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# The Casamance conflict : un-imagining a community.

Sandra Tombe  
*University of Louisville*

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THE CASAMANCE CONFLICT: UN-IMAGINING A COMMUNITY

By

Sandra Tombe  
B.A., Berea College, 2014  
M.A., University of Louisville, 2016

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the  
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University of Louisville  
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2016

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A Thesis Approved on

April 8, 2016

By the following Thesis Committee:

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Bonnie Fonseca-Greber

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Dr. David Buckley

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Dr. Rodger Payne

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Dr. Matthieu Dalle

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents Tranquilina Joseph Kenyi Lungu,  
Kazi Yugusuk Tombe, Lillie Shelly, and William Shelly,

Who love me deeply, sacrifice much for me,  
continue to support my academic pursuits,  
and pray for me.

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## ABSTRACT

### THE CASAMANCE CONFLICT: UN-IMAGNING A COMMUNITY

Sandra Tombe

April 8, 2016

The Casamance conflict in the southern region of Senegal started in 1982, when protestors rallying after the MFDC pulled down the Senegalese flag from public buildings in Ziguinchor calling for independence of the Casamance region. The movement based its claim for an independent Casamance on the different colonial history that distinguished it from the rest of Senegal. Surprisingly, it was not until later in the development of the movement that ethnic, linguistic, religious, and regional differences between the two regions came to factor into the MFDC's platform.

This thesis then seeks to examine why and when these dimensions come to be part of the movement's rationale. In particular, it argues that the Casamançais identity has not always existed as such, it has rather been imagined into a political identity seeking independence by the MFDC. the MFDC imagined this politicized Casamançais identity that gave it legitimacy, it is un-imagining it today by maintaining favorable ties with the Dakar-based government, relying on external support from the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau, and exploiting the very Casamançais population on behalf of which it claims to fight. The thesis assesses biases in news articles and examines comments of individuals published on Senegalese and Casamançais online newspapers to show evidence of un-imagining.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	3
METHODOLOGY.....	16
BACKGROUND ON CONFLICT AND REGION.....	20
DIFFERENT HISTORIES, COLONIAL LEGACIES, STATE POLICIES.....	27
IMAGINING A CASAMANCAIS IDENTITY.....	35
Role of Father Diamacoune.....	36
Letters of Father Diamacoune.....	37
UN-IMAGINING A COMMUNITY.....	44
Fragmentation within the MFDC.....	45
Reliance on External Support.....	48
Exploitation of Local Casamançais Populations.....	54
Evidence of Un-imagining Using Online Media.....	61
Combatting Un-imagining.....	68
CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS.....	76
REFERENCES.....	80

CURRICULUM VITA.....84

## INTRODUCTION

Between Algeria's 1991 post-election conflict and the Central African Republic's ongoing political and religious violence since 2013, the African continent has seen many civil wars post the Cold War. Its longest internal war in the west continues to unfold today in the southern Casamance region of Senegal, considered by many scholars to be an African exception due to its multiparty democratic traditions since independence and its overall successful multiethnic society (O'Brien 458). The conflict started in 1982 when protestors rallying after the Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance (MFDC) pulled down the Senegalese flag from public buildings in Ziguinchor (the regional capital of Casamance) to voice their dissatisfaction with the government. Dakar's immediate and violent response to quell the rebellion only led to the solidification of the Casamançais independence movement, which resulted in violent attacks from both warring sides.

Interestingly, however, the Casamance conflict is perhaps one of the least known African internal conflicts. Indeed, not even Guy Arnold's 1999 *Historical Dictionary of Civil Wars in Africa* mentions the then seventeen-year long conflict between the Senegalese state and the separatist MFDC. To be sure, the Casamance conflict, tallying roughly over a thousand victims during its peak years from 1992 to 2001, may understandably qualify as a low-level conflict (Faye 13). But as it has witnessed many unfulfilled cease-fire agreements and resisted many solutions, the Casamance conflict continues in its 33<sup>rd</sup> year without serious commitment from the Senegalese government or

the MFDC to resolve it. When attacks between the opposing sides first broke out, the MFDC based its claim for an independent Casamance on a different colonial history that distinguished it from the rest of Senegal. Later, the movement drew on ethnic, linguistic, religious, regional, and geographic differences between the two regions of Senegal in order to bolster its platform (Lambert 590). Yet despite the significance of these differences, they do not on the onset provide a foundation for the MFDC Casamance movement or give it the necessary momentum when they do become part of its rationale.

This thesis seeks to explore the interaction between these aspects and their contribution to the formation of a Senegalese and a Casamançais national identity, which then give rise to the Casamance conflict as well as aid in its persistence. I will show that the Casamance national identity has not always existed as such; that historical and social conditions that made a Casamançais identity helped the MFDC transform it into a nationalist one. I will also show how divided loyalties on the part of the MFDC in recent years has helped in the un-imagining of a Casamançais identity. Un-imagining draws from the work of Benedict Anderson on identity formation, *Imagined Communities*. Anderson's thesis is that ethnic and national identities are imagined into being, rather than naturally existing from prehistoric times. He does not use the term "un-imagining" in his work, but this thesis seeks to engage the idea and examine how un-imagining can reveal a different, and less positive process of identity change and formation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There is much literature exploring the origin of nationalist movements like the one southern Senegal experiences. But those origins depend on one's understanding of what a nation and nationalism are. In his famous 1882 essay, Ernest Renan suggested the following definition of a nation:

La nation, comme l'individu, est l'aboutissant d'un long passé d'efforts, de sacrifices et de dévouements. Un passé héroïque, des grands hommes, de la gloire (j'entends de la véritable), voilà le capital social sur lequel on assied une idée nationale. Avoir des gloires communes dans le passé, une volonté commune dans le présent ; avoir fait de grandes choses ensemble, vouloir en faire encore, voilà les conditions essentielles pour être un peuple...l'homme n'est esclave ni de sa race, ni de sa langue, ni de sa religion, ni du cours des fleuves, ni de la direction des chaînes de montagnes. Une grande agrégation d'hommes, saine d'esprit et chaude de cœur, crée une conscience morale qui s'appelle une nation. (Renan)

According to Renan, a nation is a psychological entity formed by a shared past that brings a people together. But his elimination of race, language, religion, and regional boundaries as markers of a nation is problematic because those factors often play a major role in shaping the past of a people. Perceived similarities of appearance, the ability to communicate, shared ideology, and special proximity are all vehicles, though not

necessarily the only ones, which facilitate the interactions of peoples and hence allow them the opportunity to create shared experiences. For this reason, Ernest Gellner's definitions seem more suitable:

1. Two men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture, where, culture in turn means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating.

2. Two men are of the same nation if and only if they recognize each other as belonging to the same nation. In other words, *nations maketh man*; nations are the artefacts of men's convictions and loyalties and solidarities...(7)

Gellner shows that there are cultural and a voluntaristic dimensions to nations, but neither provide a satisfying description. These definitions thus account for the omission in Renan's version as well as acknowledge nations as psychological constructs or, as Anderson defines them, "imagined political communities—imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6). Nations are imagined because "members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). It is then possible that different individuals who subscribe to the same national identity can have different perceptions of that particular identity. Nations are limited because they are bound by particular cultures or values beyond which other nations exist. They are furthermore sovereign because of the socio-political context of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century in which they rose. Lastly, nations are imagined as communities because they are "conceived as deep, horizontal, comradeship" (Anderson 6-7).

Responding to Gellner's definition of nationalism as the invention of nations where they do not exist, Anderson highlights the imagining of nations:

The drawback to [Gellner's formulation]...is that [he] is so anxious to show that nationalism masquerades under false pretenses that he assimilates "invention" to 'fabrication' and "falsity," rather than to "imagining" and "creation." In this way he implies that "true" communities exist which can be advantageously juxtaposed to nations. In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even those) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined. (6)

Nations can be imagined by those who subscribe to them as well as by external observers. An example that Anderson cites is the *ancien regime* of the French aristocracy. It was not until recently that it has come to be identified as such, but in pre-Revolution France, they were identified by their nobility and ties to the crown (6-7). Another example that is perhaps more relevant is the perception separatist movements—that is separatist movements in general and not particularly the case of Casamance—have of themselves and the perception observers have of them. They quite often imagine themselves as freedom fighters, as do those who support them of course. Others on the other hand may imagine them completely differently, labeling them as "rebels" or "bandits." In the process of the conflict, however, communities continue to imagine themselves, sometimes crossing over to others' perception or furthering their own to the extent that those identities become real to them.

As Anderson explains, this imagining is the result of the cultural roots of nationalism. Using 18<sup>th</sup> Century Europe as the point of reference, Anderson finds that the imagining of communities was only possible with the weakening of three cultural conceptions from antiquity. First is the decline of religion through the rethinking of script-languages, that is, sacred languages like Latin and Arabic which are thought to have been inherently inseparable from the truth of Christianity or Islam (14). As vernacular languages cemented themselves in various territories and regions and challenged the hegemony and exclusivity of Latin and Arabic, they foreshadowed the imagining of nations. The second conception was the decline in power of dynasties. Anderson observes that the societies of the past were organized around and defined by centers, explaining the paradox of a monarch's ability to control a vast periphery of land with diverse populations. As discussions of sovereignty challenged the idea of divine rule that often accompanied monarchies, another basis for nationalism was under way (21). The third conception to allow for the imagining of communities is temporality, where "cosmology and history were indistinguishable" (Anderson 21).

But if nations and group identities are imagined because of the decline of those conceptions, one must provide an explanation as to why nations would change in any other manner besides being imagined differently. In other words, how does un-imagining explain the Casamance conflict in a way that imagining does not? This is a legitimate question for two reasons. The first reason is that, as it is by now evident, Anderson himself does not employ the term "un-imagining." The second reason that calls for the above question is that imagining still means that nations can change or evolve by imagining themselves differently. No doubt, the three conceptions that Anderson gives for the beginning of the

imagining of communities are irreversible changes. Contemporary societies can imagine themselves into something else, but they cannot imagine themselves back to societies of pre-antiquity, or to a previous identity in recent collective memory for that matter. Imagining of nations therefore, as a forward-moving process of identity creation and recreation, is particularly seen by Anderson as a positive process. Thinking of nations as “imagined” or “created” as opposed to “invented” as Gellner suggests is a reflection of the positivity of that nation creation process.

Un-imagining then seeks to reflect negative processes of identity change. Bearing in mind the irreversibility of imagining communities, however, un-imagining cannot simply be the reversion to a previous identity regardless of how removed that identity is from the present. I therefore define un-imagining as the intentional and unintentional rejection of an identity brought about by actions of the involved actors. Un-imagining does not purport to reclaim the previous national identity or identities of a group, it rather refers to the actions of elite agents that slowly contribute to the refusal of that particular identity by the individuals who subscribe to it who, in turn, begin to un-imagine this very same identity. Furthermore, though imagining is an organic process, un-imagining, can be organic and inorganic. The intentional rejection of an identity refers to the well-executed actions of agents that bring about the undoing of a particular identity. Unintentional un-imagining of a community refers to the unintended consequences of actions taken by elite actors.

As a communal identity is fundamental to nations, the latter is the bedrock of nationalism, a new ism which also rose to prominence in the eighteenth century. It is a

political principle which proposes that a nation be governed by a state that reflects its boundaries:

Nationalism is a doctrine [that] pretends to supply a criterion for the determination of the unit of population proper to enjoy a government exclusively its own, for the legitimate exercise of power in the state, and for the right organization of a society of states. Briefly, the doctrine holds that humanity is naturally divided into nations, that nations are known by certain characteristics which can be ascertained, and that the only legitimate type of government is national self-government. (Kedourie 1)

Accordingly, a group that shares certain characteristics such as language, religion, and geographic boundaries should have a political leadership or a state that reflects that particular make-up. Indeed, nationalism does not only call for the alignment of political and national boundaries; as a theory of political legitimacy, it says that nations have a right to self-government, to self-determination.

Within nationalism, there are two approaches that seek to explain how self-determination secessionist movements arise. The first, highlighted by Kedourie's formulation above, is the traditional or primordialist thought. Primordialism holds that humans have belonged to a group with which they share commonality since time immemorial. They thus see nations as a natural division of peoples that have been sustained throughout history (Fearon 6). Aïssatou Fall builds on the same thinking when she states that the Casamance identity is marked primarily by its culture rooted in the past and defined by an unchanging geography. She emphasizes the differences in values and beliefs between

the two main regions of Senegal, the “forest people” of Casamance and their northern counterparts from the “arid zones” (Fall 9). While important, those differences sharpen the divide between the two regions by overlooking the commonalities, which increasingly complicate the claims of the separatist movement.

Primordialism further posits that violations of self-determination outrages “proper nations.” Therefore, according to the Primordialist account, the cause of separatist movements is the violation of the principle of political legitimacy (Fearon 7). I however think that the reality that not all proper nations are moved to action when their self-determination is violated poses a great challenge to primordialism. Senegal, our case in question, is made of seventeen large ethnic groups that can further be divided into four groups: the Wolof, the Hal Pulaar, the Sub-Ginean, and the Mande (Faye 9). But only the Sub-Guinean group, particularly the Diola ethnic group within the Lower Casamance region spearheads the Casamance nationalist movement. Unless primordialists define “proper” nations as those that seek self-determination, it stands that there are others factors at play when a community claims independence because of its national identity.

