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HIDDEN DEBATES OVER THE STATUS OF THE CASAMANCE DURING THE DECOLONIZATION PROCESS IN SENEGAL: REGIONALISM, TERRITORIALISM, AND FEDERALISM AT A CROSSROADS, 1946–62*

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Abstract

The article studies the contexts in which the idea of a separation of the Casamance from the rest of Senegal arose during the process of decolonization. The idea was an outgrowth of colonial representations forged since the end of the nineteenth century. It was first formulated by the French authorities in secret discussions with the representatives of the Casamance in the context of the 1958 referendum. It was taken over by local political leaders who saw it as a possible answer to the debates over representation that arose in the post-war process of democratization, and later by proponents of political mobilization at the sub-regional level after independence. By examining this little-known moment of possibility, the article shows that the claims of the current armed independence movement are in fact part of a longer, more ambivalent history in which a separatist imaginary of the Casamance took shape.

Key Words

Senegal, West Africa, decolonization, citizenship, territory, nationalism.

INTRODUCTION

> If any activity is especially dangerous today, it is surely writing. Our world has become so unstable that what seemed unquestionably true three months ago is now patently a mistake, and constructions once deemed perfectly logical and solid are collapsing like a house of cards.[1]

With these words, Mamadou Dia opened the afterword to *Nations africaines et solidarité mondiale*, which he needed urgently to add to his manuscript when the ephemeral Mali Federation broke apart in August 1960. The era of internal autonomy and independence

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1 M. Dia, *Nations africaines et solidarité mondiale* (Paris, 1960), 137.

between the mid-1950s and the early 1960s had indeed been a shifting, uncertain period of political possibilities.[2] The relationship between colonial authorities and Africans had been renegotiated, generating considerable debate over the future of the territorial configurations produced by the colonial system. Several studies have shown that organization into nation-states within the borders of the former colonies was merely one idea among others and definitely not the outcome desired by most African leaders.[3] It is well known that the prospect of regroupment was at the core of the projects supported by Léopold Sédar Senghor and Mamadou Dia, who emerged as the winners of the political contests in Senegal during the 1950s: first, the project to federate West Africa within a French-African confederation, based on the federation of French West Africa (AOF), followed by the Mali Federation, and finally, the prospect of a Senegambian union. The form of a nation-state within the boundary lines established by the colonial territorial framework was ultimately adopted only after these alternatives had been attempted.[4] However, in AOF, the seeds were clearly already germinating in the conditions in which the colonial authorities negotiated the internal autonomy process.[5] Indeed, during the 1950s, the colonial authorities had reinforced the territorial scale of executive power (the territorial budget; the General Council, then the Territorial Assembly; the semi-autonomous government in 1956, which became autonomous in 1958). The territory of the colony gradually became the center of the spaces used in representing — and budgeting — political life.

When exploring the issue of territorial forms of decolonization in Senegal, most analyses have emphasized that tension between the movement in favor of territorialization and federation projects, those 'dreams of unity'.[6] Our aim here is to go beyond the territorialism versus federalism debate that drove the central arenas of imperial and African power and instead look at another scale and other actors in the territorial imaginary of Senegal. This article is concerned with the idea of a separation of the Casamance from Senegal, which was formulated several times between the late 1950s and early 1960s. The idea of separation was inherited from colonial representations of the region forged since the end of the nineteenth century. It was first proposed by the French authorities in the context of the 1958 referendum on the Community and taken up again on a number of other occasions by the Casamance political elites once Senegal had achieved independence. Nevertheless, it remained a clandestine project, articulated 'behind the scenes' in discussions about the

2 F. Cooper, 'Possibility and constraint: African independence in historical perspective', *The Journal of African History*, 49:2 (2008), 167–96.

3 See especially, C. Lefebvre, 'La décolonisation d'un lieu commun. L'artificialité des frontières africaines: un legs intellectuel colonial devenu étendard de l'anticolonialisme', *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines*, 24:1 (2011), 77–104.

4 S. Awenengo Dalberto, 'Frontières et indépendances en Afrique: une lecture des possibles', *Afrique contemporaine*, 235 (2010), 73–83.

5 F. Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge, 1996); J. R. de Benoist, *La balkanisation de l'AOF* (Dakar, 1979); T. Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France's Successful Decolonization?* (Oxford, 2002); R. S. Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa* (Oxford, 1964).

6 C. E. Welsh, *Dream of Unity: Pan-Africanism and Political Unification in West Africa* (Ithaca, NY, 1966); W. J. Foltz, *From French West Africa to the Mali Federation* (New Haven, 1965); F. Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa* (Princeton, 2014); de Benoist, *La balkanisation de l'AOF*.

individual and collective possibilities and opportunities that decolonization seemed to have opened up.[7] Nothing concrete came of it in the Casamance. Contrary to other projects pursued during the same period, the idea of separation failed to generate popular and/or armed mobilization or the creation of new institutions.[8] Despite the potential heuristic value of a counterfactual approach, we have no intention of writing an alternative history about 'worlds that might have been'.[9] We think it is important to consider the separatist statements in themselves, as facts and events in the decolonization process inherently worthy of study.

Cooper showed that the triumph of the territorial nation-state at independence was less the product of nationalist mobilizations than the contingent result of clientelist and coalition politics by African political elites, including the neutralization of trade unions and the merger of political parties.[10] In Senegal, coalition politics led these elites to seize regional political representation and the right to imagine alternative territorial possibilities. When the colonial Casamance *cercle* (administrative subdivision) was transformed into an electoral district starting in 1946, the accompanying political debates were certainly not about the legitimacy or illegitimacy of Senegal's borders. Led by a new generation of educated men from the region, the discussions increasingly centered on what was essential to 'good' representation of the new citizens and the ability of the various regional or territorial leaders and political parties to embody it. Thus, one of the mainsprings of mobilization in favor of democratization was the struggle not against colonialism as such but against the power of the central government, which explains the persistence of the separatist idea in the early 1960s.[11] We will show that the separatist statement was considered a possible response to the debates over representation, even though it also corresponded to the positioning strategies of certain political actors in the region. Within this framework, our research is part of the renewal of historical reflection on the forms of nationalism and the competing imaginaries of state nationalism in Africa, paying special attention to how they are expressed and the diversity of the actors, places, and scales that have shaped them.[12] Indeed, we must not allow ourselves to be locked into a statist interpretation, which has been a powerful political — and sometimes historiographical — tool to disqualify alternative territorialities.

This analysis also seeks to contribute to fill a lacuna in the historiography on decolonization in Senegal, one which no doubt can be explained by the relative secrecy surrounding these projects, but above all by the start of an armed movement calling for

7 J. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, 1990).

8 J. Allman, *The Quills of the Porcupine: Asante Nationalism in an Emergent Ghana* (Madison, 1993); P. Boilley, 'Décolonisation saharienne et politiques économiques: OCRS/Royaume Sanussi de Libye: deux tentatives occidentales pour durer?', in R. Ageron and M. Michel (eds.), *L'ère des décolonisations* (Paris, 1995), 359–68; B. Lecocq, *Disputed Desert: Decolonisation, Competing Nationalisms and Tuareg Rebellions in Northern Mali* (Leiden, 2010); M. Larmer, E. Kennes, 'Rethinking the Katangese Secession', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 42:4 (2014), 741–61.

9 D. Gilbert and D. Lambert, 'Counterfactual geographies: worlds that might have been', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 36:3 (2010), 245–52.

10 F. Cooper, 'Conflict and connection: rethinking colonial African history', *The American Historical Review*, 99:5 (1994), 1539.

11 See also J. Straussberger, 'Storming the citadel: decolonization and political contestation in Guinea's Futa Jallon 1945–61', *The Journal of African History*, 57:2 (2016), 231–49.

12 M. Larmer and B. Lecocq, 'Historicising nationalism in Africa', *Nations and Nationalism*, 24:4 (2018), 893–917.

independence of the Casamance in 1982. The Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC-1982) took over the name of the party that dominated political life in the Casamance in the 1950s, laying claim to this legacy based only on fragmentary knowledge. For a long time, historical investigation was troubled by clashes between the MFDC-1982 and the Senegalese state, which also took place on the ground of history. The virulence of those disputes made the political actors of the 1950s extremely cautious: they were the only ones who could provide a first-hand account of events, but they feared that any association between their own MFDC and that of the younger generation, the MFDC-1982, might fuel separatist arguments or discredit their own experiences. Nevertheless, it is possible to write this history.[13] It is also necessary to grasp how this moment of possibilities was able to become the matrix of contemporary imaginaries of secession.

