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GUINEA-BISSAU and CASAMANCE:
INSTABILITY AND STABILIZATION

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1. Introduction

Since 1999, there have been unprecedented changes at the highest level of State in both Senegal and Guinea-Bissau as the groups which held power since independence were overturned: in Senegal by the ballot box and in Guinea-Bissau after a lengthy armed insurrection. We have also seen a complete change of government team in these two countries. The question now is whether these new power groups will be able to meet the huge social expectations, which largely led to their victories. This is an urgent question in Guinea-Bissau, which has suffered dramatically as a result of the conflict. But it is also a pertinent question for Senegal where leaders must settle a separatist conflict, which has been draining the region of Casamance for more than 18 years. The return to violence after a new peace agreement signed in Ziguinchor in March 2001 is an indication that peace is not yet assured. A resolution is urgently required. Not only have the local populations endured long suffering, but also prolonging the conflict could destabilize both Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, which is also implicated. The coming and going of thousands of refugees between Casamance, Guinea-Bissau and the Gambia is the clearest sign of this instability.

2. The Situation in Guinea-Bissau after Africa's Longest Coup d'Etat: The Ghost of General Mané

The 1998 military uprising, led by General Mané, finished 11 months later with the overthrow of President Vieira, bringing to an end the hegemony of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea (Bissau) and Cape Verde (Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde - PAIGC), which had been in power since independence was won 25 years earlier. But General Mané's attempt to check the power of the new President Koumba Yala (as he had managed to check the power of Vieira) failed. The death of Mané re-opened power struggles and created political uncertainty in early 2001, at a time when the state of the country was catastrophic, the State coffers were empty and the border with Senegal was far from stable.

2.1. The Victory of General Mané: Africa's Longest Coup d'Etat¹ (7 June 1998 - 7 May 1999)²

It may seem paradoxical to speak of a coup d'état when the perpetrators always refused to take power. Nevertheless, they overthrew the President and ended 25 years of PAIGC domination.

¹ Sotinel, T., En Guinée-Bissau, après onze mois de rébellion, l'armée a mis en fuite le président Vieira, *Le Monde*, 9 May 1999

² For a more detailed description of this period, see report written by Andrew Manley for UNHCR, Manley, A., *Guinea Bissau/Senegal: War, Civil War and the Casamance Question*, WRITENET for UNHCR/CDR, November 1998 (UNHCR/CDR REF WORLD databases), and articles written by Miguel Martins and Gérard Gaillard. Martins, M., *Le conflit en Guinée-Bissau: chronologie d'une catastrophe*, *L'Afrique politique 1999: entre transitions et conflits*, Paris: Karthala, 1999, pp. 213-18; Gaillard, G., *Guinée-Bissau: un pas douloureux vers la démocratie*, *Afrique contemporaine*, No. 191, 1999, pp. 43-57

It began following the dismissal of General Ansoumane Mané, army Chief of Staff of Guinea-Bissau, who was accused of concealing by neglect a transfer of arms to rebels in Casamance. He was dismissed on 5 June 1998, three days before the report of the parliamentary enquiry was due to be published. When the report was later published, it exonerated Mané and instead accused President Bernardino Vieira ‘Nino’. Many observers saw Mané as a scapegoat, linking his dismissal to Guinea-Bissau’s entry into the Franc zone in that the French and Senegalese may have increased pressure on Vieira to stop the trafficking of arms to Casamance.³

Mané retaliated. On 7 June 1998 in Bissau there was a mutiny. On 9 June a military junta, which declared that it did not want to seize power but to return it to the people, was set up.⁴ That same day, Guinea-Conakry and Senegal responded to a request from President Vieira and sent troops to fight against the insurgents. Officially 2,200 Senegalese and 400 Guineans fought for the loyalists who remained faithful to President Vieira. In fact they had major responsibility for defending him because the mutiny rapidly grew to become a general uprising, reuniting most of the armed forces of Guinea-Bissau⁵ and progressively taking control of most of the country and the capital.

A large part of the population of Bissau took refuge in the north of the country or in neighbouring countries to escape the fighting. As happened during the war of liberation, many sought refuge in Casamance, where most were welcomed by friends or relatives.

2.1.1. Broad Support

The extent of support for Ansoumane Mané revealed the depth of malaise within the army. The military, including several thousand former liberation war fighters, were poorly paid, often in arrears. At the same time many PAIGC officials were getting rich on business deals, some would claim corruptly. But the problem went deeper. Like the rest of the population, the military were subjected to Nino Vieira’s strict budgetary policy in force since the 1980s under the auspices of the IMF: a 50 per cent devaluation of the Peso in 1983, structural adjustment plans, and entry into the Franc zone in 1997 which further raised the cost of living. This situation partially explains the arms trafficking, but there were also political, ideological or ethnic considerations.

There was widespread dissatisfaction: “the current government is extremely unpopular and criticized for economic mismanagement, corruption, high prices and the poverty of its citizens”.⁶ This explains the opposition’s popularity in the first multi-party elections in 1994: in the presidential election Nino Vieira did not secure a victory in the first round and just managed to beat Koumba Yala in the second. Koumba Yala nevertheless kept a low profile during the events of 1998-1999, when he initially restricted himself to denouncing the call for foreign troops and only later called for the resignation of Nino Vieira.

³ Gaillard, p. 45

⁴ *Idem*, p. 46

⁵ There are an estimated 10,000 men in the army (Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile: Guinea-Bissau 1997-98*, London, 1997; *L'état du monde 2001*, Paris: La Découverte, 2001), and also several thousand former liberation war fighters

⁶ Economist Intelligence Unit, p. 24

The dissatisfaction also explains the rivalries dividing the PAIGC, where Nino Vieira was under violent attack, notably from Malam Bacai Sanha.

2.1.2. *External Ramifications*

The intervention of troops from Conakry in Bissau can be seen from two different perspectives. Firstly, there were personal links between generals Vieira and Conté dating back to the liberation war of Guinea-Bissau, but also because of President Conté's interests in Bissau (property investments).⁷ Secondly, from a political perspective, the Government of President Lansana Conté had been threatened by a mutiny in January 1996, and challenged over the arrest and detention of opposition leader, Alpha Condé. He had sought the help of his friend Nino Vieira, giving Vieira the right to expect reciprocity when he needed it.

The official aim of the Senegalese intervention, known as "Operation Gabou",⁸ was to defend a democratically elected government, in line with secret defence agreements of 1975 and 1990. But when these agreements were later published, it was clear that they did not allow for such extraterritorial intervention.⁹ It was clear to all observers that the intervention was directly linked to the conflict in Casamance and that the Senegalese army had other aims: firstly, they wished to avoid a government in Bissau which was associated with the Casamance rebellion, and secondly, they wanted to outflank the rebel fighters of the Democratic Forces of Casamance Movement (Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance - MFDC). The rebellion in Casamance soon emerged as the predominant concern for the Senegalese. Several months later they refused to withdraw from Guinea-Bissau unless an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) intervention force (which Senegal tried in vain to be part of) was promised for deployment along their southern border, a condition which, of course, had no connection with the defence of the Guinea-Bissau Government.

