

# ECOWAS Peace and Security Report

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## Overview of religious radicalism and the terrorist threat in Senegal

### Introduction

The acceleration of military action in the Malian conflict with the launch of Operation Serval on 11 January 2013, the deployment of the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) and the preparations for the deployment of a United Nations (UN) mission have introduced new security processes in West Africa and beyond. Henceforth, in the Sahel-Saharan battlefield, troop-contributing countries and those who support the military intervention will be exposed to different kinds of threats. This situation has raised concerns in religious, political and security circles. Many countries in the sub-region are wondering whether the security services and forces are equipped to deal with both the terrorist threat and the possible connections between the international Jihadist movement that has taken root in the Sahel and active or dormant radical groups in the different countries.

Geographically, Senegal is an extension of the Sahel-Saharan region. Two Senegalese nationals, described by some as unsuccessful candidates for migration, were spotted among the Jihadists in Mali, a transit country for many illegal migrants on their way to Europe.<sup>1</sup> Sociologically, Malian and Senegalese culture first intermixed under the Mali Empire, and again in the early years of the independence period under the Mali Federation. Islam is another medium that draws the two nations together. On El Hadj Oumar Tall's journey to Mali, from Niore to the Bangadiara cliffs, his route is dotted with Tijaniyya religious centres. The followers of the Kuntiyya Qâdiriyya of Timbuktu belong to the same brotherhood as the disciples of Ndiassane (near Tivaouane in Senegal). Every year, many Malians attend the *Gamou*, the pilgrimage organised by this brotherhood to celebrate the birth of Mohamed, the Prophet of Islam.

In such a sociological and cultural setting, it is normal to wonder whether Senegal – a country neighbouring Mali, that is highly Islamised and traversed by numerous movements, including Jihadist and Wahhabite, and that contributes troops to AFISMA – is directly threatened or likely to become either a theatre of operations or a fallback zone. This report is an enquiry into the radical religious movements in Senegal that are capable of taking advantage of the regional context and unpredictable circumstances to engage in violent actions.

Methodologically, this preliminary study is based on media reports, semi-structured interviews with various actors and a public opinion survey with 400 respondents conducted in February and March 2013 in Dakar and its suburbs, in the city and *département* of Saint-Louis as well as in Thiès and Mbour. Because of the difficulties in measuring a phenomenon such as radicalism, the method adopted is a qualitative analysis of the responses gathered during interviews and in questionnaires.

### ECOWAS PEACE AND SECURITY REPORT SERIES

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## Is Senegal at the centre of interactions in the Sahel-Sahara?

In June 2007, the alleged assassins of a group of French nationals wanted by the Mauritanian police travelled through Senegal and the Gambia to Guinea-Bissau, where they were arrested by the Guinea-Bissauan security services. On 29 May 2010, three suspected Jihadists were arrested at Léopold Sédar Senghor International Airport in Dakar by the Senegalese Criminal Investigation Division. This event alerted the Senegalese authorities to the need for closer cooperation between the different national and sub-regional intelligence and security services. In September 2010, cooperation with the Moroccan police made it possible to identify and later extradite these three, who were members of the *Jeunesse islamique combattante marocaine* (Moroccan Islamic Youth Fighters) – an organisation with alleged al-Qaeda links – and wanted in an investigation into attacks perpetrated in Morocco from May 2003. In February 2011, two suspected members of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) who were on the run were arrested in the suburbs of Dakar.

In July 2012, the arrest in Dagana, northern Senegal, of ten suspected members of a terrorist network prompted a reaction from Senegal's President Macky Sall. While on an official visit to France, the latter stated that no African country was capable of dealing with the threat alone because of the continent's porous borders. When Imam Boubacar Dianko was arrested in January 2013 by the Senegalese intelligence services in Kidira, a border town near Mali, the Senegalese authorities grew increasingly concerned. Dianko was suspected of having links with the leader of the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). While such information may now be in the public domain due to the turmoil in northern Mali, the fact remains that, well before the French intervention, there were several clues pointing to the presence in Senegal of operational units capable of perpetrating violent religious extremist acts.

