

The Reintegration of the Casamance Region into Senegalese SocietyDO NOT CITE
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THE REINTEGRATION OF THE CASAMANCE REGION INTO SENEGALESE SOCIETY

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"Les liaisons avec la Casamance constituent le talon d'Achille du Sénégal"

Jean-Claude Marut

The lush green rich arable lands and tropical climate among many other factors starkly contrast the Casamance region of southern Senegal from the rest of the country. After an 18-hour boat ride on the MS Joola, one can easily note the differences between Dakar and Ziguinchor.

It is historically a resource rich yet underdeveloped region. "The two Casamance regions of Kolda and Ziguinchor have considerable potential for economic development, which has been largely ignored because of the ongoing armed separatist campaign and the priority given by the government to maintaining a substantial military presence in the area. Both regions have climates and soil conditions which, if exploited, would allow them to produce enough food crops (including rice, the staple) to meet national requirements."

The Casamance has an extensive colonial heritage as it has been subjected to Portuguese, English and French control for over 200 years. The region was a Portuguese colony until 1866 and a French colony until independence in 1960. It is located in the southern region of Senegal and almost completely severed from the rest of the country by the Gambia. This close proximity and preference for Casamance trading out of Banjul compared to Dakar supplements the region with an English influence.

Religiously, Christian and animist beliefs dominate the region and separate it from the majority of the country's population which is overwhelmingly Islamic. The Casamançais are more culturally and linguistically linked to groups (Manding, Diola and Balante) in the Gambia and Guinea Bissau (see map #1).

At times the region has also been more politically aligned with Guinea Bissau and this is historically evident when the Casamançais fought with the African Party for Independence of Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands (PAIGC) during the country's quest for independence and more recently in the 1998 civil war in which MFDC rebels were accused of fighting on the side of the military junta lead by General Mane.

The conflict in the Casamance region of southern Senegal is an exceptional case in Africa and is the only separatist movement in West Africa. It has been plagued by conflict for almost twenty years with no foreseeable end in sight. Since the Casamance rebellion began in 1982, the subsequent fighting has killed an estimated 1200-3000 people while internally displacing numerous villages and consistently causing the exodus of thousands from the country.

The Casamance "question" has been explained as a center-periphery problem, economic marginalization, class struggle, ethnicity, failure of the Senegalese democratic model, and the imposition of the Wolof-Islam model on the whole of the state. All of these factors have had a significant impact on either the root causes of the conflict and/or the prolongation of what appears to be an irretraceable problem of the Senegalese state. It is a problem that has already destabilized the subregion and brought the country and Guinea Bissau to the

brink of war.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the Casamance secession and determine what elements have impeded its resolution. A brief historical evaluation of the movement and irredentist undertones will be provided in order to establish the foundation from which the movement has evolved. Considerable attention will be paid to the failures of the Senegalese state and the rebel movement's inability to 'win' or resolve the problem. A critique of Wade's presidency thus far will also be provided in order to highlight a continuity of the state's ineffectiveness in addressing the issue. The conclusion will attempt to determine whether or not the conflict is resolvable and what elements would provide impetus for a solution.

History of the Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC)

The MFDC was created in 1947 and was formed in an attempt for the region to find a more representative voice in Senegalese politics. The movement for the most part was peaceful and eventually absorbed by President Senghor's party. It is debatable as to whether or not the movement had any desire for independence that is until the events of December 26, 1982 when the group reemerged. A large group of protestors had formed in Ziguinchor to demand independence for the Casamance in which they attempted to tear down the Senegalese flag outside government buildings and replace it with their own. Regardless of the true intention of the protest, the Senegalese government immediately judged the movement to be a direct threat to the state. Authorities swiftly suppressed the demonstration and jailed many of the leaders. The most notable of these leaders was a Catholic priest by the name of Abbé Augustin Diamancoune Senghor who is still a predominant figure in the current crisis. The suppression of the movement, sometimes considered brutal, by the state authorities christened the movement's rebirth but this time in violence. This forced the movement to become clandestine in nature and placed its members into the position of victims of state violence.

