

Appendix III.B

Encirclement Across Borders

Interview Data

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1 Preparations

1.1 Ethical considerations

Fieldwork was conducted with prior ethical clearance from the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC), University of Oxford, grade 1A. Approval was officially granted on 23.08.2023, with the research ethics reference *SSH_DPIR_C1A_23_048*. For each interview, the interviewee was given a written overview of the project, including how data will be stored and used. They filled out a consent form indicating their level of anonymity and other preferences. While some interviewees allowed me to use their full name, I decided to render all interviews anonymous. The topic is politically sensitive both in Gambia and Senegal, an ethical consideration which in my view trumped any need to elaborate on any individual's identity.

1.1.1 Example questions

The interviews were open-ended, reflecting my interest in qualitative assessments of various interview-specific topics. However, certain questions were posed early on across the interviews (while tailored to the situation). These are two examples:

- In your experience/view, since the Gambian-Senegalese rapprochement in 2017, and especially since Operation Restore Democracy, to what extent have Senegalese troops been free to pursue MFDC fighters into Gambia? What do you base this assessment on?
- In your experience/view, since the Gambian-Senegalese rapprochement in 2017, and especially since Operation Restore Democracy, to what extent have Senegalese troops been free to pursue MFDC fighters into Gambia? What do you base this assessment on?
- In your experience/view, how has Gambian authorities reacted to violations of its borders' integrity? What do you base this assessment on?

2 Excerpts cited in the article

Below follows word-for-word citations that are referenced in the article. They are fully anonymised, and any mentions of names, times, and places that can link the interviewee to their identity is removed from the quotation. Sometimes, this is followingly marked in brackets, along with contextual aspects such as questions the interviewee was posed.

2.1 Interview 1

- 01:10: "Even in the independence movement, the ideas that Sadio and others were talking about are being taken over. (...) So politically, the generation that Sadio has been fighting for, these are people that want to be part of Senegal."
- 14:37: "But then because you don't know who the rebels are, they can easily change and come here, they can easily escape."
- 15:30: "Through ECOWAS they are trying to use Gambia as a place where they can, not use it as a launching pad but for intelligence."
- 20:05: "We know that they [Sadio's MFDC] had access [before Barrow]. (...) There was a guy that came to a hospital and that was Salif Sadio. (...) So they have been accessing Gambian hospitals and services."
- 22:30: "It was more like 'this is our territory, do your stuff here, but we have no business with you.'"
- 23:50: "There is no MFDC camp on the Gambian side. We have never had any. One of the main work that our soldiers do is monitoring that borderland. (...) On the Casamance side of the border, that's where they have their base. It's very close."

2.2 Interview 2

- 4:00: "When there was war, they used Gambia for refuge there. They came and hid there. Since 1988 they were using Gambia to come and hide themselves there. (...) If there is a fight, the fights will not be longer than three days. Then after, the rebels will use Gambia to come and hide themselves there."
- 5:00: "[Do they sometimes attack from the border?] Yes, and then they run back again. [What happens when the Senegalese soldiers try to follow them?] They're not allowed."
- 9:04: "[When Barrow took over, what happened then?] It changed a little bit. But he allowed Sadio to continue the timber trade and use the border. (...) They are allowed to stay here."
- 12:30: "He said that now we are not fighting, because there are no use for fights. (...) They used to come and relax in Gambia, and then go back in order to convince the population that they are still strong."
- 17:50: "[And the Gambian government?] They know where they are. And some of them [Sadio's men] used to deal with the forces of the Gambia. This is why it's difficult for us to finish this. All of MFDC must be on the table."
- 24:10 "The border is controlled now by the forces. All along the border, there are controls. (...) He cannot stay at the border. All of that is blocked now. That's why Sadio is willing to negotiate."
- 25:50: "The other problem is that most of the police officers, soldiers, paramilitaries, most of their parents are from Casamance. So some of them are supporting Casamance to get independence. You see? So those people are welcoming. They are family."

2.3 Interview 3

- 00:25: "The operations of the MFDC in Gambia is mainly for social affairs. Most of the rebels are married to Gambians. Some of them have compounds in Gambia. These are civil compounds, there is no military equipment there."
- 01:10: "Jammeh had a direct relation to the MFDC. When Jammeh fell from power, we who live at the border could see that the extent to which the MFDC were on Gambian territory was drastically reduced. I can remember in 2011, there was a war that took place between the Sadio faction and Diakaye, led by Jakini Sambou. Jakini attacked the Sadio faction, and Sadio had to cross into Gambia. Gambian forces had to arrest them, but less than 24 hours later they let them go."
- 05:37: "All the fights that took place between Sadio and Senegalese forces took place on Casamance territory. But the rebels are stationed mainly on the border. They feel more safe to be on the border because when the pressure gets high, the rebels can just cross the border. That's why, anywhere you see rebels, they are stationed close to the border."
- 05:50: "From around 2007 and up to last year, Sadio's men had camps in Katama, Karrunor, Jilanfari, Katinoro, and Jundang."
- 08:06: "[Do they ever attack from the Gambian side?] No. The rebels, when they come to the Gambia, they don't come with weapons."
- 20:50: "The military strength of Senegal is far superior to the rebels'. So when the Senegalese soldiers attack in a very intensified manner, what they will do is they will pack their weapons somewhere and go hide in the Gambia. What they do is guerrilla warfare. What they do is hit and run. They don't like to confront the Senegalese most of the time. They will not run directly to Gambia, they will hide somewhere in Casamance, but when the Senegalese find out where they are hiding, (...) they will just pack their weapons and come to Gambia as civilians."

