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The Changing Political Landscape of the 2024 Senegalese Presidential Election, and the Pivotal Role of the Casamance: A Study on Regional Impacts & Political Dynamics

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THE CHANGING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF THE 2024
SENEGALESE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, AND THE PIVOTAL ROLE
OF THE CASAMANCE

A STUDY ON REGIONAL IMPACTS & POLITICAL DYNAMICS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TERMINOLOGY & ABBREVIATIONS.....	4
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION.....	5
1.1 - Contextualisation...	...5
1.2 - Relevance...	...7
1.3 - Research Problems, Objectives, and Questions...	...8
1.4 - Methodological Approach...	...9
1.5 - Structural Outline...	...11
CHAPTER 2 - ACADEMIC DEBATE.....	12
2.1 - History of the Casamance Conflict...	...12
CHAPTER 3 - “LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT” & THE CONTEMPORARY CASAMANCE.....	23
3.1 - What are Low-Intensity Conflicts?...	...23
3.2 - Contemporary Conditions in the Casamance...	...25
CHAPTER 4 - OUSMANE SONKO & MACKY SALL.....	31
4.1 - Ousmane Sonko, the Political Force...	...31
4.2 - Macky Sall, Creator of his Own Downfall...	...35
CHAPTER 5 - THE CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS.....	38
5.1 - <i>Le Conseil Constitutionnel</i> & Senegalese Constitutional History...	...38
5.2 - The Electoral Crisis of February 202439
5.3 - Crisis Outcome...	...43
5.4 - Election Results...	...44
CHAPTER 6 - DISCUSSION & CONCLUDING REMARKS.....	48
6.1 - Discussion...	...48
6.2 - Limitations & Future Research...	...50
6.3 - Final Remarks...	...51
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	52
APPENDIX.....	59
A.1 - Maps and Media...	...59

A.2 - Interview with Professor Benoît Tine...	...63
A.3 - Interview with Dr. Mamadou Bodian...	...74
A.4 - Interview with Mr. Samuel Sakhewar Fama Diop...	...79
A.5 - Interview with <i>Eurocham</i> Senegal Board Member...	...82
A.6 - Interview with the High-ranking European Diplomat...	...84
A.7 - Interview with ControlRisks...	...85

TERMINOLOGY & ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Alternance</i>	French: Political term referring to the change of power from one political party to another. First indicator of healthy democratic systems.
<i>Longue Durée</i>	French: Historical lens exceeding human memory and archaeological record, incorporating climatology, demography, geology, etc in order to study imperceptible, slow changes.
<i>Vis-à-vis</i>	French: relative to.
<i>Laissez-faire</i>	French: economic concept that promotes non-intervention; letting things play out.
<i>Ibid</i>	Latin: Same. Refers to the recent-most footnote source
<i>Et al.</i>	<i>Et alia</i> ; Latin: and others.
MFDC	<i>Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance</i> / Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance.
PASTEF	<i>Patriotes Africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la fraternité</i> / African Patriots of Senegal for Work, Ethics and Fraternity.
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
LIC	Low-Intensity Conflict.

Chapter 1 - Introduction:

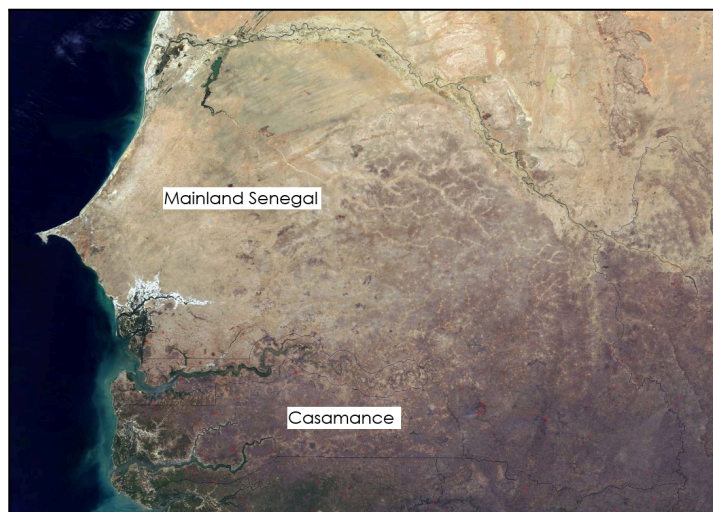
This thesis paper is the culminating text of the MA African Studies research project, centred around the Casamance Conflict, the 2024 Senegalese Presidential Election, and rising political force Ousmane Sonko. In this paper, the concepts of constitutionality, pan-Africanism, and conflict continuities are explored *vis-à-vis* Senegal's rising political change emanating from grassroots efforts and youth movements to combat decade's long political circuses and a collapse of socio-economic opportunities.

1.1 – Contextualisation:

Before addressing the Casamance conflict, it will be helpful to prior outline the Casamance itself. The Casamance is a region in Senegal geographically isolated from the remainder of the country by the near-enclave of Gambia. While the rest of Senegal and the Casamance are not entirely separated by sea or border, Gambia stretches 300 km inland. Consequently, road travel from Ziguinchor (the Casamance regional capital) to Dakar while circumventing Gambia takes 10 hours through the deep hinterlands. As a result of this isolation, this paper will use the term 'mainland' when discussing the core territories of Senegal. Additionally regarding terminology, the biggest Casamançais ethnic group are the Jola (also written Djola and Diola). Different demonyms stem from a variety of works in English, French, Portuguese, Mandinka, and the Jola language itself. In this paper, these terms will be used interchangeably as it denotes the same group. Moreover, while the Diola are the dominant group in Casamance, there are other linguistically distinct (yet culturally similar) groups such as the Bainuk, Balanta, Manjack, Mankanya, and Karoninka peoples. This paper will use the overarching term 'Casamançais' when referring to the general population of the region that have a shared history *vis-à-vis* mainland Senegal and colonialism.

In addition to geographic separation, the Casamance features prominent divergences in ecology and climate, demographics, history, language, and religion. Firstly on ecology, differences stem from latitudinal separation: Senegal is a Sahelian climate, characterised by dry bushlands and semi-aridity; Casamance is a river basin

Figure 1: Satellite image of Senegal showing ecological divergence between North and South Senegal¹



¹ Original image sourced from: Mapsland, "Large detailed satellite map of Senegal," *Mapsland*, accessed June 25, 2024.

akin to the Gambia, characterised by comparably high humidity and heavier rainfall, and resultantly lush woodlands similar to the Bissau-Guinean climate (see Figure 1).² There are resource-endowment differentials that consequently emerge. Senegalese natural resources include fish, peanuts, phosphate, and metal ores (iron, gold, titanium)³ with high production in agriculture and industrial goods.⁴ The Casamançais economy specialises in agricultural cultivation (both low and highland), livestock rearing and hunting/fishing, charcoal, salt, and dead wood.⁵ These resources can be attributed to the region's climate remaining underdeveloped. Casamance further possesses significant untapped oil reserves, centering Casamance as the rich natural reserves of the State.⁶

Demographically, there are stark differences between North and South. The North is predominantly Muslim and inhabited by the Wolof people (43% of total population).⁷ Contrastingly, the South is composed of the religiously diverse Diola, making up two-thirds of the regional population, despite only consisting of 4% of the national population.⁸ In addition, the two regions experienced contrasting colonial histories: Senegal, the seat of French influence into inland West Africa; and Casamance, under Portuguese influence from the 15th Century until ceded to France at the end of the 19th. The French administration would see continuously weaker influence in Casamance *vis-à-vis* the rest of Senegal.⁹ All these elements slowly coalesced, leading to longstanding tensions between these regions. Tensions can be further traced to socio-economic conditions in the Casamance, derived from regional underdevelopment. Part of this can be attributed to the economic crisis that affected Senegal during the 1970s, where many youths faced rising unemployment and diminishing prospects.¹⁰ Land reforms in the 1970s further worsened the local socioeconomic conditions.¹¹

Peaceful protests in 1982 in reaction to economic and political neglect resulted in targeted arrests and denunciation of it as a "Jola Affair".¹² Tensions erupted into conflict when clashes occurred between the *Mouvement des Forces Démocratique du Casamance* (MFDC) and the Senegalese government, the former looking to secede. At the time, motivations stemmed from the under-development of the Casamance by the Senegalese government, causing socioeconomic differences and marginalisation from the North.¹³ During the peak in the 1990s, the conflict featured bombardment of Ziguinchor and bloody clashes between the MFDC and Senegalese Armed Forces.¹⁴ The conflict

² Samo Diatta, Mamadou Lamine Mbaye, and Soussou Sambou, "Evaluating Hydro-Climate Extreme Indices from a Regional Climate Model: A Case Study for the Present Climate in the Casamance River Basin, Southern Senegal," *Scientific African* 10 (2020): 2.

³ Interactive Country Fiches, "Senegal," *Interactive Country Fiches*. <https://dicf.unepgrid.ch/senegal>

⁴ Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC), "Senegal." <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/sen>

⁵ Martin Evans, "Insecurity or Isolation? Natural Resources and Livelihoods in Lower Casamance," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 39, no. 2 (2005): 310.

⁶ Michael C. Lambert, "Violence and the War of Words: Ethnicity v. nationalism in the Casamance," *Africa* 68, no. 4 (1998): 588.

⁷ Anne Theobald, "Successful or Failed Rebellion? The Casamance Conflict from a Framing Perspective," *Civil Wars* 17, no. 2 (2015): 184.

⁸ *Ibid*, 184.

⁹ *Ibid*, 184.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 184.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 184.

¹² Peter Mark, Ferdinand de Jong, Clémence Chupin, "Ritual and Masking Traditions in Jola Men's Initiation," *African Arts* 31, no. 2 (1998): 33.

¹³ Theobald, "Failed Rebellion?" 184.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 185.

between the two parties spilled over into both Gambia and Guinea-Bissau, acting as one factor that led to the Guinea-Bissau Civil War in 1998.¹⁵ Since 2007, clashes have drastically subsided following bouts of peace talks and the death of long-term leader of the MFDC Augustin Diamacoune Senghor. This has led to the contemporary situation: occasional flare-ups of low level clashes between the government and the handful of fragmented MFDC militias (caused by leadership disagreements).¹⁶ As a result, peace talks are near non-existent due to the plethora of independent interests.¹⁷

As of 2023, Ousmane Sonko - current mayor of Ziguinchor since 2022 - is the leading figure in the opposition to Senegalese president Macky Sall (2012-2024). A former tax inspector and founder of the PASTEF party (African Patriotes of Senegal for Work, Ethics, and Fraternity), his politics include anti-establishmentarianism, anti-corruption, populism, and pan-Africanism. Following allegations of rape charges (cleared following two years of investigation), disturbing public order, and “corrupting the youth,” Sonko has routinely clashed with the justice system in 2021 and 2023. Sonko and his supporters claim these are politically motivated.¹⁸ Sonko sought to present himself for the 2024 presidential election, though legal troubles limited his agency. Since his arrest, a local Ziguinchor court annulled his removal from the electoral lists by the national courts,¹⁹ though this decision was overturned by the Supreme Court. The PASTEF is composed of trade unionists, entry-level politicians and civil servants. In 2021, Sonko formed the Liberate the People coalition (*Yewwi Askan Wi*) where they won in major cities including the stronghold of Dakar.²⁰ In 2022, they won 55 out of 165 seats in the *Assemblée Nationale* - Senegal’s only legislative body following the dissolution of the Senate in a 2016 constitutional amendment.²¹ However, on July 31st 2023, Senegal’s Minister of the Interior dissolved PASTEF, citing that the party rallied its supporters into violent protests in March 2021 and June 2023.²² This caused more protests in Dakar and Ziguinchor, and the party has since launched a legal appeal to a national court and the ECOWAS Court of Justice.

1.2 – Relevance:

The Sahel is currently undergoing an intellectually fascinating yet operationally distressing era in its decolonisation process. As many decolonial scholars have argued (wa Thiong’o,²³ Taiwo,²⁴

¹⁵ James Minahan, *Encyclopedia of the Stateless Nations: A-C* (Greenwood Press, 2002): 400-401.

¹⁶ Abdoulaye Ngom and Ismaila Sene, “The Casamance Conflict and its Displaced Persons : An Overview,” *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 11, no. 8 (2021): 22

¹⁷ Antonieta Rosa Gomes, “O Dificil Processo de Resolução Do Conflito de Casamansa: Uma Mediação Pode Ter Êxito?” *Cadernos de estudos africanos* 42, no. 42 (2022): 211.

¹⁸ The Economist, “Tension in Senegal is set to persist,” *The Economist*, June 8, 2023.

¹⁹ Théa Ollivier, “Au Sénégal, la justice relance Ousmane Sonko dans la course à la présidence,” *Le Monde*, published October 13, 2023.

²⁰ NEWS WIRES, “Senegal Counts Legislative Votes With Eyes on 2024 Presidential Race,” *France 24*, published July 31, 2022.

²¹ Rédaction Africanews, “Sénégal : l’opposition acceptera les résultats des législatives,” *Africanews*, published August 11, 2022.

²² Ilaria Allegrozzi, “Senegalese Government Dissolves Opposition Party, Cuts Internet,” *Human Rights Watch*, published August 1, 2023.

²³ wa Thiong’o Ngũgĩ, “The Language of African Literature,” in *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature*, ed. wa Thiong’o Ngũgĩ (London: Currey, 1986): 6-7.

²⁴ Olúfẹ̀mi Táíwò, *Against Decolonisation. Taking African Agency Seriously* (London: Hurst, 2022): 56.

Nwankpa²⁵), the decolonial efforts of the 1960s were only partially successful. Political self-determination may have been a right reclaimed, but even that was constrained - as illustrated by covert and overt imperial machinations in the D.R.C. (1961, Lumumba), Cameroon (1958, Bassa and Bamileke insurrections), and Burkina Faso (1987, Sankara) as well as constraints on self-determination in Nigeria (1967-70, Biafran War) and Niger (1959, blacklisting socialists/anti-French voices). Many of these can be linked to Cold War Era anxieties of the expansion of Communism into young African states, as seen in Angola (1975, Cuban aid) and Mozambique (1977-92, Mozambican Civil War). Moreover, economic independence, educational liberty/equality, and freedom of geopolitical relationships have all been limited during the following independence. Today, one need only observe French state deals for Nigerien uranium or multinational corporations' refinement deals for Nigerian crude oil to understand the relationships that persist. This is without speaking further on remnant colonial links to knowledge production and linguistic equality, as argued by wa Thiong'o. As such, to see the Sahel region undergo this violent paradigm shift - for better or for worse - is a necessary step in the process of decolonisation. It appears that, at face value, there are two paths: the Burkina Faso-Mali-Niger axis of violent rejection of France, neo-colonialism, and its subsequent self-serving supra-national institutions (coups); and the Senegal peaceful approach that utilised in-state democratic mechanisms (elections). Moreover, there is a rise in Africa - small part of a greater global trend - of electoral authoritarianism (Tanzania and Cameroon²⁶) and democratic backsliding (Ethiopia²⁷). Considering all the above: to see Senegal remain tenacious in the face of a fledgling authoritarian's failed coup is quite remarkable and worthy of note for such a historic occasion. To understand the wider picture and which strategies can be successful in promoting self-determined political outcomes, research such as this needs to occur on successful examples in an otherwise unsuccessful and violent landscape.

Similarly, the Sahel outlines that if nothing else, neocolonialism is being explicitly rejected. Given the victorious party in Senegal's 2024 election was a pan-Africanist anti-imperial movement, it is more important than ever to see how a party from such grassroots and non-political origins can take command of France's last bastion of influence in the region. All inclusive: this research is relevant due to its proximity to the ongoing paradigm shift scholars are witnessing across the Sahel. Given the path these states have taken over the past 5 years, the incoming 5 years promise to be equally as interesting, and pivotal in this current transitional stage.

1.3 – Research Problem, Objectives, and Questions:

The observed research problem is the Casamance as it exists today and its role in Senegal's politics. Over 40 years after the initial outbreak of conflict, the region still bears the brunt of its consequences. Despite this, its current mayor since 2022 has used this region as his electoral stronghold

²⁵ Michael Nwankpa, "The Colonial Legacy Argument," in *Nigeria's Fourth Republic, 1999-2021: A Militarised Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 2023): 24.

²⁶ Yonatan L. Morse, "Electoral Authoritarianism and Weak States in Africa: The Role of Parties Versus Presidents in Tanzania and Cameroon," *International Political Science Review* 39, no. 1 (2018), 115.

²⁷ Adem Kassie Abebe, "Ethiopia's Transition: Will the Country Stem Descent to its Tradition of Authoritarianism?" in *Democratic Consolidation and Constitutional Endurance in Asia and Africa: Comparing Uneven Pathways*, ed. Tom Gerald Daly and Dinesha Samararatne (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2024): 228.

and policy springboard. The initial objective was to explore how the dynamics between the Casamance, Sonko, and Macky Sall (as the nation's leader for 12 years) are interlinked and exist through each other for each of their successes and downfalls. However, within a month of beginning field research, the political situation was scrambled due to Macky Sall's postponement of the February election. Given the chaos this sowed in the political sphere, this research had to address how this decision impacted the topic. This led to the ultimate research question of: **To what extent does Ousmane Sonko and his coalition have the ability and means to successfully reincorporate Casamançais grievances into the coalition's national political campaign of pan-Africanism, anti-corruption, and anti-establishmentarianism against Macky Sall.** Supportive research questions:

- ❖ How fundamental is Ziguinchor to Sonko successfully establishing himself in politics?
- ❖ What role has the Constitutional Crisis played in Sall's downfall and Sonko's rise?
- ❖ Is Sonko an independent moment, or the representation of a new wave of Pan-Africanist leaders guiding disgruntled African youths?

1.4 – Methodological Approach:

In order to adequately answer the questions identified in Section 1.3, insights and data were gathered through a 6 month research project, most notably a 10-week research field internship in Senegal over the course of the 2024 February presidential elections. Over this period, methods used included expert interviews, media analysis, ethnographic observations, and analysis of academic works.

The first part of the methodological approach focuses on establishing fundamentals. The foundations of this research were based on an extensive review of the academic works on the Casamance, its history with Senegal and colonialism, and the conflict itself. The aim is to assess different themes apparent in the conflict and discover which themes recur most often for the conflict and its long-term consequences, before linking to them Ousmane Sonko and his political march. Most of the work explored dates in the 21st Century as it begins to wrestle with long-term consequences and conflict continuity, as opposed to many 20th Century works that focused on the conflict itself. Additionally, in order to maintain a thematic thread through the discourse, a framework was constructed based on the common themes. The result is a flow-chart that has centered corruption and economic exploitation of the Casamance as the two central nodes, that then spreads out to conflict continuity, the MFDC, Casamançais grievances, and Ousmane Sonko (See Figure 2 in Appendix). This diagram served as the theoretical foundation for approaches to the research problem. Other node offshoots included Macky Sall's governance, Casamance resources, the death of the MFDC's historic leader, and lingering colonial impacts. While these are all noteworthy research in their own right, they were set aside in favour of the ultimately chosen themes as they are simply most pertinent to Ousmane Sonko's political campaign.

Once this has been established, the second part of the methodological approach was crafted. This is founded on expert interviews, media analysis, ethnographic observations based on field work, and deep review of the academic literature.

First and foremost were the expert interviews. These were conducted with individuals from a variety of fields, each of which live in Senegal and have (personal) connections to Senegal, politics, or the Casamance. The goal was gathering a series of individuals in order to create an extensive perspective of the current situation. Due to unforeseeable circumstances of the election postponement, all of these interviews were held prior to voting day; most were held in the period between Macky Sall's postponement and the eventual election in late March and provide crucial insights during the tumultuous period. The subjects are critical in uncovering perspectives that are not discussed in the literature and for following the events as they unfold in real time, offering unparalleled involvement. The subjects were as follows, ordered chronologically:

- ❖ Professor Benoît Tine: 11-year Ziguinchor denizen, head professor of the sociology department at Université Assane Seck;
- ❖ Anonymised: Board member of *Eurocham* Senegal, key organisation in promoting cooperation between European corporations, entrepreneurs, and the European Union (EU) delegation - confidential discussions;
- ❖ Dr. Mamadou Bodian: researcher at West African Research Centre (WARC), professor/researcher at *Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire* (IFAN) of the Université Cheikh Anta Diop, and political constitutionalist;
- ❖ Anonymised: High-ranking European diplomat to Senegal (ambassador) - confidential discussions;
- ❖ Susanna Eusebi & Renna Hawili: Political analysts at *ControlRisks Senegal*, international British firm specialised in security and safety managements & assessments. Eusebi and Hawili lead geopolitical and security analytics for Senegal;
- ❖ Samuel Sakhewar Fama Diop: Political Science student at Université Cheikh Anta Diop, former leader of a PASTEF political action cell in Dakar.

Continuing on, the second critical data collection point were media analyses, primarily focused on traditional media covering the electoral crisis. Such data sources are crucial when attempting to keep up with a political crisis. These articles, primarily from *Le Monde*, *RFI*, *Brut*, and *Africanews* (mix of Western and African) were primarily collected from February 1st until February 28th. They serve to fact-check claims encountered during the interview process. Social media analysis was a desired method as Sonko uses TikTok as one of his primary propagandic tools. Unfortunately, Senegal's government routinely banned TikTok during the 2023 protests and 2024 crisis. Moreover, linguistic barriers hampered this option. Future research will need to consider this element further.

Moving to academic works, the literature review of Chapter 2 will be utilised for similar fact-checks by cross-referencing interview insights to the existing, verified literature. The literature also served as a pivotal base for the many of the early dives into the themes of the Casamance Conflict and Senegalese political history.

And thirdly, the final data collection source will consist of ethnographic observations. As this research is composed of a substantial field research segment in Ziguinchor and Dakar, ethnographic observations will be collected. This will largely attest to two elements: ongoing social, cultural, and religious shifts in Ziguinchor *vis-à-vis* existing literature; and direct observations in Dakar on political

atmosphere and social unrests. Both are key to understanding the underlying mechanisms that drive Senegalese and Casamançais agency during both the crisis and the conflict. All combined, the field research and variety of research methods serve to answer the primary research question outlined above.

1.5 – Structural Outline:

The following chapters of this thesis are organised as follows: Firstly, Chapter 2 will begin with a deep dive of the academic debate on the Casamance Conflict and exploring each of the recurring themes to help build the theoretical foundations for this research; Following this, Chapter 3 will explore the specifics of low-intensity conflicts as a label. The chapter will then explore the contemporary conditions of the Casamance as it pertains to the political situation entering the 2024 election. Once these have been established, Chapter 4 will discuss Ousmane Sonko and Macky Sall. These two will be explored as foils of each other, what they each represent in Senegalese democracy, and how their actions have impacted the Casamance. Following this, Chapter 5 will tie the previously established contexts to the constitutional crisis of February 2024, before ultimately moving on to Chapter 6 for a general discussion of the themes relating back to the research question before the concluding remarks.

Chapter 2 – Academic Debate:

2.1 – History of the Casamance Conflict:

There has been a significant amount of literature created by scholars on the Casamance abording various topics such as religion, economics, ecology, politics, failed mediation and actor proliferation. However, there are few such sources that coalesce multiple of these perspectives together to allow for an in-depth understanding of the conflict that accounts for all elements continuously building in the conflict. With the state of the conflict as it is - perpetual low-intensity - it is vital to understand what led to it reaching this uneasy and open-ended stalemate. Most importantly, when we take into account Ousmane Sonko, understanding these themes leads to gaining further awareness of how such an opposition candidate can weaponise local sentiments to not only create a stronghold of political support, but to cultivate and grow an anti-government movement from an isolated region to a national struggle. It is here, in relation to grievances that emerged from the Casamance Conflict, that Sonko's role becomes catalytic.

As will be outlined in the subsections below, the academic discourse highlights themes of struggle against marginalisation (politically, economically) and exploitation as recurring in Casamançais grievances. Moreover, these themes have been consistent from the early grievances leading to conflict eruption in 1982 up until the deadly protests of the 2020s. As this paper will discuss in the latter chapters, it is these themes that continue to strain successful resolution and peace, and most importantly: something that could reignite regional separatist violence and a renewed struggle for independence through the championing of Ousmane Sonko.

2.1.1 – Religion & Culture:

With regards to religion, it is helpful to review the works of Robert Baum - an American professor of Religion - and Jean-Claude Marut - researcher at *Centre d'étude d'Afrique noire de l'Institut d'études politiques* of Bordeaux. To begin with, the wider academic literature strongly reinforces that the conflict is not religiously based and should not be attributed to such.²⁸ This is despite the historical sharp split between Casamançais religious customs (religiously diverse but the primary bastion of Christianity/Animism) and mainland Senegalese religious practices (<90% Muslim).²⁹ Despite such, religion has not been impactful through inter-religious tensions, but rather the social organisation derived from religious customs; the violently atheistic advance of modernity marked by demarcation and control clashing with centuries-long religiously-based traditions. For instance, Baum argues that one of the multitude of root causes to the conflict's outbreaks was the revocation of 1978 Diola Property Laws

²⁸ Jean-Claude Marut, "Les Particularismes au Risque de l'Islam Dans le Conflict Casamançais," in *L'Afrique Politique - Islams d'Afrique: Entre le Local et le Global*, ed. Centre d'Étude d'Afrique Noire (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2002): 147.

²⁹ Office of International Religious Freedom, "2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Senegal," U.S. Department of State, last modified 2021.

that accompanied the general nationalisation of agricultural land in Senegal - particularly in the Casamance.³⁰ It was a process that began as early as 1964: “nationalization of all indigenous African land claims while according full legal recognition to private land titles registered under a European system.”³¹ This caused widespread panic in the Casamance that suffered a slow erosion of their cultural independence, since as Baum - quoting Boone (2003) - argues:

“... [these] government policies encouraged northern Senegalese immigrants to take possession of rich lands that had not been farmed during the prior three years, but which were still regarded as owned by local people. This applied not only to the rice paddies but to forests that were subject to complex local legal systems of land ownership.”³²

This episode is part of a larger trend still visible today of government-mandated dispossession of Casamançais collective property, as illustrated in Irene Osemeka’s *Casamançais versus Sénégalaise: Migration and the indigene-settler conflict in post-independence Senegal* or in Martin Evans’s *Contested spaces, new opportunities: Displacement, return and the rural economy in Casamance, Senegal*. Markers of the ethnographic individuality of the Casamance’s peoples *vis-à-vis* the North have been slowly yet continuously eroded. The sentiment of modernity encroaching and controlling is not lost amongst locals. Even today, conflict insecurity caused a flood of internally displaced persons (IDPs) exodus from the Casamance, whom’s land in many cases has been redistributed.³³ Returning to the pre-conflict outbreak era, Evans supports Baum’s hypothesis: land disputes “formed a major locus for unrest preceding the [...] rebellion.”³⁴

There has always been tension between the Casamance and the mainland. Up until Ousmane Sonko entered the picture, there had never been an ethnic Diola representative at the highest levels of executive power. This lack of participation in the government blended with this erosion of traditions. Tensions skyrocketed when land dispossessions would end in the ownership of northern Wolofs that migrated South, hence this idea of settler-colonialism in the Casamance.³⁵ For the Diola, much of their autonomy stems from their cultural independence to the Wolofs. Thus, when thinking about the role of religion, Baum outlines a productive framework:

“[It is] not about how religious differences contributed to the secessionist movement. Rather, it is the issue of how Diola religious sensibilities shape

³⁰ Robert Baum, “Religious Roots of the Casamance Conflict and Finding a Path Towards its Resolution = Raízes Religiosas do Conflito de Casamansa e Encontrar um Caminho Para a sua Resolução,” *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos* 42, no. 42 (2021): 234.

³¹ *Ibid*, 238.

³² *Ibid*, 238.

³³ Martin Evans, “Contested spaces, new opportunities: displacement, return and the rural economy in Casamance, Senegal,” in *Displacement economies in Africa: Paradoxes of Crisis and creativity*, ed. Amanda Hammar (London: Zed Book Ltd, 2014): 67.

³⁴ *Ibid*.

³⁵ Irene N. Osemeka, “Casamançais versus Sénégalaise : migration and the indigene-settler conflict in post-independence Senegal,” *Lagos Historical Review* 12 (2012): 110.

their perception of responses to what they perceive [as a threat to Diola autonomy] and [Diola] way of life.”³⁶

At its essence, Baum is arguing that there is a push-and-pull occurring between the Casamançais desire for local autonomy and the imposing, unitary government policies of the Senegalese government. As such, it is pivotal to understand religion’s role beyond a clash of belief systems, but rather a fundamental facet of social structures that are threatened.

