an autonomous nation and being assimilated into Senegal as its eighth province. Such integration would necessitate centralized control over the new nation emanating from Dakar, with the Gambians receiving proportional representation in the Senegalese National Assembly.

A loose federation, meanwhile, would create a confederal government overseeing defense and foreign affairs. In this case, Senegal and The Gambia would continue to maintain autonomy in all other areas of decision-making.

The final option, a treaty of friendship, does not involve the creation of a new state. Rather, both countries would maintain their autonomy and independence; the treaty would simply function as a transitional tool in creating further cooperation and alignment between the two. As a committee, you must consider various areas of contention as you decide the nature of the Senegambian future.

Political Integration

Senegalese officials are particularly enthusiastic regarding the prospect of complete integration; that is, assimilating The Gambia as the eighth province of Senegal. Their enthusiasm is driven by the unique geographic location of The Gambia, which cuts off the southern province of Casamance from northern Senegal. Thus, keeping Casamance connected with northern Senegal necessitates routing transportation and communication infrastructure across an international border, introducing unnecessary complications. These concerns are exacerbated by the tendency of the people of Casamance to favour self-rule and independence from Senegal. The geographic and political separation between The Gambia and Senegal intensifies fears that Senegalese dissidents could use Gambian territory to incite political instability and insurrection. The Gambia also stands to benefit from increased political integration to some extent, as it would allow it to focus its resources on internal affairs instead of attempting to manage its onerous border.



Map of Senegal showing Casamance.³⁰

However, complete integration would entail a severe curtailment of The Gambia's autonomy. Gambians would lose their autonomous government in exchange for proportional representation within the Senegalese one. This is unacceptable to many Gambians, as this would leave them in a perpetual state of political minority. The issue of integration is further complicated by the language barrier that exists between the two countries; although most of the population of each country speaks indigenous West African languages natively, Senegal is nominally a francophone nation, and The Gambia is a nominally anglophone one. Thus, a new state would have to wrestle with political elites who cannot speak to one another in their preferred language.

³⁰ zmijugaloma. "Casamance." DeviantArt, image posted May 2017.
<https://www.deviantart.com/zmijugaloma/art/Casamance-681333946>

Economic Integration

Immediate and complete economic integration would necessitate the formation of a customs union. A customs union is a type of economic integration where member countries eliminate tariffs on goods traded among themselves while establishing a common external tariff on imports from non-member countries.³¹ In practice, The Gambia would need to align its liberal trade policy with Senegal's complicated and regulatory one. This would be an immense administrative effort, currently beyond the qualified administrative manpower available to the Gambian government. Furthermore, even if such an alignment is made possible, the high tariffs and duties levied by the Senegalese government would result in a sharp increase in the cost of living for Gambians, leading to hardship and strife.

Economic integration, through tariff alignment and a customs union, poses many benefits for the Senegalese. Firstly, the unification of tariffs will help mitigate cross-border smuggling (considered below) through price unification. Further, it will provide an additional market for Senegalese industry and help reduce transport and infrastructure inefficiencies related to the processing and export of peanuts. For example, perhaps Senegalese exporters could use the Gambia River to transport peanuts as opposed to transporting via land. Some estimates suggest that this could save between 1 and 3 francs per kilogram of peanuts—saving between 80 and 240 million francs (approximately \$80 to \$240 million in 2025 dollars) on a standard shipment of 80 tonnes.³² However, it is worth noting that transport inefficiencies could be mitigated without economic alignment. In fact, many African countries already use the natural infrastructure of others through treaties.

³¹ EBSCO. "Customs Union." Research Starters: Business and Management. EBSCO Information Services. <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/business-and-management/customs-union#:~:text=A%20Customs%20Union%20is%20a,imports%20from%20non%2Dmember%20countries>

³² Robson, Peter. "The Problem of Senegambia." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 3, no. 3 (1965): 393–407. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/159550>.

There are benefits of economic integration for The Gambia, though they are not as straightforward. Tariff unification and the establishment of a regulatory framework similar to Senegal's will require extensive administrative investment and effort. The heightened cost of imports will equally be passed on to Gambian consumers, leading to a rise in the cost of living. Negating these significant costs will require a careful consideration of the benefits that can be negotiated through industrial development, skilled labour migration, and financial compensation. For example, economic integration could be advantageous for The Gambia if, in exchange for a customs union, it were to benefit from development on the Gambia River. However, such an arrangement does not necessarily have to coincide with political or economic integration: across the African continent, several other nations have created intergovernmental organizations to manage river basin development.³³ Additionally, even though The Gambia would lose much of its ability to make independent trade decisions, by merging its trade power with that of Senegal, the bloc would increase its collective leverage when negotiating trade deals with other powers by offering a larger market and a stronger production base.