Although they expected an easy victory, as had happened in Banjul in 1980 and 1981, the Senegalese soldiers were confronted with unexpected resistance by the insurgents.¹⁰ In a country which had paid dearly for its independence, the intervention of foreign troops unleashed a strong patriotic response increasing the unpopularity of President Vieira. This response built upon other issues which had been a source of contention between the two countries. For example, the coolness of Senghor's resolutely pro-western Senegal towards the PAIGC, a Marxist-inspired anti-imperialist

⁷ *La lettre du continent*, 20 May 1999

⁸ The title is paradoxical as Gabou was the name of a former empire which disappeared in the nineteenth century and which straddled Guinea-Bissau, Casamance and the Gambia; it was one of the most favoured arguments used by Casamançais separatists to challenge their region being part of Senegal and to advance the idea of "the union of the three Bs": Banjul (the Gambia), Bignona (Casamance), Bissau (Guinea-Bissau). Between 1982 and 1989 this project had an ephemeral existence in the form of the Senegambia Confederation. Cf. Gautron, J.-C., *La Confédération de la Sénégalie: entre l'union et le protectorat?*, *L'année africaine*, Paris: Pédone, 1982, and, more recently, Sall, E. and Salla, H., *Senegal and the Gambia: the Politics of Integration*, and Hughes, A., *L'effondrement de la fédération de la Sénégalie*, in Diop, M.-C. (ed.), *Le Sénégal et ses voisins*, Dakar: Sociétés-Espaces-Temps, 1994

⁹ Gaillard, p. 52

¹⁰ The decision was reportedly imposed on President Diouf by army chiefs who were exasperated by the resistance of Casamançais rebels. (Un accord "secret" d'assistance mutuelle. Les généraux à l'origine de l'intervention auraient fait un mauvais calcul, *Libération*, 11 July 1998)

national liberation movement, supported by communist countries, or more recently, the territorial disagreement over off-shore oil deposits which was settled in Senegal's favour.¹¹ Part of the population despised the rapprochement between Nino Vieira and Senegal's President Abdou Diouf started in 1995 and which intensified with Guinea-Bissau's entry into the Franc zone. This was especially so because it rode on the back of the rebellion in Casamance with an attempted joint manoeuvre by the two armies to organize a combing operation along the border area and granting the Senegalese army the right to pursue people on Guinea-Bissau territory. In addition, part of Guinea-Bissau's liberation army had used Casamance as one of its rear supply bases (with Guinea) in its struggle against the Portuguese and had developed links with the population. Many Casamançais, as well as many Gambians, like Ansoumane Mané, fought in the ranks of the PAIGC. Some then moved to Guinea-Bissau after independence, taking Guinea-Bissau nationality and occasionally playing important roles in the State apparatus. The fight against MFDC fighters therefore seemed to many like a betrayal. Conversely, support for the Casamançais rebellion seemed self-evident. It was almost as if the Junta of Guinea-Bissau was reuniting with the ideals of the liberation struggle by pursuing the double aim of national liberation and social progress. This essentially explains not only the 1998 uprising, but also the aftermath: if Nino Vieira had legality, the Junta and its leader, Ansoumane Mané, seemed to benefit from a real popular legitimacy.

Furthermore, the Junta benefited from the support of Casamançais separatists. Although they denied it at first, the MFDC recognized that Salif Sadio and other rebel leaders did send men to fight alongside the insurgents, and even stated that they had played a prominent role.¹² It is possible to see this intervention in Guinea-Bissau as a logical extension of the armed struggle against the Senegalese army and its supporters. There is also an element of exchange involved: while this gave the rebel fighters an opportunity to thank their supporters from Guinea-Bissau, it was also a chance for them to obtain more weapons.

2.1.3. *The Junta's Victory*

Two cease-fire agreements were signed in quick succession. The first on 26 July 1998 under the auspices of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (Comunidade de Paises de Lingua Portuguesa - CPLP), which appeared indulgent towards the Junta and was the CPLP's first public intervention on the international scene.¹³ The second was signed on 26 August 1998 in Cape Verde under the auspices of the CPLP and ECOWAS - though ECOWAS was quite hostile to the Junta. But the civil war resumed in October. It was not until 1 November 1998, that the peace accords of Abuja, Nigeria, were signed under the auspices of ECOWAS. These accords granted victory to the Junta, provided for the withdrawal of foreign troops and the deployment of ECOMOG (the ECOWAS intervention force) contingents, and named a government of national unity which was given the responsibility of organizing presidential and legislative elections before the end of 1999. This marked the beginning of a dangerous period of cohabitation between the two powers, namely the President and the Junta. The Junta, strengthened by its victory on the ground,

¹¹ See Marut, J.-C., *Après avoir perdu l'Est, la Guinée-Bissau perd-elle aussi le nord?*, in *Lusotopie 1996*, Paris: Karthala, 1996, pp. 81- 92

¹² Mamadou Sané, Deputy Secretary General of the MFDC. Personal interviews, Paris, 1999

¹³ See Cahen, M., *Enfin la Communauté?*, in *Lusotopie 1996*, Paris: Karthala, 1996, pp. 11-14, about the birth of the CPLP

managed to ensure that its candidate, Francisco Fadul, was accepted as Head of the transitional Government.

2.1.4. *The Transition (1 November 1998 - 7 May 1999)*

Fadul had hardly taken office when he made his position clear, taking a hostile stand against Senegal and its supporters on a number of counts:

- he accused the French military of fighting on the side of loyalist forces and their foreign supporters (Senegal and Guinea) by bombarding Junta positions;¹⁴
- the Prime Minister of Guinea Bissau ignored Senegal when making his first diplomatic contacts and tightened links with Portugal, whom he thanked for their “active solidarity” during the conflict by reactivating former defence agreements and inviting the Portuguese Prime Minister to Bissau;¹⁵
- lastly, and most importantly, Francisco Fadul stated he was in favour of a referendum in Casamance, which Dakar saw as interfering in internal Senegalese affairs.¹⁶

The attitude of the Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau fed the controversy over the implication of France and Portugal in the conflict, respectively in support of Vieira and Mané. The rivalry between the two men reflected the Franco-Portuguese rivalry which was accentuated by Guinea-Bissau’s membership of both the community of French speaking countries and the CPLP. The establishment of good relations between the new strong men of Guinea-Bissau and Portugal gathered pace counteracting the rapprochement with France which Vieira had been working towards for several years.¹⁷

2.1.5. *A Failure for Senegal*

The last Senegalese soldiers left Bissau in March, as ECOMOG contingents were still arriving with French logistical support. The triumphal welcome the soldiers received in Dakar cannot hide the reality: they had achieved none of their objectives. Even though Nino Vieira was still officially Head of State, the Junta held the real power; ECOMOG was not stationed at the frontier and the rebel fighters from Casamance returned to their bases with more arms. And, to complete this picture, the conclusions of the Guinea-Bissau parliamentary commission of inquiry, published on 13 April, exonerated General Mané and implicated President Vieira. The independent Senegalese daily newspaper, *Walfadjri* asked: “An intervention for nothing?”¹⁸ about an operation which lasted 10 months, from 9 June 1998 to 15 March 1999, and had mobilized around a quarter of the Senegalese army.