BARGAINING FOR THE AUTONOMY OF THE CASAMANCE

The project for the French Community, which was slated for a referendum vote on 28 September 1958, reflected the need of the French authorities to rethink how the ties between the metropole and France's overseas territories were structured, in the context of the Algerian crisis and the sudden regime change in France, when General de Gaulle came to power. In each territory, the inhabitants were given a choice between internal autonomy on an individual territorial basis within the French Community (the 'yes' vote) or immediate independence (the 'no' vote). The referendum was not designed to set the terms for France's withdrawal from Africa: on the contrary, the Community was intended to last. In this context, the French authorities did not consider the possibility of failure. As Pierre Messmer, the former high commissioner of the republic in AOF, testified: '[I]t was clear that we had definitely decided to ensure that the "yes" won, as well as to stop the project of the federalists by any means necessary'.[14]

In late August and early September of 1958, the Union Progressiste Sénégalaise (UPS), the Senegalese section of the Parti du Regroupement Africain (PRA), obeyed the call to vote 'no' decided by the federal party at the Cotonou convention in July. At the time, Senghor was campaigning in favor of establishing an African federation within a confederation led by France. Although the project of the constitution was not aligned with his goals — it enshrined the suppression of existing federal bodies and did not put relationships between the territories and France on an equal footing — Senghor and some of the other senior UPS cadres were nevertheless opposed to the idea of an abrupt break from France. But Senghor's stance was still in the minority within the UPS, which was dominated by radicals who had been actively involved in the campaign for the 'no' vote.

13 Interviews have been conducted with a dozen of political actors at the time. Beside the official archive, this research has benefited from a previously-unknown private collection, the personal archives of Paul-Ignace Coly (APPIC), the former secretary general of the MFDC section of Bignona and later the first UPS mayor of Bignona. The unfiled collection contains numerous diaries, notebooks, letters, and minutes of local and regional political meetings, covering the period from 1946 to the late 1970s, which Paul-Ignace Coly and his son, Édouard Coly, generously allowed me to consult between 2003 and 2006 at their home in Bignona.

14 P. Messmer, quoted by R. Colin et al., '"Alors, tu ne m'embrasses plus Léopold?": Mamadou Dia and Léopold S. Senghor', *Afrique contemporaine*, 233 (2010), 119.

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On 28 August 1958, when de Gaulle made a speech promoting the Community in Dakar, he found himself facing a part of his audience who loudly demanded immediate independence.

The risk of a defeat in Senegal was especially intolerable for the French in view of their close and long-standing ties. Here, as elsewhere in the French Union, administrative control over the balloting process, at least since political suffrage was opened up in 1946, no longer seemed sufficient to guarantee a positive outcome.[15] On the sidelines of the official campaign, the French therefore pursued a broader policy of enticement and influence-peddling among prominent figures and religious authorities — particularly heads of the Sufi brotherhoods, which had considerable influence in northern Senegal. In this framework of unofficial maneuvering, the French made a specific offer to the *conseillers territoriaux* from the electoral district of Casamance. These *conseillers,* elected representatives in the Territorial Assembly of 1957, were all members of the UPS; some had been in office since 1952. Among them were Yoro Kandé, who was also chairman of the Finance Commission of the Territorial Assembly, Ibou Diallo, a senator, and Émile Badiane, a member of the Permanent Commission of the Territorial Assembly. After his speech, de Gaulle received several *conseillers* from Casamance who were still in Dakar to persuade them to campaign for the 'yes' vote.[16] When they returned to Casamance, the *conseillers* held a special meeting on 5–6 September 1958 in Ziguinchor, the administrative capital of the *cercle*. On the afternoon of 6 September, the delegation went to the *cercle* residence, where, according to the account given by Kandé, the commander asked them to campaign for the 'yes' vote in exchange for Casamance autonomy.[17] This explained their decision to disregard the watchword of their party — of which Casamance had been a faithful electoral bastion since 1951 — and their early commitment to promote the 'yes' vote:

> So we, we were for the 'yes'. Afterwards. When de Gaulle arrived. Because there was something, at the bottom. … We are not allowed to reveal it to you, but I am going to tell you. We had, the superior commander, the last superior commander of Ziguinchor, his name was … I think, Brousset, who told us: 'If you vote to ensure the "yes" [wins], right after that I will send troops here, and you, the Casamance, you will gain your independence'. It was that, above all, that made us vote ['yes']. At the time, in Dakar, people couldn't understand why. Everybody else said 'no' and we said 'yes'.[18]

Kandé's account is vague on at least one point: it seems that the offer would hold up only if the rest of Senegal voted 'no'. At the administrator's office, the deputies drafted a new proclamation, which nine of eleven of them would sign, calling for a 'yes' vote in favor of the French Community. The official archives show that the proclamation was immediately relayed by

15 See for example K. van Walraven, 'Decolonization by referendum: the anomaly of Niger and the fall of Sawaba, 1958–1959', *The Journal of African History*, 50:2 (2009), 269–92; C. Atlan, 'De la gestion à l'arbitrage: l'administration du Sénégal face aux premières élections libres de l'après-guerre (1945–1958)', *Outre-Mers*, 338–9 (2003), 145.

16 Interview with Moussa Coly, Bignona, 27 July 2002. Coly, then a *conseiller* of Casamance, was present at the meeting in Dakar.

17 Assane Seck, a *conseiller* of the Casamance at the time but absent from the meeting in Ziguinchor, was the first to put me on the trail of this deal.

18 Interview with Yoro Kandé, Kolda, 30 July 2002.

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Amédée Brousset to the Governor of Senegal, who telegraphed it that very day to the Overseas Ministry.[19] It was later published in *Paris-Dakar*, the territory's official newspaper:

> The elected representatives of Casamance ...
> In view of the virtually unanimous desire of the people of the Casamance, which is shared entirely by their elected representatives, [and] assuming full responsibility at every level, without waiting for instructions,
> Solemnly declare their will to vote and ensure a 'yes' vote on 28 September 1958 throughout the region, and thereby indicate unequivocally the firm resolution of the Casamance to continue its evolution in a dignified way within the framework of the Franco-African Community.[20]

The determination of the regional representatives to take authority over the territorial framework is patent here: the 'elected representatives' of the district are presented as the only legitimate representatives allowed to speak in the name of the Casamance, excluding de facto the central government leaders. The French proposal had indeed convinced the *conseillers territoriaux*. The day after the meeting with Brousset, several of them organized a meeting in Ziguinchor to defend their position, which went against the party line.[21] The AOF intelligence service noted at the time:

> If the 'no' votes were to win, it is likely that Mr. Ibou Diallo and the elected representatives of the Casamance, supported by a massive vote of the country, [would] send a petition to General de Gaulle and the Overseas Minister requesting the separation of the Casamance from Senegal and its organization into an autonomous territory or State linked to France within the Community.[22]

The idea of a separation of the Casamance from Senegal thus emerged from behind-the-scenes discussions. It was a divisive issue within the local section of the UPS. In the town of Ziguinchor, the proclamation — like the prospect of autonomy — had not been approved unanimously. At a counter-meeting, a group of UPS militants had denounced the betrayal of the Cotonou 'no' and of pan-African ideals.[23] They rejected 'the idea of a separation of the Casamance from Senegal', accusing the elected representatives of the Casamance 'of receiving money from General de Gaulle'.[24]

How are we to interpret this statement? First, we can assume that the deal was a short-term electoral tactic, prompted by fear on the part of the French that the referendum might fail. Thus, it reflected a specific electoral calculation. When the governor of Senegal urgently transmitted the proclamation to the Overseas Ministry, the only information he added to the text was the number of inhabitants in the Casamance (420,000) and the