Moreover, Sonko is Muslim and a supporter of creating more space for Islam in politics. Given the Casamance’s unquestionable status as the stronghold of non-Islam religions, the unparalleled success of Sonko in the region is fascinating to the role of religion. This is not to say Islam has no place in Casamance: ethnographic observations of equal numbers of churches to mosques and open prayers at the university of Ziguinchor indicate there is a change underway. Most interesting is to investigate how religion has changed over decades. By and large, religious changes in the Basse Casamance are non-linear. According to Steven Thomson, one can observe conversion to Islam on the northern banks of the region (citing Mark 1977, ‘78, ‘90; Lambert 2002; Linares 1986, ‘92) and divergently conversions to Christianity on the southern banks of the river (citing Baum 1990; Foucher 2003), and then further specificity among particular populations such as the Kalorn on the Gambian border.³⁷ Furthermore, Thomson states the trends for conversions into Islam and Christianity can be traced to the 1950s and 1960s respectively. What is clear is that the religious make-up of Casamance - while home to Senegalese Christianity - is incredibly diverse unlike mainland Senegal. The belief systems have coexisted for centuries; asserting the Casamance’s pluralistic uniqueness.³⁸ It is vital to not take religion at face value, as it essentialises difference. Indeed, Christianity is as imported through colonialism as is Islam through the African Jihads of the 19th Century.³⁹ The true value of religion to this discussion is how it shapes perspectives and traditions.

2.1.2 – Economics:

The theme of autonomy is central to the economics aspect of the Casamance Conflict and beyond. Here, the works of Martin Evans (researcher in Development/African Studies) is tremendously additive and consistently referred to. Similarly, the works of Michael Lambert (professor in African Studies/Anthropology) and Vincent Foucher (Researcher in African Studies/Secessionism/Conflict) make a common appearance in the literature.

First and foremost, Foucher notes that in the Casamance there is a long history of economic exploitation due to the prevalence of vital natural resources. These include timber (old growth forests), agricultural land (nutrient-rich), woodland vegetal growths (peanuts), and tourism (hotspot of

³⁶ Baum, “Religious Roots,” 233.

³⁷ Steven K. Thomson, “Christianity, Islam, and ‘The Religion of Pouring’: Non-linear Conversion in a Gambia/Casamance Borderland,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 42, no. 3 (2012): 241.

³⁸ Jacqueline Trincaz, “Christianisme, Islam et transformations sociales. La Famille en Casamance / Christianity, Islam and Social Changes. The Family in Casamance,” *Archives de sciences sociales de religions* 46, no. 1 (1978): 86.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 86.

Senegal).⁴⁰ Additionally, Lambert reported that there are significant unexploited oil reserves, estimated at one billion barrels.⁴¹ While there are other oil reserves in Senegal (particularly offshore and northern deserts), the Casamance's reserves add another layer to Senegal's delegation of Casamance as a resource depot. Lambert argues that these economic advantages create additional anxieties for the state to maintain its tight grip on such a resource-endowed region.⁴²

Moving on to economic activity, Evans is understood to be the subject matter expert due to his extensive writings. When looking at the conflict, he argues that in the Ziguinchor region there has developed a "War Economy" during the periods of heaviest fighting (~1990s), reliant on the aforementioned natural resource endowments.⁴³ As Foucher had outlined, Evans identified the components of this economy as: timber, cashews and tree crops, cannabis, livestock and bushmeat, subscriptions from locals to support the MFDC, robberies and tolls, humanitarian aid, and weapons.⁴⁴ Many of these activities operated cross-borders with Gambia, straining relations between Senegal and Gambia. Moreover, as a war economy, it is dependent on the availability of force,⁴⁵ which is interesting given the past decade of *laissez-faire* policy from the state. Despite this emergent economy, the majority of the Casamançais have been excluded from the profits generated. This, when paired with the extensive destruction and limitation of economic activities in the Casamance, has caused an economic crisis similar to the grievances leading to the outbreak of conflict in 1982.⁴⁶ This hardship is in addition to land dispossession. There was forced displacement as a cause of and result of the conflict; consequently many northerners migrated South and possessed those lands with state consent.⁴⁷ Following this, there were frequent economic- and conflict-motivated migrations. As Jean-Claude Marut wrote in 2005:

"For a long time, the rural exodus constituted one of the privileged economic strategies for young Diolas, principally directed towards the urban centres in the North of the country."⁴⁸

Many of those who left the Casamance with intention to return have done so, yet many have turned to new lives in major cities or across migrant routes towards Morocco and Cabo Verde. At present, the returning Casamançais are confronted with few options: dispossessed land (higher productivity soils), abandoned land (lower productivity soils), and land-mined fields. In many cases in the interior, the scattered remnants of minefields continue to cause risks and inhibit land returns.⁴⁹ All these outcomes

⁴⁰ Vincent Foucher, "The Mouvement des Force Démocratiques de Casamance: The Illusion of Separatism in Senegal?", in *Secessionism in African Politics, Aspirations, Grievance, Performance, Disenchantment*, ed. Lotje de Vries, Pierre Englebert, and Mareike Schomerus (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019): 268.

⁴¹ Michael C. Lambert, "Violence and the War of Words: Ethnicity v. Nationalism in the Casamance," *Africa* 68, no. 4 (1998): 588.

⁴² *Ibid*, 588.

⁴³ Martin Evans, *Ni Guerre ni Paix: The Political Economy of Low-Level Conflict in the Casamance* (London: ODI, 2003): 1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 9-13.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 15.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 2.

⁴⁷ Evans, "Contested spaces, new opportunities," 67.

⁴⁸ Jean-Claude Marut, "Les racines mondiales du particularisme Casamançais," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 39, no. 2 (2005): 318.

⁴⁹ Evans, *Ni Guerre Ni Paix*, 5.

regarding land use have caused many Casamançais who return to experience high poverty similar - if not worsening - to the 1982 conditions.⁵⁰ Once again, migration becomes an economic option.

As will be highlighted in the next chapters, many formal and industrial economic activities (such as the exportive port) are unstable due to external political forces. This leaves only two stable anti-poverty income strategies, entirely pushed by consumers: Tourism⁵¹ (Cap Skirring and the sea-side Casamance) and cannabis. Indeed, Senegal is one of the main cannabis producers in West Africa, as well as a leading distribution hub.⁵² The United Nations report on cannabis in Africa - citing Evans - makes a special note of the role of Cannabis in the Casamance conflict. In particular, it outlines claimed links between the Liberian National Patriotic Front and the MFDC, where the former traded guns to the latter for cannabis.⁵³

A highly interesting facet of the economics of the Casamance Conflict is the recent proliferation of actors in the region, many of whom benefit from the status quo since the turn of the millennium. To that end, Evans argues that NGOs (aid organisations), the MFDC factions, state governments (Gambia, Guinea-Bissau), and to a lesser extent multinational corporations have profited from the informal logging industry caused by lack of oversight and regulations, especially along border areas.⁵⁴ From this setting, Evans posited that the war economy has inhibited much of the peace process as there are vested interests from numerous actors, who continuously profit from the ongoing low-intensity conflict.⁵⁵ The conflict - one can argue - has reached a delicate equilibrium: not high-level enough to raise genuine security threats to the central government; yet high enough to be labelled a dangerous zone, limiting international business investments while allowing easy exploitation of local resources at the expense of local communities. The economic externally-extractive exploitation of the region is one of the central pieces of Ousmane Sonko's manifesto: *Pétrol et Gaz au Sénégal*. In it, Sonko utilises his experience and credibility as a tax inspector to expose the corruption of the Senegalese government over oil contracts and profits. It also claims these contracts include conducting business links with foreign based organised crime. Sonko, over the course of his rise to power, weaponised this manifesto and its claims to galvanise disgruntled and impoverished Senegalese youth. In particular, Ziguinchor youths felt spoken to by Sonko's rhetoric and his part Diola ancestry, forming a loyal electoral foundation since 2019. It proved to be highly effective for Sonko as he continued to build his political movement.

2.1.3 – *Environment and Ecology:*

Ecology will not be the subject matter of this paper however, there are political consequences from ecological matters worth considering. Culturally, the Casamances's peoples have split beliefs over forest spirituality. For instance, the communities near Ziguinchor and the southern border hold forests in high spiritual regard, whereas communities near Bignona and the northern border it is less widespread. Boubacar Demba Ba and Luc Descroix's *Analyse de quelques conséquences du conflit de*

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 15.

⁵¹ Jacques Sidioka Tendeng and Mamadou Diombera, "Le tourisme durable comme outil au service de la réduction de la pauvreté : le cas du tourisme rural intégré en Basse-Casamance," *Études Caribéennes* 51 (2022): 3.

⁵² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Cannabis in Africa* (November 2007), 6.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 6.

⁵⁴ Evans, *Ni Guerre Ni Paix*, 2.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 2.



Figure 3: Administrative regions of the Casamance⁵⁶

Casamance sur les ressources forestières dans le département de Bignona (Sénégal) is noteworthy. In it, the authors argue - along Evan's Wartime Economy - that the forestry resources have been subject to exploitation, leading to rampant ecological damage to old growth forests and ecosystems.⁵⁷ Moreover, they posit that there is an outward movement of resource extraction, away from the Casamance and its peoples while deforestation spreads internally.⁵⁸ This movement will be discussed in the next chapters: the illicit international trade between the forests of Basse-Casamance and Gambian lumber mills. Due to the complex web of actors and their economic interests in the region, old forest growths have been incredibly fragile and under continuous threat. The MFDC in its current form struggles tremendously to finance itself, resulting in their contributions to the deforestation near their camps along the Gambian border. Demba Ba & Descroix end their paper by stating there needs to be an urgent implementation of "conscience" across all actors, as well as strict applications of legal texts in order to save growths and ecosystems.⁵⁹ As aforementioned, Sonko has been vocal against the government's *laissez-faire* with forestry resources and its resulting environmental destruction. By promising economic assistance and denouncing the government, Sonko is able to stoke fears against the powers that be. Whether material changes would occur with him in power is anyone's guess, and the role his PASTEF coalition will have in limiting trans-border illegal trades will be uncovered in due time.

2.1.4 – History:

History is a core element to understanding the Casamance Conflict and the region as a whole, particularly when seeking to contextualise the feelings of difference between the Casamance and mainland Senegal. One such crucial difference is the divergent colonial histories between the two regions. Dakar has long served as the administrative capital to France's West African colonial empire

⁵⁶ Penda Dieye, "La Casamance : Organisation de l'espace - 6e," *Sumudaara*, accessed June 30, 2024.

⁵⁷ Bouacar Demba Ba and Luc Descroix, "Analyse de quelque conséquences du conflit de Casamance sur les ressources forestières dans le département de Bignona (Senegal) = Análise de algumas consequências do conflito de Casamansa sobre os recursos florestais no departamento de Bignona (Senegal)," *Centro de Estudos Internacionais* 42, no. 42 (2021): 267.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 267.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 267.

after it was transferred from St-Louis, near Mauritania.⁶⁰ Consequently, the core urban centres have much clearer French inheritance. Indeed, one can see Senegal's mirroring constitution, the highly politicised and civic social culture, and even the register of Senegalese French (*vis-à-vis* other African dialects and modern French) is very formal. On the other hand, the Casamançais experienced a far more varied history. As Cristiano d'Orsi - fellow at University of Pretoria in the law faculty - described the Casamance's journey:

“Casamance was a former Portuguese colony. The Portuguese, however, ceded this territory to France through a convention signed in 1886. French colonial rule continued until 1960, despite much resistance from the local population. In 1960, Senegal became independent and sovereign following the dissolution of the former Mali Federation, which was composed of the Republic of Senegal and the Sudanese Republic (formerly French Sudan that adopted the current name of Mali after the dissolution), both former French colonies.”⁶¹

The last sentence is noteworthy. During the independence period, Senegal exited as a francophone state that cooperated with its francophone neighbours. This stoked fears in Casamance, who's Portuguese heritage (shared with Guinea-Bissau) was coming under threat. Indeed, Lambert puts it best:

“The ancient cultural affinities between the Jola and the peoples of Guinea-Bissau are believed to have been reinforced during the colonial era. As late as 1886 the Casamance, similar to Guinea Bissau, was largely under Portuguese control. The lusophone influence remains a characteristic of Ziguinchor. It presents a sharp contrast to the heavy francophone influence of northern Senegal.”⁶²

Given the porous border between Senegal, Gambia, and Guinea-Bissau, it is no surprise to still see the lusophone link. The fears of identity erasure grew as the Senegambian Confederation failed to unite the Gambia and Casamance river-basins with the expansive northern plains into a polycultural grouping. This is part of continuous push-and-pull that the Casamance has experienced. As d'Orsi stated:

“...it is important to point out that in the 20th century, the region defined as “Casamance” has often been subjected to administrative reorganizations. Consequently, the geographical term “Casamance” has often been used in an unclear way to define the borders of the region. The ambiguity surrounding the exact definition of the area called “Casamance” has been exploited by both

⁶⁰ Gregory Valdespino, “‘The Cité is Yours’: Colonial Modernization and Dakar’s Postcolonial Suburban Dream,” *Journal of Urban History* (2024): 3.

⁶¹ Cristiano d’Orsi, “An Outlook on the Conflict in Casamance with a Focus on the Legal Situation of the Mouvement des forces Democratiques (“Mouvement of Democratic Forces of Casamance”) and its Members,” *Willamette Journal of International Law and Dispute Resolution* 23, no. 1 (2015): 10.

⁶² Lambert, “Violence and the War of Words,” 588.

the central government of Senegal and the liberation movement to promote their agenda in the conflict.”⁶³

This is something that can be observed over the Casamance conflict. In 1985, following rising armaments of the MFDC’s military wing, the government responded by dividing the Casamance province (geographically defined) into two reduced regions: Basse-Casamance (administratively Ziguinchor region), and Haute-Casamance (administratively Kolda and Sédhiou regions). As such, the Casamance has undergone routine administrative changes in order to curb the materialisation of a unified geographically-based group identity.

Linguistically, the landscape of Casamance is immensely diverse: Diola, Mandinka, Casamançais and Bissau-Guinean Creoles, and the Baïnouk language grouping featuring dozens of small languages;⁶⁴ additionally, there is French and remnants of Portuguese - particularly near the border to Guinea-Bissau. Mainland Senegal experiences a similar diversity (Wolof and French as lingua francas; Fulani/Pulaar, Arabic, Serer, however the North is far more Wolof-speaking due to the cultural dominance of Wolofs.

Lastly, Senegalese politics has - up until April 2024 - seen its leadership dominated northerners. Senghor (Joal - North), Abdou Diouf (Louga - North), Abdoulaye Wade (Kébémér - North), and Macky Sall (Fatick - North) are all from the core urban area. The North here is relative to Casamance. This feature of historic Senegalese politics has offered a path inwards for Sonko and the Casamance. Sonko is part Thièsois (North) and part Diola (South). Consequently, to the historically disenfranchised Casamançais there is a real sense of representation and possibility for change.

2.1.5 – Geopolitics:

Geopolitics has always been a fundamental aspect of the Conflict - internally and externally. There is a great variety of works from different authors on the subject. The most noteworthy geopolitical element were the resultant tensions between Gambia and Senegal. As aforementioned, there was a failed attempt to create a Senegambian Confederation. The initial proposal guaranteed independent governments, economic policies, and military apparatus, while creating a bi-state confederation governing body that would feature a Senegalese president and Gambian vice-president.⁶⁵ While the project lasted over a decade, both members sought vastly different outcomes from the confederation, with Senegal seeking a unitary union and the erosion of Gambian independence whereas Gambia sought political stability, military protection, and access to a common market.⁶⁶ Ultimately, diverging ambitions and political instability in the Gambia caused the collapse of the union, severing any increases in ethnic diversity. Under full implementation of the confederation, the Casamance would have found itself with a sister river-basin that is historically distinct from the northern territories. Instead, the geographic isolation returned⁶⁷ and the reinstatement of trade barriers only worsened socioeconomic conditions,⁶⁸

⁶³ d’Orsi, “An Outlook on the Conflict,” 7.

⁶⁴ Alexander Cobbinah, “The Casamance as an Area of Intense Language Contact: The Case of Baïnouk Gubaher,” *Journal of Language Contact* 3, no. 1 (2010): 177.

⁶⁵ Arnold Hughes, “The Senegambian Confederation,” *The Contemporary Review* 244, no. 1417 (1984): 86.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 83-84.

⁶⁷ Edmun B. Richmond, “Senegambia and the Confederation: History, Expectations, and Disillusions,” *Journal of Third World Studies* 10, no. 2 (1993): 180.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 180.

fueling MFDC support. Furthermore, the collapse of the union led to Gambia's authoritarian leader to offer support to the MFDC,⁶⁹ as well as take advantage of border instability to profit off of the illicit timber trade⁷⁰ (Gambia has only 3% forestry coverage⁷¹). As such, the Casamance, the MFDC, Senegal, and Gambia are inextricably linked. Geopolitically, the Casamance Conflict has spilled across borders. Whether Gambian connections, or failed attempts at selling Casamançais Cannabis to foreign militias for arms,⁷² the conflict has played its role in straining to some degree inter-regional relationships. Lastly, Lambert had an interesting note on the power of an independent Casamance in transforming regional dynamics:

“In addition to being anxious about losing the economic wealth of the region, as well as setting a precedent for border changes, the Senegalese government, some have speculated, fears the emergence of an economic union between the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, and an independent Casamance, a union which might challenge Senegal's regional economic hegemony.”⁷³

Turning our attention domestically, it is interesting to notice the evolution in the dynamic between local sentiment and Dakar. Here, Álvaro Nóbrega's work is interesting. After over 40 years of instability, local communities have become exhausted. Yet, that has not correlated to an acceptance of the unitary Dakar project.⁷⁴ As will be shown in the later chapters, one can extract that local support for the MFDC and its continued struggle has greatly diminished,⁷⁵ however it has not increased support for the status quo. In fact, observers can see that the election of Sonko to the municipality has exemplified a distaste for the establishment without a reliance on separatist conflict. For Nóbrega, if one wants a stable, long term solution, there needs to be: unity, understanding of local grievances, and importantly an incorporation of the Casamance without further destroying autonomy.⁷⁶

2.1.6 – Factionalism:

Factionalism has become a core identity of the Casamance Conflict and the MFDC over the past 15 years. Following the death of longtime leader Augustin Diamacoune Senghor in early 2007, the disagreements over chief authority and the quasi-legitimacy of Diamacoune Senghor's peace treaties combined to factionalise the MFDC into a series of smaller militias.⁷⁷ The split created three major

⁶⁹ Stefan Gehrold and Inga Neu, “Caught Between Two Fronts - In Search of Lasting Peace in the Casamance Region: An Analysis of the Causes, Players and Consequences,” *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung* (2010): 89.

⁷⁰ Martin Evans, “Insecurity, Informal Trade and Timber Trafficking in the Gambia/Casamance Borderlands,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 37, no. 2 (2022): 274.

⁷¹ Global Forest Watch, “Gambia,” country dashboards, last modified 2023, <https://www.globalforestwatch.org/dashboards/country/GMB/>.

⁷² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Cannabis in Africa*, 6.

⁷³ Lambert, “Violence and the War of Words,” 588.

⁷⁴ Álvaro Nóbrega, “O Conflito de Casamansa: Uma Perspetiva Geopolítica,” *Cadernos de estudos africanos* 42, no. 42 (2022): 37.

⁷⁵ Andrew McGregor, “Is the Curtain Dropping on Africa's Oldest Conflict? Senegal's Offensive in the Casamance,” *Aberfoyle International Security* (February 2021).

⁷⁶ Nóbrega, “O Conflito de Casamansa”, 52.

⁷⁷ Christophe Châtelot, “Boundaries of Casamance remain blurred after 30 years of conflict,” *The Guardian*, 19 June, 2012.

factions: Salif Sadio's, Caesar Badiatte's and Mamadou Niantang Diatta's. Each leader vied for control of the MFDC, but none had the gravitas necessary. Peace accords in the 2010s would collapse the legitimacy of each faction's quest for dominance, or in other cases cause further factionalism.⁷⁸

In addition to it breaking the unified front and greater movement, the splits have also hampered many attempts at mediation and conflict resolution. Antonieta Gomes argues in favour of this: long term mediation will remain largely impossible while the MFDC factions operate under their independent goals and ambitions,⁷⁹ whether political or warlord-esque. Furthermore, Gomes notes that any successful mediation has become incredibly difficult due to non-compliance of many actors in the region.⁸⁰ Looking at the history, there have been many peace talks and ceasefires that led nowhere due to rogue groups continuing the fight.⁸¹ Though with the collapse of the MFDC's military strength, their ability to reject ceasefires has diminished.⁸² By and large, one can associate the current status of the factions to bandits.

Since the movement has no clear leader, and the MFDC has become a shell of its former self, Sonko is the most well placed individual to unite Casamance as he already has with Ziguinchor. Even while in jail, his local supporters remain very active and occasionally violent. In fact, local citizens have felt that they are being punished for resisting Macky Sall's government.⁸³ The support for Sonko has not thinned, and he remains poised to lead Ziguinchor as the separatist movement transitions from independence to increased integration and a shift in government.

2.1.7 – *Common Themes:*

From the existing academic literature, there are a handful of themes that stand out: economic exploitation, political marginalisation, actor proliferation, ecological destruction, demographic changes (through migration), and regional/national geopolitical dynamics. Each of these in turn has played a role not simply in conflict continuity for the Casamance, but more importantly is their role in Sonko's popularity. Indeed, for any populist anti-establishment politician to succeed, there requires the correct conditions.

Firstly, there needs to be general disapproval of the governing forces - particularly if there's a history of political dominion. A continuous political system that routinely disenfranchises one of the groups (whether class or identity) in the nation breeds distrust in such a system and its purpose. In the case of Senegal, the lack of southern representation at the highest echelons has only consolidated sentiments that the state works for the North.

Secondly, socioeconomic conditions need to be weak. By removing the security of fundamental goods (food, water, income, housing), the electorate will deliberate political allegiance based on its ability to secure these goods. Whether ancient Rome with gladiators and state subsidies for daily bread rations, or the United States with its excessive food production/waste and entertainment culture, the notion of

⁷⁸ McGregor, "Curtain Falling."

⁷⁹ Antonieta Rosa Gomes, "O Dificil Processo de Resoluçao Do Conflito de Casamansa: Uma Mediação Pode Ter Êxito?" *Cadernos de estudos africanos* 42, no. 42 (2022): 211.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 193-194.

⁸¹ McGregor, "Curtain Falling."

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Moussa Ngom, "A Ziguinchor, Ousmane Sonko, l'enfant du pays présent partout malgré son absence," *Le Monde*, December 6, 2023.

“Bread and Games” has always been a useful tool to limit political dissent, as dissent would come at the cost of such stabilities.

Thirdly, identity based politics that can be problematised greatly increases political success for populist movements. Europe is a fascinating example of such. The crises of the 21st Century with routine economic crises and collapse, migration, austerity, and outsourcing of fundamental production industries (such as outsourcing manufacturing to China) have caused a great deal of discontent among Europe’s working classes. One only needs to see the 2024 European Elections to see the rise of European populist parties in France, Italy, and the Netherlands, Austria, Hungary, and others. Returning to the case of Senegal and the Casamance, there has been systematic mistreatment of the Casamançais over decades. Additionally, the more lusophonic and Christian/Animistic identities in the region stand starkly opposite the predominantly francophone, Muslim, Wolof identity of the North. Thus, Sonko and his part Diola background are one of the few politicians in Senegal positioned to speak to the people of this conflict.

As such, returning to the themes outlined at the beginning of this section, the most common theme linking the others to Sonko, Senegalese politics, and the Casamance Conflict is marginalisation. Through and through, the Casamance has been subject to exploitation of its resources, of its desire to reclaim its autonomy, and complete political exclusion. In practice, given the current relationship with “Gambia’s” lumbering industry and the presence of petroleum, Casamance has slowly become an extractive frontier as a consequence of its rich resource endowment. Its presence in the country only strengthens the state without requiring political involvement, similar to the United States (U.S.) regulation that while convicts may not vote, they remain tallied in the population. Thus, counties with large convict populations receive increased federal gains with reduced representation.

Each of the themes can be linked to the core grievance of exclusion, only bolstered by the land dispossessions and the diverging histories. While the Casamance Conflict has reached a stable equilibrium of low violence, the imaginations remain. The Casamance remains delegated as a dangerous zone. As will be highlighted in the next chapters, this alone can suffice - when paired with a charismatic populist - in taking a fledgeling, borderland conflict and transforming its aftermath as the crucible for historic change in Africa’s most stable democracy.

Chapter 3 – “Low-Intensity Conflict” & The Contemporary Casamance:

3.1 – What are Low-Intensity Conflicts?

“People talk about cold conflict, of low intensity conflict [in the Casamance]... I don’t agree. A conflict is a conflict. Even if we don’t see tanks or anything similar: a conflict remains a conflict as it compromises the development of a region or country. An investor will not put their money where there isn’t 100% security. So - whether low or high intensity - development is limited. Additionally, it will not just be investments that do not arrive, but the people themselves will leave the region due to this same insecurity. The youth who are supposed to be in the region to work on development will emigrate, and projects will leave and not be developed any further.”⁸⁴

This quote originates from an interview conducted by the author with 10-year Ziguinchor resident and a prominent professor from the city’s university, Benoît Tine. It perfectly contextualises a core element of the Casamance Conflict: the double-edged sword of the ‘Low-Intensity’ conflict label. There will always be materialistic differences between low- and high-intensity however, over the *longue-durée* both the low- and high-intensity label constrict development and post-conflict reintegration, maintain external stigmas, and both can be weaponised by political motivations. Given the power of the term - not simply as a definition but as a tool - it is vital to understand its origins and how it can be used inappropriately.

Defining Low-Intensity Conflicts (henceforth LIC) is no easy feat, as its inherent political nature limits its definitivity. It is helpful to understand from where it emerged. Most conflict studies scholars agree that the term LIC can be traced back to the Reagan administration (1981-1989) when public support for military interventions ran dry due to the aftermath of the Vietnam War.^{85 86} With the ongoing Cold War and the struggle for consolidating spheres of influence, the Reagan administration realised that inactivity from the United States military apparatus internationally would weaken U.S. foreign interests *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union.

Finding a definition for LIC remains difficult. Ivan Molloy for instance - political scientist and eccentric personality - argued that the definition varies significantly per source.⁸⁷ Molloy noted that for contemporary U.S. government bodies such as the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), early definitions usually were too narrow and unable to take into account the high variety of activities that would be associated

⁸⁴ Benoît Tine, interview by author, Ziguinchor, January 24, 2024, pg. 69 of appendix.

⁸⁵ Ivan Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution : The Emergence Low Intensity Conflict* (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 16-18.

⁸⁶ Michael T. Klare, “The Development of Low-Intensity-Conflict Doctrine,” in *Intervention into the 1990s*, ed. Peter J. Schraeder (Boulder, USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992): 42-43.

⁸⁷ Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution*, 16-18.

with the strategy.⁸⁸ However, it becomes clear that the term emerged from a strategic doctrine within the U.S. government, something supported by Klare (1992), Shultz (1989), implicitly Ware *et. al* (1988). According to Reagan's administration:

“Low intensity conflict embraced the main principles of waging revolutionary and counter-revolutionary warfare in a low intensity environment. These principles included: the provision of security assistance to allied governments for the development of their economies and armed forces as a ‘bargain-priced’ means of ensuring the protection of US security interests; to conduct covert action to deal with ‘developing threats to our [US] security before the employment of US military power or other actions entailing higher costs and risks are required’; efforts to ‘ameliorate the underlying causes of conflict in the Third World by promoting economic development and the growth of democratic political institutions’; support for selected resistance movements ‘opposing oppressive regimes working against US interests’; use of ‘instruments of US power’ to help friendly nations under internal or external threat; and ‘steps to discourage Soviet and other state-sponsored adventurism, and increase costs to those who use proxies or terrorist and subversive forces to exploit instability.’”⁸⁹

This government definition is hefty. Ignoring the blatant hypocrisy of “discouraging state-sponsored adventurism” while establishing a framework for adventurism or the hypocrisy of condemning the use of terrorists to exploit instability (Taliban, Mujahadeen, Somalia), this definition is the founding charter of the U.S. Imperial Machine that dominated global affairs between 1991-2020. While this definition is near useless in the case of the powerless Casamance and diplomatic Senegal, it is indicative to the LIC label that this term is before all else a tool of promoting foreign interests. A more useful, less U.S. imperial justification definition is Michael T. Klare's, American professor in Conflict Studies:

“...the low end of the ‘spectrum of violence,’ embracing terrorism, guerilla warfare, counterinsurgency, ethnic and border disputes, show-of-force operations, and what the Pentagon deceptively calls ‘peacetime contingency operations.’”⁹⁰

Klare builds on Molloy's arguments of political centrality, arguing that under the Reagan administration LICs “took on broader significance, representing a new policy of military intervention in Third World Areas.”⁹¹ Indeed, as someone born in the 21st Century, there is no drought of examples of U.S. military policy as a tool for their foreign affairs. This definition is rather applicable to the Casamance, as over the course of the conflict there have been: ethnic implications; cross-border disputes

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 17.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 18-19.