In stark contrast to primordialism, modernist thinking on nationalism rejects the claim that nations have always existed. While it recognizes the existence of shared cultural space and identity markers, modernism argues that these elements operated on a very small and local level; “...identities in premodern times tended to be face-to-face and operated on a small scale,” says Varshney, “ordinary people rarely interacted beyond their local environments” (31). Thus, nations as we know them are modern creations shaped by modern social, cultural, and political forces in operation. Within in modernism, many schools of thought see nations and ethnicity as recent creations of social, political, and

economic realities, but they differ on how those dimensions influence the creation of a larger identity and how, in turn, those identities lead to conflict or separatist movements.

Postmodernism holds that power is sustained by knowledge, that objective knowledge is but a narrative articulated by the knowledgeable elites, and that those narratives have their own political, social, and cultural implications. From these premises, postmodernists argue that the elites are the ones who create an identity because they monopolize knowledge, its creation, and dissemination, affirming the well-known saying and its converse: knowledge is power (Varshney 32). On the other hand, constructivists like Anderson come from the opposing angle and argue that nations are not necessarily only the creation of an elite-centered narrative; grassroots mobilization of individuals can challenge and weaken the power structure, thereby creating lasting national and ethnic identities beyond the nuclear level (33). From Gellner and Anderson's perspective in particular, modern technology as a source of knowledge is accessible to elites as well as to the masses. Through those technologies—print capitalism, and social media in particular—the average member of society too can construct larger identities. To Anderson, those modern resources allow individuals to imagine rather than construct larger national identities; and because those nations are imagined, they can form and disintegrate even when all the basic characteristics that make their imagining possible are still in full play (Anderson 45).

Although postmodernists and constructivists diverge and see nations as a creation of elites and as a creation of an organic process, respectively, they converge with regards to post-colonial societies and agree that colonial powers created the contemporary ethnic divisions in order to maintain their power. Those divisions, whether they be Hindu-Muslim

in India and Pakistan or Hutu-Tutsi in Rwanda, are enduring identities that will be in existence for a long time. Colonialism has thus “instituted enduring hierarchies of subjects and knowleges—the colonizer and the colonized, the Occidental and the Oriental, the civilized and the primitive, the scientific and the superstitious, the developed and the underdeveloped...not because of the colonizer’s bad faith but due to the functioning of colonial power” (in Varshney 34). And those distinctions will indeed be relevant to the Casamance conflict, where Senegal is often referred to as a contemporary colonial power.

However, a significant difference between postmodernists and constructivists lies in their understanding of facts and how they relate to identity creation. To postmodernists, facts are very much convoluted by their own representation that they become undiscernible as such. Facts about an incident involving a Muslim and a Jew, for example, is manipulated to sustain a preexisting narrative, the “master narrative,” of a Muslim-Jew historical antagonism (Varshney 33). Truth, particularly in the context of identity conflicts, is thus impossible to establish because it is inseparable from its representation, so argue postmodernists. Social science can therefore only examine discourses and representations of facts. On the other hand, constructivists believe that facts are discernible and that their incorporation into an established narrative does not necessarily mean they will always apply to all situations. “Whether facts can be established is an empirical question,” says Varshney of the constructivist stance, “not a theoretical one” (33).

A more recent modernist school of thought, an economy-based theory, takes a different approach and emphasizes the material foundations for the rise of nationalism and nationalist movements. According to what has come to be known as the greed hypothesis, “incidences of rebellion are not explained by motives, but by the atypical circumstances

that generate profit” (Collier and Hoeffler 546). Nationalist movements are motivated not by a national identity sustained through shared history or culture, although those can and do exist; they are rather motivated by economic gains. But, the challenge with the greed-hypothesis is that not all atypical circumstances would lead to an uprising; therefore, the movements that do form have to have a foundation that is not merely economic.

Interestingly, Wagane Faye uses the hypothesis to further study the Casamance conflict and argues that the MFDC today is motivated by war economy; “a movement initially motivated in large part by grievance, then opportunity, has become one driven almost entirely by greed (48). It is certainly a relevant approach considering the economic motivations of colonization, particularly in the African context. But while Faye’s grievance-to-greed analysis of the Casamance conflict shows that motives and objectives of the movement have changed and evolved, the economic approach downplays the social, cultural, and historic factors (the grievance hypothesis) which are still at play today. “The idea here is not that a materialistic approach is of no use to understand political mobilization in contemporary Africa,” says Vincent Foucher; it is that it hinders a “broader, more encompassing understanding of materiality...[one] that takes into account the experiences and perceptions of nationhood held by a broader set of characters” (83). That Foucher treats materiality as a factor among many for political mobilization allows for a holistic approach to the Casamance identity question.

Another theory that is also insightful given the pluralist society of Senegal is institutionalism, which holds that conflict and peace in a culturally and ethnically pluralistic state are determined by the type of political institutions in which they operate. A federal or unitary type of government, along with the voting system in place, can

influence ethnic violence or peace (Varshney 36). Institutionalism is best expressed by Arend Lijphart's theory of consociationalism, which argues that elites must compromise in order for pluralist democracies to reduce the potential of ethnic violence. Such compromise would come about through a political system that works on intergroup consensus (Varshney 37).

It is perhaps evident that primordialism does little in helping us better understand the Casamançais conflict. Modernism on the other hand offers richer perspectives and approaches, which demonstrate the complexity of the Casamance conflict. Considering all the modernist theories examined, however, institutionalism seems to be the least relevant. While it would normally have an important insight in helping to explain conflicts in pluralist settings like Senegal, it places much attention on the political structure and political participation for my purposes. Those are of course issues that Senegal would be dealing with in theory, but due to the low level nature of the conflict, and the demand of the rebel movement, political participation is not the objective of the rebels, nor is it an explicit objective for the Dakar-based government that would have to weigh the rebellion in Casamance with equally diverse yet peaceful ethnic pluralities in the rest of the country.

To varying degrees, postmodernism, constructivism, and the economy-based theory explain the Casamance conflict, the identity of its actors, and how those identities have changed or are changing through imagining and un-imagining. Elites within the MFDC as well as grassroots involvement have contributed and still contribute to the unfolding conflict, to resolution efforts, and to the un-imagining of the identities that substantiate the region's separatist claim. All three theories place a great deal of importance on the role of colonization in creating larger identities. Colonization as an institution, has

nurtured different identities that eventually became antagonistic in the Senegalese context. And due to its own functioning in most of Africa as an economic enterprise, colonialization gave the precedent of economically-motivated assertion of difference, explaining the change within the MFDC towards economic gains. Furthermore, postmodernism and constructivism's attention to and disagreement on the existence of facts and "master narrative" make them particularly important for demonstrating the subtleties and intricacies of the Casamance conflict.

With the aid of postmodernism, constructivism, and the economy-based theory, this study is therefore anchored in Anderson's thoughts on nations as changing and imagined, particularly on how modern technology helps in the ongoing process of imagining and, as I argue, un-imagining of identities in the Senegalese and Casamançais context. It seeks to examine the formation of the Casamançais identity and its evolution throughout the 33 years in which the region's separatist movement has been active. Particularly, I argue that, while historical, cultural, and geographic dimensions paved the way for a Casamançais identity, a nationalist Casamançais identity did not come into being until it was articulated by the leadership of the MFDC, making use of the knowledgeable elite insight from postmodernism. I argue furthermore that, despite the MFDC's success in imagining a Casamançais nationalist identity, it has failed it by sustaining ties with the Senegalese power structure based in Dakar and shifting its support base from the Casamançais people, demonstrating the war economy that today characterizes the MFDC as explained by the economy-based theory. In doing so, the MFDC is well in the process of un-imagining a Casamançais identity that has only weakened in recent years. This un-imagining is where

we see the organic or grassroots rejection of a Casamançais identity through the use of online news sources and modern tools of communication.

## METHODOLOGY

Seeing that the theories discussed above lend themselves favorably to empirical research, this thesis will rely on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in its examination of primary sources.

CDA is a theory and a methodology that examines texts to show underlying ideologies of dominance or discrimination in political discourse (Wodak and Meyer 7). It goes further than the French theory of *Explication du texte* (close reading) and allows one to look at power and superiority-inferiority dynamics. CDA focuses on language and power because “it is usually in language that discriminatory practices are enacted, in language that unequal relations of power are constituted and reproduced, and in language that social asymmetries may be challenged and transformed” (Blackledge 5). Its basic assumptions are that language is a social phenomenon, individuals and institutions express specific meanings and values through language, texts are the relevant units of language communication, and that readers and hearers are not passive in their relationship to a text (Wodak and Meyer 6). Using CDA as a methodology, I will be relying on a critical reading of primary texts that show political conflict in the Casamançais context. Some of those primary sources are various writings by Léopold Sédar Senghor, Senegal’s first president and an influential figure in shaping Senegalese nationalism. His vision was for Senegal to become a Francophone country, but Wolof came to be the national language, which has particular implications for the Diola portion of the Casamance movement.

The other data that I will look at are letters by Father Diamacoune Senghor (hereafter Father Diamacoune), the first leader of the MFDC. His letters highlight the role of colonization in setting the stage for the Casamance conflict. CDA will also aid in analyzing media sources like *Journaldupays.com* and Dakar-based newspapers such as *Seneweb* and *Senego*, gathering individual comments and figures from which to draw my own analysis regarding the Casamançais and Senegalese identity. I will be looking particularly at the identities that individuals are emphasizing. Other data I will be using is the Senegalese demographic makeup is the 1988 Senegalese census, the most complete census on the country to date.

I must note here that my choices of data have been limited by access in two particular ways. I was unable to go to Senegal last summer as I had planned. Therefore, the data I could gather were limited to what was available online or through interlibrary loan. The other dimension of this restricted access, which I believe has been the most challenging to my research, is the limited amount of work done on the Casamance conflict and scarce current publications online. Father Diamacoune's letters are published on *Journal du Pays'* website (for reasons that I explore later on), and not in an archive dedicated to keeping record of the conflict's history, for example. I would not have had access to those letters had then not been posted on *Journal du Pays*. For my examination of un-imagining, furthermore, I was not able to use *Wal Fadjri* or *le Soleil*, two of the largest Senegalese newspapers, because they do not allow their online readers to post comments. The first owned by a religious group and the second government-owned, *Wal Fadjri* and *le Soleil* could have potentially given a unique insight into un-imagining because of their affiliations.

This study is divided into five sections. The first section will give a brief background on Senegal and the Casamance region and conflict, then it will discuss the relationship between the Diola ethnic group and the MFDC, showing their divergence and convergence. The second section will look at the legacies of French colonization of Senegal and the policies of the new Senegalese Republic. In particular, it will discuss the different colonial histories of Senegal and Casamance, the marginalizing policies of the French, and the rise of Wolof—perceived as a form of colonization in the Casamance. The third section will discuss how the MFDC used the grievances of the region, and the mediums it utilized, to awaken Casamançais consciousness and create a strong base of support for itself. The fourth section will examine the un-imagining phase of the Casamançais identity by the MFDC and how it operates in the Casamance context. To make the case for un-imagining, I will look at the political response to the conflict, the ties between the MFDC and Dakar, the MFDC's reliance on financial support from neighboring countries like Guinea-Bissau and the Gambia, as well as reliance on violence towards local Casamançais populations. I will also examine the MFDC's current rhetoric to show how it manipulates the weak nationalist sentiments that remain in the region to combat un-imagining. The fifth section will conclude the study and outline possible directions for future research.



Figure 1: Contemporary administrative division of Senegal (SAS ECOWAS Part II DEF, 358)

## BACKGROUND ON CONFLICT AND REGION

### Senegal and Casamance, Diola and MFDC

Senegal is surrounded by Mauritania to the north, Mali to the east, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau to the south, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. A sixth neighbor, the Gambia, is an enclave that extends along the southern part of the country, almost completely separating the northern regions from Casamance. As identity is central to this study, a landscape of Senegal's ethnic make-up is essential. Senegal is a diverse country with seventeen large ethnic groups that can further be divided into four encompassing identities dispersed to varying degrees throughout the country's fourteen administrative regions (Faye 7). According to the 1988 Senegalese census, the largest group is the Sahelian-Sudanese, consisting of the Wolofs and the Sereres and making up 40% and 15% of the population, respectively.

Although Wolofs constitute the majority in the west and northwest of the country, they also live throughout Senegal. The Sereres, on the other hand, mostly inhabit the central regions of Fatick, Kaolack, and Thies. The Hal Pulaar, the second group is made of Peuls and Toucouleurs, 15% and 10% of the population respectively. The third group is the Mande, which comprises Soninkes, Bambaras, and Malinkes. These groups inhabit pockets of the Casamance and the Tambacounda region and together make up 7% of the population. The fourth group, the Sub-Guinean, makes up 13% of the Senegalese population and it

consists of Diolas, Balants, Mandiaks, Mankagnes, and the Bainouks in the Lower Casamance, and Bassaris, Bediks, Koniaguis in the Tambacounda region.<sup>1</sup>

The current separatist movement in Senegal concerns a subset within the fourth group, the Casamance region. The Casamance is further divided into three administrative regions: Ziguinchor (Lower Casamance), and Kolda and Sédhieu (Upper Casamance). The MFDC, which today claims to be a nationalist movement representing the entire Casamance region, has not always had independence as its objective. The MFDC was first established in the 1940s by a minority white elite of the southern region; its mission was to advocate for the inclusion of the Casamançais in the new African political leadership of French Senegal (Foucher 85). According to Foucher, the first MFDC was in fact close to power centered in Dakar and close to the leader Leopold Senghor. But twenty years into independence, under the leadership of Father Diamacoune, the MFDC reinterprets its relation to the whole of Senegal and calls for independence of the region.