19 ANOM 1affpol/2281/5, 'Quotation: Proclamation of the Elected Representatives of the Casamance', telegram from Government of Senegal, Dakar to FOM, Paris, 6 Sept. 1958.
20 *Paris-Dakar*, 8 Sept. 1958.
21 'Réunion des élus de la Casamance – Grand meeting en faveur du oui', *Paris-Dakar*, 10 Sept. 1958. Only Assane Seck and Jules Lemaire did not take part in the meeting.
22 ANOM 1affpol/2248, Office of the High Commissioner of the Republic in AOF. Collection of the main intelligence reports received by the AOF research department for the period from 8 to 14 Sept. 1958, 17–18.
23 Interview with Louis Dacosta, Dakar, 25 Aug. 2004. Louis Dacosta had been one of the leaders of the counter-meeting on 8 Sept. 1958 in Ziguinchor.
24 ANOM 1affpol/2248, Office of the High Commissioner of the Republic in AOF. Collection of the main intelligence reports received by the AOF research department for the period from 15 to 21 Sept. 1958, 19.

number of eligible voters (196,162).[25] The Casamance electoral district represented a significant pool of votes: with about 17 per cent of the registered voters in the whole territory, it was the second largest group after the electoral district of Kaolack.[26] A positive result in the Casamance was therefore likely to have a direct bearing on the election. Nevertheless, this electoral reading needs to be combined with another hypothesis concerning the development of an alternative territorial strategy by the French authorities. As the prospect of former African colonies achieving autonomy and independence became more concrete and imminent, the French may have wanted to plan and encourage a reconfiguration of its territorial scenarios that would ensure them a role — even modified — in an independent Africa. The idea of a possible break with France had thus brought another project of separation back to center stage in Senegal, this time elicited directly and openly by the notables of the Lebu people, the major indigenous landowners living on the Cape Verde peninsula.[27] On 9 September, in a resolution signed by the *grand serigne* of Dakar (traditional chief of the Lebu) and the *conseiller territorial* Mamadou Assane Ndoye, Lebu dignitaries had promised to ensure a 'yes' vote on the referendum. This pro-France position reflected a dominant tendency among traditional leaders and prominent figures in AOF, who were worried that their status — already threatened by democratic gains — might be called into question. The representatives of the Lebu community had explicitly asked France 'to acknowledge, in the event of a negative result in the Senegalese referendum, that it would not to be legally bound by the vote and would retain the possibility of freely defining the new relationships linking it to France with which it intended to be associated'.[28] The idea of detaching Dakar from Senegal had been considered by the French authorities as early as the mid-1950s.[29] Moreover, the programmed disappearance of its status as federal capital seemed to enable a reshuffling of the cards. The document insisted on 'the wealth and variety of the options offered to local communities' by the Community project: once again, the Senegalese central government's legitimate authority to define the institutional and territorial future of all the regions of the colony was competing with that of local political actors.[30]

In mid-September 1958, the risk of seeing the Senegalese territory dismantled must have played a part in the decision by the UPS leadership to impose a moderate course of action on the party's left wing — which they could now do without risking exclusion from the PRA. As Assane Seck had suggested, for the French, the deal had certainly been a way of indirectly blackmailing Senghor and Dia.[31] Indeed, Casamance autonomy was not only going to cut off a portion of territory from Senegal, but it would also deprive the UPS and Senghor of a substantial electoral pool. At a meeting of the UPS executive

25 ANOM 1affpol/2281/5.

26 Calculation based on the figures provided by K. Robinson, 'Senegal: the elections to the Territorial Assembly, March 1957', in K. Robinson and W. J. M. Mackenzie, *Five Elections in Africa* (London, 1960), 349.

27 A. B. Diop, 'La prise de position de la collectivité lebu en faveur du "oui" lors du référendum de 1958', (unpublished DEA thesis, University of Dakar, 1985).

28 *Paris-Dakar*, 11 Sept. 1958. This activism pushed the new Senegalese authorities to transfer the capital of Senegal from Saint-Louis to Dakar.

29 A. Seck, *Sénégal, émergence d'une démocratie moderne, 1945–2005: Un itinéraire politique* (Paris, 2005), 48; M. Dia, *Afrique: Le prix de la liberté* (Paris, 2001), 113–9.

30 *Paris-Dakar*, 11 Sept. 1958.

31 Interview with Assane Seck, Dakar, 5 Mar. 2003.

committee in Rufisque, a new majority in favor of the 'yes' vote emerged.[32] Thus, the ruling party officially joined in the campaign in favor of the constitutional project only one week before the referendum. On 28 September, the 'yes' vote won across Senegal by a landslide: 97.2 per cent of the votes — and 92.5 per cent in the Casamance district.[33] The deal proposed by the French authorities to the *conseillers* in Ziguinchor was de facto cancelled by the results of the vote.[34] Nevertheless, examining the reasons behind the offer does not answer the question of how this offer, rather than another, could have been proposed and how it found a receptive audience. The possibility and appeal of separatism did not come out of nowhere. This question invites us to go back and look at the longer history during which the social and political imaginaries of the actors involved in the transaction — the French authorities and the deputies of the Casamance — were shaped.

THE COLONIAL CONSTRUCTION OF CASAMANCE PARTICULARISM

To a certain extent, the French offer regarding the Casamance in 1958 attests to the performative effects of local colonial territorialization, of which the Casamance is the product.[35] Indeed, through negotiations and wars of conquest and occupation, the French were able to bring together different territories with distinct though connected histories at the very end of the nineteenth century: independent village entities and large portions of the former Mandinka kingdom of Kaabu and the Peul kingdom of Fouladou. Moreover, the pace of colonial occupation had been significantly slowed down by the fragmentation of political and territorial units. In 1886, the French, who had successfully competed with Portuguese traders already present in the area since the sixteenth century, negotiated the transfer of control over the *presidio* of Ziguinchor and the first delimitation of the southern border of the Casamance. They were less successful in the North with the British, whose trading posts on the Gambia River were the Crown's oldest possessions in West Africa. In the second half of the nineteenth century, French attempts to exchange the Gambia for another territory failed and a borderline between the two empires was established in 1889. The French sought to create a compact colony starting from Saint-Louis, which would correspond to what the French authorities considered the 'natural borders of Senegambia', but the project stumbled over the Gambian enclave.[36]

32 ANOM 1affpol/2257/3, information bulletin of 15 Aug. to 20 Sept. 1958, Department of Security Services of AOF, 54.

33 ANOM 1affpol/3548, 'Procès-verbal de la Commission des votes pour le référendum sur la Communauté'.

34 Of course, one might well question its practicability. The later example of the Comores-Mayotte referendum in 1974 nevertheless shows that the French authorities could envision handling such electoral consultations separately.

35 The name 'Casamance' had been used at least since the fifteenth century to designate a small part of these areas, in reference to the sovereign (*mansa*) of Kasa, a Bainun-Kasanke kingdom from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, who was certainly a vassal of the Kaabu Empire. The small state did not coincide with the wider borders of the contemporary Casamance, even at its peak in the fifteenth century. See C. Schefer (ed.), *Relation des voyages à la côte occidentale de l'Afrique d'Alvise de Ca' da Mosto 1455–1457* (Paris, 1895), 173; J. Boulègue, 'L'ancien royaume du Kasa (Casamance)', *Bulletin de l'IFAN*, série B, 42:3 (1980), 475–86.

36 Governor Louis Faidherbe quoted by Y.-J. Saint-Martin, *Le Sénégal sous le Second Empire: Naissance d'un empire colonial (1850–1871)* (Paris, 1989), 504–5.