### Level of religious radicalism in Senegal

The geopolitical paradox of Senegal is that, while it symbolises the extent to which Africa belongs among Arab and Islamic countries and organisations, having twice hosted the Summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and being a member of the Islamic Educational, Science and Culture Organisation (ISESCO), the Muslim World League (MWL) and the World Islamic Call Society, it remains a traditional ally of the West. Hence its many similarities with Arab countries like Saudi Arabia, the Gulf Emirates, Morocco, Egypt and Tunisia, all of which are targeted by al-Qaeda and its various branches, which consider them as 'agents' of the West.

The survey conducted from February to March 2013 as part of this study shows that most of the Senegalese people opposed

to the French intervention in Mali also blame their country for taking part in it. This is the case with 35 to 40 per cent of interviewees in Thiès and the environs of Dakar. One felt that 'the Islamists are waging a jihad in northern Mali that should spread across the country to the rest of West Africa ... because our states are dirty and are led by infidels'. Among the survey participants in the region of Saint-Louis, some consider Ansar al-Dine and MUJAO as 'simply applying Islamic law, the Sharia'. In their opinion, therefore, 'by sending troops to northern Mali, Senegal is fighting against Islam'. Senegal, 'instead of fighting alongside France, should protect the interests of Islam, which includes, among other things, the application of the Sharia'. One new element is that not all of the men and women who expressed these opinions belonged to the Salafist movements; some were members of brotherhoods and 'swore' by their religious leaders only.

Overall, such extreme positions are still in the minority. Convinced that Islam is 'a religion of peace and tolerance where dialogue is more important than force', most of the people interviewed believed that the jihad preached by Ansar al-Dine and MUJAO 'is outdated, a thing belonging to the past days of the Prophet of Islam', and they stated that 'the only jihad allowed by the Muslim religion is the one the believer should wage against his own body'. This opinion is often repeated in the statements made by the brotherhoods, especially the Mouride, with reference to the jihad 'nafs', which is part of their basic religious education. Reassuring as this may be, it is important to note that the categories of people that can tip over into violence are precisely those that are in the minority.

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The minority discourse that favours jihad can be heard in a number of spheres of Senegalese society, especially in the urban periphery among the youth. The fact of the matter is that, while there is rampant religious radicalism, the Senegalese do not seem to perceive it yet or, rather, experience its manifestations. They believe that Senegal does not share the same characteristics as Mali and that its tradition as 'the land of Téranga', referring to its legendary hospitality, as well as the peaceful nature of its people, protects it from that kind of situation. This is exactly what people used to say in Mali before the crisis.

Similarly, the brotherhoods are still largely perceived as a shield against foreign extremist influences. People living in the provinces can often be heard saying that 'a person of genuine

Senegalese origin' cannot support the ideologies of the religious extremists promoting violence. The incidents of self-immolation in front of the Presidential Palace during President Abdoulaye Wade's regime and at the beginning of Sall's term of office, or the violence before the 2012 presidential election, seem forgotten and are not regarded as signs of a profound change in society, particularly with respect to violence.

## It is rare to find empirical studies on the real status of Islam in Senegal over the past few decades.

It was also in the provinces, for example in Saint-Louis, that people gave confused answers expressing this optimism: 'Security-wise, Senegal is sufficiently immunised by the professionalism of its army and the blessings of its virtuous elders', 'Senegal does not have any mineral resources', 'There is a relative ethnic homogeneity in Senegal', 'There are no Islamic radicals in Senegal', or '89 per cent of the Senegalese people are black; it is not an Islamist country'; meaning that they regard radicalism as an exclusively Arab phenomenon, not something that is found in all societies.

Nevertheless, some respondents could not hide their fears about what they perceived as a threat to the idealistic model of Islam, particularly the threat posed by movements hitherto described as 'reformist', including ideological trends ranging from the Muslim Brothers to Salafism and its Wahhabite variant. These respondents all belonged to brotherhoods, especially Tijan and Mouride. Those belonging to the latter emphasised the teachings of El hadj Malick Sy and Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, whom they view as the regulators of Senegalese society.

Some of the respondents claimed to have at least once been 'attacked in their faith by those who blame them for engaging in an unorthodox practice', arguing that 'Islam has only one source, the Sunna' (sayings and traditions of the Prophet of Islam). They are thus criticised by those who do not belong to any brotherhoods and who refuse to recognise them as 'true Muslims'. This is precisely the state of mind of the so-called Takfirist schools of thought; that is, an excommunicating attitude that generally precedes the call to jihad against an 'impious' society. Those conditioned for Jihadism are usually detached from the realities of their society and live in an idealised world where their religiosity is a sort of de-territorialisation of the group they belong to, combined with an acute sensitivity to the causes of international Islam.