Smuggling

One of the key issues that the two nations need to contend with is cross-border smuggling. With such a long border between the two nations, devoid of any natural boundaries like rivers or mountains, the border is practically impossible for either nation to control in its entirety. Furthermore, given that it runs right through ethnic groups and that both nations have

³³ Rangeley, Robert, Bocar Thiam, Randolph Andersen, and Colin Lyle Ulv. 1994. "International River Basin Organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa." <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/746931468768279826/pdf/International-river-basin-organizations-in-sub-Saharan-Africa.pdf>.

minimal administrative capacity, the border is incredibly porous, allowing people and goods to travel from one nation to another with relative ease.

There are two main types of smuggling that are carried out: the smuggling of imported products and the smuggling of peanuts. Interestingly, the direction in which the smuggling occurs differs between these two types, but both forms disproportionately harm Senegal more than The Gambia. Imported products are smuggled from The Gambia into Senegal as a result of the difference in trade policies between the two: as a result of The Gambia's liberal import policy and its ability to buy from the cheapest source, many consumer goods are cheaper in The Gambia as compared to Senegal. Hence, there is a strong incentive to smuggle these goods, which normally include "shoes and sandals, transistor radios, tobacco, and textiles," and sell them for a lower price than commercially available in Senegal.³⁴ This has led to the emergence of a significant black market economy, which subverts Senegal's policy of "import substitution," where it attempts to produce a higher proportion of its own goods through developing local industry. Many goods arrive with legal contracts in The Gambia destined for Guinea-Bissau, and are then stolen en route and rerouted to Senegal.³⁵

On the other hand, while the primary crop grown in both countries is peanuts, there is a key difference in how each country deals with the purchase of peanuts from farmers. Senegal has a system of IOUs called "chits" for its peanut farmers. These are exchanged for tax-deductible cash three months later, rather than receiving cash up-front. In contrast, Gambian farmers receive cash up-front for their produce.³⁶ As a result, Senegalese farmers often illegally sell their produce in The Gambia, where they receive hard cash, rather than selling into the Senegalese state

³⁴ Stephen S. Golub and Ahmadou Aly Mbaye, *"National Trade Policies and Smuggling in Africa: The Case of The Gambia and Senegal"* (Swarthmore College and Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar, June 2008).

³⁵ Richmond, Edmun B. "SENEGAMBIA AND THE CONFEDERATION: HISTORY, EXPECTATIONS, AND DISILLUSIONS." *Journal of Third World Studies* 10, no. 2 (1993): 172–94. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45193442>.

³⁶ Ibid.

marketing system. The Senegalese farmers prefer this, as the money is guaranteed and can be spent on immediate needs such as farm supplies.

Military Integration and Foreign Policy

Other key issues that require discussion and alignment between the two nations for any level of integration include defense cooperation and shared foreign policy. Agreements on these issues provide useful tools for cooperation, but do not in and of themselves further substantial integration.

After Senegal intervened to restore President Jawara following the 1981 Gambian coup, it has become clear that a unified security framework is essential—Gambia cannot effectively control its own borders independently. However, the Senegalese army is far more advanced and significantly larger than The Gambia's. This raises concerns that The Gambia's forces would be overshadowed or even completely absorbed if a confederation were to be formed. While The Gambia would benefit from increased security from being within a larger confederation, its sovereignty would be at risk. Military integration presents a tradeoff between long-term stability and Gambian autonomy, a dilemma that is central to the discussions around a confederation. Gambian officials fear that such an arrangement could erode national identity and leave their country dependent on Senegal for both defense and foreign policy.

Senegal and The Gambia's Foreign Policy

Senegal and The Gambia approach foreign policy from very different positions of strength and dependency, which shape their stances on the proposed confederation. Senegal, as the larger and more powerful state, pursues a foreign policy that balances close ties with France

and regional leadership ambitions. It seeks to expand its influence while presenting itself as a stabilizing force in West Africa.³⁷ Its leaders view the confederation as a way to formalize Senegal's security role in the region and prevent future coups in The Gambia.