⁹⁰ Michael T. Klare, “The Development of Low-Intensity-Conflict Doctrine,” in *Intervention into the 1990s*, ed. Peter J. Schraeder (Boulder, USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992): 46.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 46.

between Gambia, Senegal, and the MFDC; and frequent guerilla warfare. While there has been more evolution of the term as a stand-alone term, the origin of it in U.S. Cold War foreign policy doctrine is interesting with regards to the term being a symbolic weapon by governments. Whereas the U.S. sought to justify its own imperial “adventurisms,” perhaps so too is Senegal seeking to justify the Casamance’s existence as a subordinate, unworthy of investment, and dangerous region. In either case, as Shultz would argue in their analysis of this U.S. doctrine, there is laboured legalisation of the justification for what are ultimately classical state profiteering abroad.⁹²

Conversely, the 21st Century has seen certain authors argue the term is completely redundant. Grant T. Hammond - professor of International Relations - argues that it is inappropriate in its context:

“The consequences of calling war by some other name, of thinking about war as if it were something else ... are critical. [...] LIC is a modern-day equivalent to the term ‘Holy Roman Empire,’ described by historians as neither Holy, Roman nor an empire. LIC suffers the same fate - pretending to be something it is not. It is not low, to be measured by intensity or conflict. It is a violent, armed threat to the *status quo*.”⁹³

LIC and its definitions lack a substance, largely because that which they are seeking to define is incapable of fitting within the definition itself. Wars cannot be ‘Low-Intensity’ as they will still drastically alter the perceptions and experiences of its denizens. Moreover, the present international stage is highly active in conflict zones and thus causes a global shockwave of reactions from governments, businesses, tourists, and ill-intentioned or non-state regional actors. In any case, the term LIC fails to adequately address the conditions it claims to specialise in. LIC zones such as the Casamance are - as professor Tine said - harmful for development and higher-level economic activity - critical to exit an LIC. Moreover, they are inherently political. One should recognise who has the authority to define an LIC, particularly when gauging national interests. Senegal, recognisant of the Casamance as a resource and land bank, has utilised the LIC label precisely to diminish the independence fervour. All the while, Casamance has been blighted by economic stagnation, collapse in income and economic agency, and a resultant migration-remittance economy. As Professor Tine highlights:

“There are only adults and the elderly left, which truly shows that the quality of life problem is even more important. And you only have to see the number of Western Unions (and others) at each street corner, these money remittance points, we see that a good part of the population is gone. In my opinion, the youth has passed onto something else (eating, drinking, building a house, sending the parents to Mecca). It is survival now rather than a struggle that has been here for 40 years and we still haven’t seen the end of the tunnel.”⁹⁴

⁹² Richard H. Shultz, “Low-intensity conflict, Future challenges and lessons from the Reagan years,” *Survival* 31, no. 4 (1989): 367-369.

⁹³ Grant T. Hammond, “Low-Intensity Conflict: War by Another Name*,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 1, no. 3 (1990): 226.

⁹⁴ Benoît Tine, interview by author, Ziguinchor, January 24, 2024, pg. 65-66 of appendix.

3.2 – Contemporary Conditions in the Casamance:

As outlined above, LICs have a heavily politicised origin and are often weaponised by those with the power to describe against those who are described. In other words, there is a struggle over narrative between those defined by narrative and those (often the state and state media) able to change it. In the context of the Reagan administration, the powerful was the U.S. and the prescribed were emerging states into the world order. In the context of this research, Senegal with its control over state media and discourse has been the powerful, whereas the Casamance and its emergent identity is the powerless. Much of the insights gathered on this topic were formed through an in-depth conversation with Professor Benoît Tine who - over a decade of living in Ziguinchor - has watched the conflicts quasi-aftermath evolve as clashes have completely subsided. Additionally, Professor Tine has lived in Ziguinchor since Macky Sall entered office, thus he has watched conditions shift under this long administration. All his perspectives were then cross-checked with the existing literature.

3.2.1 – Representation:

The war of representation has been a defining feature of the Casamance's status in the larger framework of Senegalese national unity. Indeed, many Senegalese parents express fear and concern when letting their children come to study at the university Assane Seck in Ziguinchor. Professor Tine, as chief of sociology department, receives many such concerns due to the imaginations of the region held by the wider Senegalese public:⁹⁵

“But I finally realised that until now there still were these representations in the public opinions of the Senegalese, that the conflict was still here even if the clashes had calmed.”⁹⁶

“In the imagination of the Senegalese, you needed to put a cross over the Casamance. Moreover, we have seen that there were many people leaving the Casamance for Thiès.”⁹⁷

However, these imaginations are not indicative of the current security situation. The professor notes the role of governments in perpetuating these representations. For instance, the French government maintained the Casamance as an active red zone despite rare clashes. There is a sentiment of unjust applications of the LIC label. For instance, an LIC label involves a continued mediation effort. Unfortunately - as stated in Chapter 2 - mediation is not always well intentioned. The economic situation in the Casamance causes an unintended added consequence that public trust in mediators has collapsed. As their income and privilege are dependent on the necessity of their services, local

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, pg. 65-66 of appendix.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, pg. 66 of appendix.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, pg. 65 of appendix.

populations feel these negotiators - like the bandits - profit off the instability. However, there is some validity to this prescription of the danger zone:

“We can sense that there are still visible aftermaths - physical - of this conflict here. But also psychological [aftermaths] with people that are traumatised, terribly traumatised by all these killings, all these deaths that the conflict has caused...”⁹⁸

The impacts have lingered a decade past the last true bouts of clashes. The military still makes shows of force to the locals through armed patrols. The impacts on families have been the most traumatic, with the conflict having pitted members against members. In a few cases, families have one son join the military, while another joins the bandits in the *maquis*.⁹⁹

These same representation games are true regarding how the media treats the bandits. Both MFDC factions and independent individuals commit roadside robberies along the few major routes in the Casamance. The media in its coverage predominantly describes these as “elements supposedly belonging to the MFDC.”¹⁰⁰ By and large, the MFDC has few income options: roadside robberies, protection rackets, and cannabis cultivation. This is a fairly open secret; state forces no longer adventure in certain zones near the Gambian border where the MFDC grows its cannabis.¹⁰¹ Similarly, some disgruntled youths have no income opportunities, leading to a massive spike in informal employment and/or banditry - whether independently or through the MFDC. Indeed, the informal sector dominates Senegal’s economy, not simply the Casamance. Over 80% of all employment is informal.¹⁰²

As important as representations are regarding marginalisation, radicalisation, and limiting integration, there are other critical elements of the contemporary Casamance conflict that have propelled Sonko’s popularity. Most notably, the Casamance as it pertains to Sonko and what allowed him to rise centralises: the traumatic, social rupture that has caused pain; rampant deforestation linked to bad-faith actors; political motivations causing lacking development projects; and most importantly the surge in priority of survival over independence.

3.2.2 – Deforestation:

Deforestation has become rampant near the border zones. This causes a divide between the southern communities where forests are still holy, and in northern communities where forest ecosystems have nearly entirely disappeared.¹⁰³ Professor Tine argues that these northern communities (Bignona) have placed economic interests over cultural interests: “the forest serves man to exploit until it disappears.”¹⁰⁴ More importantly is how this timber serves the local economy. As stated, it serves as one of the few, consistent forms of income - championed by Bignona communities, MFDC forest factions,

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, pg. 65 of appendix.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, pg. 65 of appendix.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, pg. 68 of appendix.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, pg. 68 of appendix.

¹⁰² Diplomat, interview by author, Dakar, February 9, 2024, pg. 85 of appendix.

¹⁰³ Benoît Tine, interview by author, Ziguinchor, January 24, 2024, pg. 69 of appendix

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, pg. 69-70 of appendix.

and communities near Gambia. In practice, nearly all the timber crosses the border to Gambia. This is especially bizarre as Gambia features 3% forest coverage,¹⁰⁵ despite hundreds of lumber mills at the border:

“Wood is cut in Bignona and after it crosses the border into Gambia. Observers have demonstrated that along the border with Gambia we see hundreds and hundreds of mills just on the other side of the border, with naturally the complicity of the factions, the State, and these [international] companies.”¹⁰⁶

Not only is there exploitation and an exodus of the Casamance’s local resources, but there is system externalising of the profits. As Professor Tine highlights, the timber allows locals to survive by trading their historic cultural norms and local environment for income.¹⁰⁷ This is despite the lion’s share of profits not returning to the Casamance. The state is complicit, as to cross the border the state must get a share. This is not something lost on local communities. Moreover, most bizarre of all is the non-utilisation of the Casamance’s other resources. There is timber production, however, there is no oil extraction, nor natural gas industry. Instead, cannabis and wood cover the informal economies, with peanuts/cashews forming the primary *modus operandi*.¹⁰⁸

3.2.3 – Infrastructure Bottleneck:

One of the most impactful themes in galvanising the population has been development bottlenecks. Inherently, economic hardships cause radicalisation of its experiencers as they seek a political solution to their economic condition. However, in the case of the Casamance where conditions can be traced to political disagreements, the continuance of politically-motivated constrictions has only pushed the Casamançais away from Sall’s government. In particular, since 2019 the government has not held back:

“...now that the PASTEF is in the town-hall, all the state projects are halted. Projects like Promoville were meant to create an urban framework with new routes. All that has come to a stop [...]. Same with the university: it’s been ten years that we have chased after the restitution of the construction sites, it’s taking a lot of time to finish. All this shows that there is a neglect of this region.”¹⁰⁹

The analysis is sound from Sall’s government. Successful projects will be attributed to the PASTEF; failures will be blamed on Sall. However, the context of decades-long neglect paired with Sonko’s prime-time charisma has only galvanised locals further. However, political machinations are not

¹⁰⁵ Global Forest Watch, “Gambia,” country dashboards, last modified 2023.

¹⁰⁶ Benoît Tine, interview by author, Ziguinchor, January 24, 2024, pg. 69 of appendix.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, pg. 70 of appendix.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, pg. 68 of appendix

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, pg. 65 of appendix.

a new phenomenon; observers can see that the state has limited development projects during the entire administration, not just when Sonko arrived. Notably, the limited transport infrastructure developments. The artery of economic activity is the Ziguinchor port. The port serves as a transport hub for ferries to Dakar as well as an export hub for peanut production. As such, given the limited economic activity, many informal activities have popped up around the port. The shutdown of the port - citing fuel prices - has thus greatly harmed Ziguinchor communities:

“...there are direct jobs that the port creates as well as indirect jobs around the port. Direct like the ferries and ships, and indirect like all the small and large commerces that set themselves up around. For example: the ship arrives and the taximen install themselves around for their *gagne-pain*; the lady creates her small boutique next to them for those who arrive and in search of a sandwich for the journey... There are all these commerces and services that depend and live on the arrival of these boats, but unfortunately today this simply is no longer the case. And now, the prices of other transports like the shuttle-bus have risen. The 7-seater taxis were at 9000 CFA [13.72€] and now are at 12000 CFA [18.29€] without any competition.”¹¹⁰

Speaking personally, I noticed that if I wished to go to Dakar from Ziguinchor, I first needed to organise transport to the coastal airport by the shuttle-buses that leave three hours before the flight departs. Similarly for my research colleagues, movement was entirely dependent on no roadblocks. All this is to show transportation in the Casamance is a luxury that the government is complicit in constricting. As Tine puts it:

“Absolutely nothing is done for this region’s development, because development is a sign of peace. Because we are in a certain enclavement, where we are on the edges, in isolation, people have this sentiment of revolte. We are going to revolt since we are not considered as *Sénégalais a-part-entière* but *Sénégalais entièrement à part*. And so, there is this revolte that is born [...] behind Sonko, behind the PASTEF...”¹¹¹

The conditions of the Casamance and the political choices that led to this contemporary position have been fundamental for Sonko. He had the political savvy to take advantage of these sentiments, and with it he skyrocketed into the national political discourse. The youth are simply “...done with a state that does nothing for them.”¹¹²

3.2.4 – *Struggle for Survival:*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, pg. 67 of appendix.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, pg. 65 of appendix.

¹¹² *Ibid*, pg. 68 of appendix.

Beyond the role of neglect, there are the consequences as they impact individuals. Frankly stated, youth in the Casamance have little to no opportunities to climb the socioeconomic ladder. They are forced to place their energy into securing necessary goods in an insecure environment. Such a struggle has ended the last mainstream hopes of independence however, it has simultaneously amplified Sonko for the same reason. While they may no longer wish to secede, the youth of Casamance sense they can - for the first time in Diola history - have an equal say in state governance.

“Whatever the case, I believe that the youth of today have moved onto something else. The idea of independence - in my opinion - is still here, but only in the mentality of the people who lived through it (mostly the elderly). But for the youth, they tell themselves that no matter what, we won’t obtain [independence] and today the problem is being able to eat, able to survive... ‘I have my diploma but I can’t find a job.’”¹¹³

A direct consequence of this hardship is migration, which only worsens the hardship through the removal of the youths.

“And that is why we see the phenomenon of regular migration, not far from here with a major point of departure. Recently, we conducted a study at Kolda on migration seeing that it is one of the central nodes for migration to Senegal. And indeed, in each village there is practically a good part of the youth that has gone.”¹¹⁴

This was something prevalent in the interview with professor Tine. The youth all leaving is detrimental to the Casamance and its identity. As he states, these youth are forced to leave, as if hope is lost. This phenomenon is far more prevalent in the rural communities. While they are far less impacted by fears of robberies or insecurities, there are very real fears and impacts caused by limited economic agency. It has become a huge political point not just for the local communities, but also for Sonko and his campaign. Thus, while the conflict has undergone a period of relative stability, the *longue-durée* of the conflict has caused **and continues** to cause lingering consequences onto Casamance communities. The tenacity of these consequences have a bleed-over effect impacting local communities’ perspective on politics.

“There is a veritable change in the mentality that is in the process of establishing itself. We can see a real *prise de conscience* [awareness] from the youth’s part.”¹¹⁵

¹¹³ *Ibid*, pg. 65 of appendix.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, pg. 66 of appendix.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, pg. 71 of appendix.

Chapter 4 – Ousmane Sonko & Macky Sall:

The 2020s in Senegal have been marked by consistent social tensions and public unrest. In 2021, 2023, and 2024, there were routine clashes between pro-change protestors and Sall's gendarmes. These have been led by the youth and students such as with Dakar's Université Cheikh Anta Diop or Ziguinchor's Université Assane Seck. On one hand, this unrest was against Sall's government and lack of change. On the other hand, these protests erupted against Sall's authoritarian approach to Sonko's political candidacy. The government had thus shut down the Université Cheikh Anta Diop on June 3rd 2023 in an attempt to curb the unrest.¹¹⁶ The university would remain closed until Diomaye Faye's election in April 2024. Senegal has a history of youth movements to push a public discourse against the socioeconomic conditions. In 2011, the *Y'en a Marre* movement consisted of Senegalese journalists, rappers, and youth activists as a social movement against the ineffective government. It emerged to promote a new *alternance* after the many years of Abdoulaye Wade by ushering in a new party: Macky Sall's *Yaakaar*. As will be highlighted in this chapter, this new *alternance* would have limited impacts for youth socioeconomic conditions.

4.1 – Ousmane Sonko, the Political Force:

Since the legislative elections of 2019 where Ousmane Sonko and his allies formed the *Yewwi Askan Wi* (Wolof: "Free the People") coalition, Sonko and his PASTEF party have become a staple of Senegalese politics. In 2022, Sonko was elected mayor of Ziguinchor. It was the first marker of the change brewing amongst the electorate. It marked the successful alignment of Sonko's political ambitions with the Casamance's political grievances, and it is easy to understand why.

First and foremost, the PASTEF is an anti-corruption party. Sonko founded the party in 2014 alongside a multitude of young civil servants desiring political change. It is important to note that the focus is both on 'young' (PASTEF's success is based on the youth movement it has captured) and 'civil' (non-political elites; those who work for the state). With this cohort, the ambition has always been ending corruption amongst the political elite, renewing the layman's economy and deprioritising neo-colonialism, and re-kindling independence era political beliefs such as pan-Africanism. To the Senegalese youth, it is a captivating promise. An opportunity for an economy that works for them, an opportunity for stark political change, and an opportunity to end the existing relationship with France. With the current regional phenomenon of West African states ending the hegemonic relationships established between the newly independent states and the respective colonial powers at the end of the colonial period, there is once again a feeling of opportunity spreading amongst youth in West Africa. Whether the declaration of departure from ECOWAS by Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger will lead to a new era of Africa cooperation, only time can tell. But in the case of Senegal, the Casamance, and Sonko, Sonko is a representation of this shifting paradigm.

¹¹⁶ Moussa Ngom, "Dakar university students in limbo after chaos from conviction of political opponent Sonko," *Le Monde*, published June 3, 2023.

Secondly, Sonko is a hero of the southerners.¹¹⁷ For the first time in Senegalese history, Sonko presents a veritable challenge to the northern hegemony in politics. Through each of the nation's first four presidents, all have been from the urban core apart from Sall and his part-Fulani heritage. Even current president Diomaye Faye and Ousmane Sonko have Thièsois heritage. This characteristic of the presidency is something that has long kindled sentiments of marginalisation amongst the Casamançais.¹¹⁸ Contrastingly, the PASTEF has focused heavily on centralising the plight of the Casamance in their political campaign, and expanding Senegalese nationalism to include Casamançais Diola of the region. In many of his national speeches, Sonko speaks directly to the Casamance.¹¹⁹ This - in addition to his dual heritage - has heavily contributed to his popularity, success and legitimacy.

Lastly, Sonko is a tax inspector. He is not a career politician. In fact, it was his job that propelled him to discover corruption in the petrol industry. It ultimately led to the writing and publishing of his book and manifesto respectively: *Pétrole et Gaz au Sénégal* (2018) and *Solutions* (2018).

Given Sall and the open secret of his corruption^{120 121 122} and the economic situation of the urban masses, it is easy to understand how Sonko was able to rise rapidly. Indeed, when speaking to PASTEF members, they do not consider themselves under one ideology. Rather, they see their party as a coalition. They are *Gauchistes* (leftists), without the unnecessary baggage of Marxism.¹²³ Simultaneously, they are pan-Africans, Muslims, anti-corruptionist, and anti-colonialists.¹²⁴ Pan-Africanism is perhaps the most important aspect of the PASTEF. A major jump in PASTEF legitimacy as a Pan-African party was its assimilation of the *Rassemblement National Démocratique* (RND) - the party founded by Anta Diop (namesake of Dakar's university). Anta Diop was a prominent pan-African scholar and academic. The mantle of the party was taken by former president of the party Diallo Diop. Unfortunately, age and lack of gravitas limited the RND's agency, ultimately leading to its assimilation into the PASTEF. This led to a strong pan-African wing in the PASTEF, defining three prongs: anti-corruption, anti-establishmentarianism, and Pan-Africanism. There are other parts in such an expansive coalition such as a Islamist voices seeking to influence Sonko. However, these are heavily criticised within the party itself as well as from opponents. Despite this, the party maintains a democratic nature in the ideology it has decided to champion. As far as the average Senegalese is concerned, the PASTEF is the only party that is currently set up to challenge the elites' state as it exists.

4.1.2 – State Responses:

Sonko poses a very clear threat to the establishment as the cautionary stance of the government indicates. At every point of the political journey, the Sall's administration tried establishing roadblocks. There were 3 cases of inhibition against Sonko: politically-backed prosecutions throughout the 2020s against him and Faye, the dissolution of the PASTEF in 2023, and keeping Sonko off of the official

¹¹⁷ Samuel Sakhewar Fama Diop, interview by author, Dakar, February 17, 2024, pg. 82 of appendix.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, pg. 82 of appendix.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, pg. 82 of appendix.

¹²⁰ Dr. Mamadou Bodian, interview by author, Dakar, February 8, 2024, pg. 75 of appendix.

¹²¹ Board Member *Eurocham* Senegal, interview by author, Dakar, February 8, 2024.

¹²² Diplomat, interview by author, Dakar, February 9, 2024, pg. 85 of appendix.

¹²³ Samuel Sakhewar Fama Diop, interview by author, Dakar, February 17, 2024, pg. 79-80 of appendix.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, pg. 79-80 of appendix.

candidate list for the presidency. Each of these in turn had a plethora of political motivations that were all leading towards hindering Sonko's presidential campaign.

First and foremost of the state's roadblocking is Sonko's multiple squabbles with the legal system. Sonko's first arrest came in 2021 as he was accused by a female employee of a massage salon of repeatedly threatening her with rape and death.¹²⁵ It should be noted that such an accusation is not to be taken lightly. Conversations with the European diplomat¹²⁶ and the board member of *Eurocham*¹²⁷ indicated Sonko promotes very conservative views on women. Furthermore, Sonko has been very public on his views on gender roles, highlighted most plainly in each of his public appearances with his wives: one dressed in modest, traditional Islamic dress; the other more modern, with a lot of cosmetics. It is indicative of the brand Sonko wants to sell: modern yet traditional; traditional yet progressive. Ultimately, Sonko would be acquitted of the rape charge after two years of investigation however, would be immediately charged with a two year sentence for "corrupting youth."¹²⁸ Sonko chose not to attend his trial, denouncing it as politically motivated and malpractice.¹²⁹ This rejection of the legal process would be a galvanising point for many PASTEF's supporters.

In between the 2021 rape charge and the June 2023 sentencing for youth corruption, Sonko would receive three more setbacks. In February 2021, the deputies of the *Assemblée Nationale* (most loyal to Sall's coalition) voted to strip Sonko of his legal immunity.¹³⁰ On May 8th 2023, Sonko received another six-month suspended prison sentence for defamation.¹³¹ Lastly and most importantly, Sonko was arrested once again for 'disturbing public order.'¹³² At each of these points, Diomaye Faye would be accompanying Sonko as Faye received his own share of defamation charges against a ministerial magistrate, as well as the eventual charges of inciting insurrection and undermining security.¹³³

Secondly - in line with the weaponisation of the legal system - was the dissolution of Sonko's party. On July 31st, 2023, the minister of the interior dissolved the PASTEF, citing "frequent calls to insurrectional movements."¹³⁴ The minister denounced these threats as highlighting a "permanent and serious failure in the PASTEF's duties as a political party."¹³⁵ The PASTEF denounced the decision as following no democratic logic.¹³⁶ Only once has a political party been dissolved (1960): the *parti africain*

¹²⁵ Jeune Afrique, "Sénégal : ce contient la plainte pour « viols et menaces de mort » contre Ousmane Sonko," *Jeune Afrique*, published February 5, 2021.

¹²⁶ Diplomat, interview by author, Dakar, February 9, 2024.

¹²⁷ Board member *Eurocham* Senegal, interview by author, Dakar, February 8, 2024.

¹²⁸ Papa Atou Diaw and Cecilia Macaulay, "Ousmane Sonko trial: Senegal opposition leader sentenced for 'corrupting youth'," *BBC*, published June 1, 2023.

¹²⁹ The Economist, "Tension in Senegal is set to persist," *The Economist*, published June 8, 2023.

¹³⁰ Africanews, "Senegal strips immunity from opposition MP Sonko accused of rape," *Africanews*, published February 26, 2021.

¹³¹ RFI, "Sénégal: le gouvernement dissout le parti de l'opposant Ousmane Sonko, 2 morts dans des manifestations," *RFI*, published July 31, 2023.

¹³² Katarina Hoije, "Senegal Opposition Leader Charged With Fueling Deadly Protests," *Bloomberg*, published July 28, 2023.

¹³³ Coumba Kane and Théa Ollivier, "Senegal's presidential election: Bassirou Diomaye Faye, Ousmane Sonko's Plan B," *Le Monde*, published March 23, 2024.

¹³⁴ RFI, "Sénégal: le gouvernement dissout le parti de l'opposant Ousmane Sonko, 2 morts dans des manifestations," *RFI*, published July 31, 2023.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

de l'indépendance.¹³⁷ According to Aminata Touré - former prime minister for Sall and current opponent - even under the presidencies of Léopold Senghor and Abdou Diouf when Abdoulaye Wade was a ferocious opponent, his party was never under threat.¹³⁸ As such, the dissolution of the PASTEF, less than one year before a vital election that the PASTEF is poised to take raised alarm bells.

And thirdly, there has been notable discourse on Sonko's candidacy. On January 20th, 2024, the *Conseil Constitutionnel* - the most powerful electoral authority - released its official 20 candidate list for the election.¹³⁹ In it, notable political personalities such as Sonko and Karim Wade were missing. The *Conseil* was affirming its earlier decrees on January 5th, 2024 and November 17th, 2023 that Sonko would not be eligible for a candidacy. The January 5th decree cited an incomplete file;¹⁴⁰ the November 17th decree overturned an earlier decision by a Ziguinchor court seeking to reinstate Sonko to the polls, however the supreme court overruled the decision;¹⁴¹ and finally the January 20th decision only reaffirmed the standing rejection of Sonko. It is interesting to note Senegal's classical democratic culture, featuring routine veto against veto amongst the nation's courts. At many points Sonko tried to appeal to these decisions, but the Court of Justice stated that none of Sonko's rights had been violated,¹⁴² and was simply enforcing the six-month suspended defamation sentence against him.¹⁴³ Naturally, there were peaceful protests by Sonko's supporters against this however, the courts maintained a legalistic motivation and not a political one. Many of these courts feature judges appointed by the president, allowing for a great deal of 'political shenanigans' from any sitting executive.

While Sonko was kept off, Diomaye Faye was given the green light. Initially, Amadou Ba - Sall's prime minister and chosen successor - pushed heavily to remove Faye from the list, citing: his irregular campaign, lack of political party (following the dissolution), and imprisonment.¹⁴⁴ The *Conseil's* official document clearly cites Amadou Ba's role in keeping Faye off the list.¹⁴⁵ Ultimately, as his documents were all in order the court chose not to investigate further. This is telling of three things. The first: there is transparent and routine weaponisation of political tools by the administration against the perceived threat of Sonko. The second: despite this, there is an important legalism to Senegalese culture; even though there are attempts to curb the PASTEF, the *Conseil* asserts its duties to democracy and allows Faye's candidacy. And the third: the powers that be are highly aware of the PASTEF's momentum; and recognise that while Sonko can be constrained legally, non-legal constrictions of Faye would likely ignite violent unrest.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Conseil Constitutionnel, "Liste des Candidats à l'Élection Présidentielle du 25 Février 2024," *décision N°2/E/2024*, decided January 20, 2024.

¹⁴⁰ Le Monde and AFP, "Senegal court rules that Senegalese opposition leader Sonko cannot run in presidential election," *Le Monde*, published January 5, 2024.

¹⁴¹ Babacar Dione, "Ruling by Senegal's highest court blocks jailed opposition leader Sonko from running for president," *AP News*, published November 17, 2023.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Le Monde and AFP, "Senegal court rules that Senegalese opposition leader Sonko cannot run in presidential election," *Le Monde*, published January 5, 2024.

¹⁴⁴ Conseil Constitutionnel, "Liste des Candidats à l'Élection Présidentielle du 25 Février 2024," *décision N°2/E/2024*, decided January 20, 2024.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

This all begs the question: What is the threat that Sonko is posing? Like any anti-establishment populist, Sonko is promising change. He is promising a draining of the swamp, so to speak. Given his tax-inspector background and publicly speaking against the corruption in the government, Sonko is a real threat to the privileges of the political elite. To many in the public - when we consider the legal circus and the dissolution of the party - the legitimacy of the justice concern came under heavy scrutiny by Sonko's supporters. The crimes themselves became less and less of a concern compared to the course the government took in this prosecution. According to Samuel Skahewar Fama Diop ('Sammy') - former leader of PASTEF political action cell of 25 members in Dakar - believes there to be political motivations behind many of the investigations against Sonko:

"The legal process around [Sonko] was rushed, the usual investigative processes were ignored, and the final decision from the judges' condemned Sonko even if evidence indicated the opposite."¹⁴⁶

Similarly, Mamadou Bodian - researcher at the WARC - when speaking on Macky Sall and his role as an electoral authoritarian, noted the slow establishment of a two tiered judicial system. For instance, Diomaye Faye - the emergent replacement and Number 2 to Sonko - was imprisoned over defamation charges against a magistrate.¹⁴⁷ Conversely, Karim Wade - aspiring and failed candidate to the 2024 elections - also defamed the *Conseil* for their removal of him from the lists. Karim Wade is not particularly important to Sall's political machinations, but what is are the glaring differences in treatment for those allied to Sonko, and those that could play a role in spreading out opposition votes.

