

“THE FLAG STILL STANDS!”
THE POLITICAL RECONVERSION OF THE INTERNALLY EXILED
INDEPENDENTISTS OF CASAMANCE

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Abstract

The article analyses the different trajectories of former combatants of the Mouvement des Forces Democratiques de Casamance (MFDC) in southern Senegal, focusing on the political prosecution of the armed struggle. If the independence demand is often present in their speech, it takes different forms and allows them to enter the local political life or become agents of the peace process. It is about trying to understand the motivations of actors and contextualize them in order to identify the mechanisms that lead to long-term dialogue and conflict resolution.

Keywords: militancy, political careers, identity, veterans, veterans, peace mechanisms

Introduction

The political prosecution of armed struggle by veterans depends on a series of personal and social factors. While research on this phenomenon has been numerous, the literature on related processes - such as "internal

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exile" of veterans - is less rich¹. By its typology, the Casamance conflict lends itself to studying the modes of "production" and political functioning of the demobilized paramilitary elements. The goal of our research is twofold. First, critically explain the historical evolution of the "liberation" movement of Casamance, emphasizing the separations and regroupings of the main factions involved in this conflict. Then, in the light of this synthesis, we will try to analyze the profiles of the independence ex-combatants in internal exile converted to political militancy.

To do this, we propose a plan in two large parts. The first will be devoted to the nature and historical evolution of the Casamance conflict, with a particular emphasis on the fragmentation and attempts to regroup the secessionist movement, whose power decreases from its pinnacle at the end of the 1980s, to its lower level in the mid-2010s. In the second part, we will deal with the question of the internal exile of veterans and especially the political future of internal exiles. We will present here the most relevant results of a sociological survey that we conducted in 2018 and in early 2019 in Casamance and in "metropolitan" Senegal, which consisted in identifying, interviewing and making dialogue with veterans belonging to different rebel groups in Casamance. This allowed us to establish a series of regularities and to sketch out a series of militant journeys, from the "maquisard without maquis" to the "notable repented" - portraits that we will present in this final part of our article, before drawing some conclusions.

The Casamance conflict: from rebellion to relative appeasement

For more than thirty years, Senegal has had to contend with a separatist rebellion in the south of the country. The Casamance region, located between The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau, has experienced periods of sometimes very violent conflict, punctuated by several cease-fires, to

¹ Jeffrey J. Ryan, „The Impact of Democratization on Revolutionnary Movements“ in *Comparative Politics*, no. 27(1), 1994.

today stagnate in a situation of "neither peace nor war" . If secret meetings with nationalist hints had been taking place for several years², we often remember December 26, 1982, to mark the beginning of events, when the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) organized a large peaceful demonstration in favor of independence in Ziguinchor. The symbolic goal of this march was to win the Senegalese flag of governance. Mamadou Nkrumah Sané and Abbé Diamacoune, the main ideologues of the movement, were arrested a few days earlier³. To remove the Senegalese flag and replace it with a white flag was a strong symbol. The gendarmes, panicked, shoot at the crowd; victims are identified on both sides. This march remains for the MFDC a highlight of the movement's history. The support of the population was essential to legitimize the armed struggle. The MFDC is positioned as the spokesman of a population abandoned by the state, suffering from a weak economic development and the spoliation of its natural wealth by foreigners. Casamance is also under great pressure on land. The law on the National Estate, passed in 1964 but applied in the late 1970s, allows the administration to appropriate land which are not registered. Encouraged by drought, many Northerners take advantage of the land in this green region. Land acquired on the coast is often used to build hotel complexes. Locals suffer more than they take advantage of the tourism potential of their region: hotels encroach on their productive space and appeal to the more qualified people of the North to compose their staff⁴. The MFDC can take advantage of "the political vacuum (...) which gives it a quasi-monopoly in the representation of the Casamance evil"⁵. The movement became more radical from December 1983. The political

² Mohamed Lamine Manga, *La Casamance dans l'histoire contemporaine du Sénégal*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012.

