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COLLANA DEL CENTRO DI STUDI AFRICANI IN SARDEGNA

2

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Politics and Minorities in Africa

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Contents

9 Foreword
Bianca Maria Carcangiu

11 Introduction
Marisa Fois, Alessandro Pes

I. Identities

25 Vanguards of the Empire: The "fascistization" of the Italian colony in French Morocco between the two wars
Mauro Piras

47 Identité politique et démocratie: les trois dimensions de l'ethnonationalisme touareg au Niger et au Mali
Gado Alzouma

71 Redefining Somaliness through the Bantu-Jareer Community: The Absent Somalis in the Somali Socio-political Landscape
Mohamed Haji Ingiriis

101 "Chinese South Africans Now Black!". Race and Belonging in the "New" South Africa
Yoon Jung Park

II. Elections

129 Minorities, Plebiscites and Caliphate in British Northern Cameroons 1959-1961
Richard A. Goodridge

153 Slavery, Politics and Elections in post-colonial Mauritania: The *Haratines*, marginalization and inclusion
Giuseppe Maimone

175 Between assimilation and exclusion: The case of Minorities in Botswana
Elisabetta Spano

197 Politics of Social Movements in Minority Contexts: Oil, Elections, Resistance and Representation in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria
Akin Iwilade and Iwebunor Okwechime

III. Religion

221 The political participation of Copts in Egypt: From the Nasser years to the sectarian strife of the nineties
Alessia Melcangi

245 The rise of Islamic Resurgence in Somalia
Valeria Saggiomo

IV. Boundaries and Territories

273 Minorities as a Political Majority: Power and Reciprocity Within and outside the Small Geographic Boundaries of a North-Central Nigerian State
Henry Gyang Mang

295 Being a Minority in Zimbabwe:
A Case Study of the Matebeleland Question
Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni

319 *Authors*

Foreword

The Nova Collectanea Africana by the *Centro di Studi Africani in Sardegna – CSAS* continues to grow with *Politics and Minorities*, the second installment in the publishing activities of the CSAS after its debut, *Cities and Minorities*, edited by Filippo Petrucci and Isabella Soi. The success of the latter, attested by the many praises received, has strengthened the determination of the Centre to continue the initiative and constantly try to enhance it, following on the footsteps of the aforementioned brave first editors.

These innovative elements are a new Scientific Committee and a call for papers that has resulted in a wider array of contributions from foreign scholars – especially from African scholars devoted to this field of study. Indeed, they are the new interpreters of the History of the continent; they are the ones analyzing the past and the present from a point of view more in accordance with African identity.

The countries analyzed in this volume suffer from political turmoil, ethnic and religious conflicts, deep fractures between modernizing and traditionalist élites – each and all of them elements that are not new at all in the history of independent Africa.

The befitting division of the volume in four parts (Identities; Elections; Religion; Boundaries and Territories) mirrors, on one hand, the incomplete nature of the process of independence experienced by the ex-colonies of the African continent, divided in big areas of cultural influence such as the English, the French and the Portuguese ones, still suffering from its fragmenting effects, worsened by arbitrary and "invented" borders – and, on the other hand, the aftermath of all the attempts to break ties with each country's colonizer or the Western world as a whole.

The determination shown by African people, specially in the past ten years, after the creation of the African Union, bears witness to their will to free themselves from meddling by other States and to stand side by side with the other members of the international community – examples such as those of Somalia, Niger, Mali and Nigeria, as well as all the other countries studied in this book, are proof of it.

From the point of view of the CSAS, as scholars of African history and institutions, and in the words of our own bylaws, we hope that there will come a moment of complementary action and knowledge between government, educational and university institutions in order to gain a deeper awareness regarding the vast open issues that concern Africa.

Bianca Maria Carcangiu
November 2012

Introduction

Marisa Fois, Alessandro Pes

The second issue of Nova Collectanea Africana focuses on the relationship between politics and minorities in independent Africa. This volume analyses how the concept of minority is developed in African politics[1].

Defining a group as a minority or a majority can be a consequence of political decisions. Religion, ethnicity, gender, geography and language are often used to define a minority group. When it comes to language, a political language might be understood via the concept of minority literature, as expressed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

[1] About the relationship between politics and minorities in Africa, see for example, G. ANGIONI, N. MELIS (a cura di), *Minoranze nel Mediterraneo: uno studio multidisciplinare, Cooperazione Mediterranea*, ISPROM, n. 6/2008, O. BENGIO, G. BEN-DOR (eds), *Minorities and The State in the Arab world*, Lynne Rienner Pub, Boulder, Colorado 1998, G. CHALIAND, *Minority peoples in the age of the nation-state*, Pluto Press, London 1989, C. COQUERY-VIDROVITCH, « Histoire et historiographie du politique en Afrique. La nécessité d'une relecture critique (À propos de la démocratie) », in *Politique Africaine,* 46, 1992, pp. 31-41, M. FOIS, «Berberità e berberismo in Algeria. Un'identità ripensata», in L. SERRA, A. M. DI TOLLA, M. GHAKI, A. HABOUSS (a cura di), *Pluralità e dinamismo culturale nelle società berbere attuali. Quaderni di Studi Berberi e Libico-berberi*, Il Torcoliere, Unior, Napoli 2011, pp. 317-333, I. KANE, *Protecting the rights of minorities in Africa: A guide for human rights activists and civil society organizations*, Minority Rights Group International, London 2008 www.minorityrights.org/7544/guides/protecting-the-rights-of-minorities-in-africa-a-guide-for-human-rights-activist-and-civil-society-organizations.html, [Accessed 5/11/2012], M. U. MBANASO, C. J. KORIEH (eds), *Minorities and the State in Africa*, Cambria Press, Amherst, New York 2010, F. PETRUCCI, I. SOI (eds), *Cities and minorities in Africa*, Nova Collectanea Africana, Aracne, Roma 2011, S. SLIMANE, *Recognizing Minorities in Africa,* Minority Rights Group International 2003 www.minorityrights.org/859/brefings-papers/recognizing-minorities-in-africa.html [Accessed 5/11/2012], A. THOMSON, *An Introduction to African Politics*, 3rd Edition, Routledge, 2010.

in their interpretation of Kafka[2], which states that a minority literature is not the literature of a minority language but the literature expressed by a minority group using the language of the majority. Political participation of specific groups can therefore be understood as minority only from the majority point of view.

Research often focuses on the relationship between the majority and the minority by analyzing the majority perspective on the rights and political roles of the minorities, ignoring the minority perspective. This volume is an attempt to overturn this attitude in order to reflect the political participation of minorities from their own point of view.

Most of the book is dedicated to the post-independence period, a key period of evolution for the new established states. In the new African states the relation "majority-minority" is not affected by the *divide et impera* policies imposed by past colonial governments. After 1960, the existing "majority-minority" dynamics in African states were challenged by access to free elections, which extended political participation to minorities previously marginalized or excluded. The trends and movements perceptible at a political and cultural level were – and still are – symptoms of an increased desire for participation. The nation-building process and the strengthening of national unity; and claims and/or reappropriations of identity markers are some of the main goals of this process.

New constitutions, universal suffrage and separation of powers engendered by independence would appear to ensure uniformly equal access to political life. Yet due to the various political strategies pursued by governments in each country, the level of involvement and participation fluctuates widely between them.

The issue of minorities and the shape of their political participation explains the differences and diversities that can be seen in the Africa continent, often a place represented as a homogeneous *corpus*. Because the continent shows such a wide range of social, political and economic processes, it would be both pointless and erroneous to superimpose a generic and artificial unity on African states simply due to their geography.

In *Politics and Minorities in Africa,* we have decided to give space to a substantial number of African countries by refusing the traditional partition of Mediterranean and Subsaharan Africa and preferring in-

[2] G. DELEUZE, F. GUATTARI, *Kafka: pour une littérature mineur*, Minuit, Paris 1975.

stead an analysis led by case studies. Although the case study approach doesn't address the variety and diversity of cases in the African continent, it is useful for examining the individual characteristics of specific cases. This volume is divided into four sections based on these themes: *Identities*, *Elections*, *Religion* and *Boundaries and Territories*. At the same time, all four categories are used to investigate the relationship between minorities and politics.

The countries considered are: Morocco, Niger, Mali, Somalia, South Africa, Cameroon, Mauritania, Botswana, Nigeria, Egypt and Zimbabwe.

Contributors are varied, ensuring a wide approach – from history to anthropology, and from economics to political science – which guarantees a thorough analysis of the phenomenon. Such a multidisciplinary approach is the best way to illuminate the many different aspects of this subject.

The first section is dedicated to the theme of *identities*. Mauro Piras explores the subject by examining both chronologically and topically. The author analyses the concept of identity during the Italian Fascist period through a look at the Italian community in Morocco and the links between migration, colony, politics and voting rights. The essay resituates the idea of the minority, transposing it to a colonial system in which the minority gains hegemony (Gramsci).

A humble community of Italian immigrants existed in Morocco at the beginning of the 20th century. Italy had no interests to defend in the region. The traditional aim of transforming the Mediterranean into an Italian sea, sought after by the Fascist government, pushed the regime into pursuing a policy that considered the Italian interest in every question related to the Mediterranean area. When the political situation in Morocco seemed to open a possibility for Italian penetration, the Fascist government decided to put the Italian community under strict control by the local diplomatic representation in order to transform it into a reliable political tool for the regime. The Italian community attempted to exploit local anti-Semitic laws to gain the support of Muslims, trying to capitalize on the Muslim opposition to Zionism and hitting the "minority inside the minority" Italian Jews in Morocco, by that time fervent supporters of the regime.

The political identity and the emerging of an ethno-nationalist discourse in Niger and Mali, with a special focus on the Tuareg community and the Azawad territories, are the topics analysed by Gado

Alzouma. Declared independent in April 2012, the Azawad territories are emblematic of the ethnic and economic complexity of the Sahel region. Following the relative democratization of African societies in the 1990s, several countries found themselves caught in the grip of political instability, rising ethno-nationalist claims, and ethnically-based insurgent movements calling for autonomy or independence.

The advent of democracy in these countries paradoxically sparked a new wave of nationalist conflicts that are being waged along the lines of ethnic or clan-based loyalties. The very expression of democratic participation is now being corroded by the rise of ethno-nationalist and separatist discourses. In Niger, since the advent of democracy in 1991, the ethnicization of political life has taken a violent form, both by way of the emergence of autonomous, independent Tuareg armed rebellions who directly challenge the authority of the state, its republication structure and democratic, centralized model, and by way of ethnically-based Tuareg political parties who oppose this same authority's federal structure. In this paper, it is argued that these claims, in their various forms, show that democratization does not automatically result in the inclusion of minorities or the automatic acceptance by minorities of democratic participation or even of democratic ethno-pluralism within the boundaries of a unified state. It also shows that the actors and rebels movements are closely related on both sides of the border between those two countries.

In his essay, Mohamed Haji Ingiriis analyses the case of Somalia and demonstrates that Somali society is deeply heterogenous; following Catherine Besteman's anthropological reading[3], the author reveals the existence of a wide range of communities distinguished from each other by language, culture and traditions. Ingiriis especially focuses on the Bantu-Jareer community.

The Somali Bantu, or Jareer, community is among an excluded group of minority communities in Somalia classified by "noble" or "pure" Somalis as low-caste, mainly due to their distinct culture, tradition and physical appearance which contrast with those of other Somali communities. It is considered the most segregated and discriminated minority. The Somali Bantu/Jareer are oppressed for their African

[3] C. BESTEMAN, *Unraveling Somalia: Race, Class, and the Legacy of Slavery*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1999.

origin, whereas the rest of Somalis regard themselves as Arab immigrants. Due to this constructed idea of the "pure" society, the Bantu/Jareer community has been denied a place in Somali politics. This chapter explores the social and political status of the Somali Bantu/Jareer, examining their absence in the sociopolitical landscape of Somali society from their own perspective, in order to shed light on their plight and on the injustice, oppression and discrimination that they face.

Yoon Jung Park explores the social and juridical condition of Chinese South Africans, a community present in Southern Africa since the early 20th century. On 18 June 2008, while South Africa was still reeling from recent outbreaks of xenophobic violence, the Pretoria High Court issued an order proclaiming that Chinese South Africans fell within the broad definition of "black people" as contained in the nation's affirmative action policies. Reaction to the decision was swift and overwhelmingly negative; across the board, South Africans were in disbelief that the Chinese South Africans could be classified as "black".

This chapter addresses concerns about affirmative action and argues that these race-based policies – as they are currently written and implemented – are re-racializing the country. Chinese South Africans have long held an ambiguous, confused, in-between position in South Africa. In light of continuing Chinese migration into the country, the global rise of China and its growing influence on South Africa's economy and polity, the place and position of Chinese South Africans continues to be further confused. Furthermore, affirmative action policies impede progress toward building an inclusive, racially diverse national identity and a broad sense of belonging. So long as rewards are doled out on the basis of blackness and blackness increasingly becomes the principal defining characteristic of South Africanness, South Africa fails in its efforts to construct a national identity that reflects its history and its increasing diversity.

Richard A. Goodridge opens the section dedicated to the *elections* and the analysis of minorities and political representation. This essay highlights the role of colonialism as a key factor in conditioning the relations between minority and politics.

Cameroon was subjected to three different kind of colonialism: the German, the French and the British; with unavoidable consequences. In 1961, the people of British Northern Cameroons voted in a United

Nations-sponsored plebiscite to gain their independence by joining the Federation of Nigeria rather than the Republic of Cameroun. The overall result of this second, definitive plebiscite contrasted with that of the first in 1959, in which the electorate had rejected an offer of closer political association with Nigeria. This chapter explores the bases of these different responses and sets the context for the role of Sir Ahmadu Bello, *Sardauna* of Sokoto.

Based on archival research conducted in Nigeria and Cameroun together with oral sources from Northern Nigeria, the chapter suggests that the "Sokoto factor" may only be understood in the context of the historical evolution of Northern Cameroons. The paper concludes that Fulani domination of political, economic and social life was clearly at the expense of the *habe* (non-Fulani) communities throughout Northern Cameroons and contributed much to the latter's hostility to local government and Nigeria. It is further suggested that the discussion must be placed within the broader subject of the minorities question in Nigeria.

The simultaneous marginalization and inclusion of the Haratines community in Mauritania is analyzed by Giuseppe Maimone. The country follows the typical Sahel state typology, presenting a Northern area dominated by the Arab-Berber community and a Southern area dominated by the Black-African community. This social structure is one of the main causes of the complexity of social, economic and political relations in the country.

The creation of the post-colonial state of Mauritania was characterized by the persistence of the Arabs as the dominant class, both politically and economically. Not all Mauritanians had rights to citizenship and, in order to preserve their power, the Arabs continued to refuse it to their slaves and to marginalize the Black-Mauritanians who lived by the Senegal River Valley. The *Haratines* – slaves, former slaves and slave descendants – represent more than one-third of the population; the rest is almost equally divided into Arabs and Black-Mauritanians, but, having no political rights, they have become a minority even if in reality they are not. In the 1970s, a section of *Haratines* began to fight for their rights, creating in 1978 the *El-Hor* ("Free Man") movement. Initially persecuted, over time the Arabs preferred to start a process of inclusion by Arabizing the *Haratines*, in order to control the *El-Hor* electoral weight and to preserve their own power in the face of potential alliances between the *Haratines* and

Black-Mauritanians, who were beginning to fight for their civil rights. In 1980-81, the military regime formally abolished slavery and some *El-Hor* leaders had marginal ministries.

Haratines came to be considered as Black Moors, in opposition to the leading White Moors, but included in the Arab society of Moors. In reality, the Arabs did not set up any measures to fight slavery and the *Haratines* continued to be exploited as slaves. The drought of the Eighties weakened Arab landlords in rural areas who freed some of their slaves by creating new forms of dependence that still today maintain *Haratines* in servility. The Eighties saw the creation of a movement that gave emphasis to the "Africanity" of the *Haratines*. FLAM (*Forces de Libération Africaines de Mauritanie*) was immediately opposed by the regime, declared illegal and forced into exile in Senegal.

The process of inclusion of the *Haratines* carried out by Arabs was revitalized in 1987-88, when the Mauritanian government expelled and persecuted about 700 Black-Mauritanians of the Army, charged with conspiracy against the State, and when the advancing of the Sahara Desert pushed Arab farmers and *Haratine* members of their tribes to the south, causing conflicts with the Black-Mauritanians usually present in the Senegal River Valley. The result was the expulsion of more than 80,000 Black-Mauritanians in 1989 and the exploitation of these territories by *Haratines* and Arabs, reinforcing their alliance.

This chapter analyses the historical evolution of these political processes and highlights the opposing representations of the *Haratines* made by the Arabs, *El-Hor* and *FLAM*, marked by the different political choices that are reflected in their leaderships. An *El-Hor* founder has become the President of the Mauritanian National Assembly, while another in 1995 created *SOS-Esclaves*, an association that still fights for the emancipation of people in slavery. *FLAM* continues in exile in Paris.

Elisabetta Spano analyses minorities in Botswana, the former British colony in the Southern Africa, where, in the eyes of many political scientists, the democratization process requires significant further study[4]. Botswana has always been mistakenly regarded as ethnically

[4] M. BRATTON, N. VAN DE WALLE, *Democratic experiments in Africa. Regime transitions in comparative perspective*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997; J.D. BARKAN, «Democracy in Africa: What future?», in *Harvard International Review*, 24 (2), 2002, pp. 72-

homogenous. Since its independence in 1966, it has been characterised by lack of ethnic violence and pursuit of a non-racist policy, making it an exception in a continent marked by civil wars, freedom struggles and racist regimes. But it also made many observers consider it a mono-ethnic entity.

Botswana, however, encompasses a plurality of different ethnic groups within its borders, alongside the Tswana majority. In pre-colonial times, foreigners were absorbed into Tswana society but still managed to retain their culture; subsequently, British authorities empowered and enforced Tswana chiefs and their reigns to the detriment of other ethnic groups subject to them. At the time of independence, consequently, Tswanas inherited power, with the victory at the first election of the BDP, the Bechuanaland Democratic Party (Botswana Democratic Party after 1966, when the country changed its name). Seretse Khama, paramount chief of the Bamangwato, the main Tswana chiefdom, was leader of the party and in 1966 first President of the country. In the post-independence years, governments have carried out a policy of absorption and merging of minorities into the Tswana majority. According to this policy, all citizens had to identify with the Tswana nation in order to avoid tribalism; in this way, minority languages, cultures and traditions were pushed to the edge and excluded from the public sphere. Minorities peacefully accepted this politics of assimilation, by staying in a state of acquiescence for decades and ending up agreeing with the *status quo* of belonging to a minority group and, for this reason, being considered as second-class citizens.

In more recent decades, however, minorities have started to raise their voices against evident examples of discrimination. This chapter provides a historical account of the presence of minorities in Botswana, their marginalisation in both political and civil life of the country, and their most recent battles in order to gain official recognition of their rights from the State.

Akin Iwilade and Iwebunor Okwechime look at the topic of minorities in the Niger Delta region, establishing a connection between political representation and the oil question that turns on ideas of representation and resistance.

77; N. VAN DE WALLE, «Africa's range of regimes», in *Journal of Democracy*, 13 (2), 2002, pp. 66-80.

This chapter examines the dynamics of election time social mobilization in the oil-producing minority region of the Niger Delta of Nigeria. Specifically, the chapter places social mobilization during election times in the context of the political economy of oil in the region and the historically-rooted demand for political inclusion in the Nigerian state. Using the 2007 and 2011 general elections as templates, this analysis maps the contemporary history of resistance to the oil multinational-state coalition in the region, its implications for economic reproduction, social inclusion and access to the resources of state; and the way election time mobilization has come to represent this important social dynamic.

The dynamics of minority politics in the Niger Delta region is particularly relevant in this context because it captures three critical features of the emerging role of minorities in modern elections. First is the potential of minorities to serve as game determinants in a multiethnic political system where social mobilization has clearly ethnic colourations. This often magnifies, or sometimes even exaggerates, the relevance of historically marginalized groups in the political process. Second is the push-pull effect of contradictory forces for "center-leaning" (that is, those who would see mobilization towards a federal center) on the one hand, and for enclave politics (those who insist on provincialism as an end of mobilization) on the other. Third are the peculiar implications of resource extraction, control and distribution for ethnic mobilization and how it frames broader perspectives on the national question. Through extensive interaction with key players in the mobilization of ethnic minorities in the Niger Delta and with the wide and growing literature on ethnicity, elections and oil in the region, the chapter demonstrates the dominance of the minority discourse in election time social mobilization in the region and what impacts this has had on the broader questions of democratization and governance in the country. The chapter concludes by drawing attention to implications of the continued dominance of minority discourses within a political system that still struggles with legitimacy questions and within which new and increasingly violent forms of resistance are taking shape.

Alessia Melcangi opens the third section, dedicated to the relations between minorities, politics and *religion*, by analyzing the "Coptic question" in Egypt, where a substantial Christian community lives in close proximity to a Muslim majority. The resulting tension invites

sociopolitical reflections on concepts such as citizenship, civil society and political participation, and specifically on notions such as minority rights and religious freedom. This encompasses a look at the link between the idea of state and the idea of religion, in order to understand the place reserved for non-Muslim communities within social and political structures.

In the past century there have been different answers to the issue of the core Egyptian identity, all of which have influenced the political participation of Christians. The shift to Islamic themes as the main characteristic of the Egyptian community and the rise of sectarian tensions led Copts to be relegated to a secondary status, as outsiders, who have certain rights as a "protected" and accepted ancient minority, but are not, and never can be, part of the Islamic core identity, and must therefore be politically marginalized. The political participation of the Coptic minority and the problem of its integration into a national community went through several phases during the different Republican governments, but all Egyptian regimes have ultimately failed in dealing with the problem of defining the Egyptian political community.

This chapter analysis the political expression of the Coptic community up to the end of the 20th century through the constitution of movements, parties or civil society associations and their participation in the institutions of the state. Moreover, it seeks to address the extent to which notions of inclusion and exclusion can be used as analytical tools to explain the evolution of social and political identities in Egypt. Through the collection of archival data, analysis of newspaper articles and a study of the published literature in English and French, this chapter enlightens us as to how the political action of the Egyptian presidents and the calls to national unity bring into question the juridical and political position of non-Muslims inside Egyptian society, encouraging the shift from the *dhimma* status to an equal one.

Valeria Saggiomo's contribution is a historical portrait of the political and religious movement Al Islah in postcolonial Somalia. Based on field research conducted in Somalia and in Kenya among the Somali diaspora from 2006 to 2010, this chapter traces the origins of the movement back to the 1960s, when Al Azhar University in Egypt used to promote cultural cooperation programs with Somalia. From the mid-sixties, though the movement remained underground from its inception, it was repressed by both the postcolonial government and the

secular socialist regime of Siad Barre. Hosted by Saudi Arabia, the religious opposition regrouped soon after and, with the help of the Egyptian brothers, formally built Al Islah society in 1978. Al Islah was an exiled religious opposition movement until the fall of the Siad Barre regime in 1991 when its members reentered the country through the humanitarian sector, in response to the humanitarian crises that followed the civil war.

The evolution of Al Islah in Somalia is then reconstructed through extensive firsthand interviews with the current vice-president of the movement, who highlights its strategies to permeate Somali society through the creation of Islamic charities and NGOs during the 1990s, and the gradual conquest of the political arena – which has yet to be concluded. At present, Al Islah remains an underground political movement and will continue to be so until an open political scenario allows fair competition among political powers. In light of the recent resurgence of Islamist parties in North Africa's political elections, the chapter demonstrates how the evolution of the Al Islah movement in Somalia can be framed within the same Arab awakening process.

Henry Gyang Mang starts the *Boundaries and Territories* section of the volume, analysing the existence of a minority as a political majority in the North-Central Nigerian State.

Although generally there is a view that minorities stand on the negative side of power relations in African politics, this is not necessarily the case for local, provincial (or state – as the nomenclature may be) demarcations. Smaller units can create massive political advantage for some minority groups, as they place them in a position – albeit limited to that geographic confine – of negotiating power with the "majority-minority" within their confines. This power play could potentially transit outside the boundaries of the state or province due to the influence of the larger aggrieved majority who demand national representation at all times. This work proposes to discuss the complexities of power relations in the plateau state North-Central Nigeria and how this affects the politics of Northern Nigeria as a whole.

The case of the Matabeleland Question in Zimbabwe, the former South-Rhodesia which was the last territory of Southern Africa to gain independence, is the lens through which Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni examines the relationship between minorities and politics.

One of the longstanding challenges to the ideal of a unitary Zimbabwe nation-state has been the Matabeleland question. The traditional

view has been that the Matabeleland question is nothing but a form of tribalism rooted in pre-colonial history, when the ancestors of the Ndebele-speaking people used to be overlords of the Shona. This history and memory is said to make it difficult for present-day Ndebele people to accept Shona triumphalism and domination. At the same time, the triumphant Shona groups are said to have not forgotten the history and memory of Ndebele raids, which makes it difficult for them to accept the Ndebele as innocent and full citizens of Zimbabwe.

Yet another dominant view is that the Matabeleland question is a postcolonial phenomenon rooted in the 1980s when the Shona-dominated Zimbabwe state deployed the Fifth Brigade, which killed an estimated twenty-thousand Ndebele-speaking civilians under the pretext of fighting against the dissidents who were assumed to be enjoying the support of the minority Ndebele community. The official government approach towards the Matabeleland question has been that of silencing them through deployment of state violence, while continuing to economically marginalise the Matabeleland region. This shortsighted approach has contributed to the further radicalisation of Matabeleland politics, culminating in the region becoming a stronghold of oppositional political formations and home to such political organisations as the Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF), which is fighting for the establishment of the independent state the Ndebele that is completely separate from Zimbabwe. The chapter seeks to unpack the core issues of the Matabeleland question and plot the political fate of the Ndebele since 1980. This is important because Matabeleland is not only becoming a theatre of secessionist politics but also a terrain of intense electoral contests.

Marisa Fois, Alessandro Pes
November 2012

I. Identities

Vanguards of the Empire: The "fascistization" of the Italian colony in French Morocco between the two wars

Mauro Piras

Historically, the settlement of Italian colonists in the Mediterranean countries had a very different nature compared to the "colonisation" carried by other European powers in Africa and Asia. Rather than homeland's economic and military powers representatives, Italian emigrants were, largely, workers, artisans and small traders, who were well integrated into the social fabric of the countries of adoption, and rarely took a prominent position[1]. In post-unification Italy this fact resulted in the curious tendency to confuse, in the term "colonialism", both the spontaneous migration phenomenon, through which more or less numerous and compact communities of Italian emigrants abroad were created, and the colonisation itself, i.e. the conquest of new territories by a sovereign state[2]. The fascist regime continued, in its own way, this tradition; it also considered emigration as a phenomenon linked to colonialism, and tried to exploit the colonies of Italian emigrants abroad to promote its own political goals. The regime harboured expansionist or hegemonic aspirations regarding the Mediterranean basin as a whole, although in varying degrees from region to region. It was clear that Italy could legitimately claim political "rights" on certain territories, in front of the international community, only if they were based on pre-existing tangible interests. Where there were not Italian interests to defend, that could justify such aspirations, the regime would encourage their creation from above. Overturning, therefore, the normal relationship of cause and effect, instead of advancing demands of colonial nature based on already acquired posi-

[1] On Italian emigration in general, see G. ROSOLI (by), *Un secolo di emigrazione italiana 1876 - 1976*, Centro Studi Emigrazione, Roma 1978; Z. CIUFFOLETTI, M. DEGL'INNOCENTI, *L'emigrazione nella storia d'Italia 1868/1975*, Vallecchi, Firenze 1978.

[2] G. CALCHI NOVATI, *Fra Mediterraneo e Mar Rosso. Momenti di politica italiana in Africa attraverso il colonialismo*, Istituto Italo-Africano, Roma 1992, pp. 80-81.

tions, fascist Italy favoured economic, cultural and political activities of the emigrant colonies in the Mediterranean, so to be able to legitimise its future demands.

In Morocco, there was only a modest colony of Italian emigrants. The 1901 census recorded the presence of just 70 Italians in Morocco; but in 1911 their number increased to 12.000[3]. It was mostly composed of Sicilians who left Tunisia for Morocco, soon after the Italian invasion of Libya. They concentrated mostly in Casablanca, in the district of Ma'arif, and they gave an important contribution to the development of the city during those years. In 1924, with 12.258 people, that of Morocco was by far the smallest Italian community in North Africa: in that same year, 91.000 Italians were surveyed in Tunisia, 45.106 in Egypt and 37.000 in Algeria[4]. Italian economic interests in the country were insignificant: trade with Italy and Libya accounted, in 1931, to 3.89% of the total trade of French Morocco, and even less in the Spanish zone. The Italian land property was negligible[5]. This was not enough to discourage the regime, determined to fulfil the traditional dream of making the Mediterranean an Italian sea. The issue of controlling the "*porte di casa*" - the doorsteps, i.e. the straits, and access to the oceans – was particularly felt by Italy, therefore Morocco could play an important role in its Mediterranean policy. When the political situation in Morocco seemed to open a window to an Italian inclusion, the government in Rome became interested in the political future of an area that, until then, had been contended primarily between Great Britain, France, Spain and Germany, and it did not neglect any effort to increase its own influence[6]. The other powers were not enthusiastic about the Italian intrusion, but Morocco was in a complex political and fluid situation, divided into two protectorates, in addition to the area of Tangier under international control. There were, consequently, wider margins for manoeuvre that in the rest of North Af-

[3] *Annuario statistico della emigrazione italiana dal 1876 al 1925*, edited by Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, Roma 1926, p. 1535 and p. 1539.

[4] *Annuario statistico della emigrazione italiana*, cit., p. 1535.

[5] Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Syrie-Liban, Dossiers de principe (hereafter: Syrie-Liban, DP), 672, n° 1440 – 9/11, 13 June 1933, *La "politique étrangère coloniale" de l'Italie*, p. 5.

[6] D.J. GRANGE, «L'enjeu marocain dans la politique méditerranée de l'Italie entre les deux guerres», in J. B. DUROSELLE, E. SERRA, *Italia, Francia e Mediterraneo*, Franco Angeli, Milan 1990, pp. 40 ss.

rica[7]. In 1928, Italy was able to obtain participation in the administration of Tangier. In 1931, when the Spanish government hinted at the possibility of renouncing to its protectorate over Morocco, Rome did not conceal its ambition to take over Spain. It began to promote Italian "interests" of various kinds, to justify eventual political or territorial claims, and in the capital of the Spanish protectorate, Tetuan, a new consulate was inaugurated with great ceremonies[8].

The Italian claim to participate in all diplomatic negotiations concerning Morocco was motivated by the need to protect the interests of the local Italian community. Thus, emigrant groups that had formed spontaneously suddenly became the object of great attention by the Italian government, which had shown little interest in them before fascism. The economic and social conditions of the Italians in North Africa were usually modest: unlike the British or French communities, which constituted privileged *enclaves*, the Italian ones were often fully integrated into the indigenous society[9]. Mussolini's regime attributed to the Italian communities an unprecedented political role, encouraging social activities and vigorously promoting the national sentiment of their members. Such attentions tickled the pride of the emigrants, and gave them a sense of identity and belonging, after decades of complete absence of the Italian state. This facilitated the identification between patriotism and fascism in the Italian minority, which, more or less consciously, was transformed into an instrument of the regime's foreign policy.

The French authorities did not fail to notice the growing intrusiveness of the Italian activity in Morocco, which fell within the context of a broader activism, involving all French Mediterranean domains. In the early Thirties, the French government felt it was facing a well-defined political project, which aimed to undermine the French influence in the Levant and North Africa, and to replace it with the Italian one. At its heart, it had a fundamental role of "Italianity", i.e.

[7] Syrie-Liban, DP, 672, n° 1440 - 9/11, 13 June 1933, *La "politique étrangère coloniale" de l'Italie*, p. 6.

[8] D.J. GRANGE, «L'enjeu marocain», cit., p. 47.

[9] The French observed, for example, that the Italian community in Egypt, unlike all other European communities, did not only include representatives of middle and upper classes, but also artisans and labourers: Syrie-Liban, DP, 672, n° 1721 - 9/11, 20 July 1933, *Politique coloniale de l'Italie, suite*, p. 8.

mobilising the Italian emigrant communities in supporting fascism[10]. The French oscillated between an attitude of sufficiency, towards a policy that they felt was destined to fail, and moments of deep concern, for the damages that the Italian continuous attacks could bring to their prestige in the Arab world. In any case, they followed the developments of Mussolini's "colonial foreign policy" with great and constant attention, collecting information and producing a large number of reports on the Italian activity. Much of the information contained in this essay has been drawn from a long and interesting report of 1938, which described in detail the different activities of the Italian communities and the consular representatives inside French Morocco.

According to the French, the first fascist initiatives of some significance in Morocco had begun in the second half of the Twenties, similar to what happened in Syria and in the rest of the Arab world, with the mobilisation and framing of the local Italian community. At the beginning of the following decade, this last appeared firmly under the political control of the Italian government, through diplomatic representatives[11]. The "fascistization" of the Italian emigrants, through the organization of *Fasci* Abroad[12], was a general phenomenon, which mainly involved the large Italian communities in Europe and the Americas. The Italian community in French Morocco, composed largely of artisans, labourers and small traders, amounted to 10,300 people in 1926, growing to 16.760 in 1938. In the local context it was a significant presence, equivalent to one third of the foreign population, which amounted to 51.000 people, excluding the French[13]. Two

[10] Syrie-Liban, DP, 672, n° 1440 – 9/11, 13 June 1933, *La "politique étrangère coloniale" de l'Italie*.

[11] Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Tunisie, 2139, Direction de la sécurité publique, *La politique italienne en zone française du Maroc*, Octobre 1938 (hereafter: *Politique italienne en Maroc*), p. 2.

[12] The *Fasci* Abroad (*Fasci Italiani all'Estero*) were the political organization of the Fascist National Party among the Italian emigrates abroad. After Mussolini's rise to power, they were progressively disciplined and put under the supervision of the *Ministero degli Affari Esteri* (MAE, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) through the Directorate General for Italians Abroad. See E. GENTILE, «La politica estera del partito fascista. Ideologia e organizzazione dei Fasci italiani all'estero (1920 – 1930)», in *Storia Contemporanea*, XXVI, n. 6, 1995; L. DE CAPRARIIS, «I Fasci italiani all'estero», in E. FRANZINA, M. SANFILIPPO (edited by), *Il fascismo e gli emigrati. La parabola dei Fasci italiani all'estero (1920 - 1943)*, Laterza, Bari 2003.

[13] *Politique italienne en Maroc*, p. 2. In 1936, the French community in Morocco amounted to 155,569, while the Spanish community, second for importance, amounted to 23,414: E.

thirds of the Italian emigrants concentrated in Casablanca, 11.245 people in 1938; while the second Italian community, that of Rabat, only had 1.969 people[14]. The fascist activity was of little significance until the beginning of 1926, when a delegate of the Fascist National Party (*Partito Nazionale Fascista*, PNF), Dante Brancolini, arrived in Morocco, setting up the party's organisation and propaganda. Five *Fasci* were created, in Casablanca, Rabat, Fez, Marrakech and Mazagan. Following disagreement amongst *Fasci* leaders, in 1928 they were put under control of the consul in Rabat, Mr Goffredo. He cleverly oriented the activities of the fascist organisations towards activities of public interest, such as sport and charity associations, that allowed Italians to meet without alerting the authorities of the Protectorate[15].

Since 1929, after the creation of the Directorate General for Italians Abroad, the mobilisation of the Italian community experienced a new boost. Representatives of the Directorate were ordered to maximise the development of Italian assistance activities, to tighten the links between their compatriots, and to avoid naturalisations at all costs. This activity from above, carried out by the "leaders" of the community towards the mass of emigrants, seemed to give lower results than expected. The events promoted by the consulates became then more frequent, in the attempt to exalt the national sentiment and compact the colony: public ceremonies, school parties, film screenings about homeland, distribution of booklets, and so on. In December 1931, in order to establish greater control over the Italians, a "council of the colony" was created in Casablanca, consisting of 30 prominent personalities of the community, including the consul general. The council organised parties and events, promoted assistance and protection towards compatriots, and tried to settle differences within the colony. At the same time, the consular authorities resorted to every means in an attempt to subdue Italians to the will of the fascist regime. Those families who used to send their children to French schools were subject to pressures from Italian teachers. Even the handling of normal consular paperwork was subjected, for emigrants, to the certification

DE LEONE, *La colonizzazione dell'Africa del Nord (Algeria, Tunisia, Marocco, Libia)*, CEDAM, Padova 1960, Tomo secondo, p. 192.

[14] The other most numerous Italian communities were Fes (573 people), Meknes (567) e Marrakech (500): *Politique italienne en Maroc*, p. 2.

[15] *Ivi*, pp. 4-5.

that their children attended Italian schools, or that they professed the fascist faith[16]. Certainly, also for the Italian community in Morocco was true what the French observed in Algeria, where those who refused to join fascist associations were subjected to severe harassment. Consular representatives would refuse to help newcomers in finding work, and to provide them assistance when needed; they deliberately obstructed and delayed office paperwork, such as marital status certificates. Those recalcitrant to "fascistization" were excluded from the rest of the community[17].