Abbé Senghor has been the figurehead and symbolic leader of the movement since 1981. The claim for independence is based on the idea that the Casamance is a product of French colonial rule. "Senghor is explicit in his claim that the French made the Casamance. In his view the French intended to administer the Casamance as an independent colony, not a region within the colony of Senegal. Senghor contends that it was an administrative oversight, a mere technicality, that the French failed to officially recognize the independence of the region." The French historian Jacques Charpy would later refute this claim in 1994. Abbé Senghor also based his belief upon a supposed agreement between Emile Bandane, one of the original founders of the 1947 MFDC party, and President Senghor that after 20 years of Senegalese independence the state would recognize the sovereignty and independence of the Casamance. This belief has been dismissed as conspiratorial with no concrete proof but is still believed by many people in the region. It is not the conspiracy itself that is so interesting but the mindset of the Casamançais in their adamant belief that the Senegalese state has maneuvered against them since independence.

Throughout the 1980s, demonstrations were marred by violence and the government continued its repressive tactics in the region including arbitrary detentions, the banning of the MFDC and human rights violations. After the government granted several amnesties for MFDC leaders and followers, the MFDC issued an official declaration of the armed struggle for independence in May 1990. This would be a bloody turn of events in the struggle as the MFDC would now take an armed offensive position and organize itself accordingly.

The next stage of violence corresponded with the deterioration of relations between Senegal and its neighbors. Strains over the Senegal-Mauritania crisis, the dissolving of the Senegambia confederation, and the commencement of the

Senegal-Guinea-Bissau territorial dispute over oil rich waters provided a tense diplomatic environment in Dakar.

In mid-1991, a ceasefire was arranged between the MFDC and the government. Diouf granted amnesty to hundreds of MFDC loyalists and sympathizers. The Senegalese state needed to improve its tarnished image in the international community as its public relations had badly suffered due to Amnesty International reports accusing the government of substantial human rights abuses in its campaign against the MFDC. Unfortunately, this ceasefire lasted only until early 1992 due to government refusal to discuss independence.

The conflict became increasingly violent with substantial increases in casualties and refugees. This increase in violence can be attributed to the polarization of the MFDC itself. In August 1992, the movement split into two factions - the Front Nord, led by Sidy Badji, and the Front Sud, led by Abbé Senghor. The division between the two groups is drawn along the Casamance river (refer to map 2).

"The Front Nord of the MFDC's armed wing, under Kamougué Diatta, became progressively more disenchanted with what it viewed as the Jola ethnocentrism of Diamacoune and the Front Sud. Although the experienced Front Nord, under commanders who, in some cases, had experience of war in Algeria and Indochina, was more of a military threat to the Senegalese army, it had arrived at a gradualist position, favouring a steady move to autonomy, where the sudistes were now committed to all-out independence won by force of arms."

The 1990s witnessed the intensification of the conflict especially in relationship to the sophistication of the type of weaponry used by the rebels. The debut and wanton use of land mines began and several especially fierce attacks on Ziguinchor in 1999 witnessed the use of 82mm Chinese shells, which had not previously been used by the MFDC. At certain points during this period, the region absorbed over one-quarter of the Senegalese military.

During this same time period, the region became precariously destabilized and over seven conflicts raged throughout the region (refer to map #3 - the conflicts also include Mali and Niger). These conflicts have been blamed for a pronounced increase in weapons and even speculation about "wandering rebels" throughout the region.

It is possible that there are certain rebels who are not Casamançais and several accounts of assailants that speak English among themselves. The reverse of this is also true in that Kromah, of ULIMO in Liberia, "allegedly used his ethnic and commercial ties to recruit Casamance (Senegal) separatists to the ULIMO cause of their ethnic kinsfolk." At the same time, Conté of Guinea "faced a February 1996 coup attempt. The coup leader...appeared to recruit support from among frustrated Malinké officers and entrepreneurs with Casamance and ULIMO links."

Rumors of dissent within the Front Sud became more pronounced. Accusations of ethnic cleansing by hardcore Diola members surfaced. Salif Sadio allegedly shot two of his lieutenants suspected of plotting his assassination. The MFDC replaced the Senegalese military as the larger perpetrator of human rights abuses.