³ René Capain Bassène, *Casamance. Récits d'un conflit oublié (1982-2014)*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2015.

⁴ Jean-Claude Marut, *Le conflit de Casamance. Ce que disent les armes*, Paris: Karthala, 2010.

⁵ Jean-Claude Marut, „Le dessous des cartes casamançaises. Une approche géopolitique du conflit casamançais” in François George Barbier-Wiesser (dir.), *Comprendre la Casamance. Chronique d'une intégration contrastée*, Paris: Karthala, 1994, p. 205.

leaders were then in prison, leaving more space for Atika, the armed wing led by Sidy Badji, which became a maquis in 1985⁶.

Many people interpret the Casamance crisis in light of the region's poor development. Geneviève Gasser shows that some young people engaged in the maquis would be ready to leave if they had more chances to find a job. It raises the question of whether historical resistance and identity ties could give way to a recovery of the Senegalese economy and the creation of new jobs. It would then be necessary to ask whether behind the secessionist threat lies the search for a better integration with the Senegalese socioeconomic group⁷. Marut shows instead that the region suffers from excessive development. It is one of the few to have experienced such an influx of workforce and capital. Rather, practices are problematic. By massively allocating land to foreigners and Senegalese in the north, the state encourages inequalities and the destruction of the natural environment. Senegal considers that resources such as groundnuts belong to the national domain and assumes all exploitation rights. The Casamance do not oppose the progress of the region but rather "a rentier conception of resources, which has all the features of a colonial "enhancement", even in the way to look at the natives"⁸. Others believe that ethnicity must be understood to better understand the formulation of the independence claim. The MFDC has always claimed to represent all ethnicities. Yet its leaders rely more on the joola tradition to build their discourse and Casamance identity. Although they understood that they had to give a regional dimension to their struggle, they still use mainly traditional joola referents to legitimize their struggle, for example by evoking the Joola's resistance to colonization⁹. The register of the joola

⁶ Séverine Awenengo-Dalberto, „Le conflit casamançais. Matrices, émergences et évolutions” in *Revista de Política Internacional*, no. XI-XII, 2008, pp. 116-145.

⁷ Geneviève Gasser, „Etre jeune à Ziguinchor” in *Autrepart*, no. 18, 2001, pp. 143-156.

⁸ Jean-Claude Marut, „Le problème casamançais est-il soluble dans l'Etat-nation ?” in Momar-Coumba Diop, *Le Sénégal contemporain*, Paris: Karthala, 2002, p. 437.

⁹ Paul Diédhiou, *L'identité joola en question (Casamance). La bataille idéologique du MFDC pour l'indépendance*, Paris: Karthala, 2011.

tradition mobilized by the MFDC masks in reality "the modernity of its claim¹⁰". The nation-state is indeed a notion absent from pre-colonial joola societies. The movement carries out a real cultural work in order to "build and fix the joola identity under a Casamance mask¹¹"; Senegal has thus failed to produce a Senegalese identity in the south of the country¹².

We have proposed several reading grids to understand the birth of the separatist speech, it is necessary now to stop a moment on the MFDC to seize its formation, its evolution and its divisions. As emphasized by Christian Roche, the guerrillas have suffered very harsh living conditions and had to follow a formation of guerrillas being unarmed at first. If the ammunition finally arrived from Arabic-speaking countries such as Libya, "one of the main concerns of the combatants evaluated at a thousand, in the decade 1990-2000, was to find food¹³". The Amnesty International report pointed to the MFDC's abuses against the people it is supposed to represent. For many years, they did not hesitate to kill civilians suspected of colluding with the state or to raid villages to steal money and food reserves. These episodes of violence forced people to take refuge in urban centers or in neighboring Guinea-Bissau and Gambia¹⁴. In 1991, the MFDC came out politically reinforced from a cease-fire concluded with Senegal, since they are recognized like an interlocutor of the central power¹⁵. They demand the departure of the Senegalese military and take advantage of it to control a greater part of the Casamance territory. The leader of the northern maquis at that time, Kamougué Diatta, initially opposed to this

¹⁰ Séverine Awenengo-Dalberto, „A qui appartient la paix? Résolution du conflit, compétitions et recompositions identitaires en Casamance (Sénégal)" in *Journal des anthropologues*, no. 104-105, 2006, pp. 2, 79-108.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 15.