According to the French, in 1938 there still was a gap between the more humble majority of emigrants and the Italian government, due to the elitist attitude of consular representatives. Count Franco Fabrizio, consul in Casablanca, showed a clear preference for its wealthier compatriots; for this reason, he did not enjoy the appreciation of labourers. A worker, who was the victim of a work accident – in a plant owned by one of the richest and more prominent Italians in the city – unsuccessfully tried to obtain an indemnity from the consulate. Giovanni Fornari, consul in Rabat, was accused of granting free trips to Italy only to students whose parents could afford to finance fascist organisations, and completely neglecting assistance to less wealthy Italians[18]. In any case, the estimates of the French were unequivocal: in Casablanca, 92% of Italians were considered fascists, only 3% indifferent, and 5% anti-fascists. The members of the regime's organisations were 4.600[19]. In Rabat too, nearly all Italians were members of fascist organisations[20].

The fascistization of the youth was one of the main objectives of the Italian government. Every pupil attending Italian schools was automatically registered in the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* (ONB), the fascist youth organization[21], at the age of 6. Their uniform was di-

[16] *Ivi*, pp. 5-6.

[17] Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Tunisie, 2139, n° 345 CM, the Governor General of Algeria to the Resident General in Tunis, Algiers 8 March 1939, attachment, pp. 30-31.

[18] *Politique italienne en Maroc*, pp. 77-78. Mr. Fornari arrived in Rabat in September 1937: before him, the Italian consul was Italo Zappoli.

[19] *Ivi*, p. 21.

[20] *Ivi*, p. 38.

[21] The ONB was founded in 1926; its main purposes were the ideological indoctrination and paramilitary training of the Italian youth. It was divided into *Figli della lupa* (ages 6 to 8), *Balilla* (ages 8 to 13 years) and *Avanguardisti* (14 to 18 years). In 1937, it was absorbed by the *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio* (GIL), which included the fascist university organizations.

rectly supplied by the school management, who would hold it, and hand it to them on the eve of every public event. At the age of 14, all young men, including those who did not attend school, were enrolled in the *Avanguardisti*, and began receiving military training. The organisation's boards were composed of teachers from Italian schools, accompanied by former students[22]. Each year, a few *Balilla* were offered the opportunity to go to Italy for free, usually for a 30 days trip. During their stay, they would continue their training, and would receive a visit by the "Duce" in person. The young Italians between the age of 18 and 20, after leaving the ONB organisations, were imbued with a "fascist spirit", and they were among the most active agents of the Italian propaganda in Morocco[23].

The numerical growth of the Italian community, combined with the ever increasing interest of the regime for Morocco, favoured the flourishing of Italian initiatives. In Casablanca, the Italian Chamber of Commerce existed since 1916; during the Fascist period emerged the Circle of Italian Catholics, and the local branch of the Dante Alighieri Society (1932), the society for the promotion of Italian language and culture in the world. The Italian school was founded in 1920, but was transferred to the new premises of the consular office in 1930-31; while the secondary school was transferred, in 1932, to a separate new building in the suburb of *Roches Noires.* In 1933, the Italian government acquired land for the construction of an Italian church, which saw the light only in the 1950s. In Tangier, where Italy sought to obtain participation in the international administration, in 1925 was inaugurated the *Casa d'Italia* ("house of Italy", seat of the Italian institutions and associations), in the palace of the former Sultan 'Abd al-Hafid, where, in 1929, also began to work the Italian hospital[24]. The

See N. ZAPPONI, «Il partito della gioventù. Le organizzazioni giovanili del fascismo 1926 - 1943», in *Storia Contemporanea*, XIII, n. 4-5 1982; C. BETTI, *L'Opera Nazionale Balilla e l'educazione fascista*, La Nuova Italia, Firenze 1984.

[22] *Politique italienne en Maroc*, p. 7.

[23] *Ivi*, pp. 14-15.

[24] Information taken from the website of the Commitee of Italians abroad (Comites) of Casablanca: http://www.comites.ma/pages/hhassociazioniitalmarocco.htm [Accessed 19/04/2012]. According to the website of the Italian consulate in Casablanca, the building was bought in 1926, on behalf of the Italian government, by the National Association for the Relief of Missionaries abroad: http://www.conscasablanca.esteri.it/Consolato_Casablanca [Accessed 19/04/2012].

Dante Alighieri Society had a committee in Tangier at least since 1934, and it held Italian culture courses for foreigners[25].

In Casablanca, where most of the Italian presence in Morocco was concentrated, the fascist organisation was more widespread and branched out. Italians were grouped in associations of various kinds: the paramilitary groups of the ONB, the *Fasci*, veterans' associations, sports organisations, and so on. The Dante Alighieri Society promoted the spread of Italian scientific and literary culture, especially through the organisation of conferences. The *Dopolavoro* ("after-work", the fascist recreational organization for workers), funded by the Italian government, handled leisure activities for Italians of "modest conditions", through clubs, philharmonic and theatre societies, etc. Lastly, there were charity activities in support of needy Italians, also controlled by the consulates, and funded, besides the government's funds, through donations and charity events[26]. The headquarters of fascist activities were in the *Casa d'Italia*, managed by the council of the colony, which was inaugurated in June 1932, in the presence of Piero Parini, director of the Italians abroad. It was a 3,500 m^2 building, in which were located the consulate, the *Fascio*, the Chamber of Commerce, the Italian school, the offices of sports and charities organisations, and the *Dopolavoro*[27].

In other cities of the protectorate Italian organisations were less numerous and active[28]. However, over time, the centre of propaganda activities was moved to Rabat, capital of the French protectorate. The consul general in Rabat exercised an ideological control over the Italian communities and over his colleagues in other cities of the protectorate, who would go to him to report their activity and to receive verbal instructions. Here were located, among other things, the only Italian newspaper in French Morocco, and the Inspectorate of the *Fasci*. The *Fasci* in the protectorate were in fact placed under the authority of an inspector, Paolo Giacom, who had his offices at the consulate general, and was in direct contact with the PNF in Rome[29]. He gave sub-

[25] The courses were attended by 64 people in 1934 and 134 in 1935: State Central Archive, Rome, Minculpop, General Directorate for Foreign Press (hereafter: DGSE), 156, *Marocco 1935*, the president of the Dante Alighieri Society to the ministry for Press and Propaganda, Rome 19 November 1935.

[26] *Politique italienne en Maroc*, pp. 13-17.

[27] *Ivi*,pp. 21-23

[28] *Ivi*, pp. 17-18.

[29] *Ivi*, p. 13.

sidies to the unemployed Italian fascists, so that they would watch over their compatriots, and would refer about their political positions and personal relationships with locals and foreigners. Those Italians who showed a desire to become naturalised were subjected to threats[30]. According to the French, within the country also operated agents of OVRA (the fascist secret police), under the management of the PNF delegate in Morocco, Dante Brancolini, who was expelled from the French zone in 1938. Mr Brancolini had the task of watching over the political conduct of the entire Italian community, including the consuls themselves, who, well aware of his great power, would often turn to him to influence the government in Rome[31].

The Italian government, for obvious political purposes, vigorously supported the economic activities of Italians in Morocco. Italian companies were encouraged, according to the French, to take part in auctions for public works with very low bids; the government would guarantee the reimbursement of any losses. In this way, Italians would often prevail over competition, winning several contracts[32]. In Casablanca there was a branch of the Italian Commercial Bank (*Banca Commerciale Italiana*), which, like all Italian branches in countries under French rule, seemed to have significant funds, and would grant loans at much lower rates than French banks[33]. The bank director (since February 1938, Leonidas Ganzina) was, like the rest of the staff, a notorious fascist. The bank would sometimes grant, to local traders, advances and loans without any interests, requiring a simple guarantee. Some of the most important traders in the city became customers of the bank[34]. The Italian economic activities in Casablanca were considerable: Italian retailers with a licence, for example, were about 1,000. The most important category, among businessmen, was that of public works contractors, considered by the French as the most dangerous agents of the fascist propaganda, also because they mostly came from Tunisia, and could perfectly speak Arabic[35].

[30] *Ivi*, pp. 170-171.
[31] *Ivi*, pp. 149-151.
[32] *Ivi*, p. 178 e p. 97.
[33] Syrie-Liban, DP, 672, N° 1440 – 9/11, *La "politique étrangère coloniale" de l'Italie*, 13 June 1933, p. 8.
[34] *Politique italienne en Maroc*, pp. 130-132.
[35] *Ivi*, p. 96.

The first Italian newspaper in French Morocco, *La Tribune Latine*, appeared in 1923; founded in Casablanca by Antonio Corrias, was replaced in 1927 by *La Squilla*, and later by *L'Unione Italiana*. In December 1928, this newspaper ceased publication, and there was no Italian press in the protectorate until May 1930, when Mr Corrias founded *L'Heure*, a weekly newspaper in Italian, French and Spanish. Following the establishment of the council of the colony, the Italian consular authorities took control of the press. The activity was moved to Rabat, where on 31 January 1932 began publication of the new newspaper *L'Ala Italiana,* managed by the local secretary of the Fascio, Giuseppe Turchi; Antonio Corrias was editor in chief[36]. Even this paper was short-lived: it lasted just over a year, until it was replaced in April 1933 by a new weekly newspaper, *L'Eco d'Italia*[37]. In July 1933, some Italians in Casablanca, linked to the *Associazione Nazionale Combattenti* (the Italian association of war veterans), began to publish another newspaper on their own, *Il Coloniale*; more extremist and anti-French than the Rabat newspaper, and with an initial print run of about 1,000 copies, it survived for a very short period. Instead, the new official paper, *L'Eco d'Italia*, finally had better solidity. The Italian consulate in Rabat, in order to ensure full political control over the newspaper, brought in the journalist Massimo Collato from Rome[38]. This did not mean that *L'Eco d'Italia* had a moderate political stance. Already in the first issue appeared an article, signed by Romolo Sartori, president of the Chamber of Commerce and the Dante Alighieri Society, that accused France of violating the Algeciras agreement with its customs policy. A regular column on the Italian weekly newspaper, significantly titled *Tiro al bersaglio* ("target shooting"), constantly attacked French men and political groups[39]. *L'Eco d'Italia* was subsidised by the Italian government, but its publication was initially promoted with a subscription within the Italian community. The consul had offered 1.000 francs, the other members of the colony 100 francs each. But already in 1934, after largely failing economic support of the community, the newspaper had run into financial difficulties[40]. The consul in Rabat, Italo Zappoli, during the war in Ethiopia suc-

[36] *Ivi*, p. 142.
[37] *Ivi*, p. 8.
[38] *Ivi*, p. 143.
[39] *Ivi*, p. 8.
[40] *Ivi*, p. 144.

ceeded in avoiding the closure of *L'Eco d'Italia*, which he personally edited, thanks to the contribution of the Italian communities in Casablanca and Rabat. The survival of the newspaper was regarded as highly important for the political fidelity of the Italian community, because the local press in French, which published news from the agencies Reuter's and Havas, was considered hostile to Italy[41]. The only other Italian newspaper in Morocco was published in the international area of Tangier. *La Vedetta di Tangeri* was published twice a week, and according to the French his director, Mr Lo Faso, was a Minculpop (*Ministero della Cultura Popolare*, the ministry of press and propaganda) agent. Particularly after the Spanish war, this paper was notable for its fierce attacks to the city's French administration[42].

In order to increase the Italian influence in Morocco, the mobilisation of the Italian community was accompanied by a systematic political propaganda towards Muslim circles. This type of activity developed mainly during the 1930s, fitting in with the broader fascist "Islamic policy", directed at the entire Arab and Muslim world[43]. The French believed that the Italian propaganda among Moroccans began in 1930, at the time of the riots against the promulgation of the *Berber Dahir*[44]. The suspect, probably unfounded, arose from the fact that Shakib Arslan, protagonist of the press campaign against the *Dahir*, became pro-Italian after 1934[45]. According to Italian documents it seems that, in the early 1930s, the propaganda in Morocco was actually quite bland. In 1934, the emergence of Nazis competition began to alarm the Italian representatives, who asked for a greater govern-

[41] DGSE, 156, *Marocco 1936*, Mr Zappoli to the Foreign Minister, Mussolini (copy), 17 January 1936.

[42] *Politique italienne en Maroc*, pp. 145-146.

[43] On the Arab policy of fascist Italy in general, see particularly R. DE FELICE, *Il fascismo e l'Oriente*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1988, e N. ARIELLI, *Fascist Italy and the Middle East, 1933-40*, Palgrave Macmillan 2010.

[44] *Politique italienne en Maroc*, p. 217. On the issue of the *Berber Dahir* of 16 March 1930, see C.A. JULIEN, *L'Afrique du Nord en marche. Nationalismes musulmans et souveraineté française*, troisième édition, René Julliard, Paris 1972, pp. 130-5; J.P. HALSTEAD, *Rebirth of a Nation. The Origins and Rise of Moroccan Nationalism, 1912 – 1944*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1967, pp. 169-190.

[45] J. BESSIS, «Chekib Arslan et les mouvements nationalistes au Maghreb», in *Revue Historique*, n. 526, Avril-Juin 1978, pp. 479-480. On Shakib Arslan, see W.L. CLEVELAND, *Islam against the West. Shakib Arslan and the Campaign for Islamic Nationalism*, University of Texas press, Austin 1985.

ment effort[46]; but only during the Ethiopian war was the Fascist propaganda organisation rapidly developed and broadened. Italy opened a massive campaign to convince the public opinion, in the Arab world, that the Muslims in Ethiopia were an oppressed minority; but if they had passed under Italian rule, the Fascist "Islamic policy" would ensure their well-being and progress[47]. In Morocco, where the press was not very developed (the only Arabic-language newspaper was controlled by the French Resident General), the most effective propaganda was conducted by distributing leaflets among the Arab population[48]. According to the vice consul in Casablanca, Mr Prato, Moroccans were rather indifferent to the events in Eastern Africa. They did not hate Italians, and cherished a secret sentiment of admiration for Mussolini, also thanks to what they came to learn on the colonial policy in Libya[49]. The French, predictably, depicted quite a different situation: according to them, Moroccan people clearly sided with Ethiopia, because, despite being aware of the Negus' bad treatment towards Muslims in Ethiopia, there prevailed what was defined as the "*caractère racial*", in other words, the solidarity with the last independent African nation that was fighting against a European imperialist power[50].

In any case, according to the French themselves, Italian propaganda had not systematically attacked France and the institution of the protectorate in Morocco until 1936. The Italians, actually, manifested a

[46] DGSE, 156, *Marocco 1934*, Tel. 961, Tetuan 18 December 1934. On Radio Bari propaganda, see D.J. GRANGE, «Structure et techniques d'une propagande: les émissions arabes de Radio-Bari», in *Relations Internationales*, n. 2, 1974; ID., «La propagande arabe de Radio Bari (1937-1939)», in *Relations Internationales*, n. 5, 1976; C. MACDONALD, «Radio Bari: Italian Wireless Propaganda in the Middle East and British Countermeasures 1934-38», in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 13, n. 2, 1977.

[47] On the development of the organisation of the fascist propaganda, see P. FERRARA (edited by), «Il Ministero della Cultura Popolare», in G. MELIS (edited by), *L'amministrazione centrale dall'Unità alla Repubblica. Le strutture e i dirigenti*, Vol. IV, Il Mulino, Bologna 1992; B. GARZARELLI, *Parleremo al mondo intero. La propaganda del fascismo all'estero*, Edizioni dell'Orso, Alessandria 2004. On the fascist propaganda outside Europe during the war of Etiopia, see also G. PROCACCI, *Dalla parte dell'Etiopia. L'aggressione italiana vista dai movimenti anticolonialisti d'Asia, d'Africa, d'America*, Feltrinelli, Milan 1984.

[48] DGSE, 156, *Marocco 1936*, Mr Zappoli to the Foreign Minister, Mussolini (copy), 17 January 1936.

[49] DGSE, 156, *Marocco 1936*, Tel. 593/48, Casablanca 30 January 1936.

[50] Syrie-Liban, Affaires Diverses, 1061, n° 1.953, the delegate in the Residence General in Marocco, Helleu, to the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Pierre Laval, Rabat 19 October 1935.

clear desire for relaxation, perhaps because of precise instructions of the Government in Rome, given the period of good relations between Italy and France at that time, which culminated in the Mussolini-Laval agreements in January 1935. Following the Ethiopian crisis and the French adhesion to the sanctions, the situation rapidly changed, becoming even tenser after the start of the Spanish civil war and the birth of the Rome-Berlin Axis. From 1936, the Italian foreign policy became increasingly anti-French. This change, accompanied by intense propaganda, was matched by an equal change in the attitude of the Italian communities in Morocco, Tunisia and in the remaining French domains in the Mediterranean[51]. The Italian community in Morocco, after being moulded and disciplined, was directly involved in the political activity of the Government of Rome. During the Ethiopian conflict, the consul in Rabat, Mr Zappoli, subscribed the Chamber of Commerce of Casablanca to several newspapers of Tripoli and Bengasi, which were then freely distributed among Arab traders for propaganda purposes[52]. Fascist Italians, encouraged by the consulates, made a constant propaganda against France, among both foreigners and locals in Morocco[53]. During conversation with Arabs, they praised the superiority of the Italian and German governments stressing their military build-up, which was going hand in hand with the supposed decline of the democracies. The more naïve Moroccans, according to the French, were led to believe that Italy and Germany could help them gain independence[54]. Particularly in Casablanca, where the Italian community was larger and had a significant social and economic role, the fascists' propaganda activity was viewed with concern by the French, also because of the obvious links they had with Spanish Francoists[55]. The Italian propaganda in natives' circles was also favoured by ties with the Diouri family, a branch of which had taken Italian citizenship[56]. Some family members were working for Italian consulates, and were openly pro-fascists. Probably thanks to these connections, the Italians began having relations with the nationalists of the

[51] *Politique italienne en Maroc*, pp. 9-10.
[52] DGSE, 156, *Marocco 1936*, Tel. 2339, Rabat 7 April 1936.
[53] *Politique italienne en Maroc*, pp. 176-178.
[54] *Ivi*, p. 225.
[55] *Ivi*, p. 34.
[56] Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris, La Courneuve, K-Afrique (hereafter: K-Afrique), Questions Générales, 211, n° 547, Rabat 17 March 1938, the delegate in the Residence General to the Foreign Minister.

Comité d'Action Marocaine. L'Action Populaire, the main nationalist press organ in 1937, was directed by the wife of Muhammad Diouri, one of the main nationalist leaders, and it seems that it was printed in the Foch typography, owned by an influent member of the PNF[57].

The local propaganda in Morocco gained momentum especially during Mussolini's pro-Islamic campaign, culminating in his journey to Libya, in March 1937[58]. It coincided, roughly, with the pilgrimage to Mecca of that year. The Italian government would directly organise the *hajj* for the Libyans, both to show interest in the spiritual well-being of the Muslim subjects, and to watch them, preventing them being exposed to dangerous political ideas in Mecca. Intense propaganda was carried out among Moroccan Muslims to convince them to take part to the pilgrimage, together with the Libyans, under Italian protection, with a stopover in Tripoli[59]. The initiative was repeated in January 1938, with the Spanish collaboration. On the outward journey, during the "Italo-Hispanic" Mecca pilgrimage, the pilgrims visited Benghazi, Tripoli, Naples and Rome, where they were even introduced to Mussolini[60]. Moroccan spiritual and political leaders who attended the journey warmly thanked the Italian authorities for the «care and protection» received[61]. According to the French, Italy had come into good relations with the *sharif* Ahmed ben Seddik of the *Darqawa*[62] of Tangier, director of several *zawaya*, who, in September 1937, went, at the Italian expenses, to Egypt, Libya and Italy, and he also was one of the leaders who attended the Mecca pilgrimage organised by the Italians in 1938[63].

In December 1937, the Italian activity in Morocco led to a diplomatic row with France. The recent appointment of Giovanni Fornari as the consul in Rabat to succeed Mr Zappoli, wrote the Resident General Noguès, had given hopes for a new attitude of the Italian rep-

[57] J.P. HALSTEAD, *Rebirth of a Nation*, cit., p. 156.
[58] *Ivi*, p. 217.
[59] DGSE, 157, *Marocco 1937*, Tel. 562/53, Tetuan 1 April 1937.
[60] *Politique italienne en Maroc*, p. 228.
[61] The "political leader" of the pilgrimage was a certain *sidi* Kaddur Ben Amar: DGSE, 157, *Marocco 1937*, Tel. 215192/c, Rome 30 April 1938 (MAE communication related to a telegram from Tetuan of 2 April).
[62] *Darqawa* are a *sufi* orden (*tariqa*), born at the end of the XVIII century in Northern Marocco: R. LE TOURNEAU, «Darḳāwa», in H. A. R. GIBBS *et al.* (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd Edition), Brill, Leiden 1986, Vol. 2, p. 160.
[63] *Politique italienne en Maroc* p. 229.

resentatives, and for moderation of the «combative tendencies» recently displayed by fascists in Morocco, and by *L'Eco d'Italia*. But, on the contrary, Italian propaganda was intensified[64]. On the orders of the French Foreign Minister, Yvon Delbos, Noguès protested with Mr Fornari about a series of Italian actions, deemed damaging to the authority of French[65]. Among them, the distribution of leaflets in Arabic, in which «unflattering comparisons» with the French colonialism appeared; the Italian consulate's delivery of propaganda publications to several local political personalities; and the advertisement, carried out among Muslims, on the Mecca pilgrimage organised by the Italian government. The propaganda, protested the French Resident, was being continuously carried out, even «verbally», by Italian emigrants. Mr Fornari was completely unaware of the propaganda leaflet distribution that had irritated the French; only after talks with Noguès, he discovered that it had been clandestinely distributed in numerous copies, right after Mussolini's visit to Libya, precisely by his predecessor, Mr Zappoli, and by the other consuls in Morocco[66]. Mr Fornari's ignorance about the Italian activities in his jurisdiction surprised Noguès, and strengthened his suspicion that emissaries of the secret services or PNF agents were secretly operating in Morocco, carrying out special missions of propaganda and surveillance[67]. Mr Alfieri, Minister for Popular Culture, reproached the Italian representatives, not for the distribution of propaganda material, which was actually endorsed and promoted by Rome, but for not doing it with sufficient caution[68]. Very soon, the consulate in Rabat and the Minculpop decided, by mutual agreement, that the activities had to resume with more determination, albeit trying to avoid new diplomatic incidents[69].

After the outbreak of the Spanish civil war, the Italian propaganda activity could be carried out undisturbed within the Spanish protector-

[64] K-Afrique, Questions Générales, 211, n° 2315, Rabat 3 December 1937, Noguès to the Foreign Minister.

[65] K-Afrique, Questions Générales, 204, n° 665 à 667, Paris 10 December 1937, the Foreign Minister, Yvon Delbos, to the Resident Noguès.

[66] DGSE, 157, *Marocco 1937*, Tel. 245577/c, Rome 28 December 1937, MAE to Minculpop, transcription of telegram from the Cunsul General in Rabat of 14 December 1937. The leaflet was titled *Rihla Mussolini ila Libya* (Mussolini's visit to Libia).

[67] K-Afrique, Questions Générales, 204, Tel. 858, Rabat 15 December 1937, f.to Noguès.

[68] DGSE, 157, *Marocco 1937*, Tel. 900267/22, Rome 12 January 1938.

[69] DGSE, 157, *Marocco 1937*, Tel. 909661/865, Rome 1 August 1938, f.to Tosti, e Tel. 228746/869, Rome 16 August 1938, MAE to Minculpop.

ate, thanks to the political-military alliance with Franco's nationalists. Since Morocco, for its geographical and political position, was directly involved with Spanish events, the ideological battle between fascisms and democracies intertwined with the Italo-French competition in the Mediterranean, also involving local politics, i.e. the emerging Moroccan nationalism. The sheer audacity of Franco, who granted complete freedom of speech and press to Spanish Morocco, and promised complete autonomy to the protectorate after his victory, created some difficulties to the French. The Moroccans in the French zone, found it difficult to accept that Franco's and Mussolini's policies in North Africa seemed to be more liberal than those of the Popular Front. Spanish Morocco also became the epicentre of the German and Italian propaganda[70]. Within the French protectorate, the Spanish civil war favoured the nearing between the Italian community and the Spanish one – now regularly invited to the *Casa d'Italia* and to fascist political rallies – and the fascist propaganda among French right-wing parties[71]. The Spanish speaking press happily lent itself to support fascism, for example by hosting articles on the Italian colonial policy in Libya[72]. In 1938, as French Morocco authorities learned, several Moroccan nationalists of the Spanish zone travelled to Europe, reaching Spain, Italy and Germany, hinting at a co-ordinated action between Rome, Berlin, and Burgos to spread anti-French propaganda among the Arabs[73]. If nothing else, an agreement between Italy and Spain in this sense was considered certain. At the beginning of the year, the Italian ambassador in Salamanca, while visiting Tetuan, held talks with some Moroccan nationalists. Meanwhile, the French were convinced that Shakib Arslan, who had resumed contacts with Maghreb nationalists, was turning part of the funds he had received from Italy and Germany to the "Arab agitators" in France and North Africa[74].

The adoption of the anti-Semitic policy and racial laws in Italy had a significant impact on the Italian community in Morocco. Nazi anti-Jewish propaganda had preceded the Italian one by several years[75], but

[70] C.A. JULIEN, *L'Afrique du Nord en marche*, cit., pp. 139-142.

[71] *Politique italienne en Maroc*, p. 172.

[72] DGSE, 157, *Marocco 1937*, Tel. 1080/89, Tetuan 27 June 1937, e Tel. 1374/111 del 13 August.

[73] *Politique italienne en Maroc* pp. 227-228.

[74] *Ivi*, p. 228.

[75] See J. BAÏDA, «Le Maroc et la propagande du IIIème Reich», in *Hespéris Tamuda*, Vol. XXVIII, 1990; J.P. HALSTEAD, *Rebirth of a Nation*, cit., pp. 152-157. On the relations be-

the racial turning point of the fascist regime, as well as affecting the internal balance of the community, added new tensions in the relations among the various ethnic groups and faiths that constituted the Moroccan society, especially in the cities, where both the Italian and the Jewish presence was more significant. The most zealous fascists, in Casablanca and Tangier, began to demand that the Jews, who were the main representatives in Italian Chambers of Commerce, were replaced. In Tangier, it was rumoured that a consulate employee of Israelite origins, whose name was Aflalo, had been replaced by the "racist" Giorgio Bedni, following precise instructions from Rome, that recommended to no longer resort to Jews for sensitive tasks. In Rabat, Mrs Benatar, an Italian Jewish teacher, was fired. *La Vedetta di Tangeri* unleashed a violent campaign against the Jews; its director expressed astonishment for the fact that the vice president of the local Rotary Club, the Jewish engineer Mr Zinnari, was still holding his position. Most fanatical fascist Italians adopted an attitude of intransigent racism. Peaks of stupidity were reached by a certain Giuseppe Cavazzuti, resident in Tangier, who, having gone to a mechanic while in Meknes, refused Shell oil for his car, on the grounds that the dealer of that brand – in Tangier! – was a Jew; and by a certain Mr Sacchini, who, during a tourist trip in Marrakech, when about to give alms to some poor, asked them first if they were not, by any chance, Jews[76]. The racial policy seemed all the more absurd, as the Italian Jews in Morocco were among the most affluent and influential members of the community, and many of them, up until then, had been enthusiastic supporters of the fascist regime. The Italian Jewish community had been accustomed, according to the French, to a policy of attraction that proved effective. Several notable Jews, naturalised or protected by Italy, were enrolled in the PNF; a Jew from Tangier, Mr Nahon, had long represented the Italians at the Legislative Assembly, and Abraham Laredo, member of an ancient family of the city, had been the vice consul interpreter. Teachings at the Italian high school in Tangier had progressed mainly thanks to Jewish elements. Many young Jews had studied in Italy, attracted by the fascist propaganda, and had returned full of enthusiasm. The racial laws had therefore

tween Muslims and the Jewish minority in Marocco, see M. KENBIB, *Juifs et musulmans au Maroc 1859-1948*, Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines, Université Mohammed V, Rabat 1994.

[76] *Politique italienne en Maroc*, pp. 157-159.

deeply disappointed and offended the community. Its members, foreseeing that they would have been expelled from the PNF, had stopped wearing fascist insignias, and purchasing *La Vedetta di Tangeri*, which had adopted a strong anti-Semitic line[77]. In Casablanca, nearly all Italian traders had withdrawn their funds from the Italian Commercial Bank, for an estimated total of about 10 million francs. The bank suddenly found itself in difficulties, and tried to find a way out by sending brokers to Muslim traders to convince them to deposit their money in the Italian bank[78].

According to the French, the anti-Semitic policy of fascist Italy was clearly correlated to the propaganda towards the Muslims. The Italians thought well to exploit the animosity between the two communities, which had been exacerbated by the Palestinian issue, for their own political purposes. The consulate in Casablanca distributed copies of an anti-Semitic propagandistic book, in which France and Great Britain were accused of pushing Jews against Muslims. Radio Bari, in its broadcasts, denounced Great Britain's responsibilities for the events in Palestine, and gave regular news on the anti-Jewish laws adopted in several European countries[79]. In September 1938, alongside the usual propaganda material on Italian colonial and pro-Islamic policy, anti-Semitic leaflets began to appear[80]. The result was indeed, according to the French, a significant improvement in the Muslims attitude towards fascism[81]. Muslim Moroccans, despite scant sympathy towards Italy, received anti-Semitic laws with a certain satisfaction. News about the racial laws in Italy was read and commented with interest, and met the approval of most fanatical Muslims and nationalists. The more educated Moroccans, and the press, which was expression of their thought, were, on the contrary, concerned. On the one hand, it was feared that racial policies in Europe would cause new waves of Jewish immigration in North Africa; on the other hand, the Arabs did not overlook the possibility that they too were considered an inferior race[82]. The Moroccan Jews, for their part, in order to contrast the

[77] K-Afrique, Questions Générales, 206, n° 207, the French consul in Tangier, Chesneau, to the Foreign Minister, Georges Bonnet, Tangier 24 August 1938.
[78] *Politique italienne en Maroc*, pp. 159-160.
[79] *Ivi*, p. 165.
[80] *Ivi*, pp. 221-222.
[81] *Ivi*, pp. 165-166.
[82] *Ivi*, pp. 160-161.

Muslims' favourable attitude towards Italian anti-Semitism, argued that it would inevitably retort against the Arabs, they too a "Semitic" race. Some Italians, realising the danger posed by such an argument, suggested to replace the ambiguous term "anti-Semitic" with the more precise term "anti-Jew". According to the French, this was a further proof that the Italians intended the racial policy as a means of propaganda towards the Arabs[83].

The Italian racial laws created a heated debate in the Moroccan press. A controversy broke out between *L'Avenir Illustré*, press organ of the Moroccan Jewish community, and *La Voix Nationale*, owned by 'Abd al-Latif Sbihi. The latter, especially after the Jewish community had organised a fund-rising in favour of the Jews of Palestine, called for the prohibition of such initiatives, the closure of *L'Avenir Illustré*, and other anti-Jews measures[84]. However, deep divisions on anti-Semitism emerged also among the Muslims themselves. Following an editorial of the *Maroc Matin*, which reproached young Moroccans for their anti-Semitic propaganda, which was likely to provoke the reaction of France, the reformist press organ *La Voix Nationale* published an article signed by the whole editorial staff, which stated: «the editors of La Voix Nationale […] if they do not consider the Jewish race an inferior race, they categorically refuse […] to consider it a superior race», and again: «we are too respectful of the order to be inspired by Goebbels racism as you claim, but we have to remind you that Moses' racism is more comprehensive and insidious»[85]. The article accused Moroccan Jews of grabbing all the wealth and trade of the country.

In any case, the French noted, although in some occasions the Italian propaganda had found favourable reception among Moroccans, as also coinciding with the difficult internal situation in France and the economic crisis that hit the population, the country as a whole remained hostile towards Italy and her colonial policy[86]. 1938 saw a revival in anti-Italian currents in the Arab press[87], to which the French were probably not extraneous. Moreover, after the Easter agreements

[83] *Ivi*, p. 163.
[84] *Ivi*, pp. 163-164.
[85] DGSE, 157, *Marocco 1938*, Press review n° 33, Rabat 1 October 1938, p. 19, from *La Voix Nationale* of 21 September 1938 (translated to Italian in the document).
[86] *Politique italienne en Maroc*, p. 232.
[87] See for example DGSE, 157, *Marocco 1938*, Tel. 230259/c, 29 August 1938; Press review n° 30, Rabat 1 September 1938; Press review n° 33, Rabat 1 October 1938.

with Great Britain in April 1938, the Italian prestige was in evident decline throughout the whole Arab and Muslim world[88]. At the end of the year, the Resident General Noguès wrote that the Italian propaganda had already lost much of its effectiveness. On the one hand, the expedition of 20,000 Italian colonist farmers in Libya had caused serious reproof to the fascist colonial policy; on the other hand, the Italian claims over Tunisia had removed all illusion on Mussolini's "pro-Islamic" foreign policy[89].

The Italian community in Morocco found itself in a peculiar situation between the two wars. Despite being a European minority in Africa, it had developed spontaneously and independently, and not as the representative of the imperialistic interests of the motherland. Her indirect involvement with the political events in the French Morocco, between the two wars, was the result of a process orchestrated from above. The fascist government tried to use emigrants as a tool through which to promote Italian prestige in the country; to develop economic, commercial and cultural ties, to then be asserted on the diplomatic negotiating table; and to spread ideological and political fascist propaganda within the Muslim community. Fascist activity exacerbated Morocco's internal tensions, favouring the emergent nationalism and Moroccans hostility towards France, and fuelling anti-Semitic currents. The Italian minority thus had a role, however secondary, in the political affairs of Morocco between the two wars, helping accelerate the clash with France and the national emancipation process. However, Italian influence expansion in the country, longed for by the regime, did not occur. The same "fascistization" of the Italian community was, probably, largely an external phenomenon. In September 1938, on the occasion of international tensions that led to the Munich Agreement, the Italian community proved far from unanimous in supporting the regime. Many Italians, surely also for fear of incurring personal consequences in the event of war, declared their loyalty to France. In Casablanca alone, between the 25th and 30th September,

[88] N. ARIELLI, *Fascist Italy and the Middle East*, cit., pp. 133 ss; M. PIRAS, *Politica islamica e propaganda fascista in Siria e Libano (1932 - 1940)*, Doctorate thesis, University of Cagliari, A.A. 2010/2011, pp. 235 ss.

[89] «Le Général Noguès, Résident général de France à Rabat, à M. Georges Bonnet, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères», T. n° 519, Rabat, 16 December 1938, in MINISTERE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGERES, *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1932-1939, 2° Série (1936-1939)*, Tome XIII, Imprimerie Nationale, Paris 1979, Doc. 156, pp. 303-305.

about a hundred Italians went to the municipal offices to learn about the naturalisation procedures (seven applications were actually submitted). Several of them went even further, offering to join the Foreign Legion to fight alongside the French, or to participate in the passive defence of the colony. When calm returned, fascist propaganda resumed, and the consulates were instructed to collect the names of those who had shown Francophile sentiments, or poor adherence to the fascist cause[90]. It seemed clear, however, that many Italian emigrants, though flattered by the fascist regime's attentions, were not willing to become passive instruments of its foreign policy.

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Identité politique et démocratie: les trois dimensions de l'ethnonationalisme touareg au Niger et au Mali[1]

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1. Introduction et revue de la littérature

De nombreuses études[2] ont montré que la globalisation, bien que parfois présentée comme un phénomène d'harmonisation et d'homogénéisation des économies, des cultures et des sociétés[3] s'est accompagnée d'une résurgence ou d'une réaffirmation des identités collectives. Certaines de ces études[4] ont aussi insisté sur le fait que la globalisation a partout généré des demandes pressantes pour un élargissement de la sphère des libertés démocratiques, un renforcement de la bonne gouvernance et l'instauration de régimes démocratiques là où ils n'existaient pas. Grâce au développement des technologies de l'information et de la communication, à la consolidation d'une société civile internationale et à la pression croissante exercée par les organi-

[1] Cette réflexion est principalement consacrée au Niger. Toutefois, lorsque nécessaire, nous illustrerons nos propos par des exemples pris au Mali particulièrement quand il sera question de l'aire géographique appelée Azawad qui, dans son acception traditionnelle, s'étend non seulement au Mali, mais aussi au Niger et en partie en Algérie et en Libye.

[2] S.P. HUNTINGTON, *The Third Wave. Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman and London, 1991; G. GODELIER, Préface in J.-C. TAMISIER, *Dictionnaire des Peuples et Sociétés d'Afrique, d'Amérique, d'Asie et d'Océanie*, Larousse, Paris, 1998; B. DUTERM, *Peuples indigènes et minorités ethniques : les conditions sociales de leur reconnaissance*, Alternatives Sud (Editorial), Vol.VII 2, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2000.

[3] D. HELD, A. MCGREW, D. GOLDBLAT et J. PERRATON, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture,* Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1999.

[4] S.P. HUNTINGTON, *The Third Wave, op. cit.*; S.M. LIPSET, *The Social Requisites of Democracy Revisited*: 1993 Presidential Address, *American Sociological Review*, 59, 1994, pp. 1-22; A. RICHARD, «Economic Pressures for Accountable Governance in the Middle East and North Africa», in A. NORTON (ed.), *Civil Society and the Middle East,* Vol. 1, E.J Brill, Leiden, New York and Koln, 1995; L. DIAMOND, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1999.

sations internationales, les agences des Nations unies et les communautés diasporiques pour le respect des droits humains, les États autoritaires ont perdu une bonne partie de leur souveraineté et de leur capacité à exercer un contrôle sur les populations au sein des entités territoriales traditionnellement reconnues. Partout les peuples indigènes, les communautés marginalisées, les paysans sans terre, les minorités ethniques et religieuses et les travailleurs surexploités se lèvent et réclament, non seulement les droits qui leur étaient déniés, mais aussi la reconnaissance de leur existence même en tant que groupes distincts.