Currently, the MFDC breaks down into political, military, and external wings. Abbé Senghor leads the political wing. The military wing (also referred to as Attika - Diola for warrior) reflects the geographical division of the region and includes the Front Nord (who laid down arms in 1992) currently led by Sidy Badji and the Front Sud currently led by Salif Sadio. The external wing can be classified as the exiled elitist perspective of the movement headed by Mamadou Nkrumah Sane who resides in France and organizes various MFDC cells located in various European cities. The hardline position shifted from the Front Nord (after the 1991 ceasefire) to the Front Sud (after the 1993 ceasefire).

The Underlying Irredentist Aspect

Recent literature and Senegalese media coverage on the Casamance question has

taken on irredentist claims. It was not uncommon after the colonial scramble for land that ethnic groups found themselves separated by the newly formed international borders. Groups of people that had historically lived together were thus divided and forced to live under this new nation-state and forced to participate in a national identity.

While undoubtedly the Casamance movement is separatist in nature, there are a significant amount of irredentist undertones that need to be analyzed not necessarily for determining whether or not an irredentist movement would bore success but as to the potential destabilizing effects and complexity that it adds to the conflict.

"Irredentism, in broad strokes, refers to attempts by existing states to annex adjacent lands and the people who inhabit them in the name of historical, cultural, religious, linguistic, or geographic affinity. Intrinsic to the notion of irredentism is a tension between people and territory, between politics and culture - indeed, between symbolic and instrumental aspects of international relations."

According to this definition, the Casamance embraces many of these characteristics specifically of concern here is the "instrumental aspects of international relations". At times, Senegalese foreign policy has revolved around the fear of the Three B's - Bissau, Banjul, and Bignona (village in the Casamance).

In 1981, Senegal intervened in the Gambia in order to save President Jawara's regime. At the heart of the armed revolt was Casamance-born Kukoï Samba Sanyang. Senegal did not intervene in the 1994 coup in which President Jammeh seized power but at times the Senegalese government has been hesitant to accept his mediator role in the conflict due to the fact that he is an ethnic Diola.

The civil war in Guinea-Bissau, led by General Mane, caused alarm in the Senegalese government not only due to the close ties between the MFDC and Bissau but Mane himself is also a Gambian born ethnic Diola.

The Gabou Empire existed in the region between the 16th and 19th centuries and encompasses much of modern Gambia, Casamance, and Guinea-Bissau (refer to map #4). The areas not covered by the empire readily share cultural, linguistic, and ethnic ties (refer to map #5) so that the identity of Gabou entirely embraces these three areas.

In recent years, the MFDC has vocally expressed not only separation from Senegal but also a union with the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. It is highly questionable as to whether or not these countries support such a movement but the claim holds much value among relationships in the region.

The Casamance would have little success as its own country. The viability of a small state comes into question and the following parallel can be drawn between the Gambia and a potential Casamance state: "The Gambia was seen as being too small in terms of human and material resource base, and therefore conceived of having insufficient state budget to maintain internal security, external relations and defence, and to spearhead a significant development process. The domestic market being a priori small, private enterprises, it was further argued, would not be able to grow and benefit for economies of scale."

The irredentist claim could take on economic ramifications in that the union between the three regions would provide a sufficient resource base and domestic market that would allow for economies of scale. Currently, the Gambian and Bissauan economies are both struggling so from an economic point of view the union would theoretically prove beneficial for all parties.

Nkrumah, the external wing leader, has repeatedly voiced the irredentist aspect of MFDC movement and admitted the MFDC role in assisting the Bissau rebels take power stating that "the objective of our movement is to constitute next a Gabou federation with Guinea-Bissau and the Gambia."