¹⁴ This argument is pursued in Vershave, F.-X., *Noir silence: qui arrêtera la Françafrique?*, Paris: Les arènes, 2000, pp. 71- 9

¹⁵ Guinée-Bissau: entre Paris et Lisbonne, *Walfadjri*, 21 April 1999

¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁷ See Koudawo, F., Guinée-Bissau: la carte francophone, in *L’Afrique politique 1997: Revendications populaires et recompositions politiques*, Paris: Karthala, 1997, pp. 213-28

¹⁸ Une intervention pour rien, *Walfadjri*, 15 April 1999

2.1.6. *The Fall of Nino Vieira (7 May 1999)*

Nino Vieira left power in the same way he had seized it in 1980: following a coup d'état. This resulted from his refusal to disarm the Presidential Guard, as required by the Abuja Accords.¹⁹ The Junta gained total power and controlled the whole country after fighting in which 263 people were injured and 80 died.²⁰ The fallen President sought refuge in the Portuguese Embassy and was granted political asylum in Portugal, leaving Guinea-Bissau on 10 June.²¹ The Presidential Palace was pillaged and burnt by the crowd and the diplomatic headquarters of Senegal, France, the European Union and the United Nations were ransacked and/or burnt by Junta soldiers. ECOMOG contingents looked on at events which made their presence useless. The day the uprising started against Vieira, 7 June, became the new National Day, replacing 15 November.²² The uprising had lasted exactly 11 months, from 7 June 1998 to 7 May 1999.

The overthrow of Vieira simply completed a process begun 11 months earlier. Now the Junta had all the cards in its hands. As it did not want to hold power, the military left that to civilians but nevertheless intended to remain in control; Mané said he wanted to play the role of arbiter.²³ Malam Bacai Sanha, President of the National Assembly who was seen as the leader of opposition to Nino Vieira within the PAIGC, was named interim President of the Republic pending new elections. Francisco Fadul remained as Head of Government. While Ansoumane Mané was promoted to Army General, Verissimo Seabra Corea, the number two of the Junta, was nominated General Chief of Army Staff. On 7 June a new constitution was adopted.

2.2. The Elimination of General Mané: 2000 - 2001

2.2.1. *The victory of Koumba Yala*

The new situation seemed quite similar to the previous one with a junta trying to reconcile rule of law and its control over political power. Also, the presidential elections brought to a head two major questions:

- Which of the candidates - Sanha or Yala - would win?
- What sort of relationship would the new President have with the Junta?

On the eve of the 28 November 1999 dual presidential and legislative election, the Social Renewal Party (Partido da Renovação Social - PRS),²⁴ led by Koumba Yala, vigorously rejected the Junta's attempt to force candidates to accept a deal which would grant the Junta special consultative status.

¹⁹ Putsch surprise en Guinée-Bissau, *Libération*, 8 May 1999

²⁰ En Guinée-Bissau, après onze mois de rébellion, l'armée a mis en fuite le président Vieira, *Le Monde*, 9 May 1999

²¹ Portugal was one of few countries which did not condemn the coup d'état. It was condemned by most countries in the sub-region and by ECOWAS, but also by the UN and the OAU.

²² Nino Vieira overthrew President Luis Cabral on 15 November 1980.

²³ Agence France Presse, La junte assure toujours la réalité du pouvoir, 13 May 1999

²⁴ Reuters, Power Alternates in Guinea-Bissau, Army and Issue, 22 January 2000

The 28 November ballot put Koumba Yala ahead of Malam Bacai Sanha in the presidential election, though the PRS won the legislative election without gaining an absolute majority in the Assembly. In the second round of presidential elections on 16 January 2000 Koumba Yala won a crushing victory (72 per cent of the votes) over his opponent. For the first time since independence, the PAIGC lost office; the arrival of new blood had not been sufficient to save it. A new generation of leaders who had not taken part in the war for the liberation of Guinea-Bissau came to power.

In his inaugural speech, Koumba Yala called for national unity and gave priority to the fight against corruption and poverty and the defence of human rights. Internationally, he intended to “leave behind the situation created by the war” by developing “friendly links and cooperation” with Senegal and Guinea-Conakry, which had sent troops in support of Vieira.²⁵ Senegal encouraged this will for reconciliation when shortly afterwards it accepted a revision of the agreement on the exploitation of the economic zone’s resources in Guinea-Bissau’s favour (Guinea-Bissau received 20 per cent instead of 15 per cent of the zone’s resources).²⁶ Finally, the nomination of a member of the President’s party, Caetano N’Tchama, to be Head of Government replacing Francisco Fadul, the Junta’s man, completed the new government team. Caetano N’Tchama led a coalition government comprising the PRS and the Guinea-Bissau Resistance-Bafatá Movement (Resistência da Guiné-Bissau - Movimento Bafatá - RGB-MB)

2.2.2. Tension Between Mané and Yala

Ansoumane Mané “took note” of the election results and wished the new President good luck.²⁷ In fact he did not renounce his role, even though the Junta was divided on this issue.²⁸ To some extent, it was the same tension which had existed in 1998 and 1999 between General Mané and President Vieira and Mané had resolved that to his advantage by eliminating Vieira. This time, the reverse was to happen. Was Mané pushed into making a mistake? Or did he make an error of judgement by underestimating divisions within the army? It is always possible that he simply stood by his position, rejecting any compromise. Five ministerial posts were allocated to military personnel, but he refused the ministerial post of advisor which Yala offered him. The European Union declared it was “concerned about the climate of tension and insecurity” which reigned in Guinea-Bissau. The arrest of journalists, a former leader of the Guinean (Bissau) Human Rights League (Liga Guineense de Direitos Humanos - LGDH) and an opposition party leader, provide ample evidence.

²⁵ Agence France Presse, Guinée-Bissau: Kumba Yala prête serment, 18 February 2000

²⁶ Agence de Presse Sénégalaise, Sénégal - Guinée-Bissau: Les deux pays révisent le protocole de partage de leurs ressources pétrolières, 31 August 2000

²⁷ Le général Mané rassure Kumba Yala, *Sud*, 26 January 2000

²⁸ Poursuite des tractations pour désigner un nouveau chef de l’État en Guinée-Bissau, *Le Monde*, 11 May 1999

However, some observers saw the tension at the border with Senegal, where incidents were becoming ever more frequent (the border was closed in September), as the only card the Junta had left to play to put pressure on the institutions in Bissau.²⁹ They also questioned what real power President Yala had over the army.³⁰ The authorities in Guinea-Bissau rapidly re-armed after the losses caused by the war (buying military materiel from Ukraine and China, for example), provoking the Senegalese President, Abdoulaye Wade, to seek weapons from France.³¹ In October, President Yala issued a warning to Casamançais separatists that they would not be allowed to use Guinea-Bissau territory for their guerrilla activities against Senegal.³²

2.2.3. The Elimination of Mané (November 2000)

The crisis broke on 20 November 2000 when General Mané rejected new army appointments and named himself General Chief of Army Staff to replace General Seabra. On 24 November, there were armed attacks against Seabra, his former colleague who had become a supporter of Koumba Yala. Thousands of people again fled the capital.