It is evident from these points that there is a concerted effort to keep Sonko away. Sonko is the champion of the Casamance and the youth. To many of his die-hard supporters in Dakar and especially in Ziguinchor, they see the treatment he has received as he championed their cause. There is a real sentiment that what happened to Sonko is representative of what's been happening to the Casamance in this 'low-intensity' period. Consequently, while the weaponisation of the legal system was supposed to keep Sonko away, it only radicalised his supporters and pushed them further towards anti-establishmentarianism.

4.2 – Macky Sall, Creator of his Own Downfall:

As aforementioned, Sall's government has been active in the 2020s in its attempt to restrain Ousmane Sonko. Whether it be cyclical criminal processes or the unique dissolution political party, Sall has used the tools he has available. But that is not the end of the line, nor the beginning; it is simply the progression down a path that Sall has seemed content to walk: electoral authoritarianism.

Electoral authoritarianism has been spreading slowly across the globe. After the intense liberalisation and democratisation period that emerged during and after the Cold War, one can argue that given this period's forced implementation of liberalism by the former colonial powers, it functioned as a *de facto* pendulum swing to one extreme. In Europe, where one can attribute the emergence of

¹⁴⁶ Samuel Sakhewar Fama Diop, interview by author, Dakar, February 17, 2024, pg. 80 of appendix.

¹⁴⁷ Dr. Mamadou Bodian, interview by author, Dakar, February 8, 2024, pg. 75 of appendix.

global democracy with the Treaty of Westphalia, this political system emerged naturally. It required centuries of discourse, political change, persecution, and war. In France for instance, the epitome of feudal monarchies was removed and replaced with a republic, then an emperor, then a king, and back to a republic. The people's discourse of how their society is organised is an important, organic, and fundamental process that requires time. Similarly, the boundaries and groupings of different peoples is something that must occur organically for a true social cohesive bond to emerge. When looking at Alsace, the grouping of its people as either German or French is a violent discourse that required multiple (great) wars to decide. In the context of colonisation and Cold War era liberalism, such an organic evolution was robbed. There was an imposition of outside values by outside powers that had to be acclimated to in order to keep up with the rapidly changing world. Agency remains available, even under these conditions. As such, if the pendulum of political organisation swings to one extreme, then when agency is accounted for it can - under its own will - swing a political system back to another extreme. In the world we see today, liberalism and democracy were spread yet the benefits of such have not. In the case of Africa, states were sold the wealth of these values only to discover the liberal order has a core that profits and a periphery that produces, manufactures, and extracts. Moreover, authoritarian governments often trade civil liberties and political rights in exchange for forced unity, forced cohesion, and forced progress. As such, while these freedoms are cherished, authoritarianism can (though not guaranteed) bring some form of progress, such as protectionism for infant industries that would be gutted in the global trade chain. These outcomes are never guaranteed, however they can offer agency that had been lost due to each nation's niche in the global value chain. It is not difficult to imagine that in these conditions the disenfranchised youths of the most exploited continent have been willing to watch the pendulum slowly move back in this era of democratic backsliding. Not towards full authoritarianism, but perhaps something in between: electoral authoritarianism. Understanding Sall's role in this over the past 12 years is critical to understanding how the PASTEF could be so successful as an anti-establishment movement.

Speaking with Dr. Mamadou Bodian - long time constitutionalist and political thinker - as well as established members of the politico-business class, it becomes clear to internal observers that Sall has been slowly onsetting electoral authoritarianism.¹⁴⁸ Internal here is an important distinction. Taking the constitutional crisis, Sall's decree was a surprise to many external observers. To internal observers like Dr. Bodian it was clear that Sall had been preparing something drastic. The only reason Sall settled on not campaigning again was the threat it would destroy the nation. As seen by his February Decree, Sall would use every tool available - legitimate and illegitimate - to curb Sonko's arrival to the presidency. The emergence of the two-tiered justice system for Sall and his allies versus Sonko and his allies is the pinnacle of this march towards authority. Even simply looking at the arrests and dissolution, there are all attempts to limit democracy and *alternance* in favour of protecting self-interests, even if it goes against Senegal's powerful democratic values.

Beyond these, there are other markers of Sall's authoritarianism and his vision of what the state is for. One such was his approach to the term-limit discourse. Sall had promised to end the discourse started by Abdoulaye Wade and bring terms back to 5 years. Sall beat Wade (who argued he had the right to campaign despite his two terms served) and changed the terms to 5 years after serving his own 7 year

¹⁴⁸ Dr. Mamadou Bodian, interview by author, Dakar, February 8, 2024, pg. 75 of appendix.

term.¹⁴⁹ Following this, Sall himself argued that - like Wade - his first 7 year term could not fall under the 2016 constitutional amendment.¹⁵⁰ Consequently, Sall left the door completely again to ignore the two term limit set out in the constitution by exploiting the same loophole that he criticised Wade for. This led to civilian protests and subsequent violent police response culminating in deaths and a disgruntled Sall accepting the public's anger.

Similarly, Sonko's book could only exist thanks to the questionable contracts signed in the oil and gas industry, particularly in terms of profits. Despite Petrosen being a national petrol industry (99% publicly owned), its profits remain in the hands of the elite. Moreover, every single contributing expert to this paper spoke about the corruption among Sall's in-Laws. His wife's family, a very powerful and wealthy clan, has utilised their connections to the means of governance to fill their pockets. For instance, Sall's brother in law holds dual positions as Minister of Infrastructure and mayor of the former colonial capital Saint-Louis.¹⁵¹ In the years since these appointments, there have been a series of corruption scandals.¹⁵² It became an open secret of their activities amongst the public, negatively reflecting on Sall and his reputation.

Another key characteristic of electoral authoritarianism is state violence through security officers. In Senegal over the 2020s, Sall has routinely used the *gendarmes* to crush protests violently. A U.S. state report notes the commonplace unlawful killings, cruel/degrading treatment at the hands of security officials, and arbitrary arrests.¹⁵³ Notably, the report states "there were no significant changes in the human rights situation in Senegal during the year" despite heavy protesting over the summer months and end of year. It is indicative of Sall's governance and the slow degradation of civil liberties.

Sall was a central actor in Senegal's democratic backslide, although with hindsight it remained a minimal backslide. The trends that have been set however, are cemented. What started with Wade continued to Sall, and even post-Sall the opportunity is still available for further political shenanigans. At the end of the day, it is all about power and not letting go despite the importance of *alternance*. As Professor Tine put it: "It is pure Machiavellism."¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Diplomat, interview by author, Dakar, February 9, 2024, pg. 85 of appendix.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour, "Senegal 2023 Human Rights Report," *United States Department of State*, published in 2023, 1.

¹⁵⁴ Benoît Tine, interview by author, Ziguinchor, January 24, 2024, pg. 73 of appendix.

Chapter 5 – The Constitutional Crisis:

5.1 – Le Conseil Constitutionnel & Senegalese Constitutional History:

Before moving on to the crisis itself, it is helpful to contextualise the central player in the coup: the *Conseil Constitutionnel* (Constitutional Council). The *Conseil* is the ultimate authority on all electoral matters, surpassing even the Supreme Court. It was central to the constitutional debate on the retro-applicability of term limits following amendments to term length under Abdoulaye Wade and Macky Sall. Prior to the *Conseil*, electoral matters were entirely controlled and organised by the state, specifically the Ministry of Interior. Contestations were managed by the Supreme Court. However, in 1992 there was a political crisis that forced president Abdou Diouf to enter a discourse with elements from the political apparatus on electoral rules. The result was the establishment of the *Code Électoral Consensuel* (Consensual Electoral Code) of 1992 and the subsequent creation of the *Conseil* on May 30th, 1992. A key figure in driving this process was Kéba Mbaye, who ultimately served as the court's first president. Immediately, the *Conseil* experienced a violent “*crise de naissance*”¹⁵⁵ as it sought to establish its legitimacy. Having created the *Code Electoral* and *Conseil*, Senegal tested the system during the 1993 legislative elections. In it, the entire system was called into question by some leaders from the opposition. They contested the process and denounced certain members of the *Conseil* as corrupt.¹⁵⁶ The situation deteriorated rapidly with the assassination of the council's vice-president on May 15th, Babacar Sèye.¹⁵⁷ The assassin was never caught, despite multiple tortured suspects by the gendarmerie prompting human rights concerns.¹⁵⁸ Dr. Mamadou Bodian, prominent constitutionalist, argues that many in Senegal had suspected the state of complicity as it sought to add chaos to the electoral process. The situation eventually calmed as there was a collective effort to transform the electoral process into something that promotes political *alternance*.¹⁵⁹ By 1993, there had still been no *alternance* between parties; Abdou Diouf had replaced Senghor as the chosen senghor, but it remained the *Parti Socialiste du Sénégal* (Socialist Party of Senegal). As such, politics would continue as is and true *alternance* would not occur until 2000 with the election of Abdoulaye Wade and the *Parti Democratique Senegalais* (Senegalese Democratic Party).¹⁶⁰ In any case, following the 1993 crisis, there would be efforts to make “the organs in charge of elections far more inclusive with the participation of civil society, political parties, etc.”¹⁶¹ It culminated in the complete reformation of ONEL (National Observatory of Elections) and the creation of a General Directorate of Elections (DGE) to pressure the Ministry of Interior against political

¹⁵⁵ Mamadou Bodian, interview by author, Dakar, February 8, 2024 pg. 75 of appendix.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pg. 76 of appendix.

¹⁵⁷ Amnesty International, *Senegal: The murder of Maitre Babacar Seye - a political killing?*, Amnesty International, October 19, 1993.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁵⁹ Mamadou Bodian, interview by author, Dakar, February 8, 2024, pg. 76 of appendix.

¹⁶⁰ Tarik Dahou *et al.*, “Senegal 2000-2004: political change and its contradictions,” *Politique Africaine* (Paris, France: 1981) 96 (2004): 5-6.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, pg. 76 of appendix.

machinations. In contemporary practice, the ONEL and DGE serve the technical functions of elections, while the *Conseil* serves judicial functions.¹⁶²

As the *Conseil* exists today - given the quasi-autocratic politics of Wade and Sall - some political actors have the impression that the *Conseil* has been politicised.¹⁶³ First and foremost, the judges are unilaterally appointed by the president, breeding political loyalty. The *Conseil* has been utilised to both validate and invalidate government decisions from the party in power in hopes of creating favourable conditions for electoral success.¹⁶⁴ Dr. Bodian mentions a case in 2010 when Wade sought to amend the constitution to “introduce a ticket that would allow him to create a vice-presidency while reducing the threshold to pass the first round from 50% to 25%.”¹⁶⁵ Similar situations happened prior to the 2012 election and the 2024 election for Wade and Sall respectively. In both cases, the *Conseil* failed to explicitly define whether the terms would be reset upon length-changes. For all these instances, it was heavy public unrest and violence that forced the sitting presidents to back up. Thus, heading into February with the official candidate list, public confidence in the *Conseil* was low as it pertains to the council’s fulfilment of its democratic duties.

5.2 – The Electoral Crisis of February 2024:

Senegalese politics took a sudden turn on Saturday 3rd of February 2024, when president Macky Sall released a decree unilaterally revoking his earlier November 2023 decree confirming the election date for February 25th, 2024. Sall stated:

“For a few days, our country has been facing a dispute between the *Assemblée Nationale* and the *Conseil Constitutionnel*, in open conflict against a backdrop of an alleged case of corruption of judges.”¹⁶⁶

The election would thus be postponed *sine die*¹⁶⁷ as he claims to guarantee “a free, transparent, and inclusive election.”¹⁶⁸ Sall laid the blame to the corruption of members of the *Conseil* through their removal of certain candidates from the official list - such as Karim Wade - and the approval of others - like Diomaye Faye. According to Karim Wade - son of Abdoulaye Wade - his candidacy was admissible due to having removed his additional French nationality. Under the Senegalese constitution, no individual may campaign for president if they hold two citizenships. In reality, by the time Wade had deposited his candidacy, he was still in the process of terminating his French nationality. This did not stop Karim Wade from defaming the *Conseil*, nor Sall from supporting him. Both Sall and Wade further argued that Rose Wardini - official candidate - supposedly had dual Franco-Senegalese nationality

¹⁶² *Ibid*, pg. 76 of appendix.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, pg. 76 of appendix.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, pg. 76 of appendix.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, pg. 76 of appendix.

¹⁶⁶ David Rich, “Report de la présidentielle au Sénégal : entre stupeur et condamnation, des réactions en cascade,” *France 24*, published February 4, 2024.

¹⁶⁷ Gallagher Fenwick, “Coup d’État du pouvoir au Sénégal?,” *France Inter*, published February 4, 2024.

¹⁶⁸ David Rich, “Report de la présidentielle au Sénégal : entre stupeur et condamnation, des réactions en cascade,” *France 24*, published February 4, 2024.

culminating in her arrest for “forgery, usage of forgeries, and judgement fraud.”¹⁶⁹ Karim Wade was not especially popular, benefiting greatly from the PDS’s established electorate. Shortly into the crisis, his father Abdoulaye Wade and his predecessor Abdou Diouf released an open letter calling for an immediate end of violence by protesters and for Sall to organise the “national dialogue he has announced, without delay.”¹⁷⁰ The letter was similar to ECOWAS’s statement: for the youth, it lacked severity and condemnation befitting such a case of authoritarianism. Moreover, as the son of his predecessor and potential siphoner of PASTEF votes, it was in Sall’s interests to stand with this supposed corruption and bolster Wade’s chances for candidacy. Wade would never beat Sall’s party however, he just may spread opposition votes out enough to push Amadou Ba over the edge. Similarly for Faye: despite calls from prime minister Amadou Ba to remove Faye from the list due to his criminal convictions (and thus remove a PASTEF candidate), the *Conseil Constitutionnel* argued that since all his documents were in order there was little they could nor should do.

To many observers, Sall’s decree came as a shock - not due to unexpected actions from someone of his character, but for its place in Senegal’s prized democratic history. To internal observers such as Dr. Bodian, this was completely in line with Sall’s reputation as president. A capstone for how far he’s pushed the powers of the executive. But never since 1963 has a universal vote for a presidency been postponed, nor has Senegal experienced a coup d’état.¹⁷¹ Immediately following Sall’s decree, civil society rushed to find precedents for such a move. However, as university professor Babacar Gueye stated: “there is no legal basis to postpone the election.”¹⁷² Speaking more on the subject, the professor states:

“... [Sall] only invokes Article 42 of the Constitution that assigns him as the guarantor of the proper functioning of the institutions. However, it turns out that we are not currently in an institutional crisis. The institutions are functioning well, justice is functioning well, the *Conseil Constitutionnel* is submitting its decisions, the *Assemblée Nationale* created a parliamentary commission of inquiry to investigate these supposed corruption cases.”¹⁷³

To Professor Gueye and Senegalese civil society, the institutions are functioning as they should. While the PASTEF would argue that there is evident political tampering of the judicial branch, they would still argue that fundamentally the institution can fulfill its duties. Thus, invoking Article 42 is inherently invalid. In order to circumvent this lack of constitutional foundation, Sall needed his near-majority in the *Assemblée*. During the 2022 Parliamentary elections, Ousmane Sonko’s *Yewwi Askan Wi* (YAW, Liberate the People) coalition successfully took 32% of total seats and became the second-largest party. Sall’s own party *Benno Bokk Yaakaar* (United in Hope) failed to obtain an absolute majority with only 46% of seats. Thus, during this crisis, Sall needed to guarantee a majority in the *Assemblée* to legitimise his decree and postpone the election by a maximum of 6 months. YAW deputies refused to co-sign and

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ France 24, AFP, and Reuters, “Senegal bans protest over delayed vote, suspends internet access,” *France 24*, published February 12, 2024.

¹⁷¹ France 24 and AFP, “Au Sénégal, les députés examinent le report de la présidentielle dans un climat tendu,” *France 24*, published February 5, 2024.

¹⁷² François Mazet, “Report de la présidentielle au Sénégal: «Cela ne repose sur aucune base juridique valable», estime l’universitaire Babacar Gueye,” *RFI*, Published February 4, 2024.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

linked arms in defiance. Sall resorted to entering his loyal gendarmes into the *Assemblée* to force deputies out until a 3/5th majority had been secured.¹⁷⁴ It ultimately succeeded at the cost of further antagonising the opposition movement. Consequently, the *Aar Sunu Election* (Save Our Election) coalition was formed to consolidate a counter-Sall movement. It coalesced a diverse ensemble of opposants to Sall: political opposition, labour unions, civil society organisations, and others.

In addition to police violence in the *Assemblée*, the immediate aftermath of his decree saw a widespread infringement of civil liberties. Sall introduced a national ban on TikTok (Sonko's primary social media platform), shutdown mobile data in urban centres (to limit protest organisation),¹⁷⁵ as well as revoking the broadcasting license for WalfTV (private, independent network) for inciting violence¹⁷⁶ while deploying his armoured gendarmes to the streets. These raised alarms, Sall was jumping headfirst into authoritarianism. Speaking personally, the situation certainly took a radical turn, and it was clear the confusion Sall was trying to sow amongst protestors and organisers. While WalfTV's shutdown, the TikTok ban, and the gendarmes would stay in place for all of February, the mobile data shutdown would be removed and reinstated cyclically in days preceding planned riots. In addition, Sall arrested former prime minister Aminata Touré and presidential candidate Anta Babacar Ngom for attending the banned protests.¹⁷⁷ All this policy was a sharp culmination of what Sall represented for Senegalese democracy: a true threat to its principles behind a sympathetic face.

In its early days, observers were unsure what to title this political situation. Initially, it resembled a coup. To many Senegalese who have never experienced such an event even under Senghor's single-party state, the opposition deplored this as a "constitutional coup d'état."¹⁷⁸ The commandeering of the electoral process - in addition to the violent strongarming of the *Assemblée Nationale* - it seemed as if Sall would not let an opportunity to maintain a grip on power pass. The ensuing crackdown on civil liberties and protests only bolstered the idea that this was a coup. However, in retrospect the opposition coalition successfully managed to create a deadlock between Sall's camp, Sonko and the other opposition parties, and the *Conseil*. Ultimately, the moment would be nothing more than an episode, albeit indescribably important to Senegal and West Africa. It is incredibly rare for African states to successfully reject authoritarianism through tenacious constitutional institutions. In that regard, Senegal stands defiant. But considering the entire event, the intentional disinvolvement of the military, and the final outcome for the *Conseil*, this incident resembles far more of a constitutional crisis than a coup. Had it ended with a despotic Sall, it would have been a successful coup d'état. However, like the crisis of 1993 that led to the creation of the *Conseil Constitutionnel* and the beginning of the end for Senghor's party and successors, this crisis will likely lead to a rejuvenation of Senegal's politics through the PASTEF's ambitious plans.

¹⁷⁴ France 24 and AFP, "Au Sénégal, les députés examinent le report de la présidentielle dans un climat tendu," *France 24*, published February 5, 2024.

¹⁷⁵ France 24, AFP, and Reuters, "Senegal bans protest over delayed vote, suspends internet access," *France 24*, published February 12, 2024.

¹⁷⁶ Yusuf Akinpelu, "Senegal on the brink after elections postponed," *BBC*, published February 6, 2024.

¹⁷⁷ Babacar Dione and Chinedu Asadu, "Senegal police clamp down on protesters as opposition rejects election delay," *AP*, published February 5, 2024.

¹⁷⁸ France 24, "Crise au Sénégal : l'opposition, sonnée, crie au 'coup d'État constitutionnel'," *France 24*, published February 6, 2024.

5.2.1 – International Responses:

International actors were relatively calm and quiet. The U.S. government would be a significant international actor, whereas the French would publicly remain silent to avoid another Niger situation. Firstly, the U.S. and Secretary of State Anthony Blinken were prominent actors in the mediation process. Sall has great financial reserves in U.S. banks. The U.S. threatened to sanction and confiscate these financials should Sall not limit his authoritarianism. The Americans used this pressure to return mobile data availability. They would subsequently continue to push against Sall's authoritarianism and to reinstate the election at the earliest possibility. France - on the other hand - was a quiet power. They advanced through EU delegation channels and other third-party approaches. It is strange to see such a loud and arrogant former colonial power - that habitually forgets its former colonies are independent states - have such an uncharacteristic change of course. It is clear that failed policy after failed policy has finally resulted in a lesson from the French foreign relations establishment to move away from *Françafrique*. The timing was perfect for such an evolution; Senegal has over the past half-decade experienced a limited form of the *France Dégage!* movement. The movement spans many francophone states in West Africa and is hostile to continued French neocolonialism involvement. Unlike Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali where *France Dégage!* is significantly more prominent, Senegalese society simply recognises the spectre of France and is ready to resist should France overstep, something carried into Sonko's government. Indeed, Sall and Macron are very close allies. Champions of the ideologically-lacking Centrist Neoliberalism, the two have long had a close rapport and both have been threatened by anti-establishment populists. After his term, Sall had been set up by Macron to become the new "*envoyé spéciale du Pacte de Paris pour la Planète et les Peuples*" ("special envoy of the Paris Pact for the Planet and Peoples;" the 4Ps) for one year.¹⁷⁹ The envoy is relatively impactless but would have served as an olive branch from Macron to a loyal ally. As of June 2024, the official website for the 4Ps continues to present Macky Sall as president of Senegal while making no mention of his current role in the 4Ps.¹⁸⁰

ECOWAS was an interesting case. The moment of Sall's decree coincided with the announced shock exit of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger from ECOWAS by the military juntas in each state. The moment placed incredible pressure on ECOWAS that: on one hand, was losing a significant part of its unity and body; on the other hand, it lost their main democratic voice in Senegal to a crisis. Had it been one or the other, ECOWAS would have had a stern approach to both. Instead, they initially echoed Sall's desire for "free, transparent, and inclusive elections" before changing to a sterner tone. ECOWAS subsequently organised an emergency session in Nigeria¹⁸¹ where they demanded Senegal avoid "jeopardising 'peace and stability' during these trying times for West Africa."¹⁸² They demanded a return to an election timeline respectful to the constitution that matched its Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Afrique Média, "Macron Nomme Macky Sall Comme Envoyé Spéciale du Pacte de Paris Pour la Planète et les Peuples (4P)," *Afrique Média*. November 13, 2023.

¹⁸⁰ "Les Principaux Participants," *Pacte de Paris Pour la Planète et les Peuples*, accessed June 25, 2024, <https://pactedeparis.org/>.

¹⁸¹ Al Jazeera, "ECOWAS holds emergency session over Senegal crisis and member exits," *Al Jazeera*, published February 8, 2024.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ ECOWAS, "Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance," December 21, 2001.

5.3 – Crisis Outcome:

Ultimately, Sall’s gambit would end unsuccessfully. After weeks of increasingly violent protests, rising police violence and armed counter-protesting, mobile data limitations, and exhausting every political option available to him, Sall found his world collapsing inwards. As the winds shifted from cautionary fear towards optimism for the *Aar Sunu Election* coalition, Sall would enter into amnesty talk with Sonko. In the time preceding this negotiation, Sonko had largely remained silent. He recognised that this would only galvanise his own supporters and push the centrist voters over to his camp. When Sall began approaching him to offer amnesty to Sonko, Faye, and the thousands of political prisoners, it was clearly an attempt to save Sall from the inevitable consequences. Ultimately, Sonko and others would be released on March 14th,¹⁸⁴ 10 days prior to the final election date of March 24th. Upon their release, massive crowds would gather around them, treating them as heroes.

The reason Sall felt forced was a sudden and shock decision by the *Conseil Constitutionnel*. As aforementioned, the council’s 9 judges are unilaterally appointed by the president. It is bizarre to see Sall take such an opposition to the *Conseil* and vice-versa, especially when considering their centrality to the discourse on term duration amendments of which he has benefitted. Despite this paternalistic relationship, the *Conseil* would ultimately hammer the final nail in his coffin. Through Sall’s strongarming of the *Assemblée Nationale*, he secured a postponement for the election until December 2024. However, Sall’s must end after April 1st unless explicitly decided upon by the *Conseil*. Otherwise, he is mandated to step down and an acting president would be appointed - most likely the president of the *Assemblée*. Coincidentally, this would be one of Sall’s loyal underlings: Amadou Mame Diop. The plan was clear: force through the necessary legislation with police violence, promote a transition of power without *alternance*, and escape before facing consequences. Unfortunately for Sall, before his plan could be completed, the plethora of legal challenges submitted to the courts caught up to him. Returning to Professor Gueye’s arguments earlier: Sall invoked the right to meddle through Article 42 of the constitution, which stipulates that the president is “the guarantor of the regular functioning of the institutions...of the territory.”¹⁸⁵ Even after the amnesty agreement, Sall publicly stated his belief that he had committed no wrongs, and simply followed the framework of law.¹⁸⁶ As the professor argued and the *Conseil* proved however, the institutions have never been healthier. For an African state to be confronted with a sitting president playing authoritarian and exit the other side with no armed violence, through nothing but the tenacity of democratic institutions and the unflinching democratic spirit of the Senegalese public is a monumental achievement.

5.4 – Election Results:

¹⁸⁴ Babacar Dione and Jessica Donati, “Senegal’s top opposition leader freed from prison ahead of presidential election this month,” *AP News*, published March 15, 2024.

¹⁸⁵ The Sovereign People of Senegal, “Title III: Of the President of the Republic / Article 42,” *Constitution of Senegal* (2001, rev. 2016).

¹⁸⁶ Rédaction Africanews and AP, “Senegal crisis: ‘I don’t owe any apology, I abided by the law’, Sall says,” *Africanews*, published March 20, 2024.

Once Sall released Sonko and Faye, it was evident that Faye would become Senegal's fifth president. And so he did on April 2nd, 2024. Faye would take 54.28% of the popular vote compared to Amadou Ba's 35.79% of votes. The turnout was 61% of all eligible voters.¹⁸⁷ While no landslide victory, the result is indicative of the anti-establishment sentiment amongst the Senegalese electorate. However, when looking at the votes per department, it is interesting to see the contrasts between Faye's strongholds and Ba's strongholds. Table 1 illustrates the confirmed voting results for over half of the nation's departments. It shows total votes and the victor's share thereof:

Region	Total Votes	Winner	Winner's Votes (%)
Guinguineo	36,901	Diomaye Faye	17,481 (47%)
Kolda	68,931	Diomaye Faye	30,256 (44%)
Guédiawaye	121,185	Diomaye Faye	79,646 (66%)
Louga	124,743	Diomaye Faye	57,021 (46%)
Dagana	92,361	Amadou Ba	35,462 (50%)
Mbacké	216,428	Diomaye Faye	172,053 (79%)
St-Louis	110,604	Diomaye Faye	62,793 (57%)
Kebemer	84,311	Diomaye Faye	49,443 (59%)
Kaolack	146,719	Diomaye Faye	82,960 (57%)
Keur Massar	62,383	Diomaye Faye	39,023 (62%)
Rufisque	186,118	Diomaye Faye	106,505 (57%)
Ranérou Ferlo	15,539	Amadou Ba	12,576 (81%)
Kanel	64,991	Amadou Ba	56,542 (87%)
Matam	100,401	Amadou Ba	86,730 (86%)
Ziguinchor	76,027	Diomaye Faye	57,003 (75%)
Diourbel	73,909	Diomaye Faye	44,809 (61%)
Bambey	76,028	Diomaye Faye	50,245 (66%)
Boukiling	39,783	Diomaye Faye	22,359 (56%)

¹⁸⁷ Conseil Constitutionnel, "Proclamation des résultats définitifs du scrutin du 24 mars 2024," *décision N°7/E/2024*, published March 29, 2024.

Soraya	11,846	Diomaye Faye	7,012 (59%)
Kédougou	23,304	Amadou Ba	10,833 (46%)
Salémata	6,790	Amadou Ba	4,166 (61%)
Kaffrine	65,943	Diomaye Faye	33,107 (50%)
Médina Yero Foulah	31,060	Amadou Ba	14,067 (45%)
Sédhiou	45,306	Diomaye Faye	28,964 (64%)
Goudomp	45,236	Diomaye Faye	28,697 (63%)
Oussouye	19,882	Diomaye Faye	15,824 (79%)

Table 1: 2024 Senegalese Presidential Election results by department. Own work with data from *Sénégal Vote*¹⁸⁸

When mapped, the result is Figure 4. For a map of departments, see Figure 5 below. A complete version of Figure 4 exists (Figure 6) however, not all of the regions can be confirmed. The ones that could were diligently researched to support its 100% validity, accuracy, and legitimacy of Figure 6's original author's work where possible. As such, Figure 4 features half the map in white: these are departments that could not be cross referenced. However, most of the critical regions for trend analysis were accounted for. Figure 6 still retains legitimacy as a first-glance tool.