The Failures of the Senegalese State

The geographic and cultural isolation of the Casamance from the majority of the country has had a substantial impact on the fiercely independent nature of the region. Prolonged marginalization by the state has certainly compounded the isolation and negligence of the Casamance. There is most undoubtedly a feeling of internal colonialism. The idea that the state, through its central-periphery politics, inherited practices of former colonizers, and clientalism linkages, continues to exploit the resource rich region for the benefit of an elite group in Dakar. This has had grave implications on the prolongation and ineffective resolution of the conflict. The population feels money from agriculture, fishing, tourism, etc. is exported to Dakar without benefiting the region. The demands of Casamançais and civil society for more economic opportunities in the region are still a current theme in the region.

During the 1970's, the growing Casamançais identity emerged among the Diola, Peul, Manding, etc. due to a communally shared resentment against those perceived as undermining and threatening their prosperity (mainly the Wolof and the state itself). "The affirmation of Casamançais difference gave sense to a spontaneous popular resistance against strangers to the region, accused of pillaging its resources and marginalizing its inhabitants with the complicity of the authorities. Highlighting a deficit in political representation, this resistance by those the Northerners (Wolof, Sérér, Toucouleur, etc.) tended to refer to as "savages", "Indians", or "Zulus", raised both the question of the nature of links with Dakar and that of a mismatch between "imported" systems and indigenous social practices."

This can also be observed in the reverse as the Casamançais are often referred to as lazy, backward, and lacking a desire for development as many of their subsistence needs are readily provided for them by their environment. The Wolof refer to them as "Niak" or forest people.

The Diola, the major ethnic group, only comprises 5.5% of the entire population and historically has been quite hostile towards any centralized authority and fiercely resisted French colonization. In order to muster support against the movement, the government has, in an overly simplistic manner, referred to it as one of ethnicity. This strategy was based upon the government's wish to protect the norms of devoutly defended by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and African states territorial integrity and national sovereignty. If the Casamance were ever to succeed in gaining international legitimacy as a new state, this would be a direct assault upon the norms, which the OAU has strived to defend since independence.

The Senegalese government has banned any formation of political parties based upon ethnic loyalties and by deeming the movement "ethnic" has established a platform from which to attack the credibility and intentions of the movement. It considers the MFDC illegal and under Diouf's regime considered any negotiation tantamount to the betrayal of the Senegalese people and state. While some credibility can be given to this particular portrayal of the movement, it is an overly simplistic static evaluation of the Casamance question and in doing so the state has refused to address the more threatening and credit-worthy aspects of the insurrection.

Banned ethnic parties, effective to a certain extent in protecting the country from pitfalls that others have encountered in constructing a national identity, along with regional marginalization of the Casamance and favoritism towards the North has only created an environment that encouraged the festering of animosities between the region and the rest of Senegal.

Diouf waited too long for any type of negotiation and the stubbornness of the MFDC in its absolute demand that independence be included in any talks has led to a stalemate between the rebels and the state. As Diouf long considered the Casamance a law and order problem, which could and would be resolved only by the state's military mechanism, his unwillingness to negotiate early on could have

been one of the largest errors in the history of the problem. By not taking the conflict seriously (in the context of the media and public opinion), the state's continued ineptitude and inability to win militarily have reduced the situation to a stalemate which has allowed for a certain sort of warlord politics to take hold of the region.

As late as September 13, 1997, he rejected any idea of negotiations and stated "the situation in the Casamance does not require a national conference but a mobilization of the nation around the head of state, to help the national army fulfill its mission of defending the territorial integrity and national unity." The effects have been two-fold. By refusing to negotiate, Diouf missed a key opportunity to resolve the problem early on as rebels were initially sympathetic to the idea of an increased regional autonomy. The current problem is that the state is "considering" this demand by the Front Nord political wing of the MFDC but the Attika wing of the movement now refuses anything but independence.

The failure to initially address the very real economic marginalization of the region has only prolonged the conflict. What might have commenced as an "ethnic" movement has evolved into one that expresses the disillusionment and frustration with the state's inability to provide adequate economic development for the region. With increased focus on globalization issues and the marginalization of Africa and its states as a whole, there is no doubt that the Casamance will continue to lose opportunities for any type of economic revitalization.

Internal policy has not been the only decisive factor in the Casamance conflict. Senegal and its' neighbors foreign policies have also had a substantial impact on the situation. This can predominantly be contributed to a weak state foreign policy that at times is more reactive than comprehensive.