¹³ Christian Roche, *La Casamance face à son destin*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2016, p. 143.

¹⁴ Amnesty International, *Sénégal. La terreur en Casamance*, Paris: Les éditions françaises d'Amnesty International, 1998.

¹⁵ Jean-Claude Marut, „Guerre et paix en Casamance. Repères pour un conflit, 1990-1993" in François George Barbier-Wiesser (dir.), *Comprendre la Casamance. Chronique d'une intégration contrastée*, Paris: Karthala, 1994, p. 219.

ceasefire, runs his territory as if the state no longer existed, without the agreement of the leadership of the MFDC. The people had to pay him a contribution instead of paying their taxes. His commitment to the independence of the region is quickly challenged as he seems ready to negotiate with the government, which weakens the movement, while a hard core is formed around Diamacoune, Nkrumah Sané and Leopold Sagna (at the head of the South Front)¹⁶. When the latter went to Dakar in 1993 to meet and discuss with Abdou Diouf, he was quickly dismissed from his duties and it is the rising face of the South Front, Salif Sadio, who is now in charge of military operations¹⁷. In 1993, Diamacoune agreed to a new ceasefire, signed with Senegal's Minister of Armed Forces, Madia Mary Dieng. He calls for peace since Ziguinchor, which will be strongly criticized by Nkrumah Sané¹⁸. In 1997, Salif Sadio's South Front retreated to the north bank of the Casamance River and attempted to take over the Sidy Badji camps. In 2000, he had Leopold Sagna killed and separated from the "lukewarm" of his camp by having them locked up in "very narrow bunkers, without food or water"¹⁹. The military wing and the political wing move away from each other. Diamacoune decides to follow the line of the government announcing the manhunt of Salif Sadio after it has committed very violent attacks. Father Diamacoune wants to be the legitimate interlocutor of the MFDC and holds ambiguous speeches, oscillating between the need for peace and development in the region and the impossible negotiation of independence²⁰. The MFDC is becoming more fragile, especially since Dakar is getting closer to Guinea-Bissau, which until recently supported the rebellion indirectly by allowing it to take refuge in its territory or by giving free rein to arms trafficking. Following the peace agreement of March 2001, signed by Diamacoune but discredited

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ Christian Roche, *op.cit.*

¹⁸ Jean-Claude Marut, „Guerre et paix en Casamance”, *op.cit.*

¹⁹ Roche, *op.cit.*, p. 153.

²⁰ Vincent Foucher, „Pas d'alternance en Casamance ? Le nouveau pouvoir sénégalais face à la revendication séparatiste casamançaise” in *Politique africaine*, no. 91, 2003, pp. 101-119.

by Nkrumah Sané, the priest continues to play on ambivalence by asking the state to build a University of Casamance and to make the opening up of the region. One could see there not the will "to get out of the whole Senegalese, but to participate better"²¹. Until 2006, the region is experiencing a period of calm, which ends when Salif Sadio speaks through the radio SUD FM. The state intends to use the internal divisions and the factions of Mangne Diémé and Cesar Atoute Badiate, helped by the Guinea Bissau and Senegalese army, come to put pressure on Sadio. It is a waste of time, the latter being supported by mercenaries from Liberia and Sierra Leone²². There are many divisions within the separatists. Vincent Foucher notes that the paradox of the MFDC is that its survival has been made possible by the decentralization of the movement into several factions, making it extremely weak²³. One question remains unresolved, that of the MFDC's sources of funding. In addition to possible donations from the Casamance diaspora and the theft of livestock or food resources, Evans Martin highlights the timber and cashew trade in which both the separatists and the soldiers of the Senegalese army are involved. As for the production and sale of cannabis, we can not overestimate them; if some maquisards ask for a tax on Indian hemp producers, in no case they control the entire chain of production²⁴.