To cope with the distance from the colony's administrative center, the problems of the occupation, and the specific challenges of economic *mise en valeur* (development), the French combined the various parts of the area to form a 'District of the Territories of the Casamance'.[37] This original administrative configuration within the colony was run by an *administrateur supérieur* reporting directly to the governor. The *administrateur supérieur* was in charge of *cercle* administrators, and the number of *cercles* varied from one to five between 1895 and 1944. Although the network of administrative *cercles* was intended to handle local specificities, it was never able to change the colonial perception of a Casamance unity and its distinctive identity compared with the rest of Senegal, which the *administrateur* Descemet described in clear-cut terms in a letter to the deputy Blaise Diagne in 1927:

> It cannot be stressed often enough: the Casamance is not in fact part of Senegal and we must have the courage to say so. At the present time, it is a real geographical and ethnic heresy to assume a document applies to the whole of Senegal before finding out whether or not it can be adapted to the 'backwardness' of the Casamance.[38]

The discourse concerning the distinctive identity of the Casamance took shape in Lower Casamance and the various Joola lands. Missionaries, ethnographers, and administrators developed an idea of the region as an area of tradition and isolation, 'fetishism', and anarchy. The ethnocentric, stereotyped colonial gaze failed to grasp the complexity of African social and political experiences in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. Administrators referred to this representation to justify the many problems encountered in the occupation of the district. Throughout the French presence in the Casamance, the statement of a Casamance particularism continued in the form of regular calls for the autonomy of the district, formulated by French traders from the Chamber of Commerce in Ziguinchor and by *administrateurs supérieurs*. These were pragmatic demands — the social imaginaries of the inhabitants of Casamance were not at stake. In the French traders' and local *administrateurs*' eyes, the distinctive identity of the Casamance region kept it from being well-ruled by Senegal; hence, the development of the region required greater administrative and political autonomy. These calls ranged from simple budgetary autonomy for the district to its transforming into an independent colony directly attached to the governorate of AOF.[39] The central authorities never followed up on these demands and, on the contrary, focused on normalizing the status of the district within the colony at the end of the 1930s. In 1939, the district was eliminated, and the territories were incorporated into the general system of *cercles*. Nevertheless, the idea that the Casamance was not an organic part of Senegal persisted into the 1940s and 1950s. Thus, in 1950, a former administrator of the Ziguinchor *cercle* explained in a letter to the Governor of Senegal:

37 *Arrêté* of 11 May 1895, *Journal officiel du Sénégal et dépendances*, 1895, 161–4. Senegal was divided into eight administrative subdivisions that corresponded to seven *cercles* and the District of the Casamance. The latter encompassed 'all the countries from the borders of British Gambia and Portuguese Guinea to Fouta-Djalon and Upper Gambia'.

38 ANS 11 D1/337, Administrateur Supérieur of Casamance to Mr. Diagne, Deputy of Senegal, Ziguinchor, 15 Jan. 1927.

39 See in particular the report from the *administrateur supérieur* Chartier, which sums up the demands of his predecessors: ANS 2G/36–75, Annual General Political Report, Territory of the Casamance, 1936.

> The real tragedy of the Casamance is its distance, given its artificial annexation to Senegal. Everyone thinks so and whispers it, but very few state it frankly. I wonder why that is. Sooner or later, the question of reorganizing the country will have to be reconsidered.[40]

For a long time, this European imaginary of the Casamance shaped the analytical framework in which the French colonial authorities viewed the region. No doubt, autonomy projects also informed the first generations of political elites in the Ziguinchor *cercle*. Traces of these communications can still be found.[41] Yet if these communications were able to fuel debates over Casamance identity, it is because they reinforced other endogenous processes that formed the Casamance imaginary.

THE BIRTH OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATION ON THE SCALE OF THE CASAMANCE

Linked to major social changes in the Casamance — particularly the growth of urban migration and of school attendance, which underwent a boom in the post-war period — the processes that transformed the Casamance as an imagined community began to acquire a different dimension in 1946.[42] In that year the Lamine Guèye law granted citizenship to all inhabitants of overseas territories in the new French Union. At that time, citizenship entailed few electoral rights, but it led to debate over how populations should be represented, raising questions never before asked in new territorial configurations: who was represented, by whom, and for what purpose?

Starting in 1946, the new electoral map portrayed the debate in very specific terms in the Casamance compared with elsewhere in the colony. Indeed, until 1951, the district of Casamance was the only electoral district in Senegal that corresponded exactly to the boundaries of the Ziguinchor *cercle* (the former District of the Casamance). In the rest of the colony, the three electoral districts — Fleuve, Voie Ferrée, and Sine-Saloum — combined different *cercles*, thereby remodeling the territory from an electoral standpoint.[43] The participation of an expanded body of citizens in elections and their assumption of elected positions transformed the Ziguinchor *cercle*, the result of a relatively recent colonial territorial system, into a community of interests and political representation.

The first elections to the assembly of the General Council organized in 1946 were won by the Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (the French Socialist Party, or SFIO). In the Casamance, the elections had kept the former urban elites, mainly from the North and imposed by the central committee of the party, at the center of local political

40 ANS 11D1/309, Administrator of Overseas Territories, D. Richard, to the Governor of Senegal, Tabou, 29 Nov. 1950.

41 See especially the private archives of Tété Diadhiou, donated to the ANS (Série 1Z). See also S. Awenengo Dalberto, 'Usages de l'histoire et mémoires de la colonie dans le récit indépendantiste casamançais (1982–2000)', *Outre-Mers*, 368–9 (2010), 137–57.

42 On post-war social changes in Casamance, see V. Foucher, 'Les "évolués", la migration, l'école: pour une nouvelle interprétation de la naissance du nationalisme casamançais', in M.-C. Diop (ed.), *Le Sénégal contemporain* (Paris, 2002), 375–424.

43 Fleuve: the Lower Senegal, Podor, Matam, Louga, and Linguère *cercles*; Voie Ferrée: Dakar delegation, the Thiès *cercle*; Sine-Saloum: the Diourbel, Kaolack, Kédougou, and Tambacounda *cercles*.

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life.[44] The nomination of Diallo, at the time a young primary school teacher in Sédhiou, had been rejected by the party. The desire to take part in political life was nevertheless especially strong in the Ziguinchor *cercle*. This political openness coincided with the rise of a new generation of educated elites in the Casamance, who were ready to get involved in politics. At a meeting of the Young Socialists of Ziguinchor in October 1947, a debate took place concerning 'the incompetence of a few leaders who were too old' and the presence of too many 'Senegalese' in the local SFIO.[45] A young school teacher declared that he would no longer 'allow himself to be led like a sheep by the Senegalese, whom he called dupers. . . . The people of the Casamance are sufficiently advanced to know what they have to do'.[46] The generational gap was coupled with a community divide opposing Senegalese (from the North) to *Casamançais*.

The Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC), founded in 1949 by Diallo and Badiane, aimed precisely to embody the aspirations of the *Casamançais* and to reconcile 'the people with their elected representatives'. Article 2 of the MFDC statutes expressed this approach:

> The quintessence of the movement is to rectify our local politics and militate as an intellectual community to raise, study, and solve the various local problems in a general framework, without, however, impeding or creating obstacles to issues of interest to Senegal as a whole or another region of the Colony in its own sphere.[47]

Between 1949 and 1956, the MFDC succeeded in establishing and leading active sections throughout the *cercle* — except in Oussouye, and to a lesser extent, in the city of Ziguinchor. It had wide appeal among newly educated youth as well as in the rural world. To mobilize the electorate, MFDC leaders correlated their ability to make demands (notably for schools, dispensaries, roads, and higher peanut oil prices) with the importance given to the Casamance in the various political arenas: 'Your grievances will not be heard until Casamance is respected and well represented everywhere. We are counting on your help', as local leaders explained in a village meeting.[48]

By stimulating debate over how the Casamance should be represented, opposition to the SFIO played a crucial role in the formation of the MFDC. It was not peculiar to the Casamance, but rather structured the debate throughout Senegal as well as political initiatives between 1946 and 1952. Senghor's departure from the SFIO in 1948 to found the Bloc Démocratique du Sénégal (BDS) had corresponded precisely to his determination to oppose SFIO centralism, taking advantage of the new electoral base made up of former 'subjects'. In view of upcoming legislative elections in 1951 and territorial elections in 1952, the BDS tried to forge a series of alliances, particularly with the trade unions in the avant-garde of the social struggles against the colonial authorities, from which it co-opted a few prominent figures. The BDS also sought support in the regions. The MFDC, reticent at first to answer its call, ended up accepting an agreement to support

44 With one exception: the *conseiller territorial* Pierre Édouard Diatta, son of Benjamin Diatta, the *Chef de Province* of Oussouye.
45 ANS 21G/219/178, 'The Casamance Security Sector', meeting of the SFIO Party of Ziguinchor, 22 Oct. 1947.
46 *Ibid.*
47 ANS 11D1/309, statutes of the MFDC.
48 APPIC, minutes of the MFDC-BDS meeting, Dianki, Mar. 1955.