Although it claims to represent the entire Casamance region, the MFDC has mostly been associated with the Diola ethnic group. The Senegalese government first characterized the rebellion in the Casamance as a “Diola affair” (Evans 38). Foucher goes even further and argues that the MFDC has been an ethnic Diola movement since its inception; the movement’s leaders have been Diola, “as have the movement’s core symbols and its fighting ground” (88). According to the 2013 Ziguinchor census from the *Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie* (ANSD), the Diola constituted the majority of the region’s population at 57.8 %, followed by seven other groups as shown in the table below (Ziguinchor Census 12).

Ethnic group	Population percentage
Diola	57.8
Mandingo	11.1
Pulaar	10.5
Wolof	3.9
Mandiak	3.5
Balant	2.9
Serere	2.7
Mankagne	2.4

Table 1: *Obtained from Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie. Service Régional de la Statistique et de la Démographie de Ziguinchor. 2013.*

The ANSD's most recent census on Kolda from 2009 shows that the Peul make up the majority of the region as shown below.

Ethnic group	Population percentage
Peul	75.13
Mandingo	7.31
Wolof	7.22
Sarakole	2.33
Diola	1.36
Serere	1.10
Balant	.96
Bambara	.95
Badiaranke	.83
Soninke	.65
Diakhanke	.60
Conjagui	.36
Manjag	.24

Table 2: *Obtained from Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie. Service Régional de la Statistique et de la Démographie de Kolda. 2009.*

Although no information is available on population distribution in the Upper Casamance region of Sédhieu, it can be extrapolated from the available data that the Diola

are far from constituting the majority in the greater Casamance region. On the contrary, they are mostly centered in the Ziguinchor region of Lower Casamance, where they do constitute the majority, while making 5.3% of the total Senegalese population (1988 Census). Undoubtedly, considering the size of the Diola, an investigation of the extent to which the MFDC is an ethnic or a regional force is necessary. There seems to be a general consensus that the Casamançais movement is an ethnic Diola movement. The Senegalese state has even taken a similar position in initially dismissing the MFDC as Diola-centered. While I agree with the particularity of the Diola identity within the Casamance region, I challenge the MFDC-Diola connection, and suggest that an ethnic argument undermines the Casamançais cause. As Ferdinand de Jong and Geneviève Gasser phrase it, “primordial tribalism” on the part of the Diola is not the foundation of the Casamance conflict (220).

It is the case that the Diola have risen to the elite status that allowed them to lead the MFDC through regional perception and, most notably, through their access to education. A version of the 1982 preparatory meetings that leaders of the MFDC held reveals the place of the Diola within the region:

Question: How come the Diola took the lead in the movement?

Response: At the time, in the beginning, there was everything [people from all ethnic groups]. But when they went deep into the analysis, they said it was a very serious problem and that serious people were needed [to deal with it]. The Fula and the Mandingo withdrew. The Manjak and the Mancagne said that maybe they would stay. But all said they were behind us [the Diola].

Question: Why did people think the Diola were serious?

Response: The Diola, they are warriors. They are not afraid to fight. And they know how to keep secrets. They have those rituals, this tradition. You take an oath for something. Once you have taken the oath, you are never going to go. (Quoted in Foucher 87-88)

The Diola were seen as natural warriors and leaders by their Casamançais neighbors, they are those who can carry out a mission. The rituals, traditions, and ability to keep secrets further give the Diola a mystical identity that seems to drive others to rally behind them, to *trust* rallying behind them. Even more significantly, the Diola have separated themselves from the rest of the region through access to education. A mostly animist region at the beginning of French colonization in the 1700, the Casamance region provided an ideal demography for evangelization by the Catholic Church and, with it, education through missionary schools. Through access to elementary education in Lower Casamance—the educational centers of the region—many Diola youths were able to move to northern Senegal to further their education (Foucher 89). North-ward migration from the Casamance region was so great that by the 1980s, major high schools like Cheikh Oumar Foutiyou Tall and Charles de Gaulle had 70% and 50% Casamançais population, respectively (Bonnardel 368). Although Bonnardel's numbers are representative of the entire Casamance region, one reason strongly suggests that the majority of those students in northern schools were Diola.

According to Foucher, the Diola community was very active in promoting education in the Lower Casamance; it would mobilize resources to build schools and only ask for teachers from the colonial administration (Foucher 89). Speaking of the Diola's strong interest in education, the French official in charge of the Lower Casamance in the

1950s said the population of the southernmost area was “very concerned about educational issues,” and because of their commitment and effort and some help from the administration, he finished constructing twenty schools in two years (Quoted in Foucher 90). Thus the new literati Diola were now able to thrive in colonial service in various positions as schoolteachers, clerks, and policemen. In this sense, the Diola, as the elite of the region, were well positioned to articulate grievances, as it is often the case with elites. Yet despite their leadership, the Diola were not and are not equivalent to the MFDC. During his field research in the 1990s in Casamance and Dakar, Michael Lambert found that the Diola did not speak in unison as far as the MFDC was concerned:

...I knew many Jola who sympathized with the MFDC position, but I knew just as many who did not. At times Jola opposition to the MFDC has been violent. In May 1992 a village paramilitary group in Coubanaou engaged Atika (MFDC’s military wing) in a military confrontation that reportedly claimed the lives of twenty rebels... While I was conducting research in Dakar a Jola explained to me some of the tactics used by the Senegalese army to combat the rebels. Indeed, many of the soldiers who have been fighting to suppress this movement are from the Casamance. Although most Jola I knew believed that certain political and economic inequalities had to be addressed, many argued that the “Casamance question” should be resolved without violating Senegal's territorial integrity. (586)

If the MFDC was an ethnic movement then, it clearly did not have the support of the Diola as a collective. Some Diolas were against the MFDC, while others thought of it as a rebellion rather than a liberation movement, which suggests that these Diolas questioned the legitimacy of the MFDC and doubted its objectives. Therefore the MFDC, having always claimed to represent the Casamance region, is best seen as such. The

region's history and colonial legacy, which expands beyond the Lower Casamance, further challenge the suggested interchangeability of "Diola" and "MFDC."

## DIFFERENT HISTORIES, COLONIAL LEGACIES, STATE POLICIES

Most historians note that northern Senegal and the Casamance region have had different colonial histories and experiences. Although mostly known as a former French colony, Senegal was first invaded by Portugal in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Fall 5). French control of Senegal did not materialize until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when it defeated British claims to Senegalese natural resources and succeeded in pushing the Portuguese south of the Casamance region to Guinea and Guinea-Bissau (Fall 5). Coming under French control after it was traded with Portugal, the Casamance belonged to the French *Rivières du Sud*, an administrative region that is today the coastal area of Guinea.



Map 2: Map of Senegal with the Casamance region highlighted in pink. Casamance is made of two administrative regions, Ziguinchor and Kolda. (*Reliefweb.net*)

In 1845, *les Rivières du Sud* and all French territories stretching as far south as Gabon, were taken out of Senegal's gubernatorial control and joined to a different administration called *Ile de Gorée* only to be returned under the Senegalese government by a 1859 decree (Fall 6). In 1889, *Les Rivières du Sud* became partially independent of Senegalese colonial authority when another decree placed it under a lieutenant governor subordinate to the governor of Senegal yet having direct access to Paris for particular administrative issues (Fall 6). Two years later in 1891, *les Rivières du Sud* was a completely independent colony from Senegal with its own governor (Roche 272). As these dates show, for most of the French control of Senegal, the Casamance was administered separately; it was not integrated into Senegalese colonial territory until after World War II.

There is perhaps no better indicator that France distinguished Casamance from the rest of Senegal other than its incorporation of the northern Senegalese regions as French. Saint-Louis, Gorée, Rufisque, and Dakar were officially considered French overseas territories in the late 1960s to early 1870s (Johnson 140). The inhabitants or *Originaires* of those *Quatre Communes* were considered French citizens and thus had the right to have a deputy in the *Assemblée Nationale* (Johnson 140). As France saw these *Originaires* as people they could civilize, other populations within the various regions were relegated to lower status:

The act of bestowing upon *originaires* the same political rights as their French counterparts on the mainland [...] of France meant that the French colonial administration viewed the Senegambian population in the rural hinterland as being less assimilable than their urban counterparts in the Four

Communes. Consequently, Senegambians living beyond the Four Communes were designated as French subjects (*sujets* or *indigènes*). French subjects fell under the *Code de l'indigénat* (Native Code), less directly, the arbitrary power of the French colonial administration, which most often relied on traditional chiefs—ethnic leaders or Muslim holy men (*marabouts*)—to establish its domination. (Johnson 140-141)

The difference between *originaires* and *indigènes* was so pronounced that pregnant women from outside the *Quatre Communes* would move to one of the French territories in order to give their child the privilege of being French-born (Johnson 142). The *Quatre Communes* became an interesting reality in that it helped create a perception of otherness, an “us” and “them” for both the French Senegalese and the Senegambians. The *originaires*, as French citizens who were made to learn French and promote the French culture were called, had more in common with the Metropole a sea away than they did with people who were just a town or region over. Likewise, the *sujets*, already relegated as such, became lower than people they shared much with. For the *originaires* and the *sujets* alike, therefore, psychological distance became real, where the former is closer to a place that is spatially distant, while the latter is distant to a place that is spatially close.

As a region of *sujets*, however, The Casamance was a challenge to French colonization. In northern Senegal, the hierarchical, centralized, and islamized societies were an advantage to the establishment of French authority. In Casamance, on the other hand, “[The] fragmented, anarchical nature of societies there meant that clear and co-optable local power structures were lacking. French attempts to install chiefs, therefore, often Wolof or Mandingo, failed” in this Christianized and animist region (Faye 16).

Indeed, Casamance's resistance to French colonization was so pronounced that the Governor of the Colonies of Senegal, in a 1906 letter to the General Governor of French West Africa (FWA) advised "pacification and progressive penetration for the Casamance" (in Faye 16). Similarly in 1917, FWA Governor-General Van Hollenhoven noted that the Casamançais did not see the French as "masters;" the French were "only tolerated there" (in Faye 16). The hostile relationship between the two parties further deteriorated during WW I and II, when recruiting of Casamançais forces and taxes to support French war efforts were vigorously opposed in the region (Faye 16).

After independence in 1960, post-colonial policies in the state of Senegal further added to the different colonial history and experience of Casamance and furthered the establishment of a Casamançais regional identity. Léopold Sédar Senghor, one of the staunchest advocates of Senegalese independence who became the country's first president, sought to establish a Senegalese national identity through institutionalizing French. Perhaps more than other leaders who were part of the French West African community, Senghor, an intellectual and poet who wrote extensively in French, had a particular affinity for the language. It is perhaps no coincidence that in 1983 he was the first black African to be nominated to the *Académie Française*, the body governing matters concerning the French language. A Serere, Senghor used French better than his native language: "I think in French; I express myself better in French than in my mother tongue" (841). It is no surprise then that the new Senegalese Constitution established French as the official language (Article 1 of the Constitution of Senegal). According to Senghor, his vision in institutionalizing French is to give the Senegalese people the tools to express themselves integrally:

Il n'est pas question de renier les langues africaines. Pendant des siècles, peut-être des millénaires, elles seront encore parlées, exprimant les immensités abyssales de la Négritude. Nous continuerons d'y pêcher les images archétypes : les poissons des grandes profondeurs. Il est question d'exprimer notre authenticité de métis culturels, d'hommes du [20ème] siècle. Au moment que, par totalisation et socialisation, se construit la Civilisation de l'Universel, il est, d'un mot, question de nous servir de ce merveilleux outil, trouvé dans les décombres du Régime colonial. De cet outil qu'est la langue française. La Francophonie, c'est cet Humanisme intégral, qui se tisse autour de la terre : cette symbiose des « énergies dormantes » de tous les continents, de toutes les races, qui se réveillent à leur chaleur complémentaire. (*Le Français* 843-844)

To Senghor, French was not only an objectively rich language, but as a colonial legacy, a positive colonial legacy, it was one that the Senegalese could not un-choose even if they wanted to (*Négritude* 399). Despite French being a colonial imposition, Senghor saw it as an important agent in shaping Senegal's "metis" culture, one made of the interaction of colonial society through the assimilation of the *Quatre Communes* with local heritages that did not disappear. And lastly, Senghor thought of French as a tool for African Francophones to use to contribute to universal civilization, the work of all races and peoples.

However, despite Senghor's optimism regarding the prospect of French in Senegal, it did not succeed in penetrating Senegalese society as much as Wolof, which was spoken by 70% of the population in the 1970s. According to Smith, Wolof won over French

because of its informality: « [Le] français, perçu comme la langue de distinction sociale, de l’officialité, du formel, de la rigidité de la norme, de la hiérarchie et de la verticalité, et le wolof vécu comme langue de la sociabilité horizontale, de la communication spontanée, de l’informalité, de la souplesse linguistique et identitaire » (Smith « Nationalisme Banale » 67). In 1978, after intellectuals voiced the need for Senegalese authenticity and cultural identity, Senghor recognized Wolof, along with Jola, Mandingo, Pulaar, Serer, and Soninke as national languages in the Constitution (Smith “Informal Politics”).<sup>2</sup> The number of Wolof speakers only increased; in 2003, more than 80% of the Senegalese population spoke Wolof, compared to only 20% of the population who spoke French (Johnson 127). Although the table below is from the 1988 Senegalese census, it shows the discordance between native speakers and speakers of the 6 national language, most significantly with Wolof.