Faced with the possible overthrow of Koumba Yala, the Senegalese press panicked. Some of them emphasized the responsibilities of the international community, stating that by maintaining an embargo against a country on the edge of starvation, the United Nations and the European Union seemed to have created the conditions for the return of the military.³³ On the other hand, some of the Guinea-Bissau opposition, starting with the PAIGC, welcomed the General's initiative.³⁴

However, these events were short-lived. Despite the Bishop of Bissau's mediation efforts, Ansoumane Mané was surrounded by soldiers 40 km to the north of Bissau on 30 November as he was trying to flee, and killed in unclear circumstances (there are different explanations). Observers are far from convinced by the official version that he died trying to resist arrest, and the homage Koumba Yala paid to him did not put an end to the questions. All that is clear is that his disappearance removed a threat to Koumba Yala, to Senegal ("one less thorn in our side", said a Senegalese journalist) and to France which had much to fear from the links between Ansoumane Mané and the Casamançais rebellion.³⁵

However, the elimination of Mané did not stop Salif Sadio's rebel fighters maintaining pressure in Casamance despite new agreements reached between the Senegalese Government and the civilian wing of the rebellion.

²⁹ Pour la deuxième fois en une semaine, le président Wade fait faux bond à Bissau, *Sud*, 28 April 2000

³⁰ Frontières, *Sud*, 30 June 2000

³¹ Agence France Presse, Abdoulaye Wade à Paris, 22 May 2000

³² Le président Kumba Yala lance un avertissement aux séparatistes casamançais, *Sud*, 20 October 2000

³³ Le syndrome Mané, *Sud*, 23 November 2000

³⁴ Guinée-Bissau: le gouvernement dénonce le coup de force de Mané, *Le Soleil*, 22 November 2000

³⁵ Le syndrome Mané; Fin de cavale et ... d'un mythe, *Sud*, 25 November 2000

2.2.4. *The New Fragile Government*

Koumba Yala felt confident for the first time: “At last Koumba Yala is Head of State”, said the headline of a Senegalese newspaper.³⁶ During the incidents the authorities arrested numerous military officers and political leaders in Guinea-Bissau, as well as Casamançais fighters, and the President reiterated his determination that Guinea-Bissau would not be used as a rear base for the Casamance rebellion. In January 2001, the army launched an offensive against those loyal to Salif Sadio, who was protected in his base in Senegal, just near the border. Officially these attacks were reported to have been effective, because at the end of the month the authorities claimed 30 rebels had been killed.³⁷ However, five months later, Salif Sadio was still fighting. Even though the involvement of Guinea-Bissau in this Casamance conflict is not new, the level of involvement is. President Yala had brought the Casamance question to the heart of politics in Guinea-Bissau by linking his fate with the struggle against the rebel fighters.

The situation became more complex in late May when some 1,500 Casamançais refugees were expelled from Guinea-Bissau by the army after some of their homes had been burnt and their cattle stolen.³⁸ They had been living in villages close to the border and were accused of supporting the rebellion. The Guinea-Bissau authorities denied this but the refugees confirmed the facts on arrival in Ziguinchor.³⁹ They had been brought together in San Domingos and handed over to the Senegalese army at the border. Thousands of others were reportedly ready to leave if they had been able (there are believed to be 20,000 Casamançais refugees in Guinea-Bissau).

During this period, in a country which is among the 15 poorest in the world in terms of their GDP per capita, the people have been impatiently waiting to see improvements to their daily lives. There have been strikes in the civil service as the unions criticize the Government for not listening to their demands, particularly relating to the payment of salary arrears.⁴⁰ And, the majority of the population still lives in extreme poverty.⁴¹

Koumba Yala is facing a long-term political crisis. In January 2001 the RGB-MB rejoined the opposition after a Government reshuffle which favoured the PRS and so the Government no longer has a majority in the Assembly.⁴² In March the PRS withdrew its support from the Prime Minister. In April the opposition demanded the removal of Faustino Imbali, who had just been appointed on 26 March to replace him.⁴³

³⁶ Mané mort, Kumba Yalla enfin chef d’État, *Sud*, 14 December 2000

³⁷ Agence France Presse, 30 rebelles du MFDC tués par l’armée bissau-guinéenne, 29 January 2001

³⁸ Crise casamançaise: Bissau expulse plus de 1500 réfugiés, *Sud*, 26 May 2001

³⁹ Telephone interview with a person involved with the reception of the refugees

⁴⁰ Le Premier ministre contesté, les institutions en crise, *Sud*, 15 March 2001

⁴¹ Economist Intelligence Unit, p. 27

⁴² Guinée-Bissau: Kumba Yala installe un nouveau gouvernement, *Sud*, 24 January 2001

⁴³ Agence France Presse, L’opposition demande le départ du Premier ministre tout juste nommé, 4 April 2001

The crisis was resolved in May when President Yala threatened to dissolve the Assembly. The Government's programme, and its budget, were finally agreed when the opposition abstained. The social sector, army and presidential expenses were to constitute 82 per cent of Government expenditure.⁴⁴ The intention is to drastically reduce the excessive number of people within the administration, where thousands of non-existent civil servants have apparently been counted, and within the army, where 5,000 civil war veterans are due to be demobilized.⁴⁵ Foreign aid will provide 80 per cent of the country's income: Guinea-Bissau will remain an assisted country, living on international support.

The lack of resources, the weakness of the state and the fragility of the Government make for an uncertain future in Guinea-Bissau. Fear of new troubles has resurfaced.⁴⁶ The army is reportedly deeply divided. Alongside the divisions between supporters and enemies of Ansumane Mané, there are apparently also ethnic and religious divides.

One wonders to what extent this fragility might lie behind the visits by the Head of State to neighbouring countries. In mid-May the President of Guinea-Bissau toured the sub-region, visiting Guinea-Conakry, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mali and back to Guinea, where he offered support to President Conté who is facing serious problems on his southern border.

2.3. Conclusion

These events show how the Junta led by General Mané was burdened with social and political demands which had not been met. It seems that his elimination has not only not solved the problems, but has created new ones. There is a risk of new confrontation between the civilian power and the military, and a risk of confrontation within the army which appears very divided. The only certainty is that Koumba Yala seems weakened by the experience. It is only the divisions among his enemies which keep him in power. It is in this context that in May 2001 the President of Guinea-Bissau travelled to meet his counterparts in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mali and Guinea-Conakry.

⁴⁴ Agence France Presse, Adoption du budget 2001 de la Guinée-Bissau, 29 May 2001

⁴⁵ Today, the army is reported to number 25,000 men, about half of whom are very old and veterans of the liberation war, and the rest are young volunteers who were largely unemployed and became committed to General Mané in June 1998.

⁴⁶ Casamançais refugees have confirmed that people are taking measures to prepare for a possible new conflict. Private source, Ziguinchor.

3. The Situation in Casamance - One of Africa's Longest Conflicts

3.1. Introduction

In Senegal it was Abdoulaye Wade's victory in the presidential election of January 2000, followed 18 months later by a large victory for his supporters in the legislative elections, which put an end to President Diouf's 20 years in office and to the Socialist Party's (Parti socialiste - PS) domination in the country since independence in 1962. Having campaigned on the theme of change, Abdoulaye Wade has to meet high expectations. These include social expectations in a country where good economic performance has hardly impacted on the poor (two thirds of Senegalese reportedly have an income of less than four French Francs a day). But there is also an expectation that the Casamance problem will be solved, something which opposition leader Wade, in 1991, promised would be done in a few weeks if he were to come to power. Such a solution seems urgent for several reasons. Even though it is far from being the most deadly (the number of dead is reportedly around 2,000), this conflict which has lasted since 1982 is one of the longest on the African continent. It has caused tens of thousands of people to flee into the towns or into neighbouring countries. It is a destabilizing factor not only for Senegal, but also for its neighbours, Guinea-Bissau and the Gambia, where it plays on internal divisions.⁴⁷ It strangles almost the entire economy of a region which is considered to be potentially one of the richest in Senegal. And, finally, it is associated with the development of banditry and criminality.

