

ANTI-MINE ACTION AND LIBERAL PEACE IN CASAMANCE, SENEGAL

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This paper proposes a reading of the “neither peace nor war” setting in Casamance, Senegal, one of the more persistent conflicts in West Africa. It examines peacebuilding and development policies through a comprehensive review lens of existing literature and field knowledge to analyze the failure of the anti-mine program. The paper argues that the anti-mine development policy and peacebuilding outline applied in Casamance relates to the discourse and framework of liberal peace. It reveals that the mindset of the liberal peace agenda is not consistent with the dialogue required to achieve a sustainable peace and implement an effective demining program.

Keywords: anti-mine action, peacebuilding, negotiation, dialogue for peace, liberal peace, Casamance

Ação anti-minas e paz liberal em Casamansa, Senegal

Este artigo propõe uma leitura do cenário “nem paz nem guerra” em Casamansa, Senegal, um dos conflitos mais persistentes na África Ocidental. Examina as políticas de construção e desenvolvimento da paz através de uma revisão abrangente da literatura existente e do conhecimento de campo para analisar o fracasso do programa anti-minas. O documento argumenta que a política de desenvolvimento anti-minas e o esboço da construção da paz aplicado em Casamansa diz respeito ao discurso e ao quadro da paz liberal. Revela que a mentalidade da agenda liberal de paz não é coerente com o diálogo necessário para alcançar uma paz sustentável e implementar um programa eficaz de desminagem.

Palavras-chave: ação anti-minas, construção da paz, negociação, diálogo para a paz, paz liberal, Casamansa

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The violent and counterproductive repression of a pacific protest in March 1982 by Senegalese authorities points to the beginning of the armed struggle in Casamance, Senegal. Women were attacked, elders mistreated, and holy places invaded. The immediate organization of a violent reaction initiated one of the oldest low-intensity conflicts in present Africa. The MFDC, *Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance*, together with its armed wing, Atika, claim the independence of this Senegalese region between the Gambia and Guinea Bissau. The movement is fragmented, exhausted by its internal contradictions. One of the main factions of Atika is based in the Guinea Bissau border under the commandment of Cesar Atout Badiate, a Christian / animist diola from Oussouye District. The other main faction, based in the Gambia border, is under the commandment of Salif Sadio, Muslim diola from the Fogny zone. Both are or have been reliant of external direct or indirect support, the one from Bissau and the second from Banjul.

The conflict in Casamance is a persistent low-intensity conflict where peace-building initiatives to-date have been unsuccessful. A limbo situation of “neither peace nor war” remains. The successive Senegalese governments have failed to install a durable peace. They’ve tried to suffocate the support of the rebellion through economic development and the fight against poverty. The present official positions tend to ignore or minimize the conflict.

This paper analyzes and challenges the rationale of this position. It combines academic research with direct interviews and participation as a guest advisor acting in the framework of NGO initiatives for peace in the events and dialogue spaces that are mentioned. The first part of the paper interrogates the liberal peace paradigm. The paper rationalizes how this paradigm materializes in Casamance and argues that the situation of neither peace nor war is attributable to the lack of sound initiatives for dialogue. The second part of the paper focuses on anti-mine action and reveals how the anti-mine mismanagement is a mirror of the failure of the peace process in Casamance.

The liberal peacebuilding paradigm

Oliver Richmond in his genealogy of peace and conflict theory outlines several generations of theory and practice of peacebuilding. The first generation, conflict management, is limited to a state-centric discourse and aims at the production of a basic minimum order without open violence. This setting has been labeled as a negative form of peace or victor’s peace. The second approach, conflict resolution, is more focused on understanding the root causes of conflict and

considers both perspectives of individuals, groups and societies; with repression and deprivation of human needs at the root of protracted conflicts along with structural factors such as underdevelopment. The contemporary liberal peacebuilding approach, the third-generation peacebuilding, aroused with the convergence between the agendas of peace research, conflict resolution, and conflict management. Emerged since the end of the Cold War, liberal peacebuilding combines the traditional forms of peacekeeping, mediation, and negotiation, with the broad array of tasks necessary to construct, reconstruct, or even develop the infrastructures, institutions, and political, economic, and social fabric of post-conflict states.