In such a situation, practices and actors considered to be un-Islamic become their targets. The same goes for all things

that are, or look, Western. The state, in its so-called secular form, is a special target of criticism by Islamists. In this regard, Senegal's military and diplomatic positions are significant enough to expose the country to the threats of Jihadist movements. Indeed, Senegal, a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), has contributed to all the decisions adopted by this organisation in its bid to restore the integrity of Mali, including by force. Senegal's participation in AFISMA is, moreover, in line with the position it took in the past when it sent troops to fight alongside Western forces during the First Gulf War in 1991. Regarding the military presence of France, a country considered an enemy of Islam, especially since the ban on the so-called Islamic veil in schools in 2004 and the various statements made by President Nicolas Sarkozy, there is a perception that Senegal is a 'defender of French interests' in the sub-region, including real or imaginary French economic interests. This perception was strengthened when the new defence agreement between France and Senegal was signed on 18 April 2012.

## Evolution of Islamic rhetoric

Still deeply influenced by the paradigm of a 'pacifist' brotherhood<sup>2</sup> opposed by the so-called reformist movements, religious research in Senegal has failed to take into account the changes in rhetoric in this area over time and the mixed nature of the religious paths of Islamic actors since the seventies.<sup>3</sup> It is, therefore, rare to find empirical studies on the real status of Islam in Senegal over the last few decades. The literature on the subject still seems to distinguish only two categories: on the one hand, an Islam composed of brotherhoods such as the Tijaniyya, Mouridism, Layenes and Qâdiriyya, that is opposed or challenged, on the other hand, by reformist movements such as Ibâdu Rahmân (whose ideology is close to that of the Muslim Brothers with sub-groups of students on university campuses in Dakar and Saint-Louis) and Al-Falâh (of Wahhabite-Salafist leanings, originally from Saudi Arabia and for the moment removed from the political struggle, advocating instead a pietism similar to the Salafist movements of the Maghreb and Middle East).

In this context, many still believe that the Sufi brotherhood of Islam is a shield against Islamist extremism. The preliminary survey conducted in 2013 revealed that neither the authorities nor the Senegalese themselves realised the full complexity and mixed nature of the country's Islamic landscape. While some of the respondents mentioned the existence of 'well-organised and well-armed' extremist groups in Senegal, most did not see any difference between these extremist movements and Ibâdu Rahmân, a confusion that demonstrates the impact of the dichotomist theories. Officially, the leaders of the Ibâdu Rahmân movement say they reject all forms of violence. A deeper analysis, however, suggests a less visible strategy, which includes a long-term agenda and investment in schools. Such a movement certainly does not yet have the necessary social rooting to stage a political challenge or openly oppose the brotherhoods. At present, it focuses its efforts on building a

parallel or competing educational system, while counting on specific medium- or long-term socialisation.

Asked whether religious extremism was on the rise in Senegal and what the signs were, those who answered yes always mentioned dress codes or beards. They were unaware of the ideological background of sermons, Internet sites and chat groups, including social networks, which feature, for example, the issuing of fatwas, the sharing of Wahhabite sermons and links with African and Middle Eastern Islamic networks.

The time has come to shift attention away from the non-brotherhood movements, and stop discounting the possibility that the seeds of Jihadism can occasionally thrive in these circles.

In the part of the survey aimed at determining the level of religious radicalism, the responses were consistently vague and expressed mixed feelings about the jihad, which is legitimised in some religious works or sermons (for example, the Jihad of El Hadji Omar, Mamadou Lamine Dramé and Samory). The responses were couched in vague terms, suggesting a tension that is worth analysing further. 'You can't support everything, but you can't throw out everything either. It is the Islamic law,' said a number of people when commenting on the actions of Ansar al-Dine and MUJAO. This type of response suggests that the time has come to shift attention away from the non-brotherhood movements, and stop discounting the possibility that the seeds of Jihadism can occasionally thrive in these circles.