*Moustapha Niasse, Foreign Minister of Senegal.*³⁸

In contrast, The Gambia adopts a more cautious and pragmatic approach, aiming to preserve its sovereignty and avoid being overshadowed by its larger neighbor. Gambian leaders rely heavily on British aid and Commonwealth connections but recognize that closer ties with Senegal could improve their security and economic prospects.³⁹ Both states, therefore, engage in foreign policy that seeks external support—Senegal to legitimize its regional role, and The Gambia to ensure that any integration does not fully compromise its independence.

³⁷ Owusu, Fidel Amakye. "Senegal as a Strategic Player in the Sahel." GIS Reports Online, October 8, 2024.

³⁸ SEYLOU (photographer). Moustapha Niasse, Former Foreign Affairs Minister of Senegal. 5 February 2000. Photograph.

³⁹ Ousman Mamakeh Bojang and Muhammed Lenn. An Analysis of Latent Factors Influencing Gambia-Senegal Relations Beyond Colonial Dichotomy. *Journal of International Affairs and Global Strategy*, Vol. 75, 2019.

France's Foreign Policy

Though Senegal has been independent since 1960, France maintains a military presence with several bases in the nation, including a major base in Dakar. This is part of France's broader strategy to maintain influence in Western Africa while also aiming to promote regional stability. Senegal remains one of France's "staunchest allies in Africa," even after France shut down its subsidy program for Senegal post-1960.⁴⁰ They have maintained a "special relationship" with strong diplomatic and economic ties, with several French companies remaining in the nation.⁴¹ While France is supportive of a confederation, it is against a full Senegalese takeover of The Gambia due to the potential for regional instability and the loss of France's image as a promoter of African peace.

The United Kingdom's Foreign Policy

The UK still exerts influence in The Gambia post-independence through the Commonwealth and aid programs; however, it no longer maintains a military presence in The Gambia the way France does in Senegal. The UK supports the formation of a confederation, as it would relieve the burden of having to send aid to an independent Gambia. British officials, however, worry about the erosion of Gambian institutions such as its military, and therefore support a loose economic confederation as opposed to political and military integration. The UK also fears that a stronger Senegalese role in Gambian affairs could weaken the Commonwealth's

⁴⁰ Al Jazeera English. "Former Colonial Ruler France Hands Over Its Last Military Bases in Senegal." Al Jazeera, July 17, 2025.
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/7/17/former-colonial-ruler-france-hands-over-its-last-military-bases-in-senegal>

⁴¹ Bawa, Aisha Balarabe. From Imperialism to Diplomacy: A Historical Analysis of French and Senegal Cultural Relationship. Paper presented at the London Art as Cultural Diplomacy Conference, Portcullis House, British Parliament, London, August 21–24, 2013. Cultural Diplomacy Academy, 2013.
https://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/academy/content/pdf/participant-papers/2013-08-acd/Aisha_Bawa_-_From_Imperialism_To_Diplomacy-_An_Historical_Analysis_Of_French_And_Senegal_Cultural_Relationship.pdf

standing in the region. Additionally, British policymakers are cautious about any arrangement that might reduce Gambian sovereignty to the point of alienating local elites, who have long cooperated with the UK.⁴²

Nigeria's Foreign Policy

As the most populous nation in West Africa, Nigeria views itself as the leader of the region, and the proposed confederation has the potential to disrupt this equilibrium. While Nigeria maintains a publicly neutral stance, it is apprehensive about the increased Francophone influence the confederation could bring to the region.⁴³ Though generally anti-colonial in its foreign policy, Nigeria prioritizes its own sphere of influence above all else, and therefore has a vested interest in the outcome of the confederation debate.

Your Role

Will Senegal and The Gambia unite and become a regional powerhouse? Will they go their separate ways and become stronger on their own terms? Will they collapse into further poverty and civil unrest? The Senegambian future lies in your hands. Good luck delegates!