2.4 Interview 4

- 00:51: "When it comes to issues like Foni, the Gambian government tries to restrain itself from intervening too much. Because, as it is right now, Gambia relies on Senegal a lot for security. Half of the ECOMIG mission, we have 750 soldiers from Senegal, about 300 from Nigeria, and about 250 from Ghana. So the mission mainly consists of Senegalese soldiers."

- 03:12: "A lot of Diolas, a lot of them are from Casamance region, and they entered through Kanilai during Jammeh's time. (...) He had a camp, they were called the 'green boys', and they mainly consisted of Casamance people, maybe the MFDC."
- 04:10: "Now there are tight security measures. We don't hear much of the rebels crossing into the Foni. I think now it's a bit controlled, compared to before where it was flexible, you could come in and come out. [Why was it flexible?] Because apparently the former president had affiliations with the MFDC. So I guess that's the reason why it was so easy for them to come in and go back at their own time."
- 05:50: "If you're in Gambian territory, and you're here to protect Gambians, there is no way you should be concentrating on someone's who's on the other side [of the border]. (...) The Senegalese contingent is in Foni, the Nigerian one is at the airport, and the Ghanaian contingent is at Banjul."

2.5 Interview 5

- 06:06: "If we see the MFDC, our role is to report that. We cannot pursue. But if we are fired at, we can pursue them. Only after they start shooting."
- 07:07: "We have even painted our vehicles white to prevent accusations that we are involved in fighting the MFDC. We did it this year."
- 08:08: "If the Gambian government wants to end the MFDC, they need to deploy to the border and allow Senegal to do so also."
- 10:10: "This year, the Senegalese have pushed for joint operations, but the Gambian government have refused. They prefer to patrol their own border, without Senegal's involvement. And that's why the MFDC is still able to cross. Gambia is free for them. It's only when something happens that they [the Gambian forces] pursue them."

2.6 Interview 6

- 03:03: "At the Presidential Council on 1 August this year, Macky Sall agreed that they need to stop at the border."
- 04:04: "The hot pursuit agreement [of 2018] is work in progress. It's not operational, because they haven't finalised the code of conduct."

2.7 Interview 7

- 06:40: "After the change of government, you can see the professionalism in the Gambian forces."
- 07:01: "Even now it won't be difficult to cross. But our military men don't compromise if one is crossing with arms. Less if you're hiding, but if not you can't."
- 08:12: "Since the incident last year, we received reports that Senegal moved men, a change of duty, from one part of the country to another. They tried to use the Gambian land to cross with some arms and ammunition from Dakar to the Casamance end. There was a little push-and-pull at the border because they wanted to cross with arms which the Gambian military had not been informed."
- 20:15: "Gambia does not have the capacity to arrest Sadio's men, until and unless there is a joint collaboration, joint forces, between Gambia and Senegal. For example if Gambia finds Casamance rebels as a threat to national security, they can join hands. [What would happen then?] Then both countries can go in for 'life or death' to get what they want. But for Gambia, Sadio is not our problem. Even at the authority level."
- 23:30: "[The ECOMIG's] mandate is already spelled out. So if they want to attack MFDC, they have to go beyond it."
- 28:28: "[The Gambian military] believe that in certain circumstances you either cool down tensions for lasting stability, or if you go with force you will then become a threat to the Senegalese forces."

2.8 Interview 8

- 03:28: "In Gambia, you don't see them. Only if you know them, you're able to identify them among civilians. But a lot of them are settled in the Gambia, around the Combo areas, Lamaine, Brikama. What they do is they come into the bush and then come back."
- 04:08: "Karonor is very close to the Gambian border, to a village called Tapa [Kapa?]. So he [Sadio] is not actually based in Karonor itself, but he's based between Karonor and another place."
- 13:40: "They [Sadio's men] are very close to Gambia, it's very easy for them to just come to Gambia and melt into civilian life. I can tell you, some of them are living and interlinking with their wives and children, in Brikama, so it's very easy for them to come and just keep cool."
- 14:50: "There are so many accusations about soldiers who are from Casamance and who know these rebels. The army as an institution wouldn't allow that. But then you wouldn't know the personal relationship between the fighters and some of those soldiers. [Ensuing anecdote censored to maintain anonymity]."
- 16:40: "It's quite clear that the ECOMIG that are around the Foni region are Senegalese, and their only business is to stop the rebellion from Casamance."
- 20:30: "The Senegalese want to box the rebels from the Gambia and into Casamance. Because the Senegalese could attack from that end, and then they would prevent them from getting into Gambia from the other end. But they have never been able to do that."
- 21:30: "ECOMIG has actually distanced themselves from attacking the rebels, that's not their mission."
- 22:31: "The Gambian and Senegalese militaries do not cooperate at all."
- 54:43: "During the fighting in the 80s we got a lot of refugees from Casamance. Some of them are still here, they've joined the army, but they are still connected to Casamance. They are very closely knit, the Diola community in the border areas."

2.9 Interview 9

- 11:01: "The Senegalese military need to launch operations from behind the rebels, meaning from Gambia. If they could do this, if they could use Gambia as a launching pad, the MFDC would be eliminated in less than a day, or no more than seven days."
- 12:02: "The Senegalese want to launch both ground and air operations. Since Gambia refuses to involve its airspace, they [the Senegalese] struggle to launch attacks from the air, as they cannot violate the border."
- 13:03: "The Gambian government knows this is needed to eliminate the rebels, but we don't want to pay the price. Our people would be the ones to suffer. We don't want another Kenya here. [referring to the jihadi terrorist violence crossing the border from Somalia.]"