It is true that religious leaders can serve as mediators and so mitigate the impact of the ideological and financial onslaught of Wahhabite or Jihadist Salafism, which is very powerful because of its use of petrodollars and the social services delivered by Islamic associations. The latter invest in educational and social services not provided by the state, even though it is not possible at this stage to measure the magnitude of this phenomenon. The state authorities also broadly share the perception of the brotherhoods as being a protective wall against the Jihadist danger. However, some people believe the state is trying to discredit the brotherhoods by forging political links with religious groups, thus indirectly encouraging the rise of Islamic radicalism. An inhabitant of the region of Saint-Louis put it this way: 'The Senegalese government wants to weaken the brotherhoods in order to increase the state's power compared to theirs and this opens the way for terrorists. There are Salafists in Senegal and,

therefore, increasing religious extremism.' And there may be a new development: Islamist movements are being courted during elections, as in 2012 when Ibâdu Rahmân supported Sall from the first round.

## Islamisation of political contestation

It is often forgotten that, since the 1970s, following the emergence of an Arab-speaking elite from Arab and/or Islamic universities who challenged the hegemony of the Francophone elite accused of causing the bankruptcy of the country since independence, the myth of the Islamic conscience was born and has grown in all spheres, including among the brotherhoods. This myth is an attempt to revitalise the experience of Islamic membership to a transnational community that practises 'mechanical' solidarity. The Islamic movements have apparently understood that it is in their interest to forge an objective alliance with members of the brotherhoods, even if they have to temporarily hide their anti-brotherhood sentiments.

This myth of an Islamic conscience has developed into a real political movement that has captured the exogenous ideologies of Salafism, Wahhabism, nascent Shiism and even Jihadism. Those dissatisfied with the brotherhood movement, which is sometimes too heavily marked by its repeated contacts with the political authorities, just as in the colonial days, are now moving closer toward a rationalised Islam and are even recruiting members among the Francophone intellectual elite. Paradoxically, through the 'elitism' of extremism, this is said to be causing an 'Islam of engineers' divested of local cultural characteristics, for example in the Middle East (the Muslim Brothers in Egypt) and the Maghreb (Algeria, Tunisia and most recently Morocco).

This cross-cutting movement is apparently sensitive to the demands of globalised Islamism (the Palestinian cause, anti-Americanism, etc.). Hence the creation of a deterritorialised category of Muslims who follow a trend of pan-Islamism that gathers together all the Muslim causes of the world (Afghanistan, Kashmir, Chechnya, etc.). These militants, cut off from their families and a society they consider impious, are ideal targets for recruitment by international Jihadist movements, especially in a context where AQIM, as part of its efforts to modernise its image, is increasingly present in the social media, including in West Africa.

It was in the disadvantaged suburbs of Dakar and Thiès that most of the respondents who supported the actions of the Jihadists in northern Mali expressed negative feelings towards an anti-Islamic West. They said they 'totally' support the Islamists because 'they are fighting for Islam' and 'that is a commendable effort'. One respondent living in Grand-Yoff (Dakar) was even prepared to reveal his identity because 'those fighting for a just cause should only fear Allah and not any human being'. A 24-year-old youth used the survey to invite a member of

the research team to a prayer at a mosque far from the city centre because he avoided mosques 'that do not respect all the precepts of Islam'. It is this kind of mindset that led to the banning of brotherhood practices in campus mosques such as the one at the University of Dakar, which is controlled by the Salafist movement. His younger brother, aged 21, stated that 'it is a fight for all good Muslims' and they should take up arms against the 'impious'. A similar opinion was expressed by another youth in Thiès who welcomed the action of the Jihadists in Mali: 'I am ready to join them in order to support what they are doing.' According to him, 'the Islamists are waging a jihad in northern Mali that should spread across Mali to the whole of West Africa', a statement that is in line with the programme of action of movements such as MUJAO.

The idea of an impious, Western-allied Senegalese state was often repeated in responses: 'Our states are dirty and are headed by infidels,' said those respondents who were linked to the Salafist movement or were members of other prosperous Islamic organisations. This support was also expressed by some students who were initially reluctant to respond to the questionnaire: 'The West is fighting against Islam. What is happening in Mali is unacceptable; France with the support of the infidels is fighting against Islam and Muslims. It is everybody's duty to support the latter.'