The Senegalese state seems helpless against a rebellion that masters the terrain on which it is evolving. Taking care not to undermine its image of a democratic state with the international community, Senegal is careful

²¹Geneviève Gasser, „<Manger ou s'en aller>: que veulent les opposants armés casamançais ?" in Momar-Coumba Diop, *Le Sénégal contemporain*, Paris: Karthala, 2002, p. 488.

²² Mohamed Lamine Manga, *op. cit.*

²³ Vincent Foucher, „The Resilient Weakness of Casamançais Separatists" in Morten Boas and Kevin C. Dunn, *African Guerrillas: Raging against the Machine*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2007.

²⁴Martin Evans, „Ni paix ni guerre: the Political Economy of Low-Level Conflict in the Casamance" in Sarah Collisons (ed.), *Power, Livelihoods and Conflict: Case Studies in Political Economy Analysis for Humanitarian Action*, London: Overseas Development Institute, Background for Humanitarian Policy Group Report, no. 13, 2003, pp. 37-52.

to not use methods too brutal, even if Amnesty International had denounced the human rights violations of the army on the Casamance populations. The NGO noted cases of torture and humiliation intended to spread terror and to push the population to denounce²⁵. Many people have also been reported missing, while others have been victims of extrajudicial executions. In the face of increasing tension, the state must act. On January 1, 1981, Léopold Sédar Senghor leaves the baton to Abdou Diouf, who reinstates political pluralism while banning "the creation of political parties based on ethnic or religious affiliations". Which meant that the MFDC could not be considered a political party²⁶. During the Diouf period, the emissaries of the state endeavored to divide the rebellion by dialoguing with those of the North Front led by Sidy Badji. In 1992, Diouf also promised decentralization and therefore more power for the regions. This solution appears as a means of defusing tensions while strengthening the integration of regions²⁷. In July 1997, the Senegalese authorities noted a proliferation of antipersonnel and anti-tank mines in Casamance. They come mostly from old stocks of weapons left behind by the Portuguese colonizer in Guinea-Bissau and would have been made available to the MFDC by senior Guinea-Bissau military officials²⁸. Abdou Diouf also gives a socio-economic response to the Casamance conflict. In the short term, this amounts to "feeding the cantonments of the North Front and finance the development of economic activities in exchange for maintaining their abandonment of the armed struggle²⁹". When Abdoulaye Wade was elected in 2000, he broke with the formalism of the Diouf years by inviting Diamacoune to the presidential palace and multiplying the meetings with the leaders of the MFDC³⁰. Wade sets up a Peace Management

²⁵ Amnesty International, *op.cit.*

²⁶ Paul Diédhiou, *op.cit.*, p. 271.

²⁷ Jean-Claude Marut, „Le dessous des cartes casamançaises”, *op.cit.*.

²⁸ Boucounta Diallo, *La crise casamançaise. Problématique et voies de solution*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009.

²⁹ Séverine Awenengo-Dalberto, *op.cit.*

³⁰ Manga, *op. cit.*

Commission, led by General Mamadou Niang and Youba Sambou, a native from Casamance who is then Senegalese Armed Forces Minister³¹. He also wants to ban foreign intermediaries in the peace process³². Wade sets up a real "policy of seduction" for fighters: subsidies are paid to those who agree to give up the fight to resettle in civilian life³³. Care is also provided to the sick and tens of millions of CFA francs are paid to the abbot and his close associates³⁴. Peace agreements are signed in 2004 but remain without effect because the South Front refuses to collaborate. Nevertheless, they allow the launch of the program of economic and social activities in Casamance (PRAESC) "established the previous year on the financial basis of the promises of donors and whose management is devolved to a new government agency, the Agency National Council for the Reconstruction of Casamance (ANRAC)³⁵". Macky Sall came to power in 2012 and decided to call on international experts, including the Catholic NGO Sant'Egidio to get closer to Salif Sadio. In 2014, he went to Casamance with a list of projects such as new boats, the electrification of villages, the construction of a train between Ziguinchor and Tambacounda³⁶ ... The Senegalese government continues to offer economic and development solutions to a problem that is fundamentally political.