What do these maps show? There are three glaring insights. The first is that in most of the departments, the winner's margin fluctuates between 40-65% of total votes. When looking at the urban core (Rufisque, Keur Massar, Guédiawaye, Bambey), the success of the PASTEF in mobilising the urban youth is clear as day: Faye took 57%, 62%, 66%, 66% respectively. It was here that the victory was earned, key swing states to use American terminology. Indeed, in departments with high total votes (<100,000) - Kaolack, Mbacke, St-Louis, Louga, Rufisque, Matam, Guédiawaye - Ba only won one: Matam. This leads to the second key insight: where are the strongholds?

Ba took Matam, with a staggering 86% of total votes. Contrastingly, Faye won the other major departments with between 44%-66%. The one exception is Mbacke, another urbanised department close to Thiès - Sonko and Faye's home city. But for Ba, representative of Sall and *Yaakaar*, their strongholds have traditionally been in the East of the country where the Fulani peoples live. Indeed, when looking at the 2019 elections (See Figure 7, in appendix), we can already extrapolate this trend. In that election where Sonko finished third behind Macky Sall and Idrissa Seck, we can trace Sall's strongholds to the departments of Podor, Matam, Kanel, and Ranérou Ferlo: historic Fulani homelands along the Northeast. Sonko on the other hand was dominant in the lower-Casamance. Idrissa Seck found some success only in Mbacké and Thiès (30-40%). Comparing these results to 2024, we can see similar trends across the country. For instance, Ba and *Yaakaar* once again had a powerful majority (87%, 81%, 86%) in the area. Other areas such as the South-East region of Kédougou (Kédougou, Salémata, and Saraya) or

¹⁸⁸ Barry Souleymane with *Sénégal Vote*, "Présidentielle du 24 mars : Les résultats par département finalement publiés (Photos)," *Sene.News*, published March 26, 2024.



Figure 5: Map of Senegal's Departments¹⁸⁹

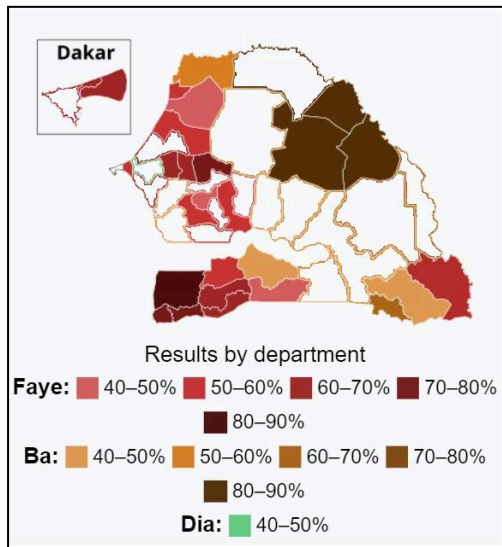


Figure 4: Confirmed results by department, 2024 Senegalese Presidential Election¹⁹⁰

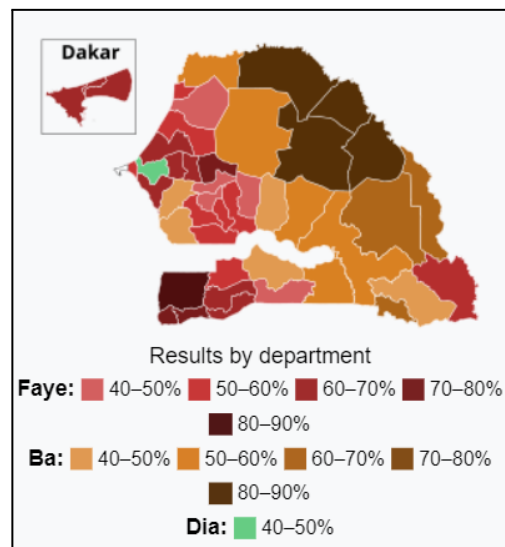


Figure 6: unconfirmed results by department, 2024 Senegalese Presidential Election¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Population Data, "Senegal - regions," *PopulationData.net*, published April 17, 2019.

¹⁹⁰ Based on the work of wikipedia user BSMIsEditing. The user's map was the only version of an electoral map available online. BSMIsEditing's original work features the full map (see Figure x) however, nearly half the regions could not be confirmed. From the data publicly available, the trends are clear. For the sake of accuracy, this paper will only use the map with confirmed results. All credits go to BSMIsEditing for their designs.

¹⁹¹ BSMIsEditing, "2024 Senegalese presidential election," *Wikimedia Commons*, final publication April 12, 2024.

the North-West (Louga, Dagana, and St-Louis) were very evenly distributed.

For Diomaye Faye however, the strength was in the urban cores: Mbacké (79%), Guédiawaye (66%), Diourbel (61%). His and the PASTEF's true strength emerged in the lower-Casamance region, similar to the 2019 election. In 2024, the departments yielded 75%, 56%, 64%, 63%, and 79%: a substantial rate. This success in the Casamance, in addition to the powerful presence in the urban centres, are what propelled the PASTEF to victory. In 2019, there were far more isolated to the Casamance, but the championing of the youth grievances between 2019-2024 successfully crowded out other candidates like Idrissa Seck, Khalifa Sall (unrelated to Sall), and Mamadou Dia. With a choice between the PASTEF and *Yaakaar*, it is clear that the PASTEF has the ability to speak to the youth. More importantly, the results by department highlight how the strategy was successful. By establishing themselves in a marginalised region, the PASTEF assured that it would not run into a great deal of opposition. How could it, after all that Sall has contributed to the existing low-intensity conditions. Similarly, the troubles of youth - unemployment, low income, marginalisation from the governing apparatus, corruption amongst elites, etc. - are easily equated to those of the Casamance - marginalisation, lack of opportunities, underdevelopment, isolation from the political class. While Sall undeniably had great contributions to modernising Senegal's national infrastructure through development plans, it also culminated in a constitutional crisis in which he would retain power.

The outcome of the election was already heavily leaning towards the PASTEF by January - even with Sonko and Faye imprisoned. To emerge victorious against the successor of the incumbent with only a month on the campaign trail is a tremendous achievement. Sall's attempt to protect the constitution as he perceived it only cemented the PASTEF victory. A 20 percentage point lead is indicative that the centrist voters had been convinced by the events that unfolded since the 2021 protests. The PASTEF's project was successful, and its reliance on the Casamance (given the comparison between the 2019 and 2024 elections) has been a strategy that brought a group of civil servants and non-politicians to becoming president and vice-president of the Republic of Senegal.

Chapter 6 – Discussion and Concluding Remarks:

6.1 – Discussion:

What has this research paper illustrated over these chapters?

1. The Casamance Conflict was a complex and multifaceted conflict rooted in a plethora of different causes, leading to *longue-durée* consequences in collapse of socioeconomic conditions and social cohesions, rampant exploitation of local resources at the expense of ecology and communities, insecurity, underdevelopment, damaging imaginations and media representations, and political exclusion and marginalisation - all of which are similar to the original 1982 grievances;
2. The conflict evolved beyond a localised struggle for independence into a core-periphery struggle between those with the power to define, and those that are defined;
3. These consequences bled over into the 2020s in the form of political anger that led to rising anti-establishment populism that extended from the Casamance out to the core;
4. Ousmane Sonko's rise is significantly dependent upon the Casamance and its role in Senegal over the past 40 years;
5. Macky Sall and the state were personally involved in the affairs of the Casamance and Sonko, in hopes of curbing the shift mentioned in point 3;
6. Macky Sall's 2024 Crisis was an attempt at authoritarianism that ultimately only ascended the PASTEF further to the highest offices;
7. The election results indicate a geographic/ethnic divergence between voters in the urban centres, Northeast departments, and Casamance departments;
8. The Casamance voting results in favour of Sonko in 2019 and 2024 are indicative of the impact caused by the Casamance's mistreatment at the hands of the state;
9. Sonko to the Casamance is liberation without independence; equality and reintegration.

Over the course of this paper the topics of the Casamance Conflict, the Sonko-Sall dynamic, and the Constitutional Crisis have all been discussed in turn. But how does they relate to each other and the research question:

To what extent does Sonko and PASTEF have the ability and means to successfully reincorporate Casamançais grievances into the national political campaign of pan-Africanism, anti-corruption, and anti-establishmentarianism against Sall.

Judging by the presidential elections in 2019 and 2024, the Casamance has been critical in Sonko's campaign and success. Without a steady base of support, reaching the presidency would have been a difficult mountain to climb. Where Sall has the Northeast, Sonko created his base in the Southwest however, this left the ever-important populous urban core to be fought over. The Casamance is a case study of the wider, forgotten youth of Senegal. By allying himself with the grievances of the Casamance - poverty, lack of opportunity, underdevelopment, political violence - Sonko positioned himself to speak to the plights of the youth. Critically, Senegalese demographics feature 20% of the total population being between the ages of 15-25¹⁹² (and 41% between 0-14), highlighting the importance of youth's aspiration to be addressed. Moreover, 90% of all employment is informal; thus, focus on the youth economically is vitally important to secure the future of the country. The youth movement that began with *y'en a marre* contributed to structuring the PASTEF's political movement.

For decades, governing elites across African states traded national self-sufficiency and future developments in favour of quick profits. They govern not to lead, but to gain. In turn, the persistence of these elites and the stagnation of political change and development has disenfranchised millions of urban African youths. This idea of selling the state applies less to Senegal than it does to hyper-examples like Nigeria and its petrol industry or the D.R.C and its critical raw materials; however, the framework remains. In response to this trend, the PASTEF has positioned itself as the champion of the disenfranchised. They placed anti-corruption and anti-establishment as leading ideologies, marking a radical shift from traditional politics. As with every populist government, the real question is will they succeed in implementing their promises and breaking the corruption cycle.

Regarding the Casamance conflict, it has evolved into a Casamance political struggle. What began as separatist war between the MFDC and the State turned into a political fight between the PASTEF and the State. The consistent marginalisation and underdevelopment became Sonko's cause. This was not ignored by the State either. For example: the shutdown of the port was clearly politically motivated once Sonko became mayor. Upon his election to prime minister, Sonko immediately reopened for ferries and shipping.

Over the past two presidential elections, the Basse-Casamance has been central to both the campaign discourse and the election results. The PASTEF emerged victorious due to the Casamance playing a pivotal role equivalent to the Northeast territories importance to Sall. Faye, Sonko, and the PASTEF would not have won by 20% had they not secured the Casamance. This is indicative that the Casamance and its peoples have become completely reintegrated to the national cohort and the political process. Even if the victory cannot be entirely attributed to the Casamance, the region will always remain fundamental to the historic success of the PASTEF, as the 40 years of conflict created an environment favourable for a populist anti-establishment politician. It was the catalyst for Sonko to become a true threat to the established Sall.

A significant contribution needs to be attributed to the consequences of Sall's governance. Sonko and the Casamance are inextricably linked, as the two are to Sall. Sall's authoritarian tendencies and Big Man status were pivotal in crafting Sonko as a desirable foil to him for the centrist voters. It appears that Sonko, Sall, and the Casamance are trapped in a triangle of influence: Sall undermines the

¹⁹² UN Statistics Division, "Demographic Yearbook 2020," *Demographic and Social Statistics*.

Casamance, the Casamance supports Sonko, and Sonko enters a warpath - sustained by the youth - that will radically depart from traditional politics. It is a dynamic of marginalisation, authoritarianism, and anti-establishmentarianism. Whether gendarmes violence, the weaponisation of the legal system, the historic dissolution of a party, the Constitutional Crisis, or cracking down on the right to peaceful protest, Sall's reputation was irreparably tarnished and pushed the most successful democracy in Africa to the brink of collapse. Interestingly, this near-miss with authoritarianism has greatly strengthened democracy in Senegal. The other important branches of governance - *Conseil Constitutionnel*, the legislature, the *laissez-faire* approach of the military, and the public reaction - all pushed back against the executive. Authoritarian doors remain open however, particularly with the possible interpretations of term limits and constitutional amendments. This is despite Sall's 2012 promises to resolve these constitutional interpretations. If the past is indicative of the future, there are many reasons to expect an amendment back to 7 year terms. Despite this, true *alternance* has finally arrived, and can only be beneficial to the rich political culture. No longer is there a consistent line of appointments, permissions, and party breakaways that defined the transitions from Senghor to Diouf to Wade to Sall. Instead, a party led by civil servants has emerged and created a truly separate political coalition - finally rupturing the line of descendents from Senghor.

Given the Constitutional Crisis that took place, there is a supportive research question that rises in priority: what is the historical importance of this moment as it pertains to West Africa? Senegal broke the mould of African despotic electoralism and resisted authoritarianism through constitutionality and democracy. The case of Senegal as a mature democracy can serve as a beacon to other regional states; African states need not be a tool of wealth transfer from state to elites as long as democratic institutions are strongly established. As a researcher, it appears that this is a turning point. Pan-Africanism, rejection of neo-colonialism, and the reclamation of the state by the disenfranchised youth are concepts strongly returning to the continent, missing for many decades following the collapse of Pan-Africanism in the late 20th Century. It will be hard to replicate the case, but the paradigm is set. States have reclaimed their independence and agency, and West Africa will likely see this paradigm shift continue to sweep across the region, whether peacefully (Senegal) or violently (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger). Furthermore, with the loss of Macron's favourite African ally, French influence will struggle to extend the same historic reach it has enjoyed. Shortly after entering office, Sonko denounced French involvement in African politics, indicating the end to the Sallist-Macronist alliance that dictated the past 12 years. Interestingly, on May 15th Sonko welcomed Jean-Luc Melanchon - leader of the *France Insoumise* (France's most influential socialist party). It is indicative of the PASTEF's ideology, and the path they will likely take over the next 5 years: one that rejects neocolonialism and modern imperialism in favour of resisting the status quo.

6.2 – Limitations & Future Research:

There are a few limitations worth mentioning. Firstly on the methodological front, the interview sample size was small due to the political crisis and unavailability of prominent interviewees like Diallo Diop. Future research needs to explore more elements involved in politics to gain further insights into what occurred behind the scenes. Regarding media, social media analysis of Sonko's

messaging would be highly productive towards understanding how he captured the urban youth. Future research should consider exploring this past the legal and linguistic barriers faced during this project. Thirdly, while the Crisis offered unparalleled insight into the functioning of Senegal's democracy, it remained extremely difficult to complete research duties as the situation evolved in real time.

Thematically, there is a crucial element missing as existing literature on the subject is lacking. Senegal features a parallel power structure based in the holy city of Touba. Touba is the seat of the *Mourides*, a Muslim brotherhood (not **the** Muslim Brotherhood). Its leader is one of the most powerful figures in Senegal, matching the president. At every political decision, the consent of the Caliph is sought out. Unfortunately for this project, there was no space to explore this theme in a way it deserves but as an observer it was clear that they ultimately played a role in the ending of the crisis. Considering the prevalence of Islam in Senegal, future research is needed on exploring the exact dynamics between the official government and the unofficial powerhouse that is Touba.

6.4 – Final Remarks:

In the end, the Youth, Sonko, the Casamance, and the *Aar Sunu Election* peaceful resistance movement aligned to accomplish the same goal: end the authoritarianism of Sall's government. Indeed, corruption, marginalisation, and anti-establishmentarianism were critical policy points of the PASTEF's campaign. The political crisis was merely the marker of the end for Sall's political career.

For the first time in Senegal's history, there is true political change. It is no longer Senghor choosing his successor, or Wade given the right to form his own party, or Sall breaking away from Wade. Until Sonko, there was always an element of delegation, of consent, of permission for change. Now, under Sonko, there is a dramatic opportunity for change for the people. What the end outcome will be, remains unknown. Sonko's aura is one of cult of personality - something common in fledgling authoritarians. Should he want to keep Senegal's democracy more stable and nurtured, Sonko must avoid falling into the same pitfall that characterised Kwame Nkrumah. As things stand, Senegal faces a future and optimism it has rarely experienced. Perhaps this time it will create true change.

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Appendix:

A.1 – Maps and Media:

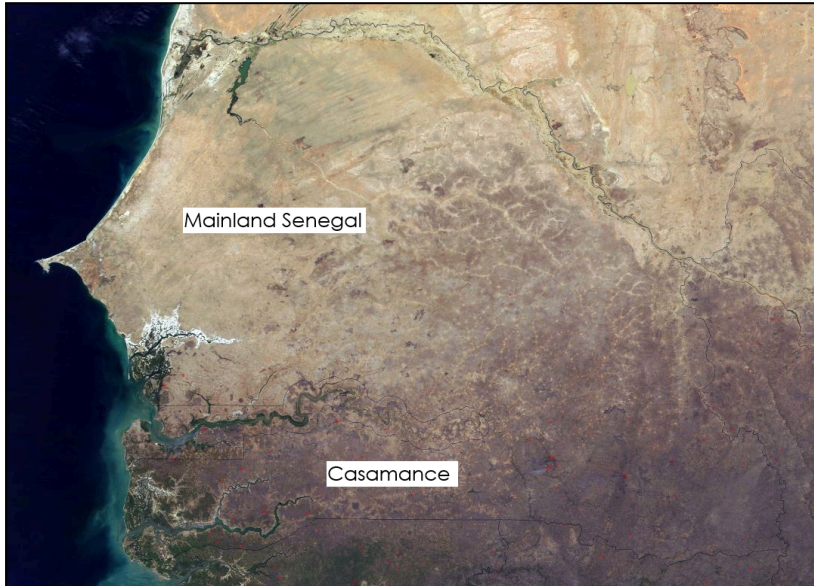
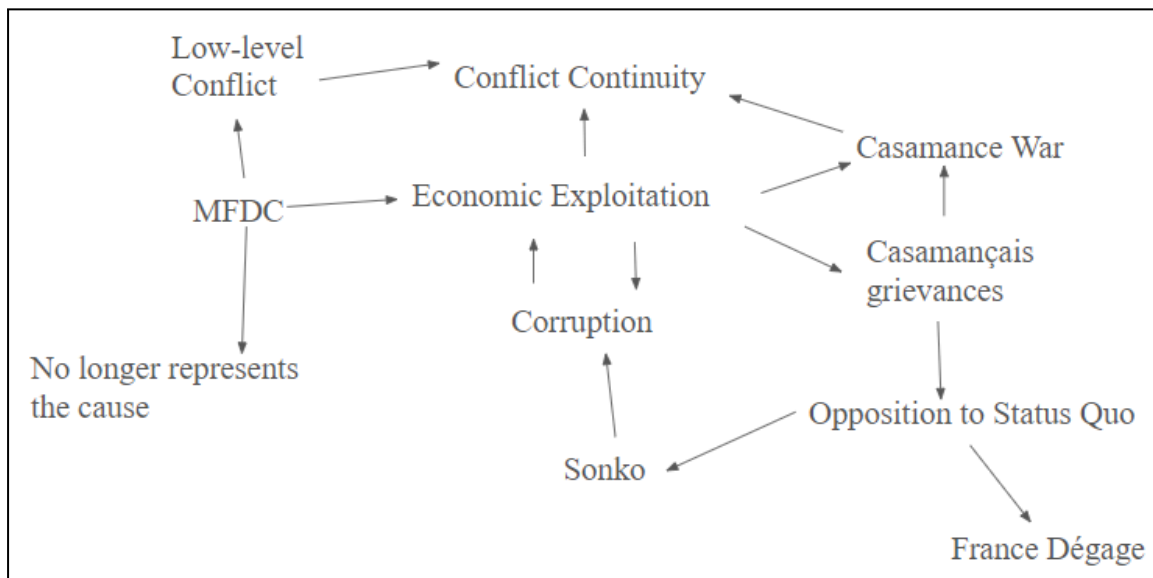


Figure 1: Satellite image of Senegal showing ecological divergence between North and South Senegal¹⁹³

Figure 2: Mindmap showcasing central nodes of 'Economic Exploitation' and 'Corruption' and their subsequent offshoots. Economic exploitation and corruption are inextricably linked when considering the Casamance. The other nodes link that to the greater trends studied in this research. Self made.



¹⁹³ Original map sourced from, annotations self-added: Mapsland. "Large detailed satellite map of Senegal." *Mapsland*. Accessed June 25, 2024.

Figure 3: administrative regions of the Casamance¹⁹⁴



Table 1: 2024 Senegalese Presidential Election results by department. Own work with data from *Sénégal Vote through Sene.News*¹⁹⁵

Region	Total Votes	Winner	Winner's Votes (and %)
Guinguineo	36,901	Diomaye Faye	17,481 (47%)
Kolda	68,931	Diomaye Faye	30,256 (44%)
Guédiawaye	121,185	Diomaye Faye	79,646 (66%)
Louga	124,743	Diomaye Faye	57,021 (46%)
Dagana	92,361	Amadou Ba	35,462 (50%)
Mbacké	216,428	Diomaye Faye	172,053 (79%)
St-Louis	110,604	Diomaye Faye	62,793 (57%)
Kebemer	84,311	Diomaye Faye	49,443 (59%)
Kaolack	146,719	Diomaye Faye	82,960 (57%)
Keur Massar	62,383	Diomaye Faye	39,023 (62%)
Rufisque	186,118	Diomaye Faye	106,505 (57%)
Ranérou Ferlo	15,539	Amadou Ba	12,576 (81%)
Kanel	64,991	Amadou Ba	56,542 (87%)
Matam	100,401	Amadou Ba	86,730 (86%)

¹⁹⁴ Penda Dieye, “La Casamance : Organisation de l’espace - 6e,” *Sunudaara*, accessed June 30, 2024.

¹⁹⁵ Barry Souleymane with *Sénégal Vote*, “Présidentielle du 24 mars : Les résultats par département finalement publiés (Photos),” *Sene.News*, published March 26, 2024.

Ziguinchor	76,027	Diomaye Faye	57,003 (75%)
Diourbel	73,909	Diomaye Faye	44,809 (61%)
Bambey	76,028	Diomaye Faye	50,245 (66%)
Boukiling	39,783	Diomaye Faye	22,359 (56%)
Soraya	11,846	Diomaye Faye	7,012 (59%)
Kédougou	23,304	Amadou Ba	10,833 (46%)
Salémata	6,790	Amadou Ba	4,166 (61%)
Kaffrine	65,943	Diomaye Faye	33,107 (50%)
Médina Yero Foulah	31,060	Amadou Ba	14,067 (45%)
Sédhiou	45,306	Diomaye Faye	28,964 (64%)
Goudomp	45,236	Diomaye Faye	28,697 (63%)
Oussouye	19,882	Diomaye Faye	15,824 (79%)

Figure 4: Confirmed results by department 2024 Senegalese Presidential Election¹⁹⁶

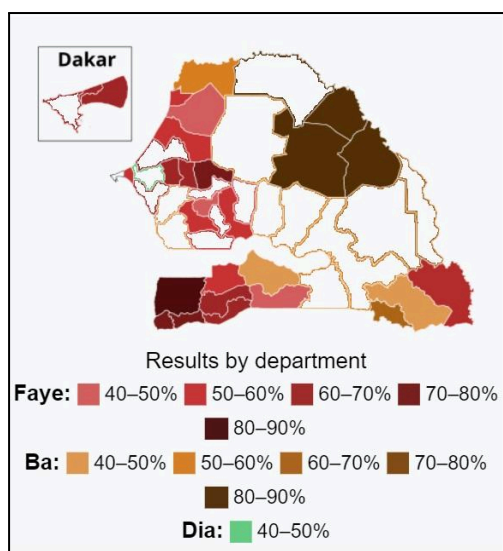


Figure 5: Map of Senegal's Departments¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Based on the work of wikipedia user BSMIsEditing. The user's map was the only version of an electoral map available online. BSMIsEditing's original work features the full map (see Figure x) however, nearly half the regions could not be confirmed. From the data publicly available, the trends are clear. For the sake of accuracy, this paper will only use the map with confirmed results. All credits go to BSMIsEditing for their designs.

¹⁹⁷ Population Data, "Senegal - regions," *PopulationData.net*, published April 17, 2019.



Figure 6: unconfirmed results by department for the 2024 Senegalese Presidential Election¹⁹⁸

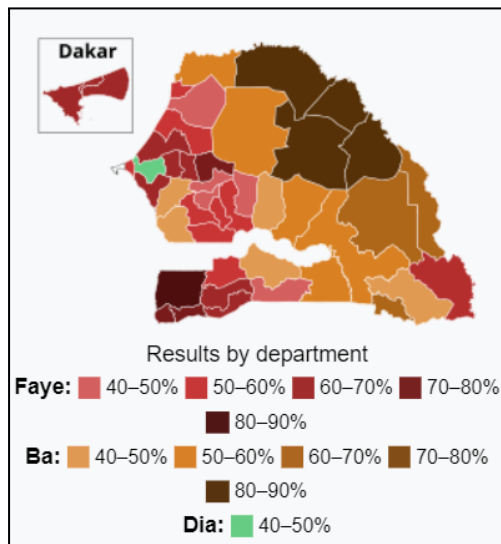
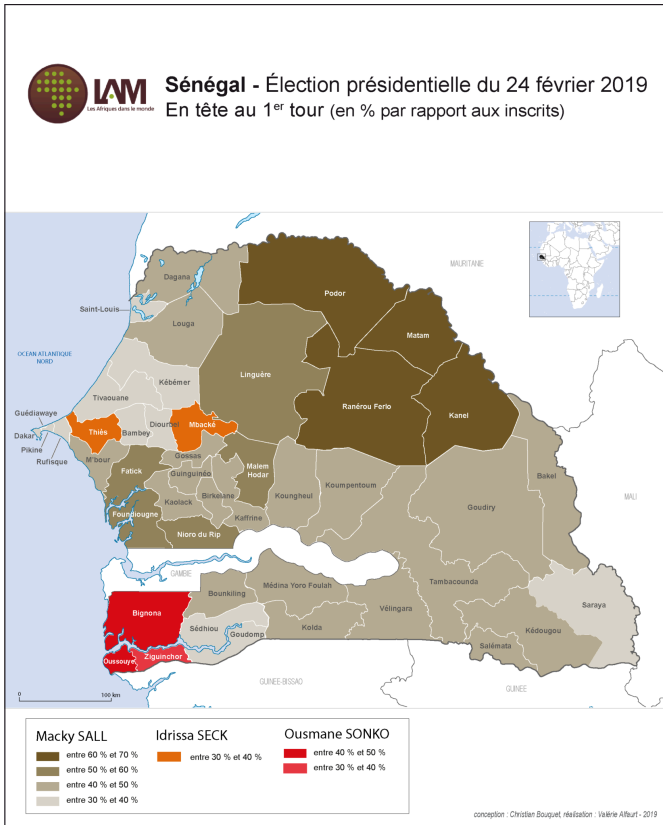


Figure 7: map of 2019 Presidential Election results.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ BSMIsEditing, “2024 Senegalese presidential election,” *Wikimedia Commons*, final publication April 12, 2024.

¹⁹⁹ Christian Bouquet and Valérie Affaut, “Sénégal - Élection présidentielle du 24 février 2019,” *LAM - Sciences Po Bordeaux* (2019).



A.2 – Interview with Professor Benoît Tine:

This interview was conducted on the 24th of January (2024) between Léo Ricca and Benoit Tine at his office in University of Ziguinchor Assane Seik. Benoît Tine is a leading professor in the sociology department at the University of Ziguinchor, and has lived there for a decade. Below is the transcript of the conversation. Comments were not transferred; highlighted segments are useful insights to incorporate in final outcomes. The subject gave full consent for name and insights to be included in the final paper.

*Leo Ricca (LB): *Brief introduction of myself and my background**

LB: Pour commencer, si vous pouviez m’expliquer un peu qui vous êtes, ce que vous faites, quelles sont vos expertises, et votre domaine d’expérience.