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the BDS in the 1951 legislative elections, and, in exchange, the BDS guaranteed it could choose the nominees for the 1952 Territorial Assembly elections. Three months before the legislative elections, Senghor wrote to Badiane to reassure him about this commitment:

> Once again, I have no intention of asking you to dissolve the Mouvement démocratique de la Casamance. In my view, regionalism is not only legitimate, but even necessary. … What Dia has asked of you, what he told me you have agreed to, is that, while maintaining and strengthening the Mouvement démocratique de la Casamance, you will belong to the BDS at the same time. I give you my solemn assurance that when the time comes to select candidates for the General Council elections [Territorial Assembly], you, and you alone, will choose them. We will not impose anyone on you.[49]

The MFDC therefore campaigned in favor of the BDS. Borrowing Senghor's expression, Badiane explained the deal to Paul-Ignace Coly, the general secretary of the MFDC section of Bignona, in these terms: 'A single goal: rectify the situation. How: by toppling our common enemy through solid, rational organization, focusing on the very legitimate regionalism supported by the BDS party'.[50] 'Legitimate regionalism' was by no means understood as territorial autonomy. In 1951, the debate was focused on other concerns: the political struggle was under way against the SFIO (the 'common enemy') and for social and political equality, not for independence of the territories, which was neither a tangible prospect nor an objective of struggle at the time. For the MFDC, however, this description enshrined Senghor's recognition of the political identity of the Casamance. Badiane put it this way in addressing his activists: 'We are first and foremost *Casamançais*, but we back Senghor'.[51]

On 17 June 1951, the BDS won two deputy seats, a bitter defeat for the SFIO partly thanks to votes in the Casamance, where the BDS won by 93.92 per cent, the highest rate in the territory.[52] This moment — the election result, but also the way it was communicated — was decisive if we are to understand how the MFDC and two generations of political elites in the Casamance interpreted the relationship that had been established with Senghor. According to Kandé, Senghor owed his final victory to the MFDC:

> The BDS made a clean sweep. And then, because not every polling station had transmission facilities, when the initial results came in, Lamine Guèye had 1,100 and some more votes, Senghor 1,000 and some [it was an order of magnitude]. The results from the Casamance were not yet in. Towards midnight, when the Casamance results were announced, the SFIO had nothing here. There were a few BDS cards, but in fact it was the MFDC that took everything. So we were the ones who allowed Senghor to overtake Lamine Guèye. Senghor owes his total victory to us. It caused such a stir, man, in the Casamance, people were sure that if you were not in the MFDC, you would have nothing. In 1952, there were elections of *conseillers*. By then, there was no problem, we won everything, and continued to do so.[53]

Indeed, the elections in March 1952 allowed the leaders of the MFDC to validate by the ballot box the representation of the Casamance they had claimed to embody since 1949. Five of the eight *conseillers* elected on the joint BDS-MFDC list (Diallo, Badiane,

49 APPIC, L. S. Senghor to E. Badiane, Paris, 10 Mar. 1951.
50 APPIC, letter from E. Badiane to P.-I. Coly, Sédhiou, 20 Mar. 1951.
51 APPIC, MFDC, 'Structuring of MFDC-BDS sections', 1951.
52 ANOM, 1affpol/1004, minutes of the Voting Census Commission of 17 June 1951.
53 Interview with Yoro Kandé.

Kandé, Guibril Sarr, and Michel Diop) came from ranks of the MFDC. The BDS, which also won on a colony-wide scale, once again achieved its highest scores in the Casamance.

Soon tensions arose between MFDC and BDS members. The MFDC *conseillers* were deprived of the strategic, prestigious positions in the central and federal arenas to which they felt entitled. In 1953, when the UPS did not nominate Diallo for election to the Assembly of the French Union, it was one disappointment too many. 'In truth, we had a right to that post. That is why there was a break and why the Convention of Marsassoum was held', explained Sancoung Sané, who was in charge of MFDC propaganda at the time.[54] Indeed, the minutes of the extraordinary MFDC convention in Marsassoum in November 1953 report on the tensions and the crystallizing effect they had on the political construction of autochthony.[55] Between 2,000 and 3,000 participants from all the subdivisions of the Ziguinchor *cercle* attended the convention,[56] which again attests to the wide audience enjoyed by the movement, its ability to encroach on the entire *cercle* and the importance of the meeting. For activists, it meant they had to pull themselves together and relaunch 'the union for a Greater Casamance'.[57] Senghor was bombarded with criticism accusing him of betraying his 1951 promises; as proof, Diallo read out two letters the deputy had sent him at the time. One activist went back to the nomination of Robert Delmas in 1952 for *conseiller* of the Casamance: 'Why did Senghor put a European in a place reserved for an African? A *Casamançais*, I mean? Senghor has failed'. Another queried: 'Has the Casamance been neglected or betrayed?' Some participants were more restrained, and they made a distinction between the BDS and Senghor. Admittedly, as Senghor had become practically an iconic figure in the Casamance, he still looked like a savior. 'We owe him our freedom', one convention attendee reminded the assembly. Diallo summarized the strategy as follows: 'Senghor owes us a lot', but warned, 'Let us show the BDS that we are a party'.[58] At the end of the convention, the MFDC decided to remain autonomous and, out of 'loyalty' to Senghor, to collaborate with the BDS only on issues of crucial importance until the 1957 elections. For several months, political mobilization started up again solely on behalf of the MFDC.

The attitude of the MFDC was a real problem for the BDS, now threatened with isolation and discredited in the electoral district of the Casamance. Dia later explained how hard he had worked to 'resist regionalism and promote a merger', mainly to convince Diallo: '[He] was too much of an autonomist. We argued a great deal on this point. He really dragged his heels before accepting'.[59] Senghor and Dia attempted to join forces, no doubt by promising to co-opt the main high-ranking members of the MFDC — it should be noted that Diallo was selected for the post of senator in the Grand Conseil de l'AOF in 1956. The MFDC leaders finally agreed to fall in line, and in June 1954, at the MFDC convention in Bignona, imposed on their activists to accept the affiliation between the MFDC and the BDS. The process did not go smoothly: a minority of young activists left to found the

54 Interview with Sancoung Sané, Sédhiou, 6 Aug. 2002.
55 APPIC, MFDC, minutes of the extraordinary convention in Marsassoum on 14–15 Nov. 1953.
56 ANS 2G/53–213, 'Senegal, Quarterly Summary of Events, 4th Quarter 1953'; ANS 11D1/309, note on the MFDC, 20 May 1954.
57 APPIC, MFDC, minutes of the extraordinary convention in Marsassoum on 14–15 Nov. 1953.
58 *Ibid.*
59 Interview with Mamadou Dia, Dakar, 4 Jan. 2004.

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Mouvement Autonome de Casamance (MAC). Its members represented the arrival of a new political generation in the Casamance, as in the rest of Senegal, shaped by trade unionism, influenced by Marxism and pan-African ideology, and highly critical of the moderate attitude of the BDS and the MFDC towards colonialism: the progressivism they had embodied at the end of the 1940s was henceforth viewed as conservatism, which had to be fought. All the same, the MAC enjoyed only limited success in the Casamance. The MAC was a party of urban elites and trade unionists; its ideological and social base kept it from sharing the concerns of the local population and forging real connections with the rural world. Nevertheless, the MAC forged a surprising alliance between disappointed activists and the enemies of the MFDC-BDS in the Casamance, ranging from former SFIO elites criticized in 1946 to the young radicals of the Senegalese section of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA). For this reason, the movement brought together at least as many *Casamançais* from the North of Senegal as those from the South.[60] The MFDC attacked the MAC precisely for lacking the requisite legitimacy to represent the Casamance. All in all, the clashes between MFDC-BDS and MAC in the mid-1950s contributed to the discursive construction of a differentiation between 'real' and 'fake' *Casamançais*.