This third-generation approach is heavily driven by the requirements and perceptions of policymakers, officials, and actors involved in both top-down and bottom-up visions of peace, and processes based upon both, a peace that can be constructed by external actors in cooperation with local actors. (Richmond, 2015)

The liberal peace embodies a synthesis of Western-style democratization, “good governance”, human rights, the rule of law, and developed, open markets (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2007). The new paradigm of peacebuilding is understood as a state-building project that has been partially considered within a liberal state-building enterprise.

Detractors of the liberal peace affirm that with noticeable regularity the quality of the “peace” and reconstruction facilitated by the liberal peace project has been unsatisfactory. They see a replication of the errors of liberal imperialism in the 19th century and argue that:

the liberal peace camouflages liberal, Western, rich-state interests, lauds empty institutions over human life, retains a modernist obsession with states that are territorially sovereign and so bound to be the source of yet more conflict, and makes the mistake of believing that external actors can solve problems for others without provoking unintended consequences. (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2007)

Supporters of the liberal peace retort that what little is being done is vital in facilitating the order and security required for individual liberty and social improvement as well as for stable states and regions.

A liberal peace blueprint arises in Casamance

The liberal peacebuilding framework materialized in Casamance, Senegal, in the first decade of the twenty-first century. President Wade defeated President Abdou Diouf in 2000 and was elected in the first presidential “alternance” of the history of the Senegalese democracy. Senegal, a consolidated democratic state, a moderate Muslim nation who was engaged in the fight against terrorism, was considered a valuable ally by the United States. Following 9/11 the Pentagon increased contributions to strengthen the capacities of the Senegalese army. At the same time, American development aid redefined its scope and focused on Senegal. Development and security policies merged, and the promotion of the liberal peace became a development concern. The new peace agenda in Casamance aroused to support grassroots economic development and peacebuilding initiatives, as opposed to the previous agenda, which was rooted in the understanding of conflict as interstate conflicts and classic mediation between symmetric parties. USAID became a major agent in the peace process in Casamance. The new peace model, fueled by the American cooperation and other international partners, was built on the following:

- People-centered peacebuilding diplomacies and development strategies, rather than state-centered
- Involvement of relevant stakeholders at all levels of society
- Partnership development between civil society and state parties
- The link between security, peace, and development

This new top-down designed blueprint materialized in a Peace framework agreement in 2004. The agreement was signed in Ziguinchor by Master Ousmane Ngom, Minister of Interior, and Abbot Augustin Diamacoune Senghor, leader of the MFDC. It included an amnesty law, the disarmament and demobilization of all combatants, their voluntary reinsertion into Senegalese paramilitary corps and their support from development organizations through income-generating activities, with a view towards economic insertion. In general terms, the agreement focused on encouraging a political economy of peacebuilding and reconstruction in Casamance. The agreement did not address political issues.

The main constraint of the 2004 Framework agreement was its inclusiveness. In 2004 leader Diamacoune was in an isolated position, he was in surviving residence in Ziguinchor, and consequently his leadership capacity was weak and internally contested. Members of MFDC civil and armed branches felt excluded during the negotiation process and decided not to agree with it. Moreover, the

feasibility of the agreement depended on the cessation of internal rivalries and the improbable unity of the MFDC. Another important contested flaw of the agreement was the inexistence of any political issue in its content. This was a crucial constraint as the MFDC's very existence and reasoning for armed resistance was based on a political claim, the independence.

As a result, the 2004 Peace framework failed. It resulted in an impasse and led to the return to armed struggle some months after its signature. Violent actions followed by non-formal cease-fires alternate since then, setting a long-lasting situation of "neither peace nor war" (Marut, 2010). This setting changed only in January 2018 when the Senegalese military deployed an intensive operation including artillery in response to the murder of twenty woodcutters apparently perpetrated by rebels in the forest of Boffa near Ziguinchor. Since then, the Senegalese Armed forces seem more decided to directly tackle "security" issues.