Cette résurgence des identités collectives en temps de démocratisation a suscité un regain d'intérêt des chercheurs pour les études portant sur les mobilisations ethniques, particulièrement en Afrique, après les grands débats qui ont été menés sur les théories constructivistes au cours des deux décennies précédentes et ce, suite à la publication du livre de Benedict Anderson[5] et de celle l'ouvrage collectif paru sous la direction d'Eric Hobsbawm et Terence Ranger[6]. En effet, pendant longtemps, l'idée défendue par bon nombre d'auteurs[7] était que l'étouffement des libertés démocratiques et de l'expression des identités ethniques, particulièrement en Afrique francophone où la tradition jacobine héritée du régime colonial français a érigé au rang de tabou toute référence aux appartenances collectives, était en soi un terreau fertile pour l'explosion de violences identitaires longtemps contenues. D'après ces auteurs, de nombreux conflits ethniques violents auraient pu être évités si des institutions démocratiques avaient été mises en place dans les pays concernés. Pour les théoriciens appartenant à ce groupe de pensée, l'antidote aux conflits ethniques était donc la démocratie. Dans le même ordre d'idées, certains analystes[8] sont même allés plus loin et ont prophétisé la disparition des solidarités ethniques avec le développement de la modernisation et la propagation des va-

[5] B. ANDERSON, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London 1983.

[6] E. HOBSBAWM et T. RANGER, (eds)*., The Invention of Tradition,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983.

[7] H. GLICKMAN (ed.), *Ethnic Conflict and Democratization in Africa*, African Studies Association Press, Atlanta, 1995; C. AKE*, Democracy and Development in Africa,* Brookings, Washington DC, 1996.

[8] N. GLAZER, D.P. MOYNIHAN, «Why Ethnicity?», in *Commentary,* 58(4), 1974, pp. 33-39; W. KYMLICKA, Nation-Building and Minority Rights: Comparing West and East, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 26(2), 2000, pp. 183-212.

leurs libérales et démocratiques. On sait aussi que des prédictions similaires avaient toujours été faites par l'école marxiste qui soutenait que les solidarités de classes allaient l'emporter chez les travailleurs sur les solidarités de type primordialiste telle que l'appartenance religieuse ou ethnique.

Le fait que ce soit en période de démocratisation que l'ethnicité se cherche des voies d'expression politique ou que l'expression de l'ethnicité sous ses diverses formes (y compris violentes) soit devenue plus saillante, était donc un paradoxe qui nécessitait de nouvelles explications théoriques dont l'une des plus importantes fut donnée par Snyder dans son livre *From Voting to Violence : Democratization and nationalist Violence,* publié en 2000. L'argument principal de Snyder était qu'un certain nombre de conditions doivent exister pour que les élites d'un groupe ou d'une minorité ethnique décident de promouvoir des revendications nationalistes et pour que les masses auxquelles elles font appel soient réceptives au discours qu'elles développent. Ce sont ces mêmes conditions qui expliquent quel type de nationalisme (civique, ethnique, révolutionnaire ou contre-révolutionnaire) va émerger de leur action et les formes (violentes ou pacifiques) que ce nationalisme va prendre. Certains des commentateurs de Snyder[9] ont soutenu que ses arguments laissent supposer que la résurgence de l'ethnicité en temps de démocratie dérive du relâchement du contrôle autoritaire sur les masses qui donne toute latitude aux entrepreneurs politiques d'utiliser l'ethnicité et ses symboles comme instruments de mobilisation politique. De nombreux autres auteurs, notamment les théoriciens de la mobilisation des ressources[10], les théoriciens de la compétition ethnique[11] ou des théoriciens comme Bonacich[12] qui font

[9] M.R. BEISSINGER, «A New Look at Ethnicity and Democratization», in *Journal of Democracy* Volume 19, Number 3 July 2008, 85-97.

[10] A.R. OBERSCHAL, *Social Conflict and Social Movements*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1973; C. TILLY, *From Mobilization to Revolution,* Addison-Wesley, Reading, Massachusetts, 1978; J.D. MCCARTHY, M.N. ZALD, «The Enduring Vitality of the Resource Mobilization Theory of Social Movements», in J. H. TURNER (ed.), *Handbook of Sociological Theory*, 2001, pp. 533-565.

[11] D. BELL, «Ethnicity and Social Change», in *Ethnicity. Theory and Experience*, GLAZER N. et MOYNIHAN D. (eds.), Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, London 1975, pp. 141-74; F. BARTH, «Enduring and Emerging Issues in the Analysis of Ethnicity», in *The Anthropology of Ethnicity. Beyond "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries"*, H. VERMEULEN, C. GOVERS (eds.), Het Spinhuis, Amsterdam 1994, pp. 11-32; A. LANGER, «Horizontal Inequalities and Violent Group Mobilisation in Côte d'Ivoire», in *Oxford Development Studies*, 33(1), 2005, pp. 25-45.

des conflits ethniques le résultat d'un marché du travail segmenté ou éclaté (*split labor market*), un marché caractérisé par des discriminations raciales, ethniques ou sexistes que ce soit en termes d'opportunités d'emploi, d'égalité salariale ou même de possibilités de promotion, ont, avant Snyder ou après lui, abondé dans le même sens.

Toutefois, et s'agissant plus particulièrement de l'Afrique, très peu d'auteurs se sont intéressés aux discours élaborés par les acteurs dans le cadre des mobilisations ethniques. Par exemple au Niger, si les facteurs qui expliquent la résurgence des rebellions touarègues ont été très largement expliqués par maints auteurs[13], la nature des discours protestataires et les formes qu'ils prennent n'ont pas toujours reçu l'attention qu'elles méritent. Cet article se propose de contribuer à remédier à ce problème en tentant d'analyser la production idéologique des mouvements rebelles nigériens dans ses rapports au cadre démocratique.

La question principale que nous nous posons est la suivante : qu'est-ce qui, dans les principes fondamentaux de la démocratie tels qu'ils sont énoncés dans un pays comme le Niger, s'oppose aux aspirations de certaines minorités au point que certains entrepreneurs politiques issus de ces minorités se sentent dans l'obligation de recourir à des stratégies de subversion pour se faire entendre? La réponse à cette question ne peut se trouver que dans le discours que les rebelles élaborent pour justifier ou promouvoir leur cause. Toutefois, ce discours n'est pas un discours monolithique. Dans cet chapitre, nous partons donc de l'hypothèse que le discours politique de la rébellion touarègue

[12] E. BONACICH, «A Theory of Ethnic Antagonism: The Split Labor Market», in *American Sociological Review*, 37(5), 1972, pp. 547-59.

[13] H. CLAUDOT-HAWAD, «Nomades et État : L'impensé juridique»,in *Droit et Société*, 15-1990, pp. 229-242 ; H. CLAUDOT-HAWAD, «Histoire d'un enjeu politique: la vision évolutionniste des événements touaregs 1990-1992», in *Politique Africaine* 50, 1993, pp 132-40 ; A. SALIFOU, *La question touarègue au Niger*, Karthala, Paris 1993 ; A. BOURGEOT, «Révoltes et rebellions en pays touareg», in *Afrique Contemporaine*, 170, 2ème trimestre 1994 ; D. HAMANI, «Une gigantesque falsification de l'histoire», in *Niyya,* N. 4, Avril 1994, pp. 6-8 ; F. DEYCARD, Political Culture and Tuareg Mobilizations: Rebels of Niger, http://univBordeaux.academia.edu/FredericDeycard/Papers/931438/Political_Culture_and_Tuareg_Mobilizations_Rebels_of_Niger [Consulté 9/07/2012].

est marqué par des différences importantes dans les prises de position et les orientations idéologiques et que le contexte institutionnel et l'environnement socio-politique, y compris les rencontres, les rapports noués entre acteurs politiques touaregs et acteurs étrangers ainsi que les solidarités organisationnelles entre mouvements rebelles Touaregs et d'autres organisations identitaires à travers le monde expliquent ces orientations. Notre analyse portera principalement sur les productions idéologiques ou symboliques des organisations rebelles touarègues, ce que les théoriciens des mouvements sociaux appellent les "cadres" ou les "schèmes", traductions françaises des concepts de "frame" ou de "framing" dans leurs premières formulations anglo-saxonnes[14]; car les mouvements rebelles touaregs, comme tous autres mouvements, sont porteurs de croyances et d'idéologies qui structurent la pensée et l'action des acteurs et qu'on peut retrouver ou discerner dans les campagnes de communication persuasive, le travail de propagande, de sensibilisation et de mobilisation, autant que dans les diverses formes de protestation, de justification ou de rationalisation des activités rebelles.

De ce point de vue, nous avons identifié au moins trois orientations idéologiques dans le discours protestataire touareg. Ces orientations traduisent les différences qui existent entre une diaspora intellectuelle touarègue essentiellement basée en France et dont les thèses sont influencées par le mouvement pan-amazigh (pan-berbère) et d'autres mouvements ou organisations françaises tel le mouvement occitan, voire, pour son aile extrémiste la Nouvelle Droite française, et une autre frange qui agit essentiellement sur le terrain au Niger et qui est plus ancrée et plus "intégrée" dans les réalités nationales. Les thèses de la diaspora (qui comprend deux courants), apparaissent nettement plus "indépendantistes" et plus "différencialistes" que celles, plus intégrationnistes et nationalistes, des leaders politiques et intellectuels basés au Niger.

Notre travail s'articule en trois parties : dans un premier temps nous présenterons un bref historique des rapports des mouvements rebelles Touaregs à la démocratie au Niger des années 1990 à nos jours. Dans un second temps nous nous intéresserons aux trois orientations

[14] D. A. SNOW. R. D. BENFORD, «Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization», in *International Sociological Movement Research* 1, 1998, pp. 197-218.

majeures du discours politique et idéologique touareg et dans un troisième temps, en nous appuyant sur leurs lectures concurrentes de l'identité touarègue, nous montrerons que les divergences théoriques ou idéologiques qui animent ces mouvements sont le produit des contextes politiques et institutionnels différents dans lesquels ils évoluent.

2. Démocratie et rébellions touarègues au Niger

Au Niger, c'est à partir de 1990, période marquée par un vaste mouvement de démocratisation en Afrique que les revendications identitaires et politiques touarègues se sont manifestées sous la forme d'une systématisation idéologique et même d'une lutte armée. Bien que les Touaregs, tout comme les autres peuples nigériens, se soient opposés à l'invasion coloniale et plus tard à la domination néocoloniale française, c'est au cours de ces vingt-deux dernières années, avec l'avènement de la démocratie, que les rébellions touarègues se sont multipliées et raffermies.

C'est en effet le 7 Mai 1990, soit deux mois avant l'organisation de la Conférence Nationale Souveraine qui devait conduire à l'instauration d'institutions démocratiques dans le pays, que la première insurrection armée de l'ère démocratique éclata à Tchintabaraden où une attaque organisée par des jeunes Touaregs nigériens expulsés de l'Algérie et de la Libye fit plusieurs dizaines de morts. Les cinq années qui suivirent furent une période de grande instabilité politique et sociale sur fond d'attaques récurrentes des rebelles Touaregs, de répressions de l'armée, d'arrestations souvent arbitraires de citoyens touaregs par le gouvernement et de massacres de civils de part et d'autre. Dans un premier temps les partis politiques et organisations de la société civile qui luttaient pour l'instauration d'un régime démocratique ont tenté de prendre en charge et intégrer dans leurs plates-formes revendicatives les aspirations politiques des Touaregs. C'est ainsi que le 25 Mai 1991, plusieurs milliers de Nigériens organisèrent une marche en soutien aux Touaregs pour dénoncer le massacre, par l'armée nigérienne, de plusieurs des leurs à Tchintabaraden. Toutefois, si certaines revendications des mouvements touaregs s'accordaient avec celles des organisations démocratiques, notamment l'aspiration à plus de justice sociale, la fin des discriminations et des répressions ainsi que l'instauration d'un ordre social et politique plus

juste, il apparut très vite qu'il existait un décalage entre certaines aspirations identitaires et autonomistes des mouvements rebelles et celles, républicaines et unitaires, du mouvement démocratique et social nigérien.

Les premiers signes de ce décalage apparurent lors de la Conférence Nationale Souveraine organisée à Niamey à partir du 29 Juillet 1991. La conférence regroupait, outre des représentants des organisations de la société civile nigérienne, des partis politiques nouvellement créés et légalisés, des associations estudiantines, des corps professionnels, des syndicats, des autorités religieuses, des chefferies traditionnelles et des femmes, plusieurs représentants des tribus touarègues (chefs traditionnels) et des organisations et partis politiques à composante touarègue. Les partis et organisations d'obédience touarègue qui avaient inscrit leurs actions dans le cadre démocratique avaient tous opté, au cours des débats, pour l'installation d'un État fédéral au Niger. Cette aspiration était en porte-à-faux avec la position affichée par l'écrasante majorité des participants qui ont rejeté cette demande et maintenu l'État unitaire avec toutefois certaines concessions telle que l'acceptation d'une large décentralisation. C'est ainsi que la revendication fédérale en tant que forme de l'État est restée, jusqu'à ce jour, une singularité politique associée aux Touaregs au Niger. Le rejet du fédéralisme par la Conférence Nationale renforça aussi les convictions et la détermination des rebelles à poursuivre "leur lutte".

Face à cette situation, la position des nouvelles autorités démocratiques issues de la conférence nationale était qu'une lutte armée ne se justifiait plus du moment que le peuple nigérien avait mis fin à la dictature et que toutes les formes de revendication politiques pouvaient s'exprimer de façon légale et pacifique dans le cadre démocratique ainsi créé. Les mouvements touaregs en revanche exigeaient la reconnaissance de leurs organisations politiques, l'intégration de leurs combattants dans l'armée, les corps paramilitaires et l'administration, le retrait de l'armée nationale des zones nord du pays et la proclamation de l'autonomie pour ces régions. Ces positions, notamment l'instauration d'un État fédéral, étaient aussi défendues par les partis politiques d'obédience et de composante touarègues légalement reconnus dont les deux plus importants étaient l'UDPS-Amama (Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social) de Issouf Bako et le PUND-Salama (Parti pour l'Union nationale et la Démocratie) d'Akoli Daouel. Toutefois, en juin 1992, le FLAA (Front de Libération de

l'Aïr et de l'Azawad) qui regroupait les différentes organisations rebelles touarègues et le gouvernement intérimaire issu de la Conférence Nationale, manifestèrent tous les deux leur volonté d'engager des négociations en vue d'arriver à un accord de paix bien qu'entre temps, en décembre 1991, de nouveaux combats qui s'étaient soldés par plusieurs morts aient opposé l'armée nationale aux insurgés et qu'en août 1992 des sous-officiers de l'armée nigérienne aient procédé à Agadez à l'arrestation de plusieurs Touaregs accusés d'être de connivence avec la rébellion, y compris de hautes personnalités tels que Mohamed Moussa, le ministre du commerce et du tourisme. Puis de nouveaux massacres de civils, de part et d'autre, s'ensuivirent notamment l'assassinat d'un vieillard Touareg de 80 ans, l'exécution de neuf civils par des rebelles du FLAA le 1er Janvier 1993 et la mort de trente civils lors d'attaques dans des villages de la région de Tchintabaraden.

En mars 1993 un nouveau président de la République (le premier de l'ère démocratique) fut élu en la personne de Mahamane Ousmane, le dirigeant du CDS-Rahama (Convention Démocratique et Sociale-Rahama). Il obtint rapidement une trêve avec les mouvements rebelles et des prisonniers politiques furent libérés de part et d'autre par le gouvernement et les Touaregs. Toutefois, des divisions et des défections apparurent au sein du FLAA dont certaines composantes rejetaient l'accord de trêve signé par leurs chefs. Dans le même temps, le gouvernement devait lutter sur deux fronts parce qu'il se heurtait, non seulement à la rébellion touarègue, mais aussi à des difficultés financières croissantes et au mécontentement d'une très large frange de l'armée qui organisa à plusieurs reprises des mutineries dans plusieurs casernes. En septembre 1993, l'accord de trêve fut prolongé de trois mois tout en étant à nouveau rejeté par plusieurs factions du FLAA. De nouveau, en décembre 1993, des attaques attribuées aux rebelles Touaregs se soldèrent par la mort de plusieurs civils. Elles furent encore suivies de la création de plusieurs nouveaux groupes armés touaregs et des violences qui menaçaient de transformer la partie nord du pays en une sorte de Far West où sévissaient, non seulement des rebelles affichant des revendications politiques claires mais aussi des coupeurs de routes, des trafiquants de drogue et bientôt (à partir de 2007 avec la création d'Al Qaida au Maghreb Islamique ou AQMI) des terroristes islamistes. Finalement, en octobre 1994 le gouvernement parvint à signer un accord de paix avec l'ensemble des mouve-

ments armés touaregs mais ce n'est qu'en avril 1995 que cet accord devint définitif.

Toutefois, les violences ne cessèrent pas pour autant. De nouvelles rébellions touarègues éclatèrent en 1997, et de nouveau en 2007, avec la création du MNJ (Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice) et du FFR (Front des Forces du Redressement). Cette dernière rébellion était certainement la mieux organisée, la plus sérieuse et probablement celle dont les revendications ont bénéficié de la plus large couverture médiatique en raison de l'utilisation par les rebelles des nouvelles technologies de l'information et la communication tels que les sites web et les vidéos en ligne[15]. Apres une série de défections au sein du MNJ et de créations de nouvelles organisations rebelles telle que le FFR, les insurgés acceptèrent une médiation du colonel Kadhafi qui aboutit à de nouveaux accords et à l'instauration d'une paix encore fragile puisque l'éclatement d'une nouvelle rébellion au Mali, en 2012, suivi de la proclamation d'un État indépendant Touareg appelé Azawad le 6 Avril de cette même année, fait peser la menace d'une contagion sur les zones frontalières du Niger.

Comme on le voit, depuis le début des années 1990 et donc depuis le début de l'ère démocratique au Niger, ce pays ne connut que de brèves périodes de paix relative et fragile. De toute évidence une partie de la minorité ethnique touarègue n'a pas accepté d'intégrer le cadre démocratique ou, à tout le moins, cette minorité n'a pas reconnu dans le cadre démocratique un système capable de répondre à ses aspirations. Ceci apparaît clairement dans le décalage qui existe entre ces aspirations telles qu'exprimées dans les trois orientations du discours protestataire touareg et le discours démocratique dominant au Niger, celui tenu par la classe politique.

3. Les trois discours de la rébellion touarègue

Comme nous l'avons souligné auparavant, au sein des mouvements rebelles et de la classe politique touarègue dans son ensemble, trois discours peuvent être distingués même s'ils ne sont pas toujours sys-

[15] G. ALZOUMA, «The state and the rebel: Online nationalisms in Niger», in *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 2009, 27(4), pp. 483-500.

tématisés et clairement définis par leurs porteurs. Ces trois courants sont les suivants :

1) Un courant axé autour d'un discours civique nationaliste, anti-séparatiste et anti-indépendantiste qui affirme l'appartenance à la nation nigérienne et se prononce contre les discriminations et l'injustice. Ce discours est favorable à l'existence de la communauté touarègue dans les frontières actuelles du Niger et se prononce pour une large décentralisation. Les porteurs principaux de ce courant sont d'abord les partis politiques d'obédience touarègue (UDPS-Amana et PUND-Salama) qui agissent dans le cadre de la légalité constitutionnelle. Ce sont aussi les personnalités politiques touarègues d'importance tels que Hamid Algabit, plusieurs fois ministre et ancien premier ministre, et dirigeant actuel du parti RDP-Jamaa (Rassemblement pour la Démocratie et le Progrès) ou le premier ministre actuel, Brigi Rafini, qui appartiennent à divers partis politiques nigériens et font parfois entendre leur voix sur les questions touarègues. On peut y ajouter d'anciens rebelles (y compris Aghali Alambo[16] et Rhissa Boula, dirigeants des rébellions des années 1990 et 2000) qui ont signé des accords avec le gouvernement et œuvrent pour la décentralisation ou l'autonomie. On peut aussi noter l'existence de très nombreux intellectuels et politiciens Touaregs qui sont légalistes et prônent un nationalisme civique nigérien et la construction d'une nation nigérienne.

Le trait principal de ce courant est qu'il s'exprime dans le cadre légal démocratique et ne semble pas s'opposer aux principes fondamentaux de la démocratie nigérienne tels que définis dans la constitution.

2) Le deuxième discours est un discours nationaliste ethnopluraliste et séparatiste, principalement défendu par certains intellectuel de la diaspora tel que le Nigérien Mohamed Attayoub[17] et qui se prononce pour la création d'un État multiethnique appelé Azawad où les Touaregs cohabiteraient avec les autres communautés ethniques, notamment les Peuls, les Songhaïs et les Arabes qui ensemble seraient opposés aux ethnies du sud malien. Ce courant se prononce contre l'hégémonie d'une ethnie ou d'un groupe d'ethnies sur d'autres et fait de la défense de la diversité culturelle son credo.

[16] A. ALAMBO, *Notre identité est : Niger !,* http://m-n-j.blogspot.com [Consulté 22/04/2008].

[17] M. ATTAYOUB, *Azawad-Mali : le point de non-retour?*, http://www.temoust.org [Consulté 15/03/2012].

3) Le troisième courant se caractérise par un discours ethnodifférencialiste qui se prononce pour un État indépendant exclusivement touareg, contre le multiculturalisme et le mélange des ethnies. C'est un courant "racialiste" qui oppose les Touaregs considérés comme "blancs" aux autres populations, les populations "noires" (y compris au sein de l'ethnie touarègue) ou sub-sahariennes et qui rattache les Touaregs, de façon exclusive, au monde berbère et nie leur africanité. Ce courant repose sur l'idée qu'il y a des différences culturelles irréductibles entre les ethnies nigériennes et que les États-nations africains sont des États-nations ethnocides. Ce courant a été un temps défendu par le FFR de Rhissa Ag Boula (dont la position semble avoir évolué avec les récents évènements maliens) et par certains autres intellectuels Touaregs tels qu'Issouf Ag Maha. C'est un courant minoritaire qui a toutefois une "résonance" importante au sein du publiccible en raison de la concordance qui existe entre cette forme d'explication et les explications du sens commun, ou entre les catégories qu'elle construit et oppose les unes aux autres et les catégories du sens commun. Le plus souvent, il apparaît moins sous la forme d'un discours officiel que d'un discours tenu par une jeunesse radicalisée touarègue, celle de la diaspora, qui s'exprime notamment sur les forums de discussion en ligne tel qu'Agadez-Niger.com.

Dans les pages qui suivent, nous allons tenter de montrer le rapport de ces trois courants à la démocratie et en quoi le discours rebelle s'oppose au discours démocratique dominant au Niger. Nous allons montrer que c'est la lecture qu'elles font de l'identité touarègue et de l'intégration des Touaregs au Niger qui "viole" en quelque sorte les principes fondamentaux sur lesquels cette démocratie a été érigée.

4. Le tabou de l'ethnie et de la "race" comme sujets politiques

Au Niger, l'article 13 du Code de Conduite des partis politiques et candidats indépendants en période électorale[18] fait obligation aux partis politiques et aux citoyens d'éviter toute campagne à caractère régionaliste, ethnique, racial, ou basé sur le genre ou la religion. Pour sa

[18] Cabinet du Premier Ministre, Conseil National de dialogue politique (CNDP), 2011. *Code de bonne conduite des partis politiques et candidats indépendants en période électorale au Niger*, Niamey : Secrétariat Permanent.

part la constitution nigérienne interdit la "politisation" des identités ethniques pour des raisons de cohésion nationale et de lutte contre toute incitation à la haine ethnique. L'ethnicité est donc un tabou politique dans la sphère publique au Niger bien qu'elle soit constante dans les attitudes et les non-dits.

En revanche la dimension "ethnique" ou "raciale" de la rébellion touarègue, qu'elle soit reconnue, revendiquée ou niée n'a jamais cessé d'exercer une grande influence dans les discours anthropologiques, politiques ou journalistiques autant que dans les rapports entre les Touaregs et les autres ethnies. On peut même soutenir que le discours "révolutionnaire" de certains rebelles touaregs (Mano Dayak) s'est construit autour de cette identité ethnique politisée alors que le républicanisme de type jacobin et universaliste, tel qu'hérité de la France par les États africains, y compris démocratiques font de l'expression politique des identités ethniques un tabou. Voici ce qu'écrivait Mano Dayak en 1992, pour justifier la rébellion : «Les Touaregs ont souffert de la colonisation.[…] Pour finir ou plutôt pour achever, les Français nous abandonnent à la vengeance de ceux qui, au temps des colonies, s'étaient montrés plus soumis, plus dociles, plus malléables que nous» (1992 :25). Il écrit aussi: «Ils (les Noirs) nous en veulent, nous parlant encore et encore de ce passé ou ils étaient les serviteurs et nous les maîtres» (1992 :22). Les médias participent aussi de cette construction. On en trouve un exemple dans "l'Express" du 27 décembre 1990 qui écrit :

> L'administration française a transmis le pouvoir à des ethnies privilégiées […] L'autorité de ces nouveaux gouvernements, qui ne s'est pas transmise par une victoire à la guerre, est ressentie comme insultante et insupportable par les Touaregs. D'autant que, pendant des siècles, ces populations avaient servi de réservoirs d'esclaves pour les Kel Taggelmust. Ce que ni les uns ni les autres ne sont prêts à oublier[19].

Le même schématisme se retrouve sous la plume de certains intellectuels Touaregs qui ont joué un rôle important dans la justification et l'organisation des rébellions des années 90 et qui lisent les rapports entre les communautés nigériennes sous cette même forme. C'est notamment le cas de de Rhissa Boula, leader du FFR lors de la rébellion

[19] "Rebellions touarègues", *L'Express*, 27 décembre 1990.

de 2007 dont la position, qui a beaucoup évolué depuis, peut être interprétée, en accord avec Pierre-André Taguieff, comme un discours ethnodifférencialiste, c'est-à-dire une sorte de racialisme "culturaliste", non-expressément "biologisant" ; un racialisme où le concept de culture est substitué au mot "race" et qui conçoit "le croisement des cultures", c'est-à-dire les relations interculturelles et l'amalgamation des différentes ethnies dans l'État-nation comme destructrice des identités collectives. D'après Rhissa Boula, l'État-nation africain est le résultat d'un redécoupage territorial "avec des populations qui n'ont rien à voir les unes avec les autres sur le plan linguistique, culturel, ou économique ; le but est néanmoins d'en faire une nation. C'est impossible". Pour sa part, Issouf Ag Maha écrit : "Caresser le rêve d'homogénéiser des peuples de différentes cultures et origines […] restera toujours un rêve"[20]. Comme on le voit ici, le droit à la différence devient un prétexte pour le séparatisme ethnique (le slogan pourrait être ici "égaux mais séparés"). Parce qu'il défend l'intégrité culturelle de chaque ethnie unique, c'est-à-dire la conservation des ethnies en l'état et non pas seulement l'expression, la "tolérance", l'acceptation et l'ouverture à la différence, ce discours s'oppose bien sûr aux idées de nation et de construction nationale qui sont les dogmes centraux des néo-démocraties africaines, y compris celle du Niger.

Il existe donc une différence fondamentale entre le discours démocratique dominant au Niger dans son rapport à l'ethnie et à l'expression de l'ethnicité et la lecture que les rebelles font des appartenances identitaires et des rapports que les différents groupes ethniques entretiennent entre eux. Cette même contradiction fondamentale apparaît dans la lecture ethnique de la territorialité telle qu'elle apparaît dans le discours protestataire touareg et le principe de l'intangibilité des frontières héritées de la colonisation, principe sur lequel reposent l'État et la démocratie tels qu'entendus par la classe politique dominante au Niger.

[20] I. MAHA, «Question touarègue : quelle perspective ?» http://www.temoust.org [Consulté 16/04/2008].

5. Lecture ethnique de la territorialité et principe de l'intangibilité des frontières héritées de la colonisation

La cohabitation des différentes ethnies et la reconnaissance des frontières au sein desquelles elles vivent est la seconde contradiction qui oppose les rebelles à la classe politique dominante du Niger. De nombreux chercheurs présentent la mise en contact ou la cohabitation "forcée" au sein des frontières tracées par le colonisateur, des multiples ethnies africaines comme la source principale des problèmes auxquels ces peuples sont confrontés. C'est d'ailleurs principalement sous cet angle que les médias, en particulier les médias français, présentent l'instabilité politique et les rébellions au Sahel. Une affirmation courante, typique, nous en est donnée par un article de Bernard Lugan dans *le Monde* du 12 Mars 2012 qui écrit à propos de la crise malienne: «A la base de tout, se trouve le fait que l'espace sahélo-saharien, monde de contacts ouvert, a été cloisonné par des frontières coloniales artificielles qui forcent à vivre ensemble des pasteurs vivant au nord et des agriculteurs sédentaires vivant au sud»[21]. (Lugan, 2012). Cette appréhension de la réalité touarègue a toujours été partagée par certains des mouvements rebelles nigériens. C'est ainsi par exemple que la CRA ou Coordination de la Résistance Armée, le regroupement des mouvements rebelles constitué en février 1994 en vue des négociations avec le pouvoir central nigérien, écrit dans le mémorandum qui lui a servi de plate-forme revendicative :

> Notre avenir, notre destin, notre histoire nous ont échappé depuis […] que la France a décidé d'étendre son empire jusqu'à notre Sahara ancestral […]. A l'époque, nous constituions un ensemble géographiquement, socialement et culturellement homogène. Nous avons été dépossédés de notre territoire dans son intégralité […]. Nos colonisateurs ont d'abord partagé notre espace par des frontières arbitraires, constituant ainsi des pays taillés à leurs intérêts. (CRA, 1994).

L'idée défendue par la CRA est qu'avant l'avènement de la colonisation, il existait une correspondance parfaite entre un espace géographique occupé de façon homogène et exclusive par les Touaregs, le

[21] B. LUGAN, «La nouvelle géopolitique post-Kadhafi explique les problèmes actuels au Mali», *Le Monde*, 12 Mars 2012.

Sahara, ou ce que les journaux appellent "le pays touareg", et cette communauté ethno-linguistique. C'est sur cette base que la CRA va formuler la première délimitation cartographique du "pays touareg" dans ce même mémorandum. "Le pays touareg" ainsi défini occupait les trois-quarts du Niger et englobait, du Nord au Sud presque toutes les régions à l'exception du Kawar au Nord-est et d'une partie du Sud-Ouest nigérien, soit la partie qui correspond au département de Dosso. De même, les rebelles du MNLA (Mouvement National de Libération de l'Azawad, Mali), ont déclaré, le 6 Avril 2012 un État touareg indépendant qu'ils ont dénommé Azawad et qui, géographiquement, correspond aux deux-tiers de la partie nord de l'État malien. L'Azawad ainsi délimité comprend essentiellement les régions de Gao, de Kidal et de Tombouctou (soit les sixième, septième, et huitième régions du Mali) et une partie de la région de Mopti avec une superficie de 822.000 kilomètres-carrés et une population d'environ 1.295.000 habitants. Toutefois, dans sa déclaration d'indépendance le MNLA ne donne aucune indication claire des limites territoriales de l'État de l'Azawad mais reconnaît les frontières hérités de la colonisation avec le Niger à l'Est, l'Algérie au Nord et la Mauritanie à l'Ouest :

> Considérant qu'en 1960, à l'occasion de l'octroi de l'Indépendance aux peuples Ouest-Africains, la France a rattaché sans son consentement l'AZAWAD à l'État malien qu'elle vient de créer […] Proclamons irrévocablement, L'ÉTAT INDÉPENDANT de l'AZAWAD à compter de ce jour Vendredi 06 Avril 2012. DECLARONS […] la reconnaissance des frontières en vigueur avec les états limitrophes et leur inviolabilité[22].

Les médias internationaux, particulièrement français, ont très rapidement sanctionné cette sécession en donnant une large couverture médiatique aux évènements et en illustrant la plupart des articles parus dans la presse d'une carte du nouvel État de l'Azawad découpé au sein de l'État malien. L'Azawad est ainsi présenté, non seulement comme "le pays touareg" ou "le berceau du peuple touareg" mais aussi une réalité géographique et humaine homogène dont l'occupation et le développement économique et social constitue la revendication fondamentale des Touaregs. Ainsi, d'après Moussa Ag Assarid, porte-parole du MNLA, "après la libération de l'Azawad de l'occupation de l'armée Malienne […] le nouveau combat concerne […] un projet po-

[22] MNLA, Déclaration d'Indépendance de l'Azawad, 6 Avril 2012.

litique permettant aux populations de vivre dignement sur le territoire de leurs ancêtres"[23]. Toutefois, si cette revendication est largement partagée par la plupart des intellectuels ou leaders politiques touaregs, la signification que lui attribue la classe politique dominante est manifestement différente parce que le territoire ainsi délimité et dénommé Azawad n'est pas habité que par les Touaregs. En fait les Touaregs n'y sont qu'une extrême minorité de l'ordre de 5% ou moins.

Aussi, on trouve d'un côté les intellectuels, idéologues et leaders politiques touaregs qui sont contre le modèle de l'État-nation postcolonial, notamment dans son objectif d'amalgamer les différentes ethnies et de construire sur cette base une nation unitaire, et de l'autre les membres des classes politiques malienne ou nigérienne pour qui ce principe "n'est pas négociable". A cette position adhèrent aussi les partis politiques d'obédience ou de composition touarègue qui inscrivent leurs actions dans la légalité républicaine et démocratique. Ainsi, lors d'une interview donnée dans les années 90 à la Voix du Sahel, radio d'État du Niger, Hamid Algabit affirmait que "nous devons continuer à vivre ensemble comme nous avons toujours vécu bien avant l'arrivée de la colonisation car ce n'est pas la colonisation qui nous a mis ensemble". Il s'opposait ainsi à un dogme courant au sein des mouvements rebelles : à savoir que c'est la colonisation qui a amalgamé des ethnies différentes et les a amenées à vivre ensemble sur un même territoire. Chose que démentent les historiens car des centaines d'années avant l'arrivée des colonisateurs, ces mêmes ethnies partageaient ce même espace territorial même si les frontières actuelles n'existaient pas à l'époque.

Au sein même des mouvements rebelles, l'unanimité n'est pas faite sur ce sujet. Par exemple les leaders du MNLA et certains intellectuels Touaregs de la diaspora, prônent la création d'un État indépendant multi-ethnique qui comprendrait certaines ethnies telles que les Songhaïs, les Peuls ou les Arabes, tous habitants du Nord à l'instar des Touaregs avec qui ils partagent l'Azawad, et qui de ce fait sont distingués des "ethnies du Sud" du Mali. Cette position est ce que je nomme, faute de mieux, ethnopluralisme séparatiste. L'ethnopluralisme a ici pour fonction d'évoquer les origines et affilia-

[23] M. AG BIGUI, *Interview de Moussa Ag Assarid au Courrier International*, http://toumastpress.com [Consulté 9/07/2012].

tions de ce courant théorique et idéologique qui se rattache manifestement à l'ethnisme de type occitaniste, un ethnisme défini comme "normatif " par Guy Heraut[24] et dont la caractéristique principale est d'être opposé à l'hégémonie d'un groupe ethnique ou d'un ensemble de groupes ethniques sur d'autres. L'ethnisme occitan prône l'harmonie et l'équilibre de tous les groupes ethniques vivant à l'intérieur d'une entité territoriale, y compris la création de partis politiques et la séparation ethnique si nécessaire.

C'est Mohamed Attayoub, intellectuel Touareg nigérien qui à ce jour a donné de l'ethnopluralisme séparatiste sa formulation la plus complète dans un article récemment posté sur la page web de Temoust.org. Attayoub soutient tout d'abord que

> il existe bel et bien une identité de l'Azawad forgée par des siècles de cohabitation et de brassage entre les communautés songhaïe, touarègue, maure et peule. Ces communautés partagent un ensemble de référents culturels qui les différencient des peuples du sud du Mali actuel[25].

D'après lui, les frontières ne suffisent pas à faire un État d'autant que "le pacte national" n'est pas partagé par l'ensemble des communautés vivant sur ce territoire parce que la nation à construire est envisagée comme un instrument pour l'exercice d'une hégémonie dirigée par une ethnie qui impose sa volonté aux autres. Il estime qu'au cours de leurs cinquante années d'existence l'État malien et l'État nigérien n'ont pas fait preuve d'équité à l'égard de toutes les ethnies qui les composent. Ils ont ignoré la diversité culturelle et se sont bâtis sur l'existence d'une élite monoethnique au détriment des autres. La construction nationale telle qu'envisagée par cette élite est une espèce de "mariage forcé". Son échec appelle à une refondation nationale qui donnera d'abord la parole aux peuples. Cette refondation devra aboutir à un statut particulier pour l'Azawad car celle-ci est "une entité qui dispose de sa propre personnalité avec des communautés qui se sont toujours côtoyées et mélangées"[26]. On peut donc résumer le credo de l'ethnopluralisme séparatiste dans les termes suivants : respect de la

[24] G. HERAUT, «Qu'est-ce que l'ethnisme ?», in *Europe et formation*, Institut Jules-Destree, Gilly, Belgique, 1966.

[25] M. ATTAYOUB, *Azawad-Mali : le point de non-retour?*, *cit.*

[26] *Ibid.*

diversité et de la personnalité culturelles des ethnies ; respect des ensembles socio-culturels de l'Azawad, constitués d'ethnies différentes qui partagent cependant une identité commune en raison des brassages multiséculaires ; statut particulier et autonomie pour les Azawadis.