National language/ethnic group	% of native speakers	% of national speakers
Wolof	43.5	70.9
Pulaar	24.1	24.1
Serere	14.9	13.7
Manding	4.2	6.2
Diola/Joola	5.1	5.7
Soninke	1.5	1.4

Table 3. Data from the 1988 Senegalese Census showing the breakdown of ethnic speakers and language speakers.

While scholars like Smith emphasize the informal ascendance of Wolof as a *lingua franca*—that is wolofization carried out by local populations without the state as a driving agent—it has nonetheless come to factor into the Casamance’s grievance. The MFDC, mostly led by the Diola, attributed the dwindling number of Diola speakers to

Wolofization, a spread which they also accorded to colonization (Faye 22, 33). According to the 1988 census, the Diola have the highest percentage of natives who speak the language, 97%. It also shows that, within the Ziguinchor region, 28% of Diolas speak Wolof as a second language, while 9.1% of Wolofs speak Diola as a second language. Although those statistics are in theory favorable for the Diola considering its overall size within the Senegalese population, wolofization is nonetheless seen as a challenge to Casamance identity. Surprisingly, however, this opposition to Wolof has had an ambiguous influence on French, a language that has been particularly strong in the region.

In the Casamance, institutionalization of French seems to promote as well as hinder the language. As shown earlier, despite the Casamance's resistance of French colonization, it valued education and benefited from opportunities provided by the Catholic Church, a strong influence that still shows today with French's dominance in education in the region. In their study of pluralism in Casamance published in 2005, Martine Dreyfus and Caroline Juillard find that French is much widely used in Ziguinchor than in Dakar: 70% of Diola youths speak French as a second language (86). Furthermore, they find that private Catholic education in Casamance promotes the purity of French, not mixing it with local languages as it is the case in Dakar (Dreyfus and Juillard 278). Here we see that institutionalized French is still strong in the Casamance, and it seems to be spoken more prescriptively than in the northern region. There also seems to be an effort on the part of some Casamançais to emphasize the prevalence of French over Wolof in the region. A website of a vacation destination in Casamance has the following regarding the languages of the region:

La langue officielle est le français et est parlée par une majorité de casamançais. Le diola est la langue la plus parlée en Casamance en raison

de l'ethnie majoritaire, les diolas. Le wolof est une langue communément utilisée dans tous le Sénégal pour des conversations interethniques. Certains diolas parlent français mais ne parlent pas le wolof. (279)

It is interesting that the website chooses to note that some Diola speak French but not Wolof. The implicit of course is that there are some Diola who speak Wolof and not French. Perhaps because of its formal use in educational settings and its association with male adults who have had French-style education, French has nonetheless taken a backseat among the region's youths. According to Juillard's research, most young Casamançais prefer communicating in Wolof as opposed to French in particular contexts over others: « Je peux parler français avec un garçon, en privé; mais dans le milieu, je préfère parler wolof...Le wolof facilite les relations entre les garçons et les filles; pour dire son besoin à une fille, pour l'aborder, les garçons emploient le wolof; une fille abordée en français répond toujours en wolof» (Juillard 436). But despite the recognition of the various differences between northern Senegal and Casamance, however, they do not become grievances until framed as such by the MFDC.

## IMAGINING A CASAMANCAIS IDENTITY

I argue here that the MFDC, through rhetoric, used the grievances of the region to imagine a nationalist—and thus political—Casamançais consciousness that had not previously existed. Through this strategy, the MFDC was successful in recruiting the support of the Casamançais population for an independent Casamance—reinforcing the movement and giving it legitimacy. The events which set the stage for the imagining of the Casamançais identity as a nationalist one are the economic crises of the 1970 put in place much earlier through French colonization. After independence, Senegal continued the colonial policy of extroverted economics, which is focusing on the economic needs of the former metropole with regard to imports and suppressing the exportation of some of its strong agricultural products (Maraut 316). Coupled with the long draught the country experienced, these policies particularly affected Casamance, whose rice production suffered when it was disfavored over cheaply imported American and Thai rice (318). Naturally, as Senegal's term of trade deteriorated, it was forced to take foreign aid and accept hard structural adjustment measures, which, once again, fell heavily on the Casamance once again (318).

On the political front, the 1970s witnessed the deepening of ties between then future MFDC leaders and political units, particularly the newly established *Parti Démocratique Sénégalais* (PDS) of former president Abdoulaye Wade. Marut questions these relationships, pointing out that it is unlikely that the Casamance uprising and the

establishment of the PDS happened to just coincide: « Quand ils ne sont pas eux-mêmes membres du PDS, les animateurs de la contestation, parmi lesquels figurent nombre de futurs dirigeants du *Mouvement des forces démocratiques de la Casamance* (MFDC), font campagne pour un parti qui combat vigoureusement le pouvoir en place » (321). Maraut suggests that some future MFDC leaders may have been members of the PDS. They promoted the PDS election campaigns in Casamance in opposition to the *Parti Socialiste* in power. In doing so, they were propping themselves for inclusion in the new political power. But the frustration of those political ambitions, together with economic conditions of the region, pushed the MFDC in the 1980s to mount its opposition to the Senegalese state and calling for its independence.

#### Role of Father Diamacoune

Through its rhetoric, the MFDC has been influential in imagining the Casamançais identity. It has imagined a nationalist Casamançais identity by the way in which it over-politicized the Casamance's past. The most important individual to articulate this nationalist movement was Father Diamacoune, the leader of the political wing of the MFDC and the father of the 1982 separatist movement. It is important here to note the authority that Father Diamacoune had through his position and reputation. As a Catholic priest, seen by his followers as a humble and devoted man of God and of Casamance, Father Diamacoune enjoyed the respect of the community and its support. Even the fragmented MFDC throughout the late 1990s and into 2007, the year of Father Diamacoune's passing, respected the Father despite the fact that his leadership for different factions was becoming increasingly symbolic (Evans 13). He used this very authority, however, to shape the Casamançais identity. Father Diamacoune started hosting a radio

program on education in the 1960s, but he also used this opportunity to highlight the cultural heritage of the region and its uniqueness (Fall 16). He realized the importance and the power of the radio as a tool for disseminating messages that would rally people behind a common Casamançais identity.

Father Diamacoune also held conferences and wrote pamphlets through which he voiced the economic and political discontent of the Casamance in the years leading up to the 1982 demonstrations (Fall 17). Through those radio programs and pamphlets, Father Diamacoune essentially shaped an imagined community of the Casamançais. As suggested by Anderson's theory, Father Diamacoune spoke to an audience that is unknown to him in part or in whole in terms of sheer numbers or the extent to which that audience subscribed to the Casamançais identity. The mere assumption on Father Diamacoune's part that there was an audience to his message shows the intangibility of that community. I must note here that these communication mediums, the radio and written material such as flyers and pamphlets, are particularly significant because they highlight the importance of contemporary media in helping to create an imagined community as demonstrated by Anderson.

#### Letters of Father Diamacoune

Furthermore, in examining three letters of Father Diamacoune written to various government officials, I find that the Casamançais identity has always been imagined to have existed. The oldest letter in the data analyzed here that Father Diamacoune wrote is from 1990, addressed to the then Secretary General of the United Nations. In this letter, Father Diamacoune expresses his frustration with lack of communication on the part of the

Senegalese government and the French authorities, particularly the failure of then President Senghor and his successor Abdoulaye Diouf to respond to letters he wrote in 1980 and May of 1982, respectively. According to Father Diamacoune, the aim of those letters was to call for a peaceful dialogue regarding the oppressive conditions of the region. Having not responded to Father Diamacoune's invitations, the Senegalese government nonetheless chose to respond violently when the Casamançais took to the streets in December 1982. Likewise, the then French President, Prime Minister, and Ambassador to Dakar all failed to respond to the grievances of the Casamance region in multiple letters sent by Father Diamacoune between 1983 and 1987. As the leader of the MFDC, the only organized group, Father Diamacoune spoke on behalf of the region, there was no other authority. Naturally, one questions the relevance of the French political authority, in the context of a then thirty year old independent Senegal, to the internal Casamance conflict. Below are Father Diamacoune's words:

Du 15 janvier 1980 jusqu'à ce jour, j'ai échappé à plus de seize tentatives d'assassinat...Voilà les seules réponses que j'aie eues avec les incarcérations. Le Sénégal ne veut pas émanciper la Casamance, Pays de Protectorat confié à l'Administration de la Colonie du Sénégal. Nul n'est bon juge en sa propre cause. On ne [peut] pas être juge et partie...C'est pourquoi je me suis tourné vers la Puissance Colonisatrice pour mettre la France devant ses responsabilités politiques, historiques et morales envers la Casamance. (Letter to UNSG 1990)

And again in a 1994 letter to the then French Ambassador to Senegal, Father Diamacoune made the same references to an oppressed Casamance:

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, émancipez vite la Casamance avant que le Sénégal ne bouleverse encore son Economie qui, timidement, renaît de ses Cendres. Je vous le redis : le Sénégal projette de mettre tout le Territoire de la Casamance à feu et à sang de l'Atlantique à la Falémé. Le Dispositif est déjà en place. Il ne reste plus qu'à presser sur le bouton. Ce que feraient volontiers les Gendarmes du Président Abdou Diouf. (Letter to French Ambassador 1994)

According to Father Diamacoune, France as the former colonial power has a political, historic, and moral responsibility towards Casamance. This is the case because France administered the Casamance as a protectorate managed under the same administration as that of Senegal, but not as a *part* of it. Therefore, the Casamance should not have become subordinate to Senegal because it was a separate entity. Father Diamacoune explicitly calls the relationship between Senegal and Casamance an oppressive one when he characterizes Senegal's silence as a refusal to *emancipate* the Casamance, implying an unjustifiable and immoral bonding of the region to the rest of the country. Father Diamacoune further claims that the Senegalese response to the conflict is an intentional and well thought out plan to destroy the Casamance, evidenced by the presence of then President Diouf's armies in the region.

In Father Diamacoune's letter to the UN, we have the reason the MFDC gives for demanding Casamançais independence: the Casamance was colonially governed apart from Senegal, it should thus be its own state. Lambert argues that Father Diamacoune based Casamançais independence solely on its French creation, which rightly undermines the importance of cultural and historical factors that are central to a national identity (589).

However, within the same letter, Father Diamacoune evokes the Casamançais imagined community:

[En] mon nom personnel, au nom des cent mille manifestants Casamançais du 26 Décembre 1982, au nom de mes valeureux et glorieux ancêtres, au nom du Peuple Casamançais unanime, je vous prie de faire diligence auprès de la France et du Sénégal pour que, immédiatement, et sans condition aucune, définitivement, justice soit faite à la Casamance qui depuis 1645, a combattu et lutte encore pour son indépendance nationale contre le Portugal, contre la France, et maintenant plus que jamais contre le Sénégal. (Letter to UNSG 1990)

Father Diamacoune is the only individual to place the number of demonstrators at the December 1982 march at a hundred thousand individuals, a significantly high count compared to the range of a few hundreds to a thousand given by most scholars of the conflict like Fall and Evans (8). Father Diamacoune's inflation of the number of demonstrators is interesting because it seems to be an attempt on his part to legitimize the nationalist claim of the Casamance in the eyes of his audience. It is certainly not impossible to start a separatist movement with a small base and have it gain momentum as it develops. However, to elicit a powerful response like the one Father Diamacoune is asking for, the discontent of a few hundred demonstrators may not convey the urgency of the movement.

This exaggeration therefore is an indication that it does not matter what the actual numbers are as long as there is some support, it only matters what the response is. Father Diamacoune also calls on the UNSG in the name of those protestors, in the name of ancestors, and in the name of the "unanimous" Casamançais people, further demonstrating

the imaginary elements at play here. Father Diamacoune ends his letter by equating Senegal to the Casamance's previous Portuguese and French colonial masters that it viciously resisted in the past. By framing the relationship between those three countries in the way he does, Father Diamacoune deliberately paints Senegalese control of Casamance as an extension of the colonization of those European powers extending as far back as 1645. To Father Diamacoune then there is an undeniable oppressor-oppressed dynamic in the Senegalese-Casamançais relationship.

Similarly, in a 1991 letter to then President Abdou Diouf, Father Diamacoune sharpens the distinction between Senegal and Casamance:

Nous voulons savoir ce [que fait le Général Amadou Abdoulaye Dieng] en Casamance en général, et au Camp Militaire de Ziguinchor en particulier. Une des clauses du Cessez-le-Feu stipule que toutes Forces d'Intervention envoyées en Casamance devraient regagner leur base de départ, donc rentrer au Sénégal. On nous constatons, non seulement des maintiens de Camps de Forces d'Intervention, mais encore des départs et des arrivées et même un déferlement de ces mêmes Forces souvent en les es civiles. La Casamance n'a qu'une Parole. Devant des agressants de votre part, notre Pays se demande ce que veut le Sénégal qui, par ses comportements, tient un double langage : celui de la Paix et surtout celui de la guerre. (Letter to President Diouf 1991)

This is perhaps one of Father Diamacoune's most interesting letters regarding the conflict because at this point he moves from addressing the conflict as an internal one to

one that is between two sovereign states. First off, he calls the Senegalese army “Intervention Forces,” implying that they are violating the territorial integrity of an autonomous Casamançais state. Furthermore, recalling the stipulations of the 1991 Cease-fire, Father Diamacoune reminds the President that those forces should withdraw to their original base, which is in Senegal—suggesting again that the Casamance is not a part of that Senegal. He puts this Casamance-Senegal opposition rather plainly when he says that the Casamançais wonders about what Senegal wants from it with its aggressive army. Notice here that the word “*Pays*,” meaning “country,” is capitalized by Father Diamacoune.