Despite this failure, the 2004 Peace framework agreement was applauded by the international community and was considered a green light for international funding dedicated to the "reconstruction" of Casamance. As soon the agreement was signed a peace building multi-national basket fund was released; peace-building and reconstruction programs in the region multiplied. I was myself solicited by the Spanish Cooperation Agency to design an intervention aiming to "promote living conditions and the social and economic reintegration of the populations affected by the conflict in Casamance" (AECID, 2005). The powerful industry of development and cooperation landed in Casamance to implement the liberal peace. The Senegalese government communications reduced since then any conflict related incident to episodes of banditry associated to security issues. This peace blueprint ignored discussion on political claims and did not consider how to address reconciliation or transitional justice.

The peace agenda financed by the government partners was planned and delivered by international and local NGOs. It mobilized local NGOs, and local and traditional leaders including the traditional king of Oussouye. By participating in this process, fueled by international funding, Senegalese NGOs contributed in the same way as the foreign actors to the achievement of government objectives "confirming the trend of humanitarian relief to be a transmission belt of the power in place" (Marut, 2010). The peacebuilding agenda implemented in partnership with local NGOs challenged the local civil society ability to perform as a neutral actor, able to legitimately promote and undertake independent peace initiatives. This top-down model attempted to influence the rebellion, under the pressure of the population and the civil society, to accept the Senegalese state solution. This is probably crucial to understand the failure of the local civil soci-

ety since then to play a relevant role in the interactions between the state and the rebellion.

“Neither peace nor war”, the outcome of the liberal peace paradigm in Casamance

The non-resolution of the conflict in Casamance remains today an example of the failure of an “intrusive” peacebuilding agenda. As Pugh et al. (2008) argue,

peace processes and peace-building practices need political roots in local societies, and political communities should have the freedom to set their economic priorities including protection of economic activities from negative effects of global integration.

The “neither peace nor war” case in Casamance is a striking example of Richmond’s questioning (2005) on the myths and realities of the liberal peace and post-war reconstruction. There is a need for a research agenda – he argues – on the different components of the liberal peace (as well as any possible alternatives), and how they interact with each other, “as there is much evidence to show that this interaction may often be negative”.

The paradigm applied in Casamance assumed that economic development was the main issue to ensure durable peace. To some extent, this explains the reason why the Senegalese government has not fully considered, at least since 2004, to engage in direct conversations with the rebellion and have arguably never seriously considered addressing the problem in its political dimension. Other potentially useful considerations for achieving durable peace, such as investigations of crimes, mass graves, reparations or any other kind of transitional justice or reconciliation measure have ever been explored by Senegalese officials.

Thanks to the visible progress of infrastructure and poverty reduction, covered by a de facto cease-fire until 2018, Senegalese government statements try to avoid asserting that there are still armed groups and occupied territories in Casamance. Yet, closed roads and abandoned villages indicate otherwise. At least the following municipalities include closed tracks, isolated communities, limited or no presence of state agents as well as “forbidden” or “red” territories: Kataba 1, Kataba 2, Djinaki and Oulampane in the Bignona Department, Boutoupa Camaracounda, Nyassia, Niaguiss and Adeane in the Ziguinchor Department, Santhiaba Mandjack in the Oussouye Department and Goudomp, Diattacounda, Samine and Tanaff in the Goudomp Department.

Presence of armed forces, mines, and the proximity or coexistence of armed elements of MFDC is day to day life in extended areas of Casamance. State servic-

es such as education and health are challenged, limited or sometimes non-existent. In these municipalities of the Ziguinchor and Sedhiou regions little information is available on state policies and projects. It seems consequently reasonable to have reservations about available data concerning citizens, living conditions and development indicators. Social and economic integration in these municipalities is confronted to the non-existence of civil registration services during longtime. Access to civil status represents an urgent need for number of citizens. The extraordinary needs for the modernization of civil registration services in the municipalities in question is a sound challenge for the Regional Development Agencies of Ziguinchor and Sedhiou. In terms of security, according to press releases, 90% of the incidents and major events identified in Casamance (clashes, mine accidents, and to a lesser extent, robberies) concern the municipalities mentioned, where security is the biggest concern.

Resident populations of borderlands are bound to interact with armed groups in the search for peaceful coexistence for them, to borrow tracks, to harvest fields, to cultivate rice fields or to exploit forests. Some borderlands grass roots organizations, not considered in the 2004 agreement, such as CADP¹, MJPI², groups federated in Usoforal, amongst others, have been able to coexist with them. They engage in dialogue at the very local level stating de facto relationships with members of MFDC armed wings.