SEALING OFF TERRITORIAL IMAGINARIES

The principle underlying the alliance between the BDS and regional representation ended with the electoral victories in 1951 and 1952. From that moment onwards, the BDS started disqualifying regionalism in order to neutralize it — targeting in fact any form of competing representation. In March 1954, the annual report of the BDS presented an explicit critique of regionalism, which was no longer 'necessary' and even less 'legitimate', as Dia made clear:

> We find ourselves in the presence of inorganic groups, or at least without a territorial base or doctrine, perhaps definable by a program confined within the limits of a specific region or the aspirations of an ethnic group. In such instances, we have to call a spade a spade and agree that it is a regionalist or ethnic group, in which case, party organization is required with no less force.[61]

Dia continued his report, describing the experience of British Nigeria as a dangerous counter-example. At the time, evoking the threat of ethnicism — which Casamance regionalism was not — was a powerful argument in Senegal as elsewhere.[62] This new critique of regionalism proceeded along three lines: regionalism lacked the legitimacy to embody the people's demands, it was strategically ineffectual, and it was politically risky. In practice, the disqualification of regionalism did not keep BDS leaders from playing the native-born card to ensure their electoral appeal. During the campaign for legislative seats in 1956, Senghor himself had publicly questioned the Casamance identity of Assane Seck, leader of the MAC and a fellow candidate of Guèye.[63]

60 ANS 21G/220/178, tract put out by the MAC, 9 Dec. 1955.
61 ANOM 1affpol/2263, M. Dia, annual report to sixth BDS convention, Ziguinchor, 19–21 Apr. 1954.
62 Cooper, 'Conflict', 1538.
63 ANS 21G/220/178, 'Intelligence: Public BDS meeting in Rufisque on 25 Dec. 1955'. Senghor was referring to the Lebu patronym of Seck, which originates in northern Senegal. Seck's family had settled in the Casamance at the end of the nineteenth century.

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Starting in 1956, the adoption of the *loi-cadre* (framework law) stepped up the process of centralizing political power in Senegal. At the same time, the dominant party sought to absorb its competitors.[64] In 1957, the BDS became the Bloc Populaire Sénégalais (BPS) by merging with several parties. The statutes of the BPS stated that its members could not belong simultaneously to regional political groups or particular interest groups.[65] Thus, the MAC sent its letter of dissolution in September 1957; the MFDC had already merged with the BDS.[66] The BPS presented itself as the 'unified party of the Senegalese masses', and in 1958 it managed to absorb the Senegalese SFIO, its former main rival, to become the UPS.[67]

During the 1950s and early 1960s, a gradual distortion can be observed between political practice and language in the territorial and federal areas. Senghor's critique of centralism and Jacobinism had been a powerful argument against the SFIO. Within the scope of preparing for autonomy and independence, criticism of national egoism was also leveled against the territorialism of Houphouët Boigny in AOF. These criticisms and the experience of the Mali Federation nourished Senghor's reflection on the model of the West African federal state:

> Above all, we will be careful not to fall into one of the temptations of the nation-state, which is to impose uniformity on people through *fatherlands*. Archetypes impoverish people, reduce them to robot-individuals, rob them of their essence and lifeblood. Richness comes from the diversity of fatherlands and people, from their complementarity. … Hence the superiority of the federal state over the unitary state.[68]

Nevertheless, the imagination of a federal or confederal state was legitimate only on the Euro-African or West African scale. Internally, the autonomy and institutional organization of complementary regional 'fatherlands' seemed inconceivable. For the central elites such as Senghor and Dia, Senegal could be a federated state — of the Community, of the Mali Federation — but not a federal one.

The refusal of the Senegalese elites to consider an internal federal model for Senegal was not in contradiction with believing in the federal idea for West Africa. Let us begin by looking at Dia's strategic argument in 1954: the revolutionary movement was in danger of being impeded by micro-nationalism and the organization of politics on a regional basis. Starting in 1956, Senegalese elites increasingly argued that micro-nationalisms were contrary not only to the ideology of modernization, but also to a pragmatic approach to federalism — one that considered large-scale organization an essential condition for the economic development of Africa and its ability to participate on the international stage. For Senghor, the (West African) federation corresponded to an entity that was 'economically solid, in other words, with a wealth of people and resources',[69] whereas the nation-

64 A. Ly, *Les regroupements politiques au Sénégal: 1956–1970* (Paris, 1992); F. Zuccarelli, *La vie politique sénégalaise 1940–1988* (Paris, 1988).

65 ANOM 1affpol/2263, BPS circular, Dakar, 7 Aug. 1957.

66 ANS 11D1/309, Session Secretary D. Koita and Session Chairman N. Konaté, resolution to dissolve the MAC, signed in Ziguinchor, 1 Sept. 1957.

67 ANS 21G/217/178, minutes of the meeting of 13 June 1956 held by the BDS, MPS (Senegalese section of the RDA), SFIO, and Union Démocratique sénégalaise (UDS) parties.

68 L. S. Senghor, *Nation et voie africaine du socialisme* (Paris, 1961).

69 L. S. Senghor, 'Pour une solution fédéraliste', in 'Où va l'Union française? From colonialism to association', special issue, *La Nef*, 9 (1955), 159.

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state was not a viable configuration for Africa. The political and territorial unification of Senegal had therefore been little-motivated by a nationalist project. Rather, it was the consequence of a political strategy aimed at ensuring the preliminary stage for the success of the federal project. Fundamentally, what was at issue with the federation project was no doubt the need to maintain the *de facto* power of both Senegal and the Senegalese leaders within the imperial framework, and then, at the time of independence, in the West African framework. A federal project in Senegal, which would have granted autonomy to the Casamance, would not have met such a requirement without weakening the legitimacy and the representativeness of the Senegalese leaders. With the failure of the Mali Federation in August 1960, then that of the project for a Senegambian union in the early 1960s, the political position of these Senegalese leaders was in question. The centralizing orientation of the Senegalese political model was thus reinforced, which contributed to cementing the political and regional positions of subalternity.

It is now possible to grasp more fully what actually took place at the time of the referendum. The centralization of power at the territorial level was already a process well on track when, by stealthily introducing the issue of regional territory, the French proposal of 1958 seemed to open the debate regarding the possible territorial configurations of autonomy. In accepting the proposal, the Casamance representatives indicated their determination to seize the opportunity after ten years of political struggle pursued in the name of the Casamance and ambivalent relationships with Senghor's party and with the central framework of political representation.

DISSIDENCE AND ALTERNATIVE FEDERAL PROJECTS AT INDEPENDENCE

Senegal's accession to internal autonomy and later independence — initially in the framework of the Mali Federation — finally confirmed the territorial architecture produced by the colonial framework. The premature withdrawal of the project of autonomy for the Casamance did not spark any visible mobilization. Kandé explained that the *conseillers territoriaux* were very 'disappointed', but they were resolved to 'help unite the Casamance to Senegal'.[70] Indeed, at first glance, all the elected representatives of the Casamance implicated in the 1958 affair appear to have participated in the process of 'mutual assimilation of elites' engaged in by the Senegalese state.[71] Senghor and Dia promoted the principal former MFDC leaders.[72] Badiane became Minister of Vocational Training in 1959. Diallo became Deputy-Minister to the Présidence du Conseil in April 1962, then Minister of Health and Social Affairs in the final Dia government in November 1962. His political activism in favor of the Casamance region at the very beginning of the 1960s no doubt played a role in securing his entry into the government. Indeed, in the Casamance, the

70 Interview with Yoro Kandé.

71 J.-F. Bayart, *L'État en Afrique: La politique du ventre* (Paris, 1989), 193–226.

72 Moreover, the Casamance had been given priority treatment under the first development program of the autonomous government. ANS, Documentation Center, Mamadou Dia file, declaration of Mamadou Dia before the ordinary meeting of the Legislative Assembly of Senegal in Dakar, 5 Dec. 1959, 7–9.

first years of independence continued to seem like a period of territorial possibilities which were not only autonomist but also federal. The way these possibilities were imagined was reoriented by, first, the reconfiguration of the alliances between states that were newly independent or on the way to autonomy and, second, by the hardening of political and ideological positions resulting from the imperatives of national construction and the Cold War. At that time, what was at stake was not so much a complete redrawing of colonial boundaries as the possibility of founding new power relationships.