3.2. Eighteen and a Half Years of Conflict⁴⁸

The Casamançais rebellion began in 1982 in Ziguinchor as an extension of spontaneous popular agitation. People were challenging the privileges accorded by the authorities to those from outside the region at the expense of indigenous people such as the expropriation of peripheral urban and coastal land, fishing rights, commercial forestry rights and the allocation of official posts. This was fed both by feelings of superiority on the part of those from the North, who regarded their Southern countrymen as backward forest people, and by the feeling among Casamançais that they were different from the Senegalese (but conversely close to those from Guinea-Bissau), a feeling reinforced by the separation afforded by the Gambia.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ For a global overview, see Marut, J.-C., Le dessous des cartes casamançaises, in Barbier-Wiesser, F.-G. (ed.), *Comprendre la Casamance*, Paris: Karthala, 1994, pp. 193-211

⁴⁸ For the period 1982-1998, this paragraph is based on Marut, J.-C., *La question de Casamance: une analyse géopolitique*, Paris: Université Paris 8 - St Denis, 1999 (Doctoral thesis in geo-politics), Part I. For the period 1998-2001, see Marut, J.-C., *Géopolitique de la question casamançaise*, Paris: Karthala (forthcoming).

⁴⁹ Although most are hostile to the idea of independence, Casamançais activists are critical of what has become of their region. See Délégation des Cadres casamançais élargie, *Memorandum relatif aux événements de Ziguinchor* (December 1982 and 1983), 1984 (not published.). Consult also, Diatta, N., *Le prêtre et les députés: lettre d'un prêtre catholique aux députés de Casamance*, in Barbier-Wiesser, F.-G. (ed.) *Comprendre la Casamance: chronique d'une intégration contrastée*, Paris: Karthala, 1994. And the well-documented analysis made by an opposition political party, the Democratic League/Labour Party Movement (Ligue démocratique/Mouvement pour le parti du travail - LD/MPT), *Casamance: la crise*, Dakar: Jallarbi, 1990

The MFDC, which was created in 1982 after a meeting between the group from Ziguinchor (including Augustin Diamacoune and Sanoune Bodian) and those in exile in Paris (Mamadou Sané), proposed a simple response to the dissatisfaction: independence. This argument, which was essentially developed by a Catholic priest, Father Augustin Diamacoune Senghor, is based on the belief that Casamance never formed part of the French colony of Senegal and was therefore improperly annexed at the time of Senegal's independence.⁵⁰ The advocates of this view, who were mostly teachers and high school pupils, had often been involved in land disputes. The grassroots members, as seen from the lists of people arrested, is a reflection of local society, consisting largely of peasants, fishermen and waged labourers.

The first public MFDC demonstration was also to be their last. Whether it was peaceful as the supporters of independence claimed, or aggressive, as the Government claimed, the march of 20 December 1982 in Ziguinchor, the regional capital, ended tragically. The security forces fired on the crowd killing several people. This was to be the beginning of a long period of repression against the whole Diola community, which was seen as suspect. Casamançais activists in the ruling Socialist Party, even those living in Dakar, were not spared suspicion. But the event had an even more serious consequence as those demanding independence opted for armed struggle. It was former soldiers from the Senegalese army, and even some from the French army, who from 1983 organized the underground resistance. The rebel fighters were young people, mostly from peasant families, who had abandoned school early and had few job prospects. Their motivation was always the same: firstly, and almost unanimously, revenge for the violence inflicted by the Senegalese military on their families, and, secondly, the unfair treatment they felt they suffered.

Contrary to the wishes of the movement's leaders, the uprising remained largely limited within the Ziguinchor region, lower Casamance, the country of the Diola. This undeniably gave the conflict an ethnic connotation which the authorities used to discredit it. However, despite having a Church figure at its helm, the rebellion was not at all a religious movement. From the grassroots to the summit, it reflected Casamançais society, primarily Muslim, including the region of Ziguinchor where as well as Muslims there are some Christians and Animists. Contrary to the image portrayed in the media, it was not at all a revolt by the Animist and Christian South against the Muslim North.

⁵⁰ None of his documents has been published. Refer to his rejection of an historic analysis which he himself had commissioned, Diamacoune Senghor, A., *Casamance, pays du refus: réponse à Monsieur Jacques Charpy*, Ziguinchor, 1995 (not published). See also Charpy, J., *Casamance et Sénégal au temps de la colonisation française*, *Le Soleil* [Dakar], 22 December 1993; Sénégal, Ministère de la Communication, *Témoignage historique de la France sur la Casamance: Discours prononcé par Jacques Charpy, Conservateur du Patrimoine, Ziguinchor, le 21 décembre 1993*, Dakar: Imprimerie Saint-Paul, 1994

The rebel fighters went on the offensive in 1990 when they attacked military targets throughout the region of Ziguinchor. The offensive coincided with border confrontation between the armies of Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, adding credibility to the theory of a plot against Senegal.⁵¹ This marked the beginning of the civilian exodus into neighbouring countries. In 1991, the first cease-fire agreement was signed in Guinea-Bissau. In 1992, hostilities resumed between the Southern Front and the army, while Sidy Badji and the Northern Front led by Kamougaye Diatta laid down their arms. This was the first split within the movement. The fighting was restricted to the left bank of the River Casamance, between the river and the border with Guinea-Bissau, in the Department of Oussouye. A second cease-fire agreement was signed in 1993 in Ziguinchor, but did not lead to serious negotiations.

The conflict resumed vigorously in 1995, focusing on and stretching towards the east along the border with Guinea-Bissau. The situation on the ground was also worsening. Both sides denied any responsibility for the proliferation of mines (both anti-tank and anti-personnel). Acts of banditry began and they were probably not solely the responsibility of rebels living insecurely in the bush. There was also an increase in abductions and torture committed by the Senegalese security forces, according to human rights organizations such as the African Conference for the Defence of Human Rights (Rencontre africaine pour la défense des droits de l'homme - RADDHO) and Amnesty International, which at the same time denounced abuses committed by the rebels against civilians.⁵²

From 1997 the MFDC became further divided, firstly within their political wing and then within the military wing. On 19 August 1997, at Mandina Mankagn, on the southern outskirts of Ziguinchor, rebels killed 25 Senegalese soldiers. This serious setback for the Senegalese army had two important consequences which marked a turning point in the history of the conflict:

- militarily, an intensification of repression by the Senegalese army;
- politically, the splintering of the civilian wing of the MFDC.