Formal direct dialogue between the state and rebel leaders has been envisioned through Saint Egidio, an Italian organization based in Vatican. Saint Egidio supports Senegal in facilitating dialogue exchanges with Salif Sadio, the warlord whose base is in the Gambian border, the leader of Atoute Badiate's rival wing. The strict confidentiality of these talks brings frustration and under information of media and citizenship, who are more and more eager to transparency and accountability (Gueye, 2015). Devoid of results to date, the talks facilitated by Saint Egidio cannot be considered as a peace process as such.

This scarcity of sound initiatives for direct dialogue with the MFDC suggests that dialogue and negotiation are most probably not on the government's priorities and exposes its conviction of progressive drowning of the Casamance armed resistance. Following the official position, Casamance is in peace with some episodes of insecurity linked to cross-border banditry, these episodes relate to domestic affairs, consequently no international involvement is envisioned or foreseen. This position weights peace through economic development, it avoids

¹ CADP, *Comité d'appui au Développement de la Zone des Palmiers* (municipality of Djinaky, acting in the Gambian border).

² MJPI, *Mouvement des Jeunes pour la Paix et l'Intégration* (based in Kolda, acting in the southern border).

addressing the presence of non-state armed forces, rather it prefers to disregard it.

This global picture is compatible to a liberal peacebuilding model based in economic development and security. It includes a government reluctant to direct dialogue with armed groups, a strong civil society (local NGOs, organizations, ...) who are the principal recipient of the financing of economic development, continuing citizen insecurity despite the important military presence, slow and poorly distributed economic growth, and a perception among many citizens that the benefits of peace are poorly shared. Besides, the most affected populations in the borderlands are confronted to organize and engage themselves in a needed minimum dialogue ensuring local coexistence with armed groups.

Anti-mine action triggers dialogue for peace in Casamance

The following section shows how the need to engage anti-mine action is going to challenge this liberal peacebuilding blueprint in Casamance.

Casamance is seriously affected by the presence of mines. In 1999, Senegal established a National Commission to implement the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their destruction, also known as the Ottawa Mine Ban treaty, but was unable to set up a demining program because of the growing intensity of the conflict. After the 2004 Peace Framework Agreement, an urgent draft research mission on the impact of mines in Casamance explored 251 localities. It confirmed that 93 of these areas were contaminated by mines and/or explosive residues of war. Even though the mission could not visit several areas situated along the Gambian border, it estimated that over 90.000 people were affected by the presence of mines. Eleven square kilometers of land and 73 kilometers of tracks and paths were suspected of being contaminated by mines in the districts of Niaguiss, Nyassia and Diattacounda alone, between the river and the Guinea Bissau border (Mine Ban Convention, 2012). Article 5 of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their destruction engages the signatory state to identify all areas where the presence of anti-personnel mines is known or suspected, and to destroy all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control "as soon as possible and not later than ten years after the convention was enforced in the country" (Mine Ban Convention, 2012). The relative drop in tensions since the signature of the 2004 peace agreement favored the implementation of the anti-mine action program.

In 2006, President Wade requested support from international partners to boost demining. The Moroccan Armed forces deployed one hundred soldiers who cleared several areas and offered free medical services. However, the mission was suddenly interrupted just two months in, due to clashes with MFDC elements leading to several casualties. As a result, the 2007 review of the strategic anti-mine plan reaffirmed the civil, neutral, and humanitarian character of the demining program. The same year the Senegalese national Anti-Mine Action Centre (CNAMS)³ became operational. Several brigades of local young anti-mine workers were trained. The implementation of the National Action Plan began with a pilot project of humanitarian demining executed by Handicap International from February 2008 with support of US and Belgian funding.

Senegal was required to request a first extension of the ten-year deadline enforced by the Ottawa Mine Ban treaty signed in 1999. An additional seven-year time-period, until March 2016, was agreed to attain integral demining. The EU granted a larger contribution of EUR 4,8 million to be implemented by UNDP through professional demining organizations like South African Mechem and Norwegian People's Aid who began operations in 2012.