The Senegambia project and the reopening of possibilities

Secessionist discourse was revived once the project for an alliance between Senegal and the Gambia was back on the Senegalese agenda, following the breakup of the Mali Federation and the launch of the Gambian autonomy process. The Senegalese authorities presented the project of an alliance with the Gambia as necessary to recover momentum towards the unification of 'Senegambia', which had been artificially divided by European imperial rivalries. In April 1961, a Senegalese-Gambian inter-ministerial committee was set up to encourage trans-border cooperation. In October 1962, an agreement was signed to send a UN mission of experts to explore various formulas for possible association between Senegal and the Gambia.[73]

The initial negotiations had been conducted in the tense context of preparing for general elections in 1962 in the Gambia, which were supposed to ensure its internal autonomy. The two main political forces in the running — the United Party (UP) headed by Pierre Njie and the People's Progressive Party (PPP) led by Dawda Jawara — alternated between seeking closer ties with Senegal and denouncing its imperialist aims, with Njie and Jawara furthermore accusing each other of wanting to sell the Gambia to Senegal. The Senegalese authorities sought to develop a diplomacy from the bottom up: playing the card of close cultural or even family ties and taking full advantage of the idea of common belonging and a 'natural' closeness above and beyond distinct colonial experiences. Dia thus encouraged the Senegalese parliamentarians from the border regions to 're-establish friendly ties' with their Gambian counterparts.[74]

Senator Diallo was betting on the PPP and Jawara, a fellow Mandinka, and was a (highly insistent) architect of closer relations between Dia and Jawara at a time when the Senegalese authorities were talking only with Njie's governmental party.[75] In early April 1961, he invited Jawara and 11 PPP parliamentarians to meetings at the National Assembly Hotel with the Casamance parliamentarians, who 'sang the praises of friendship between the Casamance and the Gambia'.[76] Jawara also attended a meeting that brought together nearly two hundred *Casamançais* and Gambians from Dakar.[77] Later in the year, Jawara went to Ziguinchor to encounter PPP sympathizers and Casamance leaders.[78] It is difficult to know the exact content

73 J. Senghor, *The Politics of Senegambian Integration 1958–1994* (Bern, 2008), 143–6.
74 ANS VP 170, press release, Barthust, 16 Apr. 1961.
75 Ibou Diallo's family, originated in Fouta-Toro, settled in the Sédhiou region in the final quarter of the nineteenth century, where they became assimilated into Mandinka culture. Interview with Tonerre Diallo, Sédhiou, 5 Mar. 2004.
76 CADN Fonds Ambassade de France à Dakar (FAFD), file 385, B.S. Senegal 4.4.61, meeting between *Casamançais* and a Gambian delegation from the PPP.
77 CADN FAFD, file 385, B.S. Senegal 7.4.61, meeting between Gambian members of the PPP and Casamance parliamentarians.
78 CADN FAFD, file 385, Governor of the Casamance at Intersen in Dakar, 17 Oct. 1961.

of those meetings, as the available archives are rather enigmatic on this subject. Did they take place in a legalistic framework, supporting the Senegalese dynamic in favor of Gambian integration? Was there any intention of playing another card — that of the Casamance alone with the Gambia? Earlier in the year, the French intelligence services reported that Diallo had lamented the way the Senegalese government was treating the Casamance and had declared that 'if the latter continued to be neglected, it might be tempted to secede … and seek to establish a bloc with its two neighbors: Portuguese Guinea and the Gambia'.[79] Diallo was able to use the idea of Casamance autonomy to put pressure on the Senegalese authorities, particularly to satisfy his own political ambitions and to encourage the authorities to support his ally, Jawara, in the Gambia. Nevertheless, Diallo's contradictory agendas (secession or governmental integration) did not disqualify the secessionist statement. The statement appeared to be a way of resisting the central elites: first the exit option and then the loyalty game challenged the methods used to debate the representation — both individual and collective — of the Casamance and its political elites in independent Senegal.

At that time, however, Senegalese authorities seemed to have been mostly concerned about the actions of the radical left, whose militants, well established in the Casamance and eastern Senegal, were circulating in neighboring countries. Yet, it was in the wake of these actions that the separatist idea was once again formulated.

A new regional map of 'subversive' solidarities

The 1958 referendum had shattered the political consensus negotiated by Senghor during the 1950s. Although the 'no' vote was particularly low in Senegal, it was nevertheless promoted by a radical fringe of militants in the Parti de l'Indépendance Africaine (PAI) and the Parti du Regroupement Africain-Sénégal (PRA-S), who continued to oppose the ruling party despite Senegal's accession to independence. In the Casamance, the 'no' vote in 1958 had garnered 7.42 per cent of the votes, but this minority was focused and active. Locally, the trend had emerged above all in the municipality and in the subdivision of Ziguinchor, with 48.57 per cent and 39.84 per cent of the 'no' votes, respectively.[80] The UPS section of the municipality of Ziguinchor — the one that had condemned the idea of Casamance autonomy — had in fact resigned from the UPS and joined the PRA-S, which also attracted former members of the MAC and of the Union Démocratique sénégalaise. Activists from the PRA-S and the PAI were particularly ostracized and repressed by the state and the administration. In the Casamance, the electoral campaigns between 1959 and 1963 gave rise to extremely violent clashes between UPS and PRA-S militants.[81]

For Senghor, the 'subversion' of the PRA-S and the PAI seemed especially threatening, as it was occurring in the border areas of the Gambia, Guinea-Conakry, and Guinea-Bissau, where the opponents could find logistical and ideological support.[82] Relations between

79 CADN FAFD, file 318, B.S. Senegal 10.1.61, meeting of *Casamançais* with Portuguese Guineans and Gambians.

80 ANOM 1affpol/3548, 'Procès-verbal de la Commission des votes pour le référendum sur la Communauté'.

81 Interviews with Doudou Sarr, Louis Dacosta, Cheikh Coly, Cherif Tounkara, Assane Seck; Seck, *Emergence*, 53–69 and 117–38.

82 Senghor quoted in CADN FAFD, file 385, Ambassador C. H. de Boislambert to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dakar, 15 Nov. 1961.

Senghor and Sékou Touré were tense, especially after the breakup of the Mali Federation that had brought Touré and Modibo Keita closer together. Senghor and Dia were also worried about the growing power of the Parti Africain pour l'Indépendance de la Guinée et du Cap-Vert (PAIGC), led by the Marxist-leaning Amilcar Cabral, in the struggle against colonialism in Portuguese Guinea.

In this context, the Gambia represented a risk for the Senegalese government. It impeded access to the south of Senegal and control over PRA-S activities. The border police regularly noted that arms were being circulated in the sub-region, transiting via the Gambia. The itinerary of PAIGC weapons provided a map of potential dangers for the Senegalese authorities: arriving from Conakry, arms shipments crossed western Senegal and then the Gambia before reaching Portuguese Guinea via the Casamance.[83] Senegal feared not only that the weapons transiting via the Gambia might be used by PRA-S bases in the Casamance, but also, more broadly, the formation of a political and ideological alliance between its internal and external adversaries, including part of the Gambian political class. Indeed, the leader of the Democratic Congress Alliance (DCA), which had entered into an alliance with the PPP in the run-up to the 1962 elections, had declared in Accra in May 1961 that as soon as the Gambia gained its independence, it would become associated with the project for a Guinea-Ghana-Mali union.[84] This project was certainly not reassuring for the Senegalese leadership, as it could have isolated Senegal and given wings to its internal opposition. On the eve of the Gambian general elections, the Consul of Senegal in the Gambia wrote to the Senegalese Minister of Foreign Affairs:

> [A] totally independent Gambia, with no close ties to Senegal, would be a grave danger for us. Mali, Ghana, and Guinea know that, and they are preparing to intervene forcefully to draw them away from a Union which would be natural for them. Politically, a 'foreign Gambia' would be a home base and a hotbed for a 'secessionist opposition' in the Casamance.[85]

It seems that the Guinean president had also formulated the project for a separation of the Casamance within the framework of its incorporation into a left-nationalist bloc around Guinea and Portuguese Guinea.[86]

Presumably, this trans-border context strengthened the collective and individual commitments of Casamance militants to the PRA-S. While the secession of the Casamance region was not a fixed idea in the imaginaries of PRA-S members, it appears to have been an effect of the politicization of activists in the Casamance. This politicization took place not only within the Senegalese framework, but also at the regional level. At first, the idea of secession was briefly considered as a way to put pressure on the Senegalese state by some of the PRA-S cadres from the Casamance. It was a solution born of disillusionment, a last resort in the face of government repression:

> The government led us to the brink of catastrophe. It carried out a policy of impunity, it burned down the houses of opponents, we were beaten, we were stabbed, and at the time, I assure you I

83 ANS VP/208, Governor of the Casamance to the Border Police Chief in Kolda, 9 July 1962.
84 Senghor, *Politics*, 118.
85 ANS VP/93, 'Note on the political situation in British Gambia on the eve of the general elections in May 1962', London, 9 May 1962.
86 A. Lewin, *Ahmed Sékou Touré: Président de la Guinée. Tome IV: 1960–1962* (Paris, 2009), 11-12, 33.