Further, some facts gathered during the study support the idea of mixed paths in the gradual radicalisation that hitherto has only been observed in the non-brotherhood movements. This is at least the case with the peri-brotherhood movements described as youth groups who 'commit crimes' and 'force their ideas on people'. Asked whether Senegalese people were capable of perpetrating attacks, some respondents from Saint-Louis said yes, citing groups like the 'thiantacounes' as examples.<sup>4</sup>

## Factors supporting the emergence of Jihadist ideology

The pro-Jihadist ideology discourse rests on three pillars: pan-Islamic solidarity, hostility to brotherhoods and a deep anti-Western attitude, although a number of socioeconomic factors also contribute to shaping this discourse.

The first pillar is that of taking ownership of all the international causes considered Islamic, or which are Islamised by proponents who advocate for a mechanical solidarity, to the extent of making it a matter of religious obligation demanding limitless sacrifices, including one's own life. The preliminary survey gathered some illustrative responses.

The second pillar, hostility to brotherhoods, is the rejection of all Islamic religiosities that differ from those accepted by Salafist ideology. As a result other Muslims are considered to have strayed from the right path and must be brought back on track, by force if necessary. Statements made by a 23-year-old

youth living in a suburb of Dakar illustrate this kind of mindset: 'Yes, I support them (the Jihadists) with all my heart because Islam is trampled everywhere. I would gladly join any efforts to establish Sharia in Senegal. In this country, Islam is the worshipping of men. The brotherhoods must disappear and I am ready to take part in eliminating them by all means.'

The supporters of such a Takfirist discourse, which excommunicates and excludes entire groups of Muslims from the 'community of believers', may constitute a sociological unit and support the ideologies of groups such as MUJAO. It is common knowledge that this movement emphasises the concept of *Tawhid*, the 'oneness of God', whereas in the opinion of Senegalese Islamists, the brotherhoods practice association, or *shirk* in Arabic. Such potential units exist in Islamic associations and are not monitored in any special way.

The sociological resistance of the brotherhoods is still a reality, with the result that the strategy adopted by pan-Islamic movements tends to involve efforts to control the educational sector and delivery of social services to the poor, possibly while waiting for the balance of power to tip in their favour. In view of the fact that Senegal has allowed the development of a dual educational system with the official Francophone schools on the one hand and numerous Arabic or Koranic schools on the other, such a strategy may pay off in the long term.

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The Senegalese government apparently does not fully grasp the challenges posed by this situation, nor does it seem to have included this religious dimension in its global security policy framework. In any case, there is a need to reform the private denominational sector in order to mitigate the exploitation of Arabic scholars and address their frustrations before they are won over by extremists. There was a wave of protests following the threat to close certain *daaras* (Koranic schools) that were declared non-compliant, whereas there is no relevant legislation on the matter. The issue was quickly seized upon by religious actors who used it as a tool in Senegalese politics in a bid to prove that Senegal is an anti-Islamic state.

This exaggeration, which crossed the brotherhood/Islamist boundary, resulted in the burning of a temporary shelter used as a classroom in a village in the south-east of Senegal on 10 March 2013. The arson was perpetrated by a group of men 'hostile to the presence of a French school in the village' in order to 'save their *daaras* and comply with the spirit of the late founder of the village'.<sup>5</sup> Such a contestation of the official and secular educational system is comparable, in terms of the arguments put forward, to the actions of Boko Haram in northern Nigeria, whose struggle is essentially based on its rejection of 'Western' education.

This anti-Western sentiment can be found between the lines of comments on the French intervention, and the positions expressed are quite ambiguous. While Senegal's participation in the conflict is generally hailed as a sign of African solidarity and good neighbourliness with Mali, the fact that France led the operation is criticised and the latter's motivations are questioned because of the suspicion that the intervention may have been prompted by its desire to protect its geostrategic or economic interests.