CNAMS and the newly deployed humanitarian anti-mine workers were aware of previous military demining and that the MFDC could interpret the new demining programs as an attempt to weaken its military positions. The 2004 agreement already assumed that depolluting "would be engaged in a partnership with the Army and the ex-combatants of the MFDC". CNAMS faced the need to engage in clean-up operations involving the MFDC in locality selection and the conduct of the activities. Very soon the humanitarian anti-mine workers were challenged to address sensitive zones. Direct dialogue with MFDC combatants was much needed.

Geneva Call conversations

On March 20, 2013, under the auspices of the Guinea Bissau authorities and supported by Geneva Call,⁴ a Swiss-based humanitarian organization, CNAMS met twenty-five commandants of the Atoute Badiate wing of the MFDC in São Domingos, Guinea Bissau. Senegalese officials attended this meeting aiming to facilitate the implementation of humanitarian demining operations. This initiative was encouraging; a Senegalese civil servant meeting MFDC rebels in Guinea

³ *Centre National d'Action Anti-Mines du Sénégal.*

⁴ Geneva Call is a neutral and impartial humanitarian organization dedicated to engaging armed non-state actors towards compliance with the norms of international humanitarian law and human rights law. www.genevacall.org

Bissau. This seemed to signal a new way to tackle the Casamance issue, allowing direct dialogue, and outside Senegalese borders.

During the meeting, MFDC participants understood the need to proceed with humanitarian demining, but they also pointed out that “CNAMS had reached a red line beyond which the security of anti-mine workers could not be guaranteed. MFDC believes demining is dependent on a wider peace process” (IRIN News, 2013). Despite the clarity of this statement the media headlines conscientiously, or not, celebrated “Demining speeds up in Casamance”. Indeed, humanitarian demining operations persisted.

On Friday, May 3, 2013, twelve anti-mine workers of the South African firm MECHEM were detained by MFDC elements in Kailou, Nyassia district. MFDC blamed CNAMS “willfully failing to comply with the São Domingos agreement” (MFDC-Atika Press release, Mai 8, 2013). This incident was particularly embarrassing: on the one hand the life of the detainees or hostages was at stake, on the other hand it called into question the first attempt at direct dialogue.

Demining operations in Kailou were engaged after “locally led negotiations”. CNAMS unrecognized procedures appointed local leaders and community members to play the role of “go-betweens” to jointly agree upon areas to demine. Visibly these local negotiations were neither validated nor recognized by MFDC leaders.

President Macky Sall of Senegal urged Guinea Bissau President Serifo Nhamadjo’s support regarding the release of the twelve civilian hostages. A diplomatic mission of army officers from Guinea Bissau joined Atout Badiate, head of the most important wing of MFDC, in the village of Kassolol, São Domingos District, and transmitted a message from their Army Chief. Atoute Badiate granted the liberation of the hostages “at the right time” and wished a formal solicitation of the Guinean auspices by the Senegalese authorities.

This appeal demonstrated how MFDC was sensible to the possibility of a qualified change of the Senegalese attitude towards the internationalization of negotiation initiatives and the role Guinea Bissau could play. Some weeks after, on May 27, Atout Badiate freed three women from the group of twelve hostages thanks to the work of DDCC, a Guinean organization acting under official demand. DDCC (*Djemberem di cumpo combersa*) is a Guinean NGO of retired military and paramilitary dedicated to conflict management. Its affiliates were members of the Commission of reconciliation of the Guinean Armed forces after the civil conflict in 1999.

The twenty-five MFDC commanders met again with CNAMS in São Domingos on June 7, 2013 in the presence of Minister Abdou Papa Cisse, President Sall’s ad-

visor, the President of Geneva Call and a pool of facilitators including the Bishop of Ziguinchor, the representative of the Imam of Bignona and Robert Sagna, ex-minister, all under the auspices of a Guinea Bissau Foreign Affairs officer and the President of São Domingos District. As a result of this meeting, a pre-agreement was proposed ensuring the continuation of humanitarian demining only in areas where there had been prior joint agreement. Following international standards, Geneva Call staff considered that this was a good opening for MFDC. The content of this pre-agreement essentially attempted to formalize what was already recommended in the Mine Ban treaty.