Senegal's relationship with its neighbors has ranged from being excellent to bordering on war. In 1989, tensions centered around the Senegal River Valley led to massacres by both Senegal and Mauritania while leading to the mass expulsion of people on both sides of the conflict. Diplomatic relations were severed and provoked a heated animosity between the two countries for many years.

Mauritanian foreign policy at this point can be linked to a Kautilyan pattern of actions. Senegal was perceived as the enemy and its neighbor, or potential neighbor, the Casamance, was a friend. Mauritania has been accused of supplying arms to the rebels in what can be deemed as a retaliatory action to the events of 1989.

In regards to the Gambia, the relationship between the two has varied over the years. The Casamance has most definitely strained diplomatic relationships in that the Gambia, in the past, has been accused of playing the transit point of Irakian arms from Mauritania to the Casamance, serving as a central point for the administration party of MFDC, and hosting rear bases for Attika. The increased role of the Gambia as a facilitator in the negotiation process has both calmed tensions but among others heightened the fear of the Three "B"s. The relationship between Senegal and Guinea Bissau has been rather precarious and influential in the resolution of the problem. The Dome Flore oilfield off the coast of the two countries has been a point of contention in the past. The oilfield reserves are estimated at 100 million tons of heavy oil and 1 million tons of light. Sixteen years of legal battles and increasing tensions between the two countries were eventually resolved amicably in June 1995 in which Senegal offered Guinea-Bissau a percentage as long as they recognized Senegalese sovereignty over the waters.

"The primary reason for Senegalese generosity was an unstated linkage that called for the Guinea-Bissau government to take, in return for a portion of the oil profits, a much more active role in denying the Casamance insurgents both access to illegally transshipped weapons and safe havens on the Guinea-Bissau side of the border. This accord is indicative of a rising, consensus within the policy-making establishment that resolution of the Casamance issue is 'central' to the fashioning of stable, long-term regional relationships."

Historically, the MFDC rebels have utilized the bordering Bissauan region as a rear base from which to mount their attacks against Senegalese forces which until recently have been targeted at the Ziguinchor region. This increasing frustration with lack of security especially in the Kolda region mounted in July 2000 with 22 villages within the region protesting and requesting that the President increase security in the area. The Senegalese army has frequently crossed the international border in pursuit of MFDC rebels to a seemingly ambivalent, resistant or supportive Bissauan government. Senegalese bombings in 1995 and as recently as April 2000 have tested relations between the two states. Up until mid-1997, rumors had been circulating that the Bissauan army was involved in supplying and trading activities with the Front Sud rebels. Due to pressure from both Senegalese and French governments, an inquiry was established to investigate the ever-increasing rumors. This inquiry marked deterioration in relations between President Vieira and the chief of the armed forces, General Ansumane Mane, who was under suspicion for gun-running. In late January 1998, Vieira officially suspended Mane, which touched off a chain of events that quickly lead the country into a civil war, which threatened to destabilize the region.

"Although the Bissau emergency was in part the result of a series of policy blunders by Vieira and his government, neither of whom could claim a watertight electoral mandate, as opponents were quick to point out, it was the links between Bissauan army officers and MFDC cadres that precipitated the crisis with the sacking of Mane and the subsequent rebellion."

Senegalese and Guinean intervention quickly followed suit due to the implications in the Casamance. What was initially seen as a quick intervention quickly deteriorated into a potentially prolonged conflict. As the conflict escalated, fears began to mount that Mane could easily defeat the Senegalese in an all-out attack. "Portuguese intelligence also suspected that Senegal was about to declare war formally on Guinea-Bissau as a pretext for sending in the rest of its army. Massive international lobbying ensued, with success, to avoid what Portuguese officials were referring to as a 'catastrophe scenario'." Throughout the conflict, MFDC rebels were reportedly fighting and supporting the pro-Mane troops. This event overwhelmingly demonstrates the potential that the Casamance secession has in destabilizing the region.

The state has also faltered in its inability to eliminate clientalism practices leftover from the Senghorian regime. "Clientelist systems are distinctive in that benefits and sanctions in the system are distributed to individuals, rather than social groups, via the particularistic and discretionary exercise of state prerogative."