What about today? The MFDC is burst. Within the armed wing, Salif Sadio's men, who now constitute the North Front, seem to have detached themselves from the MFDC and are no longer recognized by Secretary-General Nkrumah Sané³⁷. Sadio is challenged in his area by Lamanara Sambou, while Caesar Atoute Badiate is implanted in the south. The latter seems more favorable to discussions with Dakar but must deal with many

³¹Roche, *op.cit.*

³²Vincent Foucher, *op. cit.*, 2003.

³³ Roche, *op.cit.*

³⁴ *Ibidem.*

³⁵ Séverine Awenengo-Dalberto, *op.cit.*

³⁶ Roche, *op.cit.*

³⁷ Informations obtained in an interview with Mamadou Nkrumah Sané, October 2018.

dissident rebel leaders³⁸. As for the political pole, it seems also more divided than ever. Nkrumah Sané continues, since his exile in Paris, to direct part of the MFDC, which does not recognize the seat of the party built by Abdou Elinkine in Ziguinchor. Finally, MFDC veterans would have come together in a "contact group", which presents itself as an intermediary between the MFDC and the state, although it is disavowed by the current Secretary General. In 2014, ANRAC has a total of 52,800 IDPs, 20,000 refugees in The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau and 8,000 IDPs in Ziguinchor³⁹. It estimates the number of guerrillas to 2,300 in 2006⁴⁰, although they would be only a few hundred today⁴¹. If ANRAC has a section devoted to the demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, it is difficult to find official information on the actions taken and the fate of the combatants who decide to leave the maquis. For the most part, they would convert to private security or agriculture, while others would benefit from a training program in craftsmanship set up by the Senegalese state⁴².

To continue the armed struggle by political means: an objective, several strategies?

As we have seen in our ample historical analysis, after an initial period of emergence and then consolidation from 1980 to 1991, the Casamance rebel movement experienced a period of weakening that was marked, particularly in the period between from 1992 to 2000 through a process of demobilization and "self-demobilization" of rebel fighters. As part of this process, we can distinguish several trajectories of Casamance activists. Most of the veterans remain in Casamance, but for different

³⁸Amadou Ndiaye, *Conflits armés et résilience, dans l'univers des femmes de Kaguïtte (Casamance)*, Saint-Denis: Edilivre, 2018.

³⁹ Amadou Ndiaye, *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰ Boucounta Diallo, *op.cit*.

⁴¹ According to a workfield (2017) of Sergiu Mișcoiu (Babeș-Bolyai University, Romania)

⁴² Informations obtained with Enzo Fasquelle, Science Po Paris student.

reasons, mainly related to lack of resources, no longer make war and pursue other concerns to meet their needs. Some join the maquis in Guinea-Bissau or disperse in The Gambia, where they rarely get political asylum. Others leave Casamance and Senegal, abandoning any military or political activity. Finally, one last part (which can be estimated to be at the level of a hundred people) leave Casamance, but stay in Senegal to pursue the politically fight.

It is this latter category that particularly interests us here for at least two reasons. Firstly, because the Casamance "internal exiles" correspond a priori to the typology of the repentant fighter, amply present in the wake of armed conflicts across the globe. And so to look at their case could allow us to draw lessons likely to be generalizable on a regional level, even international. Secondly, while having left Casamance for at least twenty years, it is likely that they have a more detached but still very interested in the conflict in which they were involved. As such, they constitute a non-negligible source of new and qualitative information and observations (which any wise researcher should consider, with a good dose of precaution). But it is especially the proper interpretation that these former rebels retrospectively made of the reality of their struggle and the motivations for their involvement, their actions, their initial paramilitary engagement, their subsequent defection and their reorientation towards political prosecution. of the armed struggle that interested us the most here.