He sees the Casamance as its own proper country. It is “*notre Pays*” that is “our country,” one that differs culturally and socially from that of Senegal and thus not a part of it. By using a language like “your” and “our” Father Diamacoune uses the classic presentation of otherness and difference as determined by self-identification and perception. While it is no doubt that Father Diamacoune realized that Casamance was, for all intents and purposes, part of the Senegalese state, the discourse was important in reinforcing the gap between the two entities and sustaining the identity that would in turn sustain the movement. It is not necessarily the case that Father Diamacoune had a plan to create a separate Casamançais identity, but that he genuinely believed in the separateness of the Casamance.

According to Father Diamacoune, this aggression as advanced by the contemporary colonial power is the reason the MFDC formed in the first place. In a 1997 letter to the Senegalese Prime Minister, Father Diamacoune states how Senegal “imposed a long, unjust, cruel, and heinous war” on the Casamance:

Cette guerre, la Casamance ne la voulait pas et ne la veut pas aujourd'hui. [Les manifestants] avaient demandé à parler au Chef de l'Etat. Cela leur fut refusé et vous-même avez créé le maquis des Forces Combattantes du Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance en dispersant, par vous forces...nos parents de religion traditionnelle. (Letter to Prime Minister 1997)

The implication from Father Diamcoune's letter is that, had the Senegalese government responded differently, if it had not responded with violence to the Casamançais call for dialogue, the MFDC as a separatist movement would not have formed. While this claim may have been possible, it contradicts the seeds that Father Diamacoune had already planted in the years prior to 1982. The MFDC as a militant group may have been an immediate result of the Senegalese response to the demonstration in 1982, but the idea of a Casamance apart from Senegal is one whose foundations have been shaped by cultural and social dimensions which were synthesized by Father Diamacoune. The government's violent response only served to sharpen and crystalize separatist sentiments in the region. The imagined political Casamançais community, unified by common grievances and history as highlighted by Father Diamacoune in his letters, was supportive of the MFDC in the first years of the conflict. However, this identity has been in the process of un-imagining itself as divisions within the MFDC weakened it and as the movement found support elsewhere.

## UN-IMAGINING A COMMUNITY

The un-imagining phase of the Casamance identity is as much due to internal tensions within the MFDC leadership as it is to external powers and influences. The Senegalese government and the MFDC have both contributed to the un-imagining of the Casamance identity. The Senegalese government and the MFDC continue to un-imagine the Casamance identity intentionally. In general, the political response on the part of the Senegalese government has been initially dismissive of the movement. To this date, the conflict has persisted through the presidencies of Abdou Diouf, Abdoulaye Wade, and Macky Sall, Senegal's second, third, and fourth president, respectively. Former President Diouf, whose leadership beginning in 1981 spanned the first eighteen years of the conflict, first thought to solve it by ignoring the movement. According to Joseph Glaise, Diouf's initial strategy was no-negotiation with rebels (84). In fact, Wade did not meet with Father Diamacoune until 1999, his last year in office (Foucher 2003). Such a policy on the part of the state sought to emphasize that the two involved parties are unequal.

Unlike Senegal, the MFDC was not a state or representative of a state, it was rather a group engaged in rebellion. To negotiate with rebels is therefore to acknowledge their movement as legitimate and to equate it to a legitimate authority such as a sovereign state. In other words, one can think of Diouf's no-negotiation policy as a way of un-imagining the identity on which the movement is based. The Senegalese government is operating on

a level that is well below illegitimizing the movement, which suggests realizing that there are claims put forward by a group within society and then questioning those claims. No-negotiation as a deliberate policy of un-imagining invalidates the MFDC's movement by ignoring it and devaluing its claims. It was not until the 1990s that Diouf's policy towards the Casamance changed and, alongside it, materialized a chronic fragmentation of the MFDC that made more invasive un-imagining policies by the government possible. This change on the part of the state was a reflection of the escalating violence between its army and the military wing of the MFDC known as *Attika*—a Diola word meaning “warrior” (Evans 4). Established in 1983 and operated under the leadership of Sidy Badji, *Attika* had about 600 combatants by 1990 (Bessène). Despite its small size, however, it was able to attack Senegalese army bases and incite equally violent responses from the government, ushering in the very first cease-fire agreement between Dakar and Sidy Badji in Cacheu, Guinea-Bissau in 1992 (Sany).

#### Fragmentation within the MFDC

However, this seemingly positive development for the Casamançais conflict agreement, which was intended to consolidate peace talks between the government and the MFDC from the previous year, proved to be the movement's downfall. Father Diamacoune rejected the agreement for having fallen short of laying the groundwork for Casamançais independence, the central objective of the movement (Evans 5). Since then, the MFDC has split into two factions based on their territory of operation along the northern and southern ends of the Casamance River: *Front Nord* (Northern Front) under Badji and *Front Sud* (Southern Front) under Father Diamacoune. Shortly after the split within the movement, *Front Nord* pacified and distanced itself from combat against Senegalese

forces. The government even recognized the moderate position of the *Front Nord* by giving it *de facto* control of the northwestern part of Bignona Department in the Ziguinchor region and withdrawing state army presence (Evans 5).

Many scholars of the conflict characterize this change within the *Front Nord* and the following favorable state response as a positive development with regard to the conflict. However, Evans warns that this perception of *Front Nord* is inaccurate because the movement has not given up its weapons and its economic development projects have been nothing but illegal activities (Evans 4). In 2001, for example, it attacked a Senegalese military base that was in its territory. Under Father Diamacoune and Léopold Sanga, on the other hand, the *Front Sud* remained the more militant branch of the movement, advocating still for the independence of Casamance. It occupied the southern part of the Casamance, right along the dense forested boarder with Guinea-Bissau. (Faye 38). For the rest of *Front Sud*, however, Sanga proved to be less militant due to his ties with President Diouf. The hardliners of *Front Sud* then rallied behind Father Diamacoune's choice, Salif Sadio, effectively dividing the leadership of the faction.

In the case of the Senegalese government and the MFDC, the un-imagining of the Casamançais identity was made possible due to the fragmentation within the latter. Of course, the un-imagining of an identity by the Senegalese government is interesting because it seems to be very much like a response one would expect from a government facing a secessionist movement. As a sovereign state, Senegal has the right to defend its territorial integrity and do what is necessary to preserve it and weaken the movement that threatens its unity. But I argue that the government becomes particularly engaged in un-imagining when its objective is no longer to simply weaken the elites' articulation of the intentions of

the separatist movement, but when it undermines the identity that makes it legitimate. Under Diouf, for example, the Senegalese government adopted a surprising policy of openness and cooperation with regards to the Casamance.

Unlike what might be expected, the state did not isolate or discriminate against the Casamançais in any significant way, even when the MFDC singled out northerners in Casamance (Foucher 97). No doubt, the government's security forces, with no explicit objection from President Diouf, engaged in human rights violations regarding its Casamançais population in the northern part of the country, particularly those suspected as MFDC agents or supporters (Foucher 97). But those instances were significantly rare when paralleled to the extent to which President Diouf invested in connecting the MFDC with the rest of the country, especially with Dakar. President Diouf's first move in response to the conflict was to change the face of the political elites, recruiting young Casamançais and promoting them to high positions within the national as well as the local government (Foucher 97). Robert Sanga, a Bainouck Casamançais who was also the leader of the more moderate wing within the *Front Sud*, became in charge of the municipality of Ziguinchor in the stead of a north Senegalese (Foucher 97).

The Senegalese government also thought to strengthen cultural and social ties with the Casamance. In the 1990s, the state honored the Casamançais Diola prophetess and symbol of Casamançais resistance for the MFDC, Aline Sitoé Diatta, and launched an investigation to inquire about her disappearance (Toliver-Diallo 344). The state also put in efforts to cultivate the various cultures of Senegal and promote a harmonious inter-ethnicity. The state sought to use the great West African tradition of joking relationships to mobilize intercultural connections (De Jong 391). A joking relationship is one between

“two persons in which one is permitted, and in some instances required, to tease or make fun of the other, who in turn is required to take no offence” (Radcliff-Brown 90).

#### Reliance on External Support

On the Casamance front in the 1990s, the MFDC started to weaken its very movement by its reliance on external support from neighboring countries and use of violence against the locals, actions that have led to the decline of Casamance public support and thus to the un-imagining of the Casamançais identity. I must emphasize here that the divisions within the MFDC addressed above are central to its decline and then to the un-imagining of the Casamançais identity. As shown above, those divisions were not just divisions of leadership, but they were also splits in objectives and visions. To varying extent, the *Front Nord* and *Front Sud* of the MFDC both relied on financial and logistic support from the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau.

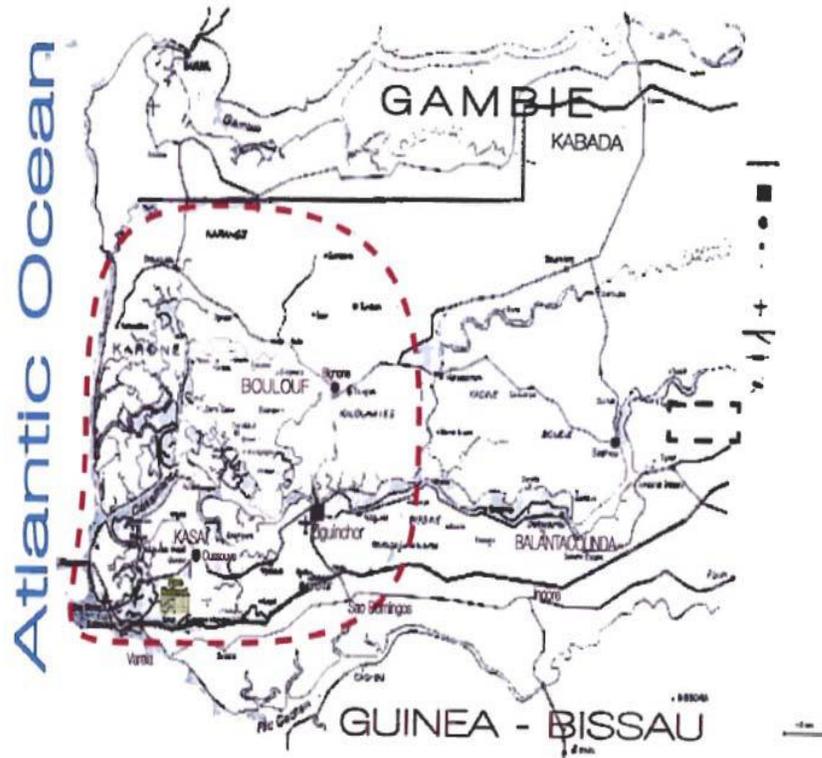


Figure 3: The red circle showing the expansion of the *Front Nord* Attacks (Obtained from Faye 35)

The proximity of the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau to the Casamance (see Figure 1) make the relationship between those countries and Casamance understandable. But the Gambia has a particularly unique relationship to the whole of Senegal. Shortly after Senegalese independence from France, Senegal and the Gambia established the Senegambian Confederation in 1981, reflecting the two countries' cultural ties disrupted by history (Gambia-Senegal 1981). The union was short-lived however; due to challenges of economic and political integration, Senegambia came to an end in 1989 (Ceesay). The Senegal-Gambia relationship severed after the collapse of the confederation, but the

cultural connection between the various communities in the area were not affected. During the 2001 Gambian elections, for example, many Casamançais Diolas who took refuge in the Gambia were registered by Jammeh's (Gambian president) supporters to vote for him in the upcoming elections (Evans 7). Although manipulated for political advantages, the temporary adoption of Casamançais Diolas in the Gambia goes to show the complexity of identities in the region and the extent to which nations, and particularly nationalism, are political constructs.

Occupying the northern region of Casamance near the Gambian boarder with about one thousand fighters, the *Front Nord* modified its agenda and called for greater autonomy of the region, it was therefore on good terms with the Senegalese government (Faye 37). On the other hand, the *Front Sud*, based near the Guinea-Bissauan border with about two thousand fighters, maintained its full independence (Foucher 97). Cooperation between the two fronts was limited at best a nonexistent at worst; "each faction claimed it is the real MFDC and tried to discredit the other" (Faye 38). This divergence was all evident in 1992 when the more militant *Front Sud* resumed fighting in an attempt to obstruct the presidential elections scheduled for the following year. To stifle the elections in the areas under its control, the *Front Sud* committed violence against civilian Casamançais in order to hinder them from taking part in government initiatives and the elections (Faye 38). As a branch of the movement that is claiming independence, the *Front Sud* viewed those who intended to vote as traitors (Faye 39).

Furthermore, although the government and the MFDC continue to sign peace agreements throughout the 1990s, ones that are ironically supported by neighboring Gambia and Guinea-Bissau, the *Front Sud* still escalated its violent attacks. It moved from

targeting police stations and small government structures to attacking Ziguinchor's airport and a few northern Senegalese fishers in 1992 (Fall 95). With attacks intensifying and destroying bases of the *Front Sud*, coupled with Guinea-Bissauian cooperation with Senegalese government, the branch moved north-ward towards the Casamance River, putting the two branches of the MFDC in the same territory and much closer to the Gambia (Faye 40). The relationship between the MFDC and the Gambia, further reinforced by the move of *Front Sud* north-ward, is central to the persistence of the conflict and the disintegration of the Casamançais identity. According to Faye, the MFDC used Gambian territories to transit Libyan and Iraqi weapons to its bases in the Casamance and designated it as a meeting place of MFDC leaders and fighters (41).