Benoît Tine (BT): D’accord, alors moi je m’appelle Benoît Tine, je suis ici à Ziguinchor depuis 2013 après avoir fait mon cursus en licence et en master à l’université de Dakar. Après je suis parti en France faire une thèse de doctorat à l’université de Versailles. Je suis resté la bas de 2005 jusqu’en 2013, donc à 2013 j’ai été recruté [à Ziguinchor], et je suis rentré avec toute la famille, et puis donc je suis la en temps qu’enseignant chercheur, et je travaille sur des questions de sociologie de la déviance, sur les questions de violences, de délinquance, la question de la drogue, de la prostitution, voila toute ces formes que les sociologues appellent la déviance, ou que les criminologues vont qualifier de déviants. Je travaille sur ces questions là depuis la avec certains articles qui ont été publiés sur la question. Mais je ne travaille pas que sur ça, j’ai deux axes de recherche, même trois axes. J’ai aussi

un axe de recherche sur les questions de travail. Le travail, la santé et la souffrance au travail, d'ailleurs ma thèse m'a apporté beaucoup sur ça, dans les centres d'appel. Donc j'ai travaillé sur ces questions là pour faire une comparaison sur le travail de téléconseiller en France (dans le département 78) et le travail de téléconseiller ici à Dakar (PCCI). Voilà ce sont les questions que j'aborde. Et j'ai essayé de faire la synchronisation de ces deux axes de recherche, c'est-à-dire déviance d'un côté et travail de l'autre - à quel moment ces deux là se rencontrent. Et on voit effectivement que y'a beaucoup de rapprochement, surtout quand on parle des addictions au travail ou la violence au travail. Il existe la violence verbale, la violence psychologique - toutes les formes de harcèlement - mais aussi il y a la drogue. On voit que les gens sont obligés de se surpasser pour atteindre les objectifs qui sont fixés par l'organisation. Il y a de plus en plus d'objectif, plus en plus de rapport, de rendu, de livrable, et du coup les gens - ce sont des humains, ce ne sont pas des robots - ils sont obligés de se surpasser, ils sont obligés de se droguer. C'est les machines à café, si on aurait fait tout le tour de l'université, tous les bureaux vous verrez des machines à café parce que voilà il faut qu'on soit toujours en forme, voir même au delà, toutes ces substances, drogues, etc. que les gens consomment pour être performant. D'ailleurs y'a un excellent ouvrage de quelques auteurs français sur ce dopé au travail, donc toutes les formes de drogues qu'on va consommer pour être performant au travail. Ce sont les questions que j'aborde de façon générale. Et puis voilà, j'ai travaillé sur le conflit Casamançais un peu - ce n'est pas ma spécialité en tant que telle mais j'ai abordé quelques aspects de cette thématique. Du point de vue administratif, j'ai été chef de département sociologie de 2016 à 2019, et depuis 2023 je suis le directeur adjoint de l'UFR SES et aussi accesseur.

LB: Et êtes-vous d'origine de Casamance?

BT: Non, non, je suis d'origine Thiessoise, de la région de Thiès. C'est le travail qui m'a amené ici.

LB: *Introduction to my topic, my research, and my internship approach*

LB: Je voulais commencer par vous demander est-ce que vous avez une idée de comment le sentiment d'indépendance ou le sentiment des jeunes aujourd'hui en Casamance il a évolué depuis le début du conflit?

BT: Alors en temps qu'un des observateurs - pas le meilleur, de loin. Mais pour venir ici c'était un problème parce que y'a toutes ces représentations qui entourent le conflit Casamançais, parce que jeune, ou très jeune on a entendu parler de ces attaques, de ces braquages, de ces formes de violences dans les médias qui ont été perpétrés ici en Casamance. Donc de loin on suivait ça à travers les médias: zone de conflit, zone de guerre, zone où il ne fallait pas aller. Dans l'imaginaire du Sénégalais, la Casamance il fallait mettre un croix là dessus, d'ailleurs on a vu que y'avait des gens qui ont quitté la Casamance pour venir à Thiès. A Thiès Vous voyez beaucoup de Sudistes - des Diolas, Manjaques, etc. - donc des gens qui ont fui le conflit pour arriver à Thiès et dans d'autres régions certainement, mais à Thiès j'ai grandi avec des gens qui sont originaires d'ici. Donc avec tout ceci, finalement, venir ici et travailler ici pendant que le conflit n'est pas encore éteint, sans la paix définitive, ça posait problème. Lorsque je l'ai dit à mes proches, à mes parents que j'étais recruté à l'université de Ziguinchor et que je vais y aller ils m'ont dit: "mais, tu es fou! Qu'est ce que tu vas faire en Casamance? Avec tout ce qu'on entend parler comme conflit Casamançais." Et surtout avant même c'était peut-être mieux parce que y'avait une unité autour du président [du MFDC] l'abbé Diamacoune Senghor, mais aujourd'hui que le conflit est très éclaté vous avez jusqu'à 4 ou 5 factions, là c'est encore plus compliqué. Je leur ai dit que en tout, c'est encore le Sénégal, j'y vais quand même, sachant que j'étais motivé puisque de un j'ai attendu trois ans en France avant de trouver le poste, et de deux si la paix doit intervenir elle ne va

pas tomber du ciel. Il faut la construire, et peut-être qu'en tant que chercheur universitaire on pourrait contribuer à ça. Je me suis en plus renseigné: Ziguinchor la ville c'est vraiment sans souci, c'est une des villes les plus sécurisées du Sénégal. Peut-être après dans les périphéries extérieures la ou ça se passe c'est plus compliqué. Donc y'a ce sentiment là, cet imaginaire, cette représentation sociale qui entoure ce conflit Casamançais même aujourd'hui en tant que chef de département j'ai été confronté par cela. Il y a avait des étudiants qui ont été envoyés ici par l'état et les parents m'appelaient en tant que chef de département: "est-ce que c'est sûr, est-ce que je peux laisser mon enfant venir en Casamance ou pas?" Moi, de l'intérieur, il n'y avait aucun problème. Mais je rendais compte que jusqu'à présent y'avait encore ces représentations dans les opinions publiques Sénégalaise, que le conflit était encore là même si les choses se sont calmées, mais on n'a pas encore la paix définitive donc c'est ce qui alimente encore cette représentation sociale qui perdure et même si pendant longtemps la France avait mis la Casamance comme Zone rouge, ça a été levé depuis quelques années. Mais on sent qu'il y a encore les séquelles visibles - physiques - de ce conflit là mais aussi psychologiques avec des gens qui sont traumatisés, énormément traumatisés par toutes ces tueries, tous ces morts que le conflit a causés. Le trauma existe même dans le cas d'une famille, que le conflit a ouvert entre les uns et les autres; entre les partisans du pouvoir - admettons que y'a un fils militaire dans la famille - et un autre fils qui est dans le maquis. Donc voilà y'avait cette division dans le quartier, dans la maison, dans chaque foyer à cause de ces oppositions là. Et il y eu un autre événement - politique cette fois - avec Sonko qui est un fils de la Casamance. Bien sûr il est né à Thiès, mais il est originaire de la Casamance, c'est un Diola. Et ici, l'origine est très importante; même s'il est né à Thiès, on le considère pas comme Thiésois, il est issu de la Casamance. Lorsque cet homme est arrivé il y a une dizaine d'années, il y avait cet espoir qu'enfin la Casamance pouvait s'en sortir.

Bon, [Sonko et le PASTEF] n'étaient pas un parti politique régionaliste, ils n'avaient aucun lien avec la rébellion Casamançaise, mais on voyait que pour [les locaux] c'était peut-être un espoir de voir la Casamance sortir de cet isolement. Parce que y'a ce sentiment. Lorsque je suis arrivé en 2013, par rapport aux autres régions, Ziguinchor c'était comme un gros village à l'époque. Et je vois comment cette frustration a été construite, comment elle est née, peut-être même étant une des causes du conflit Casamançais. Absolument rien n'est fait pour que cette région se développe. Parce que le développement est un des noms de la paix. Parce que on est dans un certain enclavement, ou ils sont en marge, à l'isolation, donc les gens ont ce sentiment de révolte. On va se révolter puisqu'on n'est pas considéré comme des Sénégalais a-part-entière mais comme des Sénégalais entièrement à part. Et du coup, y'a cette révolte là qui est née - et on l'a vue - derrière Sonko, derrière le PASTEF, et tous ces autres là qui ne sont pas forcément du PASTEF, mais dont le conflit a cristallisé cette pauvreté, ce trouble, cette misère - ici comme ailleurs - que les gens vivent au quotidien. Cette vie dure, ce *gorgulu*, on vit au jour au jour. Donc derrière ce conflit politique, il y avait tous ces autres conflits que les gens voulaient extérioriser parce qu'ils en avaient ras le bol. C'est comme une cocotte minute: à un moment donné ça explose. C'était juste un prétexte: le PASTEF c'était juste un déclencheur pour que toute cette misère explose et libère la personne. Je trouve que la Casamance c'est un peu ça. Et même aujourd'hui maintenant que le PASTEF est à la mairie, tous les projets de l'État sont à l'arrêt. Projet comme Promoville c'était pour créer un cadre urbain avec des nouvelles routes. Tout ça c'est à l'arrêt maintenant que le PASTEF est arrivé à la mairie. Et avec l'université aussi: ça fait dix ans qu'on court après la restitution des chantiers, ça met du temps à finir. Tout cela ça montre un délaissement de cette région là.

Mais quoi qu'il en soit, je pense que les jeunes d'aujourd'hui sont passés à d'autres choses; l'idée d'indépendance - à mon avis - est encore là, mais dans la mentalité que des personnes qui l'ont vécu, principalement les anciens. Mais pour les jeunes, ils se disent que de toute façon, on l'obtiendra pas, et aujourd'hui le problème c'est de pouvoir manger, pouvoir survivre. Tout ce qui concerne le conflit, concerne la guerre, ce sera pour plus tard ou peut-être jamais. Mais ce qui compte aujourd'hui c'est

comment faire pour manger. “J’ai mon diplôme mais je n’arrive pas à avoir d’emploi.” Ou “je n’ai pas de diplôme et je suis là en train de galérer.” Donc qu’est-ce qu’il faut faire pour manger et boire. Et c’est pour ça qu’on voit ce phénomène de la migration qui est régulière, pas loin d’ici avec un grand point de départ. Et récemment on a effectué des recherches à Kolda sur la migration en voyant que c’est un des points centraux au niveau de la migration au Sénégal. Et effectivement dans chaque village il y a pratiquement une bonne partie de la jeunesse qui est partie. Il ne reste plus que les adultes et les personnes âgées, qui montre véritablement que le problème de la qualité de vie est encore plus important et rien qu’à voir le nombre de Western Union (et autre) à chaque coin de rue ces points de remittance d’argent on voit qu’une bonne partie de la population est partie. A mon avis, la jeunesse est passée à autre chose (manger, boire, construire une maison, envoyer les parents à La Mecque), c’est la survie maintenant plutôt qu’une lutte qui est là depuis 40 ans et qu’on n’a pas encore vu le bout du tunnel.

LR: Pourriez-vous dire que le conflit qui a étendu n’a pas ramené les promesses du début du conflit? Est-ce que les jeunes aujourd’hui sont dans un état plus difficile de survie qu’au début, où ils sont obligés de partir pour trouver des emplois, pour gagner de l’argent? [16:34]

BT: Oui, ils sont obligés de partir. Après, on aura quelques jeunes qui vont aller dans le maquis, ils vont lutter. Mais il y a plus tendance à partir comme avant. C’est comme s’ils avaient perdu l’espoir. Et ce n’était même pas leur espoir, mais le projet de leurs parents autour de Diamaoune Senghor. On leur avait promis la séparation et que cette séparation attendait que Senghor leur avait promis et qu’en 1982 ils ont pris les armes. Même si, on n’a pas encore eu le document officiel qui démontre que oui, au bout de telle année de compagnonnage vous allez partir comme un état indépendant. On ne l’a pas encore vu. Donc je pense que les jeunes sont passés à autre chose: c’est la survie, c’est l’économie aujourd’hui qui prend le dessus sur la politique.

LR: Et est-ce que vous croyez que dans cette quête de survie, le candidat d’opposition et le PASTEF ont réussi à créer un support autour d’eux de ces jeunes qui ont envie d’un changement, qui ont envie d’un rapatriement économique de la Casamance, d’une chance de survie et qu’ils voient le PASTEF qui est très anti-gouvernement, anti-l’État comme il est? Je vais commencer par une autre question d’abord. Est-ce que vous croyez que l’État est complice dans l’exploitation économique au Casamance? Et que c’est l’État qui fait que les jeunes sont dans cette situation de survie? [18:06]

BT: Pour moi, je l’ai cru à 100% que l’état n’avait rien fait pour cette ville. Arrivant en 2013, il n’y avait presque rien, juste la route principale qui ne vient seulement maintenant d’être refaite. J’ai l’impression que l’État a essayé de - comment dire - stigmatiser cette région. “Puisque vous voulez être indépendant, vous n’aurez rien. Puisque que vous voulez ça, on va vous enlever jusqu’à ce que vous soyez réduit à un esprit de survie. Que vous n’avez donc plus qu’à vous pour penser à cette indépendance là et que vous serez préoccupé seulement par ce que vous allez manger. Donc on vous réduit à votre plus simple expression humaine et besoin physiologique.” Pour moi, ce qu’il n’y a rien eu [en développement] de la part de l’État, qui continue encore - avec l’arrivée à la Mairie de Sonko - à appliquer cette politique là. C’est-à-dire, exclure la Casamance des grands projets. Oui il a eu PUDC, le Paderca, il y a eu tout ces grands projets mais c’était des coquilles vides à mon avis. Peut-être que l’État ne le fait pas à dessin - je ne suis pas dans le cercle du président - mais en tout cas, les conséquences sont là, par rapport aux autres régions. En Casamance, il manque énormément de choses. Encore plus en considérant que monsieur Sonko est originaire d’ici, donc c’est comme si au lieu d’être un avantage, c’est un inconvénient. C’était supposé être un avantage de celui là qui aller

apporter une voix au sans-voix, qui va dire ce que vivent les Casamançais, voilà ce que vivent les jeunes Casamançais. Mais au lieu de cela, c'est comme si ce qui était au-dessus de leur tête est enfin tombé avec le PASTEF sur les têtes de ces jeunes-là. Vous aussi vous allez subir ces conséquences là. "Donc, il a eu l'indépendance et on vous a serré les ceintures, et aujourd'hui avec le PASTEF qui nous empêche de dormir, donc là encore on va serrer la vis pour que vous souffriez d'avantage." C'est un peu l'impression que j'ai par rapport à cette situation qui est dommage. Je pense que le fait que le PASTEF est là ça aggrave le cas parce que le gouvernement a arrêté tous les projets. Et peut-être que l'État dit que si les projets ont du succès à Ziguinchor, on l'attribue au PASTEF et Sonko, et non pas à l'État même si c'est leur projet. Pour moi, ceci est un facteur aggravant qui aggrave davantage cet isolement dont est victime la Casamance.

Prenons les bateaux: avant les gens pouvaient venir ici par bateaux et maintenant ils sont à l'arrêt. On ne nous dit rien de claire: certains disent que c'est un problème technique, d'autre du prix du carburant, et d'autre quelque chose d'entièrement différent. Ce qui est clair, c'est que les bateaux se sont arrêtés net au moment des événements [les émeutes] politique de Juin [2023]. C'est la même histoire avec la route: pour venir ici c'est la croix et la bannière. Avec l'avion, on nous a dit qu'on allait subventionner les billets et enlever les taxes lorsque le président est venu en 2014 pour que les billets ne coûtent plus que 50,000 CFAO [76 EUR]. L'idée c'était d'aider à éviter les braquages des routes. Mais là, rien n'a été fait. La seule promesse réalisée était sur les bateaux, les prix des places ont baissé de 9000 CFAO [13.84 EUR] à 5000 CFAO [7.69 EUR]. Mais même avec cela, les bateaux sont à l'arrêt donc aujourd'hui la Casamance est presque plus enclavée qu'avant. Tout ceci est dans une optique de museler la Casamance.

LR: Avec un collègue de recherche, nous sommes allés visiter le port récemment et nous avons remarqué que c'était tout fermé. Surtout, en parlant avec un homme local que tous les commerces sont aussi fermés. Il y a des dizaines de camions remplis de noix qui ne peuvent plus bouger. C'est donc relié à ce que vous dites? [23:03]

BT: C'est effectivement ça comme il y a des boulots directs que le port crée et aussi les boulots indirects autour du port. Direct comme les bateaux et indirect comme tous les petits et grands commerce qui s'installent autour. Par exemple: le bateau arrive et les taximen s'installent autours pour leur gagne-pain, la dame crée sa petite boutique a coté pour ceux qui auront envie d'un sandwich pour le bateau. Il y a tous ces commerces et services qui dépendent et vivent avec l'arrivée de ces bateaux mais malheureusement aujourd'hui ce n'est juste plus le cas. Et maintenant, les prix des autres transports comme le prix du bus ont augmenté. Les taxis 7-places étaient à 9000 CFAO et maintenant sont à 12000 CFAO puisqu'il n'y a plus de concurrence.

LR: Et donc croyez-vous que cette situation de la vis qui tourne, est-ce que ça radicalise? Soit les jeunes soit les aînées. Parce que je me demande si vous dites que les jeunes sont dans cette situation de survie et de vouloir partir, et j'imagine que les personnes âgées doivent se sentir encore plus tranché dans leur opinion d'avant. Mais est-ce que les deux groupes sont dans cette situation de radicalisations qui fait que endommager cette situation du point de vous gouvernance centrale. [24:25]

BT: D'abord: pour les personnes âgées, je pense que c'est vraiment cette nostalgie qui est là. Pour eux, l'État ferait tout possible pour massacrer et continuer à massacrer - si besoin. Mais l'État n'accorderais jamais l'indépendance. Je crois qu'aujourd'hui, les personnes âgées s'en réalisent. L'armée Sénégalaise est simplement trop moderne et organisée pour que ça se passe. La preuve: à chaque fois que les Nations Unis demandent des casques blancs ou des armées dans la région, le Sénégal fait

partie des premiers. Après, je crois que les vieux ont mis une croix sur cette fameuse indépendance que leur camarade et anciens n'ont pas pu obtenir à leur moment le plus fort.

Après, les jeunes c'est facile à les radicaliser. Ils ont ces sentiment délaissement, ces sentiment d'exclusion, d'être des Sénégalais de deuxième classe. C'est donc ça qui les frustre et c'est ça la radicalisation moderne. Les événements de 2021 et 2023 se sont comme un baromètre pour moi: Ziguinchor faisait partie d'un des points les plus chauds au pays - à part Dakar - et c'est pour ça que les universités étaient fermées. Avec des dizaines de milliers d'étudiants qui sortent, Dakar et Ziguinchor tremblaient. Et Ziguinchor, naturellement, représentait le deuxième point chaud du pays dû à la Casamance. De un: il y a le conflit et tous les éléments que j'ai décrits; et de deux, on voit l'exclusion à travers le monsieur Ousmane Sonko. Le gouvernement l'a même accusé d'être et collusion avec la rébellion et corruption des jeunes. Ce que ça fait c'est que les tensions étaient très très fortes ici à Ziguinchor pendant ces deux moments de la crise socio-politique Sénégalaise parce que il y avait tous ces sentiments de délaissement. Les jeunes étaient près à tout, même avec des pierres pour faire face à la police. C'est quasiment une ville morte à un moment donné. Pour montrer cette radicalité que ces jeunes-là, ils en ont simplement complètement marre d'un État qui ne fait rien pour eux. C'était vraiment un baromètre: une manière de démontrer le mécontentement, le ras-le-bol. Et les affrontements ici étaient violents! Ce n'était pas au niveau des États Unis dans les années '90 mais, il a quand même eu des civiles armés, des balles tirées, et des manifestants morts. Soit ce sont des militants qui ont infiltré le maquis, soit ce sont des civils qui se sont simplement armés pour faire face à la police.

LR: J'aimerais bien aller vers la question des étudiants mais avant cela: quelle est la perception des milices armées dans le maquis? Parce que de ma perception de l'extérieur, j'ai l'impression qu'ils sont devenus des bandits. Comme j'ai habité au Nigéria, j'ai beaucoup vu ces énormes groupes de bandits dans le Nord du pays et des braquages sur les routes en dehors des villes. Est-ce la même perception ici? [28:54]

TB: A mon avis, ce n'est pas très clair. Parce que même quand les médias en parlent, ils disent "des éléments supposés appartenir au MFDC" quand ils parlent des braquages sur les routes. En plus, sur la route Transgambienne, les braquages sont tellement communs que la circulation était interdite entre Bignona et Kafountine pendant la nuit par ordre du préfet. Il y a un véritable banditisme qui existe dans la région, mais on n'a pas de preuves. Ça peut être de la part de ces factions par instinct de survie, puisque ça coûte de l'argent d'être une faction. C'est une question qui m'intéresse: comment font-ils pour survivre. D'où nous arrivons à la culture illégale du cannabis. J'ai écrit un article où j'ai décrit la Casamance comme la Colombie du Sénégal ou on voyait une grande culture de production et trafic. Bien sûr la Colombie c'est pas le cannabis mais l'idée c'est ça: la drogue au Sénégal.

LR: Et même les pays voisins? [30:22]

BT: Effectivement, le Sénégal est très bien classé pour la culture de cannabis en Afrique de l'Ouest. Je crois que c'est seulement le Maroc et le Nigéria qui sont comparable à notre production. On est sur le podium. Donc, il y a cette économie criminelle qui existe - une narco-économie - qui alimente les factions MFDC et l'État le sait! Il y a certaines zones où l'armée n'ose pas s'aventurer parce que simplement, il y a des factions là-bas où ils bénéficient de la complicité des populations pour qu'en retour les factions les protègent. Vous me protégez en cultivant, et en retour je vous rémunère. Donc il y a cette situation là. Et il y a aussi la déforestation. La seule économie locale est sur le bois: il n'y a pas de pétrole, y a pas de gaz donc en attendant qu'est-ce qu'il font? C'est le cannabis, c'est le bois, et les noix de cajou/arachide. Les factions ont besoin de vivre et dans des endroits où ces trois méthodes

n'existent pas, et bien il faut faire quelque chose. C'est quoi? C'est le braquage, c'est le dépouillement des villages. Mais ça peut aussi être des individus qui profitent simplement de l'insécurité de la région. Il y a beaucoup de grands profiteurs, jusqu'à dans la société civile et à Ziguinchor qui n'ont pas d'intérêt que le Conflit Casamançais se termine. Ça peut être des gens qui sont soi-disant négociateurs ou des intermédiaires et qui vont "négocier" et gagner beaucoup d'argent sur ce conflit. Dès que le conflit s'arrête, ils perdent leur moyen de vivre et leur privilège. Du coup, comme les bandits, ils vont profiter de l'instabilité politique pour qu'après l'opinion publique attribue cela au MFDC. C'est donc voilà pourquoi les médias disent des "éléments supposés MFDC" parce qu'on ne sait pas. Le MFDC ne revendique jamais les braquages, ou est-ce que ce sont des bandits qui se camouflent comme séparatiste.

LR: J'ai lu ça dans la littérature académique que le conflit qui est arrivé à ce point est maintenant au niveau bas au point où c'est pas un risque sécuritaire pour l'armée Sénégalaise, mais assez élevé pour que des groupes comme les factions - et d'autre intérêt - puissent continuer à exploiter, comme ces négociateurs et petits bandits. [34:06]

TB: Un petit commentaire par rapport à ça. Les gens parlent de conflit froid, de conflit de basse attention... moi je ne suis pas d'accord. Un conflit c'est un conflit. Même si on ne voit pas de char ou quoi qu'autre: un conflit est un conflit puisqu'il compromet le développement d'une région ou pays. Un investisseur ne viendra pas mettre son argent là où il n'y a pas la sécurité à 100%. Donc, basse ou haute intensité, le développement est limité. En plus, ce ne sera pas seulement l'investissement qui ne viendra pas, mais les gens vont partir de la région du à cette même insécurité. Des jeunes qui sont supposé d'être dans le pays pour y travailler le développement vont émigrer, des projets qui vont partir et ne seront pas plus développés. Donc pour moi, il n'y a pas cette distinction entre basse ou haute intensité. Basse intensité? Au contraire, le conflit dure depuis 40 ans maintenant et il ne produit que des effets néfastes.

LB: Est-ce que c'est la même situation pour tout ce qu'est les entreprises forestières et leur rôle dans la déforestation qui ne continue de croître? Est-ce qu'il y a un lien entre ce que vous dites et le fait que nous voyons une expansion de la déforestation? Est-ce qu'il y a des intérêts de continuer d'exploiter cette situation? [35:24]

BT: Oui Oui c'est un peu ça. Chaque fois que y'a une richesse quelque part il y a des compagnies étrangères et des États - comme a dit De Gaulles les États n'ont pas d'amis, ils ont seulement des intérêts. Donc on verra toujours des personnes et groupes venir profiter de la situation. On le voit au R.D.C., au Biafra à l'époque. Et ici, la richesse présente et principalement le bois. Avec la complicité de certains États et de groupes, les factions vont exploiter ces bois pour survivre. C'est pourquoi que dans tout le Bignona, on dit que la forêt a complètement disparu, et que la Gambie est l'un des pays qui en profite le plus. C'est un des plus grands producteurs de bois rose, même s'ils n'en ont aucun chez eux. Le bois est coupé en Bignona et après il traverse la frontière en Gambie. Des observateurs ont démontré que le long de la frontière avec la Gambie nous voyons des centaines et des centaines de scieries juste de l'autre côté de la frontière, avec bien sûr la complicité des factions, de l'État, et de ces compagnies. Puis, ce bois est exporté du port de Banjul. Les intérêts sont là. Cela permet aux uns de pouvoir continuer leur lutte pour gagner de l'argent, ou bien pour les populations de vivre. Avec ce changement climatique et cette pauvreté quasi extrême, le peuple a besoin de survivre et donc doit vendre ce bois. Donc l'un [le peuple] comme pour l'autre [les séparatistes], on coupe le bois, on l'exporte globalement, et cela fait que la forêt disparaît.

Ce qui est intéressant c'est que les anthropologues diront que la conception de la forêt n'est pas pareil partout - comme entre Diola du Casa ou Diola du Fiony [vers Bignona]. Il y a la forêt sacrée, et on ne la touche pas. Cette conception existe surtout en Casa. Ici, la vitesse de disparition est très lente quand comparé à la forêt de Bignona puisque la forêt est respectée. Comparé aux Diolas de Bignona, là les intérêts économiques prennent le dessus sur d'autres intérêts culturels ou la conceptions du bois sacré n'existe pas. Là, la forêt sert aux hommes pour l'exploiter jusqu'à sa disparition. Un contact avec moi qui travaille dans le bois me disait que la forêt au Bignona avait quasiment disparu du a ces trafics. Et l'État, comme je disais plus tôt, n'a pas accès à ces endroits et donc ne peut rien administrer à cause de ces factions et enclavement. C'est le même problème qu'avec la cultivation de cannabis.

LR: En voyant le fait que nous avons ces bois sacrés et que nous avons cette attaque sur la culture locale, est-ce que ça crée encore plus d'entrenchement de la part de la population locale ou une sensation de ne pas être compris? [39:10]

BT: Bein le bois sacré n'est pas coupé, c'est ça en fait. C'est vraiment une différence de conception et de consentement des populations locales qu'en Bignona il coupe mais au Sud ils ne le toucheront pas. C'est vraiment au nord que cette différence de conceptions donne place aux intérêts économiques. Et donc ça a disparu plus rapidement.

Il y a deux raisons en faites: d'une part, ils n'ont pas la même conception de la forêt que ceux du Casa. Et de deux: ces grands intermédiaires et profiteurs - qui vont profiter de l'instabilité en Casamance - exploite le bois jusqu'à sa disparition.

LR: Très très intéressant. Avant d'aller vers la politique nationale de l'opposition et son lien à Ziguinchor, je veux retourner en arrière un petit bout. Vous dites qu'entre ici et Dakar - surtout à Dakar - on a vu les universités être fermées du aux étudiants. Sont les étudiants aux centre d'un grand mouvement et qui dirige une demande d'un changement de la politique nationale et du gouvernement Macky Sall? [40:58]

BT: Je n'irais pas jusqu'à la, et je ne pense pas que ca irait jusqu'à la. Mais il y a un véritable changement de mentalité qui est en train de s'établir. On peut voir une vraie prise de conscience de la part de la jeunesse. Avant ils c'était délaissé de la politique et d'être dans la société. Elle [La jeunesse] s'était recourré sur elle-même, sur les diplômes et comment accéder à leur destins. Elle était vraiment à l'écart de la société, cette génération *X* et *Y*. Une véritable génération perdue. Et aujourd'hui cette génération a pris conscience depuis la génération *Boul Fallé* [1990: génération je m'en fous]. Cette génération Boul Fallé, qui reconnaissait l'absence du gouvernement, prenait en charge leur ville et leur communauté. Et c'est arrivé après à la génération du *Je M'en Foutisme* et maintenant une véritable demande de changement. Ils en ont marre de cette politique depuis les 1990s qui n'amène rien, on en a marre que nos gouvernement soient remplis par les mêmes têtes, et on en a marre de cette politique improductive, de cette société et projets qui n'avancent pas, de cet argent qui disparaît et cette corruption endémique. Donc voilà, le sommet de cette prise de conscience de la jeunesse -des rappeurs, des journalistes, des universitaires et la société civile - qui s'est retrouvé au centre de ce mouvement. Et je pense qu'avec Sonko et le PASTEF c'est simplement un aboutissement de cette longue marche vers la centralité de la jeunesse. Avant c'était les aînés qui étaient au centre mais aujourd'hui ça a basculé avec les anciens mis au périphérique et les jeunes placés au centre. Désormais, tout dépend de les convaincre et de les garder heureux. Donc on peut considérer qu'ils ont pris le pouvoir sans être dans le gouvernement. Avec leurs émeutes et leurs manifestations, ces jeunes ont fait trembler le pouvoir. Ceux au pouvoir sont conscients que c'est les jeunes qu'il faut considérer

maintenant, et que c'est eux le futur du pays. Je pense plus que jamais, nous sommes dans cette dynamique la.