⁴² Bojang, Ousman Mamakeh, and Usman Solomon Ayegba. Historicizing the Gambia's Post-Independence Politico-Economic and Diplomatic Development Travails, 1965–1994. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* 26, no. 1 (2024). <https://jsd-africa.com/Jsda/2024>

⁴³ (IJSSHR). "The Silent Contest: Nigeria vs. France for West African Hegemony." *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, commentary, August 11, 2020. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343607924_Franco-Nigerian_detente_Nigeria_France_and_the_Francophone_states_of_the_Lake_Chad_region_in_the_era_of_the_Boko_Haram_terrorism

DELEGATE POSITIONS

Senegalese Delegation (10):

1. Moustapha Niasse, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Moustapha Niasse has served as Senegal’s Minister of Foreign Affairs for years, earning a reputation for tireless travel, diplomatic flair, and an unshakable belief in the power of soft influence—often beginning with a handful of Senegalese peanuts. Whether in Paris, Beijing, or Riyadh, he is known for pushing Senegal’s interests through charm, strategic partnerships, and well-timed concessions. A strong proponent of foreign direct investment, Niasse has spearheaded agreements that reduce taxes for international firms in exchange for bribes—occasionally securing overseas land tracts where he enjoys quiet weekends away from Dakar. He shares a long-standing friendship with French envoy Jean-Marc Delattre and regularly coordinates with him to align Senegal’s diplomatic messaging with French priorities. Niasse is a vocal supporter of the Confederation, viewing it as a necessary step toward greater regional leverage in an increasingly multipolar world. For him, unity is not just symbolic—it is a shield against interference, a bargaining chip for trade, and a legacy he hopes to leave behind.

2. Ousmane Seck, Minister of Economy and Finance

Ousmane Seck grew up in a poor family. His father, a serial entrepreneur, tried setting up many small enterprises with little to no success. These businesses ranged from poultry farms to attempting to run restaurants. As a result, financial resources were strained, and Seck’s family could not afford to send him to school. Fortunately, his uncle introduced him to politics, and he began working as a party worker in Leopold Senghor’s *Bloc Democratique Senegalais*. His

hard-working attitude and desire to learn caught the eye of Senghor himself, who personally funded Seck's secondary education until he won a prestigious scholarship to attend the *École libre des sciences politiques* in Paris. Upon graduating, he returned to Senegal with a strong desire to contribute to Senegal's success, particularly since Senghor, almost a father-figure to Seck, would be leading the newly independent nation. Beginning as a humble secretary to senior party members, his rise to power was meteoric; the backing of Senghor, combined with his shrewd political intellect, economic acumen, and a genuine commitment to the Senegalese people, earned him a place in the Cabinet within a decade of his return to Dakar. Shortly before Senghor's resignation in favour of Diouf, Seck finally rose to his current position as the Minister of Economy and Finance. The struggles he witnessed as a young boy drive him to develop thriving industrial and agricultural sectors, bringing—he hopes—prosperity to all the people of Senegal.

3. Robert Sagna, Minister of Agriculture

Robert Sagna's career began in the fields of Casamance, working as a laborer on one of the region's largest peanut farms. His fortunes changed abruptly when the farm's owner died in a jetski accident on the Gambia River, leaving Sagna to inherit the peanut tycoon's operation. For years, he built his reputation as an ambitious agricultural leader in Casamance, envisioning himself as a regional stalwart. Yet the pull of life in Dakar proved stronger, and he sold the farm to a distant cousin—an avid boater—in order to pursue his ambitions in the capital. Drawing on his deep experience in agriculture, Sagna was selected Minister of Agriculture, where he now exercises complete control over the pricing of peanuts and other key crops. He is known for his shrewd market strategies, including the calculated creation of slight shortages in Sénéchim's pesticide supply to drive competition and increase margins for select producers. Sagna sees

agriculture as both an economic engine and a political tool, as he believes that Casamance deserves more status for what it contributes to the Senegalese economy.

4. Lamine Diagne, Peanut Farmer

Lamine Diagne spends his days tending to his peanut farm in a small village near the Senegal-Gambia border. Though he claims to be hopeless with directions, his neighbors suspect he knows the backroads of the region better than anyone. He has a deep obsession with maps and geography, which he insists is purely academic whenever anyone asks too many questions. Diagne despises customs officials, convinced that they don't understand the struggles of ordinary farmers. Not overtly political, he nonetheless resents government trade restrictions, which he believes are designed to help big exporters at the expense of small producers like himself. In his spare time, he meticulously redraws old maps to include all the hidden smuggling routes he knows, which are hidden under a fake bottom in his kitchen drawer.

5. Arame Diène, Socialist Activist

Arame Diène is a fiery socialist activist from Dakar who has been campaigning across Senegal and The Gambia since her student days at the University of Dakar. As the daughter of a dockworker and a market trader, she grew up surrounded by union meetings and political debates, shaping her belief that workers should control the wealth they create. Her mother is a lifelong friend of Dakar's mayor, Aminata Fall, making political conversations part of Arame's life for as long as she can remember. She is famous for her impromptu speeches in public, especially at market corners near her mother's stall, often standing on a crate to make herself heard. Beyond rallies, she organises literacy workshops for women and laborers, believing education to be the foundation of true liberation.