L'ethnopluralisme séparatiste est probablement la dimension du nationalisme touareg qui est la plus cohérente et la plus explicitement formulée à ce jour par des intellectuels issus de ce peuple. C'est aussi celle qui est probablement la plus largement partagée au sein de l'élite politique touarègue, notamment malienne. Elle est en quelque sorte l'idéologie officielle du MNLA; celle que cette organisation s'efforce de propager auprès du public touareg et sur le plan international. C'est ainsi par exemple que dans une déclaration en date du 15 Fevrier 2012, le MNLA écrit : "Le Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad rappelle qu'il : est un mouvement révolutionnaire qui lutte pour le droit à l'autodétermination de l'Azawad; définit l'Azawad comme étant le territoire des Songhays, des Peulhs, des Arabes et des Touaregs" (MNLA, 15 Fevrier 2012). De même Jean-Marc Pellet, l'un des principaux animateurs d'Occitan-Touareg, une ONG politico-caritative et principale organisation occitane de solidarité et de soutien au peuple Touareg en France écrit : "Non, les Touareg n'ont pas l'exclusivité de l'Azawad. Oui, l'Azawad est une région multi-ethnique […] Le MNA et par la suite le MNLA […]en voulant *Azawédiser* ces différentes populations se sont mis à dos la majorité des hommes et femmes de ce futur État. […] Les militants de la cause Amazighe ne peuvent pas défendre l'Amazighité de Gao ou Tombouctou"[27]. Comme souligné plus haut, ce que la plupart des analystes et des médias omettent de dire c'est que la très grande majorité de la population de l'Azawad ainsi défini n'est pas touarègue mais Peule, Songhaï et arabe. D'autre part, comme chacun le sait, les villes de Gao et Tombouctou sont connues pour avoir été les villes historiques des Songhaïs. Personne ne peut non plus prétendre que l'occupation touarègue de cette zone est antérieure à l'occupation Songhaï tout comme il serait erroné de dénier aux Touaregs le droit d'appeler l'Azawad "le pays touareg". L'Azawad est bien le "pays Touareg" si on veut dire par là que le pays ainsi délimité est celui où on retrouve les Touaregs

[27] J. M. PELLET, «L'Azawad n'est pas le territoire des seuls Touaregs», 2012, http://occitan-touareg.over-blog.com [Consulté 9/07/2012].

ou même que cet espace est occupé par des Touaregs depuis des temps immémoriaux. Mais, de ce même point de vue l'Azawad est aussi "le pays Songhaï", "le pays Peul" ou "le pays Arabe". Il est important de souligner qu'en raison du mode de vie nomade, la relation des Touaregs à l'espace, l'attachement à un territoire spécifique ne peut se comprendre de la même manière que pour une ethnie sédentaire (bien que la majorité des Touaregs soient sédentaires de longue date) car, en raison du mode particulier d'occupation de l'espace qu'on observe chez les peuples nomades du Sahel (Peuls et Touaregs), ces derniers se sont retrouvés dispersés, littéralement "incrustés" au sein de nombreuses autres ethnies (Peuls, Songhaïs, Haoussas) avec lesquelles ils partagent des territoires communs.

Par ailleurs, beaucoup d'entre eux sont sédentaires depuis de nombreux siècles et vivent dans des villes et villages multiethniques où ils ont assimilé de nombreuses autres populations tout comme ils ont eux-mêmes été assimilés. L'écrasante majorité des Touaregs nigériens (probablement de l'ordre de 90%) sont bilingues (parlant Haoussa et Tamachekh ou Zarma-Songhaï et Tamachekh). Les populations touarègues de Balleyara (dans l'ouest nigérien) par exemple sont bien souvent monolingues (ne parlant que Zarma) mais se définissent du point de vue de l'appartenance ethnique comme Touaregs et vivent politiquement, sous la domination d'une aristocratie touarègue, tout comme leurs voisins Zarma les considèrent d'abord et avant tout comme des Touaregs. On peut ajouter à cela qu'en raison de sa position géopolitique en tant que pays charnière entre l'Afrique "blanche" et l'Afrique "noire", en raison aussi de la composition ethnique de sa population aux modes de vie divers (peuples nomades du Désert et peuples d'agro-sédentaires), l'espace précolonial nigérien a été de tout temps un creuset où se sont fondues des populations de toutes origines et où il s'est opéré un brassage tel que certains historiens l'ont présenté comme "un seul espace économique, culturel et religieux"[28].

6. Conclusion

Dans de nombreux pays comme le Niger, l'avènement de la démocratie s'est accompagné de la résurgence des mouvements identitaires et

[28] D. HAMANI, «Une gigantesque falsification de l'histoire», *cit.* , p. 2.

des mobilisations ethniques à des fins politiques. Ceci constitue un paradoxe dans la mesure où les théoriciens des mouvements sociaux ont soutenu, pendant de longues années, l'idée que l'absence de démocratie était le principal facteur qui expliquait les conflits ethniques. A l'instar des théoriciens marxistes, certains politologues spécialistes des mouvements sociaux ont même prophétisé la fin des solidarités ethniques avec le développement de la modernisation et la démocratisation des sociétés africaines. Par ailleurs, beaucoup de ceux des auteurs qui ont tenté d'expliquer la non-réalisation de ces prophéties et le paradoxe de l'explosion des revendications identitaires en temps de démocratie en Afrique n'ont pas toujours montré pourquoi certains entrepreneurs politiques recourent à des stratégies de "subversion discursive", c'est-à-dire à l'élaboration d'un discours qui "viole" les principes fondamentaux sur lesquels reposent les institutions démocratiques tandis que d'autres, qu'on peut associer à la classe politique dominante, déploient des stratégies de conservation telles que le développement de moyens "démocratiques" mais de façon contradictoire, comme l'interdiction des partis à caractère ethnique, la diabolisation du discours ethnique, le développement de discours sécuritaires axés sur la préservation de l'unité nationale qu'on présente comme "fragile" ou "menacée" par les tendances "divisionnistes" et la transformation en boucs émissaires de certains agents ou même la violence exercée de façon dictatoriale ou légale. Dans cet article, nous avons tenté de répondre à cette question en identifiant les courants idéologiques qui traversent les mouvements de protestation Touaregs, en retenant comme ligne de séparation entre ces courants leurs définitions concurrentes de l'identité touarègue (notamment dans ses rapports au territoire et à la cohabitation avec les autres ethnies nigériennes et maliennes) et l'attitude qu'elles adoptent face à l'idée de la construction nationale ou à l'existence d'une nation nigérienne, ou malienne, dans un cadre démocratique. Il est ainsi apparu qu'au courant civique nationaliste qui inscrit ses actions dans la légalité constitutionnelle et démocratique s'opposent deux autres courants: un courant ethnodifférencialiste et un courant ethnopluraliste et séparatiste. L'existence de ces courants s'explique par le fait que la démocratie nigérienne, dans ses principes affirmés, échoue à répondre aux aspirations de certaines minorités ethniques en refusant de prendre en compte certaines demandes de nature identitaire parce que ces demandes menaceraient ses propres fondements et le consensus sur lequel elle repose. Cette situa-

tion exerce une influence déterminante sur les propriétés des discours protestataires y compris les répertoires ou les registres argumentatifs que les acteurs utilisent et les schèmes interprétatifs ou cadres de l'action collective qui les guident.

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Redefining Somaliness through the Bantu-Jareer Community: The Absent Somalis in the Somali Socio-political Landscape

Mohamed Haji Ingiriis

Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organised conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe.
Fredrick Douglas

1.Introduction

During the International Congress of Somali Studies in Boston, the United States – the first to convene after the fall of the repressive dictatorial military regime of Major General Mohamed Siad Barre – an intrepid young Somali scholar by the name of Omar Abdulkadir Eno stepped onto the podium. With everyone's inquisitiveness, he vigorously challenged the audience, making them stunned and speechless. According to one astounded American academic present at the venue, Eno's enthralling words shocked the Somali and non-Somali scholars, who, without prior prediction, "responded with a mixture of embarrassment, silence, uncomfortable laugher, [even] awe and pain". This was because, in Catherine Besteman's words, "never before had a self-identified Somali Bantu/Jareer attended an international congress of Somalist scholars to speak about the plight of Somali Jareer"[1]. Speaking in English, Eno told the audience.

[1] C. BESTEMAN, *Unraveling Somalia: Race, Class, and the Legacy of Slavery*, Philadelphia, USA: University of Pennsylvania Press 1999, p. 236. The world "Bantu" has not to be confounded with the similar word employed to describe an ancient language in other African context. See S. LWANGA-LUNYIIGO, «The Bantu Problem Reconsidered», *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 17, No. 2, June 1976, pp. 282-286.

> I appeal to every civilised person to join me in the struggle to end the long existed and still ongoing racism and discrimination which have caused untold sufferings to Bantu/Jareer people since Somalia was founded [...] We have been and still are being discriminated against in Somalia publicly and privately. We have been systematically alienated by every Somali regime on academics, politics and economics, and often exploited as the cheapest labor force. We have been denied our Somali identities and human respect; we have been prejudged and categorized as ADOON (slave) and low class humans who lack the capability of normal thinking and reasoning, which undermines our general competence and dignity. The Bantu [in Somalia] have suffered right from the beginning. We have been suppressed, oppressed, robbed, raped and killed. We have been deprived of our civil rights as Somali citizens, from independence by every Somali regime until the present. We have been stigmatized and undermined as inferior to other Somalis; yet we are never given any eligibility for opportunities in the Somali society [...] My experience in Somalia has been [this]; we did not need to commit a crime of any kind, because being a Jareer itself is a crime[2].

Prior to this appeal, which was part of a new paradigm shift stemming from a panel of the conference with the title of "The Invention of Somalia"[3], the academic studies on Somalia were censored as an institution, as the military dictatorship (1969-1991) "suppressed all, but sycophants" [4]. It had been a custom for researchers, who wished to

[2] Omar Eno quoted in C. BESTEMAN, *Unraveling Somalia*, cit. , p. 236. The concealed racism and anguish of Bantu/Jareer community was compellingly expressed in a song by the late distinguished Somali poet, Abdi Muhumad Amiin, sung by the Jareer/Bantu singer, Daa'uud Ali Mashaf: "*Waxaan dhashay anoo xor ah / Sida xaashida u cad / Cidna xarig aan ugu jirin / Waxaan dhashay anoo xor ah / Waxaan dhiman anoo xor ah...Anigoon xafidi karin / Xamxamta iyo sheekada / Dadku isla dhex xulayo / Misna waxaan xaqiiqsaday / Inaan xaalku fiicneyn / Xujana kow ay ii tahay / Sheekadu inoo xiran*!" meaning "I was born as a free man / White as a paper / Under no man's hegemony / I was born as a free man / And I will die in freedom...As I could not tolerate / The Myths and legends / Which folks are propagating / Yet realised as I am / That the state of affairs is not going well / And conundrum is now being instituted against me / [Therefore] the case is closed". The whole song is available online at: http://maalmo.com/hees/d/daauud-cali-masxaf_waxaan-dhashay-anoo-xora.html [Accessed 7/05/2012].

[3] The volume born out later by A. J. AHMED (ed.), *The Invention of Somalia* (The Red Sea Press, Lawrenceville, NJ 1995), remains one of the most significant contributions to the field of Somali Studies.

[4] R. MARCHAL, «Warlordism and Terrorism: how to obscure an already confusing crisis? The case of Somalia», *International Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 6, 2007, p. 1092. Ali Jimale Ahmed points to an incident where one renowned American scholar, Lee Cassanelli, was notified by the so-called Somali Academy of Arts and Sciences under Siad Barre's regime "to look elsewhere for a new topic", especially in an area where the history of a prolonged anti-colonial experience was seen as the only history worth writing. A. J. AHMED, «Review Essay: A Histo-

carry out research in Somalia, to concentrate on matters far from studying societal conundrum and contemporary issues, such as science, anthropology and physics. Consequently, carrying out emancipatory or empowerment social research studies other than "Dervishisation"[5] had been discouraged to the point of strict prohibition. Orders had been given by the dictatorial regime to circulate, both in academic and public discourses, the rhetoric that Somali society is homogenous – the notion that all Somalis are the descendants of the same father and mother, contrary to the reality of each clan-family claiming publicly and privately to have a distinct ancestor and thus linking clan lineage to completely distinct genealogy[6].

In light of the prevailing political and social debates on Somaliness and Somali identity, this article aims to introduce the plight of the Bantu/Jareer community by reviewing the contrasting arguments surrounding the concept of Somaliness through the prism of Bantu. It tasks to review recent emancipatory/revisionist studies by "breaking down isolation and building community capacity as a vehicle for both

ry of Tigrinya Literature in Eritrea: The Oral and the Written 1890-1991. By Ghirmai Negash. Foreword by Ntongela Masilela. 2nd ed. Trenton, NJ: Africa World P, 2010», *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 43, No. 1, Spring 2012, p. 59. Rather cruel, but similar incident occurred during this epoch, when another renowned American scholar, David Laitin, was 'thrown out' of Somalia while conducting research for his influential book, *Politics, Language, and Thought: The Somali Experience*. Laitin has regretfully described "the difficulties experienced in his field research". See C. YOUNG, «Review of *Politics, Language, and Thought: The Somali Experience*. By David D. Laitin. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977», in *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 73, No. 1, March 1979, p. 292.

[5] The concept was coined by A. J. AHMED, «Daybreak is Near, Won't You Become Sour», in A. J. AHMED (ed.), *The Invention of Somalia*, p. 138. As Ahmed puts it: "By dervishisation is meant a conscious effort on the part of successive Somali regimes and their intellectual acolytes [whom Ronald Marchal calls "sycophants"] to monumentalise, to the exclusion of other groups, the Dervish experience in Somali history [an anti-British armed rebellion in some parts of northern Somalia]" (*ibid*).

[6] There was obviously no *allomorphism* – direct or proven genealogical relationship – between the diverse Somali communities. See A. KUSOW, «The Somali Origin: Myth or Reality», in A. J. AHMED (ed.), *The Invention of Somalia*, pp. 81-106; and L. CASSANELLI «Speculations on the Historical Origins of the "Total Somali Genealogy"», in M. V. HOEHNE and V. LULING (eds.), *Milk and Peace, Drought and War: Somali Culture, Society, and Politics: Essays in Honour of I. M. Lewis*, London: Hurst 2010, pp. 53-66; I. M. LEWIS, «Historical Aspects of Genealogies in Northern Somali Social Structure», in *Journal of African History*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1962, pp. 35-48; and V. LULING, «Genealogy as Theory, Genealogy as Tool: Aspects of Somali "Clanship"», in *Social Identities*, Vol. 12, No. 4, July 2006, pp. 471-485.

giving communities a voice and developing self-help activities" [7]. The aim is to deconstruct the "somewhat one-sided presentation of Somali society which is often made as consisting only of the nomadic-pastoral tradition"[8]. Such ongoing academic inquiries are important in that it will reveal that the notion of "we are all Somalis" – which is very popular among young people and pseudo-nationalist diaspora intellectuals – has no practical meaning other than theory, as evidenced by the war of all against all that plagued Somalia for more than three decades. The overall objective of this study is to "enable people from marginalised or oppressed sections of society to influence decisions which affect their lives and to develop their own solutions to common problems"[9] in achieving social justice and equality. In order to reach these objectives, Amartya Sen's model[10] – that one hardly attains equality without participation – will be adopted to encourage community cohesion at this critical juncture when Somali communities are attempting to pull themselves out from the wounds of the prolonged war.

2. Construction of Homogeneity in Somali Scholarship

Simplistic reading of Somali society – its origins is a matter of dispute among historians[11] – as a "egalitarian", "homogeneous", "agnatic" and "static" – some even portrayed it as a nation in search of a state, one which had been ahead of other African societies in the search of a sense of nationhood[12], had for many years pervaded in western schol-

[7] A. GILCHRIST and M. TAYLOR, «Community Networking: Developing Strength through Diversity», in PAUL HOGGET (ed.), *Contested Communities: Experiences, Struggles and Policies*, Bristol, UK: The Policy Press 1997, p. 165.

[8] V. LULING, *Somali Sultanate: The Geledi City-State over 150 years*, London: Haan Associates 2002, p. 267. With these scholarly studies available to the public, several commentators still maintain to limn the notion of homogeneity as a sacrosanct. The author of this essay does not claim any exception. Without a thorough examination of the case, he wrote elsewhere that Somalis share a common language, culture and tradition. See M. H. INGIRIIS, «Somalia: From Finest to Failed State», *Africa Review*, part I, 17 September 2010, p. 1.

[9] A. GILCHRIST and M.TAYLOR, «Community Networking», cit., p. 171.

[10] A. SEN, *The Idea of Justice*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press 2009.

[11] E. R. TURTON, «Bantu, Galla and Somali Migrations in the Horn of Africa: A Reassessment of the Jubba/Tana Area», in *Journal of African History*, Vol. 16, No. 4, 1975, pp. 519-537.

[12] Specifically for the Somali case, see I. M. LEWIS, *The Modern History of Somaliland: From Nation to State*, London: Weidefeld and Nicolson 1965; D. D. LAITIN and S. S.

arship of Somali society and dominated the thoughts of younger generations of scholars who might have offered a better interpretation applicable to the contextual realism.

The earlier traditionalist paradigm has championed to visualise Somali society as an essentialist and a homogenous fabric. Essentialism is defined here when whole communities are assumed to having a same social construct and sharing the same history, consciousness and experience. Essentialism and homogenisation of Somali society distracted the international community from predicting the catastrophe that has befallen the Somali communities in the Horn of Africa. By this route, the traditionalists perceived that the only way to hold the Somalis together was to propagate the project of homogenising the whole communities as one united community. This conflicted with the fact that each Somali community possessed its own history, culture, tradition and customs[13]. While John Freie defined community as an "organic, contractual or artificial" [14], a more comprehensive definition seems to be that of Jeremy Brent:

> Community is a combination of thoughts, dreams, actions and materiality. The issue of the relationship between the materiality of the world and the mental construction of that same world is a major one within social thought, and one that exists not only in relation to community[15].

For many years, the traditionalists has been adopted "the ideas of oneness and wholeness that pervade much of the writings"[16] on Soma-

SAMATAR, *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State*, Boulder: Westview Press 1987; A. I. SAMATAR, «Introduction and Overview», in S. S. SAMATAR (ed.), *The Somali Challenge: From Catastrophe to Renewal?* Boulder: Lynne Reinner 1994; S. S. SAMATAR, *Somalia: A Nation in Turmoil*, London: Minority Rights Group Report 1991; and S. TOUVAL, *Somali Nationalism: International Politics and Drive for Unity in the Horn of Africa*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1963. Writing soon after Somalia became independence, Alphonse Castagno expressed suspicion on the claim of homogeneity in adding a question mark in his title, though maintaining that Somalis "originally came from Asia". The answer to the question mark, however, seems to suggest to the opposite. A. CASTAGNO, «The Republic of Somalia: Africa's Most Homogenous State?», in *Africa Special Report*, July 1960, Vol. 5, p. 2.

[13] H. MAHADDALA, «Pithless Nationalism: The Somali Case», in A. M. KUSOW (ed.), *Putting the Cart Before the Horse: Contested Nationalism and the Crisis of the Nation-State in Somalia*, Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 2004, pp. 59-74.

[14] Cited in J. BRENT, *Searching for Community: Representation, Power and Action on an Urban Estate*, Bristol, UK: The Policy Press 2009, p. 215.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 228.

[16] J. BRENT, «Community without Unity», in HOGGET, *Contested Communities*, p. 70.

li society, even though the clear difference (and divide) between Somalis as North-South (and within North-South) is conspicuous. The traditionalists had persisted that Somalis are the only homogenous nation in African context, persisted disseminating that the Somali population is consisted of six major "clan families" [17]: Dir, Hawiye, Isaaq, Darood, Digil and Mirifle (Reewing). Such characterisation tends to neglect the existence of other distinct communities such as Arab Yemeni, Banaadiri (Reer Hamar), Baajuun, Bantu/Jareer, Boni, Bravenese, Madhibaan, Midgaan, Orromo (Warday), Tumaal, Yahar and Yibir as part of Somali society. The latter group comprises what is now known in Somalia as "Others". Many of these communities possess their own languages such as Af-Dabarre, Af-Garre, Af-Jiiddu, Af-Mushunguli, Af-Tunni, Af Baraawe (Chimbalazi or Chimini), Kibajuni and Af Reewing (or Af Maay). While there could be some borrowing from each other, a section of scholars noted that those languages have linguistically indicated that they contrast as much as French is similar to Italian or even German[18]. Some serious variance has even been inferred between Af Maay and Af Maxaa, the version adopted as the standard Somali language.

Yet the pastoral nomad's fear of losing their supposed superiority – in case these communities were permitted by state laws to use their languages – has encumbered efforts to use them officially in Somalia. I. M. Lewis observes that those communities "differ not only in economy and technology" but also in culture, custom, tradition and social

[17] This is how one much-referenced Somalist prefers to call these clans. See I. M. LEWIS, *A Pastoral Democracy: A Study of Pastoralism and Politics among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1961; and I. M. LEWIS, «The Somali Conquest of the Horn of Africa», in *Journal of African History*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1960, pp. 213-230. See also C. BESTEMAN, «Public History and Private Knowledge: On Disputed History in Southern Somalia», in *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 40, No. 4, 1993, pp. 563-586.

[18] Kusow argues that the dictatorial military regime "downplayed the existence and the significance of different linguistic groups within the Somali people". See A. M. KUSOW, «The Genesis of the Somali Civil War: A New Perspective», in *Northeast African Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1994, p. 40. However, the Af-Maay seems to differ from the standard Somali as Portuguese does from Spanish. For detailed analyses of the distinct languages spoken in Somalia, see M. H. MUKHTAR, «Language Marginalisation, Ethnic Nationalism, and Cultural Crisis in Somalia», in M. V. HOEHNE and V. LULING (eds.), *Milk and Peace*, cit., pp. 281-300; and B. BANAFUNZI, «Chimiini (Bravenese): An Endangered Language», *Journal of the Anglo-Somali Society*, Issue 50, Autumn 2011, 18-24. For a brief interesting note, see C. BESTEMAN, «Representing Violence and "Othering" Somalia», in *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1996, p. 131, footnote 5.

organisation[19]. The table below shows the distinct linguistic traits between Reewing and standard Somali language, as well as the dialects within the latter.

The absolute centrality of Somali homogeneity by the traditionalist scholarship has very recently been questioned. A new *emancipatory* scholarship which surfaced after the fall of the military regime has divulged that Somalis do not constitute of one single homogenous entity, but an amalgam of distinct communities who hardly share a common language, culture and tradition[20]. These studies have shown that Somalia has been a "world in one country" that hosted people separated in every aspect, except the Islamic religion, which itself splits up into *Sufi* and *Salafi* sects; the former subdivides into *Ahmediya*, *Qaadiriya*, *Salahiya*, *Rufaa'iya*, descending into Nurania, Aweysia, Zeila'ia, Hussenia, Maktubia[21], while the latter dissects into *Salafiya Jadida* and *Salafiya Qadiimah*.

[19] I. M. LEWIS, «The Somali Conquest», p. 216. Elsewhere Lewis has noted the Somali heterogeneousness. See I. M. LEWIS, «Modern Political Movements in Somaliland, II», in *Africa*, Vol. XVIII, No. 4, p. 358, footnote 3. As observed by Kusow, despite "the overriding assumption of long standing social, linguistic, religious, and cultural unity, the Somali people have long consisted of distinct groups occupying different grazing lands, interconnected only by the harsh environment that they inhabited». A. M. KUSOW, «The Genesis of the Somali Civil War», 36.

[20] See, for example, A. J. AHMED, *The Invention of Somalia, op. cit.*; C. BARNES, «U dhashay – Ku dhashay: Genealogical and Territorial Discourse in Somali History», in *Social Identities*, Vol. 12, No. 4, July 2006, pp. 487-498; C. BARNES, «Gubo – Ogaadeen Poetry and the Aftermath of the Dervish Wars», in *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, June 2006, pp. 105-117; C. BESTEMAN and L. CASSANELLI (eds.), *The Struggle for Land in Southern Somalia: The War Behind the War*, London: Haan Associates, 1996; L. V. CASSANELLI, *The Shaping of Somali Society: Reconstructing the History of a Pastoral People, 1600-1900*, Philadelphia, USA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982; M. A. ENO, *The Bantu-Jareer Somalis: Unearthing Apartheid in the Horn of Africa*, London: Adonis & Abbey, 2008; O. A. ENO and M. A. ENO, «The Journey Back to the Ancestral Homeland: The Return to the Somali Bantu (Wazigwa) to Modern Tanzania», in A. M. KUSOW and S. R. BJORK (eds.), *From Mogadishu to Dixon: The Somali Diaspora in a Global Context*, Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 2007, pp. 13-43; A. M. KUSOW, «Contested Narratives and the Crisis of the Nation-State in Somalia: A Prolegemenon», in A. M. KUSOW, *Putting the Cart Before the Horse*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-14; and A. SIMMONS, *Networks of Dissolution: Somalia Undone*, Oxford: Westview, 1995.

[21] F. DECLICH, «Sufi Experience in Rural Somali. A Focus on Women», in *Social Anthropology*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 2000, pp. 295-318. Most Somalis are described as nominal Muslims insofar as less religious following in deeply clannish Islam which remains an ideology to utilise as an identity when a need arises, though mostly limited untouched to pastoral tradition and custom. See G. SCHLEE, «Brothers of the Boran Once Again: On the Fading Popularity of Certain Somali Identities in Northern Kenya», in *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 2007, p. 432, footnote 45. See also L. V. CASSANELLI, *The Shaping of Somali Society*,

The claim of homogeneity has received a currency in Somali Studies, most remarkably fostered by Somalist intellectuals – both Somalis and non-Somalis. This in turn illustrated a paradigm "in which the slightest hint of a civil war remained inconceivable" [22]. Such assumed existence of a cohesive Somali society is taken for granted, particularly viewing it from the background of the repression on constructivist research study which might have critically challenged the notion of homogeneity in Somalia. Indeed, "what might once have been readily conceived of as the totality" of Somali society has vanished in January 1991, following the fall of the authoritarian military regime of Siad Barre[23]. Delivering a critical analysis of the socio-political scenario of the homogeneity ideology and the role of the state at that time, astute Somali thinker Ali Jimale Ahmed explains:

> The [Somali] state's charlatans produced their own version of a stable, contradiction-free society marked by complete homogeneity. Enamored with this version of Somali identity, the state sold it to the rest of the world. In the absence of an independent source of information, the rest of the world accepted the kind of information gleaned from official state texts. In those texts, "power" was synonymous with "truth." Whoever controlled the production and distribution of all forms of Somali discourse was seen to be presiding over the truth. It is in relation to this that many intellectuals, both Somali and non-Somali, failed in their duties as cultural critics[24].

op. cit. and I. M. LEWIS, «Sufism in Somaliland: A Study in Tribal Islam – II», in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 1956, pp. 145-160.

[22] A. M. KUSOW, «The Genesis of the Somali Civil War», cit., p. 31.

[23] C. BESTEMAN, *Unraveling Somalia*, *op. cit.* , p. 43. Most recently, one American relief worker, who in Kismaayo, a town in southern Somalia, felt dumbfounded that that Bantu/Jareer "are a different people, not like [...] other Somalis. These are the Bantu, Yusuf says. Not Somalis. I would find the matter of fact comment odd: was not everyone a Somali?". See J. S. BURNETT, *Where Soldiers Fear to Tread: At Work in the Fields of Anarchy*, London: Heinemann 2005.

[24] A. J. AHMED, *Daybreak is Near: Literature, Clans, and the Nation-State in Somalia*, Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1996, p. 8. Ahmed, quoting Ronald Barthes, pinpoints the absence of 'a shared code of reference' in Somali society (p. 36). Similarly, Gerald Hanley observes the extent of difference between Bantu/Jareer and other Somali communities in which the latter knew nothing of the former's culture, tradition and custom. G. HANLEY, *Warriors: Life and Death Among the Somalis*, London: Eland, 2004, p. 85.

3. Contextualising the Case of the Bantu/Jareer Somalis

The Somali Bantu/Jareer are among an excluded group of (assumed but not statistically proven) minority communities in Somalia that was classified by "noble" Somalis as outcaste[25], mainly by virtue of their distinct culture, custom and physical appearance, which invariably contrasted with that of other Somali communities. For many years, the community has been the most segregated and discriminated within Somali communities. The Bantu/Jareer lack of protection was epitomised by the post-"civil" war concept of *"looma-ooyeyaasha"* (no-one will avenge your death), which implies that they could not "expect redress if their rights are violated"[26]. This notion, based on clan-based discrimination, was regarded as taboo to touch on or talk about in Somali social and political forums, was broken by a considerable number of committed critical social theorists and scholars[27]. It has been showed that the Bantu/Jareer community has never enjoyed equal status within the Somali society, nor has their ordeal been documented compared to the South African or American apartheid institutions, mainly due to: a) the over-amplified myth of homogeneity, and b) the fact that since independence the country was ruled by members from the oppressive, pastoralist clans.

[25] Included in this group, who have endured "socially-institutionalised discrimination and severe human rights abuses" are Eylo, Madhibaan, Midgaan (also known as Gaboye in Somaliland), Tumaal (meaning blacksmiths), Yahar, and Yibir, the latter is known for its ritual specialisation. Other Somali minority groups, such as Baajuun, Bravenese and Banaadiris, are not treated as part of the outcaste group, though counted to be part of "impure Somalis". The rest, mainly pastoralists, perceive themselves as a 'pure' Somalis. For more recent information, see M. HILL, *No Redress: Somalia's Forgotten Minorities*, London: Minority Rights Group International, 2010), p. 4. For a fictionalised account on the Yibir, see M. GAILDON, *The Yibir of Las Burgabo*, Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press 2005.

[26] M. HILL, *No Redress*, cit., p. 9.

[27] Notable among these are: A.J. AHMED, *The Invention of Somalia*; C. BESTEMAN, *Unraveling Somalia*, A. O. ENO, *The Bantu-Jareer Somalis*; M. H. INGIRIIS, «DARAASAD: Ninba Dahab Lumay Si' u Doondoon», *Somalitalk*, 2007, available at: http://www.somalitalk.com/2007/jul/01jul607.html [Accessed 7/09/2012]; O. A. ENO, «The Untold Apartheid Imposed on the Jareer/Bantu People in Somalia», in H. M. ADAM and R. FORD (eds.), *Mending Rips in the Sky: Options for Somali Communities in the 21st Century*, Lawrenceville: The Red Sea Press, 1997, pp. 209-220; and A. M. KUSOW, «Contested Narratives», cit.

As the historian Scott Reese has pointed out, the

> Somali society at large was one riddled with social divisions. Among the nomads there was the, at least theoretical, division between "noble" and "servile" lineages or *Gob* versus *Gun*. There was also an even more basic division between "free" and "slave" as well as a number of subservient or "caste" groups that fell outside of the regular clan structure altogether[28].

This is, indeed, where what I call *Somalocentrism* starts, which is an extreme feeling of Somali *supremacism* that slowly splits into *ethnocentrism* – a deep clan chauvinism that divides itself into sub-clan superiority over other sub-clans, thus evolving into an extent that it finds itself through the ancient nomadic proverb: I and my clan against the world, I and my brother against the clan, then I against my brother, which appears normal for one to encounter two same Somali sub-sub-clans of the same clan-family fighting for superiority just to avoid the eclipsing of their importance by their cousins.

The recent "interpretivistic" research studies dealing with Somali social stratification have noted that, whereas the rest of other Somalis regarded themselves as Arab immigrants, the Bantu/Jareer community had been historically oppressed for their descent of African ancestry. Owing to the social construct of "pure" society, Bantu/Jareer community have never been allowed a place in Somali politics. Here it can be drawn some parallels between the Somali clan apartheid system and the United States of America's black segregation policy to such an extent that the former seems shoddier than the latter, as it dehumanises the category of "negroid"[29] Africans under the subjugation of a Somali nomad claiming ethnic supremacy through genealogical attachment to Arabness. According to Mohamed Eno, in the eyes of the 'oppressed' and "discriminated" Bantu/Jareer community, the practice of dehumanising them is akin to "localised imperialism void of any moderate consolation"[30].

[28] S. REESE, *Renewers of the Age: Holy Men and Social Discourse in Colonial Benaadir*, Leiden: Brill 2008, p. 139.

[29] The Bantu/Jareer are labelled by other Somalis, particularly pastoralists, as *Habash* (Abyssinian slave), *Addoon* (slave) and *Boong* (low caste) – all intended to be used as derogatory names meaning Negro. Even the name Jareer is at times adopted to dehumanise them. In this context, the Jareer identical category is identical to that of African identity.

[30] O. A. ENO, *The Bantu-Jareer Somalis*, cit. p. 45.

Certain collaborative and individual studies undertaken by Eno and Eno have documented to a degree of detail about the atrocities committed against the Bantu/Jareer and other "outcast" communities in Somalia[31]. The never-challenged social exclusion engenders an incomplete community that does not enjoy a "total social form"[32], whence unfolding the existence of two ambivalent communities: nobles and castes; or what some differentiate as "pure" and "impure" Somalis in an environment of a harsh "social exclusion" [33]. Ironically, the method used to measure such bifurcation of purity and impurity was based on the pastoralist doctrine of a mythical homogeneity that traces its origin to Arab descent. Such systematic community discrimination, which seems to be tantamount to apartheid, did not even spare highly-respected religious scholars in the nineteenth century Somalia such as Sheikh Aweys Al-Barawe; his "less than noble lineage" was an Achilles Heel that sometimes prevented him from spreading Islam in both urban and rural areas[34].

4. The Unmentioned Apartheid

The word *Jareer* (an undertone of slave descent) acclimatised to describe Bantu community is used as a derogatory eponym which de-

[31] O. A. ENO and M. A. ENO, «A Tale of Two Minorities: The State of the Gaboye and Bantu Communities of Somalia», in M. U. MBANASO and CH. M. KORIEH (eds.), *Minorities and the State in Africa*, New Jersey, Cambria Press 2010, pp. 113-142; O. A. ENO, «Landless Landlords and Landed Tenants», in A. M. KUSOW, *Putting the Cart Before the Horse*; and O. A. ENO, «The Untold Apartheid Imposed on the Bantu/Jareer People», in ADAM and FORD, *Mending Rips in the Sky*, cit., pp. 209-220.

[32] J. BRENT, *Searching for Community*, cit., p. 230.

[33] In using the term "social exclusion", we follow Shanahan and Ward's explanation that it draws upon "multiple and changing factors resulting in people being excluded from the normal exchanges, practices and rights of modern society". P. SHANAHAN and J. WARD, «The University and Empowerment: The European, University Adult Education and Community Economic Development with Excluded Groups», in G. CRAIG and M. MAYO (eds.), *Community Empowerment: A Reader in Participation and Development*, London: Biddles 2004, p. 82.

[34] See S. REESE, *Renewers of the Age*, cit., pp.159-161. For Sheikh Aweys' Islamic mission in Somalia and elsewhere in East Africa, see A. J. AHMED, «Of Poets and Sheikhs: Somali Literature», in K. W. HARROW (ed.), *Faces of Islam in African Literature*, London: James Curry, 1991, pp. 79-90; A. B. SH.U. AL-QADIRI, *Jala' al-Ayman fi Manaqib al-Shaykhan, al-Shaykh al-Wali Hajj Uways al-Qadiri wal Shaykh al-Kamil Abd al-Rahman al-Zayla'i*, Cairo: Mashhad al-Husayni press ca. 1954; and B. G. MARTIN, «Muslim Politics and Resistance to Colonial Rule: Shaykh Uways B. Muhammad Al-Barawi and the Qadiriya Brotherhood in East Africa», in *Journal of African History*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1969, pp. 471-486.

notes, in Somali, to *tima-adag* (thick hair or kinky hair). One crucial factor that Somali Bantu/Jareer felt oppressed remains due to their African origin, whereas the rest of Somalis regard themselves as what Ahmed has characterised to be "Arabs with a tan"[35]. The distinction lies in the fact that the other Somali communities associate themselves with Arab ancestry, with clans hailing from the northern portion of Somalia endowing with much emphasis on the claim of direct extraction of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam. Such suppositions, Ahmed maintains, "have contributed to the creation of a Somali that *is* in Africa, but not *of* Africa'[36] and have engendered an Arabised segment of Somali society striving to dominate the rest by virtue of their self-adherence to direct Arab noble genealogy. It is here that the impact of the perception that other Somalis hailed from Arab forefathers "did not only compromise Somalia's identity, but it also confused its Africanity[37]". Gerald Hanley, a British colonial official who was in Somalia during the aftermath of the Second World War, observed Somali recruits vehemently resisting their African identity:

> [T]he Somalis resented being considered Africans at all, and they demanded different treatment in rations and uniform than that given to the Bantu. Bantu troops like discipline. Somalis resent it. Every individual Somali fights to stay himself a person. The Bantu liked the certainty and safety of unit life, and functioned well as a receiver of orders. The Somali fumed under discipline and loved the irregular life, the scattered patrol and the lone effort which might bring him to individual notice, to recognition for what he might achieve on his own. The Bantu had patience...When the Somali battalion sailed for the Burma campaign they demanded Indian scale rations, and uniforms with collars on them, "like Indians". They did not want to dress like the Bantu troops, who wore collarless khaki blouses[38].

The belief of Arab ancestry embedded in the pastoralist Somalis' psyche has nourished a new breed of homogeneity, whose subscribers positioned themselves at the upper rank of Somalia's clan strata so as

[35] A.J. AHMED, «Daybreak is Near, Won't You Become Sour», cit., p. 149.