For a few years in the 1990s, prominent MFDC leaders like spokesman Alexandra Djiba, MFDC national secretary Edmond Bora, and Laurent Diamacoune—a nephew of Father Diamacoune—were publicly and officially based in the Gambian capital city of Banjul (Faye 37). But even greater ties on the leadership level characterized the MFDC-Gambia relationship. That President Yahya Jammeh's residence in his home village of Kanilaye just a few kilometers across the Gambia boarder is guarded by members of the *Front Nord* is not coincidental (Marut 73). The MFDC was instrumental in helping Jammeh, also a Diola, to cease power in a 1994 *coup d'état*. According to Evans, Jammeh “close links with the Joola-dominated MFDC's *Front Nord*,” says Evans (Evans 2000 655). In an interview of a former Gambia intelligence officer conducted by Pa Ndery M'Bai, a Gambian investigative journalist, he reveals that Jammeh supported the MFDC in order to prepare the support he would shortly need for his planned coup d'état in 1994.

As he continues his position in power, Jammeh still supports the MFDC while taking advantage not only of Casamançais refugee votes this time, but also of the influx of Casamançais who are fleeing the region to escape the violence inflicted upon them by the MFDC:

Casamance foreigners crossing the border to vote in our presidential elections and go back. Their numbers are estimated close to 100,000 people crossing the border and staying in abandoned hotels and schools for one week before the election date. Our voter register is close to 800,000 registered voters. Their number is therefor about 12.5% of the registered voters. It so happens that after the 2011 elections a lot of these Casamance foreigners have their Gambian voting cards and ID cards confiscated by the Senegalese border police and customs on their way back home. This fact has been hidden by the APRC but the Senegalese authorities have confirmed this fact. (Bojang)

So, the MFDC is now engaged in advancing an agenda that was not intended, supporting Jammeh's hold on power for the past four presidential cycles through increasing violence at home. If this example reinforces anything, it is that the MFDC is not just imagining the Casamançais identity, but it is also actively alienating people from it.

The Senegalese and Guinea-Bissauian relationship has recently improved, it was not always a positive one. In the 1990s, the two countries started a twelve year dispute concerning their maritime border. Although the Arbitration Court and the International Court of Justice ruled that the area in question belonged to Senegal, the neighbors were not

on the best of terms. At various points, Guinea-Bissau was a shelter and a staging post while the government and military officials supplied arms to the movement (Evans 7). Faye uses the proximity in MFDC and Guinea-Bissauan offensives against Senegal to further argue for the ties between the two forces. “The so called ‘*guerre du pétrole*’ (Oil War), during which the Guinea Bissauan and Senegalese armies fought at the border, began one month after the MFDC offensive [on Senegalese border objectives]” (43). There were also times when the Guinea-Bissauan army provided cover for MFDC fighters as they withdrew into the Guinea-Bissauan border to shield themselves against Senegalese attacks. The Senegalese government no doubt saw Guinea-Bissau as a clear supporter of the rebellious movement.

In exchange to Guinea-Bissau’s protection, the MFDC was influential in the former’s 1998 civil war. The political and military leadership of Guinea-Bissau produced conflicting responses to the MFDC. As former President Joao Vieira thought to reduce his MFDC support, the military wing under Brigadier Ansumane Mané continued to maintain MFDC arms supply and financial support (Faye 44). When Mané decided to take power from Vieira via a coup d’état in 1998, he had the support of 1,200 MFDC fighters against the Senegalese army which came in defense of President Vieira (Maraut 115). By the end of the Bissauan civil war the following year, the *Front Sud* had in its possession 82 mm mortars, B-10 82 mm recoil-less guns and DShK-38 12.7 mm heavy machine guns, a military capacity it did not have prior to the civil war (Faye 47). The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau’s backing of the MFDC reflect a change within the movement. It is no longer motivated to action by the population it claims to fight for, it instead becomes even more extreme and starts exploiting that very population for its own advancement.

## Exploitation of Local Casamançais Populations

Looking at the particular ways in which the MFDC is un-imagining the Casamançais identity, we see that the strongest evidence towards this claim is the erosion of popular support for the movement. As the *Front Sud* moved north-ward, it brought with it violence to the Bignona region, one that has been noticeably peaceful since 1992, when the *Front Nord* modified its tone and began cooperating with the Senegalese government. Now the *Front Sud* found itself confronting the *Front Nord* as well as the Senegalese government. In its attempt to cripple the violent *Front Sud*, particularly in light of recent attacks, the Senegalese government in 1995 blocked the movement of food supplies that international NGOs provided for the MFDC. It was this limited access to food that promoted the *Front Sud* to use violence and raid local populations (Faye 39).

The *Front Sud*, which was mostly engaged in those activities, gathered “contributions” from local populations on behalf of the MFDC. As *la Voix de la Casamance* noted in its article following the recent attacks, “the confrontation...took place after the assault on the village in Niaguiss by some members of the MFDC who have stolen foodstuffs. Since the ceasefire agreement, several dozens of them live clandestinely and have difficulties feeding themselves...” (25). It also forced young men into either joining the MFDC or be murdered for refusing to join the rebel group (Faye 45). Those who did not cooperate were considered partners of the Senegalese government. It is interesting here that the MFDC, which in this particular case above is the *Front Sud*, harassed local populations in the name of the MFDC, despite the movement’s internal divisions and differences. It is an especially interesting case because it show how the MFDC leadership

perceived the Casamançais imagining of the movement and ultimately of the Casamançais identity that makes constitutes it.

The *Front Sud* essentially dismissed the divisions of the movement because it perceived the MFDC, with its original motives and goals, as somehow an intrinsic comradeship that is beyond divisions, no matter how real those divisions may be. It assumed that the Casamançais would always rally around the MFDC because it is *their* movement. However, those assumptions proved to be misguided when the MFDC in the 1990s basically dismantled its popular support. According to Faye:

Public opinion about the separatists started to shift when they began attacking fishermen from northern Senegal in the name of ‘ethnic purification’ and raiding villages, eliminating traitors, robbing peasants of all ethnic and political stripes, and committing a battery of human rights abuses. The massacre of 13 civilian travelers at Niahoump, on the Transgambienne, on February 16, 1997 shocked many Casamançais. This incident was followed, one month later, by the killing of seven more under similar circumstances at Belaye, on the Bignona-Diouloulou road. Wolofs were separated from other passengers on the basis of their identity cards, and then executed. (46)

MFDC’s actions under the *Front Nord* conveys the extent to which it thought of itself as separate from the Casamançais population. The individuals who were on the receiving end of exploitation were part of the same idea of a nation that the MFDC had when it first voiced its claim for independence. The change in MFDC goals, without going

into greed as an explanation, may testify to the idea that identities, being simultaneously collective and individual, are always changing, imagining, or un-imagining themselves. But as can be seen, this un-imagining of the Casamançais identity by the MFDC has tangible consequences for the region. Self-defense groups sprung up in various villages in order to fight against robberies and MFDC violations. Those localized defense groups did not always serve as deterrents by virtue of their existence, they engaged violently at times. According to Lambert, a confrontation between the MFDC and a village militia led to the death of twenty individuals; another village chased representatives of Attika out of the village when they arrived to collect a revolutionary tax” (586).

Another organization goes even further and questions the intentions of the MFDC for the region. Created in 1998 as an organization representing Casamançais entrepreneurs and professionals, the *Collectif des Cadres Casamançais* asks the MFDC to “have the modesty to admit that [inhabitants of the region] did not mandate it to demand the independence of the Casamance... Casamançais are tired of the escalation of violence, its endless cycle...We are for the development of the Casamance and not for its independence.” Sixteen years into the conflict and the Casamançais, or at least some of them, are questioning the movement and its intentions and plans for the Casamance. Whether the MFDC would admit what the Cadres Casamançais suggesting is highly unlikely. As many were displaced to Gambia and Guinea-Bissau or internally displaced within Senegal, the Casamançais agricultural sector suffered. For example, cereal production dropped by 19.7 between 1990-1996 (Faye 47). Likewise, public land revenues fell from CFAF 45 million in 1991 to CFAF 17 million in 1997.

Thus the 1990s under President Diouf were influential to the Casamançais conflict. The appeasing and inclusive policy of the state thought to weaken the movement by reinforcing Senegal-Casamance ties on the political and cultural level. It was a tactical response on the part of the government to undermine the separatist movement while attempting to end the conflict by integrating MFDC members into the political structure. This policy was unsuccessful, however, because the MFDC, divided and conflicting, sought instead to strengthen its international ties with the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. In doing so, it weakened its movement and sowed the seed to the un-imagining of the Casamançais identity.

In recent years of the conflict, under the presidencies of Wade and Sall, we see changes in policy by the government, yet, as with the 1990s, a lack of commitment on the part of the MFDC for the movement. Taking office with the situation in Casamance clearly getting more complex with the failure of another peace agreement in 1999, Wade promised to end the Casamançais conflict within the first 100 days of his presidency (Lewis). While his enthusiasm did not materialize when he took office in 2000, Wade realized then the importance of diplomacy to fully engage Guinea-Bissau in the peace process. His first visit to Guinea-Bissau came a month after he took office, an extreme departure from Diouf's rather inactive approach (Foucher 2013 5). The meeting sought to establish a framework for a bilateral border monitoring program between the two governments (Evans 2000 651). He also engaged in direct negotiations with the MFDC leadership, although it posed some difficulties because of the divisions within the movement itself. Wade also aimed to limit border conflicts between the two countries by calling on the United Nations to place military observers along the Senegalese-Bissauan border.

Although the conflict still persists today, Wade's biggest accomplishment towards solving the conflict was reaching a 2004 peace agreement with the MFDC. Although the agreement was signed with Senegal's Ministry of Interior and Father Diamacoune on the MFDC side, Wade's presence there was significant and was an obvious departure from Diouf's handling of the Casamance. It was the symbolic gesture on the part of Wade's government that highlighted its commitment to ending the conflict. Articles 1 and 2 of the 2004 agreement called for an observation group composed of former MFDC members, government and military persons, and representatives from the MFDC's political wing to monitor the demilitarization process of the MFDC. The MFDC was also to establish a list of its fighters and deliver it to the observation group so it could conduct demilitarization.

Like others before it, however, the 2004 peace agreement, once anticipated to end all turmoil in Senegal, did not materialize. Two years later, the disarmament process had not yet started. Koussaynobo Alphonse Diedhiou, coordinator of the National Agency for the Reconstruction of Casamance (ANRAC), attributed this delay to the limitations of the peace agreement itself: "it is very difficult to realize a program of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of the rebels, for example, without a peace process in place. There has not been a meeting between the MFDC and the government since 2004" (Peace Accord Matrix). Another challenge to the implementation was the failure of the MFDC to produce the list of names to the committee. The Director General of ANRAC plainly said, it is [the MFDC's] responsibility to draw up a list and present that to us. How would we know who's in the rank and file? If they give us a list, we'll demobilize them. But as long as there is no list, there will be no disarmament and demobilization" (Quoted in Chang 6).

Although this much anticipated 2004 deal failed due to fundamental limitations in its application, it nonetheless stands out as one that is partially successful in one element. This agreement, ironically signed by Father Diamacoune himself, did not include anything on Casamançais independence. No mechanisms for future talks regarding an independent Casamance have been put in place in this document. It stands in stark contrast to Father Diamacoune’s rejection of a 1991 peace agreement signed by Badji that did not include a roadmap for the independence of Casamance. Then in his 70s in the 2000s, Father Diamacoune may have given up on the Casamançais movement resulting in independence. But it strikes one as ironic because the staunchest supporter of a nationalist movement—radical in his persistence on independence and not because of his alignment with the more militant *Front Sud*—was admitting that the Casamançais identity has weakened. It is at a point where it can operate within the greater Senegalese structure.

The Casamance conflict has not seen any improvement past the 2004 agreement, nor was Sall’s rise to power in 2012 a marker of significant change. He welcomed negotiations with the main MFDC leaders of the time, Salif Sadio, Cesar Atoute Badiatte, and Ousmane Niantang Diatta (Thurston). According to a report by Alex Thurston, Sall was “ready to open talks with the fighters and actors involved in the peace process, religious leaders and men and women of good will.” These leaders have also expressed interest in dialogue as long as it could be done on neutral grounds. Furthermore, his first official international visit was to the Gambia, further an indication of the importance of the Casamance dossier to his presidency. Yet despite the initiatives of the government and the seeming willingness of the MFDC to cooperate, peace has not materialized.

That the two opposing parties seem to have compatible interests for the region yet fail in achieving them is due in large part to the reorientation of the MFDC. Although a small number of Senegalese army members are individually engaged in the exploitation of the Casamance's resources, the Senegalese state, with its reputation of being an exception democracy in Africa, has no economic interest in maintaining the conflict. On the contrary, the conflict and the government's failure to solve it only serves to tarnish the Senegalese image internationally and regionally. The MFDC, on the other hand, benefits from the continuation of the conflict to the detriment of its own people. It has become a movement that is rooted not in its people, but one that is motivated by its economic interests. Both branches of the MFDC sustained themselves in the 2000s by exploiting the Casamançais region. This change within the MFDC is understandable particularly after relations between the Gambia and the Senegal improved, weakening the MFDC.