However, from the combatants' perspective, the new proposition was not credible as it came after CNAMS having "willfully failing to comply" what was agreed in the previous meeting. The pre-agreement was subject to the consideration of Atout Badiate who finally rejected it on June 19 in a Press release, alleging mistrust, considering that demining is "forbidden in wartime" since "demining, including humanitarian demining is in Casamance for the military advantage of Senegal" (MFDC-Atika Press release, 2013). Geneva Call, disappointed, suspended their work in Casamance.

The nine remaining anti-mine workers were freed on July 12, that is, after President Obama's visit to Dakar on June 17. Badiate tried to call the US President's attention to the fact that Senegal had real unresolved problems.

Searching peace through reconciliation

During this fascinating year of 2013 several internal reconciliation processes emerged between factions of the MFDC maquis as well as between the maquis and the MFDC political wings. In August, Cesar Atout Badiate and Ibrahima Compass, the two main commanders of the "Front sud", met to reconcile under the auspices of the President of São Domingos District and DDCC. Following several coincident oral testimonies both factions represented at the time more than 80% of MFDC armed forces. Furthermore, a well-established southern front Reconciliation committee met near São Domingos in December. The committee validated a road map for MFDC reconciliation. This road map included reconciliation between combatants, intra-civilian wing's reconciliation and reconciliation between civilians and armed forces. The proposed road map would culminate in an MFDC "seat" and the nomination of a new leader who would "conduct a proposal for a negotiating table with the State of Senegal" (MFDC press statement, December 2013). The various efforts to put this roadmap into practice had few successes and a general failure. Although its success would be an important move to engage a sound peace process, this roadmap has been badly encouraged.

Expeditionary diplomacy

On September 7, 2013, two senior officials of the Guinea Bissau Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Interior respectively, received in São Domingos an exploratory contact between Atoute Badiate and the Government of Senegal through the presence of retired US ambassador J.R. Bullington, responsible for the new Casamance dossier for the US Embassy in Dakar.

J.R. Bullington's assignment in Casamance is an example of a new concept of American diplomacy, "expeditionary diplomacy". This concept first emerged in the Bush Administration as an effort to make the State Department better prepared and more effective in working together with military forces in large-scale operations such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

We realized that the Casamance conflict retards Senegal's economic development and ties down military forces that are needed for peacekeeping missions. A small investment in expeditionary diplomacy to support the Casamance peace initiative, we believed, could not only contribute to humanitarian objectives but also promote our interest in Senegal's economic growth and continued regional leadership in peacekeeping. (Bullington & Bullington, 2015, p. 2)

J.R. Bullington confirmed the American intentions to support both pillars "development and peace", employing examples of how development initiatives were on track, such as the US-funded national road from Ziguinchor to Kolda (a project that needed agreement on demining). Despite the expectations of the Casamance, Bullington did not offer any detail about the "peace pillar" nor gave assurances about any dialogue process.

"We don't want development; we want just peace" answered an elder combatant in an info meeting in São Domingos. Indeed, MFDC elements have repeatedly insisted their willingness for peace dialogue and negotiations, that would be followed by development action including demining (MFDC-Atika releases). Atout Badiates' press releases and statements insist in this argument and stress the willingness to direct negotiations for peace to guarantee any further demining (INFOAFRIQUE, 2013).

Notwithstanding the combatant's position against demining, because of these exchanges, further conversations were scheduled between combatants and representatives of the national road construction program. These conversations were supported by the Bishop of Ziguinchor and former Minister Robert Sagna. Despite the firmness of his statements, Badiate demonstrated openness and agreed to the demining of the national road from Ziguinchor to Kolda. Shelter

for Life, an American NGO conducted discrete meetings and got his agreement as well on number of kilometers of rural tracks and roads to rehabilitate.

Bullington's expeditionary diplomacy and the following meetings with Shelter for Life did not open a new path for dialogue and negotiation for peace with the combatants. That was probably not envisioned. On the contrary, these efforts were narrowed to economic development outcomes related to the liberal peace blueprint, particularly the road between Ziguinchor and Kolda and the rural roads.