[36] *Ibid*., p. 141. Emphasis original. The construction of Qureyshite genealogy, as Cassanelli shows, "is typically employed to enhance the prestige of a clan's ancestry and often to link clan origins with the religious prestige of immigrant Arab shaykhs". See L. CASSANELLI, *The Shaping of Somali Society*, cit., p. 89; and S. REESE, *Renewers of the Age*, cit., p. 28 and p. 40.

[37] A. O. ENO, *The Bantu-Jareer Somalis*, cit., p. 30.

[38] G. HANLEY, *Warriors*, cit., pp. 187-188.

to dominate not only the social, economic and political power, but the thought and the way of living of other communities. The "imagined"[39] Somali homogeneity, together with political and military power of the "noble" clans', forced the Bantu/Jareer community to endure Somali ethnocentrism and clan nobility – that pastoralist nomads are more Somali and thus more superior than the rest. Nearly all pastoralist Somali communities, who consider themselves as the bulk of Somali society, adhere to a primary social structure which depends on the clan patrilineal system for determining one's identity and role in Somali society.

Based on that nomadic ideological construct of Somaliness, the Bantu/Jareer are excluded from the clan lineage system, suffering all the way in a situation closely similar to what Paulo Freire conceptualised as "internalised oppression" [40], a kind of institutionalised marginalisation. In many cases, they have been forced to disown their independent ethnic identity and adjoined to alien clan genealogy under what pastoralist Somalis term as *sheegad* "bonded attachment", based upon a concept of *ku-tiirsan* – that is, leaning on another clan, one which demands an incorporation of clan caste system that divides societies into classes[41]. Bantu/Jareer, nevertheless, were left no alternative other than silently resisting to adopt the nomadic clan lifestyle[42]. Lewis has observed that Bantu/Jareer, whom he labels as "people of negroid" descendants, were stigmatised by those he dubs as "pastoral

[39] For how communities are constructed through imagination, see B. ANDERSON, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso 1983. On communities formed on such basis, see J. FLINT and D. ROBINSON (eds.), *Community Cohesion in Crisis?* Bristol, UK: The Policy Press 2008.

[40] P. FREIRE, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: The Continuum International, 2003.

[41] For how Somalis prefer to "lean on a strong clan" when it serves their interest and then dump theirs or even renege against their protectors once their goals have been fulfilled, see O. A. ENO, «The Abolition of Slavery and the Aftermath Stigma: The Case of the Bantu/Jareer People on the Benadir Coast of Southern Somalia», in G. CAMPBELL, (ed.), *Abolition and Its Aftermath in Indian Ocean, Africa and Asia*, London: Routledge 2005; and G. SCHLEE, *Identities on the Move: Clanship and Pastoralism in Northern Kenya*, Nairobi: Gideon S. Were Press 1994. For a Bantu/Jareer perspective on the *Sheegat* system, see M. A. ENO, «Understanding Somalia Through the Prism of Bantu Jareer Literature», in A. J. AHMED and T. ADERA (eds.), *The Road Less Travelled: Reflections on the Literatures of the Horn of Africa*, Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press 2008.

[42] Several related communities, such as Boni (or Waribi or Waboni), who were hunter-gatherers, were almost exterminated and forced to assimilate other pastoralist clans. See I. M. LEWIS, «The Somali Conquest», p. 216. For a detailed observation, see also BESTEMAN, «Public History and Private Knowledge»; and L. CASSANELLI, «The Shaping of Somali Society».

aristocrats" to the point of master-client relationship[43]. Such relationship, based on *ku tiirsan*, makes essential to Bantu/Jareer to attach themselves with clan, particularly when they live in or around territories dominated by pastoralists.

Because becoming Somali is anchored in the notion of one should be born to (or into) clans, those who are outside the clan social structure were forced to lean on armed clansmen by way of claiming ancestry with them to receive protection which is hardly solicited. Even so, in the context of the system, they could be attached to other Somali clans by way of making them dependents or subordinates. Yet they were not allowed to claim less hostile clans in contrast with war-like, dominating clans. One observer has deducted a similar context in Africa, describing that the cast system attests to be a "hidden apartheid of segregation, modern-day slavery and other extreme forms of discrimination, exploitation and violence" [44]. Although the clan system denies certain minorities to own land in a fixed territory within their spheres, the Bantu/Jareer are one of the dominant groups living on the banks of the country's two rivers, Jubba and Shabelle[45].

As explained by Martin Hill, human rights expert on Somalia, after a

> half-century of enormous social change arising from the end of colonialism, national independence, [military] dictatorship, state collapse, armed conflict and the creation of a worldwide Somali refugee diaspora, clans remain, to a large extent, the particularistic building-blocks of the post-colonial Somali state arrangements and Somali society[46].

As such, the Somali clan structure socially maintains to marginalise the Bantu/Jareer and other minority groups, limiting "their access to justice where abuse has been perpetrated against them or they stand accused of a crime". Hill emphasises how the clan structure also "denies them [Bantu and other minorities] their rights to development,

[43] I.M. LEWIS, «The Somali Conquest», p. 228. It appears here that, with devoid of acknowledgement, Bantu/Jareer as a distinctive community were denied a place even in the anthropological scholarship on Somalia, though Lewis uses interchangeably the terms "Bantu" and "negroid" throughout his study. Thus the contribution of these studies seems to be the alienation and de-Somalisation of the agronomic culture, on the one hand, and the ennoblisation of pastoral nomadism, on the other.

[44] Quoted in O. A. ENO, *The Bantu-Jareer Somalis*, cit., p. 46.

[45] See M. H. INGIRIIS, «DARAASAD», cit.

[46] M. HILL, *No Redress*, cit., p. 7.

education and sustainable livelihoods; and places restrictions on intermarriage between majorities and minorities"[47].

Scholars of southern Somalia such as Francesca Declich have observed that "despite their great desire to be considered equal to any other Somali", the Bantu/Jareer "have always been marginalised and disregarded because they were reputed to be the descendants of slaves"[48]. The most pervasive discriminatory behaviour patterns were associated with the institution of slavery[49]. Eno's, Declich's and other scholar's analytical observation tackling the marginalisation of the Bantu/Jareer community is crystallised in the words of a forty-year-old Somali Bantu/Jareer bus driver living in Mogadishu, who was recently interviewed in a Minority Rights Group report (MRG), expressing his ordeal this way:

> Life is very hard [...] We often face discrimination in the society we live in (i.e. from majority clans). The passengers insult me. When they want an excuse to yell at me, they tell me to stop the vehicle when it is exactly where they want to alight, and since the bus cannot just come to a halt, I have stop a few steps away from where they told me to stop. Then insults and shouts come at me in their dozens [...] My people are given names and despised. Sometimes, I would prefer to work with a wheelbarrow (as a porter), which is common among my people in Mogadishu, so I could share with them these problems [...] We have the burden of discrimination and daily humiliation. I am somehow used to it, but I feel anger and sadness when I think that even my children go through this discrimination. We are used to the heavy jobs that others do not want to do. If you are a Jareer, you have to work hard because nobody will help you in this society. If I have an accident with another car, it is always my fault and I am insulted. My wife works as a maid. Once, she was accused of stealing a gold chain and there was no evidence. They finally released her and the gold chain was eventually found somewhere else. This is our life; we are discriminated against in our own country[50].

A woman interviewed in Puntland in the northeast Somalia (her name was not disclosed for safety reasons) has equated her suffering with that of constant colonialism: "I am a minority and I am disabled. The amount of verbal abuse I face everyday is unbearable. I already have enough challenges in my life and do not need people to abuse

[47] *Ibid*, p. 4.
[48] F. DECLICH, «Sufi Experience», cit. p. 297.
[49] Cited in C. BESTEMAN, *Unraveling Somalia*, cit., pp. 116–117.
[50] M. HILL, *No Redress*, cit., pp. 14-22.

me" [51]. According to the recent data in the MRG report, the Somali Bantu/Jareer women in northeast region of Puntland and south-central Somalia face the most inhuman and brutal treatment, with rape becoming part of daily life[52].

5. A Historicity of the Bantu Question

Historically slavery existed in southern part of Somalia. It was essentially abolished during the early years of Italian colonialism[53]. While different definitions have been presented in that Slavery was fundamentally defined as a means of denying community "the rights and privileges of a particular society so that they could be exploited for economic, political and/or social purposes", Lovejoy's definition of slavery seems to fit the Somali context, when he explains that it lies in the notion that:

> [...] slaves were property; that they were outsiders who were alien by origin or who had been denied their heritage through judicial or other sanctions; that coercion could be used at will; that their labour power was at the complete disposal of a master; that they did not have the right to their own sexuality and, by extension, to their own reproductive capacities; and that the slave status was inherited unless provision was made to ameliorate that status[54].

Notwithstanding his expertise on Somali Studies, Lewis – and writing in the aftermath of Somalia's independence in 1960 – seems to reinforce distortions about the inner trajectories of the Somali clan system in his underestimation when he asserts: "with their lack of any considerable immigrant European population there is little, if any, racial competition and no legal disabilities hindering Somalisation" [55].

[51] *Ibid*., p. 14.

[52] For an appalling report on Bantu/Jareer women complaining about rape at the camps of internally displaced persons in northeastern region of Puntland, see *ibid.*, pp. 19-21.

[53] For the history of slavery in Somalia, see L. CASSANELLI, «The Ending of Slavery in Italian Somalia: Liberty and the Control of Labor, 1890-1935», in S. MIERS and R. L. ROBERTS (eds.), *The End of Slavery in Africa*, Madison: Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, pp. 308-331. See also BESTEMAN, *Unraveling Somalia*; L. CASSANELLI, The Shaping of Somali Society; and O. A. ENO, *The Bantu-Jareer Somalis*.

[54] P. LOVEJOY, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, 2nd edn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000, pp. 1-2.

[55] I. M. LEWIS, «Problems in the Development of Modern Leadership and Loyalties in the British Somaliland Protectorate and U.N. Trusteeship Territory of Somalia», *Civilisations*,

Contrarily, recent empirical studies disagreeing with some of Lewis's earlier as well as recent works on Somalia reveal that the Bantu Jareer case remains the epitome of the disconnections underlying Lewis's assumed "homogeneous" Somali society, calling for serious academic attention not only towards the (partial) unlearning of the previously written works but importantly also a need for a serious reconstruction and rewriting of a new version of historiography that incorporates the divergent ethnicities of the Somali society on a level ground.

While their contemporary condition made them what Omar Eno would term as "landless landlords", the pastoral newcomers who were settled by the aboriginal Bantu became the "landed tenants" [56]. One female informant interviewed by Luling expresses her feelings thus: "Our ancestors were born here; they did not come" [57]. Despite the various evidence that differentiates the indigenous Bantu/Jareer from the former East African communities imported into Somalia as forced slaves, the locally-held historical and cultural narratives seem to disdain the separation of the two variant groups, preferring instead the upholding of the old nomadic and colonial suggestion that all Bantu/Jareer were imported "slaves". The oral and social historian Lee Cassanelli, utilising the historical findings from early Arab geographers and colonial ethnographers, has surmised that Bantu/Jareer could be descendants of the earliest inhabitants in the Somali peninsula[58]. Such contention is reinforced by the tradition that Somalia was

Vol. 10, No. 1, 1960, p. 49. Here, Lewis may not allow himself to assert the Somali racial prejudice toward Bantu/Jareer as he would do later in his studies. Lewis did his initial fieldwork as a young colonial anthropologist hired by the British colonial government to conduct an "ethnographic research" in northern Somalia. For an account on his earlier mission, see I. M. LEWIS, «Confessions of a "Government" Anthropologist», *Anthropological Forum*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1977, pp. 226-238.

[56] See O. A. ENO, «Landless Landlords and Landed Tenants: Plantation Slavery in Southern Somalia (1840-1940)», in A. M. KUSOW, *Putting the Cart Before the Horse*, cit.

[57] V. LULING, *Somali Sultanate*, cit., p. 116.

[58] L. CASSANELLI, *The Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 164. See also I. M. LEWIS, «The Somali Conquest», pp. 215-216. Classical Arab travellers use the term Berberi to distinguish Somalis from Zenji (Blacks) which they implied to refer to Bantu/Jareer. However, the origin of the Somali is vague as of today. Lewis incorrectly writes "today all Somali ultimately trace descent patrilineally from noble Arabian lineages". I.M. LEWIS, «The Somali Conquest», cit., p. 214. It seems, nonetheless, that the word Somali historically refers to any inhabitant in the Horn of Africa who accepted Islam as an ideology in resisting Ethiopian hegemony and spoke Somali as a *lingua franca*. Indeed, argues Schlee, "being Somali was equated with being Muslim, and their political rhetoric was that of *jihad*". SCHLEE, «Brothers of the Boran», cit., p. 429. Though Schlee does not refer to, see earlier similar conclusions by L. CASSANELLI, *The Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 129 and by S. REESE, *Renewers of the Age*, cit., p. 209.

inhabited by an entirely different ethnic[59] community long before the "Somali conquest of the Horn of Africa".

From Hiiraan region in the centre of the country to Hawaii Island in southern Somalia, Somali Jareer/Bantu live in the inter-riverine areas. Apart from that, although certain cultural differences within the Bantu/Jareer may exist, as those who live along Shabelle River possess a distinct culture compared to those dominant along Jubba River[60], there seems to be no physical difference between the two. However, to maintain ethnic superiority, supported and strengthened by colonial writers as well as state leaders from the nomadic culture, the Somali "majority" groups prefer to characterise all the Somali Bantu/Jareer as descendants of slave trade, despite the ample evidence by Somali and non-Somali scholars suggests otherwise. For a number of years, several development studies by independent researchers who examined the Somali ancestry came to the conclusion that Bantu/Jareer constitute "in all probability" people who lived in "Bilad Punt (Land of the Bantu)" prior to the Somali conquest of the Horn of Africa[61].

In light of all the evidence chronicled by the scholars cited in this study, one may find it disturbing that the report of an active minority rights organisation like the MRG at the height of Somali internecine war in 1991 failed to mention the plight of the Somali Jareer/Bantu. The author of the report, Said Samatar, laid much emphasis on the tit-for-tat power contestation between the "majority" clans, shunning the relevant discussion of the Bantu-Jareer community as an all-time victim of Somali society. To some extent, Samatar devotes much attention to the role of camel in Somali society by quoting a poetic passage in which a camel was described as the "mother of man" and the "true hero of the Somali desert"[62], drawing heavily from the concept of

[59] In using ethnic, we follow S. FENTON, *Ethnicity*, Cambridge: Polity Press 2010.

[60] O. A. ENO, *The Bantu-Jareer Somalis*, p. 66.

[61] See I. M. LEWIS, «The Somali Conquest», cit.

[62] Samatar decorates the report with a poem composed by Mohamed Abdulle Hassan, known by the British authorities as the "Mad Mullah". See S. S. SAMATAR, *Somalia: A Nation in Turmoil*, cit., p. 9. Surprisingly, rather than unravelling the ill-fate and appalling situation of the minority victims, the report derailed from its track by reciting camel songs, surfacing symptoms of clan sentiments within the core content of the report. It is even more astonishing how the Minority Rights Group could tolerate such a diversion from its fundamental objectives and more so the focus of the report.

what Lewis once termed as "a pastoral democracy"[63], a notion which Eno characterises as a "pastoral discrimination"[64]. From the gender perspective, Lewis's pastoral democracy resembles a pastoral dictatorship in that it gives men in authority undisputed power over women.

While Samatar is a proponent of the myth of homogeneity and pastoral democracy, he seems to involuntarily contradict himself by conceding that in the southern portion of Somalia, "one enters the culture of the Lamu archipelago of the Swahili people of East Africa". In this statement, he hints at Somali/Jareer Bantu, but does not allow himself to stress it as such. Contrary to the rich literature to which the Somali and non-Somali scholars have contributed, Samatar's authored MRG report claimed that "Somalia does not have racial/ethnic and religious minorities"[65]. However, this account was repudiated by the last report of the same organisation – the MRG – conducted by Hill, which clearly professed otherwise, citing extensively most of the authors whose works are quoted in this study. In the MRG 2010 report, one community development worker in London, who works on issues of racial discrimination and deprivation of Somali refugees, was shocked on hearing that Somalis have their [own] Dalits, the Bantu/Jareer in Somalia[66], who are the equivalents of the Indian low caste community.

6. Bantu and Somali Politics

During the aftermath of the British invasion of Somalia (1941-1950), community-based movements and social associations, provided they represented no political aims, were permitted under the British Military Administration. The Somali Youth Club (SYC) was among the first movements emerged as a social club. Formed in 1943, the SYC later renovated itself into a political party in 1947, remodelling their name as the Somali Youth League (SYL). Its founding father was Abdulkadir Sheikh Sakhaweddiin, a Bantu/Jareer intellectual, who

[63] Elsewhere Lewis had written that "a Somali does not ask another where he is from, but whom he is from". I. M. LEWIS, «The Land of the Living Dead», *Sunday Times*, 30 August 1992.

[64] See A. O. ENO, *The Bantu-Jareer Somalis*, cit.

[65] S. S. SAMATAR, *Somalia: A Nation in Turmoil*, cit., p. 6.

[66] M. HILL, *No Redress*, cit., p. 24.

had Sufi Islam roots[67]. However, the SYL's main political platform, as was evidenced in many parts of Africa at the time, was sheer anti-colonial agenda embellished with western-imported nationalism. It was founded on territorial (though contestable), rather than cultural, linguistic or economic reality and consideration. Hassan Mahaddalla, who examined the emergence of Somali nationalism, has deftly come to the conclusion that the SYL was rooted in "an illusive" notion devoid of "ethno-cultural" flavour[68].

Despite the acknowledgment of Sakhaweddiin's leadership role, Bantu/Jareer efforts to pursue posts in the SYL inner circles were hampered by their disenfranchised status, which gave rise to their demeaning and debasing by other communities. The movement, nonetheless, acknowledged in Article 34 of its constitution of 1947 the existence of Bantu Somalis when it declared that the movement as a political institution "is open to all Somalis or African who live in the land of Somalia"[69]. By African they most certainly referred to Bantu Somalis as there had been no any other "African" living in Somalia. Furthermore, another disturbing reality in the SYL document is that, by dividing the people into Somali and African, the Somalis – in their own eyes – are not Africans but more or less a society borne out with "geographical accident"[70]. It is evident that even SYL leaders, who are still considered as the champions of pan-Somali "nationhood", held the view that Somalia is not a homogenous society, but an amalgam of Somali, Arab and African communities. Article 35 of the same document further proclaims that "[a]ll those above sixty, whether Somali

[67] For a mention of his Sakhaweddiin's name and background compare I. M. LEWIS, «Modern Political Movements in Somaliland, I», *Africa*, Vol. XVIII, No. 3, p. 253; and M. H. MUKHTAR, «The Emergence and Role of Political Parties in the Inter-River Region of Somalia From 1947-1960», *Ufahamu*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 1989, p. 89 and p. 95, footnote 55. Abdikadir Sakhaweddiin's untimely death in 1945 might have deprived the Bantu members of the SYL to play a decisive role within the SYL movement. It is not clear, however, whether his political orientation inspired Bantu political parties and social movements in the 1950s.

[68] MAHADDALA, «Pithless Nationalism», cit., p. 69.

[69] G. ABUHAKEMA and T. CARMICHAEL, «The Somali Youth League Constitution: A handwritten Arabic copy (c. 1947?) from the Ethiopian Security forces archives in Harar», *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2010, p. 461.

[70] M. ENO and O. ENO, «Surveying Through the Narratives of African Identity», in Jideofor Adibe (ed.), *Who is an African?: Identity, Citizenship and the Making of the Africa-Nation*, London: Adonis and Abbey 2009.

or African, may not become members unless they have previously served" the SYL[71].

At the academic level, not only that the genealogical homogeneity of Somalia has contaminated the scholarship, but equally the mispresentation of the SYL leaders and their document as observant of human rights and combatants of discrimination. To that effect, though Lidwien Kapteijns argues that the SYL leaders "combated, but with less emphasis, the discrimination against"[72] people like Bantu/Jareer, her study suffers from citation of credible evidence to bolster her claim. On the contrary, nowhere have scholars whose studies concentrated on the subject before and after her have made a mention that "nationalists" combated apartheid against Bantu. As noted by Castagno, "the pendulum of leadership in the SYL does not remain steady and that there are no "national heroes" in the Somali nationalist movement comparable to Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana or Sekou Toure in Guinea" [73].

Another academic misconception about the Bantu Jareer identity is provided by the Somalia analyst Kenneth Menkhaus, who was contracted time after time by the United Nations as an expert on Somalia and whose PhD dissertation focused on the under-development of the section of the Bantu-Jareer people dominant in the Lower Jubba Valley. In studying only a section of the two groups under discussion, Menkhaus assumes the role of a leading authority to discover the invention of Bantu identity in Somali studies[74]. Armed with his experience of the Jubba Valley Bantu, Menkhaus ventures to make a case that Bantu identity is a new phenomenon that emerged soon after the collapse of the military regime and "never existed prior to 1991". Ironically, Menkhaus appears to base his conclusions on the emergence of the Somali African Muki Organisation in the early 1990s. He

[71] G. ABUHAKEMA and T. CARMICHAEL, «The Somali Youth League Constitution», cit., p. 461.

[72] L. KAPTEIJNS, «Discourse on Moral Womanhood in Somali Popular Songs, 1960-90», *Journal of African History*, Vol. 50, 2009, p. 103, footnote 6. However, Kapteijns admits that Somalis "had cultural differences and social inequalities beyond those [...] addressed by the nationalists" (*ibid.*).

[73] A. A. CASTAGNO, Jr., «Somali Republic», in J. S. COLEMAN and C. G. ROSBERG (eds), *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964, p. 557.

[74] K. MENKHAUS, «The Question of Ethnicity in Somali Studies», in M. V. HOEHNE and V. LULING, *Milk and Peace*, cit., pp. 87-104.

maintains that Bantu "is a label applied to the group by foreigners since 1990, and quickly adopted inside Somalia"[75], thereby following Luling's one-dimensional approach of "I have not used it"[76] despite the sprinkles of evidence Luling provides in the volume.

It is also worthwhile to note that several experts have recounted their experiences of encountering people with Bantu identity and of "distinct customs" even before Somali independence from European colonialism[77]. Writing in 1966, Robert Hess meticulously demonstrates the existence of "a Bantu group despised by the nomadic Somali"[78] as well as "Bantu agriculturalists, whom the Somali tribes regarded as inferior and by nature slaves"[79]. Castagno, equally, reports the active participation of four Bantu political parties in pre-independence Somali politics (1950-1954): Hidaiet al Islam Shidle e Mobilen, Giam Giamogia, Leopardo, Palma and Six Shidle[80]. He even acknowledges that

[75] *Ibid*., pp. 92-93. While placing more emphasis on the role of "international community" in shaping the Bantu politics in the early 1990s, Menkhaus barely bothers to discuss the relevant historical data and, regrettably, maintains to shrug off the views of opposing scholars to feature in his analysis. He is not, however, alone here. The culture of avoiding (or probably denying) contrasting scholars' contribution to the subject at hand seems to be academically acceptable in Somali Studies, and resembles an intellectual warlordism. Typical of such writings are L. KAPTEIJNS, «Discourse on Moral Womanhood», cit., I. M. LEWIS, *A Modern History of the Somali: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa*, Athens, Ohio: University Press, 4th edition 2002; and S. S. SAMATAR, *Somalia: A Nation in Turmoil*, cit. This tendency is not unique to Somali Studies. Of course, the 'practice of consulting only those who agree with [their] a priori thesis' had been prevalent in other African scholarship. See B. DAVIDSON, «African History without Africans», *London Review of Books*, Vol. 21, No. 4, 18 February 1999.

[76] LULLING, *Somalia Sultanate*, cit., p. 115.

[77] See, for example, CASTAGNO, Jr., «Somali Republic», cit., ; F. S. CAROSELLI, Relazione del Governatore per l'anno 1939-1940, Mogadiscio: Stamparia della Colonia 1941; E. CERULLI, *Somalia: Scritti Vari Editi ed Inediti*, Rome: Instituto poligrafico dello Stato 1957; G. CORNI, Somalia Italiana, II, Milano: Editoriale Arte e Storia 1937; and R. L. HESS, *Italian Colonialism in Somalia*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1966.

[78] HESS, *Italian Colonialism in Somalia*, cit., p. 164. Hess mentions a Bantu 'brief uprising' to Italian colonialism in the town of Bur Hakaba in southern Somalia (see pp. 151-152). He also asserts that Bantu Shidle (a sub section of the Bantu community) "harshly treated" their Bantu slaves (see p. 99). Here, one hardly disagrees with Menkhaus, when he postulates that Bantu/Jareer themselves "possess almost none of the features typically associated with a cohesive ethnic group". See MENKHAUS, «The Question of Ethnicity», cit., p. 93.

[79] HESS, *Italian Colonialism in Somalia*, cit., p. 93.

[80] CASTAGNO, Jr., «Somali Republic», cit., p. 526. For the votes garnered by the Shidle Party in the 1956 elections for Somali Assembly, see I. M. LEWIS, «Modern Political Movements in Somaliland, II», cit., p. 352.

> Hawiye [group] formed the Somali African Union (SAU) with the ostensible aim of "uniting all Africans". The Hidaiet al Islam Shidle e Mobilen was organized by the Negroid Shidle cultivators and their Hawiye associates, Mobilen, to advance their agricultural interests[81].

The political programme of "uniting all Africans" refers to the existence of an awakening of Bantu identity and of vote bargain in political elections. In this regard, the formation and aims of these parties probably helped create a sense of consciousness among the Bantu, but did not help their need to have a political influence in the national government. While discussing on the 1950s and 1960s southern Somali political parties, Castagno notes the numerical importance of "Negroid and Bantu" groups to a large political party: Hisbia Distoor Mustaqiil Somali (HDMS [Somali Independent Constitutional Party])[82]. Lewis also informs us about his attending of a gathering organised by of one of these parties where he discerned that it was the only party in Somalia which allowed women to participate in their meetings: "Among the northern nomads women do not attend local political meetings"[83]. Even though all political parties claimed "regional" or "nationalist" agenda, power was concentrated in certain communities and, where Somalis were concerned, it was founded on hegemony, domination and clan supremacy.

The exclusion of Bantu/Jareer in Somali social and political landscape is indicative of an incident narrated by American historian Edward Bayne. During the 1960s when Somalia was enjoying its inherited democratic institutions – independent judiciary and separation of power between executive and legislative – one unnamed Somali parliamentarian visiting the United States of America "scornfully disclaimed any interest in the American race problem, an explanation of which was being made by the United States Information Service local-

[81] CASTAGNO, Jr., «Somali Republic», cit., 523. The SAU later transformed into the Somali Democratic Party after the merger of six parties (p. 529). Without tangible evidence to back up his argument, Menkhaus maintains that "SYL's membership criteria excluded' what he terms non-Somalis whom he seems to refer to Bantu. Yet, he correctly observes that during the Somali military dictatorship, most Bantu/Jareer communities in Somalia became 'weaker, poorer, and worse off than at any time in history". See MENKHAUS, «The Question of Ethnicity», cit., pp. 96-97.

[82] CASTAGNO, Jr., «Somali Republic», p. 534. This may seem that "community is not an answer to oppression, but is a form of resistance within asymmetrical relations of power". See J. BRENT, *Searching for Community*, p. 261.

[83] I. M. LEWIS, «Modern Political Movements in Somaliland, I», cit., p. 258.

ly. "We are not interested in this [racial issue in America]", he said. "We have Negro problems, too, in the south [Somalia], where many of them are slaves still" [84]. With this clear background of multi-ethnicity, attempts, nevertheless, were continued to build a Somali state on ethno-nationalist basis, with kinship favouritism dominating the pattern of local politics. Under the euphoria of nationalism, Somalia had no immediate solution to balance the concoction of its multi-ethnic nation better than creating one under the umbrella of a mythical homogeneity.

7. Conclusion

By using the situation of the Somali Bantu as a case, this study attempted to contribute to the demythologising of the Somali and colonial perception of homogeneity. It examined how contemporary Somali political conundrum emanates from centuries-old social and cultural crises imbedded in the psyche of Somali society. It reassessed the intellectual debate between traditionalists and revisionists in Somali Studies and questioned possibility to envision how communities possessing no common interests can be harmonious. Through this prism, it traced the Bantu/Jareer as a distinct community, with particular emphasis on how they have endured multi-layered social stigma including oppression and marginalisation and how they survive living with other Somali communities which regard them "others". It provided a profile of the Bantu-Jareer community in Somalia. It further discussed the social and political position of this community in what is often portrayed as a homogeneous Somali people, an assumed "oneness" in their genealogy, ethnic-culture, language and religion. The idea of a self-same Somalia as a traditional belief was academically promoted by colonial writers who visited mainly northern Somalia and Somalist authors who were after the unification of five sections of Somalis and who later had ethnical strong-hold in the administrations since independent Somalia. This unawareness was partly contributed by academic ethnocentrism in the part of the pioneering traditionalist Somali

[84] E. A. BAYNE, *Four Ways of Politics: State and Nation in Italy, Somalia, Israel and Iran*: *The Dynamics of Political Participation exhibited in four countries caught up in the process of modernization*, New York: Univ Field Staff Int., 1965, p. 144, footnote 32.

scholars who mostly: a) hailed from the same clans accused of committing the inhumanly acts of marginalisation against the Bantu-Jareer, and b) belonged to the ideology of the mythical homogeneous Somali society.

Contrary to the assumption of shared self-sameness, the revisionist scholars who emerged after the collapse of Barre's regime contributed a quite revealing literature reassessing Somalia. The empirical focus, validity and reliability of such studies envisage a need in Somalia to create a strong civil society that would form a social transformation within the communities. Unfortunately, so far there was no concerted, reformed civil society that attested itself as a clan-free group which can advocate for a social change through education and dialogue in reversing the continuation of slavery by other means. If Somalia is to be reconstructed soon, Somalis as heterogeneous communities can build up a nation on cultural and language differences. Generally, nationhood is a process whereby people with distinct genealogical roots find a way to live together. In this context, what is missing has been the combination of theory and action (praxis), for an "actionless thought" does not lead society to real transformation. Freire captured this momentum when he wrote "[t]o exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming. Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection"[85].

The consensus among previous research studies is that the condition of the Somali Jareer/Bantu should be altered through awareness which can be achieved by means of emancipatory research, which in turn creates empowerment strategies. It can also be altered through international and local human rights campaigns, coupled with massive education for the community in creating what Freire termed as "conscientisation" – a set of critical consciousness that gives the community an empowerment to reflect itself and embark on a dialogue aimed at finding ways to transform. The Bantu/Jareer community has extremely suffered under "Somali homogeneity" and "pastoral democracy" – both failed to produce substantive evidence. It is high time for the community to be assisted to find their rights. Finally, the absent Somali should no longer remain segregated from Somali socie-

[85] FREIRE, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 88.

ty, but instead, to be given the chance to play a role in the welfare of wider communities in the contemporary efforts to build a society based on justice and equality.

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"Chinese South Africans Now Black!" Race and Belonging in the "New" South Africa

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An outbreak of xenophobic violence which began in the townships of Johannesburg and spread across the nation in May 2008 left over 60 dead and thousands displaced. Over one-third of those killed were South Africans, ostensibly mistakenly identified as *amakwerekwere* (or foreigners) because of their dark(er) skin and their inability to speak Zulu. All the other victims were black Africans, mostly immigrants from neighboring countries or from Somalia. One report attributed the violence to a:

> combination of deep structural social, economic and spatial inequalities, an on-going reliance on cheap labour, housing shortages, township retail competition, racism, a history of the use of violence to advance sectional interests and a traumatically scarred national psyche[1],

together with a freefalling economy and a deeply divided ruling party[2]. While the events of May 2008 were certainly the most vicious and widespread, they were both preceded and followed by other episodes of violence. These incidents have generally been identified as evidence of South Africans' general negative attitudes toward foreigners, particular those from other African countries.

In a seemingly unrelated matter, on 18 June 2008, the Pretoria High Court handed down its decision in the case of the Chinese Association of South Africa (CASA) against the South African government: the Chinese would henceforth be included as previously disadvantaged (or "black" as written in the legislation) and eligible to receive benefits of affirmative action legislation. In response, headlines screamed: "What color are Chinese South Africans?", "S Africa Chinese "become black"", "In South Africa, Chinese in the New Black", and "Only in South Africa: Chinese are classified as black"[3]. Many South Africans,

[1] D. EVERATT, Synthesis: Overview and Prospects. Atlantic Philanthropies, 2009:1.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] A. LEONARD, «What color are the Chinese South Africans?», *Salon.com* June 19, 2008; BBC NEWS, «S Africa Chinese "become black"» June 18, 2008 ; S. CANAVES, «In South Afri-

of all colors, balked. The strong negative public response dampened any sense of victory on the part of the small Chinese South African community and provided them with further evidence of their marginal, in-between, and tenuous position in South Africa.

This paper proposes to use these two events of 2008, from the vantage of the Chinese South African (or rather, a Korean American researcher of Chinese South Africans), as a starting point to discuss issues of race and belonging (or rather, exclusion) in post-apartheid South Africa. Xenophobia and Afrophobia; crime and racial profiling; affirmative action; otherness, blackness, and South Africanness are also discussed herein. The paper's reflections and conclusions are based on the author's many years of research and writing on the Chinese South Africans and new Chinese migrants in southern Africa, while resident in Johannesburg between 1995-2000 and 2003-2010. I want to make several related arguments here:

The first is that under circumstances of economic strain there is a tendency for the disgruntled and "left-behinds" to lash out at the most vulnerable and most accessible "other", which often includes minorities and foreigners. Interestingly, the Chinese, while clearly identified as "other" were not directly targeted by the perpetrators of violence, although some Chinese businesses did suffer in May/June 2008. For reasons to be spelled out below South Africans, particularly poor, black South Africans, seem to reserve their most visceral hatred for black African foreigners. While they have not, as yet, suffered from direct targeting, various Chinese communities, as well as South Asian migrant communities, have, however, voiced concerns that they are often singled out and targeted by corrupt officials and criminals alike[4].

Secondly, affirmative action and other similar race-based legislation seem to be reinforcing racial difference and thickening racial boundaries between ethnic groups in South Africa. Of course, in the nation that perfected laws of racial discrimination, that the country remains highly racially defined and divided should come as no surprise. However, the laws that should be working toward redress and redistribution – namely the Employment Equity Act (EEA) and the

ca, Chinese is the New Black», *China Real Time Report* June, 19 2008; B. MAXWELL, «Only in South Africa: Chinese are classified as black», *Tampa Bay Times* 2008.

[4] Y.J. PARK AND P. RUGUNANAN, «Visible and Vulnerable: Asian migrant communities in South Africa», in *Atlantic Philanthropies Report: South African Civil Society and Xenophobia* 2009.

Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Act – are creating further divisions and disputes over who qualifies as "black" or who is "blacker", who suffered more/most during apartheid, and who fought against apartheid – as if any of these considerations constitute legitimate qualifications for affirmative action benefits.

Lastly, even as South Africa is becoming increasingly ethnically diverse, particularly with increasing in-migration to the country since the end of apartheid, definitions of South Africanness appear to be narrowing. South Africanness is, in some discourses, increasingly equated with blackness[5], but not all blacks are viewed as South African. Ethnic minorities – numerically, all those who are not black Africans – complain that they are being increasingly excluded[6]. However, these processes of inclusion and exclusion are uneven and at times, contradictory. For example, it would appear that even with a predominantly black government the white minority continues to benefit economically[7], while those defined as *amakwerekwere* or foreigners, especially the black African *amakwerekwere*, suffer the most vicious attacks.

The negative responses to the Chinese South Africa affirmative action court case decision indicates that these shifting and narrowing social perceptions may ultimately determine the levels of acceptance of any ethnic minority or new migrant group, and perceptions of ethnic Chinese[8] in South Africa are confused and ambiguous, at best. In the South African case, despite the protections afforded by citizenship, the constitution, and other progressive legislation, all Chinese people in the country continue to occupy an ambiguous, marginal, and in-between position within South African society.

[5] This is not "Black" in the Steve Biko, political, and broad definition of "Blackness" as inclusive of all those who fought against white rule, but rather a narrow view of South African "blackness", which will be elaborated in this paper.

[6] See, for example, G. LEWIS, *Between the Wire and the Wall*. 1987; W. JAMES ET AL, *Now That We Are Free*. 1996; M. ADHIKARI *Not White Enough, Not Black Enough.* 2005; and Z. WICOMB, «Shame and identity: the case of the coloured in South Africa», in *Writing South Africa. Literature, apartheid, and democracy, 1970-1995.* 1998.

[7] A. BOTHA, «Could affirmative action be helping white people?», thought leader*, Mail & Guardian* March24, 2011.

[8] I use the term "ethnic Chinese" here and in various places throughout the paper as an inclusive term for all three communities of Chinese in South Africa: the Chinese South Africans, Taiwanese South Africans and the newer Chinese migrants from mainland China.

1. Xenophobia, Othering and Identity Confusion

> For fifteen years after democracy's birth, xenophobic violence was a barely reported but constant aspect of the South African landscape. Buried beneath the "miracle" of the "rainbow nation", it was like a sore tooth, a nagging, incessant but low-level continuance, which erupted in May 2008 in an orgy of violence that spread rapidly from Alexandra to other sites across the country […] and then seemed to have stopped almost as suddenly[9].

Increasing evidence of xenophobia and increasing episodes of violent behavior against foreigners can be traced to the end of apartheid and the beginning of increasing in-migration, especially from African countries. This violence erupted spectacularly and spread like wildfire across townships throughout the nation.