Senghor's policies were neo-colonial in nature and he continued to favor groups, which the French had favored during the colonial period. "Government policy clearly worked to favour the interests of French investors in local industry and the interests of Senegal's powerful Islamic leaders, the marabouts, who controlled the peasantry and the land in the groundnut-producing who controlled the peasantry and the land in the groundnut-producing areas....the government did not impinge upon marabouts' prerogatives and pursued rural development policies which reinforced the rural order established under colonial rule."

One of the most important aspects of this policy is the favoritism towards the marabouts in regards to land distribution. This undoubtedly adds credibility to the secessionists' claim of marginalization by the state.

The 1972 land tenure reform heavily impacted the Casamance region and effectively removed a substantial amount of Casamançais land in favor of Northerners who received preferential treatment in the redistribution. "The increasingly massive immigration of the 'Northerners' has entailed land estate and property expropriations. The Democratic League/Labour Party Movement (LD/MPT) Memorandum on the Casamance crisis indicated that:

During 1980-81, about 2,000 parcels of land were expropriated or allocated

exclusively to non-indigenes in the Boucotte, Lyndiane, Peyrissac and Tilene districts of Ziguinchor. Driven to the outskirts of the urban areas, that is, to the underdeveloped areas where there are no electrification, running water, health units and trade..., the Administration has thus deprived them of their right to a city while they argued that, at the same time, the populations of the North enjoy that right."

A more recent development in this land problem has been occurring in the Kolda region of the Casamance, which historically has been less sympathetic to the MFDC cause. The predominant tension here arises between the Peul and the 'Northerners'. The Pata forest in the Haute Casamance is in principle classified and protected by the government but in recent years has seen a massive organized invasion by the marabouts and mourides along with Tidjanes and Sereers. This 'invasion' also continues to have ties to the state and its clientalist practices. The mourides and tidjanes permanently cooperate and interfere in state power. The past social contract with the state: privileged access to land against agricultural expansion of peanuts remains an actuality, even if peanuts are no longer the premier source of money for the state. The forests have become less and less protected in favor of this practice. The fear is that this will polarize the differences between the indigenous groups and the 'Northerners'. "Les Peuls de la region risquaient de se soulever à l'instar de leurs 'freres' diolas de Basse-Casamance."

The Failures of the MFDC Movement

As the Casamance craves independence and/or regional autonomy, as a rebel movement, the MFDC has failed to create its own independent structures and to date has not found a means of providing the local population with basic services such as health, education, and economic development as the insurgent movements in Eritrea and UNITA.

The inability of the MFDC to provide an alternative to a population brutalized by conflict draws certain parallels to the failure of the Senegalese government in doing the same. Surely, the successful provision of these services would endear the region to the movement but instead the rebels have more frequently alienated the local population. Increasing human rights abuses and attacks against Casamançais civilians have only undermined the MFDC's credibility in the eyes of the indigenous population and provided fodder for the Senegalese media as to who is truly accountable for the victimization/marginalization of the region.

The inability to create a comprehensive platform for any negotiations illustrates one of the major weaknesses and contentious points in the movement. The polarization of the MFDC into two fronts and their inability to unify over negotiations discredits the movement as a whole and poses the question as to who really controls the movement.

The criminalization of the conflict has intensified in recent years. Attacks more increasingly come under suspicion as to whether they are perpetuated by rebels or bandits. Regardless, the rebels have come to know conflict as a source of income. Habitual raids on villages for food supplies and demands for "donations" in support of the rebel cause has become tiring for the local population who in the beginning were relatively supportive or at least sympathetic to the cause. The constant harassment and theft from villagers with no provision of a benefit, real or perceived, has diminished the population's ability or desire to continue its support of the movement. Villagers refuse to plant their fields owing to the fear of being attacked or robbed of their harvests.

Nkrumah's calls for a Gabou Federation have accentuated tensions between himself and other MFDC representatives notably the Abbé Senghor and even members of his

own external wing. This is a futile exercise and accomplishes nothing except for the polarization of elements in all wings of the movement thus preventive any real cohesive ideology on the part of the movement.