According to Faye, the MFDC is engaged in "illegal exploitation of the natural resources of Casamance because it is in the interests of the separatists to prolong the conflict and the geography and abundant natural resources in Casamance provide the MFDC with new means of survival" (49). Indeed, in Evans' detailed study of the Casamance conflict, he show that timber, the Casamance's most prominent resource, is widely exploited and diffused in the local, national, and international furniture market (Evans 2003 8). Other exploited crops like cashews and mango farms have also "seasonalized" the conflict, increasing violence throughout harvesting seasons and minimizing it the rest of the year (Evans 2003 10). Most of these exploitations however meant that local Casamançais are displaced by the MFDC for easier access. As the MFDC

abuses the same population it claims to support, it loses their backing and thus contributes to the un-imagining of the Casamançais identity.

#### Evidence of Un-imagining using Online Media

Evidence of the un-imagining of a Casamançais identity on the grassroots level is articulated in texts disseminated through social media. Feedback and responses to articles on *Senego* and *Seneweb* show the weakening of the Casamançais identity in favor of a Senegalese one. All the comments and responses examined are from self-identified Casamançais. The four articles from *Senego* and *Seneweb* that I look at address an issue or a topic regarding the Casamance region. I generated those articles by searching “Casamance” as a key word and then narrowed down potential articles by dates of publication as well as online public engagement with the article to show changes in attitudes or perceptions regarding identity. The two articles from *Senego* were published in May 2015 and March 2016. The 2015 article reports on the MFDC’s assertion of its intentions for independence through its spokesperson, Elinkine Diatta. Similarly, the second article reports a Casamance related topic, the disapproval of President Sall’s efforts in Casamance by Abdoulaye Baldé, President of l’Union Centriste du Sénégal, and possible contender for the 2017 presidential elections.

There is a total of 35 comments for both articles, but the majority are responses not to the text of the articles themselves but to reactions or comments of other users concerning feasibility of Casamançais independence. Of those 35 comments, 25 comments by non-Casamançais discredit the MFDC and the Casamance movement, citing historical and geographic reasons for the impossibility of a Casamançais independence. But considering

that those 25 comments do not really show how the MFDC is undoing the identity that motivates it, the ten comments that explicitly affirm a Casamançais identity but see it as a compatible identity with Senegal are the ones to look at and examine. Below is a comment in the Diatta article that characterizes the MFDC and the Casamance conflict as a Diola affair, and various responses by self-identified Casamançais. An individual by the name Casa writes the following in Comment 1:

Ah encore les diolas pour eux la Casamance leur appartiennent. Je n'ai jamais entendu que les mandingues, peuple sedhiou ou les peuls du fouladou Kolda sont dans la rebellion mais toujours les diolas qui veulent faire de la Casamance leur propriété avec le soutiens [du Président gambien] Yaya Jammeh. (Mangoné)

Ah yet again the Diola, they think Casamance is theirs. I never heard that the Mandingo, Sedhiou people, or the Peuls of Fouladou Kolda are in the rebellions but always the Diola who want to make the Casamance their property with Yaya Jammeh's support.<sup>3</sup>

A Casamançais by the online name of Papis Diallo writes the following response in Comment 3:

Détrompez-vous ce sont toutes les ethnies confondues de la Casamance qui veulent l'indépendance. Faites un sondage dans toute la Casamance vous verrez de vous-même que c'est toute la Casamance debout qui réclame son indépendance. Rien ne lie la Casamance et le Sénégal à tout point de vue. Vive la Casamance libre et Indépendante. (Mangoné)

You are mistaken, it is all the ethnic groups in Casamance who want independence. Take a survey throughout the Casamance and you will see for yourself that it is the entire Casamance that is proclaiming independence. Nothing binds Casamance and Senegal at any viewpoint.  
Long live the Casamance free and independent.

In response to Papis Diallo, another self-identified Casamançais by the name MISTER writes the following in Comment 3:

Je suis de la Casamance depuis des générations et Papis Diallo tu racontes ta vie, et à part les diolas qui veulent s'approprier la région les autres ethnies sont parties intégrantes du Sénégal, et ma famille mes amis mes connaissances sont fiers d'être Sénégalais et de le rester. (Mangoné)

I am Casamançais for generations and Papis Diallo you are talking about your life, and apart from the Diola who want to claim the region for themselves, the other ethnic groups are an integral part of Senegal, and my family, my friends, and my acquaintances are proud to be Senegalese and to remain Senegalese.

Another person by the name FRANKI shares similar feelings in Comment 4 :

Les casamançais [sont] des gens dignes travailleurs [qui] veulent que la Casamance soit désenclavée [et] développée mais par la voie passive mais plus par la perte de ses hommes valides... (Mangoné)

Casamance [are] worthy people and workers who want the Casamance to be opened up and developed, but not by passive voices, but no longer by the loss of Casamance's able-bodied [men]...

In Comment 1, the author does not indicate any clues that help in identifying his or her origin, although the online name choice could suggest ties to Casamance considering that the region is often abbreviated as Casa. While the origin of the author would have been telling were it possible to confirm, Comment 1 is nonetheless invaluable because it reinforces once again the importance of the Diola in the Casamançais context as discussed in greater detail in previous sections. The Diola particularism, which was perceived central in the creation of a Casamançais identity, is now also perceived as key in the undoing of that very identity as suggested by the author. Comments 2, 3, and 4, all by self-identified Casamançais, show the diversion of opinions regarding the Casamançais identity in relation to Senegal. Comment 2 attempts to minimize the Diola-centered narrative of the conflict in favor of a collective Casamançais identity, one that is very much rooting for an independent and free Casamance. While comment 3 reiterates the author's Casamance non-Diola origin, he or she does so to emphasize identifying with a Senegalese identity, as do all other non-Diola ethnic groups of the region in the author's estimation.

Unlike the first 3 comments, Comment 4 shows the change through time of a Casamançais attitude towards the conflict as opposed to the Senegalese identity. According to the comment, the Casamançais are not interested in promoting and developing the region by violence inflicted on their people by the very movement which claims to fight for their liberation; they want to advance the Casamance by peaceful dialogue. There is no explicit indication of the desire for a separate and independent state from Senegal. But there is a

strong awareness of a Casamançais identity that is being sabotaged by its very people. If those comments suggest anything regarding the Casamançais identity, it is that support for the movement is divided at best or irrelevant to the movement at worst. That is, the MFDC as an elite group is very much set on a trajectory for which popular support is insignificant that it no longer speaks for the people, but can still pretend to by associations of the past.

The other two articles from *Seneweb* are from 2013 and 2015 and they address tourism in Casamance and infrastructure projects by the government to minimize the isolation of the region from the rest of the country. In the two articles, there is a total of 58 comments, 23 of which side with a Casamançais identity and further dividing into a camp that wants independence and a camp that sees itself as nonetheless Senegalese, while a non-Casamançais majority of 25 using a particularly exclusive language in reference to a Senegalese identity.

Below are a few of those comments from the tourism article and the infrastructure article. In comment 5, the anonymous author responds to the infrastructure plans the government is hoping to start in Casamance with the support of the Gambia which separates the northern and southern regions of Senegal.

Comment 5:

Vous perdez du temps et de l'argent en CASAMANCE car elle sera indépendante. Développer notre Sénégal est une idée sage. (Ferloo)

You are wasting time and money in Casamance because it will be independent. Developing our Senegal is a wise idea.

Comment 6 echoes similar sentiments:

On a déjà eu notre Indépendance, alors arrête. Notre pays est indivisible

We have already had our independence, so stop [it]. Our country is indivisible.

Although the author of Comment 5 sees Casamance independence as imminent, the comment bears a very negative tone because the immanency of independence does not seem to be legitimate Casamançais claims to autonomy due to historical or geographic reasons. The use of “our Senegal” indicates the author’s strong identification of Casamançais as non-Senegalese. While no other comments were quite as strong in making the distinction between Casamançais and Senegalese, this comment highlights the important point that the un-imagining of a Casamançais identity is not necessarily synonymous with its absorption into a Senegalese identity. Unlike the claims of the author of Comment 5, evidence shows that Casamance independence is unlikely anytime soon. But evidence also shows that the independence movement is losing support, which means the Casamançais identity is being unimagined. Comment 6 complicates this set-up because it can seem inclusionary and exclusionary at the same time.

One can wonder about the identity that “we” in the author’s statement represents. Does it refer to those who see themselves as Senegalese, thereby making the statement exclusive, or does it stand for a united “we” made of Casamançais and Senegalese? I think the author’s statement leans towards the exclusionary side of the issue because it does not even acknowledge that Casamance is different from the rest of the country, nor that the Casamance’s claim for independence is legitimate on some levels even if it may not be feasible on others. Despite the un-imagining of a Casamançais identity, it is certain that a

small number of people still believe in the possibility of an independent Casamance, one that has so far not been attained. Comment 6 seems to even be more extreme than Comment 5 because it dismisses all together 33 years of conflict. Together these individual comments, unsolicited by organizations or official entities, show the lack of support the Casamance independence movement is facing. As some of the comments show, this lack of support translates into un-imagining an independent Casamance state, not necessarily the cultural and historical identification of being a Casamançais. Through the use of social media, individuals are more equipped today than even to shape perceptions and impressions of their imagined community members on the grassroots level rather than through state or power apparatus.

#### Combatting Un-Imagining

Conscious of its loss, however, the MFDC is actively using social media to combat this un-imagining. But as an elite agent, the MFDC does so through controlling the kind of information that gets disseminated and that which does not. Through careful investigation of *Journal du Pays*, the Casamance's only online newspaper, I argue that it is a vehicle employed by the MFDC to project a lively, monolithic movement and objective targeting independence. According to its website *Journal du Pays* is a «journal casamançais, indépendant, et libre» (independent and free) since 1999. On the “Dossier” tab of *Journal du Pays*, there is a “Histoire” and a “MFDC” section. But unlike what one would expect, the “Histoire” does not refer to the history or background of the newspaper itself; it refers instead to the history of the region. Most of the articles within the history section talk about the Casamance and the origin of the conflict, Casamançais relations with France and the

Casamançais contribution to French war efforts, and report on a tragic accident that befell a Casamançais boat named “Joola” in the 1990s.

The MFDC section is mainly peculiar because it actually exists. As a newspaper that supposedly reports on all things pertaining to Casamançais and Senegalese issues, an MFDC folder seems to designate a special place for the movement itself. This section holds the letters of Father Diamacoune examined earlier, the one to President Diouf, to the French Prime Minister, and the French Ambassador. If Father Diamacoune did receive letters in response to his, they are not included in the MFDC section of *Journal du Pays*. Having a particular place for the MFDC within the website’s sections of course raises important questions regarding ownership of the online newspaper. There is no indication of such information anywhere, although the bias towards Casamance in the articles and the information that is published suggest strong ties to the separatist movement.

One such indication of a bias if not outright alignment with the separatist movement is a an opinion poll that has been on *Journal du Pays*’s main page since I first learned about the newspaper in October 2015.

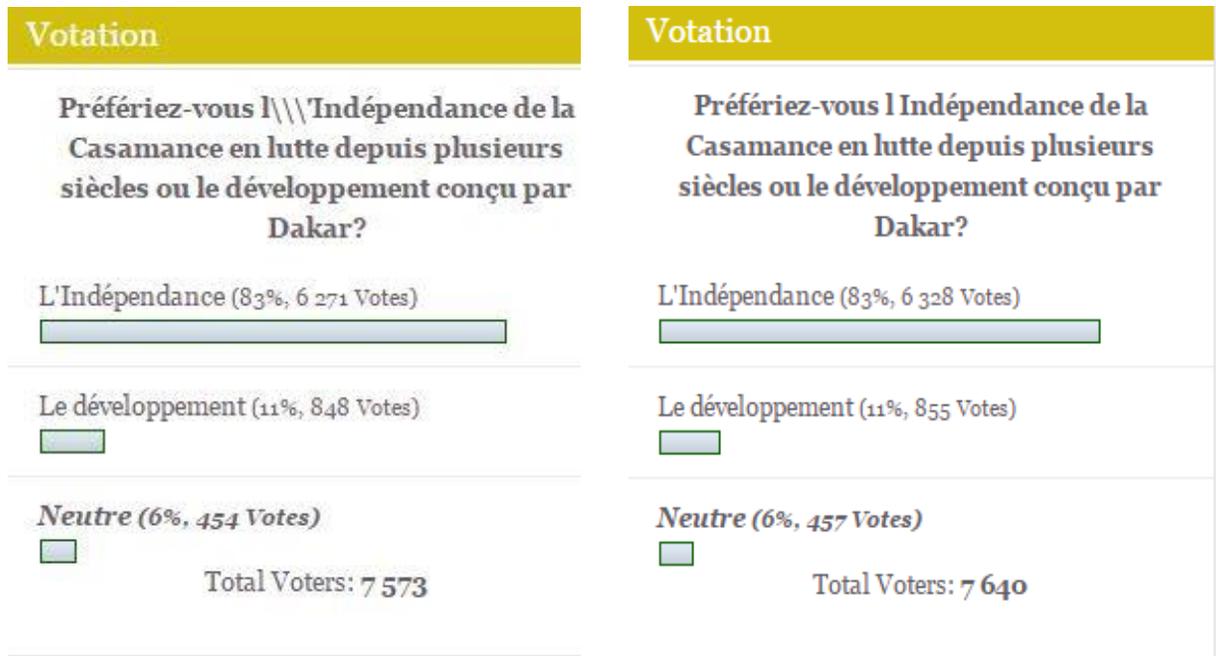


Figure 4: Obtained from *Journal du Pays*. February 16, 2016.