Scapegoating and Defining the "Other"

Surveys, focus groups and numerous pre- and post-2008 studies have clearly indicated rising levels of xenophobic attitudes amongst all groups in South Africa[10]; however, the "naming" of the events of May 2008 continues to be highly contested. For example, many within the ANC government starting with former President Mbeki were in denial about naming the violence "xenophobia", insisting, instead, that the violence was enacted by thugs and criminals. Others attributed the violence to Negrophobia or Afrophobia, stemming from unresolved self-hatred borne of the apartheid era, rather than a more general xenophobia[11]; these studies point out that white foreigners, for example, while "other" are seen as the "desired other" whereas the African foreigner is seen as the "despicable other" [12].

[9] D. EVERATT, *op. cit.*

[10] D. EVERATT, *op. cit.*; FMSP «"Xenophobia": Violence against Foreign Nationals and other "Outsiders" in Contemporary South Africa», Forced Migration Studies Programme Migration Issue Brief 3, June 2010; HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, «No Healing Here. Violence, Discrimination and Barriers to Health for Migrants in South Africa», December 2009.

[11] A. MNGXITAMA, «Xenophobia is in fact Afrophobia in disguise», *The Sowetan*, November 30, 2010; S. MNYANDA, «Afrophobic attacks are a threat», News24, September 13, 2012; and V. THAKUR, «Who is a South African? Interrogating Africanness and Afro-phobia» on e-ir.info, July 18, 2011.

[12] V. THAKUR, *op. cit.*, p.12.

Studies and focus groups conducted in the aftermath of the violence indicate that most South Africans, regardless of race or class, blamed foreigners for the nation's woes. As Everatt writes:

> Everything came to be blamed on foreigners, as I describe in a later chapter drawn from focus groups being conducted at the time (focusing on socio-political issues). Unemployment was blamed on foreigners undercutting locals; lack of housing occurred because foreigners bribed officials; lack of services resulted from the same, which saw foreigners jump to the front of the queue; there were no small-scale market entry opportunities because foreigners had taken them; foreigners were selling drugs to "the youth" who were increasingly beyond their parents' control; foreigners were committing crime […][13].

The author's own preliminary study on Asian migrants in the Johannesburg area (co-authored by P. Rugunanan), part of a large multi-case study Atlantic Philanthropies project which examined civil society responses to the xenophobic violence, explored possible reasons as to why Chinese and South Asian migrants were spared from the worst of the violence in 2008. Our study concluded that most Asian migrants present less threat of competition for resources or jobs. For example, in Johannesburg, the Chinese occupy different socio-economic strata, selling wholesale to retailers. This was not initially the case, as earlier Chinese migrants in Johannesburg's central business district experienced clashes with black South African hawkers (see Park 2008 for more); however, the Chinese seemed to have learned from these early encounters and have since removed themselves from potential direct competition.

While more recent Chinese immigrants in small towns and rural areas tend to operate small "China shops" as in Lesotho and many other African countries, it was clear that in South Africa, based on earlier research in the Free State, that they are not displacing any South Africans but filling gaps that have been vacated by others who have moved on. These shops had been operated and later vacated by other earlier immigrant groups, including Indian-, Greek- and Portuguese-South Africans. For example, in one small Free State town we visited, there were several Chinese grocers and "China shops"; one of these was still called the "Portuguese Supermarket & Bakery" in reference

[13] D. EVERATT, *op. cit.* , pp. 6-7.

to its previous owners[14]. Johannesburg, in contrast, has very few Chinese migrants operating retail shops or competing with street traders; rather, they have moved up a rung on the economic chain into shops located within more than a dozen wholesale/distribution centers selling to African traders from within South Africa as well as from neighboring countries[15]. In short, they seldom compete directly with the locals.

In instances where Asian migrants (as well as Somali and Ethiopian migrants) have been targeted, their small shops were located in townships and the informal settlements; in these cases, it may be perceived that they are competing and often out-competing local businesses. It is worth noting that another study conducted by this author, of African perceptions of Chinese migrants in neighboring Lesotho, indicates that economic competition is a huge source of tension in that country. The Chinese migrants in Lesotho are increasing out-competing and displacing local Basotho in their small shops and have been targeted, on a number of occasions, for anti-foreigner rioting and violence[16].

Beyond the lack of competition, few Asian migrants in South Africa live in townships and informal settlements; instead they live apart from the vast majority of impoverished black South Africans, most in areas formerly set aside for Indians, in newly established Chinatowns, in small spaces carved out behind their retail businesses, or, for the middle class migrants, in the suburbs, generally scattered across the nation's cities and towns. Apart from commercial engagement, there is limited contact between the Asian migrants and poor black South Africans who perpetuated the violence.

Finally, while the Chinese, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Indian minorities and migrants are often identified as an "other", they are a familiar "other", often confused and conflated with communities of

[14] See Y.J. PARK AND A. CHEN, «Intersections of Race, Class, and Power: Chinese in post-apartheid Free State», in L. HEINECKEN AND H. PROZESKY, eds. *Society in Focus: Change, Challenge and Resistance. Reflections from South Africa and beyond,* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2010.

[15] See Y.J. PARK AND A. CHEN, «Intersections of Race, Class, and Power», cit. ; P. HARRISON, ET AL, *Strategy and Tactics: Chinese Immigrants and Diasporic Spaces in Johannesburg*, paper presented at the Chinese in Africa/Africans in China working conference, Johannesburg, 21-22 August 2012; and K. PATEL, «Chinese traders: Love them or loathe them, they are here to stay», *The Daily Maverick*, 15 June 2012.

[16] See Y.J. PARK, «Perceptions of Chinese in Southern Africa: Rooted in the Local, Social History, and in Memory», in *African Studies Review*, forthcoming, for further discussions.

Chinese and Indian South Africans. In the language of Thakur, ethnic Asians in South Africa, both native and foreign, might then be viewed as a "non-threatening other" or "acceptable other".

Asians in South Africa: a "familiar other"

> Most black South Africans do not hate the Chinese.
> The Chinese are accepted. They are the "other" but not the hostile "other" [17].

In an effort to understand local perceptions of the Chinese in southern Africa, a research team administered approximately 300 questionnaires, 100 of which were implemented within the University of Johannesburg (UJ) community in 2008 and another 200 across Johannesburg and Soweto in 2009. A preliminary review of the survey data indicates that South Africans generally have a well-rounded view of the Chinese. For example, close to half of the UJ respondents agreed that Chinese small business helps South Africa generally, but with some costs. For example, some stated that the Chinese help to create jobs, but often employees must endure long hours and low pay. Others explained that the Chinese assist in bringing in consumer goods but "kill" some local businesses.

The vast majority of the UJ survey respondents indicated that they saw the Chinese as hardworking (64%), disciplined (49%), and friendly (57%). A smaller number stated that the Chinese were business-minded (10%) and smart, wise, or intelligent (8%). Only a very small proportion of the respondents described the Chinese negatively: unfriendly (4%); shady, "crooks & capitalists," "snakes" (3%); and arrogant (1%). The general survey responses were similar, but not quite as positive: they responded that the Chinese were hardworking (62.6%), disciplined (33.3%), and friendly (28.8%), while a further 7.1% saw Chinese as unfriendly and another 7.1% saw them as racist. From amongst the general survey respondents, over 64% saw China's engagement with Africa as potentially beneficial for Africans, just over 50% thought increased Chinese migration would be beneficial to the country.

To the average South African, new Asian migrant communities blend in seamlessly (and are often confused with) older communities

[17] Interview with T. Ngwane, 30 October 2009.

of Indian and Chinese South Africans, who migrated to South Africa in the mid- to late 19th and early 20th centuries. Cases of "mistaken identity" are often exacerbated by the fact that large numbers of the new migrants tend to settle in or near areas where South Africans of Asian descent have historically congregated, as mentioned. Even in places where there were few Asians in residence prior to the past few decades, such as in the Free State province or in the traditionally Afrikaner communities of Brakpan and Boksburg, east of Johannesburg, we would argue that historical memories of the existing Asian South African communities, both positive and negative, have an impact on the reception given to these new migrant communities.

Chinese have been familiar faces in townships and cities throughout the country going back for many decades[18]; this historic presence may serve as a mitigating factor for potential violence. Most black South Africans grew up on Chinese martial arts films, *fahfee*[19], and Chinese shopkeepers[20]. The Chinese South African community has existed in South Africa since the late 19th century. During the apartheid era, with their official designation as "non-white", many Chinese made their living as shopkeepers in or near black or coloured townships. Many of these Chinese also quietly ran illegal *fahfee* games as a profitable side business, increasing their contact with black residents of townships and locations. One senior member of the South African Communist Party spoke fondly about his memories of growing up in Kimberley and of one family, in particular:

> The Changfoot family was open to non-racialism. They bore the hardships of apartheid as non-Afrikaans, non-white, but also being non-racial they used to give store credit (to their black customers). Most of their customers and their

[18] M. YAP AND D.L. MAN, *Colour, Confusion and Concessions. The history of the Chinese in South Africa.* Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press 1996; K.L. HARRIS, «The Chinese 'South Africans': an Interstitial Community», in L.WANG AND G. WANG (eds), *The Chinese Diaspora. Selected Essays. Volume II*, Singapore: Times Academic Press 1998; K.L. HARRIS, «Anti-Sinicsm: roots in pre-industrial colonial southern Africa», in *African and Asian Studies* 9, 2010: 213-231; and Y.J. PARK, *A Matter of Honour. Being Chinese in South Africa.* Johannesburg: Jacana Media Pty. 2008.

[19] *Fahfee* is an illegal gambling game based on a random selection of numbers; typically *fahfee* games were run by Chinese South Africans in black townships.

[20] See U. HO, *Paper Sons and Daughters. A Memoir.* Johannesburg: Picador 2012 for robust discussions of the historical context of Chinese in South Africa.

social relations were with blacks. These Chinese *fahfee* dealers and Chinese shopkeepers serve as key personal catalysts to my memory of the Chinese[21].

Interviews with black South Africans over the years indicate a fairly broad acceptance of Chinese in South Africa; qualitative interviews with South African leaders and decision-makers also revealed that most middle aged and older black South Africans recalled generally pleasant encounters with Chinese South African shopkeepers from their youth[22]. Often the Chinese were described as kind people who engaged with the local community, learned at least a few words of the local language, and would provide credit for groceries and sundries. Several black South Africans spoke fondly about their very first recollections of Chinese as those of Bruce Lee and other martial arts experts in the movies; these were admirable and tough characters, typically engaged in fighting the white man[23]. Personal encounters with Chinese shopkeepers or *fahfee* men were typically equally pleasant. The survey work corroborates the qualitative interviews: most South Africans have no particular issues with Chinese people; they are "other" but they are neither the "desired other" nor the "despicable other."

While it is clearly the black African migrant to South Africa who suffers the worst of violent xenophobic attacks, these diverse populations of Asian migrants are increasingly vulnerable not only to episodic violence, but more often to regular harassment and crime. Asian migrants may not bear the brunt of South African xenophobia at the moment; however, preliminary research indicates that they have been identified by corrupt government officials and thugs as potential targets for extortion and crime.

Crime and Racial Profiling

Typically, these migrants from various parts of Asia are not the primary targets of xenophobic violence; however, it would appear that there has been an increase in the numbers of violent incidents involv-

[21] Interview with C. Matlako, July 2010.

[22] Interviews with C. Matlako, June 2010; and T. Ngwane and M.Hlatshwayo, October 2009.

[23] South Africa's apartheid government maintained strict control over media; movies were limited, television was only broadcast in the 1970s, and censorship was practiced widely well into the 1990s. Curiously, martial arts films and American spaghetti Westerns were very popular and widely viewed across all race groups in South Africa.

ing Asian, particularly Bangladeshi and Pakistani shopkeepers, in the past few years. Based on our preliminary research, Asian migrants are increasingly being targeted for crimes and violence, albeit not to the same extent or in the same ways as African migrants.[24] Asian migrants are very visible and increasingly susceptible to different expressions of xenophobia and discrimination as well as opportunistic crime.

Given that many of the recent Chinese migrants have irregular legal status in the country, Chinese migrants are extremely vulnerable to corruption. Chinese friends and colleagues complain regularly that they are often stopped by local police fishing for bribes.[25] The Chinese Consul-General reported that he received a dozen calls daily from Chinese nationals complaining about traffic police, police, and immigration officers all attempting to extort bribes from them. He also reported receiving several reports of Chinese nationals being robbed by people carrying police badges. In response, the Consul-General lodged complaints with the Gauteng Police Commissioner and other station managers. He reported that corruption and crime were his biggest worries and that these had resulted in many wealthy Chinese people leaving South Africa[26].

Chinese and South Asian migrants in South Africa, particularly those engaged in retail and wholesale businesses regularly complain of robbery, hijacking, and burglary. Many South Africans seen to be aware that these migrants generally do not use the formal banking system, have significant quantities of cash, and often have insufficient security systems, thus they are "predisposed" to break-ins and lootings. They are, in the words of one of our informants, "soft targets". According to one Bangladeshi informant, "Even those with proper documents are harassed." Another Pakistani shopkeeper said of the local officials (both police and Home Affairs officers), "These people are 'troublers'; they only know how to make trouble for us." One of our

[24] Y.J. Park And P. Rugunanan, «Visible and Vulnerable: Asian migrant communities in South Africa», in *Atlantic Philanthropies Report: South African Civil Society and Xenophobia* 2009.

[25] The author, too, was pulled over by police while traveling for research with other ethnic Asian colleagues along a highway in the Free State province for no apparent reason; we could only assume that he thought he could wrangle a bribe from a group of Asian women traveling on their own. He was a bit surprised to hear US and Australian accents and see a US driver's license.

[26] Interview with Ambassador J. Zhong, 20 August 2008.

respondents went so far as to argue the following: "We are their personal ATMs! They hassle us whenever they need cash" [27].

In her study on Indian and Pakistani immigrants in Laudium, Joshi produced similar findings relating to constant police harassment and corruption against the immigrants[28]. As early as 2005 Nduru comments that although "South African police have a role to play in dealing with illegal migrants, troubling reports have emerged about their conduct – even towards foreigners who have obtained documents allowing them to stay in the country legally" [29]. Majodina goes on to state that "police routinely confiscate and destroy refugees' documents in order to justify arresting them" [30].

Our own research also included several reports of car hijackings which took place along the road after weekly or monthly stock purchases had been made in Johannesburg[31]; in other words, criminals were targeting shopkeepers after they stocked up at warehouse/distribution centers. While conducting interviews in Welkom and Bloemfontein in the Free State province we were told of two recent murders of Chinese business people, one just outside of Welkom and another involving a factory owner in the Botshabelo area; while we were unable to confirm these, there are often such reports in the news.

While the majority of extortion and crime incidents seem to be carried out by black South Africans, there is also ample evidence of migrant-on-migrant crime, mostly in the large cities and often involving organized gangs (possibly off-shoots of Chinese triads operating in the country). Crime and corruption are the most visible problems affecting all ethnic Chinese (as well as other Asian migrants), in part because few South Africans distinguish between the newer Chinese (and South Asian) migrants, many of whom are engaged in retail and wholesale trading activities. The confusion between and conflation of the newer and older communities also impacted on the Chinese South Africans

[27] Various interviews 2009; see also Y.J. PARK AND P. RUGUNANAN, «Visible and Vulnerable: Asian migrant communities in South Africa», *op. cit.*

[28] H. JOSHI, *"Aapra Manso" A Case Study of Indian and Pakistani Immigrants in Laudium*, unpublished paper 2008:15.

[29] M. NDURU, «SA doesn't roll out welcome mat for all immigrants», in *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2005.

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] Various interviews 2008, 2009, and 2010.

in their struggle for recognition as previously disadvantaged under affirmative action legislation.

2. The Law, Classification and Confusion: Chinese South Africans prior to and during apartheid

Legislation, as applied to the small ethnic Chinese population of South Africa throughout its history, has been haphazard at best, and ironically, often prompted by South African government experiences or interests with other parties. This short list includes the Indian migrant population, which by the late 1890s was growing and becoming a threat to local white traders; Japan, which was an important trading partner in the 1920s and again in the post-World War Two period; Taiwan, which became one of the most important trading partners in the 1970s and 1980s; and most recently, China. The first pieces of anti-Asian legislation actually targeted the Indian population; alarm at the growth of the Indian population, first with the "coolies" and later with independent migrants, spurred Natal, the Cape Colony, and the then South African Republic to implement immigration restrictions, as well as laws pertaining to trading, residence, and citizenship[32]. These legal measures were targeted at all "Asiatics", including the Chinese.

While Indians and Chinese were constructed as "non-white" during this early period when the white elite attempted to define South Africa as a white nation at the tip of Africa, racial policies were under negotiation and at times economics trumped ideologies. Because of their important status as an important trading partner, Japanese, for instance, were exempted from "non-white" status and granted special privileges, while Chinese were treated as "non-white". As early as 1928, this special status of the Japanese was written into the Liquor Act, which exempted Japanese from the definition of "Asiatic", thereby allowing them possession of alcohol and admission to public

[32] M. YAP AND D.L. MAN, *Colour, Confusion and Concessions. The history of the Chinese in South Africa, op. cit.* ; K.L. HARRIS, «The Chinese 'South Africans': an Interstitial Community», in L.WANG AND G. WANG (eds), *The Chinese Diaspora. Selected Essays. Volume II*, Singapore: Times Academic Press 1998; and Y.J. PARK, *A Matter of Honour. Being Chinese in South Africa.* Johannesburg: Jacana Media Pty. 2008.

bars[33]. The small Chinese community in South Africa protested this differential treatment; while the laws were not changed for their benefit, the fact that most South Africans could not distinguish between the Japanese and the Chinese worked in the interests of the Chinese South Africans. If questioned, they simply allowed whites to believe they were Japanese or said as much.

South Africa's close ties with Taiwan during the 1970s and 1980s also had similar impacts. In fact, state efforts to encourage Taiwanese investment in manufacturing led to changes in immigration legislation, allowing immigration from Asia to South Africa for the first time since 1951. Taiwanese were also granted exemptions under the Group Areas Act, and permitted to live in white-only designated areas. And the Free State province, which had previously banned any Asian settlement/residence, also changed laws in order to accommodate the Taiwanese[34]. As with the earlier confusion with the Japanese, again, most South Africans could not distinguish Taiwanese from Chinese South African, so the Chinese South Africans, in practice, sometimes exempted from apartheid era restrictions, while not actually gaining full rights.

In fact, during apartheid Chinese were classified differently under different pieces of legislation. Under the Electoral Act, Chinese were classified as "black"; according to the Department of Community Development, Chinese were classified as "Asian"; the Group Areas Act included Chinese in the general category of "coloured"; and Proclamation 73 of 1951 placed the Chinese in a separate population group. For the purposes of the Mixed Marriages and Immorality Acts, the Chinese were always viewed as "non-white" and could be prosecuted from crossing the color line; in other words, they could not marry or engage in sexual relations with whites without jeopardy of arrest and prosecution. During the course of my research I learned of many couples who entered into mixed marriages; all of them were either married in South Africa outside the law or marries outside the country;

[33] M. YAP AND D.L. MAN, *Colour, Confusion and Concessions. The history of the Chinese in South Africa*, *op. cit.*, p.247; Y.J. PARK, «Sojourners to Settlers: Early Constructions of Chinese Identity in South Africa, 1879-1949», in *African Studies* 65 (2), December 2006: 215.

[34] Y.J. PARK AND A. CHEN, "Intersections of Race, Class, and Power: Chinese in post-apartheid Free State", cit.; Y.J. PARK AND A. CHEN, «Recent Chinese migrations in small towns of post-apartheid South Africa», in *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales (REMI)*, 25 (1) 2009: 25-44.

many of them subsequently emigrated rather than live under such racist laws. The Chinese South Africans, as a group were subjected to all these and other pieces of apartheid legislation, but these laws were implemented haphazardly. Furthermore, Chinese South Africans did not have the right to vote until South Africa's first democratic election in 1994.

While the laws were relatively clear about the position of Chinese as "non-white", South Africans, particularly white South Africans, were confused, in part because of the history with the Japanese and the Taiwanese, mentioned earlier. Studies conducted by the HSRC in the late 1970s attested to the growing social acceptance of Chinese amongst whites. By the 1980s, large numbers of Chinese had already moved into white areas, were sending their children to private white schools, and attending universities in large numbers (proportionate to their community). While most of these were still permit-based privileges and concessions, always dependent on the white bureaucrat, neighbor, restaurant-owner turning a blind eye, there is, without a doubt, a generation of young Chinese South Africans who never really experienced apartheid-era deprivations. As with the general population, Chinese South Africans' experience of apartheid was dependent on a myriad of factors including both age and region. At the same time, it should also be noted that all blacks did not experience apartheid equally negatively; in fact, there were numerous black, coloured, and Indian South African business people who were able to take advantage of gaps in apartheid laws or bypass these altogether to accrue large fortunes during apartheid *because of* the separation of services and facilities by race.

3. Affirmative Action and the Chinese South Africans

Toward the end of the first decade of the new millennia, the Chinese South African community presented a legal and political challenge to the government while simultaneously making history and claiming their rightful place in South African society. Confusion and contestation arose around the exclusion of the Chinese from the specific language of the two pieces of post-apartheid affirmative action legislated through the Employment Equity Act (No. 55 of 1998) (EEA) and the

Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment Act (No. 53 of 2003) (BBBEE).

After years of internal discussions and debates, meetings with government officials, presentations to Parliament, and years of government indecision and inaction – all to seek clarification on their position vis-à-vis affirmative action legislation – the Chinese Association of South Africa (CASA) decided to press ahead with a court case. In December 2007, CASA launched a legal challenge against the South African government; specifically, the Ministers of Labor, Trade and Industry, and Justice and Constitutional Development.

While there were both practical and material motivations for CASA's position, the symbolic nature of their claims were central to their argument: their exclusion from EEA and BBBEE legislation was symbolic of their continued exclusion within the nation of South Africa. In the words of the chairperson of the Chinese Association of South Africa (CASA): «The [Chinese] community's struggle has not been about economic opportunism, but about [the] lack of recognition and clearing up of misconceptions of the historical injustices the South African Chinese faced»[35].

In June 2008, the Pretoria High Court issued an order that Chinese South Africans do, in fact, fall within the definition of "black people" – the phrasing used in the legislation to indicate their previous disadvantaged position – as pertains to the EEA and the BBBEE Act. While their court battle ended successfully, the media fallout was replete with the scathing headlines mentioned earlier. The CASA case speaks to the ambiguity and complications involved in systems of racial classification, both in the past and present. This ambiguity has manifested itself in the confusion in popular perception of how the Chinese were classified during apartheid and whether they had suffered discrimination, as well as where they stand today. The confusion was heightened by the immigration of large numbers of ethnic Chinese from Taiwan (starting in the last 1970s) and from mainland China (starting in the 1990s) to South Africa.

The court order only applied to Chinese South Africans and other Taiwanese or Chinese immigrants who had become citizens prior to 1994 – likely fewer than 20,000 in all. However, the lack of clarity about "which Chinese" and "how many Chinese" was a major con-

[35] CASA (Chinese Association of South Africa), Submission to Parliament, 2003.

tributing factor to the subsequent media frenzy and public reaction. Few South Africans distinguish between Chinese South African and Taiwanese South African citizens or new Chinese migrants. In fact, most Africans across the continent tend to refer to anyone from East Asia (and, at times, elsewhere in Asia) as Chinese. The fact that the ethnic Chinese community had grown from approximately 12,000 in the 1970s to well over 300,000 by 2008 added to the (erroneous) perception that the government "pie" would be further divided into ever smaller pieces.

The strong negative public response dampened any sense of victory on the part of the Chinese South African community. It also provided further evidence of their marginal and tenuous position in South Africa, despite their efforts to integrate and claim their South Africanness. The CASA case also reveals many of the flaws of current affirmative action legislation and underscores the ways in which these policies continue to hamper the nation-building process. One of the more outrageous but nonetheless emotive arguments used against the Chinese South Africans, for example, was that they had not participated in any visible way in the struggle against apartheid and therefore did not "merit" inclusion. In Biko's language, they were could conceivably be viewed as "non-white" but they were definitely not seen as "Black" in the broad political sense.

"Earning" Affirmative Action Benefits

> There's disadvantage, but […] the Chinese had some advantages[…]. In the long run, were they disadvantaged? I think it's very relative […]. In my personal experience, the Chinaman was under the tip of the shoe, under gentle pressure, whereas blacks and others were under the heel […] from my point of view, I was a bit under the tip[36].

Arguments against the inclusion of Chinese South Africans from affirmative action policies made prior to the court case often included their relative lack of suffering during apartheid and their lack of struggle credentials. In other words, Chinese South Africans were not seen to have suffered the deprivations and degradations of apartheid to the same extent as black South Africans and they were not visible in the

[36] Interview 1999.

fight against apartheid; therefore, they should not benefit from affirmative action.

Let me begin this section with a brief description of one of my research participants. Joseph, now in his mid-60s, worked as a medical doctor living in Kimberley. As a Chinese South African he was subjected to a quota system which limited the number of Chinese admitted to the University of the Witswatersrand Medical School. Because he lived in the Cape Province (now the Northern Cape Province), he was required to get a special permit from the Chinese Consul-General[37] (despite the fact that he was born in South Africa) attesting to his good standing within the community in order to travel between the Cape and the Transvaal (now Gauteng Province).

At medical school, he and the handful of other black, coloured, and Indian students were asked to leave the room when it came time to "practice" their surgical skills on cadavers. This is because "non-whites" were not permitted to be present during post-mortems conducted on white bodies; they were only permitted to examine the organs only after the body had been removed. After medical school, Joseph, even with his high marks and top qualifications, was not able to get a job in a white hospital; because he was defined as "non-white", he was prohibited from practicing medicine on white patients. Even if he were allowed to practice in a white hospital, he would have been paid at a lower pay scale. Instead, he chose to open a small private practice in one of the black locations outside of Kimberley; there he practiced medicine for many years, earning a loyal following within that community.

While discrimination during medical training and later practice was offensive, he explained that he suffered the highest levels of humiliation outside the workplace. Chinese were the first "non-whites" to move into white-only neighborhoods; however, in order to take "advantage" of these privileges, Chinese were initially required to go door-to-door to get signatures from their white neighbors permitting the "Chinaman" and his family to live there. All such concessions granted to Chinese South Africans during the 1960s and 1970s and even into the 1980s were either permit-based or discretionary; they

[37] At the time, South Africa had diplomatic ties with the Republic of China (ROC) or Taiwan. Apparently, neither nation found it particularly odd that ethnic Chinese born in South Africa should require/receive documents from the ROC's Consul-General for activities carried out in South Africa.

could be taken away at the slightest objection from any white person. While they did have greater privileges than most other "non-whites", these came at great cost.

Former President Nelson Mandela seemed to understand their suffering and recognized Chinese South Africans as members of the South African nation. He stated at a gathering of Chinese business people in 1998:

> It is a community which has shared the indignities heaped on all those in South Africa who were not categorised as "white", a community which, because of its small size and its own insistence on human dignity, helped expose the twisted logic of apartheid; and which made its contribution to passive resistance, to defiance, and to opposing group areas and segregated political structures […]. Today, in a democratic South Africa, we can at last draw on all these rich threads as we build a nation in which every community, however small, can flourish while its members are full and unqualified members of the broader South African nation[38].

During apartheid, in protest against the Group Areas Act, the Chinese consistently refused to conform. Through mostly diplomatic channels, they fought to be excluded from these laws which threatened their very livelihoods. While most of their apartheid-era battles were fought independently of the masses, a few did, in fact, join in. During the struggle, a small handful of Chinese, some avowedly communists, engaged in covert activities. During the course of my PhD interviews with over 70 Chinese South Africans, several people mentioned one family in particular, the Changfoots (mentioned earlier), who helped to hide and transport arms for *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, the military branch of the ANC. The Changfoots and others hid their activities for obvious reasons. Fear played a tremendous role in preventing Chinese from greater involvement during the struggle; their high visibility together with family, community, and cultural pressures ensured that Chinese remained inconspicuous during apartheid. Many Chinese South Africans subsequently emigrated rather than continue to live under apartheid, leading to a brain drain from that community[39]. Others, in their own quiet ways, protested.

[38] Downloaded from www.chineseforum.org.za.

[39] M. YAP AND D.L. MAN, *Colour, Confusion and Concessions. The history of the Chinese in South Africa, op.cit.*

One might also argue that while the Chinese did not actively participate in the struggle in large numbers, in their very in-betweenness, stuck somewhere between white and black, they struck significant blows against the apartheid structures. At several junctures in the early 1970s and the 1980s, many white liberals in South Africa questioned the continued exclusion of the small, law-abiding, and seemingly civilized community of Chinese South Africans; this questioning even reached into the higher echelons of apartheid government. As one newspaper stated:

> It seems paradoxical that one of South Africa's smallest ethnic minorities – the Chinese community of 8000 – is dealing some of the heaviest blows to the crumbling wall of applied apartheid. Soul-searching in Nationalist intellectual circles has, possibly, been more evident over the Chinese questions than with any other problem of racial segregation[40].

That the discrimination they suffered may have been relatively less harsh than the discrimination suffered by black South Africans makes is no less real. However, segments within the ANC seem intent on narrowing the definition of "black" and therefore "previously disadvantaged" to black South Africans by pressing the notion that blacks suffered more than anyone else, specifically, the Chinese, Indian and coloured South Africans. "Blackness" is then, increasingly, equated to "South Africanness".

4. Black = South African

Discourses of race, nation building, and identity have been dominated by two contradictory schools in the post-apartheid era. The idea of non-racialism was dominant during the struggle years and into Mandela's presidency. Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu were the two most famous proponents of the non-racialism school – of the "rainbow nation" and "many cultures, one nation". These slogans and ideals, while problematic and more aspirational than real, were understood to be inclusive of the nation's ethnic, racial, and religious

[40] *Daily News*, 30 June 1970.

diversity. These reflect a philosophy of inclusion in a new African identity[41].

President Mbeki, during his tenure, espoused a more Africanist view; while he paid lip service to the notion of non-racialism, he also enacted policies of transformation and redress being discussed here. President Zuma, for his part, has carried on with the race-based affirmative action policies; some members of the ANC have lobbied for even further "racialization" of these policies, demanding, for example, quotas in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces.

A number of prominent scholars have criticized these affirmative action policies because they conflict with the ideal of non-racialism; furthermore, they utilize the same racial categories used under apartheid laws without serious question or critique. One well-known historian pointed out:

> The further irony is that affirmative action, as a policy pursued by the ANC will continue to racialise our society. The African middle class put in place by way of affirmative action has everything to gain by maintaining racial boundaries and a racially structured system of promotion. In view of our history these responses are understandable. What is less understandable is how all this can be called non-racialism[42].

These policies are, by their very nature and purpose, racial; as such, they have made race and ethnicity more salient. They have created a class of black elite and bourgeoisie, but more critically, they have not addressed larger and more daunting problems of poverty, unemployment, skills shortages, and service delivery. The gap between rich and poor, measured by the GINI coefficient, has increased in the nearly two decades since the end of apartheid. Increasing poverty, joblessness, and growing numbers of service delivery protests and industrial actions, provide some evidence that affirmative action legislation have not accomplished what they set out to do. Moreover, it would appear that they have further divided the nation. These societal woes form the backdrop to such events as the May 2008 violence.

A recent round of highly publicized race debates involving popular columnist Kuli Roberts, government spokesperson Jimmy Manyi, and

[41] V. THAKUR, *op. cit.*, p.5.

[42] H. GILLIOMEE, «A politically incorrect view of non-racialism and majority rule», in W. JAMES, ET AL, *Now That We Are Free. Coloured Communities in a Democratic South Africa.* Cape Town: IDASA, 1996:99.

senior economist Trevor Manuel highlights the continuing racial tensions in the country[43]. Efforts by the Labor Department to amend affirmative action legislation to institute quotas that would reflect national race figures have cause concern amongst coloured and Indian communities with their concentrated populations in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, respectively. At the core of these debates lies a link between blackness and South Africanness.

It would appear that increasingly "black" is being conflated with "South African" and "black" somehow being construed as more South African or more legitimately South African. As mentioned earlier, however, black African migrants, even those who have been in South Africa for a decade or longer, are not only excluded but all too often viciously "othered" and attacked.

5. Conclusion: Race, Identity, and Belonging

Most older Chinese South Africans still recall the many humiliations they suffered during apartheid – of being refused service at restaurants and accommodation at hotels, and of having to apply for special permits in order to travel between provinces, to purchase homes in white areas, and to attend white schools and universities. They argue that Chinese were disadvantaged but that no one seems to recall this earlier disadvantaged position. These matters are important to them; they are seen as matters of equality and belonging in post-apartheid South Africa. Inclusion in these affirmative action laws are also critical to affirming their history in South Africa; perhaps they were not the most oppressed during apartheid, but they, too, have their stories of exclusion, discrimination, humiliation and South Africanness.

In post-apartheid South Africa, the state's nation-building process, the government's efforts at redress and redistribution of resources, and the ongoing debates between "non-racial" and "Africanist" camps will affect how the Chinese, other ethnic minority and migrant groups, and the black majority imagine themselves. At present, the ongoing debates both within and outside of government and the problematic poli-

[43] L. HESS, *Kuli's coloured column sparks outrage*, News24, February 28, 2011; NEWS24, *Jimmy Manyi a racist – Trevor Manuel*, News24, march 2, 2011; WONKIE.COM, *Blacks cannot be racists – Jimmy Manyi Cartoon* on http://www.wonkie.com/2011/03/07/jimmy-manyi-black-racists-cartoon/.

cies and inconsistent implementation of BEE and EE have resulted in continued feelings of exclusion amongst South African-born Chinese South Africans, as well as coloured and Indian South Africans.

Members of these minority groups of color feel they are being excluded from rights that they deserve; that they are, again, targets of discrimination. One refrain often heard in coloured communities was also frequently repeated in my interviews with older Chinese South Africans: "during apartheid we weren't white enough; now we're not black enough." Policies of redress, as they are currently being implemented, have resulted in an increasing salience of race and a thickening of racial boundaries, marking "difference" as more important than "unity"; as a result, progress towards goals inclusive, non-racial, cosmopolitan citizenship and belonging in a post-apartheid South Africa stagnates. The CASA case and the highly publicized and negative reactions of the court ruling bring into stark relief the continued significance of race and racial classifications, and the ongoing tensions between policies of redress and the construction of inclusive notions of citizenship.

Certainly for the small community of Chinese South Africans, their eventual court-ordered inclusion in affirmative action policies and the negative public response has only served to underline their own tenuous hold on their South Africanness. While Chinese in South Africa have long-occupied a confused, nebulous space their initial exclusion from affirmative action policies and the later negative public reaction to their court-ordered inclusion has reinforced this sense of in-betweenness. The global rise of China, the growing importance of both economic and political ties between China and South Africa, and the increasing presence of new Chinese migrants in the country further confuse the issue of Chinese South Africans' belonging and place in South Africa.

If affirmative action policies continue to dole out benefits based on race, perceptions of "blackness" (who is "black enough"?) and calculations of relative suffering or deprivation during apartheid, they will continue to divide South Africa. In the humble opinion of this writer, a long-term resident of South Africa and a beneficiary of American affirmative action policies, South Africa's affirmative action policies must be revisited and revised. It is time to go back to the drawing board, starting with a clearer understanding of the ultimate objectives

of such policies and their potential impacts on future generations of increasingly diverse South Africans.

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II. Elections

Minorities, Plebiscites and Caliphate in British Northern Cameroons 1959-1961

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1.Introduction

On 13 March 1959 the United Nations General Assembly approved a Resolution which recommended that Britain take steps in consultation with a United Nations Plebiscite Commissioner to organise (under United Nations supervision) plebiscites in the British Cameroons in order to ascertain the wishes of the inhabitants concerning their future. The Resolution specifically recommended that in the Northern part the plebiscite should take place mid-November 1959 and that the people should be asked do you wish the Northern Cameroons to be part of the Northern Region of Nigeria when the Federation of Nigeria becomes independent? Or are you in favour of deciding the future of the Northern Cameroons at a later date[1]. The Northern Cameroons population opted for the second alternative but in February 1961 they chose the Federal Republic of Nigeria instead of the Republic of Cameroun in a second United Nations-sponsored plebiscite. This paper seeks to provide analysis of the reasons for the contrasting results, especially given the short time period between the two votes. It suggests that the reasons were intimately bound up with the domestic politics of Nigeria as it moved towards independence and that local politics within Northern Cameroons held great sway. It further suggests that the question of minorities constituted a central plank in the political discussions.

A study of the plebiscites in Northern Cameroons is useful if only because it helps to complement research conducted on the subject in Southern Cameroons[2] and serves to offer some basis of comparison

[1] United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) A/C.4/L.582. The Future of the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under United Kingdom Authority 1959.

[2] Some useful studies are B. CHEM-LANGHEE, *The Kamerun Plebiscites 1959-1961: Perceptions and Strategies*, PhD thesis, British Columbia, 1976 and *The Paradoxes of Self-Determination in the Cameroons under United Kingdom Administration: the Search for Iden-*

between them. Northern Cameroons had been part of the German colony, Kamerun, which was captured by Anglo-French forces during World War I and partitioned in 1919 between Britain and France. Britain's share of Kamerun was considerably smaller than that gained by France but both were placed under League of Nations mandate in 1922 and under United Nations trusteeship in 1946 when this organisation replaced the defunct League. Even before the mandate took effect, Britain laid down the administrative arrangements for its territory. Thus, British Southern Cameroons was constituted into a single Province which was attached to Southern Nigeria while British Northern Cameroons was assigned to several Northern Nigeria Provinces. Northern Cameroons consisted of two strips of land north and south of the Benue river, and it stretched from the shores of Lake Chad to the Southern Cameroons border, a distance of about 500 miles.