## Is there a gradual Islamisation of political contestation?

There were clues pointing to the existence of potentially operational units well before Senegalese Minister of Foreign Affairs Mankeur Ndiaye's declaration on 14 January 2013 acknowledging the existence of dormant terrorist cells in the country. There has recently also been a gradual Islamisation of political contestation in Senegal, for example: the demonstrations in support of Osama bin Laden in 2001 at the Main Mosque in Dakar; the demonstrations in support of the Palestinian cause during the 2010 strikes against Gaza in front of the Embassy of Israel; and the emergence of an endogenous Shiite community (outside of the Lebanese community) with established links to Iran and the Shiite diaspora in the United States. It is possible to detect concern for the country's future in the answers given by respondents. Although a minority of respondents gave these responses, they indicate that people are beginning to become aware of the threat now that the taboo on the subject has been lifted and the authorities themselves have acknowledged its reality. Respondents living in the Dakar region expressed fears for Senegal because in their opinion 'the youth are capable of committing suicide for the sake of Islam for two reasons. The first is the brainwashing that takes place in the numerous Wahhabite schools where the state has no control over what is taught. The second is poverty, because the Islamists have the money and are willing to pay.'

Indeed, as early as 2001, well before these concerns were prompted by the events in Mali, a movement that may be described as Jihadist was born. Still a minority, it is led by Imam Mamour Fall, Emir of the Islamic Party of Senegal, which is not recognised by the authorities but is very active on the Internet. This Senegalese imam used to preach in Italy, but was expelled

from that country for declaring during a sermon after Italian soldiers died in an al-Qaeda attack that he had links with Bin Laden. Mamour Fall stated in Senegalese and African newspapers that he was 'the spiritual son of Bin Laden' ('Soon I will surprise Senegal and Africa.'). This imam, on the watch list of foreign intelligence services as well as jihadwatch.org and the Senegalese security services, openly stated that he had links with the Jihadist movement and demonstrated that he had detailed knowledge of the late al-Qaeda leader's bodyguards and his wealthy family members in Switzerland.

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At times very caricatural, he nevertheless clearly states his aims and strategies in his blog, where he criticises the 'tyrants of this world', while disseminating in Senegal the main ideas of the international Jihadist discourse: anti-Americanism, the bankruptcy of Western ideologies and the imminent 'Islamic solution', the Palestinian cause, the complicity of 'infidel and apostate' heads of state and the 'culpable silence of the world' in the face of the 'injustices suffered by Muslims'.

Our survey recorded similar statements, such as the corruption of the state, the bankruptcy of governments and their collusion with the West, and, especially, that 'Islam is the only alternative'. This is illustrated by the statement of a 17-year-old girl living in Thiès: 'I won't say that they should kill, but I do support their action because this is a dirty world.' For another 19-year-old, these Jihadists should be supported because all they do is apply 'Islamic law'. He concluded by saying: 'I would like to see them in Senegal and I would not hesitate to join them.'

Certain viewpoints that are negative about the state and its public policies, particularly in the educational sector and in the management of religious affairs, seem to result in the systematic rejection and condemnation of 'deviation from the precepts of Islam' and non-application of Sharia law. The combination of this general discourse and the situation in the sub-region and the world is the reason for certain statements, such as the one made by a 29-year-old female student: 'The West uses our states to fight against the Muslim religion. It is high time that it all stopped. Everybody should be fully involved and use all necessary means, even if they must lay down their lives.'

All indications are that by demanding the increasing Islamisation of laws in a context where the government is apparently facing serious difficulties on many social issues, the Islamist movements are trying to dictate an agenda that may ultimately challenge the republican nature of the state. This is not just what the mosques or Islamic movements are saying, but what is heard openly on television and other media, including state media. This situation, together with the geopolitical realities in the sub-region, calls for the rethinking of security paradigms, particularly the mechanisms for fighting against terrorism in an increasingly complex environment.

## Conclusion

The transnational character of actors, the porosity of borders and the shrinking of distances by modern communication technologies seem to favour the spread of the Jihadist phenomenon in the West African sub-region. Senegal is not safe from such a spread, even ideologically. The protection apparently provided by the *marabouts* and brotherhoods is no longer convincing given the contestation within their own midst, the fragmentation of the authority of the Caliphs, and the existence of peripheral groups composed of virtually indoctrinated members under the influence of charismatic leaders. Senegal's foreign policy choices, combined with the limitations of its intelligence services, especially in terms of regional cooperation, mean that it can only have limited control over these developments.

The nature of the threat posed by transnational groups, together with the new concept of territorial spaces, demands multidisciplinary expertise that is not only related to security.