Obtained from *Journal du Pays*. March 15, 2016.

The poll's question in English is as follows: "Do you prefer independence for Casamance which has been in struggle for centuries or development as envisioned by Dakar?" As seen in the opinion poll from February, a high percentage of voters seems to prefer independence; that number barely increases in March. But the overall number of voters, 7,573, is fairly small and not representative of the region's opinion when compared to the actual Casamance population that stood at 437,986 in the 2002 census and has probably increased in recent years (2002). It is interesting to consider how voters could have responded differently had the question itself been worded differently. The poll seems to deliberately craft "development as envisioned by Dakar" as opposed to using more direct language such as "unity with Senegal" or "remaining part of Senegal," especially when considering that it is more precise in naming the "independence of Casamance" as such in

the first part of the question. It seems clear from the wording that “development as envisioned by Dakar” is not explicitly asking participants to indicate their approval of remaining part of Senegal, choices that would have been clearer to participants had the question read differently.

Although the poll results are not representative of the Casamançais population in any ways, there are a few important limitations that make it essentially questionable. The methodology of the poll is unknown. As mentioned above, the poll has been open since September 2015 at the very least with no specified closing date. Polls normally have a determined objective and are considered efficient or relevant when they are limited by timelines. In the case of this poll, however, there is no limited framework. Another challenge with the poll is that anyone could vote, not just Casamançais people who are affected by the conflict. To demonstrate, one of the 7,573 total votes from Figure 4 is a vote that I cast. While it is generally hard to control participants in online-administered opinion polls, relative accuracy is still possible if one had a more sophisticated poll and methodology.

The basic investigation of *Journal du Pays*' website leads to solidifying the inclination that it is MFDC-affiliated. An investigation of some of its articles further reinforces this conclusion. Looking at a few news articles of two different journalists published on *Journal du Pays*, one sees the biases in the language employed. It is a deliberate choice to look at news articles and not editorials, because, in theory, the former tends to report factual information while the later tends to explicitly support one view point over another. I should note here that none of the comments and responses to the articles examined express opposition to the MFDC or the fight for an independent Casamance. All

were very much supportive of a separate Casamance State and exhibited strong cultural and historical identification with the region. The examples I will be looking at come from two particular articles. Published by Assoukatane on January 20, 2016, Article 1 reports on the return of Dakar-based Casamançais students to remember the ninth anniversary of Father Diamacoune's passing. Article 2 is published a few days later on January 22, 2016 by Pierre Coly and it reports on a meeting that took place between the Cardinal of Casamance Théodore Adrien Sarr, Bishop of Ziguinchor Paul Abel Mamba Diatta, and forces loyal to the MFDC faction under Cesar Atoute Badiatte. The objective of the meeting taking place in San Domingo, Guinea-Bissau was to negotiate a deal to build production lines along a main highway and start demining in Casamance.

The articles exhibit much bias in their presentation of the information regarding the two occasions. Article 1 is already charged in its title, "Arrival to Ziguinchor of a Large Delegation of Casamançais Students Living in Senegal." The article makes it clear that the students are based in Dakar and its surrounding areas, which, in comparison to the rest of Senegal, is only one city of many others in a country of 11 administrative regions, (14 regions if one is to include the three regions within Casamance). There is an unvoiced acknowledgement here that Dakar is synonymous with Senegal and that the Casamance, although not officially or legally independent of Senegal, is self-proclaimed to be autonomous and separate. Indeed, a few sentences in the article reiterate the separateness of Casamance:

[C]es jeunes hommes et femmes ont marché au rythme des danses de la Casamance pour montrer leur attachement à leur culture. Du rond-point Jean-Paul II, centre de Ziguinchor, au siège du MFDC, ces jeunes avec des

drapeaux casamançais ont chanté et dansé au nom de l'unité et de la paix en terre Casamançaise. Devant le siège du MFDC, les jeunes sont accueillis par les femmes des bois sacrés qui à leur tour ont chanté et dansé au rythme du Djambadong pour une Casamance de paix et de prospérité. (Assoukatène)

These young men and women marched to the rhythm of the dances of Casamance to show their attachment to their culture. From John-Paul II circle, the center of Ziguinchor, to the headquarters of the MFDC, these young people, with Casamançais flags, sang and danced in the name of unity and peace in the land of Casamance. Outside the headquarters of the MFDC, the young students were greeted by women of the sacred groves who sang and danced to the rhythm of Djambadong for peaceful and prosperous Casamance.

There is a strong cultural identification with Casamance, as the author writes. But what stands out most in the text is the route the article points out. The students marched from the center of the city to the MFDC base with flags of the region in hand, showing support to and trust in the MFDC. The MFDC is portrayed as the agent that is able to achieve unity and peace in the region. While this support towards the MFDC makes sense in light of the event being a remembrance of a man that spearheaded the movement, one can notice the author's emphasis on peace, unity, and prosperity, without providing a critical background information of the situation in the region. As demonstrated in previous sections, the MFDC today is one of the main aggressors towards the Casamançais population. Yet, the reader gets an overwhelmingly positive impression of those student marches that are promoting peace and unity in Casamance. The author does not have any quotes from participants to balance out his biased observation of the event.

Article 2 goes even further than Article 1 in its bias to the extent that it reads as an opinion piece and not a news article. Coly explicitly criticizes Bishop Paul Mamba and the Christian establishment for having betrayed the MFDC in engaging in peace negotiations after having supported the movement's war efforts:

En effet Paul Abel Mamba en plus d'avoir accepté le véhicule que lui a gracieusement offert l'Etat du Sénégal, est aussi un membre actif de la « *commission ad'hoc de négociation* » mis en place par l'Etat sous la supervision de l'Amiral Farba Sarr par ailleurs Directeur Général des Renseignements du Sénégal. Comment des évêques ont-ils pu envoyer leurs représentants à une pareille rencontre? Depuis quand l'église fait-elle partie du lot des messieurs Casamance? Que trame l'église contre le MFDC?...Après avoir utilisé les cadres casamançais contre le MFDC, c'est autour de l'église d'être utilisée. Le Sénégal utilise toujours les fils de la Casamance contre le MFDC...Selon les spécialistes de la question Mamba a cherché à défier le MFDC, à le pousser à la faute pour mettre les leaders politiques en mal avec l'Etat et la communauté catholique de la Casamance. (Coly)

Indeed Paul Abel Mamba, in addition to graciously agreeing to take that vehicle the State of Senegal offered him, is also an active member of the "ad hoc negotiating committee" set up by the state under the supervision of Admiral Farba Sarr, also the Senegalese Director General of Information. How could the bishops send their representatives to such a meeting? Since when does the Church take part in the lot of Casamançais men? What is

turning the Church against the MFDC? After having used Casamance leaders against the MFDC, it is time for the Church to be used. Senegal still uses the sons of Casamance against the MFDC... According to those who are experts on Mamba (Diatta), he sought to challenge the MFDC, to push it to make a mistake and to get political leaders in trouble with the state and the Catholic community in Casamance.

The first indication of bias is the use of sarcasm in the first sentence, indicating Diatta's "gracious" acceptance of a gift from the Senegalese State. The author then points out his bias by using "such a meeting," to indicate his disdain for the Church's involvement in actions that counter MFDC efforts. The two questions that follow only serve to highlight the author's sympathy with the MFDC. There is the assumption in those questions on the part of the author that the Church has bad intentions towards the MFDC, but there is no questioning of why the Church is changing its position or whether this change is essentially negative as suggested. In other words, the article questions the actions of the Church but does not even indulge the thought that the Church's behavior could be a response to MFDC behavior or actions. Furthermore, the article goes out to offer general information outside the scope of the meeting and point out the Senegalese State's manipulation of the church through Bishop Diatta to turn it against the MFDC. However, those experts on Diatta are not named, nor are the sources of all the information regarding state manipulation.

From those two articles, we see that the MFDC and the Casamance is always being framed in opposition to Senegal. Furthermore, there is a strong bias towards the MFDC in the two articles examined. Those biases are not hidden, they are rather overt due to lack of support to some of their claims and the diversity of opinion. Therefore, if the

MFDC leadership or an MFDC sympathizer does not own *Journal du Pays*, the newspaper is, in an unexplainable way, a huge promoter of the MFDC. It is biased in its reporting and seeks to paint the MFDC as a hope for the region and a positive influence, not recognizing that the movement has gone through different phases and has changed and redefined itself. *Journal du Pays* helps put a façade for the MFDC at a point in the movement's history where it is increasingly losing local backing. I argue that this façade also helps to combat the un-imagining of the Casamançais identity by disseminating information that shows a united movement, one that no one seems to oppose if one is to browse through the various comments lefts by readers on some of the political, cultural, and social articles on the website.

## DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

To recapitulate, the thesis has looked at the Casamançais identity and its formation, examining historical, cultural, and social dimensions that separate the region from the rest of Senegal. It then looked at how this Casamançais identity and the Diola identity were politicized by the MFDC and collectively became the basis of a popular support for a separatist movement. It looked in greater detail at historical reports and letters of Father Diamacoune, teasing out how they articulated the Casamançais identity and struggle. In the solidification of the MFDC as a movement, the thesis examined how it dwindled and fragmented as it relied on external economic support from the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau, maintained favorable ties with Dakar, and exploited local Casamançais populations. The result of the MFDC's actions is the un-imagining of a Casamançais identity, a process that is aided by the availability of modern technology and the internet.

Through articles from *Seneweb* and *Senego*, we saw that a good majority of Casamançais diverged in their understanding of what it means to be Casamançais, a critical step in un-imagining an identity. While they all identified as Casamançais and proudly so, some equated this identification with Casamançais independence, while others limited it within the greater multicultural and multiethnic Senegalese identity. Within the second groups, some individuals identified as Casamançais and therefore Senegalese, whereas others just sought to highlight the possibility of an autonomous Casamançais identity that

is not politicized within the context of Senegal and not absorbed into a Senegalese identity. From our examination of *Journal du Pays*, we saw how the MFDC is engaged in halting the un-imagining of a Casamançais identity by projecting a monolithic and popular movement through its online presence. It certainly gives the impression that the movement is as strong as ever, a misleading portrait considering what we have studied in previous sections.

Given the current circumstances considering the Casamance conflict—the divisions within the MFDC, lack of popular support, abuse and manipulation of Casamançais populations, lack of government interest in considering Casamance independence, and government efforts to engage in dialogue for a peaceful resolution—it is unlikely that the region will see itself independent anytime soon. It is important to note here that un-imagining is only possible because the MFDC did succeed in imagining it at some point, as evidenced by popular support and enthusiasm for the movement at its onset. But as MFDC fighters continue to exploit local populations for economic gains while knowing fully well that independence at such a point is probably unlikely, it continues to lose legitimacy and un-imagining that very identity on which it is based. The Casamançais identity will be un-imagined in the sense that it will not hold on to the separatist agenda of the MFDC nor support the movement as it currently stands. It will still remain Casamançais in all its cultural and regional identity, but it will also have the option of imagining itself as part of the Senegalese identity, one that is part of the Senegalese State's cultural and ethnic plurality.

Potential Future research regarding the Casamançais conflict will need to address the un-imagining of a politicized Casamançais identity in conjunction with the creation of

a new and inclusive Senegalese identity. We have examined extensively the imagining of a Casamançais identity into one that is supportive of the MFDC, and the un-imagining of this identity, by the MFDC as well as the Dakar-based government, into one that is currently in opposition of the movement. But as the Casamançais identity has changed, it is equally likely that the Senegalese identity has also changed throughout the conflict—although probably not to the same extent. Recalling Comments 5 and 6, whose authors emphasize “developing our Senegal” and state that Senegal has already obtained its independence, it would be interesting to see how the Casamançais conflict has shaped the dominant Senegalese identity if at all.

A country that is already multiethnic and multicultural, does Senegal need to imagine the Casamançais as part of its plural society? I believe it does, because as the Casamançais identity continues to disintegrate, it becomes open to as many new grievances as it will be to imagining itself as Senegalese or be imagined by others as such. The more important question is can Senegal imagine the Casamançais identity inclusively. I think the answer, as with un-imagining the Casamançais identity, can be found in the use of contemporary technology: social media and online newspapers. Contemporary technology is an invaluable resource that allows access to what average Senegalese or Casamançais think of a conflict that is usually defined and characterized by the elites involved. Focusing on the Senegalese aspect in future research also suggests something very important about the relationship between imagining and un-imagining. These two opposing ways of identity generation are potentially simultaneous when they involve two distinct agents like Senegal and Casamance. Perhaps as the Casamançais are rejecting their MFDC-created identity, Senegal is imagining them as part of their already vibrant plurality.

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<sup>1</sup> The statistics are based on Faye's research found on pages 7-9.

<sup>2</sup> Article 1 of the 1978 Constitution lists the national languages in the following order:  
Jola, Mandingo, Pulaar, Soninke, and Wolof.

<sup>3</sup> All translations to English are provided by the author.

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## CURRICULUM VITA

NAME: Sandra Kazi Yougusuk Tombe

ADDRESS: 1823 S. 3<sup>rd</sup> St. APT 2  
Louisville, KY 40208

DOB: Khartoum, Sudan- September 9, 1991

EDUCATION AND TRAINING: B.A., International Relations and French  
Berea College  
2010-2014

M.A., French  
University of Louisville  
2014-2016

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES: Phi Kappa Phi  
Pi Delta Phi  
Greater Louisville International Professionals

AWARDS/HONORS Graduate Teaching Assistantship  
Certificate of Achievement in Recognition of  
Outstanding MA in French