Under the terms of the mandate for British Cameroons, Britain submitted an annual report to the Council of the League of Nations but there was no provision for the League to independently verify the situation in British Cameroons. This deficiency was corrected under the United Nations trusteeship system for the UN sent triennial missions to visit and report on social, economic and political development[3]. It was the report of the 1958 Visiting Mission that contained recommendations for the plebiscite.

2.The 1959 Plebiscite Results

It should be emphasised at the outset that the call made by the 1958 Visiting Mission to consider and settle the future of Northern Cameroons was based on the fact that Nigeria was moving towards independence. Since British Cameroons was administered by Britain on behalf of the United Nations and the international community it was not legally a part of Nigeria. Yet, British Cameroons was administered

tity, Well-being and Continuity Lanham, Md: Universities of America Press, 2004; V .J. NGOH *Cameroon 1884-1985: A Hundred Years of History,* Yaounde: Navi-Group Publications 1998, *Southern Cameroons 1922-1961: a constitutional history,* Aldershot: Ashgate 2001, and V. J. NGOH (ed), *Cameroon From a Federal to a Unitary State 1961-1972: A Critical Study,* Limbe: Design House 2004; C. ANYANGWE, *Betrayal of Too Trusting a People: the UN, the UK and the Trust Territory of the Southern Cameroons* Bamenda: Langaa, RPCIG 2009.

[3] For details of the management of the trusteeship system see United Nations *Yearbook of the United Nations 1948,* New York, 1950.

as though it formed an integral part of Nigeria and settlement of its future was becoming urgent by 1958 when the United Nations Visiting Mission arrived.

This Mission had been directed by the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Trusteeship Council to give its views on the method of consultation to be adopted when the time came for the people of the Territory to express their wishes about its future. At its twenty-third session (30 January - 20 March 1959), the United Nations Trusteeship Council considered the report of the 1958 Visiting Mission, especially its recommendations on the future of British Cameroons. Of greater significance was the detailed discussion in the General Assembly during its resumed thirteenth session on 20 February 1959 especially given the presence of the key political leaders from both Southern and Northern Cameroons among the British delegation.

The 1958 Visiting Mission had concluded that

> the wishes of the northern and southern peoples of the territory should be considered separately. The Mission considered that the manifest opinion of the northern population as a whole was that the Northern Cameroons should become a permanent part of the Northern region of Nigeria. If the General Assembly accepted such a union as the basis for the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement, the Mission recommended, no further consultation need to be held[4].

Given the results of the 1959 plebiscite, the Mission's analysis was severely flawed. Indeed, even before this vote had taken place, discussions in the Assembly's Fourth Committee made it clear that a majority of the representatives, contrary to the Mission's opinion, favoured holding a plebiscite in the Northern Cameroons.

Once the decision had been made to hold the plebiscite in Northern Cameroons, the requisite administrative arrangements were effected. The plebiscite was to be conducted using the electoral register then being compiled for the elections to the Federal Nigerian Parliament and registration was completed by August 1959; a United Nations Plebiscite Commissioner – Dr Djalal Abdoh from Iran – was appointed to supervise the plebiscite on behalf of the General Assembly and

[4] United Nations Trusteeship Council (UNTC) T/1426, *United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa 1958. Report on the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under British Administration,* 20 Jan 1959, par. 166-203; par. 169 contains the specific recommendation.

he was requested to submit a report to the Trusteeship Council on the organisation, conduct and results; Sir John Dring was appointed as the United Kingdom Plebiscite Administrator; and the plebiscite was set for 7 November 1959.

The results are presented in the following table and the high number of rejected votes in the Chamba constituency stemmed from the fact that the polling officer had not stamped the ballot papers! Voters chose between two alternatives: i) do you wish the Northern Cameroons to be part of the Northern Region of Nigeria when the Federation of Nigeria becomes independent? ii) or are you in favour of deciding the future of the Northern Cameroons at a later date?

Table 1: The 1959 Plebiscite Vote

	Registered Voters	*First alternative*	*Second alternative*	*Rejected votes*	*Total votes*	*% poll*
Dikwa North	16,704	7,575	7,197	8	14,780	88.4
Dikwa Central	22,736	8,891	11,998	8	20,887	91.9
Gwoza	12,506	3,356	6,773	33	10,162	81.2
Cubunawa Madagali	16,827	4,247	9,818	8	14,073	83.6
Adamawa North-east	23,100	6,120	13,578	30	19,728	85.4
Chamba	18,562	4,539	11,651	383	16,573	89.2
Adamawa South	-	-	-	-	-	-
a) Gashaka-Toungo	4,775	2,252	2,099	1	4,352	91
b) Mambilla	10,916	2,745	7,353	53	10,151	92.9
Wukari (Tigon-Ndoro-Kentu)	3,345	3,063	89	1	3,153	94.2
Total	*129,549*	*42,788*	*70,546*	*525*	*113,859*	*87.8*

Source: (Public Record Office) CO554/1748 See Annexure D to Report on the Plebiscite held in the Northern Cameroons under United Kingdom Trusteeship on 7 Nov 1959 by A.J. Dring, Plebiscite Administrator.

Initially, Northern Nigeria officials blamed the results on postponement of the plebiscite in Southern Cameroons, the vague wording of the more popular alternative and on Britain. Sir Ahmadu Bello, Premier of the Northern Region and *Sardauna* of Sokoto, initially appeared to blame both Abdoh and Dring. He supported the view that some British officials in parts of Northern Cameroons, particularly in Dikwa Division, had undermined his government's campaign since Britain wanted to hold on to Northern Cameroons and utilise the area

as an imperial nuclear war base when Nigeria and other West African colonies became independent. Sir Gawain Bell, the British Governor of Northern Nigeria, opined that Bello could either support those who wanted to petition against the results or shut his mouth[5]. Yet the views of the *Sardauna* were supported by at least one newspaper columnist who doubted that he was wrong and argued that Britain was doing its best to halt the march of Africans towards independence through its opposition to draft United Nations resolutions condemning apartheid in South Africa[6].

The allegation that Britain undermined the campaign of the Northern People's Congress government was intimately bound up with a charge that the people were not told what was really at stake. The Bama branch of the NPC criticized the practice of recruiting local uninformed people with no means of identification one month before the plebiscite and sending them to inform the masses without any means of transport in such a difficult time. Rather than provide satisfactory and genuine truth involving the two questions, British officials allegedly told the people that if they voted for the second alternative Britain would provide education and other amenities but a vote for the first alternative meant rule by Nigerians. If, argued the Bama branch of the NPC, the two questions were interpreted in this way it was obvious that among our unenlightened masses the chose [*sic*] will be the second alternative on the principle that one can better swim in the shallow waters of the lake one knows than dive into an unknown sea[7]! However, this petition unwittingly raised a key issue: the possibility that the higher number of votes cast for the second alternative was due to local grievances.

Local grievances would seem to provide the soundest explanation for the results. This is based on a direct link between the vote and local dissatisfaction and the fact that the Northern Nigerian government responded by investigating local government. Indeed, the vexed question of the influence of the Adamawa Fulani was central to the discussion. Nigerian political parties were quick to mobilise using the fear of Fulani hegemony being exercised over the *habe* peoples of Northern

[5] The Sardauna's comments and the British response may be found at (PRO) CO 554/1750.

[6] *Was the Premier Wrong?,* in *Nigerian Citizen* newspaper of Saturday, 21/11/1959.

[7] (UNGA) A\C.4\408\Add.2. Letter from N.P.C Dikwa Branch to the Secretary General 10 Nov 1959.

Cameroons. Thus, a year before the Plebiscite, the opposition Action Group-United Middle Belt Congress alliance had complained that the political institutions of the inhabitants of Northern Cameroons had been abolished or made into a non-entity, the area had become a colony of Yola (headquarters of Adamawa Province) and had been transformed into a place for adventure of the few ruling families from Yola.Thus, argued the AG-UMBC petitioners, Fulani from Yola held a monopoly on the influential administrative posts such as District Head, judge and scribe. This had created a situation whereby a strong opinion arises in the territory of wishing in the first instance to cast away the domination of Yolaners before any decision of independence from British Trusteeship[8]. These arguments presented in 1958 to the U.N Visiting Mission were successfully reiterated in the 1959 plebiscite campaign and helped to sway voters against joining Nigeria. The line of argument presented by the AG-UMBC, one based on the promotion and protection of minority interests, should be considered alongside the explanation offered by Sir Gawain Bell.

Bell had concluded before the plebiscite that the fact that only Northern Cameroons would vote (for the Southern Cameroons Plebiscite was postponed) and the possibility of continuing the trusteeship system would be the decisive influences on the outcome. The official line, as stated by Bell, held that voters were swayed towards the continuation of trusteeship than towards assimilation to the Northern Region, and that consequently the outcome of the plebiscite has to some extent been prejudiced. In this regard, Bell had support from the British delegation at the United Nations. The British suggested to the Fourth Committee that Northern Cameroons had secured an exceptional share of development finance for social and economic amenities, and this left the population favourably disposed to continued trusteeship and inclined to vote for the second alternative[9].

Britain, through Sir Andrew Cohen at the United Nations, did admit that the trusteeship factor was not the real reason for the choice made by Northern Cameroonians. Cohen clearly recognised that there was a more important reason and his explanation is worth quoting:

[8] See Extracts from memorandum dated 5 November 1958, from the United Middle Belt Congress/Action Group Alliance, in Annex IV to *Report of 1958 Visiting Mission*.

[9] (PRO) CO554/1748 p. 253, United Kingdom Mission to the U.N. Statement by Sir Andrew Cohen to Fourth Committee 5 Dec 1959.

> We believe that the Plebiscite was an expression by the people of the Trust Territory in most but not all areas of the Trust Territory of dissatisfaction at not being able to play a larger part in the system of local administration and I emphasise here the term local administration[10].

Sir John Dring, the Plebiscite Administrator, concluded that "the question in many cases boiled down to Fulani-Chamba, Fulani-Mambilla, Fulani-Pagan and so on to higher taxes-lower taxes, all anti the existing Native Authority"[11]. Dring clearly recognized the minority issue as central to the plebiscite outcome. The views of the UN Plebiscite Commissioner, Dr Abdoh, on the place of local government issues were more clearly articulated.

It is something of a surprise that Dring initially sought to suggest that the wording and/or interpretation of the choices before the Northern Cameroons people was significant to the outcome, when we consider that Dring's own report contained the unambiguous conclusion of Dr Abdoh – based on the concrete reports from plebiscite observers – that opposition to local government was critical. We, therefore, quote Abdoh:

> It would appear that the majority of the voters made use of the opportunity offered by the Plebiscite to register what was in effect a protest vote against the system of local administration prevailing in the Northern Cameroons. The information that I gathered in the Territory supports the view that the people desire the introduction of reforms to the system of local government - which to them is synonymous with government [emphasis added] - and that one of the reasons why the majority voted in favour of the second alternative was to express the will for a speedy introduction of these reforms[12].

The view that local government issues – within which were subsumed minority grievances – underpinned the 1959 results is supported by the vote in the Tigon-Ndoro-Kentu polling district where more than 90% of those casting a vote opted to join Northern Nigeria immediately. British officials in Nigeria attributed this result to the absence of an outside District Head unlike elsewhere in the areas administered as part of Adamawa Province. The peoples of Tigon, Ndoro and Kentu had been administratively transferred from Gashaka Dis-

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] (PRO) CO554/1748, Report on the Plebiscite held in Northern Cameroons under United Kingdom Trusteeship on 7 Nov 1959 by Sir A. J. Dring, Plebiscite Administrator.

[12] See par. 205 - 225 in Abdoh's report from which this quote is taken.

trict (Adamwa Emirate) to Wukari District in 1933 and they were said to have accepted this transfer with heartfelt relief since they claimed that the Gashaka Fulbe had treated them as slaves[13]. Local government issues involved, *inter alia*, neglect, exploitation, absence of social or economic opportunities as well as the ethnic and/or religious relationship; all of which intertwined the minorities issue.

When Abdu Jato left as District Head of Gwoza District in 1948, he advised his successor, Muhammadu Boi, *ka mai da hankali da yaran nan* – be careful of these young men[14]; a reference to the increasing assertiveness on the part of the small number of educated youths in the District. People in Gwoza complained that their area was neglected in every regard: it lacked roads, schools, hospitals and adequate marketing opportunities; the prospects of promotion for people from Gwoza within the Native Administration were slim; and Gwoza was not adequately represented on the Native Administration. This neglect was, in turn, attributed to the political and administrative arrangements in place: Gwoza was the neglected region of the Dikwa Division because it had little in common with the peoples of the rest of Dikwa Division but it was from the latter that the local authorities were chosen. Thus, within the Division, development of Gwoza was not a priority[15]. Similar sentiments were echoed by the leaders of opinion among the Chamba and other groups in the Adamawa Districts.

The grievances of people in the Southern Adamawa Districts were varied. Generally, they complained that remoteness from Yola and the fact that the Native Administration was the preserve of persons appointed from Yola and who were religiously and ethnically different, hindered development. In the view of Abubakar Gurumpawo, who was elected to the Nigerian Parliament, the Fulani were very wicked and did not want to bring development to the Chamba area while the influence of the emir or *Lamido* of Adamawa was too much[16]. This view was echoed by Samuel Samwe, a Christian Chamba, who in 1958 served on the Adamawa emirate's Outer Council but found this a

[13] (Nigeria National Archives, Kaduna - hereafter NAK) WukariDist 1/116 - Reports on Kentu Area of Benue Province 1933 and 1934.

[14] Personal communication from Professor Abdullahi Mahadi who comes from the area and has studied its history.

[15] Personal interview with *Alhaji* Buba Chekene and *Alhaji* Abbas Rahah at Gwoza Town, 27/01/1986.

[16] Personal interview with Abubakar Gurumpawo at Ganye, 22/07/1988.

frustrating exercise: his advice and/or requests were simply ignored and the meetings were conducted in fulfulde language to further emphasise his exclusion[17]. Samwe and Gurumpawo were, along with the likes of Dominic Mapeo and Philip Maken, representatives of Chamba separatism which advocated the separation of the Chamba from Adamawa Province for reform of local government was seen as crucial to reversing their backward status. The Chamba position found support with the 1958 Visiting Mission which took the view that while improved communications and general development could be expected to diminish grounds for serious complaint,

> the Mission feels that the distance of the Trust Territory districts from Yola, the seat of the Native Authority, and the fact that the majority of the people in them are relatively under-developed pagan tribes which also have no traditional bonds with Islam, warrant at least a re-examination of the suitability of the present system of administration.

It is of some significance, especially given the response of the Northern Nigeria Government to the 1959 Plebiscite results, that the Mission proposed the establishment in these Districts of one or more subordinate Native Authorities which might have the virtue of enabling greater decentralisation of local administration and closer participation by the people[18]. The demand for greater participation in government was a key demand of the minorities across Nigeria in the period immediately preceding and following independence.

While the lack of representation in local government and the dearth of development were critical factors throughout the Southern Adamawa Districts, indeed throughout Northern Cameroons, people on the Mambilla plateau had a more personal grievance. People in twenty villages had asked to be transferred to the Southern Cameroons because they were not related to their Fulani overlords and because all local powers were vested in District Heads appointed from Yola, the last three of whom had ruled them very harshly and the present incumbent was thought to be the worst. Among his major sins of commission was the fact that he does not move on foot, we are his horses. Always when he is going out on tour, he has to be carried by us. His weight is that which even a horse could resist but still we are forced to

[17] Personal interview with Samuel Samwe at Ganye, 23/07/1988.
[18] *1958 Visiting Mission Report,* par. 160.

carry him. The Government of Northern Nigeria did not condemn this behaviour preferring to characterise the District Head in question as one who had a high reputation for integrity, sincerity and impartiality who was occasionally carried in a litter while touring but who paid for his carriers[19]! It should come as no surprise that Mambilla constituents voted overwhelmingly for the second alternative in November 1959. The Higi in Micika District like the Chamba and Mambilla resented their lack of political power with its corollary of social and economic stagnation. Their views were articulated by Umaru Micika who – during the plebiscite campaigns – was subject to heckling as well as judicial harassment by the Native Administration dominated by the Yola Fulani[20]. According to him, Yola and Kaduna (administrative capital of Northern Nigeria) were too far and if the Higi had their own local government, their problems would be addressed more readily.

Yet there had been opposition to Yola before the Plebiscite. This opposition which had its roots in the fact that the Adamawa Emirate was in fact a collection of sub-emirates which acknowledged the overlordship of Yola, was strengthened by European partition and rule. The Districts which fell under British rule after 1919 had been under German and French administration during which time attempts had been made to develop Garoua as a rival headquarters to Yola, especially as the bulk of the Adamawa emirate was in German and then French hands[21].

During German and French rule, the Fulani district heads had been left much to their own devices and greeted news of their transfer to British authority with some incredulity; at least in the case of the notorious Hamman Yaji of Madagali District who in 1919 had hoped that

[19] (NAK) YolaProf C925, Permanent Secretary, Min of Northern Cameroons Affairs to Resident Adamawa [Top Secret] 11 November 1959 and Resident Adamawa to Permanent Secretary, MNCA 18 February 1959 and 17 March 1959.

[20] Umaru Micik's case was typical: he was sentenced to 3 months in prison in Oct 1958 for using foul language but applied for a review and the Resident ordered a retrial by the Chief Magistrate to enable Umaru Micika to call witnesses in support of his charge of provocation.

[21] For the history of Adamawa emirate until about 1919 see S. ABUBAKAR, *The Lamibe of Fombina: A Political History of Adamawa 1809-1901*, London: OUP 1977, M. Z. NJEUMA, *Fulani Hegemony in Yola (Old Adamawa) 1809-1902* Yaounde: CEPER 1978, H. RUDIN, *Germans in the Cameroons: A Case Study in Modern Imperialism* New York: Greenwood 1968 reprint.

the news that the British were coming was but a lie[22]. Yet they need not have worried for under British rule there was little substantial change except that when Britain moved to ease the worst abuses of the system they deposed the existing district head and asked Yola to send a replacement. This served to restrict the opportunities for the original ruling families and this was at the root of the 1953 protest. In 1953 Hayatu was deposed as District Head and a Yola prince was brought to Madagali as his successor but the people staged a riot; the first revolt of Northern Adamawa Districts against Yola authority[23]. While this was a case of Fulani-Fulani rivalry, the rioters included non-Fulani people.

In considering the counter-factual, what would the late M.G. Smith have made of the vote in Northern Cameroons? In outlining his arguments for social and cultural pluralism, Smith cited the case of Maradi where the Hausa dynasty of Katsina, having been driven out by the Sokoto *jihad* in 1807, established a plural society since the Muslim rulers formed a minority which controlled non-Muslims whose institutions were quite distinctive[24]. Smith's work on the Sokoto Caliphate covered the classical emirates[25] in which a Hausa-Fulani Muslim elite ruled over a largely Muslim, Hausa population although some *maguzawa* (non-Muslim Hausa) lived in their midst. In these emirates, then, the pure Native Authority system was established. Adamawa, however, was a different case. Firstly, there existed the Yola elite and the Fulani sub-establishment in the Adamawa Districts of Northern Cameroons. Secondly, the extent of Islamisation always appeared more superficial in Adamawa than in the emirates analysed by Smith. Further, there existed a large number of *habe* (non-Fulani) who were all treated as pagans although some were Muslim. It was this dynamic which is crucial to our comprehension of the 1959 plebiscite vote and which was succinctly captured in two extracts

[22] J.H VAUGHAN AND A. KIRK-GREENE (eds), *The Diary of Hamman Yaji: chronicle of a West African Muslim ruler* Indiana University Press Bloomington 1995.

[23] Personal interview with *Alhaji* Dauda Belel in Mubi 27/01/1986; also see chapter 4 of A. ABUBAKAR, *Mubi in Search of Autonomy*, B.A thesis Ahmadu Bello University 1976.

[24] M. G. SMITH, «Social and Cultural Pluralism in the Caribbean», in *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 83, 1960, pp. 763 -777.

[25] See the following works by Smith: *The Two Katsinas* and *The State of Sokoto,* both 1969, unpublished typescript; *Government in Zazzau* London: OUP 1960, *The Affairs of Daura* Berkeley: University of California Press 1978, and *Government in Kano 1350-1950* Boulder: Westview 1997.

made ten years apart. In 1949, Britain informed the United Nations that, with respect to Northern Cameroons,

> the various races that inhabit the plains have all acquired a superficial similarity of social structure through the influence of Islam, which in its local form countenances sufficient breaches of its strictly religious aspects to be able to absorb without difficulty many who still remain pagan at heart. The outward signs of the Moslem faith are everywhere to be found, but its inward meaning is honoured by comparatively few[26].

In assessing the results of the 1959 plebiscite, Dr. Abdoh felt constrained to point out that the Northern Cameroons pagans belonged to those sections of Northern Nigeria

> whose populations the Northern system has touched little, round which rather than over which it has flowed, and which have never been absorbed into the system but merely enclosed within it. There are sections of the country where the inhabitants are still pagan and where Islamic law is hardly understood[27].

Even before the 1959 Plebiscite, several top officials of the NPC had agreed with the Governor of Northern Region that there would be great advantage to Government if some of the pagan areas of Adamawa could, as suggested by the United Nations Mission be given more opportunity to run their own affairs as subordinate Native Authorities. Yet these officials recognised that while the leaders of the Adamawa Native Authority had been asked to draw up proposals for reform of local government, they will certainly not enjoy having to do so and will give away as little as they can[28]. This paper suggests that it would be wrong to assume that the problem of local administration and the feeling of being marginalised suddenly appeared in the 1950s. Given the prominence of opposition on the part of the Chamba, we examine their situation.

In the 1930s, Britain set about reorganising the area by creating a Chamba federation centred on Jada but headed by a Fulani Muslim and which was formally inaugurated in 1937. The arguments mar-

[26] Colonial Office *Report to the General Assembly of the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons under United Kingdom Trusteeship for the Year 1949,* London HMSO 1951, par. 380.

[27] UNGA. A/4314. Report of the United Nations Plebiscite Commissioner, 1959.

[28] (PRO) CO 554/1746 p.88. Sir Gawain Bell to Chris G. Eastwood, Colonial Office 23 June 1959.

shalled in favour of this arrangement included the traditional claims of Fulani political genius and local rivalries among the autochthons. Yet Britain later admitted that World War II and a lack of organised touring had spoilt the administration[29]. By 1951, some wished to make it quite clear that the Chamba should be made independent of the Fulani and to insist on the appointment of a Chamba as *wakilin* Chamba, (i.e. head of the Federation) as part of a series of reform measures. They claimed that only Fulani were employed in the Native Administration and this had *not* been part of the reform proposals of the 1930s. Rather than investigate these claims, Britain looked for scapegoats and accused the Christian missions of stirring up trouble. By 1958, the Chamba spokesmen suggested to the Minorities Commission that they should be constituted into a separate division within a Middle Belt region and repeated this request to the 1958 United Nations Visiting Mission while expanding it into a desire that their District Head should be named from among themselves and that Northern Cameroons should be broken up into separate administrative units[30].

The views of the Chamba, Higi and other groups in Northern Cameroons formed part of the discourse on the rights of minorities across Nigeria; a discourse of such importance that in 1958 Britain had appointed a Commission of Enquiry to investigate and allay the fears of minorities in Nigeria. While the Commission did not include Northern Cameroons in the scope of its enquiry[31], its comments on the minorities problem – the causes, manifestations and possible solutions – were clearly applicable to the area. Moreover, the NPC government definitely conceptualised the problem in Northern Cameroons as rooted within the minorities question and its response focused on the local government system.

[29] (NAK) YolaProf C778 pp. 13-22.

[30] UNTC T/1426: Report on UN Visiting Mission to Cameroons under British Admin; see Annex 1 p. 34; YolaProf C778. The Chamba Subordinate Native Authority - A statement prepared for the visit of the Minorities Commission to Adamawa Province in Feb 1958.

[31] See ch. 1 par. 19 of *Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into the fears of Minorities and the means of allaying them.* July 1958 London HMSO, Cmd 505.

3. The *Sardauna*'s Response to the 1959 Plebiscite Results

A plenary meeting of the General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 1473 (XIV) on 12 December 1959 which expressed its appreciation of the work of the Plebiscite Commissioner and recommended that Britain - in consultation with the UN Plebiscite Commissioner - organise a second and definitive Plebiscite in Northern Cameroons for which arrangements should begin on 30 September 1960 and which should be held no later than March 1961. In this further plebiscite the choice facing the electorate would be : a) do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Republic of Cameroun?; b) do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Federation of Nigeria?

Moreover, Resolution 1473 requested necessary measures to promote the effective democratization of the system of local government and to separate the administration of Northern Cameroons from that of Nigeria by 1 October 1960[32], the date chosen for Nigeria's independence.

Victory for the second alternative in the 1959 Plebiscite was a major blow to Ahmadu Bello, Premier of Northern Nigeria and as *Sardauna* of Sokoto, a scion of the Sokoto ruling dynasty. Bello claimed that the British had subverted the best efforts of his NPC team since they wanted to retain the territory as a paradise for whites but he quickly switched from venting his anger at the British to establishing the mechanism which would ensure that Northern Cameroonians would vote for Nigeria in the second plebiscite. The *Sardauna* correctly perceived that the Northern Cameroons is still to be wooed and much may be won during courtship that may not be offered after marriage[33]. He clearly recognised that speed was of the essence and his biographer points to several measures which were taken in quick succession to shore up his government's position in Northern Cameroons and secure the territory for Nigeria in 1961.

Paden underscores the fact that Bello established a commission of enquiry under Muhammad Tukur, the *emir* of Yauri, in December 1959 with the aim of finding ways to allow greater autonomy at local

[32] United Nations. *Yearbook of the United Nations 1959,* NY 1960, pp.364-365.

[33] This was the view of Sir Andrew Cohen expressed to the Fourth Committee on 5 Dec 1959; see also J. PADEN, *Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto* London: Hodder & Stoughton 1986.

administration level and diminishing the negative influence of the Yola/Fulani factor. Implementation of the commission's report meant significant reforms in Northern Cameroons. Gwoza was separated from Dikwa to constitute a separate Native Authority. With respect to the Adamawa Districts, these were separated from Yola Emirate. The Northern districts were formed into a single Native Authority with headquarters at Mubi. In the southern districts a) the Kentu-Tigon-Ndoro area became an independent United Hills Subordinate Native Authority; b) Gaskaka and Mambilla constituted a separate Native Authority; and c) a Chamba Native Authority was also formed. Of greater significance was the fact that the *Sardauna* took a more active role in the 1961 plebiscite campaign and assumed direct responsibility for Northern Cameroons affairs in the Northern Nigeria Cabinet[34].

4. The 1961 Plebiscite

In February 1961, men and women voted (albeit on different days) in the second UN-supervised plebiscite to determine the future of Northern Cameroons and the results are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: The 1961 Plebiscite Vote

Plebiscite District	*Nigeria (Black box)*	*Cameroun (dark pink)*
Dikwa North	22, 765	10,562
Dikwa Central	28,697	24,203
Gwoza	18,115	2, 554
Cubunawa-Madagali	16,904	13,299
Mubi	23, 798	11, 132
Chamba	9, 704	25, 177
Gashaka-Toungo	4,999	3, 108
Mambilla	13, 253	7,467
United Hills	7, 791	157
Total	*146, 296 (59.97%)*	*97, 659 (40.03%)*

Source: UNTC T/1556, Report of the UN Commissioner for the Supervision of the Plebiscites in the Southern and Northern Parts of the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under United Kingdom Administration, 3 April 1961.

[34]J. PADEN, op. cit., pp. 352 – 257.

The overall result was a vote in favour of joining Nigeria. The results in Dikwa Central, Cubunawa-Madagali and Gashaka -Toungo were relatively close while in the Chamba area, the ratio of the vote was almost 3:1 in favour of Cameroun. How do we explain these results? Do we give credence to the theory that the vote was rigged? What was the influence of the *Sardauna* and the reforms implemented immediately prior to the plebiscite? What happened to the minorities question?

A letter written as part of Cameroun's official response to the plebiscite results by Samuel Samwe and Ibrahim Abba, charged the United Nations with a breach of its commitment to the principle of impartiality. According to them,

> The activities of the United Nations officials during the Plebiscite in the Northern Cameroons [calls] for our protestation in most energetic terms and places us in a most embarrassing position; amazes us and makes us desire to know if the United Nations Organisation is a pivot for world peace or if after the fashion of this example of the activities of the observers of the Plebiscite and the Administrator at Mubi, it is a clique of diplomats whose aim is to provoke discontent and to excite violence between the interested parties[35].

More to the point, the (Northern) Nigerian government were accused of stealing the plebiscite. According to this view – to which the anti-Nigeria vote of the Chamba is critical – the time between the two plebiscites was far too short to enable local government reforms to have an impact. On the other hand, supporters of the *Sardauna* point to his dynamic campaign strategy which included the local government reforms as part of his overall strategy of dealing with the minorities' question throughout Northern Nigeria. The difficulty of proving this claim about rigging is borne out by the following example. President Ahidjo of Cameroun argued that the 170% increase in the electoral roll of two districts in Dikwa Central over the figure for 1959 is evidence of the enrolment of recent immigrants and temporary residents favourable to Nigeria but Nigeria responded that the new voters

[35] (UN) A/C.4/479, Letter of 10 April 1961 from Sir A. Cohen to Chair, Fourth Committee.

were mostly women – who were voting for the first time – and that, in any event, the result barely went in Nigeria's favour[36].

The claim that the vote was rigged by the NPC government was probably loudest among the Chamba who voted overwhelmingly against joining Nigeria. According to Samwe, Northern Cameroonians everywhere except Gwoza, voted for Cameroun but the excellent rigging saw the result declared in Nigeria's favour. Samwe recollects that he had anticipated an attempt to rig a pro-Nigeria vote and had asked people not to lose sight of the ballot boxes and had instructed his supporters to accompany the boxes at all times[37]. For Samwe, the rigging involved not counting pro-Cameroun votes while inflating pro-Nigeria numbers. His counterpart Abubakar Gurumpawo viewed rigging differently.

While he alleged that fake ballot papers were handed out in Mubi and in some areas the number of votes exceeded the number of voters, Abubakar Gurumpawo opined that barring persons from Southern Cameroons from coming to Northern Cameroons to campaign for a pro-Cameroun vote constituted rigging. Twenty-five years ago, the present writer was told by an informant in Ganye (Chamba territory) that there had been rigging and if the plebiscite were held then (i.e 1988) Cameroun would win again. According to Alhaji Bello, what contributed to rigging was that those appointed by the NPC to be in charge of reformed local governments realised that they would probably lose their authority if the populace voted for Cameroun. However, Bello was convinced that the Chamba peasants were unlikely to vote for Nigeria given the heavy-handed Fulani overlordship as reflected in his recollection that the peasants carried bamboo grass from Toungo to Yola to make houses for Yola people[38].

The views of Bello, Samwe and Gurumpawo were stridently challenged by the likes of Isa Keita and Muhammad Bashar, key members of the pro-Nigeria campaign team in the plebiscite[39]. Both dismiss the

[36] (UN) A/C.4/479, Comments by UK Delegation on pamphlet entitled "Position of the Republic of Cameroun following the plebiscite of 11 and 12 Feb 1961 in Northern Cameroons".

[37] Personal interview with Mr Samuel Samwe, already cited.

[38] Personal interview with Alhaji Bello at Ganye, 24/07/1988. At the time of the interview, Bello would have been approximately 52 years of age.

[39] I held a series of discussions with Keita which were arranged through the kind agency of his grand-daughter; I conducted personal interviews in late 1987 and early 1988 in Daura with Bashar, the then Emir of Daura.

claims of rigging as outrageous, utterly without foundation and nothing but the claims of those who have been defeated but will not accept that defeat. Yet there is logic to the charges of rigging. Firstly, elections in Nigeria during the 1950s and 1960s were characterised by fraud and the results did not command general acceptance. It is difficult to imagine that the plebiscite occurring within a tradition of electoral malfeasance would have been squeaky clean, especially when we consider the high stakes involved. More importantly, while the local government reforms of 1960 would have been welcomed, Northern Cameroonians remained aggrieved over the neglect of the area. The arguments in support of the view that the pro-Nigeria result emerged as a result of electoral fraud have some merit but are difficult to substantiate. However, we ought not to discount the role of the Nigerian political parties in the eventual outcome.

The position of the NPC was clear and unambiguous: Northern Cameroons could not be lost; it had to be retained as part of (Northern) Nigeria. However, the situation conferred some element of ambivalence on the part of opposition parties in Nigeria: a pro-Cameroun vote would constitute a domestic political defeat for the NPC Government but would represent a loss of territory and prestige for Nigeria. This ambivalence is captured in an undated letter signed by Umaru Micika, Phillip Maken, Daniel Janwai and Abdullahi Gwoza of the Action Group. These gentlemen clearly opposed being part of Northern Nigeria:

> We had in mind the example of the Southern Cameroons which in 1954 was made a separate state (or Region) within the Nigerian Federation [...]. Our people in the Northern Cameroons also desire to be given the opportunity of declaring whether they wish to remain a separate state or region within the Federation of Nigeria. For this reason we intend to make the point that the question whether we wish to be part of an independent Nigeria should be put to the electorate in a more precise form [...].The question as it is put at the moment does not indicate that we can be part of Nigeria and at the same time cease to be administered by the Government of the Northern Region[40].

In the end, this same element of ambivalence would prove decisive to voters.

[40] (UN) T./1531 UNTC 26th Session, 18 May 1960.

The rate at which former separatists embraced party politics in Nigeria also offers some insight. After the 1961 plebiscite, Samwe, Ibrahim Abba, Muhammadu Iya and Umaru Ngiki went to the United Nations kicking against the Northern Cameroons plebiscite. According to Samwe, the General Assembly appeared to take the view that Nigeria had lost one vote and won another, so there would be closure to the issue. Samwe and the others returned to Northern Cameroons with a simple message: Northern Cameroons was now permanently in Nigeria, the Chamba and other Northern Cameroonians had to choose a Nigeria political party which would best represent their interests. In other words, they would have to support a party fully and not merely use the major parties as a godfather to help them achieve limited but important goals in the plebiscites. Samwe joined the Action Group – having formed the pro-Cameroun Kamerun Freedom Party to contest the 1961 plebiscite – but Elson Warimi and others chose to found the Chamba Tribal Union instead. The late Dominic Mapeo, elected to the Federal Parliament on a CTU ticket, switched to the NPC, became Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Works and carried large numbers of Chamba with him[41]. It is true that, as Samwe points out, once the UN had accepted the plebiscite results in 1961 Northern Cameroons would remain part of Nigeria and people had to come to terms with this. Our argument is that the *speed* with which the former enemy was embraced suggests that there was greater support for Nigeria than pro-Cameroun campaigners were prepared to admit.

Yet there is direct evidence to indicate that Nigerian political parties put country first in the decisive plebiscite campaign. In 1959, opposition parties in Nigeria supported the campaign to delay a decision on the future of Northern Cameroons in what should be seen as a win-win situation for them; they could score a victory over the governing party without appearing to compromise Nigeria's sovereignty. Within the Colonial Office, it was minuted simply, in response, a pity the AG [i.e Action Group] have taken sides[42]. In February 1961 victory over the NPC would constitute a pyrrhic victory since Nigeria would lose territory and face. Thus, the Action Group-United Middle Belt Congress alliance (the major proponents of minorities rights in Northern

[41] Personal interview with Samuel Samwe at Ganye, 23/07/1988.

[42] CO 554/1746 quotes two Reuters news stories of August and October 1959; the minute is appended to the latter item.

Nigeria) which had backed the Chamba and others to postpone a decision on their future in the November 1959 vote was singing a different tune a year later. The alliance had provided Samwe with a Hillman car and a Land Rover in 1959 but these were taken away because Samwe campaigned for a pro-Cameroun vote in the decisive campaign.[43] In other words, there was unity on the part of Nigerian political parties to ensure that Northern Cameroons remained in Nigeria; they put national above party interests. Hence the slogan of 1961 *munayi* (we are with you) proclaimed unity in contrast to 1959 when *A yanke* (let us separate) was the popular cry.

Analysis of the results of the final plebiscite would be incomplete without an examination of the efforts of the governing party. The NPC pursued a comprehensive strategy which sought to tackle potential pitfalls simultaneously. One critical area for the NPC was to first neutralise and then eliminate the opposition of Nigerian parties. Abubakar Gurumpawo remembers the change in attitude of Obafemi Awolowo and the Action Group. The AG financed the anti-Nigeria vote in 1959 and provided transportation which enabled effective campaigning from village to village but was convinced at the last hour that the NPC did not want their brothers to go to Cameroun. Accordingly, the NPC put events to Awolowo in such a manner that he and the AG slowed down and supported Nigeria versus Cameroun. The argument made to Awolowo was simple but effective: future generations would forever hold in contempt the person or group responsible for letting Northern Cameroons join Cameroun. Consequently, Awolowo advised his followers to campaign for a pro-Nigeria vote in 1961[44]. Thus, national interests were judged superior to the rights of Northern Cameroons minorities; indeed, the latter could be protected and promoted through the former.

To some extent, the opposition political parties found it easier to support the pro-Nigeria campaign in 1961 because of reforms introduced by the Northern Nigeria Government in the wake of the 1959 result. Even before the first plebiscite had been decided, Sir Gawain Bell had informed his superiors in the Colonial Office that some opposition parties in Nigeria had proposed that Northern Cameroons

[43] *Ibid.*

[44] Personal interview with Abubakar Gurumpawo at Ganye, 22/07/1988. After a career in Native Administration, he became a Member of the Federal House of Representatives.

should be a separate Region of the Nigeria Federation[45]. Although the reforms implemented after 1959 clearly did not go as far as this proposal desired, they went some way to meeting the sentiment embodied in the wish of the opposition parties and helped in keeping Northern Cameroons in Nigeria at the decisive moment in 1961.