LR: C'est le bloc d'électeur le plus important la? Si tu veux gagner la politique nationale, c'est les jeunes qu'il faut gagner? [44:23]

BT: C'est ça. C'est la force, c'est l'avenir. Ils sont déterminés aujourd'hui, ils sont conscients de leur devoir de citoyen. Je pense qu'ils ont définitivement pris le pouvoir aujourd'hui et ce n'est pas juste ici au Sénégal. On le voit au Burkina, au Congo. C'est une vraie prise de conscience par ces jeunes qui reconnaissent que c'est eux le moteur de l'avenir. "On ne va plus laisser faire comme avant." Tout cela cristallisé dans cette situation aujourd'hui, est le grand défi de Macky Sall à faire face à cela. Il ne l'a pas vu venir, et il a en plus créé cette situation. Moi je suis convaincu que c'est lui et ses deux termes présidentiels qui a créé le PASTEF. Les gouvernements dans beaucoup de pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest ont une apathie envers la pauvreté. Le PASTEF et d'autre groupe d'opposition offre vers les faibles, les pauvres, les opprimés une empathie qui les amènent vers eux. Je pense d'opprimer, d'interdire, d'emprisonner, de maltraiter n'a que fait créé un monstre, et ce monstre il est là avec la jeunesse, autour d'un projet mené de Sonko.

Mais je me dis toujours que c'est qu'un épiphénomène. Sonko c'est un élément d'un ensemble, un élément d'une grande prise de conscience. Ça se centre autour de lui mais le sentiment va bien au-delà de ça. C'est une jeunesse qui en a marre de tout d'avant et voit Sonko comme une façon d'arriver au changement. C'est leur façon de prendre leur destin en main.

LR: Alors, on pourrait maintenant parler de Sonko ou de Macky Sall, je vous laisse décider. C'est sur que vous dites que Sonko c'est un phénomène, mais un phénomène spécifique au contexte actuel du Sénégal. J'ai repéré ceci, mais je demande: on voit que Macky Sall ne se représentera pas - qui est vitale pour la démocratie Sénégalaise - mais comment voyez vous le lien avec son successeur l'actuel Premier Ministre Amadou Ba. Comment voyez-vous cette délégation du pouvoir de Macky Sall vers son Premier Ministre, en voyant que Sonko est aussi en prison et a choisi son propre successeur? [47:17]

BT: Je pense que c'est cette jeunesse qui veut avancer. C'est une réussite pour la jeunesse que Macky Sall ne se représente plus. Je pense surtout qu'il n'avait pas trop le choix. Il s'est trouvé dos au mur par la pression des jeunes. S'il l'aurait fait, ça aurait complètement divisé le pays et le mettrait à terre. Je pense qu'il a bien analysé la situation politique et qu'il fallait mettre la patrie avant le parti. Il n'avait vraiment plus le choix puisque les jeunes étaient là, ils étaient prêts pour résister à son troisième mandat. Heureusement qu'il a été clairvoyant sur ce fait. Mais à mon avis c'est vraiment les jeunes qui l'ont forcé à cette décision du a leur vigilance. C'est une jeunesse qui sert de veille pour que les choses se déroulent comme elle devrait. C'est une victoire de la jeunesse et de leur prise de conscience qui maintenant ne veut plus être dirigée par quelqu'un d'autre. Ils veulent faire partie du système, ils veulent en prendre part.

Donc il a dû choisir entre plusieurs personnes. Bien sûr je ne suis pas trop au fait de ce parti là mais il a choisi le plus loyal. Quelqu'un qui ne le trahirait pas, qui serait malléable, qui perpétuerait cette action, qui n'a pas les dents longues, qui n'est pas ambitieux au point de défaire les victoires de Macky Sall.

LR: Pas comme un Sonko; quelqu'un qui l'écouterà.

BT: Voilà, contrairement à quelqu'un d'autre comme les autres candidats jeunes qui peuvent aller contre Sall. L'enjeu ici c'est que le pouvoir lui revienne, que le pouvoir reste dans le parti - qu'il dirige. Y'a des casseroles à vider encore: surtout après tout ce qui est passé en termes de violation des droits de l'homme, de corruption. On a parlé des milliards et des milliards de détournement, de faux billets, de trafic de drogue. En considérant tout cela, il faut quelqu'un qui puisse couvrir derrière. A défaut de Macky Sall: il n'avait plus la possibilité comme la jeunesse l'a forcé à l'abandon. Donc on a quelqu'un d'autre pour continuer l'affaire, surtout un fidèle.

***LR:* Mais est-ce que les gens - ou même vous - reconnaissent que oui c'est un changement mais ça serait un changement vide? [50:38]**

BT: Non, ils l'ont dit que c'est une continuité. Donc c'est à dire que celui qui a soif, il continuera à avoir soif; celui qui a faim continuera à avoir faim. C'est ça la continuité pour le pays. On élit quelqu'un pour un projet ou pour changer des choses. Mais pour vous dire tout simplement: le rôle qu'on attribue à Amadou Bâ n'est pas de changer des choses mais il est là pour continuer et surtout protéger le système. Continuer à être dans l'impunité. C'est une question de protéger les plus grands criminels tandis que le petit voleur de poule pour manger va finir en prison. Ou même celui qui dénonce le gouvernement sur Internet finira en prison. C'est ça qui est vraiment dommage dans cette situation. Ce sera Macky Sall sans son corps: son fantôme.

***LR:* Est-ce que le sentiment est que ce fantôme de Macky Sall puisse gagner? C'est sur qu'en Afrique, le président actuel a toujours un énorme avantage contre l'opposition, surtout s'il est corrompu? [52:55]**

BT: Moi je suis convaincu que - je reste un universitaire à la basse - le processus électoral Sénégalais est un des plus fiable au monde, pour avoir été président du bureau de vote pendant plusieurs reprises - en tout pas loin de 10 élections (locale, législative, présidentielle) ici à Ziguinchor. Je sais personnellement que le processus est sécurisé. Depuis le bureau de vote, après 18:00 (sauf avec l'autorisation du préfet), les résultats sont clôturés. Puis on compte, avec des représentants de tous les partis, c'est très transparent. Une fois qu'on est tous d'accord, on signe un PV; ce PV est sous-scellés; puis j'attends personnellement que l'armée vienne et fasse le tour pour récupérer le PV en trois exemplaires. Un va au sénat, un autre à la commission au niveau du préfet, et un autre je sais plus où. Mais chaque membre de parti a sa propre copie du PV pour passer ceci à d'autre représentant à différent niveau.

Donc je n'ai pas de crainte à ce niveau là. J'ai confiance au processus. Le vainqueur sera celui que la population choisit. Après, il ne manquera pas de fraude: des villes où il n'y a pas de représentant ou des villes où les électeurs seront plus nombreux que les habitants même. Ça peut arriver - à la Soviétique. Mais à part ça, le Sénégal a une longue histoire de fiabilité dans le système électoral. Tant que les populations votent, c'est le véritable plus populaire qui gagnera. Mais quand ça parle du fichier électoral - la liste - on dit qu'il y a pratiquement 1 million d'électeurs pas sur la fiche. Ça c'est une autre question, faut qu'on aborde ça comme société.

***LR:* C'est très important la fiabilité. Mais de plus, en voyant qu'il y a l'emprisonnement de Sonko pour "corruption de jeunesse," est-ce que vous croyez qu'il y a un véritable agenda politique par le gouvernement contre Sonko, dû au gouvernement reconnaître le danger qu'il pose? De l'extérieur, c'est déjà assez clair que sa popularité est immense dans les grandes villes. Il est extrêmement charismatique, il arrive à faire sortir les jeunes. Y a-t-il un agenda de l'enlever des listes puisqu'il pourrait facilement remporter la victoire? [56:35]**

BT: Oui, le gouvernement a tout fait. Je crois que c'est un projet pour l'État de mettre Sonko *out*. L'État voyait le danger, il voyait l'audience qu'il avait, et les scores qu'il a rapportés dans toutes ces élections auxquelles il a participé. Lui et son parti sont rentrés dans l'assemblée nationale avec ce qu'on appelle le *plus-forest*. Les élections qui ont suivi, il a eu encore plus de représentants. Puis aux prochaines élections il a terminé troisième avec 15%. Ensuite, avec la grande coalition, aux dernières élections législatives ils étaient quasiment à égalité avec la coalition au pouvoir. Cette présidentielle était vraiment la dernière étape pour lui pour enfin prendre le pouvoir. Le gouvernement l'a vu, ils l'ont analysé, ils ont mis en place des stratégies pour n'importe quel gouvernement aurait fait. Ils ont profité de sa faiblesse pour l'éliminer. Et peut-être après un moment donné, Sonko et le PASTEF vont eux-même préparer autour de ces faiblesses. Quoi qu'il en soit, la population n'a pas perdu leur popularité et confiance en lui. Macky Sall, d'une façon, c'est dit: "oui j'y vais pas, mais Sonko n'ont plus n'y irait pas non plus." Même s'il a leurs acolytes: lui il a Amadou Ba, et Sonko a Diomaye Faye, ce ne sera pas nous. Mais même, Diomaye Faye est aussi en prison. Donc est-ce que le gouvernement va lui laisser faire campagne et être à égalité avec les autres.

Le projet reste là depuis le tout début. C'est un long projet et un grand danger pour le maintien au pouvoir. C'est du pure Machiavélisme: resté au pouvoir le plus longtemps possible. Je ne suis pas devins bien sûr, mais quand même s'il avait eu des élections aujourd'hui avec Sonko en liberté, je pense qu'il aurait tout gagné avec la jeunesse derrière lui. Je parle beaucoup avec les jeunes. Si elle vote - et c'est vraiment pas quelque chose de sûr dans notre âge; elle parle beaucoup (en ligne) mais le jour J c'est pas toujours le cas d'action. C'est ça le grand défi de l'opposition: convaincre les jeunes d'aller voter.

LR: Est-ce que vous croyez que Diomaye Faye a une véritable chance de gagner? Comment est-il apperçu par le public en voyant que ce n'est pas Sonko mais un lieutenant? [1:00:41]

BT: Oui je pense qu'il a le charisme et que c'est quelqu'un qui... Tu sais, au Sénégal on juge quelqu'un d'abord par l'apparence. C'est quelqu'un qui s'exprime bien, qui a toujours été logique et droit dans ses bottes, et surtout toujours fidèle à Sonko. Le travail du PASTEF aujourd'hui, c'est de dire que Diomaye c'est Sonko. Et si Sonko a eu confiance en lui, c'est parce qu'il est quelqu'un qui est digne de confiance. Avant tout, c'est Sonko qui l'a choisi. Sonko reconnaît qu'il avait un projet pour l'écartier. Je suis sûr qu'il n'a pas été surpris d'être exclu de la liste des candidats. S'il a choisi Diomaye au-delà des autres, comme l'administrateur du parti ou le porte parole, c'est parce que Diomaye Faye est complètement fiable et surtout compétent. Donc le parti travaille sur ça. Si la population y croit, je crois que le pouvoir aurait perdu.

LR: Juste une question administrative envers la politique Sénégalaise, le premier ministre c'est un poste choisi par le président ou c'est l'assemblée nationale qui le choisi? [1:02:49]

BT: Non au Sénégal c'est le président qui choisit son premier ministre.

LR: Donc ca pourrait être possible que si Diomaye Faye devient président, Sonko pourrait être choisi comme premier ministre? [1:02:58]

BT: Oui bien sûr. C'est ça leur projet. On ne libère pas que Sonko, mais tous les autres milliers de ses supporters qui sont actuellement en prison. Tous ces détenus politiques. Et en effet, peut-être lui choisir comme premier ministre. Et après, aux prochaines élections en 2029 ce serait Sonko qui mène la candidature du parti.

LR: Et donc une dernière question. Je vois le statut du PASTEF qui est actuellement dissolu mais continue à mener leur candidature. Comment la dissolution du PASTEF a-t'il eu un impact sur leur actions politiques? Et est-ce que c'était encore une décision politique? [1:03:59]

BT: L'opposition a tellement travaillé sur ce projet que ce n'est plus un parti ou un individu, mais un mouvement. Ils ont organisé tout autour de cet objectif. Ils ont travaillé sur ça en telle sorte qu'aujourd'hui ce n'est plus important qui porte le drapeau, puisque le parti et le mouvement sont établis. Ils ont réussi le travail sur ce niveau là, après pas loin de 10 ans de travail.

Sachant qu'en face, la bataille n'est pas encore perdue. Ils se disent qu'il y a encore des choses à faire pour que "l'ex parti" ne remporte pas cette victoire. Mais, l'esprit et le contenu sont là, même si le nom n'y est plus. Le gouvernement doit se mordre les doigts parce que "tiens, on a dissous ce parti mais ils sont toujours là, toujours populaires."

LR: Dans cette situation ou ils ont dissous le parti, Sonko et le PASTEF peuvent faire sans? [1:04:47]

BT: En effet, ils peuvent faire sans. Selon la loi, un membre d'un ex-parti ne doit pas se représenter aux élections. Mais avec Diomaye, c'est une coalition, donc ils ne peuvent rien faire contre lui. Ce n'est plus le PASTEF. Rien n'a changé dans le projet, malgré cela.

- End -

A.3 – Interview with Dr. Mamadou Bodian:

The following interview took place with Dr. Mamadou Bodian, a researcher at the Institut Fondamentale d'Afrique Noire (IFAN), coordinator at the West African Research Center (WARC), and member of a non-specified national political party on February 8th. This was the second meeting with Mamadou, the first serving to introduce me to him prior to heading down to Casamance. The conversation was held in the midst of the ongoing political crisis as the opposition pressure was beginning to organise and mount. The subject gave full consent for name and insights to be included in the final paper, and frequently made themselves available to inquiry.

This first half is the refined notes taken during the conversation with Mamadou (the text features what he has discussed):

From the more liberal end of the Senegalese political spectrum, there was a fear that Sonko would be bringing authoritarianism. Incidentally however, Sall brought that authoritarianism himself through all his autocratic actions to control Sonko's movement. Senegal's image has been severely damaged. Mamadou mentions that the damage extends to Karim Wade - presidential candidate and son of former president - and his camp wanted to throw out the *Conseil Constitutionnel* for corruption. Sall, in his seemingly rushed decision, has crafted a situation that is rallying the entire opposition factions (politicians and parties, syndicats and unions, civil society) into a unifying movement against Sall and his regime. With this, the coalition is hoping to bring the elections from December to prior to Sall's end of term on April 2nd. In sending the nation down this path, Sall largely stands alone: many

of his ministers have resigned while his allies distance themselves from him. Despite this, there is a very delicate power struggle between Sall & his ruling party, and the opposition forces that have slowly built up and will decide the fate of Senegal.

Sall and Authoritarianism:

For the past 3 years, Sall had been undergoing this song and dance around his presentation to the next election. He has continuously reaffirmed his will not present himself at the next election, but it is simultaneously clear that he has little want to let go of power. In fact, Mamadou argued that Sall's coup attempt did not come unexpectedly. He cites Sall's history of using gendarmes to force votes in favour of his bills in the National Assembly in light of his recent use of force to legalise his decision to cancel the election. So while to outside observers it may seem unexpected, it largely was an action that could be expected from an animal trapped in a corner.

Mamadou sees this threat to democracy and the slow erosion of democratic principles as having its roots in Sall's election in 2012. For example, in 2016 there was the political fiasco of term lengths, term limits, and their applicability to ongoing terms. The whole back and forth stemmed from the previous president's - Abdoulaye Wade - position that changes to terms do not retroactively apply, meaning that Wade would be eligible to a third term for 7 years, due to his first being 5 years. Sall beat Wade in the runoff, and would change the law after he served his first term of 7 years. However, he argued that his 2012 7-year term could not fall under the change of laws in 2016-17. Part of the source of the ongoing political crisis was due to this intense constitutional discourse around retroactivity. Sall argued that he could run, but he is choosing not to.

What is clear to Mamadou, is that Senegal has transitioned over 12 years of Sall presidency into an electoral authoritarian regime. During this process, he strongly believes that there is a two tiered political and judicial system. For instance, Bassirou Diomaye Faye - replacement candidate to Sonko - is currently imprisoned due to negatively talking about a magistrate over Sonko's trial in a social media post. Meanwhile, on the eve of the election many of the presidential candidates - most prominent being Karim Wade - openly called the *Conseil Constitutionnel* corrupt to no punishment. The anti-establishment opposition and the south receive the most direct punishments from the government.

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This second half of the interview is the written up discussion held with Mr. Bodian:

Origin of the *Conseil Constitutionnel*:

Mamadou Bodian (MB): Donc, le conseil constitutionnel est une institution mise en place à l'époque pour gérer tout ce qui était légalité relative aux élections. Parce que, avant les années '90s y a avait un contesiment, du fait d'une centralisation du processus électoral qui était contrôlé du début jusqu'à la fin par l'administration de l'État. C'est le ministre de l'intérieur, c'est les directions qui géraient le processus électoral. Mais dans l'année '92, il y a eu un consensus qui a été trouvé entre l'appareil politique et l'ancien président Abdou Diouf qui a fait face dans l'année '92 d'une grande crise qui l'a poussé à aller vers une discussion autour des règles du jeu électoral. Il y avait un code électoral qui a été élaboré en '92 et on l'appel le Code Électoral Consensuel. Donc si vous allez dans les documents ou les affiches, on vous parlera du Code Électoral Consensuel de '92, dont le processus a été conduit par un juge très connu à l'époque *Kéba Mbaye* qui est plus tard devenu le président du Conseil Constitutionnel. Mais à l'époque c'était la Cour Suprême qui gérait par exemple les contentieux électoraux. Il n'y avait pas encore une autre cour qui gérait. Mais dans les années '92 après ce Code Électoral Consensuel, on a créé le Conseil Constitutionnel qui avait connu en '93 une des plus grandes crises. Une vraie crise de maturité ou de naissance, on l'appelle comme on veut. C'est qu'en '92 on a

créé le Code, on a créé le conseil, puis on va aux élections législatives de '93 où il y a eu une crise majeure de légitimité, du processus lui-même puisque certain leader de l'opposition avait contesté le processus et on accusé certains membres du Conseil Constitutionnelle d'être à l'origine de ce fiasco électoral. Et d'ailleurs, il y a eu le président du Conseil Constitutionnel qui a été tué! Babacar Sèye, c'était le président du Conseil Constitutionnel et on l'avait tué durant le processus. On ne sait toujours pas qui l'a tué. On avait accusé Abdallah Wade à l'époque d'être à l'origine, mais certain pense que c'est l'état qui avait commandité justement ce meurtre et qui a complètement chamboulé le processus électoral. Mais après la situation est revenue à la normale, et il y a eu des efforts pour rendre le processus électoral beaucoup plus à même de conduire à une alternance. Des réformes ont été introduites en profondeur, pour rendre - disons - les organes chargés de la gestion des élections beaucoup plus inclusives avec la participation de la société civile, des partis politiques, etc etc. Donc l'ONEL - Observatoire National des Élections - a été complètement réformé, mais il y a aussi la direction générale des élections qui a été créée pour appuyer le ministre de l'intérieur. C'est une branche du ministre et qui se charge de l'aspect technique des élections, pendant que le Conseil Constitutionnel gérait tous les aspects juridiques. Mais le *mec 2* c'est vraiment le ministre de l'intérieur pour tous les aspects administratifs. Mais ce qui c'est passé avec le Conseil, ce qui a joué le plus grand rôle important, dans une certaine mesure.

Conseil Constitutionnel Today:

Mamadou Badian: Mais depuis quelques années, les acteurs politiques ont l'impression que le Conseil est utilisé pour valider - ou invalider parfois - des décisions prises par le parti au pouvoir dans le sens de créer les conditions les plus favorables pour remporter les élections ou de prolonger un mandat. En 2016 cela a eu lieu. D'abord il y a aussi eu Abdoulaye Wade en 2010 quand il a voulu changer la constitution et introduire un ticket qui lui permettrait de créer un poste de vice président mais aussi de réduire le seuil pour passer au deuxième tours à 25% au lieu de 50%. Donc il y a eu des manifestations de rue puis finalement il a reculé. Mais, il a voulu aussi se présenter pour un troisième mandat. Et donc la mobilisation était autour aussi de la contestation d'un troisième mandat pour Wade.

Leo Ricca (LR): Légalement tu ne peux pas avoir trois mandat? C'est dans la constitution?

MB: Non, exactement, c'est dans la constitution. Le problème, c'est que quand tu changes la constitution au cours de ton premier mandat, on invoque souvent le principe de la rétroactivité. C'est que: ce mandat ne s'applique pas. Donc, les changements ne s'appliqueront qu'au deuxième et même troisième mandat. C'est comme si ce mandat ne compte pas et que tu as le droit à deux autres mandat. C'est ce que Abdoulaye Wade a fait. Il dit: "La Constitution a été changée durant mon premier mandat, donc il ne s'applique pas au premier mandat. Je suis passé de 5 à 7 ans, donc j'ai encore deux mandat" puis les gens lui ont dit non. Mais le Conseil Constitutionnel a dit: "effectivement, Wade a la possibilité de faire un troisième mandat parce que cette loi est rétroactive." Il s'est présenté, puis il a perdu.

LR: Contre Sall, c'est bien ça?

MB: C'est ça, contre Macky Sall en 2012. Et quand il est arrivé au pouvoir, Macky Sall aussi a changé la constitution puisqu'il avait dit qu'il allait réduire les mandat de 7 à 5 ans - y compris le premier mandat! Il arrive, il change la constitution, il dit: "Bon malheureusement, le Conseil Constitutionnel a dit que je ne peux pas changer le mandat en cours."

LR: Donc c'est son prochain et pas le premier? Il s'est gardé deux années.

MB: Exactement. Donc il passe, il gagne les élections puis il revient et il dit: "écoute bon, les deux mandats maintenant. Le premier mandat ne s'applique pas à moi." Non seulement il ne l'a pas réduit, mais maintenant il dit que ça ne s'applique pas à moi.

LR: Même pour le deuxième? Au juste le premier?

MB: Non il dit que le premier mandat ne s'applique pas, que celui de 7 ans ne compte pas. Donc maintenant il a la possibilité de faire deux mandats de 5 ans.

LR: Et c'est pour ça qu'il dit qu'il ne va pas se représenter aux élections et pourquoi c'est une position si importante.

MB: Exactement, exactement. Le fait de dire qu'il ne va pas se représenter c'était une réponse à ceux qui lui dit qu'il a des intentions de se représenter pour son deuxième mandat de 5 ans. Et quand on lui met la pression il réaffirme qu'il ne se représentera pas même s'il a la possibilité. [7:01]

LR: C'est aussi pour créer une nouvelle tradition où oui ça peut s'appliquer rétroactivement mais il ne faut pas que ça arrive.

MB: C'est ça. Mais bon, les gens avaient l'impression que c'était sincère mais là, Sall a trouvé d'autre moyen de détourner l'élection et de continuer son mandat. Mais la constitution est claire la dessus. C'est que pour être élu président, il faut gagner le suffrage universel. Il n'y a aucun autre moyen. Les seuls cas exceptionnels prévus par la constitution c'est en cas de vacances de pouvoir, en cas d'empêchement de président, et en cas de démission. Mais aujourd'hui, nous ne sommes sous aucuns de ces cas. Donc il veut prolonger. Sauf que, à partir du deux avril, il n'est plus président. Si on se fige sur les discussions de la constitutions, il y a vacance du pouvoir dès le 2 avril.

LR: Et donc le pouvoir serait élu par l'Assemblée à ce point?

MB: Non, le président de l'Assemblée devient le président, et il aura 90 jours pour organiser des élections.

LR: Donc à peu près Avril jusqu'à Décembre. C'est ça leur idée?

MB: C'est ça. Donc normalement c'est ça qui va se passer. Et je pense que le schéma qu'ils ont mis en place mènera à ça. C'est que - même si Macky part, il y aura quelqu'un qui va gérer le projet.

LR: Qui est du parti?

MB: Qui est du parti. C'est ça le deal. Maintenant l'opposition dit: "Nous connaissons ce que le gars veut faire mais on ne va pas lui offrir l'opportunité. Même si c'est le président de l'Assemblée Nationale qui est organisé, on va lui imposer des conditions qui permettent à l'opposition de reprendre le contrôle du processus et ne pas être complètement rejeté. Et c'est ça actuellement le contrôle. Le président est passé par l'Assemblée parce que..."

LR: Ça légitimise?

MB: ...oui. Parce que le Conseil Constitutionnel bien évidemment n'a aucun moyen et le processus de parrainage est une mascarade. Parce qu'on dit que pour prétendre à une élection, il faudrait avoir entre 0.6% et 0.8% de l'élection. C'est ça les dispositions. Ce qui vaut approximativement 44,360 électeurs. Ca c'est le minimum. Le maximum c'est 58,000. Donc si tu n'as pas entre ces deux chiffres, tu ne peux pas. Il faut que les citoyens le choisissent. Ils ont mis en place une solution qui permet de prendre en compte les parrainages électroniques. Mais le problème c'est qu'ils ont créé la solution mais personne ne sait comment le contrôle est fait. On ne sait pas comment le logiciel est paramétré. Tu viens, on te dit qu'il y a des doublons, des invalides, mais tu n'as aucune base pour vérifier ça. Parce que les talons de mesure sont les fichiers électoraux. Mais dans le processus on nous dit que même les fichiers qu'on a utilisés pour évaluer les parrainages, eux même ne savent pas, parce qu'ils sont incompetents pour connaître sa. C'est seulement les techniciens du Ministère de l'intérieur qui peuvent nous donner ces informations. Alors quand il n'y a pas de base d'appréciation, bien naturellement le processus est vicié. Donc les partis politiques se sont retrouvés dans une situation telle ou qu'on leur dit que presque 28,000 de leurs parrains ne sont pas sur le fichier électoral. Les gens on dit: "Alors attendez, donne nous le fichier." Et ils ont refusé. C'est ce qui a conduit à cette crise. Et en plus de cette crise là, il se trouve que le Conseil a laissé passer des candidats qui avaient une double nationalité, alors qu'il est prévu sur la constitution de juré sur l'honneur qu'on a pas une double nationalité autre que le Sénégal. Si tu as une double nationalité et que tu veux te représenter, il faut la renoncer avant le début de l'élection. Mais Karim Wade, à renoncer alors qu'il avait posé sa candidature. Ce qui veut dire, que quand il a juré, il était encore Français.

LR: Donc d'un point de vue il ne pouvait pas se présenter. Donc la cours a fait son devoir?

MB: Exactement, mais les gens ont dit que non, c'est pas normal, etc etc. Ils ont attaqué la cour en disant qu'elle était corrompue par le premier ministre, puis ils vont au parlement pour introduire une commission d'enquête qui a été soutenue par les parlementaires du pouvoir. Ils accusent le premier ministre d'être le corrupteur et les députés du parti au pouvoir s'allient avec lui. Mais en vérité il y a une dimension politique, c'est que Macky Sall avait une minorité au sein du parlement, et le fait de créer cette situation la lui permettait de créer un rapprochement avec le *Parti Democratique Sénégalais* et d'avoir la "upper hand."

LR: Le PDS, c'est bien [Abdoulaye/Karim] Wade?

MB: C'est ça. Donc voilà la situation. Et aujourd'hui, Macky profite parce qu'il a voulu mettre la pression pour que les gens démissionnent, ils ont refusé, il a pris ses responsabilités, mais la il se rend compte que c'est compliqué parce que la communauté internationale est en train de lui mettre la pression, au niveau interne il y a des pressions, au niveau du parti au pouvoir il y a une crise; et qu'est ce qu'il fait? Il appelle au dialogue, et les gens lui disent "on ne va pas dialoguer avec toi" parce que tu n'es pas crédible.

LR: Et donc, y a t'il une chance que tout cela pousse Sall dans un coin, au point où il va continuer d'agir et de créer de l'instabilité?

MB: Non. En fait, Sall veut aussi pousser l'opposition à utiliser la violence, mais les gens ont compris le jeu. Si on utilise la violence, il va utiliser ses pouvoirs exceptionnels pour gouverner. Il n'a pas besoin du parlement, il n'a pas besoin de qui que ce soit. La plus grosse bêtise que l'opposition pourrait faire serait d'utiliser la violence. Sall veut les pousser vers ça, mais je pense que les gens sont

suffisamment intelligents. Ils vont utiliser d'autres méthodes, c'est-à-dire des alliances fortes avec la société civile, les partis politiques, les organisations, les mouvements sociaux afin de lui imposer des formes de pressions comme les journées *ville-morte* etc etc. Une fois que c'est coordonné, c'est terminé pour Sall: il sera obligé d'abdiquer. Et même si on va vers un dialogue, on va dialoguer avec une position de force.