If we look at the hundred or so "internal exiles" who left Casamance to settle somewhere in "metropolitan" Senegal, we can easily identify two sub-categories that are roughly equal in terms of their numbers. The first is composed of veterans who left Casamance in the years 1992-1993, after the great split between "collaborators" followers of the "pacified" fringe of Sidi Badji and Kamougué Diatta, having accepted the agreements of Cacheu and "radicals" (The faithful of Father Diamacoune and the Southern Front of the MFDC). No longer having access to the necessary resources to continue their struggle and being the witnesses and sometimes the very actors of the fratricidal war that tore apart their formerly solid and feared

movement, these fighters demobilized rather quickly and left the province. For the most part, for fear of reprisals. The second group consists of fighters who have gradually left Casamance, following the aggravation of divisions and internal conflicts within the rebel factions (1994-2001). The consecutive tears of the two initial factions, including the war between the groups of Leopold Sagna, assisted by the army of Guinea Bissau and that of Salif Sadio, and then the blurring of the fronts through the emergence of the Djibidione Group, which became the most violent and intolerant group compared to other factions, pushed separatist veterans to a second wave of departures. As for the locations of the relocation of these two groups, we can estimate that about sixty of them have moved to Dakar, that probably about twenty has taken the path of Saint-Louis and the others live in Thies, Kaolack, Mbour and Joal-Fadiouth. In our survey, we found that these veterans eventually formed at least three groups: two in Dakar (one with arrivals from the early 1990s and the other mixed, including arrivals from both periods) and one in St. Louis. After having laid down their arms and left their native province, these former paramilitaries converted to different professions, including commerce, medicine and religion. They are mainly men (9 out of 10), the few women fighting remained in Casamance after their demobilization.

The field survey consisted of 23 interviews (14 in Dakar, 5 in Saint-Louis, 2 in Thiès and 2 in Joal) and a focus group. The latter was organized in Dakar, with 9 demobilized from all ages (1992-2001). The objective was, through the dynamics of the discussions, to understand the motivations of the participants' behaviors in relation to the evolution of the conflict and the reasons for their involvement in various forms of political prosecution of the armed struggle. Following the analysis and interpretation, we were able to establish four broad profiles corresponding to militant journeys leading to the current forms of engagement: the *maquisard* without *maquis*, the reinstated militant, the repentant and the martyrdom.

(1) The "maquisard without maquis" is an old person, frustrated, self-marginalized (by not being able to reintegrate after the departure of Casamance) and generally very antisystem. According to his reflections, he "would have liked to continue the struggle, but had no valid allies" (M.N., 68, Saint-Louis). His view of the MFDC is particularly critical: he blames the movement for its organizational inability, even during its "glory" years, and even more so, it blames the factionalism that undermined the foundations of the separatism. Today, he is still involved in secessionist propaganda, but fears retaliation and, as a result, he is politically involved in a rather moderate and indirect way. The "maquisard without maquis" is favorable to any action likely to consolidate the opposition against the power in place in Dakar, whatever it is. For example, he is supporting the city's ousted mayor, Khalifa Sall, incarcerated for corruption, against outgoing President Macky Sall.

"Our fight will stop only when the Senegalese state recognizes the total and effective independence of our country, Casamance. We will work there even in our graves" (P.N., 70 years old, Dakar)

(2) The "reinstated activist" is in most cases a man in his fifties who has managed to integrate partially into the host mini-societies, generally far removed from the Senegalese government and sometimes even hostile towards it. Having confidence in his strength, while considering himself "respected" (AA, 55 years old, Thiès), he continues a form of combat through local political activism (for example, in a district of Dakar or Saint-Louis, in a parish or in a local confraternity). He may think he is acting in favor of the MFDC or other dissident groups under the cover of local NGOs, which gives him some degree of legitimacy and respectability in the eyes of his (former) comrades. As a result, he can claim to act as a non-institutionalized mediator, a sort of bridge between the MFDC and the state, benefiting, in turn, favors from both. He thus imagines himself

becoming a real "node" of network between the separatists and the public authorities. In this sense, the observation of an interviewee is revealing:

"Peace, we only get there if we speak on two voices" (S.N., 57 a., Dakar)

On the other hand, this positioning also leads to criticisms that are sometimes very harsh on the part of other actors. Thus, the bearer of this profile, embodied in our research by several subjects, is described by the "true" fighters for the independence of Casamance as being that of a "businessman of false secessionism" or even as that of a "mafia". (D.N., 67 years old, Dakar).

(3) The "repentant" is a veteran, now rather old, who has changed sides, since he was generally marginalized in his maquis (more likely as a member of the Southern Front, outside the multiple repositioning of his factions). Recovered, following his defection, by the agents of the Senegalese State (the secret services, the army or other structures of influence), he changes sides and becomes anti-secessionist. It is now a profession of faith to support the state against separatists. Taking seriously the role of "repentant", he denounces himself for the errors of the past and reifies the process of his conversion to set an example for those who still remain attached to the secessionist cause. Posing in integrated Casamance, moderate in his aspirations, defending the path of negotiation and compromise and supporting at most the claim for greater autonomy of the region, he claims to fight the extremists he knows from within "the blindness, relentlessness and slippage" (FO, 68, Dakar). Some "repentants" have a conciliatory discourse, adopting a civic discourse (the Senegalese nation above ethnicity, the common construction of a social project above any separatist inclination). Today, the influence of the "repentant" is variable, but generally much weaker in reality than in his speech, since he is perceived in Casamance as being a "Nordist". Position openly assumed by some of them:

"After the splits of the 1990s, it became clear that it was better to side with the winners" (D.D., 69, St. Louis)

(4) The "martyr" is usually someone who had to leave Casamance as he was being pursued by the Senegalese authorities. Now aged, he is Catholic, self-qualifying as "worthy and among the only true fighters of the Casamance cause" (K.N., 70, Thiès). He received short and medium term convictions for participating in the maquis. The "martyrdom" remains attached in principle to the cause of independence and even favorable to the idea of a new general insurrection in Casamance, but he is aware of its improbability. By dint of preaching civil disobedience compared to a "totalitarian" state, he has become a kind of "mini-guru": he inspires a few young people (usually no more than a handful), often explaining independentist struggle as a form of Christian dissent in the face of Islamic intolerance:

"The Christian Casamançais Diola are the new martyrs, immolated on the altar of their faith by Muslim fundamentalists sent by Dakar" (P.A., 73 years old, Joal-Fadiouth)

Conclusion

The analysis that we have done here reveals, first of all, the persistence of the "Casamance question" as a problem perceived as real and still dead-end by the different former actors of the conflict, but also by a number of Senegalese and Casamances influencing factors. If the scale of the conflict has gradually decreased, it would be inappropriate to requalify it as a diffuse dispute between the bearers of regional interests and the central state, as some pro-government analysts do. Then, we can observe that the transformation of the armed rebellion into a political conflict was accompanied by the demobilization of a large part of the veterans, converted in various forms and to varying degrees into political agents. We have found that the attachment to the separatist cause is variable, but this

being the case, the preoccupation with the "Casamance question" remains particularly alive among veterans, regardless of their current position in relation to the evolution of the situation. Finally, this persistence of attachment in relation to Casamance can also be explained in pragmatic terms: it allows some people to make their way in local politics, others to have enough visibility to access resources, to some to transform themselves into peace negotiators, and finally to others to make themselves useful to state institutions. It would therefore be wise to take into account all the actors' motivations and contextualize them in order to try to understand and explain the mechanisms that allow conflicts - such as the Casamance conflict - to evolve in the direction of solutions, long-term peace and reconciliation.

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