

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: University of Chester</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 17A Geography, Environmental Studies and Archaeology (GDS)</p>
<p>Title of case study: Conflict management and post-conflict reconstruction in Casamance, Senegal</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Martin Evans’ research concerns conflict and its aftermath in the Casamance region of southern Senegal – the scene of West Africa’s longest-running insurgency. His work has influenced policy, humanitarian and development activity in the region and beyond, and has informed Western governments, international agencies and non-governmental organisations in their interventions to support peacebuilding and ‘post-conflict’ reconstruction. In addition, Evans has provided expert testimony in relation to asylum claims made in Western countries by Casamançais fleeing persecution. Building on his previous work, Evans has conducted the underpinning research for this activity while at Chester as a lecturer (February 2009–July 2011) and senior lecturer (August 2011–present).</p> <p>His work has a lasting impact because of the situation’s intractability and the need to address ongoing violence and human displacement. The conflict also retains the capacity to destabilise neighbouring countries.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Casamance is Senegal’s southwestern limb, sitting between The Gambia to the north and Guinea-Bissau to the south. The civil conflict there is rooted in a separatist rebellion, now over 30 years old.</p> <p>Evans’ research has been funded largely by a British Academy grant and has focused on two areas. First, his fieldwork carried out from June to August 2009 continued his long-term study of the dynamics of return and reconstruction amid people formerly displaced by violence from along the Guinea-Bissau border. The research showed how the role of international aid in this process is equivocal and sometimes divisive. Contrary to claims made by the aid community, return and reconstruction is primarily endogenous, with the initiative, resources and labour coming mostly from displaced communities themselves. Evans’ findings show that aid tends to follow rather than lead the process. However, aid can still reshape political space at different scales from the village to the administrative region. Local political entrepreneurs seek greater access to such aid, producing contestations between and within particular villages – between returning and resident populations, for example – amid heightened poverty and disputed land tenure. The presence of aid also feeds a struggle for resources between national and regional government and the resulting political restructuring creates benefits for some officials and the people in certain areas, while alienating others, including the Casamance separatists. In addition to Evans (2009), listed below, a further publication expands on and synthesises this research: Evans, M. (forthcoming 2014) ‘Contested spaces, new opportunities: displacement, return and the rural economy in Casamance, Senegal’. In Hammar, A. (ed.) <i>Displacement economies: paradoxes of crisis and creativity in African contexts</i>. London: Zed.</p> <p>The second area of research took a more explicitly historical approach in seeking to understand the Casamance conflict’s cross-border dynamics. The role of The Gambia in the conflict has been particularly under-researched. Colonial history and its modern geopolitical repercussions were explored in partnership with David Perfect, Visiting Research Associate at the University of Chester, on how Senegal and The Gambia respectively perceive and manage their combined geographical space (Perfect and Evans, 2013). Research with Charlotte Ray (then at Coventry University), which involved joint fieldwork in July 2010, also took the long view, situating different aspects of The Gambia’s linkages with the Casamance conflict in the context of broader historical and contemporary relationships. These included the evolution of formal cross-border cooperation</p>

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vis-à-vis the conflict, the development of a transnational 'war economy', ethnic solidarities, and the impacts of the conflict on The Gambia through the movement of Casamance refugees, rebels and arms onto its territory. Again, the conflict is exploited by various individuals on the ground, particularly refugees and transnational migrants, in their use of political and economic spaces on both sides of the border (Evans and Ray, 2013).

Another aspect of this historically-focused research, conducted by Evans between June and August 2009, looked at rural communities in the little-studied Balantacounda area of Middle Casamance, which has been affected by but politically marginal to the conflict. It found that people there view the contemporary situation through deeper histories of violence particular to their area and pre-dating the rebellion, especially cross-border insecurity during the Liberation War in Guinea-Bissau from 1963 to 1974. Comparing this with similar research done elsewhere in Casamance created a broader understanding of the relationship and at times dissonance between Senegalese nationalist, Casamançais separatist and local historiographies (Evans, 2013).

3. References to the researchPublications

Evans, M. (2013) 'Historiographies, nationalisms and conflict in Casamance, Senegal'. In Griffiths, C. (ed.) *Contesting historical divides in Francophone Africa*: 93-119. Chester: University of Chester Press.

Evans, M. (2009) 'Flexibility in return, reconstruction and livelihoods in displaced villages in Casamance, Senegal'. *GeoJournal* **74**(6): 507-524.

Evans, M. and Ray, C. (2013) 'Uncertain ground: The Gambia and the Casamance conflict'. In Saine, A., Ceesay, E. and Sall, E. (eds) *State and society in The Gambia since independence*: 247-287. Trenton NJ: Africa World Press.

Perfect, D. and Evans, M. (2013) 'Trouble with the neighbours? Contemporary constructions and colonial legacies in relations between Senegal and The Gambia'. In Griffiths, C. (ed.) *Contesting historical divides in francophone Africa*: 59-91. Chester: University of Chester Press.

Research grants

British Academy Small Research Grant, ref. SG-50255, 'Reconstituting space in a post-conflict society: return and reconstruction in Casamance, Senegal', £4959, June 2009–June 2011. Principal Investigator: Martin Evans.

African Studies Association of the UK (ASAUk) Sponsorship for Conferences and Workshops Fund, 'Contesting historical divides in Francophone Africa', £494, September 2010. Organisers: Martin Evans, Claire Griffiths, Brenda Garvey.