The Election of Wade – New Hope For A Resolution?

With the election of President Wade in early 2000, there was a new hope that the crisis in the Casamance could be resolved but Wade's electoral promise of resolving the conflict have fallen exceeding short of its goal.

The results of Wade's presidency up to this point have been rather mixed. Many Senegalese feel that he lacks the savoir-faire to be a head of state. He has long managed his political career based on always being an opposition candidate and has accomplished something that maybe he never expected – he was elected president. His fledgling policies and awkward transition to head of state has impeded his domestic agenda and questioned his resolve in relationship to the Casamance.

On May 23, 2000, the BBC reported that President Wade had made a request to France for weapons and military equipment. The BBC states that he was quoted in an interview with Jeune Afrique as saying that his army needed arms to prevent possible incursions from Guinea-Bissau, which he said was being armed by Ukrainians. It was also noted that he was more concerned about this particular event than the conflict in the Casamance. This event most obviously heightened fears in the Bissauan government as to the true intentions of the Senegalese government.

On May 26, 2000, the BBC reported that the request to France for weapons were to be used by Senegalese troops in the upcoming UN peacekeeping mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo. It was also reported that Wade expected the rebellion to end within a few weeks. These statements are extremely conflicting and demonstrate the lack of policy or overall ineptitude of the new regime.

In June, tensions once again escalated between Mauritania and Senegal over the Senegal River Valley. Mauritania demanded that all Senegalese leave the country within a week and the situation took on a feeling eerily reminiscent of the events in 1989. Wade's government became fully engaged in the resolution of the potential conflict.

The reason the event is of importance is that Wade became completely incapable of addressing the Casamance issue further diminishing his credibility in regards to any true intention of resolve the conflict.

On July 12th, the BBC reported that the Senegalese military carried out aerial bombing raids against rebels along the Bissauan border after a separatist attack on a military patrol in the region approximately one month after Wade was quoted as saying the conflict would end in the next several weeks.

Wade has either underestimated the complexity of the situation or his administration is weighed down with international and party issues that there has been a lack of time to address the issue. Regardless, it is essential that he, at least, approach the representatives of the movement in order to set a timetable for future negotiations. Recent rebel attacks have tested his resolve and his answer thus far has been nothing, which unfortunately mimics Diouf's failed policies in the Casamance.

Is There a Solution?

Can the conflict be resolved? The positions do not lend themselves easily to resolution. The absolute demand for independence and the state's staunch defense of national sovereignty and territorial integrity seem irreconcilable. Yet, there is hope. Both sides have negotiated in the past and there is a hope that the conflict can be resolved.

Many obstacles exist on the path to the peaceful resolution of the problem. The

government must negotiate as it has already proven that it cannot win the battle militarily and the conflict has only proven to be a drain on the nation's resources.

At times it is difficult to recognize that the country is enmeshed in a civil war. Much of the media portrayal of the conflict is based upon military information, which is highly skewed in support of the government's position. An inaccurate representation of the conflict creates a false sense of security and diminishes the seriousness of the situation in public eyes. In the L'Info newspaper, one journalist aptly summarizes this sentiment by saying "Wade doit se convaincre que nous sommes en guerre."

The government needs to create a comprehensive political vision to encompass all representations of society in the process. The Casamance war is a national problem and needs to be negotiated at a national level. There must be a democratic and representative solution to the problem. "What is at stake is not just finding a peaceful solution to the crisis but rather the need to call into question the centre/periphery model on which the state's policy is based...The democratic consensus cannot operate exclusively in the centre without running the risk of an explosion of the whole system."

A well-informed public could do much in terms of demanding that the government resolve the situation as soon as possible. If statistics on how much the war is costing the government were publicly available along with just reporting of the impact that the situation has had and continues to have on the economy of the country, the people may see that they have more of a vested interest in the resolution of the problem.