6. General Jean-Alfred Diallo, Chief of Army Staff

Recently appointed as Chief of Army Staff, General Jean-Alfred Diallo is already making waves within Senegal's military establishment. Known for his strict discipline, love of pushups, and peanut butter protein shakes, Diallo sees the army not just as a national institution but as the cornerstone of regional power. Though relatively new to high command, he commands the deep respect of the rank and file, having risen through the ranks with a reputation for toughness and loyalty to the uniform above all else. Diallo holds an unapologetic sense of superiority over the Gambian military and believes that true regional security can only come through the dominance of a well-equipped, unified force—led, of course, by Senegal. He views General Isatou Coker as both a threat and a personal rival, dismissing her cautious approach as outdated. A staunch supporter of the Confederation, Diallo sees it as the perfect vehicle to consolidate military power across borders and bring West Africa under one strategic command—his own.

7. Sokhna Gaye, Casamance Sympathizer

Sokhna Gaye, now in her early sixties, is the long-serving headteacher of a well respected secondary school in Ziguinchor. She is known to be strict but occasionally surprises students with an unexpected, ridiculous joke. She uses school assemblies to promote cultural pride and quietly encourages students to question central government policies. While publicly an ideal educator, she discreetly holds community meetings to discuss the possibilities of Casamance autonomy. In those gatherings, she often criticises foreign companies for treating the region as a mere source of profit and condemns the government for enabling such exploitation. Secretly a romantic at heart, she has a fondness for French literature and enjoys reciting poetry in her office

when no one is listening. (The whole school knows—she once left the PA system on by accident.)

8. Aminata Fall, Mayor of Dakar

Aminata Fall is the dynamic and fiercely proud Mayor of Dakar, whose favorite season in the city—unsurprisingly—is the fall. A devoted fan of the Dakar Rally, she has passed her passion for racing on to her children, all of whom compete in motorsport events across the region. Her personal collection of 4x4 vehicles is legendary, built for tackling the dunes that surround the capital and displayed proudly at public events. Fall is a vocal advocate for transforming Dakar into the “Capital of Africa,” challenging long-established urban powerhouses like Lagos and Cairo. She believes Senegal’s political, cultural, and economic strength should be projected across the continent, with Dakar at its center. A strong supporter of the Confederation, she sees it as a means to elevate Senegal’s influence and cement its place as the dominant force in West Africa.

9. Coumba Ndour, Minister for Information and Media

Coumba Ndour serves as Senegal’s Minister for Information and Media, where she oversees the country’s news landscape with a careful balance of state messaging and modern flair. A graduate of French institutions, she began her career at L’Équipe, France’s leading sports magazine, before returning to Senegal with a passion for media strategy and digital engagement. Since taking office, she has prioritized bilingual broadcasting—particularly in French—to maintain cultural ties and keep influential allies in Paris content. Ndour loves to put herself out there, frequently filming political propaganda from her government residence and sharing behind-the-scenes glimpses of cabinet life, press briefings, and curated cultural moments. A

close ally of Moustapha Niasse, she shares his belief in the power of French alignment and regional unity. For Ndour, the media isn't just about information—it's about narrative control, national branding, and making sure the right people are always watching.

10. Mousa Mbaye, SME Owner in Dakar

When Mousa Mbaye's mother found out she was pregnant, she was convinced that her son would be a lucky charm. To test out this theory, she immediately played the lottery, using his due date as the numbers, and won! This suddenly catapulted the Mbaye family into the company of Dakar's rich and famous, and Mousa's parents haven't worked a day since their son's birth. Unfortunately, their fortune is now beginning to dwindle. Their newly-found fortune allowed Mousa to study at the Royal College of Dar es Salaam, the best boarding school in all of Africa. There he would meet and become best friends with Rajnibhai Patel, incidentally the son of Tanzania's most well-known businessman: Jigneshbhai Patel. The Patels, who run multiple luxury hotels and manufacturing businesses, took a liking to Mousa and took him under their wing. Their close connection imparted a love for business in Mousa, who would choose to return to Dakar and set up his own business, instead of going to university. Today, he runs a fledgling hotel business and has plans to open peanut oil processing plants. He was chosen, in part, to be a part of the Senegalese delegation because he is expertly bilingual in English and French and in order to represent the interests of small entrepreneurs and enterprises.