General balance of the openings to dialogue on antimine action in 2013-14

The relative limited outcomes of the conversations held in 2013 and 2014 increased the lack of confidence between the parties. On the Government side, despite the need to comply with international agreements, particularly the Ottawa Mine Ban treaty, efforts to take advantage of these openings to dialogue for peace were slim. Little credit was probably given to Atoute Badiate's willingness to dialogue. Dialogue for demining finally failed to slow Casamance conflict dynamics.

Detractors of a solution based on dialogue between belligerents in the conflict in Casamance argue that Atoute Badiate's statements are capricious, sometimes vague, and often come too late. Supporters maintain that Badiate has a particular leadership style; he's a commandant of commanders, a *primus inter pares*; his management style imitates the traditional way that stresses complementarity and horizontality and is based in consensus (Serna Salichs, 2015). Badiate is a speaker, he does not decide without consulting his commanders. Decisions are taken in joint meetings and consequently, responses take time. Badiate's public communications have been conclusive against demining in wartime and have often shown discontent over the form of the conversations held. But at the same time, Badiate has shown flexibility and openness; he finally gave a green light to American solicitations concerning rural tracks and the national road to Kolda.

The underperformance of the facilitators has something to do with this failure. The Church envoys showed voluntarism and concern but assumed only a role of messengers. Robert Sagna's political agenda turned out not to be compatible with a facilitator's one. And despite their internationally recognized abilities the professional agencies Geneva Call and Center for Humanitarian Dialogue⁵ failed to encourage the parties' willingness for direct dialogue. They visibly failed to take advantage of the existing openings, and to increase mutual understanding. The failure of these facilitators to create a conducive climate for dialogue has

⁵ Centre of Humanitarian Dialogue is a private diplomacy organization based in Switzerland that assists in mediation between conflicting parties to prevent or end armed conflicts. In Senegal HD organized workshops for members of MFDC factions intending to lay the foundations for negotiations.

contributed to the failure of the anti-mining program in Senegal and to the consequent state's lack of interest in engaging in direct conversations.

Lastly, both belligerents the State and the MFDC seem to be accountable of the global failure of these dialogue attempts and consequently of the anti-mine program. CNAMS suspended its operations in 2013, disgruntled with the incapacity of the facilitators, and the increasing distance between belligerents, given Atoute Badiate's position and the impossibility of a secure and clear demining process. As a consequence of this breakdown Senegal was unable to meet its deadline. On June 20, 2015, Senegal submitted a further request to extend its Mine Ban Article 5 clearance deadline until March 2021.

Demining without dialogue in Casamance

In 2015, Senegal alleged the following circumstances preventing its compliance with international legal obligations according to the Mine Ban treaty (Ottawa Convention, 2015): general insecurity; MFDC unwillingness to agree to demining operations; the eight-month suspension of operations in 2013; ongoing concerns over the safety of anti-mine workers; and a decrease in technical and financial resources in recent years. Furthermore, Senegal noted that security conditions and a lack of funding could affect its ability to complete clearance on time.

Amazingly, the first demand of extension, that is, the same document years before in 2008, similarly stated at that time that "efforts have to be made to achieve direct dialogue with MFDC". The demand of extension pointed out that: "the objective can be achieved only if the peace process continues favorable and if security conditions improve in all the areas affected by the conflict, which are, of course, those most affected by the existence of mines" (executive summary). This confirms that the Senegalese National Commission for the Implementation of the Ottawa Convention and the Senegalese National Mine Action Centre (CNAMS) have always been aware that "the good conduct of the program will always depend on the positive evolution of the peace process". An effective peace process and thus an effective dialogue with the MFDC are essential to clearing mine areas, both are claimed in the successive demands of extension. Unfortunately, until the day any comprehensive peace process including dialogue is visibly ongoing.

March 1, 1999, Entry into force of the Convention for Senegal.

March 1, 2009, Original deadline for clearing mined areas (10 years).

March 1, 2016, First extended the deadline for cleaning mined areas (7 years).

March 1, 2021, Second extended deadline for clearing mined areas (5 years).

On October 28 and 30, 2018, the Senegalese government launched with European funding a “dialogue between stakeholders” of anti-mine action in Dakar. The dialogue’s purpose was to take stock of the current situation, assess remaining challenges and identify any barriers to relaunch anti-mine action. The MFDC was noticeably not represented in this “dialogue”. The summary report of this meeting shows unambitious recommendations: reinforcing communication and dialogue between the local, regional and national levels, as well as for CNAMS and partners, and to continue demining “where possible” (Dialogue in Dakar Report, 2018).