Quality indicators

The research on which the references above are based was largely funded by the British Academy grant indicated. On submission of the final report for the grant, the British Academy offered 'many thanks for the report which is ideal and provides exactly what we needed to close this grant. It was great to read about your research and the many presentations you have made about Casamance, including at the FCO' (email, 18 April 2013). The chapters Evans (2013) and Perfect and Evans (2013) were originally presented at a colloquium organised at Chester in September 2010. This was funded by the conference grant from ASAUk, recognised as a 'learned society' since 2007.

4. Details of the impact

This research has been informing the national and international policy community. Its impact

should be contextualised by noting that successive Senegalese governments under President Abdoulaye Wade, who was in office from 2000 to 2012, sought to lower the international profile of the Casamance conflict by suppressing domestic and foreign media coverage. He also blocked two books on the conflict that were published in France from entering and circulating in Senegal. In this context, the importance of getting information on the conflict to wider policy communities was heightened. Since the election of President Macky Sall in April 2012, Senegalese policy on resolving the conflict has become more open to international involvement at the same time as broader concerns about instability in the sub-region have emerged. Recent military operations by West African and French forces against insurgents in Mali – the latter have been found with arms apparently trafficked to them from Casamance separatists – and related terrorism in Algeria have highlighted the need for analysis of conflict in West Africa informed by field research.

Evans' research has informed British policy on Senegal mainly through briefings to diplomats at the request of the Africa Research Group at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and of the British Embassy in Dakar, capital of Senegal, which also covers Guinea-Bissau. Her Majesty's Ambassador to Senegal was briefed in post in Dakar in August 2009, following an earlier presentation to him in London with six FCO staff and external analysts present. His replacement was briefed in London in April 2011 with three additional representatives present. Besides thereby providing information supporting small aid projects in Casamance funded by the British Embassy to Senegal, the research has increased British government understanding of problems on the ground, the motivations of the Casamance separatists, and the need for British diplomatic and aid efforts in support of the peace process. Evans has emphasised that these efforts should be better coordinated with those of other European countries, principally France and Portugal, the former colonial powers in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau respectively.

At international policy level, Evans provided information and analysis on events in Casamance to the Africa II Division of the Department of Political Affairs at the United Nations in New York as it mooted a peace-building initiative between December 2009 and September 2010. More recently, this has been superseded by two new initiatives. One is a World Bank programme funding peacebuilding and return of the displaced in Casamance, where Evans acted as a peer reviewer for the programme proposal (submitting advice to a panel of 15 people, March 2012) and as a member of an expert panel giving advice on research underpinning this programme (four people, June 2012). The other is a peace-building initiative by the US Department of State, for which Evans briefed the diplomat concerned, and his advisor, before he embarked on his mission in September 2012.

Evans has also provided advice to international aid and advocacy agencies and NGOs, informing them on security and political conditions in Casamance. This has included the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre in Geneva (February 2009 to November 2011; see IDMC, 2010) and Y-Care International in London from December 2010 to the present day. Another important channel through which the research has been disseminated to users in the aid and policy sectors is the specialised media, particularly IRIN (Integrated Regional Information Networks), the highly respected news and analysis service of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for which Evans has given a number of commentaries on events in Casamance and Guinea-Bissau (see for example IRIN, 2009a-c). In addition, Evans has given an interview to the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC, 2009), notable because of South Africa's important political role on the African continent.

Evans' detailed, first-hand knowledge of the political and social conditions in Senegal has also been called upon in the provision of expert reports and other advice on the claims of Casamançais and other Senegalese asylum seekers in the UK, US, Canada and Belgium. His testimony affected the cases of at least seven individuals from May 2009 to January 2011. Given the low profile of the Casamance conflict internationally and limited expertise on it in Western countries, particularly English-speaking ones, such testimony has been highly sought after and valued by the government agencies and legal firms concerned.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Selected media and NGO reports

- IDMC (2010) *New displacement and challenges to durable solutions in Casamance*. Geneva: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. Retrieve from [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/9A0C63B752E940FCC125774600275651/\\$file/Senegal_Overview_June10.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/9A0C63B752E940FCC125774600275651/$file/Senegal_Overview_June10.pdf). [This cites Evans' research and direct communications with IDMC about the nature of displacement in Casamance and the situation of the displaced.]
- IRIN (2009a) 'Analysis: Closer to war than to peace in Casamance?' Integrated Regional Information Networks, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Retrieve from <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/86217/Analysis-Closer-to-war-than-to-peace-in-Casamance>. [This includes commentary from Evans based on his field research on the situation of the displaced; and on the problems of the peace process, based on his discussions with the Casamance separatist movement.]
- IRIN (2009b) 'Senegal: Fresh violence in Casamance'. Integrated Regional Information Networks, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Retrieve from <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/84832/SENEGAL-Fresh-violence-in-Casamance>. [Evans' commentary here considers the impacts of an upsurge in violence on the local economy – another key area of his research.]
- IRIN (2009c) 'Guinea-Bissau–Senegal: Assassinations breed uncertainty in neighbouring Casamance'. Integrated Regional Information Networks, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Retrieve from <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/83320/GUINEA-BISSAU-SENEGAL-Assassinations-breed-uncertainty-in-neighbouring-Casamance>. [Evans comments on the implications of violent political instability in Guinea-Bissau for the conflict in neighbouring Casamance.]
- SABC (2009) 'Uneasy calm in southern Senegal as new regime takes over'. South African Broadcasting Corporation FM broadcast (19 channels), 19 August. [In this radio interview, conducted in Dakar at the end of a long period of fieldwork, Evans analyses the situation on the ground in Casamance.]