Gambian Delegation (10):

1. Isatou Coker, Chief of Army Staff

General Isatou Coker is the long-serving Chief of Army Staff in The Gambia and one of the country's most formidable military figures. Trained in U.S. army camps during the Vietnam War era as part of a Cold War-era initiative to strengthen allied African officer corps, Coker returned home with a wealth of international experience—and a reputation for tactical brilliance and quiet ambition. Though officially loyal to civilian leadership, rumors have long swirled that she harbors deeper political aspirations, perhaps envisioning a future in which she holds more than just military command. Coker enjoys complete control over the Gambian Armed Forces and sees military reform as non-negotiable in any confederation talks. Her priority is ensuring that the Gambian military is not absorbed or diminished by a more dominant Senegalese force. While she does not oppose integration outright, she insists on equitable representation and command structures that reflect Gambian sovereignty. She maintains ties with a small network of aging fellow veterans from her training days—most retired, few influential, but all loyal.

2. Binta Manneh, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Binta Manneh is The Gambia's eloquent and well-connected Minister of Foreign Affairs, known for her frequent visits to London and close ties to several prominent figures in British diplomatic and social circles. A firm believer in the value of Commonwealth cooperation, she has positioned The Gambia as an active participant in regional and international initiatives, often emphasizing soft diplomacy and shared historical ties. Among her more notable friendships is Margaret Pamela Smythe, a British socialite and longtime fixture in Banjul's elite circles. Manneh moves effortlessly between banquets and boardrooms, often hosting high teas or playing golf with visiting dignitaries to build relationships on both personal and political levels. Despite

her refined image, she's known for her growing collection of small tattoos, each bearing personal or political messages hidden beneath the surface. For Manneh, diplomacy is as much about appearances and networks as it is about formal treaties—and she plays that game exceptionally well.

3. Ebrima Touray, Agriculture and Economy Minister

Before entering politics, Touray was a well-known chemist, serving as the Head Scientist for many fertilizer companies across West Africa including a stint at Senechim in Dakar. His time at Senechim marked a rivalry, which would later turn into a friendship based on mutual respect, with the current CEO of Senechim: Claire Valmont. His political career took off on the back of the success of the 'Touray Blend,' a unique fertilizer blend well-suited for Gambian soil. He champions science-driven farming reforms and pushes for investment in homegrown agro-industries. Touray believes that the Confederation has the potential to bring development and new opportunities to The Gambia, but he remains wary of the administrative burden and the possible rise in the cost of living and raw materials that could result from tariff unification and the customs union. While his speeches are often marked with hard-to-understand chemical analogies and jokes, he is a well-respected statesman and scientist. Although friends and colleagues are often left amused by the pocket-sized pH meter he carries with him at all times—even testing the tea at state dinners “just to be sure.”

4. Momodou Bah, Deputy Commander of the Field Force

Momodou Bah serves as the Deputy Commander of the Gambia Field Force, a position he assumed in the turbulent aftermath of the 1981 coup attempt. Known for his calm demeanor and methodical leadership style, Bah has focused on restoring discipline and professionalism

within the force. While he understands the strategic benefits of closer security cooperation with Senegal, he remains cautious about the Confederation, wary of ceding too much control to Senegal's larger military. Off duty, Bah is an avid marble collector, a hobby he has pursued since childhood. He claims that each marble in his extensive collection carries a particular kind of luck, and discreetly pockets one before a major operation. His colleagues have learned not to question the habit—especially after a few oddly fortunate missions.

5. Alpha Jatta, Farmer

Alpha Jatta is a Gambian farmer who grows peanuts and millet in Farafenni, near the Senegalese border. Though not directly involved in it, he allows traders to move smuggled goods through his fields in exchange for a small cut. The money is badly needed for school supplies and medicine, but he dislikes how smuggling undercuts local markets and drives up prices. Known for his progressive streak, Alpha openly supports sending girls to school and argues at community meetings in favour of allowing women to inherit farmland. He often credits his late mother, a skilled peanut oil maker, for showing him that women hold communities together. A devoted family man, he dreams of seeing his two daughters grow up in a better, fairer Gambia. In his free time, he enjoys helping his wife weave clothes for their daughters, finding pride in each stitch.