Father Diamacoune's four lieutenants were forced to leave the Maison des Œuvres catholiques (Catholic Centre) in Ziguinchor. One of them, Sarani Manga Badiane, disappeared from his home after being abducted by men in uniform. The army blames his death on the rebels. But both the Senegalese press, even though they are hostile to the independence cause, and the majority of citizens of Ziguinchor believe the military were responsible for the death.⁵³ Amnesty International also implicated the Senegalese army.

⁵¹ See in particular, Faye, O., *La crise casamançaise et les relations du Sénégal avec la Gambie et la Guinée-Bissau (1989-1992)*, in Diop, M.-C. (ed.), *Le Sénégal et ses voisins*, Dakar: Sociétés-Espaces-Temps, 1994, pp. 189-212

⁵² Amnesty International, *La terreur en Casamance*, Paris, 1998. Senegal was first challenged by Amnesty International in 1990, Amnesty International, *La torture au Sénégal: le cas de la Casamance*, London, 1990. See the Senegalese Government's responses, *Les faits en Casamance: le droit contre la violence*, Dakar, 1991, and *La vérité sur la Casamance*, Dakar, 1998

⁵³ Sotinel, T., *La Casamance souffre du regain de violence entre les indépendantistes et l'armée sénégalaise*, *Le Monde*, 1 October 1997

Father Diamacoune's three other lieutenants (Edmond Bora, Sanoune Bodian and Mamadou Diémé) were forced into exile, in the Gambia or in Guinea-Bissau.

The destruction of the movement's local leadership created a new situation. The presence of the four advisors as official representatives of the rebel fighters in Father Diamacoune's residence while he was under house arrest, ensured that contact was maintained between the rebellion on the one hand and the Government and the various mediators on the other. They also ensured contact between the different components of the movement, not only between the armed wing (the rebel fighters) and the civilian wing, but also between the branches of the civilian wing. Thanks to the mediation of the French Ambassador, they had been able to meet the external wing of the MFDC in Paris with the aim of ending internal divisions to facilitate negotiations. As a result of their links with the rebel fighters and the movement's second in command, Mamadou Sané, exiled in Paris, they were seen as "hard-liners". In fact, they probably reflected no more than the dominant feeling within the movement. It was an important turning point because the legitimacy of decisions taken by Father Diamacoune, who now became isolated, was to be questioned even more by the movement's "hard-liners", as he condemned abuses committed by some rebel fighters and as he gradually distanced himself from the armed struggle.

From 1998, the events in Guinea-Bissau changed the picture. The main rebel leader, Salif Sadio, who had returned strengthened by the experience, escaped Father Diamacoune's authority but became weakened by the elimination of his ally, General Mané in Guinea-Bissau. This resulted in fighting in early 2001 on Guinea-Bissau territory between Salif Sadio and supporters of Léopold Sagna, whom Father Diamacoune wanted to put in charge of the rebel fighters. The movement of some of Salif Sadio's men into the Department of Bignona changed the conflict's centre of gravity towards the Gambian frontier.

In a region where no point is more than 50 km from a frontier, these frontiers become ever more important when trying to reach a good understanding of the conflict. There is a total of more than 700 km of frontier which is easy to cross, which gives protection not only to Casamançais rebels but also to refugees and traffickers. These frontiers are certainly not the cause of the conflict, but they make its prolongation much more likely. In addition to the material resources of the area and its people, there are also the political, economic and military resources relating to the proximity of the frontier.

3.3. A Region in a Stranglehold

Tens of thousands of people have had to abandon their homes. Many villages have been abandoned, especially those along the frontier with Guinea-Bissau. Insecurity has partially stopped the movement of people and goods. The sales of agricultural produce (in particular palm wine and oil) have fallen. Tourism, which had invigorated the regional economy since the 1970s, is now only possible on the beaches around Cap Skirring. Many small inland tourist villages have been deserted. Industrial activity, which was already weak, has diminished. Fish and prawn freezing units in Ziguinchor are working at a reduced rate.

The reduction in economic activity leads to less income for local people. At the same time, it reduces the capacity of people to welcome refugees from Guinea-Bissau or displaced people from the border area. The recent expulsion of Casamançais refugees by the army of Guinea-Bissau can only aggravate the situation.⁵⁴ Most of them come from the border zones and so they cannot go back to their villages as there is still no security. Security requires demining operations which cannot begin while the conflict continues. Thousands of mines planted by rebels or the military for their own protection prevent the resumption of any activity in the border area with Guinea-Bissau.

At the same time, the conflict has facilitated the development of cross-border trafficking which attracts many players, both rebels and non-rebels. Struggles for control of these lucrative illegal trades have become a new source of rivalry. The production of cannabis has increased enormously (mostly grown in the area of Diouloulou, in the Department of Bignona) and it feeds a trade with the Gambia and Dakar.⁵⁵ Cashew nut production in Balantacounda, to the east of Ziguinchor, has also boomed in recent years and battles over control of their export to Guinea-Bissau have been bloody. Cattle rustling is not exclusive to this region, but here it is on a large scale. The rebel-controlled share in these activities allows them to buy arms or even rent them from soldiers in Guinea-Bissau, who in turn make up their earnings from this trafficking. These weapons, which freely circulate throughout West Africa, are abundant because of their low cost.

A parallel economy has developed on the back of these events, which is very lucrative and would be jeopardized by an end to hostilities. This is certainly one reason why the conflict continues.

3.4. Divisions within the MFDC⁵⁶

3.4.1. The Political Wing

In theory the political wing alone is entitled to represent the movement and to take decisions. It is led by Father Augustin Diamacoune Senghor, its Secretary General, a Catholic priest born in 1928 and a former supporter of Léopold Sédar Senghor (who led Senegal to independence in 1962). Later, Father Diamacoune became strongly opposed to President Senghor who he believed had betrayed Casamance. Father Diamacoune, who is often described as the “charismatic leader” of the independence movement, is the spokesperson rather than the overall leader. Beyond his judicial and historical arguments, the basis of his discourse is the theology of “inculturation” by which the Catholic Church tries to root itself in local cultures. It also, doubtless unconsciously, relates to liberation theology, which includes social and political struggle, as he repeatedly states that “there cannot be peace without truth

⁵⁴ Agence France Presse, Un millier de réfugiés casamançais expulsés du nord de la Guinée-Bissau, 24 May 2001

⁵⁵ On this issue see reports by the Observatoire géopolitique des drogues, especially the 1994 report, *Étude régionale sur le trafic, la production et la consommation de drogues dans les pays d’Afrique de l’Ouest*, Paris, 1994, pp. 135-56

⁵⁶ For an historical perspective on the divisions, see Marut, *Géopolitique*

and justice”.⁵⁷ Since 1993, Father Diamacoune has been living under house arrest in Ziguinchor. He now has political advisors personally chosen by him:

- his brother, Bertrand, one of the rare civilian members to have followed Sidy Badji when the Northern Front seceded in 1991-1992. As such, he is one of those jointly referred to as “repentants”. His rapprochement with Father Diamacoune coincided with the renewal of links between Diamacoune and Sidy Badji from 1997 onwards. Since the new disagreements with Sidy Badji in 2001, he has stayed with Father Diamacoune;
- Bourama Faye Badji, a former member of the pro-regionalist MFDC from 1947, who went over to the PS and who has never, it seems, belonged to the pro-independence MFDC, and only appeared under the title of “eminent Casamançais” when he signed the first cease-fire agreement;
- Father Diamacoune also relies on one of his nephews, Laurent Diamacoune, who is based in the Gambia.