LR: Nous avons eu l'impression que la communauté d'affaire ici ne comprend pas comment Sall a pu faire cela... que la communauté n'a pas vu venir ça.

MB: Non, personne ne comprend... Mais nous on a vu venir. On a alerté, mais personne ne voulait nous entendre. *[brief pause to lean in]* J'ai fait le tour des ambassades, parce que je fais partie aussi des experts à qui on fait appel de temps en temps pour analyser la situation et on les a averti. Ce gars ne veut pas partir. Il a compris qu'il y a avait des faiblesses au sein de sa formation politique, et on va vers une élection où il y a de forte chance de perdre au premier tour. Ça c'est les signaux.

LR: Pour qu'un président perde au premier tour, ça serait honteux.

MB: Le candidat opposant est en prison, son numéro deux est en prison, il y a des milliers de jeunes en prison. Le fait qu'on retienne des gens en prison parce qu'ils ont manifesté ou exprimé leurs opinions a créé un sentiment de frustration qui se sédimente, et qui attend de trouver un exutoire pacifique: c'est les élections, parce que les gens n'ont plus la possibilité de manifester. Tu manifeste, on te fout en prison. Donc les gens restaient calme en attendant l'élection; pas parce qu'ils sont contents mais parce qu'ils ne peuvent pas s'exprimer. Maintenant, on leur dit qu'il n'y a pas d'élection à date d'issue, et les gens se disent "non mais ça c'est le comble."

- End -

A.4 – Interview with Mr. Samuel Sakhewar Fama Diop:

The following interview was held with Samuel Sakhewar Fama Diop (Sammy). Sammy is a student at the Université Cheik Anta Diop of Dakar where he studies political science. Most importantly, Sammy is a member of the Ex-PASTEF and is the leader of a small political action cell of 25 members based in Dakar. The interview was held on February 17th, without recording equipment, thus below is the refined version of the rough notes taken during the conversation. The goal of this interview was to collect information from a primary source on the Party through an inside member, and help align the different perspectives this research will work with. The subject gave full consent for name and insights to be included in the final paper.

The PASTEF:

Prior to the dissolution of the PASTEF by the judiciary powers, Sammy would lead meetings of the cell, organise campaigns promoting awareness towards PASTEF's mission and the state of the country, and orchestrate activities to increase connectivity to the population. According to Sammy, the mission is as follows: *La patrie en premiere*. There is an expectation that members must give themselves to the *patrie*, thus making the PASTEF a "people's party." Moreover, the PASTEF is organised as an anti-system party, because the "system is *France Afrique*." By being anti-system, it

speaks to the struggle against neocolonialism, the reclamation of sovereignty, and ending the vulnerable French dependent economy. To achieve this, anti-corruption and development are placed at the forefront: creation of an industrial power, and unlocking the economic potential of each region.

When talking about the ideology of this position, I asked Sammy if he saw it as Marxist. He countered by defining it as *Gauchiste*: not quite extreme Marxist, but we do champion the notion that the sharing of economic productivity must be far more equal than currently is. They are socialists and progressive. Before even reaching that however, their core ideology is corruption must be resisted: it is the key struggle. This is not a top-led movement by Sonko however: Sammy considers every member their own leader, who are together in resisting the struggle in front of them.

Perhaps in its roots they acted in a more marxist fashion, but presently Sammy and the party consider themselves pan-Africanists. According to Sammy, a key moment in PASTEF's rise is the merging of Sonko's party with Anta Diop's RND (Rassemblement National Democratique), a leading independence era figure. His brother - Diallo Diop - did not have the gravitas to hold the party together (he believes that African political parties only live as long as powerful leadership). With that merger came pan-Africanism and its richness as an ideology. This put three prongs on the PASTEF fork: the foremost and longest is the anti-corruption movement; what follows is the anti-establishment movement; and finally comes pan-Africanism. Naturally, Sammy believes Sonko to be a leading African politician. Furthermore, he sees the PASTEF as an African party, and hopes that it will promote African unity and the popping up of this party across the continent. As an example, he mentioned that they fight against the CFAO and *la Francafrrique*, as they represent the structures and systems that maintain Senegal and its fellow nations as colonies, and not as free states.

There are certain elements of the party that Sammy disagrees with. For instance, there are members within the party that seek to promote and establish an Islamist republic that are a danger to the ideals of the party. Despite this corp, the party acts not for the minority, but in the interests of the majority to increase its chances at political victory. Senegal features a wide diversity, and the party acts to appease that landscape. As such, the party is not Islamist, nor Salaafist as has been detracted from the PASTEF. Much like Senegal, and much in line with a pan-african party, it has a high diversity.

Macky Sall:

To Sammy, to resist *Francafrrique* is to resist Macky Sall. Looking at his political actions during his terms, they were rarely putting increased pressure on French interests. Focusing on the constitutional crisis, Sammy firmly believes that the French do have involvement and are capable of intervening. He cites the ECOWAS report in favour of intervention into this decision, and the ensuing French silence. Its uninvovement is highly unusual, and Sammy wonders if there may have been a hidden agreement. Contrastingly, the Americans had a very strong and vocal position on the matter.

Using a geopolitical lens to investigate the vocal US involvement: Sammy reckons that it begins with the French and Sall having colossal agreements in place that neither side wants to lose. The US recognises the mutually beneficial relationship between those two, and is acting in line with their partners' interests. More selfishly, Senegal is a bastion of democracy and would be a big loss for the extension of power that it serves to the US. Losing it to authoritarianism would further open the door for Russian military influence to spread.

Conseil Constitutionnel:

In a rare show of institutional resilience for African democracies, the *Conseil Constitutionnel* (Constitutional Council) put forth a decision that overruled the executive branch's, something that seemed highly unlikely. Sammy believes that the president had uncertainty around the authority of

this council to this decision. Moreover, there was a passive sentiment amongst the Senegalese that the judicial branch was hollow. This was particularly due to the events around Sonko; the legal process around him was rushed, the usual investigative processes were ignored, and the final decision from the judges' condemned Sonko even if evidence indicated the opposite. Thus, there was a clarity on the political partiality of the court, This - in addition to the *rapprochement* of the ministry of justice, prosecutors, and the presidency into one corp placed strain on the public's belief of the justice system. However, the latest decision has gone against the president's attempts and has given hope to the public again on independent institutions.

Most interesting is the word choice in the decision. The council stated "les élections devront se passer dans le meilleur délai" without setting a date themselves. Sammy declared that "the council doesn't simply have a right, but they have a duty to reinstall the elections before April 2nd" when Sall's term would end. The timing of the decision has been vital. It has come at an important time to calm the situation and public resistance, and even more importantly it has avoided the setting of dangerous precedents - it has halted any chance of a case like this repeating. Sammy believes that the entire situation (of the coup) has been a "theatre scene of destruction." The country was in relative calm with the public feverishly anticipating the election, until Macky Sall's decision nearly plunged the nation into chaos. It seems Sammy believes Sall has been doing these actions on purpose in order to justify violent government repression. He believes Sall hoped that by arresting Sonko, it would rekindle the chaos of the '21 and '23 riotings.

Islam in Senegal:

Senegal stands very isolated from its fellow Sahelian neighbours. I - the author - see a tendency for religion and governance to be intertwined with each other, particularly in the Muslim countries like Nigeria, Mali, or even the Northern Nigerian federal states. Sammy outlines how that is not the case in Senegal: the country governs with a very secular hand. For instance, the decision by the *Conseil Constitutionnel* has brought forward religion by pushing for the election to occur in March, when Ramadan would occur. However, thanks to the long traditions, considerations about religions must not interfere with public decisions and the public sphere.

Beyond secularity or basic private life, Islam in Senegal has a unique manifestation: the brotherhoods. Senegal features a various array of brotherhoods lead by a caliph with a zealous series of followers. There are three at the top, but the most powerful of these is the Mouride brotherhood, to which Sammy's family is related. He knows them well: the Maurides tend to be very pressing, very powerful, and have a prominent grip on the population. Moreover, the Mouride run their small religious kingdom from Touba, their holy city. As aforementioned, the tradition of secularity keeps the political influence of the Mouride very informal, but not without teeth. Many decisions by political leaders including the president are rarely done without the consent of the Mouride. While they will often give their blessing, they have an unspoken ability to undermine leaderships, impact voters, and throw their support behind opposition parties. A non-Sammy source I talked with reckoned that these Mouride leaders were a pivotal voice in calming down the violent protests of '21 and '23.

There have always been plots between the brotherhoods and executive branch. Sammy countered my assumption that they exist only outside the political sphere but this is not true. There have been cases where family members belonging to the Mouride have attempted to create an Islamic movement/party, or even committed a coup. However, Senegalese history is rich with secularity and successful maintenance of the democratic institutions. It is not an outside power; **it is a parallel power** system. In line with such, this power will do whatever it can to protect its interest and its survival.

Casamance:

The Casamance is an incredibly rich region full of natural resources. None of these are being exploited, and the few that are come at the expense of the locals. As Sammy assures: Senegal touches little while big companies of private contracts devour the majority of the wealth. The men at the top negotiate in their own interests. For instance with Gas and Petrol, there are still contracts until '25 and '26 that provide near zero money to Senegal, while big men such as Sall reap the benefits at the expense of the nation. Sammy believes that these people are the manifestation of corruption; he believes them careless, corrupt to the bone, and lacking a love of Senegal. In reality, these elites love and protect this status quo system because it keeps money and power within their circle, and locks out the proletariat. Elites are one class, and have been one family for 20 years.

Given this, Sammy sees a direct link between Casamance's struggle and the anti-corruption struggle. "We are part of a new era of renewing Senegal with an end to corruption, to this deep system that halts all progression while breaking all things." Casamance has been, for decades, the centre of corruption and exploitation in Senegal. It has reached a point of systemic reproduction. The most vulnerable to this has been the youth, who have only become more militant in their resistance to the core. In Casamance, we also see the most violent government responses, the most massacres, all of which are pushed by the gendarmeries. Contrastingly to the Northern regions, we can also observe the region featuring the most violent protests as well: they feel more concerned, more involved. Given Sonko's popularity there, observers can notice how this region was specifically targeted and moreover, how Sonko's Diola ethnicity was particularly targeted by government crackdowns. Sammy notes how in the recent amnesty releases of political prisoners, there were many big family names from the Diola that were being released.

The Southerners have a true love for Sonko. They consider him a hero. He has - for the first time in Senegalese history - brought forward a chance for a non-northern candidate to become the president of Senegal. As things stand, the tradition of Northerner's dominance has been an exacerbating element in the sentiments of marginalisation and exclusion in the Casamance, and thus they feel Senegal does not operate for them. The movement that Sonko has been creating is the first to bring the Casamance into a discourse of national cohesion. Through him, a more diverse set of the country feels involved in nationalism and unity against corruption. In a multitude of speeches broadcasted to the entire nation, Sonko has spoken directly to the population of the Casamance as being part of the nation. Being part Wolof of Thies, and part Diola of Ziguinchor, he is one of the rare figures capable of speaking to both experiences. He is both Northerner **and** Southerner. Moreover, he has an ability to speak to the disenfranchised youth. This has been a core mechanic in building up PASTEF as a national force, as well as building a uniquely loyal political base of support in the South.

- End -

A.5 – Interview with Eurocham Senegal Board Member:

These insights come from an informal meeting with a board member of the Eurocham Senegal (Chamber of European Businesses) on Thursday 8th of February, 2024. Eurocham brings together most of the EU-based independent businesses to coordinate their efforts in regards to political situations, economic changes, and EU policy, as well as to promote cooperation. Due to this, the top end of this organisation frequently attends meetings with the French Embassy to Senegal and the EU delegation to Senegal. Thus, interviewing the board member will yield insider perspectives. The subject gave full consent for insights to be included in the analysis of the topic for the final paper.

Motivation:

The EU economic and political bodies present in Senegal had zero idea that such a political coup was coming. Their analysis had indicated that the election would occur and continue the tradition of *alternance*. Quite on the contrary, it seemed to Franco-EU bodies that Sall would step down as he had made plans going forward. The *Eurocham* contact believed that Sall had a powerful UN position on offer in 2 years, however a cross-reference to my UN contacts rejected this idea. Despite this, it appeared very likely that Macky Sall would be given a position in Paris after he stepped down from power: the “envoy of the *Four Ps*” [*envoyé spéciale du Pacte de Paris de la planète et peuple*]. Following February 3rd, this accord likely has fallen through.

With regards to potential motivation, the *Eurocham* contact believes that a lot of pressure to undermine the November decree came from Sall’s wife’s family. Reportedly, the wife’s clan is zealously corrupt, according to this contact, a contact from the WARC (West African Research Center), and the European diplomat. It appears that this family has been heavily profiting from Sall’s successful political career to acquire political positions and wealth. For instance: a brother-in-law of Sall holds a dual appointment as Minister of Infrastructure (massive pool of funds) as well as Mayor of Saint Louis, the former capital and northernmost city. In Senegal, one can say that corruption can be largely overlooked however, there is also a saying: “*Tu peux voler, mais faut partager, sinon prison.*” There needs to be a trickle down of the money appropriated, through helping the poorest in your community for example. In the case of the wife’s clan: money stayed within the pockets, and that only exacerbated the public’s perception.

The Coup:

Moreover, in his political party Sall finds himself as a lonesome strong man. The *Eurocham* contact indicated that the relationship between Prime Minister Amadou Ba and Macky Sall is shaky. Ba recognised that with the ex-PASTEUF representatives imprisoned - and the other opposition being weak - his best chance to win the election was the February 25th date. But with Sall delaying it indefinitely the ex-PASTEUF will only become stronger. More time - especially after attempting his move - will only weaken Ba’ (and thus Sall’s) chances.

Separately, Karim Wade - lacking public respect befitting the son of a former president - denounced the *Conseil Constitutionnel* as corrupt by specifically identifying two of the nine judges. He claims that the *Conseil* did not approve his candidacy due to political motivations. In Senegal, one must hold only the Senegalese nationality to run for president - Karim Wade is a binational French citizen. In order to run, he would have to revoke his nationality **prior** to the declaration of his candidacy to the *Conseil*. Wade claims he had done so accordingly, but it was shown by the *Conseil* and the French government that this was not true. Wade’s outcry created a small movement against the *Conseil Constitutionnel*, who now found themselves in a 3-directional statement between the government, itself, and the fractured-yet-allying opposition forces. By the end of February however, Wade faded into the background - part due to his person, part due to an open letter²⁰⁰ signed by two former presidents Abdoulaye Wade (his father) and Abdou Diouf.

²⁰⁰ The letter came out after Sall’s coup, and featured nothing but empty words similar to ECOWAS’s first announcement. They called for calm and dialogue, and return in time to the traditions of Senegal. It lacked teeth befitting institutional figures and was not viewed positively by many groups in Senegal.

Interestingly, the *Conseil Constitutionnel* could see the growing tension and thus possible alliance between Sall and Wade against the *Conseil* - one of the few remaining independent government arms. As such, the *Conseil* wants the election to occur as quickly as possible as to avoid a politically motivated investigation by Sall and supported by Wade. Whether the *Conseil* is corrupt or not is difficult to assert, but the official candidate list has largely been accepted as seen as valid.

Budget:

The constitutional coup has caused one considerable fallout for the Senegalese people. The beginning of the government's fiscal year was set to begin following the transition of power. The coup has delayed the enacting of these, also *sine die*. However, these budgets also supplement loans & interests and a plethora of other public/social services. Many of these are vital to the health of the Senegalese government and public. Unless opened soon, Senegal may find itself in a very difficult position to pay its bills.

- End -

A.6 – Interview with High-ranking European Diplomat:

This interview - held on the 9th of February - was a short, semi-formal interview with a High-ranking European diplomat to Senegal. In this conversation, I found similar insights to those provided by the contact of the Eurocham. The interview was not available for auditory recording; the text below is a summary of the field notes in the field. The subject gave full consent for insights to be included in the final paper.

Les Mourides:

It was through this contact that the role of the Muslim brotherhoods in Senegal became known. The more clear picture would come following *Interview #2* as the subject has personal connections to the Mourides. The full mechanics of the Mourides in Senegal will be discussed in its own *Subtopic* text. Presently, the diplomat shared that Touba served as the holy city of Islam in Senegal, with the Mouride Brotherhood acting as the local authority. This group's authority is uniquely powerful in the country, rivalling the executive branch. While there are a plethora of traditions and unspoken rules preventing the Mourides from ripping the fabric of the nation, they operate as a parallel power to the traditional forms of political power. The Mouride Caliph has a vice grip on his followers, capable of swaying their votes in elections, their temperaments during political unrest, and their zealous donations to the caliphate. The financial and social power of the Mourides would be enough to swing any election, and many elites know this. The elites refrain from infringing the powers of the Mouride while often respectfully requesting the Caliph's consent. Consent is commonly given as while the traditional powers seek not to trigger the wrath of the acolytes by antagonising the Mourides, so too do the Mourides seek to avoid bringing unnecessary scrutiny from the government. The diplomat further pointed me to a book by Bakari Sambe as part of the Timbuktu Institute on the histories of these brotherhoods.

There was a short discussion on Sonko being an ideological Muslim, and how that may fit within the Mourides. While Sonko may have numerous political views founded in religious beliefs, the Mourides are such a grounded and independent faction that Sonko will struggle to find ways to exploit their influence without alienating the non-political Islam voters. I believe there will be at least

a rapprochement between the government and Mourides. The diplomat revealed that during the violent 2021 and '23 protests, a leading voice in calming the situation and quelling the unrest was the Caliph, playing his role in maintaining the fabric of the nation.

Employment:

The diplomat revealed to me that employment in Senegal is in a catastrophic situation. Despite its status as a leading West African state, it is estimated that nearly 90% of total employment in the country is under informal employment conditions. By itself, it is not something uncommon in Africa. In Lagos, there are always dozens of opportunists and vulnerable recent migrants to the city that try to earn some form of income in some way at each moment. The frailty of local economies adds pressure against reductions in informal employment. In Senegal, we see this informality not uniquely at the lower levels of the socioeconomic ladder, but - according to diplomat - even at the higher levels of big businesses. This insight was later confirmed by other sources, most notably the subject from *Interview #3*. This reality limits social mobility as there isn't an equitable wealth transfer occurring from these productive businesses to locals through establishing contracts. Instead, jobs become insecure and income unstable. Situations like this - at a systemic level - create conditions that push the most vulnerable and frustrated towards sharp departures from the status quo: Ousmane Sonko. The PASTEF's anti-corruption movement took these sentiments of underdeveloped local economic opportunities and paired them with the clear corruption amongst the top ends of society that benefit from those same conditions.

Wife's Clan:

The diplomat followed up on what the *Eurocham* contact illustrated that Sall's Wife's family had their hands deep in the pot. Foremost, the diplomat explained the two powerful positions held by the wife's brother: Minister of Infrastructure & Mayor of Saint-Louis. It is an open secret that these appointments are simply nepotism and preceded massive corruption scandals. People are aware of these activities, and particularly aware that the appropriated funds are getting stuck as they pass hands. The perception of the clan - and by proximity, Sall - has only further deteriorated the respect given to Sall by the electorate.

- End -

A.7 – Interview with ControlRisks:

The following interview was conducted with the two political analysts from ControlRisks Senegal - a British firm that specialises in security and safety management & assessments. They operate worldwide through local offices to provide varied analysis and security provisions to international and local companies, expats, and even government projects. The analysts are Susanna Eusebi and Renna Hawili, who lead the "geopolitical and security analysis for Senegal." The interview was held at 11:30 am on Wednesday 14th of February, 2024. Below, the first section features the questions prepared for the interview. Afterwards, the second section is the refined write up of the insights noted during the conversation. Both subjects gave full consent for their names and contributions to be included in the final paper (any press is good press).

Questions:

Casamance:

- From a security perspective, how do you analyse the Casamance vs the rest of Senegal?
- If there is no difference, when has that changed?
- With regards to the opposition, do you see a disproportionate level of violence from both grassroots violence and government response?

PASTEF:

- What is your view on the PASTEF party's impact on Senegal in the future?
- How has the PASTEF's rise linked to political violence across Senegal?
- How is that different to today where there is minimised political violence?
- What is the prediction on that political violence going forward?

Ongoing Crisis:

- How do you understand this constitutional crisis that Senegal is going through?
- What perspective does one need to understand Macky Sall and his actions?
- Beyond a lust to maintain power and control, what motivations do you see from Macky Sall?
- What threat does this crisis pose to Senegal, security wise and for the safety of its institutions?
- If power is not ceded peacefully, are there chances of deeply divisive actions between factions?
- In the past we have seen the Casamançais feel alienated by the politics of the state though these have evolved into socioeconomically based issues (food, water, shelter). Given the immense popularity of PASTEF and Sonko as anti-Sall representatives, is there a serious danger of Sall's actions to reignite violence from the region?

- Given the tentative dialogues between parties and forces in the political background, what is Sonko's future in the country?
- What would the liberation of PASTEF-linked political prisoners mean for presidential politics and the future elections?
- Are these preconditions for peaceful solutions between Sall's coup and opposition opposition? Is the freeing of these candidates the only way to avoid a quasi-civil war?

Reconciliation - The Rumoured Political Dialogue:

A week and a half following Sall's decree, the machinations behind the veil were beginning to pressure Sall's camp. By then, the opposition forces have largely managed to orchestrate a movement to peacefully halt life. This included - at the civil level - days of *ville-morte*, general strikes, and peaceful protests routinely met by water cannons. At the public level, dialogues were underway, most interestingly there was an ongoing discussion between Sonko and Sall, through their camps. Sall seemed to have - from what looked like a position of power - entered talks of amnesty releases of the political prisons. The analysts reckon that these discussion could simply be performative to appease tensions and create a positive image of Sall,²⁰¹ but may not lead any material change for Sonko. For Sall, anything that can appease the opposing forces by showing cooperation is an attempt worth trying. Unfortunately, this only confirms the dichotomy that has been forming over the past five

²⁰¹ Sall had always tried to play off his Coup as a presidential duty to protect the institutions of democracy from corruption (the *Conseil Constitutionnel* was accused of corruption due to the list of candidates). I believe he tried using this whole amnesty situation to promote himself as "simply doing his duty" and not a feeble attempt to maintain a grip on power.

years in Senegalese Politics: the true, crowding-out giants are Sall and Sonko. Sall recognises, as many do, that releasing Sonko would be Sall's greatest chance to wipe his own slate clean. By their actions, no other candidate has enough space to blossom into a serious threat. Nonetheless, their impact must not be neglected.

Macky Sall:

The belief among the analysts at *ControlRisks* is that Sall likely won't step down later in the year if no date for the election can be decided. So far, Sall has utilised the lack of date for both the election and his release of power as major leverage in negotiations. The analysts and I believe that he won't rerun, but Sall has had the goal of weakening the opposition, as to elevate his party's chances.

There is also the open letter signed by Wade and Diouf, urging for a return to normalcy but severely lacking any form of denouncement of a peer. The Senegalese people immediately saw right through this as peers supporting each other. We believe that the old guard not denouncing the current president has only furthered the schism away from the status quo, and the movement towards change.

Dangerous Precedents:

Sall's recent actions have made clear what the boundaries of the president are, but also the boundaries of Senegalese politics. Firstly, these protests have been demonstrating to observers that there is a robust and organising civil society counterbalance to government power. It sends a strong message going forward to future presidents that they can be kept in check. This leads to the second element: that the democratic institutional machinery is still very resilient. The coup has caused a moment of major erosion of the democratic institutions. In a quick period, we saw the strong-arming of the *Assemblée Nationale* and the sidelining of both the constitution and the *Conseil Constitutionnel*. Furthermore, the two first moves of Sall were to turn off the mobile data and shut down a historic and culturally important news station to limit dissent. While power is predominantly concentrated with the president (in part due to the single legislative body), it cannot ignore all other forms of power and be authoritarian as seen by the complete halting of public life brought by the opposition protests.

Similarly, a core concern has been Sall's unclear eligibility for a third term. Even through the coup, he has reaffirmed that he does not seek a third mandate (some contacts reckon he nonetheless does not wish to release power) and is doing all this in the name of Senegal. A good precedent he is setting is letting it be clear that retro-applicability of mandate changes should not occur: terms should not reset following changes to term length, as was seen with Abdoulaye Wade. By doing the politically mature thing, Sall has at least made a point on that - something he faced when he won his first term in 2012.

However, the most important precedent that this event could set would be a further expansion of authoritative presidential powers. Sall showed that he can utilise the democratic institutions in an undemocratic manner to maintain a vice grip on power. It is the first time Senegal is experiencing a postponement of an election *sine die*, now future presidents are shown that - while unpopular - it is still an available tool. As long as the president has some support from the other branches, it can be pulled off successfully.

What this Means for the Sahel & ECOWAS:

The analysts agree that the February Crisis did not benefit stability in the region nor for ECOWAS. Sall's actions coincided with the triple announcement of intent to withdraw by Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger from ECOWAS, all the while Russian influence is growing. This moment is serving as a test of vitality for ECOWAS, facing existential threats from within and external influence. We are seeing its very principles, powers, and political weight of the body be continually questioned - on top of being somewhat toothless already. Already, all these member-presidents recognise that

ECOWAS has no legal power to intervene, routinely forced to operate through diplomatic and economic methods. Realistically, ECOWAS should be fine but it marks a new era for the body; one where membership and allyship is not guaranteed.

As disconnect grows amongst the member-states, it can be difficult to get each of these vibrant presidents to successfully navigate the diplomatic waters together. Furthermore, Senegal had served as a standard bearer for the rest of the community when dealing with such issues. There is a rising question of who picks up the mantle. Sall's taking Senegal off the pedestal has done few favours to the nation and its direction. The country loses its status as a regional leader, while also weakening the already frail regional bond. However, Senegal under Sall has not been without fault from ECOWAS. ECOWAS has certain rules that member-states are expected to adhere to. One of these is the "patronage" or "sponsor" system used in Senegal - similar to in France. The system requires aspiring presidential candidates to collect a certain amount of sponsors - whether from citizens, local leaders, or members of the assembly.²⁰² This rule goes against ECOWAS principles, so even as a leading example, Senegal still has limits according to ECOWAS's rules though it routinely flaunts these issues.

Mourides & Islam:

The analysts were a very productive source on the Mourides' status in Senegal. As established through other contacts, the Mourides control an extravagant amount of power and wealth. Firstly, in Touba, the Mourides employ their own unique religious police, acting as an independent religious law enforcement. In practice, they also function as religious militias. The week prior (Feb. 5-14) had seen emerging protests that the militias were confronting. Similarly, the earlier protests in '21 and '23 saw similar clashes, one ending in a fatal shooting of a protestor. By and large, Touba can be considered an independent city, a rival power. Following the February 3rd Decree, the Minister of the Interior and Minister of the Armed Forces went to Touba to talk to the "*Calife Generale*," where they asked both for his advice and his blessing.

The analysts assert that Sonko is religiously conservative, but not vastly more than other Senegalese citizens, as illustrated by the Mourides. He is unlikely to cause a major shift in the religious landscape - more than already seen in Casamance with the growth of Islam. Moreover, Senegal has inherited and maintained the tradition of *laïcité* from the French and proudly maintains a separation of religion and state.

His ideological views on homosexuality are well known, but is there a realistic probability to implement a harsher criminalisation? Perhaps, but unlikely. Life could likely get harder for the LGBT community in the coming mandate. When it comes to the death penalty, the chances are negligible. It would take a major societal values shift to revert the abolishment.

As far as the PASTEF is concerned, the talks with the analysts were more brief, focused around economic discussions. While the economic policy is largely very *gauchiste* (illustrated by nationalisation of industries like petrol and gas), it is still quite conservative. While they reclaim their economy away from "francophone organisations," they also will keep the money for the Senegalese. The investor-friendly landscape that Senegal has become known for through its stability will likely shift, losing some of that appeal. Regardless, investors will still return to Senegal, with a larger cut staying locally. It will be interesting to see how the anti-post-colonial ideas will blend with both pan-Africanism and the paradigm shift amongst its neighbours. Lastly, the analysts gave me another contact: Guy Marius Sagna. Sagna is a vocal member of the PASTEF, routinely participating in

²⁰²<https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20240110-senegal-s-sponsorship-phase-for-presidential-candidates-near-s-completion>

interviews with the media and functioning as the de-facto mouthpiece. He is a deputy for the PASTEF, a founder of the *France Dégage* movement in Senegal, and close to Sonko. Unfortunately I was unable to secure an interview.

- End -