6. Pap Secka, Revolutionary Politician

Pap Secka is a radical Gambian politician known for his charming demeanor and uncompromising views. When he was younger, he dabbled in revolutionary politics, drawing inspiration from Marxist movements across West Africa. Older now, he is better at hiding his real intentions and playing both sides to get what he wants. Though he was abroad during the 1981

Gambian coup attempt, many suspect he sympathized with the rebels. He views the Senegambia Confederation as a strategic opportunity to increase his influence. Behind the scenes, he collects revolutionary pamphlets—some so controversial that he hides them inside old law books in his expansive personal library. Secka is also an avid birdwatcher who harbors a quiet obsession with spotting the elusive West African Goshawk—a sleek and secretive bird of prey.

7. Tijan Sarr, Mayor of Banjul

Tijan Sarr is the ambitious and forward-thinking Mayor of Banjul, known for his love of trains and his dream of creating seamless public transport links between Banjul, the Gambian interior, and Senegal. Born into a wealthy bureaucratic family, Sarr has lived his entire life in the capital and witnessed its transformation from the final years of British rule to the present day. He sees Banjul not just as a political center, but as a potential hub for regional commerce and mobility. One of his key goals is expanding the city's industrial zones, though he is frequently frustrated by the agricultural land that hems in further development. Sarr is also a strong proponent of cross-river initiatives, hoping to make the Gambia River a site of both connectivity and culture. While not a soldier or diplomat, he views the Confederation as a chance to integrate infrastructure and bring Banjul into its rightful place as a gateway to the future of the region.

8. Malang Sabally, Customs and Border Affairs Commissioner

Malang Sabally is a seasoned civil servant from Farafenni who rose through the ranks of the Gambia's customs service on the strength of his reformist agenda and deep local credibility. His main mission is to eliminate smuggling. This is not only a matter of law enforcement to him, but a rather personal pursuit shaped by his childhood. His father was a peanut trader who was forced to close his business after being undercut by Senegalese smugglers operating freely across

the border. Sabally has since built a career advocating for transparent and accountable border management that protects Gambian traders from such exploitation. Outside of official duties, he runs a small, self-funded program to educate rural communities on customs regulations and legal trade routes. Ironically, he is allergic to peanuts, but remains committed to safeguarding the livelihoods tied to them and reforming the conditions under which they are traded.

9. Mariama Sowe, Radio Gambia Journalist

Mariama Sowe is a respected journalist with Radio Gambia, known for her dramatic flair. Starting as a junior reporter covering local community news, she rose in fame during the late 1970s for her balanced and captivating coverage of controversial issues. When rebels seized Radio Gambia during the 1981 coup attempt, she was trapped in the building for hours, witnessing first-hand the chaos and panic of a country unprepared for such an assault. The experience left a lasting mark, shaping her quiet but firm support for the Senegambia unification. While she avoids openly partisan language on air, her editorial choices often reflect her belief that unity brings security. In her free time, she organises spirited weekend wrestling commentary competitions, inviting local youths and retired wrestlers to debate and recreate famous matches over sweet tea and akara.

10. Fatoumata Jallow, Minister of Women's Affairs

Fatoumata Jallow is one of The Gambia's most prominent female political leaders. A skilled debater and orator, her fiery speeches on the importance of women's rights have gained her the respect of the Gambian populace. She is a particularly loud advocate for the empowerment of rural women with many of her previous policies and campaigns centred on maternal health and female literacy. Her calm demeanor, steely gaze, and commanding presence

are reminders of a previous life as a school teacher and community organizer. Her experiences growing up in rural Gambia, and witnessing firsthand the difficulties faced by women in many parts of the country help bring a nuanced grassroots perspective to national policy. She has also represented The Gambia at several international conferences on gender equality and is well-known for bridging traditional values with progressive reforms in women's rights. She can often be seen in parliament and at international conferences with her pet goat, Bintu. When asked why, she claims that Bintu can “sniff out bad policy.”

Foreign Representatives (5):

1. Jean-Marc Delattre, French Envoy to Senegal

Jean-Marc Delattre is a veteran diplomat who has spent over thirty years representing French interests across Africa and Europe, with Dakar being his most strategically sensitive posting to date. Known for his calm demeanor and mastery of behind-the-scenes diplomacy, Delattre plays a key role in maintaining France's longstanding influence in Senegal through military partnerships, development aid, and close cooperation with French firms operating in the region. While Delattre publicly supports the Confederation as a path to regional stability, he is wary of any arrangement that could trigger instability or reduce France's ability to project soft power. He works closely with key corporate allies such as Claire Valmont of S  n  chim to align French commercial priorities with diplomatic strategy.