The National Bureau of the MFDC was reorganized in early 2001 and features a number of innovations:

- unlike the bodies in charge until 1997, in which only movement “hard-liners“ sat, it reflects (at least in part) a broad range of viewpoints within the MFDC. It includes both the inflexible Mamadou “Nkrumah” Sané and the moderate Jean-Marie François Biagui. Between these two extremes, men like Ousmane Tamba try to reconcile firmness with openness;
- as they all live abroad, its four members cannot be harassed by the Senegalese authorities;
- for the first time the post of Deputy Secretary General is shared: Mamadou “Nkrumah” Sané, exiled in Paris since 1991, was re-installed in the post from which he was dismissed; Ousmane Tamba, a former Senegalese soldier and now an IT engineer in Switzerland, makes his debut (he organizes the website of the movement’s newspaper);
- the spokesperson of the movement is a previously unknown young student aged 28, Ansoumane Badji, who lives in Lisbon where he is studying literature;
- lastly, the new official responsible for external relations is Jean-Marie François Biagui, an educationalist living in Lyons who has been a long-standing opponent of Mamadou Sané.⁵⁸

But this reorganization remains a formality, with each person happily ignorant of what the others are doing and possibly ignorant of the Secretary General’s statements. “Nkrumah” Sané still considers himself head of external affairs, and completely ignores decisions made by Father Diamacoune, whom he sees as a prisoner. It seems that most of the foreign sections are faithful to him.⁵⁹ In fact, there are several groups who each appear to have their own networks each claiming to be at one with the rebel fighters.

⁵⁷ On this point, see Marut, *La question de Casamance*, Part I, pp. 114-25, and Part II, pp. 322-32

⁵⁸ J.-M. Biagui has written several booklets, including *Sané, M., Biagui, J.-M. and Tamba, O., Casamance Kunda: ce que nous attendons de la Casamance indépendante*, Lyons: Ramaix, 1995

⁵⁹ Personal investigation, May 2001

Since 1997 Father Diamacoune has progressively distanced himself from the armed struggle which he has now finally condemned. This explains both the rapprochement with the “moderates” (Sidy Badji, Bertrand Diamacoune, J.-M. F. Biagui, for example) and the criticisms from the “hard-liners” who believe that only the armed struggle will make the Senegalese authorities capitulate. But the leader of the MFDC has not given up the demand for independence; instead he is opening up the possibility of a political struggle. The main debate which engages the MFDC at the moment hinges on the question of whether or not to maintain the rebel fighting units and the armed struggle as a means of exerting pressure on the Senegalese Government.

3.4.2. *The Military Wing*

The MFDC’s military wing appears to have splintered and to have at least three rival commanding structures:

- the Northern Front led by Kamougaye Diatta, which laid down its weapons in 1991-1992, is based to the north of Bignona. Some of its members are now involved in economic micro-projects which receive state funding. This situation could be overturned, if a group from the Southern Front were to set up there;
- the Southern Front (East), whose leader Salif Sadio is reportedly still retrenched in his base near Ingoré, includes most of the rebel fighters. Ousmane Goudiaby’s group, which operates in the north, between Diouloulou and the Gambian frontier, and Ebadiouti’s group, which operates in the Nyassia area, west of Ziguinchor, both seem to belong to this Front.⁶⁰
- The Southern Front (West) of Léopold Sagna, based to the west of Ziguinchor seems to follow the orders of Father Diamacoune now that fighting with Salif Sadio’s group has stopped, and it seems they have not organized attacks against the Senegalese army for several months.

3.5. The Situation in Spring 2001

3.5.1. *Attacks in Bignona Department (May-June 2001)*

All observers agree on the nature and sequence of recent events:

- in December 2000, some men from Salif Sadio’s Southern Front, under the command of Ousmane Goudiaby and Vieux Faye, crossed into the Department of Bignona, the stronghold of Kamougaye Diatta’s Northern Front. It seems they had two parallel motives: to break loose from their own surrounded bases, and to engage and hold part of the Senegalese Army in the north;
- from February to March 2001 armed groups, who have apparently since fled back into the Gambia, attacked several civilian passenger and goods vehicles and without explanation massacred their occupants (who were mostly Northerners);
- from mid-May, some three months after these abuses, the Senegalese army launched a combing operation which resulted in deadly encounters with groups of rebels. These rebel groups have not been officially identified. Some believe they were Ousmane

⁶⁰ Recently this group has reportedly been eliminated by Léopold Sagna’s men. Cf. *La main de la bande à Ousmane Goudiaby, Sud*, 7 June 2001

Goudiaby's men (Southern Front).⁶¹ Others believe they were Kamougaye Diatta's men (Northern Front).⁶² Unless there is a rapprochement between these two groups, which seems unlikely, there is a great risk that they will start fighting each other;

- one thing remains clear. These events mean that war has returned to a region which had been relatively calm since 1992. Since mid-May, 3,500 people have left, seeking refuge in the Gambia.

These events increase the risk of instability in the Gambia. It is certainly not the first time that Casamançais refugees and rebels have used Gambian soil. However, it is particularly serious if the Department of Bignona becomes the main scene of fighting at a time when the situation in Gambia is becoming more tense as October's presidential election approaches. The Gambian opposition is criticizing President Jammeh for his authoritarian and anti-democratic methods. In particular they criticize him for granting amnesty to members of the security forces who were implicated in the violent repression of student riots in April 2000. They also accuse him of giving voter cards to foreigners, especially those from his own ethnic group, the Diola from Casamance.⁶³

The Gambian Head of State, who himself seized power in a coup d'état in 1994 and was later legitimized by elections, has already repelled several attempts to overthrow his Government. Despite being of Diola origin, he has established good relations with Senegal, declaring his opposition to rebel use of his territory. But his attitude during the events in Guinea-Bissau (the Gambia was the only country in the sub-region which did not condemn General Mané's uprising) provoked doubts about his real feelings. It is worth recalling that the country has long been considered a hub for trafficking, especially of drugs and arms, and that it provides shelter to a sizeable Senegalese community (there are reportedly 300,000 Senegalese in the Gambia which has a total population of a little over one million, thus forming around a quarter of the population).⁶⁴

The future of the Gambia seems to be one of the unknown factors in the sub-region's situation.

3.5.2. Cease-fire and Negotiations

In March, a new cease-fire agreement signed between the MFDC and Senegalese Government representatives was intended to lead to peace negotiations. The unification of the movement, which both sides want to see to ensure it "speaks with one voice", seemed to be a necessary pre-requisite. To this end, a meeting of all components of the MFDC was planned for 29 to 31 May in Banjul. It was cancelled on 25 May at the request of Father Diamacoune because of the "situation on the ground", namely internal divisions within the separatist movement, and the army's combing operation in Bignona Department. A limited meeting did nevertheless take place and a larger meeting was planned for 6 and 7 July. At

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² L'armée maîtrise la situation dans le Bignona, *Le Soleil*, 7 June 2001

⁶³ Agence France Presse, Présidentielle en Gambie: la campagne électorale sous haute tension, 6 June 2001

⁶⁴ On Gambian involvement in the Casamançais question, see Marut, J.-C., *La question de Casamance*, Part III, pp. 344-81

least one part of the movement's "hard-liners", like "Nkrumah" Sané, has already announced they will not make the journey. The participation of Salif Sadio and his representatives is also far from certain. In other words, as with other previous meetings, in 1999,⁶⁵ there is a risk that the impact of these meetings and the negotiations which might be held with the Senegalese authorities will be limited.