> was thinking about secession. Dacosta, he was against secession, but we said, we have to fight, we can't let them cut our throats. It was the PRA-S in the Casamance. At a certain point, we almost crossed the Rubicon, as they say. We were not fundamentally secessionists, but we were ready to defend ourselves in any way possible.[87]

Next, one must consider the time and place of PRA-S mobilization in the Casamance, which shaped a context of opportunity. The mobilization against the UPS took place alongside the Gambia's pursuit of autonomy, the first skirmishes of the PAIGC struggle in Portuguese Guinea, and the political patronage of Touré in the sub-region.[88] At that moment, the idea of autonomy in a union between the Casamance and the Gambia and Portuguese Guinea appeared to be the discursive product of an alignment of the ideological project of the left with the physical territories of the opposition, the political memory of the 1950s, and trans-border political and cultural socialization.

That is what we learn from the general meeting of *Casamançais*, Portuguese Guineans, and Gambians organized by PRA-S members in Dakar in January 1961.[89] Chaired by a former *chef de canton* from the Casamance, the meeting brought together 415 people.[90] Two elements shed light on how the secessionist repertoire was reactivated. First, participants approved a call for union between the Casamance, Portuguese Guinea, and the Gambia. This resolution, which was supposed to lead to 'drawing up a plan for regroupment', combined several objectives (strengthening transborder communality, the identification and defense of common interests, and political and ideological solidarity) with a reminder of the support that the Casamance could give their 'comrades' from Portuguese Guinea and the Gambia in their struggles for emancipation. An Association Nationale des Ressortissants Casamançais hors Région (ANRCHR), with board officers that included representatives of Portuguese Guinea and the Gambia, was set up one month later in a prelude to the 'plan for regroupment' that apparently never advanced beyond an embryonic stage.[91] Second, the call for union expressed the feeling that the Casamance region was being unjustly marginalized by the Senegalese state. One speaker recalled the eminent role played by 'the Casamance' in Senghor's success, and the unpaid 'debt' of the Senegalese leader:

> When he started out against Lamine Guèye, Mr. Senghor received precious support from the Casamance that without a doubt helped him to rise to the high functions he occupies today. But Mr. Senghor appears to have forgotten his debt of gratitude.[92]

87 Interview with Assane Seck, Dakar, 5 Sept. 2004. Confirmed by other interviews with Louis Dacosta.

88 This context of opportunity is reminiscent of the trans-border mobilizations of the Sawaba party analyzed by K. van Walraven, who shows that the party's social base was nevertheless much wider. See K. van Walraven, *The Yearning for Relief: A History of the Sawaba Movement in Niger* (Leiden, 2013).

89 CADN FAFD, file 318, B.S. Senegal 10.1.61, meeting of *Casamançais* with natives of Portuguese Guinea and of the Gambia.

90 This was symptomatic of the ability of the PRA-S in the Casamance to unite different bases of opposition to the central government: the former *chefs de canton* felt threatened by the policy adopted by Senghor and Dia.

91 CADN FAFD, file 318, B.S. Senegal 31.1.61, Association Nationale des Ressortissants Casamançais hors Région.

92 CADN FAFD, file 318, B.S. Senegal 10.1.61, meeting of *Casamançais* with natives of Portuguese Guinea and of the Gambia.

Here we can see how the political struggles and coalitions of the 1950s entered into the political memory of the people of the Casamance. Indeed, it was no longer merely a question of ideological and partisan opposition between the PRA-S and the ruling party. What was at stake was how the Casamance should rightly be represented in independent Senegal, which the speaker linked to Senghor's trustworthiness and his ability to honor a commitment made in the early 1950s. The alliance between the MFDC and Senghor must be understood here from a moral standpoint, as the source of the legitimacy of Senghor's leadership even more than his election.

The secessionist statement therefore transcended partisan cleavages. Ultimately, it appears to be a counter-hegemonic narrative of the moment of independence, expressing a fear of the marginalization of the Casamance — and that of its political actors — that has been embedded in the region throughout the long history of its leaders' relationships with central government authorities. How are we to interpret the absence of popular mobilizations in favor of the project? First, the choice of Senegal still made sense to many of the people of the Casamance: autonomy was not the only vision of the future. Next, the secessionist idea declined in a twofold context — interior and exterior. Dia's imprisonment by Senghor in December 1962 definitively marginalized Diallo, one of secession's main advocates. Senghor's new regime consolidated its hold on central power by adopting a single party and concentrating presidential power, which helped to weaken internal opposition in Senegal and the Casamance: the PRA-S merged with the UPS in 1966. Externally, political actors in the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau (re)focused their attention on national issues — in the Gambia, on negotiating independence, which it obtained in 1965, and in Guinea-Bissau, on the challenges of the armed liberation struggle.

CONCLUSION

The struggles and debates over 'emancipation' and 'political and social equality' during the process of democratization and decolonization took place within the Empire, the federation, the territory of the colony, and also at the local levels of colonial territorialization. From 1946 to 1960, the shifting terms of these debates brought about ruptures and 'critical moments' which local actors used to negotiate their representation and to attempt to escape from subaltern positions that were likely to remain unchanged if the territorial form of the colony was kept intact.[93] It was in this context that the idea of Casamance autonomy became available as both a resource and a scenario.

At the time of independence, the adoption and confirmation of the territorial nation-state model in Senegal was thus not merely the defeat of Senghor and Dia's federal ambitions; it was also the result of a victory over a separatist project (more than over the idea as such). The right to imagine territorial possibilities was quickly confiscated by the central political leaders. Rethinking the internal colonial map might weaken their elective legitimacy and their project for African federation. Their victory was relatively smooth because autonomy for the Casamance was not the exclusive or even primary aim of struggles during the decolonization process. The 1950s appear nevertheless as a matrix decade for the

93 P. Bourdieu, *Homo academicus* (Paris, 1984), 207–50.

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formation of a political community in Casamance and for the imagination of its autonomy as a possible future.

The revival of the secessionist idea in 1982 seems to show that the projects of the 1950s and 1960s have affected the collective memories of the following generations. The independence leaders chose to call their movement the MFDC to show the continuity between their demands and the struggles in the 1940s and 1950s. Kandé nevertheless rejected this imposed line of descent, and above all refused to reveal the hidden debates of the decolonization process:

> We have always refused to communicate the documents to the new MFDC. . . . They had an idea of what we were plotting with commander Brousset, but they did not know exactly what it was. That is why the leaders of the MFDC-1982 said there were conditions between France and the Casamance.[94]

Indeed, the founders of the MFDC-1982 knew little about the episodes in 1958 and the early 1960s. They even offer a reverse interpretation of the results of the vote for the referendum: they claim the (relative) success of the 'no' vote in the Casamance indicated its rejection of Senegal and its desire to pursue its own independence, a project that they claim was at the core of PRA-S mobilization at the time of independence. The independentist narrative often asserts the existence of a pact for a twenty-year alliance between the Casamance and Senegal which would have been signed at the moment of independence.[95] The belief in the existence of such a formal agreement seems to have been due partly to the political work of memory of the events of decolonization. Indeed, the failure to realize the projects of the 1950s and early 1960s, the secrecy surrounding their statements, and the historiographic silence have all played a performative role in this regard. 'Something' took place in the Casamance at the time of decolonization, when its elective space was structured, and at that moment, Senegal contracted a political and moral 'debt' that was never honored. Like the resonances of the tragic trajectories of Ruben Um Nyobe and the Union des Populations du Cameroun studied by Achille Mbembe, that 'something' has continued 'to haunt the social imagination, to act as if it were an available scenario — in short, like a political possibility'.[96] Left undisclosed, those secrets have thus been invested with new meaning, linked to the issues and processes of a new mobilization for independence, which began in 1982.

94 Interview with Yoro Kandé. Diallo and Badiane died in 1971 and 1972.

95 Interviews with Abbe Augustin Diamacoune Senghor, Ziguinchor (between 2003 and 2006), and Mamadou Nkrumah Sané, Paris (between 1999 and 2007). See also A. A. Diamacoune Senghor, *Casamance: Pays du refus* (Ziguinchor, Senegal, 1995).

96 A. Mbembe, 'Le spectre et l'État: des dimensions politiques de l'imaginaire historique dans le Cameroun postcolonial', *Revue de la Bibliothèque nationale*, 34 (1989), 4.

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