The border problems between Senegal and Guinea-Bissau must be addressed. The porous nature of the border and the ineffectiveness of its monitoring provide rebels with easy access to rear bases in Guinea-Bissau. It also allows for a substantial amount of cattle rustling and arms trafficking. In August of this year, the two countries have agreed upon increased border cooperation and even recently closed the border for brief periods.

The government must encourage economic and social development in the region. This is two-fold in that economic opportunities for the Casamancais will be substantial in quelling unrest due to marginalization concerns. At the same time, the government needs to offer rebels an option for their laying down arms. There is a certain profit that the rebels enjoy with their "work". Other viable alternatives need to be available in order to encourage their transition to a civil role.

The idea of increased regional autonomy needs to be rigorously investigated by the government. As independence is not a viable nor desired by the state, this is the only option that can realistically be pursued. The Casamancais have firmly established roots with their regional identity. Forcing them to submit to the Wolof-Islam model would have severe repercussions. At the same time, an effort must be made to integrate and convince the region that they also have a vested interest in the national identity.

The support for civil society is especially important. Change cannot be imposed upon society but must come from within. Recently, groups have been protesting both the MFDC and government's inability, or perceived unwillingness, to solve the problem.

Indigenous grassroots projects are utilizing very progressive techniques in addressing many issues in the conflict. USAID and the Association pour la Promotion Rurale de l'Arrondissement de Nyassia (AJAC) have begun a peace brokering project in some of the more devastated villages in the Ziguinchor area.

The main thrust of the program is to open communication between the rebels, the community, and the government. In the past, the community has been completely absent from the equation. This project is attempting to increase access to information, education, and communication while supporting the restoration of

the social tissue along with dialogue and inter-village exchanges for development of the Casamance. It is an attempt to restore the contentment of the base population that has suffered the most from the conflict. The project anticipates direct dialogue with not only Front Nord rebels but also Front Sud. The existence of such a project demonstrates how far the government has progressed in that these types of meetings are even allowed to take place. The development of alternatives for youth are essential. Lack of economic and education opportunities only provide inequities and frustrations for the next generation of rebels. If young men see no other alternatives, it will be quite easy for them to turn to the MFDC for options that the state has failed to provide for them.

In regards to negotiations, the government must include all parties. Any negotiated settlement without Front Sud participation will be difficult if not impossible to implement. The problem here is resolving the tensions between the southern and northern factions of MFDC. Regardless of whether or not the government encouraged a polarization and split of the movement, it has only provided problems in the dialogue. The sudistes regard their northern counterparts with disdain. The Front Nord is seen as betrayers of the movement not only by rebels but also by various segments of the population. The state needs to embrace the importance of the region, both in economic and national identity terms. Its potential to produce the majority of the food needs of the national population rather than relying heavily on imported foodstuffs is of paramount importance to the state. There should be no reason for the importation of rice when the Casamance is more than capable of providing the majority of the nation's needs.

L'hivernage, the rainy season, has historically marked an increase in fighting in the Casamance. The rains bring an increase in vegetation that is essential cover for the rebels and their guerilla war tactics. The crops are planted and one must wait out the rains before cultivating the fields. This means that people surviving only in a subsistence mode tend to experience the hardest time of the year as food stocks are at their lowest point. This is no exception for the MFDC rebels. A September 25th article on CNN.com reported that seven soldiers were injured in a clash with rebels outside the Ziguinchor area. The rebels will continue to test Wade's resolve as to whether or not he plans to begin negotiations. Organizations such as the Rencontre Africaine Pour La Defense Des Droits De L'Homme (RADDHO) have demanded "Peace Now!" and issued appeals to the president. Yet, Wade has yet to seriously pursue any type of dialogue with the MFDC.

The resolution of the Casamance war is essential for two reasons. The national identity has been severely wounded and the state cannot afford to lose the region's participation. It is in the country's best interest to economically develop the region. Food production, fishing, tourism, and oil are underdeveloped resources and the state is losing a substantial amount of national income. This development of the region must be prudent. The government must avoid pitfalls of previous regimes and question the center-periphery model. Exportation of resources from the region to Dakar for the benefit of non-Casamancais can no longer be acceptable if the conflict is to be resolved and the nation is to move forward in its development.