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This expertise will have to take into account not only the geopolitical aspects but also the ideological and sociological dimensions of a multifaceted phenomenon that often accompanies indicators such as rampant poverty, youth unemployment and blatant inequalities. The multidimensional character of the threat, and, therefore, of the response, apparently has not yet been fully appreciated, especially by the relevant Senegalese security services.

The dual structure of the Senegalese educational system in its current form could in the next few decades, if it has not done so already, cause major frustrations that may be exploited by Islamist movements, leading to a deep social divide due to the unequal socialisation of future citizens of the same developing nation. It is urgent to restore the balance and assert the state's control over such sensitive issues as knowledge transmission and socialisation.

## Recommendations

1. Encourage the establishment of a multidisciplinary platform for the strategic monitoring of religious radicalism, regular updates on developments in the situation and preparation of a forward-looking plan in close collaboration with the relevant Senegalese services. Other countries affected by the phenomenon could set up similar watch mechanisms and work in partnership with the ECOWAS early warning system.
2. Encourage the establishment of a national dialogue framework to discuss the future of the Senegalese educational system, in order to address the potential frustrations of those left behind by the Francophone system. In view of its position in the OIC, Senegal could work with its Arab counterparts toward a better structured educational financing mechanism and harmonious cooperation that takes into account its concerns, especially in terms of medium- and long-term security.
3. Engage the religious, traditional and customary leaders in Senegal as regulators in order to mitigate the effects of radical discourses imported by people with different motivations.
4. As discussed during the meeting organised by the African Union in Nouakchott on 17 March 2013, strengthen the existing structures and encourage the development of an architecture involving all the countries of the Sahel-Saharan belt in order to consider the different interrelated threats confronting the region and encourage better regional cooperation.

## Important dates

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| October 2001     | Demonstration in support of bin Laden in the courtyard of the Great Mosque of Dakar.   |
| June 2007        | Arrest of the alleged killers of a group of French wanted by the Mauritanian police by the security services of Guinea-Bissau after they crossed Senegal and the Gambia. |
| May 2010         | Arrest of three suspected jihadists at the international Leopold Sedar Senghor airport in Dakar. They will be extradited to Morocco in September 2010.                   |
| November 2010    | AQIM threatens former President Abdoulaye Wade.  |
| January 2011     | Arrest of Imam Babacar Dianko by the Senegalese Secrete Service.   |
| February 2011    | Arrest of two suspected AQIM members in the suburbs of Dakar.  |
| July 2012        | Arrest of ten people in Dagana, including seven Mauritians and three Senegalese suspected to belong to a terrorist network.  |
| 22 February 2013 | False bomb alert in Dakar.   |
| 10 March 2013    | Temporary shelters for classrooms are burnt down in the village of Boudouck.   |

## Notes

- 1 West African migrants fleeing from the combat zone reported this phenomenon and it was confirmed by a number of distressed Senegalese seeking asylum in Bamako while trying to return to Senegal.
- 2 Islamic brotherhoods belong to Sufism, which is a spiritual movement that distinguishes itself from political legalism and attaches greater importance to the spirit rather than the letter of the sacred scriptures or scriptures regarded as such.
- 3 Examples are Cheikh Ahmad Lô of the Istiqama movement, Imam Mamour Fall of Kaolack who swore allegiance to Bin Laden, as well as all the founders of the Islamic movement of the fifties such as Ahmad Iyane Thiam and Cheikh Touré.
- 4 Claiming membership of the Mouride brotherhood, Béthio Thioune is currently charged with complicity to murder. His movement takes advantage of the success of the Mouride brotherhood to recruit youth from the poor neighbourhoods as well as senior civil servants and private sector executives. The movement is characterised by an almost automatic obedience to its charismatic leader. These practices are irritating to the brotherhood hierarchy, which considers them deviant. However, the movement's autonomy, especially financial, as well as its large number of mainly young followers, enable it to freely conduct its activities.
- 5 Mamadou Diop, who died in the early 2000s, was the founder of Boudouck village. As a Tijanic religious leader he rejected all participation by the state in the organisation of his village (no water, electricity or schools), which operated as an autarchy according to the precepts of Islam. It is therefore not surprising that after his death, the building of a modern school was perceived as a deviation from the teachings of the founder of the village.

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