During this meeting, local civil society representatives were challenged. The example of Colombia was presented. It supposedly demonstrated that demining could be carried out even if peace is not fully achieved and can be used as a tool for promoting peace. Essentially, CNAMS requested once more for local civil society organizations and leaders to provide support in “bringing people to play the role of relay towards the combatants for the abandonment of the use of antipersonnel mines”, which is incidentally point four of its operational strategy (CNAMS). This operational strategy sits consequently its fundamentals on local civil society intermediaries or go-betweens.

But after ten years of humanitarian demining, the remaining areas to demine in Casamance are obviously of military or strategic interest for the belligerents. Humanitarian mine action is possible while a conflict is still ongoing only if it is conducted for strictly humanitarian reasons. It cannot longer be the case in Senegal. Demining must now address areas containing protective devices around armed posts and rebel strongholds. Demining is difficult to envision under a fragile non-formal cease fire. Moreover, it seems unlikely whilst MFDC leaders maintain that “demining is forbidden in wartime”, and even more problematic when local citizens are asked to act as go-betweens or “local *relais*”.

CNAMS insists on continuing with the same failed strategy that endangered the lives of the humanitarian anti-mine workers in 2013, a strategy that places continuously in danger the anti-mine civil brigades. By setting the responsibility to negotiate locally with armed elements onto the shoulders of ill-equipped, unskilled, and non-recognized local citizens, the government is arguably shirking its responsibilities and thus endangering the safety of its population. This strategy is reaffirmed despite a) the urgency for Senegal to comply with its international legal obligations, b) the unfortunate experience of the detention of twelve humanitarian anti-mine workers in 2013 by MFDC, and c) the official acknowledgment, since 2004, for the need for anti-mine action to engage in formal direct dialogue with the MFDC.

Conclusion

Critics of liberal peacebuilding underlined its intellectual incoherence in terms of “its emancipatory potential, its reification of state sovereignty, its difficulties in dealing with issues relating to justice, reconciliation, identity, gender, culture, or welfare, among others” (Richmond, 2015). The case in Casamance emphasizes this incoherence. In the past 30 years, peace never seemed to be so close affirmed Alain Yéro Embalo, RFI correspondent, in his article “Rebels in search for peace” (Embalo, 2013). Indeed, several dialogue meetings took place in 2013 in Guinea Bissau with the direct participation of MFDC commanders under the leadership of Atout Badiate, some of them with the presence of Senegalese state envoys. What a lost opportunity?

At the time of writing this article, dialogue does not seem to be on the government’s agenda for Casamance. “General insecurity and MFDC reticence to agree to demining operations” is the main acknowledged circumstance preventing universal demining in Senegal in compliance with international legal obligations vis-à-vis the Ottawa Convention. CNAMS is conscious that it is imperative to involve the MFDC in the selection of areas to demine and the implementation of the demining programs. “The objective can be achieved only if the peace process continues favorable” reiterates official documentation, whilst the 2004 Peace Framework Agreement states that depolluting must be engaged “in partnership with the Army and the ex-combatants of MFDC”.

We have illustrated how despite its failure, direct dialogue for anti-mine action with MFDC was possible and conceivable. We have observed the deterioration of the situation since January 2018, together with a visible lack of vision and of consistent solutions for demining. We have suggested that the weak interest in direct dialogue with the MFDC – characteristic of the liberal peace agenda implemented in Casamance – is accountable for the neither peace nor war impasse, has probably contributed to the failure of the anti-mine program in Senegal, it has jeopardized the Senegalese’s capacities to engage in robust local-led peace initiatives, and has reinforced the natural inclination of the Senegalese centralized government to avoid direct dialogue with the MFDC. Unless there is a critical change in the government’s way to manage the Casamance dossier, very likely Senegal will not comply with its international legal obligations, will not be able to destroy all anti-personnel mines in affected areas under its jurisdiction before March 1, 2021, and thus will be forced to submit a new request for a third extension to the Ottawa Convention.

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