However, it is possible that they could make progress on some key issues, such as the long-standing MFDC demand for the withdrawal of the Senegalese armed forces to the positions they held before the conflict.

The question of status is not on the agenda as it has been postponed for later negotiations, doubtless because it constitutes a main issue. Some believe that a special status which takes into account the specific characteristics of the region and what has happened over the past 18 years would open up the possibility of peace. Others believe it would mean rewarding armed struggle, and the beginning of the break-up of Senegal. This raises the whole question of the centralized nation-state.

3.6. President Wade's Trump Cards

So far the changes in leadership which have occurred since 2000 in the Senegalese State have not revealed a radically different approach to the Casamance question. The removal of some intermediaries, with varying degrees of authority, has certainly clarified things on the surface. While they have not stopped completely, abuses by the security forces appear to have diminished substantially,⁶⁶ but the new President has not revealed anything about how he intends to resolve the fundamental problem. He holds a number of trump cards, as he has a large parliamentary majority, he is well-established in the Ziguinchor region where his party, the Senegalese Democratic Party (Parti démocratique sénégalais - PDS) has had good results since 1978 and he knows some separatist leaders personally, having acted as their lawyer.

One thing known for certain is that he subscribes to the consensus which exists in Senegal, at least within the elite, in favour of maintaining territorial integrity and national unity.⁶⁷ From this perspective, all that is needed is to make good the errors, omissions and delays which Casamance has suffered and there would no longer be a Casamance problem. According to that same predominant way of thinking, the problem only arises because of manipulation: political opportunists have manipulated ethnicity and these opportunists have been manipulated by foreign neighbours to weaken Senegal. Some of the Senegalese elite who are part of the state machinery share this point of view (which allows the separatist leadership, starting with Father Diamacoune, to keep to its populist discourse in which the

⁶⁵ See Marut, J.-C., Casamance: les assises du Mfdc à Banjul (22-25 June 1999), *Afrique contemporaine*, n° 191, 1999, pp. 73-9

⁶⁶ Source: RADDHO delegation which visited Ziguinchor, February 2001

⁶⁷ The book by Diouf, M., *Sénégal: Les ethnies et la nation*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994, is a good illustration of this consensus. It is the only Senegalese work devoted to the Casamance problem (apart from the LD/MPT booklet), and it rejects any ethnic or regional particularity producing statistics to support its reasoning.

MFDC is represented as a “voice for the voiceless”). This national consensus is not unique to Senegal.

3.7. Conclusion

There are alternatives to the dominant analysis. They involve posing questions about the origins and meaning of a movement which is both social and concerned with identity - in the widest sense, and where an overriding demand for that identity may appear as a consequence of political under-representation.⁶⁸ They also lead to questions about the validity of the nation-state model and “developmental” models.⁶⁹ The debate is not only relevant to Senegal, but at the moment, the debate in that country has hardly even begun.

It could be said that the Casamance problem is indicative of problems which concern the whole of Senegal. But it is only in Casamance, and more precisely lower Casamance, where the problems have been raised in this way. They arose originally from a real desire for integration. The inadequacy of this integration has strengthened the feelings of identity, to such an extent that it has become a political expedient. All the actors in the conflict recognize that the only solution is a political one. But this solution appears elusive if the widely shared social demands and those relating to identity are not recognized.

4. General Conclusion

The trafficking of arms which were destined for the rebellion in Casamance and which started off the crisis in Guinea-Bissau can only confirm what was already known: the Casamançais separatist movement receives a substantial part of its resources from that country. So, Senegalese military intervention in Bissau seemed like an attempt to solve a domestic problem abroad. The authorities in Dakar were logically seeking a solution to the rebellion they had failed to defeat militarily. From this viewpoint, their efforts to control the frontier complement their search for an ally in Bissau.

However events show that this approach had some perverse effects:

- Senegalese military intervention in Guinea-Bissau in 1998 only revived patriotism within Guinea-Bissau;
- the combing operations along the border with Guinea-Bissau executed by the Senegalese army since 1995 have dispersed some of the Casamançais rebel fighters depriving them of their traditional support. This in turn provoked more widespread insecurity in Casamance, in the form of banditry and mine-laying;
- the offensive by the Guinea-Bissau army along the Senegalese frontier in early 2001 has in turn provoked a re-deployment of rebel forces in the Department of Bignona, an area which had been calm for nine years, and which today is gripped by violence.

Thus a largely military approach to the Casamance problem has contributed to the destabilization of Guinea-Bissau, increasing insecurity in Casamance, the creation of a

⁶⁸ Cf. Marut, J.-C., Les deux résistances casamançaises, *Le Monde diplomatique*, January 1996

⁶⁹ Marut, J.C., Le problème casamançais est-il soluble dans l'État-nation?, in Diop, M.-C. (ed.), *Senegal 2000*, Paris: Karthala (forthcoming)

second area of operations in the north of the region, and consequently, an increasing risk of instability in the Gambia.

That analysis ignores the fact that both the military uprising in Guinea-Bissau and the rebellion in Casamance have deep roots in their local contexts and are testimony to profound social and political dissatisfaction. Successive governments in Dakar have certainly never stopped stating that there is no military solution, only a political one, but real negotiations have yet to begin.

The coming to power in Dakar of a president who had always denounced the military solution might give some reason for hope, if certain other issues did not have to be taken into account:

- the fact that the new team shares the same attachment as their predecessors to the centralist state model leaves little room to accommodate pro-independence views and those relating to identity;
- deep divisions within the rebel movement clash with the stated aim of both the Senegalese Government and the MFDC leadership to have one spokesperson for the rebellion; and, lastly
- political volatility in Guinea-Bissau and the Gambia means that these countries have certain reflex actions in response to security matters. This was shown by their attitude to Casamançais refugees. Without doubt they manipulated the UNHCR's aid criteria to argue in favour of their efforts to move them away from the border, but these efforts also reflect their fear that rebel fighters in Casamance have links to their own internal opponents, as proved by events in Bissau in 1998. This would explain the recent violent expulsion of refugees by the Guinea-Bissau army. Furthermore, the numerous visits by Heads of State to their counterparts in the sub-region in recent weeks also illustrate their focus on security matters. It is clear that any new instability in one or other of these two countries will certainly have an impact on the conflict in Casamance. It could also take on a sub-regional nature, as events in Guinea-Bissau have hinted.

Unsatisfied social and political demands explain the support received by the rebellion in Casamance, at least at the beginning, and the military uprising in Guinea-Bissau. To respond to these demands, the states involved would need to have the necessary material and political resources. This might be possible for Senegal, which has its own resources as well as significant international assistance, where the new President, strengthened by his undisputed legitimacy, is trying to attract new investment. It would be far more difficult in Guinea-Bissau where the extreme weakness of the State and the expectations of aid donors make for an explosive situation.

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