2. Claire Valmont, CEO of S  n  chim Pesticides and Fertilizers

Claire Valmont is the formidable CEO of S  n  chim, a French-owned agrochemical conglomerate with a near-monopoly on pesticide and fertilizer distribution in Senegal. Born in Marseille to a family of chemical engineers, Valmont was educated at a prestigious British

boarding school—an experience that left her with both a flawless English accent and a lifelong disdain for the British royal family, having once been bullied by one of its more unruly sons. She later studied agribusiness at HEC Paris and rapidly climbed the ranks of France’s agro-industrial elite. Under Valmont’s leadership, Sénéchim expanded aggressively across West Africa, establishing deep ties with Senegalese agricultural ministries and securing exclusive supply contracts across the peanut, cotton, and millet sectors. Though she publicly advocates for food security and modernization, critics argue that her company’s dominance comes at the cost of local autonomy and environmental health. Valmont supports a stable confederation primarily because it promises regulatory consistency and market expansion for Sénéchim—but she is deeply wary of any populist or nationalist policies that could threaten her company’s interests.

3. Dr. Reginald Tiddleton, UK Envoy to The Gambia

Dr. Tiddleton is a relatively young diplomat with around 10 years of experience. After completing his bachelor’s degree from the University of Cape Town, he earned a doctorate in Political Science and Economics from the University of Edinburgh. Within his short career thus far, he has earned a reputation as an able diplomat with a strong track record of negotiating favorable terms for the UK in its decolonisation efforts. He was inspired to join the UK’s foreign service as a first-year student at the University of Cape Town upon hearing then Prime Minister Macmillan’s ‘Wind of Change’ speech in 1960. He is a strong believer in saving the UK money through decolonisation efforts. As a student in a largely segregated South Africa, he was inspired to take up the mantle of improving the lives of the inhabitants of the UK’s former colonies after reading Alan Paton’s ‘Cry, the Beloved Country.’ He is firmly committed to the idea that the UK can bolster its decolonisation efforts while simultaneously ensuring the best possible future for the inhabitants. His posting as the British envoy to The Gambia is the latest in a series of

promotions, and word on the streets is that a successful stint here could lead to a promotion to the much-coveted position of the UK's ambassador to Ghana.

4. Margaret Pamela Smythe, Banjul Socialite

Margaret Smythe was born in Newcastle but followed her mother, a colonial medical officer, to Africa when she was just 5 years old. While serving in South Africa, her mother would meet, fall in love with, and marry William Smythe, a major shareholder in various diamond mining corporations with mines mainly in South Africa and Botswana. Growing up, she fell in love with African wildlife and chose to study zoology at the Imperial College. After graduating, her work took her all over Africa, studying various species and contributing majorly to conservation efforts. Now, she is retired and lives in Banjul, where her wealth and impeccable socialisation skills have earned her the favours of many of The Gambia's rich, wealthy, and well-connected. She now uses her immense familial wealth to contribute to nature and wildlife conservation projects through the Smythe Foundation. Recently, she has launched the Smythe for Humans Foundation, which is committed to enacting policies that will help uplift locals, leading to development and wealth generation. In her free time, she is known to love baking and consuming copious amounts of peanut scones with tea; much to the delight of her many visitors.

5. Babatunde Adebayo, Nigerian Politician

Babatunde Adebayo was born in Lagos, Nigeria, to a prominent Yoruba family with deep ties to both business and politics. After completing his early education at King's College, Lagos, Adebayo went on to study Political Science and Economics at the University of Chicago, where he developed a strong network of international contacts and a reputation for pragmatic diplomacy. Upon returning to Nigeria, he built a real estate empire in Lagos and Abuja, making

him one of the wealthiest private citizens in the country. His wealth and connections have given him the unique ability to “get things done” across borders—particularly when the right incentives are involved. Though officially unaffiliated with either Senegal or The Gambia, Adebayo maintains personal relationships with influential figures in both governments and has positioned himself as an informal power broker in the region. He views the Senegambia Confederation as a potential opportunity to enhance regional stability, but always through a lens that balances Nigeria’s strategic interests with his own. While often seen as a dealmaker, Adebayo’s loyalty ultimately lies with Nigeria’s regional leadership and influence.

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