In the immediate aftermath of the plebiscite debacle of 1959, the *Sardauna* had moved quickly to confront the causes of the rejection of Nigeria. His primary action was to constitute a commission of enquiry which found that Northern Cameroonians wanted greater representation than was given by the Consultative Committee of Northern Cameroons established in 1955 and the ruled wished to be separated from their rulers. Separate Native Authorities were created so that in practice Gwoza was separated from the Muslim Kanuri in Dikwa Division, the Chamba were separated from the Fulani while Mubi and Madagali were separated from Yola. The opposition to Yola and Dikwa, which was reflected in popular uprisings in Johode and Mubi in the early 1950s and the 1959 plebiscite vote, was lessened in the run-up to the decisive plebiscite. Indeed, the *Sardauna* of Sokoto pitched the 1961 campaign on the basis that self-rule for Northern Cameroons would be based on separation from Provincial control in Nigeria. The *Sardauna* was, in effect, articulating the promise of a separate Trusteeship Province with the possibility of accompanying social and economic advance as a key stratagem for the NPC.

As Muhammad Bashar – the man charged with organising the pro-Nigeria campaign in 1961 – observed, the *Sardauna*, as a leading Fulani, had been respected by the Fulani of Northern Cameroons and this increased after he had accepted the recommendation for local government reforms for the area in 1960. At the same time, the non-Fulani were won over by the promise that there would be no return to the old administration and the Northern Cameroons would constitute a single Province (although Dikwa would eventually opt out). For Bashar, the decisive factor behind the pro-Nigeria vote in 1961 was the grant of some degree of autonomy to the peoples of Northern Cameroons after the 1959 plebiscite[46]. Yet it is possible to see the *Sardauna* as an even more decisive factor.

[45] CO 554/1747, p. 208. Bell to Eastwood at Colonial Office 18 Sep 1959.
[46] Personal interviews with Muhammad Bashar, Emir of Daura, April 1989.

The point has been forcefully made by his biographer that the *Sardauna* was an outstanding political leader who forged the creation of a Northern Nigeria out of disparate groups and in the midst of centrifugal tendencies. In the second plebiscite his leadership skills were clearly evident for he made a sound analysis of the situation, identified the manner in which the campaign had to proceed and was prepared to personally enter the fray to provide added weight and lustre to the pro-Nigerian effort. After the humiliating setback of 1959 and once it was established that local administration-cum-social and economic backwardness was at the heart of that opposition, he moved quickly to implement local government reforms. It seems likely that he realised that these would not be in effect long enough to counter the deep-seated opposition, and so he created a campaign team which worked separately from the efforts of Northern Cameroons officials although there were discussions between the two campaigns. Thus, in Dikwa Division Muhammad Bashar's team worked independently of the *Shehu* of Dikwa and Abba Habib[47], first Minister of Northern Cameroons Affairs. It may be deduced that the *Sardauna* was determined to establish in the minds of the populace the distinction between local officials with a history of oppression and the promise of reform and autonomy being spearheaded by Bashar and the team from Kaduna.

It has been suggested that the *Sardauna*'s standing as a respected religious figure helped to swing the plebiscite Nigeria's way. Thus, Ahmadu Bello was respected for religious reasons and he persuaded Northern Cameroonians to vote for him and, by extension, Nigeria. The *Shehu* of Dikwa at the time of the plebiscite suggested that the *Sardauna* campaigned vigorously in Gwoza but not in Bama because he was motivated by the simultaneous desire to win votes for Nigeria and souls for Allah[48]. While he may have been inspired by the sort of religious zeal which had motivated his ancestor Uthman dan Fodio in the preceding century and the motto of the Northern Region was *aiki da idaba* (work and worship), it is difficult to accept religion as a critical factor. It is true that the Muslim Fulani aristocrats of Northern Cameroons would have held the *Sardauna* in high esteem as an ethnic, secular and religious leader but it is difficult to see the Chamba pa-

[47] The former *Shehu* indicated to me twenty years ago that Kaduna never fully trusted us. Habib had been appointed in 1955 as the first Minister of Northern Cameroons Affairs.

[48] Interview with Shehu January 1986, and further interviews between October 1986 and September 1989 when I lived in Maiduguri.

gans, for example, being similarly inclined. If the *Sardauna* did neglect Bama as the late *Shehu* suggested, then this might go some way towards explaining why that area (i.e Dikwa Central polling district) voted heavily in favour of Cameroun, even to the point, it has been claimed, that individuals inside the palace at Bama dropped their ballots in the dark pink box[49]!

5. Conclusion

The post-1961 history remained dominated by many of the issues which had been central to the political discourse between 1959 and 1961. The issue of social and economic neglect continues to haunt the peoples of the former British Northern Cameroons and is reflected in constant calls for state creation in modern Nigeria. The tactic successfully deployed by the *Sardauna* of Sokoto in dealing with the inhabitants of the area was to keep them by losing them; i.e. separate them from the administration in Yola and Bama but keep them in Nigeria. This meant that he had to tackle their fears as a minority community. Yet after 1961 it was clear that old attitudes prevailed for people coming from Gwoza into Maiduguri were not necessarily welcomed and "gwoza" was used to represent social and economic retardation, the non-Muslim community, and non Kanuri and/or non-Fulani peoples. "Gwoza" became the shorthand for the minority Northern Cameroons community now firmly placed in the large Northern Nigeria.

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[49] The idea that people inside the palace at Bama voted for Cameroun was – unsurprisingly – vehemently rejected when I broached the subject to the then *Shehu* 25 years ago.

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Slavery, Politics and Elections in post-colonial Mauritania: The *Haratines*, marginalization and inclusion

Giuseppe Maimone

1. Introduction

The usual representation of Mauritania is that of a peripheral country, especially in reason of its geographical collocation at the borders of the Sahara Desert, sub-Saharan Africa and the Sudanese area. Even its socio-political references are often unclear. One can find Mauritania both included in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region and not, and so as a West African country which is clearly located in this area, it is often put aside or simply forgotten. It is difficult to use any largely shared adjectives for Mauritania and scholars usually refer to it simply using terms as *trait d'union* or other forms which clearly explicate the mixture of Arabic and African elements that make up the country[1].

Looking at its demography, even if no official data are possible but just estimations because of the silence of the government about that, Arabs are 25-35 per cent of the population, as well as Black-Mauritanians, while the biggest component of the inhabitants of the country are the *Haratines* (35-45 per cent), a term which now refers to people of Black descent, Arabized during time, ex-slaves or formal freed slaves but still in relations of dependence with their old masters.

Then, even if they are the biggest community in the country, *Haratines* constitute a minority which is socially, economically and politically discriminated by forms of marginalization which, at the same time, have the goal to exploit *Haratines* as a labour force and to control their enormous electoral weight. According to the topic of the

[1] E.g. R. CIAVOLELLA, *Les Peuls et l'Etat en Mauritanie. Une Anthropologie des marges*, Khartala, Paris 2010, p. 19, M. MARTY, «Les multiples usages de l'islam dans le champ politique mauritanien», in *L'Afrique politique*, 2002, p. 51, E.A. OULD SALECK, *Les Haratins. Le paysage politique mauritanien*, L'Harmattan, Paris 2003, p. 11, Z. OULD AHMED SALEM (ed.), *Les trajectoires d'un État-frontière. Espaces, évolution politique et transformations sociales en Mauritanie*, CODESDRIA, Dakar 2004, pp. 1-2.

book which this paper is included in, this essay analyses the historical formation of the *Haratines* of Mauritania, first as a status then as a community, the process of marginalization and exploitation that made it a minority, the policies carried out by Arabs and Black-Mauritanians to attempt to include the *Haratines* within their own communities, to use *Haratine* electoral weight to legitimize their role as leading class, as the Arabs did, or as opposition asking for the right to access political power, as did the Black-Mauritanians, and, finally, movements and associations born to fight for the rights of the *Haratines* or people still in slavery in Mauritania.

2. Colonization and preservation

Before French colonization, Mauritania was a territory populated, in Northern and Central areas, by nomadic tribes of Arab-Berber descent owning Black slaves, mostly native of the Senegal River Valley or the Sudanese area, living with their masters as household slaves or exploited as shepherds, mostly for goats, or in agriculture in the oasis of the Saharan territories[2]. In the south, the fertile lands of the Senegal River Valley were inhabited by Halpulaar'en, people who speak *pulaar* such as the Peuls and Toucouleurs, Soninke, Wolof and a few Bambara. Black communities in the past even populated the Saharan North-Western territories, from which they subsequently moved due to the constant desertification of the environment[3]. These Black communities, still present in the Senegal River Valley, were mostly agricultural and sedentary; as opposed to the Peul *Fulaabe*, who were nomadic and shepherds[4]. Slavery was present within all these communities, and practiced by Blacks on Blacks.

The ancient classification of the Arab-Berber society gave to the *Hassan*, the warriors descendent of the Beni Hassan tribes who de-

[2] O. LESERVOISIER, «Les *hratin* et le Fuuta Tooro, XIX^{ème}-XX^{ème} siècle: entre émancipation et dépendance», in M. VILLASANTE-DE BEAUVAIS (ed.), *Groupes serviles au Sahara. Approche comparative à partir du cas des arabophones de Mauritanie*, CNRS, Paris 2000, pp. 148-9. G. LYDON, «Slavery, exchange and Islamic law: A glimpse from the Archives of Mali and Mauritania», in *African Economic History*, No. 33, 2005, p. 119.

[3] N. KANE, «Un nouvel élan du mouvement pendulaire de migration des gens de fleuve ou le retour organisé des réfugiés négro-mauritaniens sur la rive droite du fleuve Sénégal», in *The Maghreb Review*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 2010, pp. 291-3.

[4] R. CIAVOLELLA, *Les Peuls et l'Etat en Mauritanie*, pp. 17-18.

feated in the XII century the Almoravides who were populating the territories, the leading role in that society. The latter, although defeated, maintained some power due to their religious knowledge of Islam, acquired previously, and, named *Zwaya* or *Marabouts*, together with the warriors formed the noble class[5].

At a lower level were the *Znaga*, the tributaries, artisans and musicians. At a further step below, we found the *Haratines* or *Hratin* (sing. *Hartani*), at that time referred to as ex-slaves already emancipated by their ancient masters even if unable to achieve mobility within the Arab social organization. The Black slaves, or *Abid* (sing. *Abd*)[6], were at the lowest level in this society, at complete dependence on their masters, considered not as human but as chattels and included in the goods owned by masters together with animals. They could not even marry. It was up to the master to decide if, and whom, they could marry, and their sons were a new acquisition of slaves for masters. No right to fatherhood was given to male slaves. Being a female slave usually meant being sexually abused by her master, if pregnant she could only hope that the master recognized the baby as his son, so giving him and his mother emancipation from slavery. In those, rare, cases, they changed their status to become *Haratines*. At that time then *Haratine* indicated just a social classification, a sign that a slave had lost his condition of chattel to acquire a human condition but without really changing his exploitation as a worker.

In reality, in society there were Black slaves, Berbers and Arabs living close to each other but they were separated by social barriers which were impossible to break. It is important to underline how these Black slaves were Muslims already before of their enslavement or, in any case, were Islamized just after, thus causing local theoretical interpretations and myths about the enslavement of Muslims by other Muslims to justify a practice that associated an inferior status to blackness[7].

[5] S. MONTEILLET, «L'islam, le droit et l'État dans la Constitution mauritanienne», in *L'Afrique politique*, 2002, p. 69.

[6] The terms used in this chapter are those usually recurring in English literature about slavery in Mauritania. They could vary in citations of different authors for the way they transcribe Arabic phonemes, e.g. *Haratines* or *Haratins* to define the entire community, *Haratine* or *Hartani* to refer to a single member or as an adjective.

[7] Ruf, among others tells a very interesting myth to explain how local culture could be addressed to support or justify the enslavement of Black Muslims. He told a story of two brothers walking around who were surprised by rain. While one of them put his Qu'ran under his

In the south, a similar social organization characterized the Black communities of the Senegal River Valley[8] which were organized into castes and, therefore, factors such as endogamy prevented social mobility[9]. Conditions of enslavement varied between the different Black ethnicities[10], and were weaker or harder, such as among the Peuls. But, in the case of the *Haratines*, an analysis of ancient slavery among the Blacks goes beyond the present study. Moreover, French colonization caused important changes in slavery within those communities[11].

The colonization of Mauritania by the French revealed the artificial creation of the territory as an entity, as it was not carried out *per se* but simply to colonize an area between the already controlled Senegal and French Sudan and hostile Morocco, about which the latter had already expressed its expansionist aspirations. Moreover, until independence, Mauritania was devoid of important local centres of power, being administrated by the Senegalese St. Louis, thus revealing how French interests were mostly focalised on the Senegal River Valley. The French did not build any new city in Mauritania, where colonization can be defined as "extra-uterine", without having any real impact on the landscape, and scholars underline how most of the population did not even detect any French presence and discovered it after the decolonization of the country[12].

In Senegal and in the French Sudan/Upper Senegal, at that time including, among other territories, modern Mali, the French, according to the General Act of Bruxelles (1890) which promoted freedom of slaves in the colonies, did set up by the end of the XIX century policies of emancipation from slavery by arrangements with the local

clothes to preserve it from the rain, the other used the Holy Book to cover his head. The black ink, falling from the wet pages of the book, coloured his face, signing him definitely to mark his bad religiosity. This was the reason why Allah condemned him to slavery. « Referring to two brothers to tell the difference between sudan and bizan is a recurrent scheme » . U.P. RUF, *Ending Slavery. Hierarchy, dependency and gender in Central Mauritania*, Verlag, Bielefeld 1999, p. 380, note 9.

[8] M. MARTY, «Les multiples usages de l'islam dans le champ politique mauritanien», p. 53.

[9] E.A. OULD SALECK, *Les Haratins*, pp. 22-23.

[10] J.F. SEARING, «Aristocrates, esclaves et paysans: pouvoir et dépendance dans les État *wolof*, 1700-1850», in M. VILLASANTE-DE BEAUVAIS (ed.), *Groupes serviles au Sahara,* pp. 28-32.

[11] M.Y. OULD CIRÉE, «L'esclavage en Mauritanie», in K.K. PRAH (ed.), *Reflections on Arab-led Slavery of Africans*, CASAS, Cape Town 2005, p. 57.

[12] A. CHOPLIN, *Nouakchott. Au carrefour de la Mauritanie et du monde*, Khartala, Paris 2009, p.51.

chiefs that changed slaves in peasants working for some years the ancient masters' lands before obtaining freedom, to change « la condition des captifs, peu à peu, sans heurter aucun des préjugés de la population et sans apporter aucune perturbation dans le régime économique du pays »[13]. Moreover, in these territories the French created *villages de liberté*, where runaway slaves found refuge, work and protection from the claims of their formal masters. In October 1895, almost 8,000 ex-slaves were living in forty-four *villages de liberté*. About 1,500 per year received a "freedom license" after three months, a pass which granted freedom[14].

So it was in the early phases of the expansion from the Senegal River Valley where some local *villages de liberté* (*adwabas*) were created but the difficulties to extend their control above territories which were mostly desert and populated by nomads soon brought about a drastic change in the French policies of colonization of Mauritanian territories. French interests were in maintaining the existent systems of trade, which could be damaged by clear policies of emancipation of slaves[15]. They preferred to make arrangements with the local tribes[16], finding support especially from the *Marabouts*, who saw in French colonization a way to stem the power of the *Hassan* tribes. The latter opposed some armed resistance, primarily in the northern areas bordering on Morocco, where local *Hassans* supported the Sultanate. The *pacification* of the country was then characterized by the respect of traditional authority and was without any clear policy of emancipation of slaves as the French had adopted in Senegal and Sudan, together with the persistence of the Arab social organization.

In Mauritania the French introduced measures that had an indirect consequence on slavery, especially regarding the need for workers for their military garrisons, where cooks, interpreters, guards and housekeepers represented paid labour for the *Haratines*[17]. Moreover, emancipation policies in Senegal and French Sudan had given to Maurita-

[13] (« Gradually the slaves' condition, not to hurt the prejudices of the population and not to cause any change in country's economy »). Archives nationales d'Outre mer (ANOM), Aix-en-Provence, FM/SG/AOF/XIV, letter 5 Dec. 1895. English translations by the author.

[14] ANOM, FM/SG/AOF/XIV, letter 16 Nov. 1895.

[15] ANOM, MRT/IV/1, relation 25 Jun. 1904.

[16] E.A. McDougall, «Un monde sens dessus dessous: esclaves et affranchis dans l'Adrar mauritanien, 1910-1950», in M. Villasante-De Beauvais (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 125.

[17] E.A. McDougall, «Living the legacy of Slavery. Between discourse and reality», in *Cahiers d'études africaines*, XIV (3-4), No. 179-180, p. 960.

nian slaves an example that, in some way, the French worked on for freedom and, in early colonization, some slaves had escaped their masters to reach the freedom villages at the south of the country[18].

3. Building Arab identity

Three years before the independence of the country, in 1957 Mauritania had an autonomous government, chaired by Mokhtar Ould Daddah, chief of the *Union Progressiste Mauritanienne* (UPM), a member of a *Marabout* tribe, who became the first President of the independent State, in 1960. This marked the continuity of power from French colonizers to post-independence leadership, because the UPM was founded in 1948 by Mauritanian notables, to offset the *Entente Mauritanienne*, a Socialist party, from the possibility of acquiring a large consensus to its requests of changes in policies. « There was nothing progressive about the movement, which represented class interests of the traditional pro-French Moorish chieftains »[19]. In French interests, the two most important economical resources of Mauritania, mining and fishing, were largely controlled by European companies.

To reinforce his power, Ould Daddah did no set up any democratic participation in the political sphere. A one-party system assured control over the country to the *Parti de Regroupement Mauritanien* (PRM), later called *Parti du Peuple Mauritanien* (PPM) to present itself as expression of the entire nation, formed by the UPM and some *Entente*'s members who left banned opposition groups to support Ould Daddah. In order to forge an Arab identity for the *Haratines*, even if of a subordinate nature, in 1961 Ould Daddah signed the UN Declaration of Human Rights and affirmed the abolition of slavery in the first Constitution of Mauritania: « La République assure à tous les citoyens, sans distinction de race, de religion ou de condition sociale, l'égalité devant la loi »[20]. The abolition was, however, a formal one, because the law delegated to the *Qadis*, the traditional Islamic judges,

[18] O. LESERVOISIER, «Les *hratin* et le Fuuta Tooro», *op. cit*., p. 150.

[19] M. BENNOUNNE, «The Political Economy of Mauritania: Imperialism and Class Struggle», in *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 12, 1978, p. 39.

[20] (« The Republic ensure to all citizens equality before the law, without distinction of race, religion and social condition »). M. OULD DADDAH, *La Mauritanie contre vents et marées*, Khartala, Paris 2003, p. 590.

the competence on disputes between slaves and their masters. In fact, justice was usually denied to slaves due to the fact that the *Qadis* had to be paid, usually by gifts, and they were of tribal membership[21]. In 1969, the competence was assigned to the Ministry of Justice but just six years later it returned to the *Qadis*.

Even if merely formal, the abolition in 1961 represented a change in whom to consider as *Haratines*. Formally freed, the slaves (*Abid*) became *Haratines* as well, but it was no more than a symbol of emancipation. Freed slaves (*Khadara* or *Khourth*), recent ex-slaves (*Haratines*) and slaves (*Abid*) became a unique group still in dependence on their previous masters. Then *Haratines* did no more refer only to a subordinate status but indicated the entire community of formal ex-slaves, by a semantic process of identification and marginalization.

If in English literature they are also referred to as Black Moors, or those who make up the Arab community together with the White Moors, or the Arabs and Berbers, the local Hassanya, a version of Arabic mixed with Berber words, used to call them *Sudan*, or "Blacks", marking their southern origin to indicate their blackness in which emancipation is not possible, as opposed to the leading *Bidhan* or beydanes, "Whites"[22]. Subsequently, a change in language occurred to mask the continuity of dependence, a continuity that the government itself had years later to admit, when new measures against slavery were necessary, even if still formal. The goal at that time was, however, to include the *Haratines* within the Arab community, even if in a secondary role.

After the first years of government, Ould Daddah looked towards the reinforcement of his power and, in general, of Arab leadership by building an identity for the new independent country. Mauritania had to be an Arab nation, ruled by Arabs, inhabited by Arabs, speaking Arabic. It had to forget or erase its Black component[23]. Ould Daddah kicked off a policy of Arabization of the country by alliances with Arab countries, by entering the Arab League in 1973 and breaking re-

[21] R. BOTTE, *Esclavages et abolitions en terres d'Islam*, André Versailles, Bruxelles 2010, p. 214.

[22] A.W. OULD CHEIKH, «Mutations de l'espace public et nouvelles formes de citoyenneté. La difficile sortie des débats sur l'esclavage en Mauritanie», in Z. OULD AHMED SALEM (ed.), *Les trajectoires d'un Etat-frontière*, p. 297.

[23] M. VILLASANTE CERVELLO, «Quelque traits de la vie politique de Mokhtar Ould Daddah, premier président de la Mauritanie indépendante», in The *Maghreb Review*, No. 27, 1, 2002, p. 58.

lations with West African countries, by declaring Arabic compulsory in the secondary school, where to form a future Arab leading class, so marginalizing the Blacks who had a relevant role in the administration of the French colonial state and did not speak Arabic but French, the official language of the State, or local black languages. The building of the Arab identity of the post-colonial country left no space to acknowledgement of other identities, so even the *Haratines* were marginalized. Under the colonization they had had the possibility to have access to schools for *Haratine* and slave children of the villages, created by the French[24]. Even if it was for just a very small part of the poorest population that then created the future leadership of the *Haratine* community[25]. Neither did the *Haratines* speak Arabic, just *Hassanya*, while Arabic was used only by educated Arabs, who, on the contrary, spoke *Hassanya* just with their slaves to mark their inferiority and exclusion from the upper Arab community.

The introduction of a language largely ignored by the Blacks, which mostly constituted the administrative staff, was contested and boycotted by Black students and their strikes gave fame to *Le manifeste des 19*, a paper signed by teachers, professors and magistrates in support of the students[26] which will take on a new life twenty years later.

4. A movement of *Haratines* for *Haratines*?

A group of educated *Haratines* in schools created by French founded, in 1978, a movement called *El-Hor*, or "free man", to fight for the rights of the *Haratines* and declaring an alternative identity of their community to the Arab one. El-Hor promoted the affirmation of the « spécificité culturelle des Haratines [qui est] la double appartenance […] au monde négro-africain dont ils sont originaires d'une part et au

[24] A.W. OULD CHEIKH, "Cherche élite, désespérément. Evolution du système éducatif et (dé)formation des « élites » dans la société mauritanienne", *Nomadic Peoples*, No. 2, 1-2, 1998, p. 239.

[25] A.W. OULD CHEIKH, «Espace confrérique, espace étatique: le mouridisme, le confrérisme et la frontière mauritano-sénégalaise», in Z. OULD AHMED SALEM (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 288.

[26] G.P. CHIARI, «Conflitti etnici e integrazione politica in Mauritania», in *Africa*, No. 45, 4, 1990, p. 535.

monde arabo-berbère qui constitue leur milieu "d'adoption" »[27], by declaring the elements which clearly characterize the *Haratines*: their speaking *Hassanya* even if Black skinned, their folklore, their music and their dance. Then, *El-Hor* asked the government to use its media to promote an egalitarian society and to explode the myth of inferiority and animality of the *Haratines*[28]. Indeed, acknowledgement of *Haratine* rights had to come with the end of their exploitation.

The request of a fight against slavery was made in the name of the egalitarian vocation of Islam and of the distorted use of religion to legitimate slavery[29]. Moreover, it was supported by mentioning that Declaration of Human Rights already referred by the Constitution and by the PPM Charter to justify the absolute necessity of the emancipation of the *Haratines* with the institutional elements of the country. Indeed, *El-Hor* is « profondément soucieuse de la consolidation de l'unité nationale »[30]. This aspect justifies the consideration that « El-Hor intended less to overturn Mauritania power structures or society and more to become a full-fledged and active part of it. The Haratine movement did not develop a radical or revolutionary vision »[31].

This non-revolutionary approach was also affirmed by asking for not the rejection of the Mauritanian state apparatus but only the acknowledgement of the right of the *Haratines* to access the public administration and the political sphere. The justification was the numerical relevance of the *Haratine* community and its cultural and ethnic specificities. The goal of *El-Hor* was the end of the exploitation of the *Haratines*, to reach through agrarian reforms and massive education of its members, erasing « des discriminations dont sont victimes les *Haratines* dans les écoles primaires, secondaires et supérieures »[32]. This discrimination existed because « le système éducatif en vigueur a été conçu de façon à empêcher la promotion des Haratines par

[27] («Cultural specificity of the Haratines [which is] the dual membership [...] to Black-African world in which they originate on the one hand and to Arab-Berber world which is their "adoption" place»). *El-Hor* Charter. Charter and further information are available at http://www.elhor.org [Accessed 16/06/2012].

[28] *Ibidem*.

[29] *Ibidem*.

[30] (« Deeply concerned about the consolidation of the national unity »). *Ibidem*.

[31] Z. OULD AHMED SALEM, «Bare-foot activists: Transformations in the Haratine movement in Mauritania», in S. ELLIS, I. VAN KESSEL (ed.), *Movers and Shakers. Social movements in Africa*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2009, p. 163.

[32] (« Discrimination suffered by the Haratines in primary, secondary and higher schools »). *El-Hor* Charter.

l'instruction et ce par la faiblesse de leur taux de scolarisation due à une obstruction voulue et entretenue par les féodaux, surtout dans les campagnes. Elle considère par ailleurs que cette obstruction est encouragée par l'Etat qui, malgré la prolifération des écoles nomades continue d'ignorer les "ADOUABAS" »[33].

It must be once more underlined how *El-Hor* spoke just for the *Haratines* and not for all the Mauritanians still in slavery, even if it did ask freedom of other « couches sociales opprimées »[34]. It was a movement of *Haratines* for *Haratines*. Or that was the way *El-Hor* reported. In fact, according to the different possible status for an *Hartani*, in the new larger concept of "*Haratine* community" born in 1961, even if the *El-Hor* founders declared to speak for their community, they did not represent all its aims but just its educated elite. They were mostly sons of freed slaves, sometimes of no recent emancipation. It is enough to consider the name of the twenty founders, nineteen of them have the term "Ould", which stands for "son of". This was possible just to the child, "Mint" if female[35], who is recognized as the son by a free man, then by an Arab master or a free *Hartani*, or given to men freed as adults. To mark the distinction between Arabs' sons and ex-slaves' sons, those free by birth by an Arab father have typically holy names such as Mohamed, Ismail, Zakarya, etc., while those freed as adult have Black or *Haratine* names, as for example M'Barik, Messaoud, Bilal, even if followed by "Ould"[36].

In the early years of its existence, *El-Hor* gained support from some Black officials and soldiers mostly forming the Army in the war in Western Sahara, after the invasion, at the end, in 1975, of the Spanish occupation of the territory considered a part of the "Great Mauritania" by Ould Daddah already before real independence of the country[37], by Morocco in the north and by Mauritania in the south. The large presence of Blacks in the Army used in the Western Sahara War was because « many white Moors did not wish to fight their ethnic

[33] (« The current education system was designed to prevent the promotion of the Haratines by education and that was for the weakness of their level of schooling due to obstruction required and maintained by the feudal lords, especially in rural areas. It must also be considered that this obstruction is encouraged by the State, which, despite the proliferation of nomadic schools, continues to ignore the "ADOUABAS" »). *Ibidem*.

[34] *Ibidem*.

[35] *Mint* is a Hassanya term, more used than *bint*, Arabic.

[36] R. BOTTE, *Esclavages et abolitions en terres d'Islam*, pp. 235-6.

[37] M. OULD DADDAH, *La Mauritanie contre vents et marées*, p. 5.

brothers, the Sahrawis »[38]. Subsequently, Black officials and soldiers began to ask for political space, aware of the new importance they had achieved.

But Blacks were not the only ones politically marginalized within the Army. It has been underlined how in this primary phase of existence Mauritania saw renewed the ancient conflict between the *Marabout* and *Hassan* tribes, i.e. the religious class holding power and the ancient warriors now forming the leading executives in the Army. Even if simplistic, this interpretation could suggest one of the reasons for the coup that, in 1978, ousted Ould Daddah and gave birth to the six years' life of the *Comité militaires de salut national* (CMSN), which saw four leading officials take, at different times, the power.

5. Abolition and inclusion

Weakened by the war in Western Sahara, Ould Daddah lost the support of the Army and a group of officials deposed the first President of Mauritania. The new government was publicly supported by *El-Hor*[39], which continued to carry on its protest. In March 1980, *El-Hor* denounced the public sale of a 15 years old boy as slave and eighteen of its members were arrested and tried. Due to the space it occupied within the media, the Trial of Rosso, from the name of the city where it took place, gave great popularity to *El-Hor* both national and international. Then, the Anti-Slavery Society, named Anti-Slavery International by 1990, conducted studies and reports on Mauritanian slavery and published in 1981 a book by John Mercer that had a large echo on the Western audience,[40] thus reinforcing *El-Hor*.

Ould Haidalla, President in January 1980, tried to undermine the force acquired by *El-Ho*r after the Trial of Rosso first by declaring that all the Mauritanian people were "brothers" and signing, in this way, what is commonly considered yet another abolition, but this formal declaration did not switch off the attention of the Western audience on the persistence of slavery in Mauritania, and neither on the *El-Hor* activities for the *Haratine* community. Then, a decree saw the

[38] J. MERCER, *Slavery in Mauritania Today*, Human Rights Book, Edinburgh 1982, p. 32.
[39] Z. OULD AHMED SALEM, «Bare-foot activists», cit., p. 164.
[40] J. MERCER, *Slavery in Mauritania Today*, *op. cit.*

light in 1981 (No. 81,234, November, 8th) declaring the abolition of slavery « in all its forms »[41]. As the Western countries did after their abolition, the decree established compensation for each slave freed by his master[42]. The government did not, however, finance any funds[43], so weakening the real effectiveness of the declared abolition and maintaining the existent *status quo* for the *Haratines* who were still enslaved and who remained in relations of dependence with their masters. Moreover, to balance and assure Arab leadership in the country, *Shari'a* law was imposed, to attract economical and political supports from allied Eastern countries, Saudi Arabia and Libya above all. The introduction of *Shari'a* caused the return of jurisdiction to the Islamic precepts which were ambiguous in nature about slavery.

Nonetheless, the *Haratines* gained a form of political representation by the creation of the *Structures d'Éducation des Masses* (SEM), created by the *Haratine* captain Breika Ould M'Barek, the only military of the *Comité militaires de salut national* (CMSN) of slave origin, to overcome the one-party system. SEM was a hierarchical system of power and of representation where, at the base, ten families represented a cell with a chief and ten cells elected a superior chief, thus constituting a midway between mass organization and an administrative structure. In those villages where *Haratines* were a majority, the SEM granted their first access to the political scene, thus bringing about the *Haratines*' support of the Haidalla's government[44], who was, in 1984, deposed by colonel Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya.

Ould Taya and his twenty years long regime have deeply affected the history of Mauritania and of the *Haratines*' fight for rights. We must underline how all the coups in Mauritania were led by Arab officials against other ex-officials who had always held relevant institutional roles during the predecessors' governments. The coups were not to really change the country's policies but to assure a more effective control over their application, thus affirming the continuity of Arab power in Mauritania and not sharp breaks aimed at change. Often, the

[41] G. DIALLO, «Mauritania's Democracy a la Apartheid is doomed», in *Africa Renaissance*, Vol. 3, No. 3, May/June 2006, p. 28.

[42] «L'article 2 précise : "Cette abolition donnera lieu à une compensation au profit des ayants droit"». Haimoud RAMDAN, «L'éradication des séquelles de l'esclavage en Mauritanie», in *Revue juridique et politique des États francophones*, Vol. 67, No. 2, 2007, p. 216.

[43] A.W. OULD CHEIKH, «Espace confrérique, espace étatique», cit., p. 291.

[44] U.P. RUF, «Diguettes, barrages, bétail: les enjeux de l'émancipation des *hrâtin* et des 'âbid en Mauritanie centrale», in M. VILLASANTE-DE BEAUVAIS (ed.), *op. cit.,* pp. 188-9.

strategies changed, not goals, and the strategy of Ould Taya was to continue both the process of Arabization of the country and that of the inclusion of the *Haratines* into the Arab community to use the potential political weight of the subordinates to reinforce the traditional Arab leadership.

Having erased the SEM, a different way to reach this purpose was attempted by Ould Taya in order to formally complete the inclusion of the *Haratines* within the Arab leading community, by giving governmental roles to some *El-Hor* leaders. Messaoud Ould Boulkheir was appointed Minister of Rural Development, with the assignment of setting up land reform to improve the conditions of the *Haratines*. «This appointment marked a turning point. First of all, it opened up access to decision-making position to the Haratine elite. […] And finally, it signalled government recognition of El-Hor as a legitimate representative and spokesman of the Haratine Community»[45]. Ould Taya assigned two marginal ministries to *El-Hor* leaders in order to ensure their support to his government, to calm the potential destabilizing flow of the movement and to normalize the social transformation requested by the *Haratine* community. As far as foreign policy is concerned, he continued with traditional alliances with Arab countries to present on the international scene Mauritania as a totally Arab nation. The process of Arabization was strengthened by the marginalization of the Blacks present in the Army and in the public administration, who saw in the alliance of Ould Taya with the *El-Hor* leadership a sign of increasing discrimination of the Blacks.

To contribute to their marginalization, a drought in the mid 1980s weakened the Arab tribes of the rural north-eastern areas of the country and pushed some tribes or their *Haratine* workers towards the south of Mauritania, in the more fertile lands of the Senegal River Valley, in order to find water and pastures for their herds. This caused psychological and physical pressures on the Black communities who saw their lands threatened by the *Haratines*.

If the masters had became too poor to sustain their slaves, often they preferred to left the latter free to reach Nouakchott, the capital city built up by Ould Daddah after independence on the western coast of Mauritania, where to find work but still maintaining «relationships

[45] Z. OULD AHMED SALEM, «Bare-foot activists», cit., p. 166.

of personal dependence» [46] that did not mean their effective freedom but just a different way to express a subordinate dependence on the ancient masters. To realize how that was still possible even at a distance, it is enough to remember that runaway or even freed slaves left their families, in the largest meaning "family" takes in Afro-Arab societies as wives, sons, brothers, sisters, etc., in the old master's hands, thus causing the persistence of the pre-existent relationships of dependence. Indeed, an increasing part of the *Haratine* community changed their condition of agriculture workers or shepherds into urban workforce mostly applied to urban sectors by daily recruitments in the poorest *kebba*[47] of Nouakchott.

6. The Black movement and the internationalization of the fight against slavery

The marginalization of the Black-Mauritanians created large support to the *Forces de Libération Africaines de Mauritanie* (FLAM), a movement fighting for the rights of the Black communities of the country founded in 1983, especially by those engaged in the Army or in the public administration who saw their social status in danger. The FLAM position was illustrated in *Le Manifeste du Négro-Mauritanien opprimé*, which had large publicity at its appearance in 1986, where it denounced the Arabs' oppression of the Black and *Haratine* identities, by considering the latter as a part of the bigger Black-Mauritanian community, although with specific characteristics as well as those of the Wolof, Soninke and Halpulaar[48].

FLAM affirmed that the Black community of the *Haratines* underwent forced Arabization as Black students had in 1966, when Ould Daddah started the process by introducing the obligation to use Arabic in the secondary school. By evoking the *Manifeste des 19* in name and quoting it entirely in the introduction[49], *Le Manifeste du Négro-*

[46] F. VITI, «Pérennité de l'esclavage? Travail et dépendance personnelle en Afrique de l'Ouest», in *Africa*, No. 44, 1-2, 2009, p. 63.

[47] The term refers to shantytowns, mostly inhabited by *Haratines*. *El Mina* is the largest *kebba* in Nouakchott.

[48] *Le Manifeste du Négro-Mauritanien opprimé* and other information about FLAM are available at the official website http://www.flamnet.info [Accessed 16/06/2012].

[49] FLAM, *Le Manifeste du Négro-Mauritanien opprimé*, 1986.

Mauritanien opprimé reminds us of the 1966 students' protests against the measures to reaffirm, twenty years later, the policies of racist discrimination, forced Arabization and social marginalization carried out by military regimes against the Black-Mauritanian communities, in which the *Haratines* have to included.

Moreover, *Le Manifeste* underlined how Arabs were a minority in a country mostly populated by Black communities and denounced the lack of publicity of the results of the census of 1977, which would reveal how the usual governmental representation of a Mauritanian population formed by 80 per cent of White and Black Moors and 20 per cent of Black-Mauritanians, which Arab leaders always referred since independence, was false[50].

> En Mauritanie, une seule Communauté a intérêt à ce que les résultats réels du recensement de 1977 ne soient pas publics, c'est la beydane.
> Les Noirs, quant à eux, sont convaincus que ce recensement a révélé le contraire de ce qui est habituellement dit, à savoir:
> - que les négro-mauritaniens sont majoritaires;
> - que l'élément haratine est majoritaire au sein de la communauté négro-arabo-berbère (NAB); Trois principales raisons amènent à cette conviction:
> 1°/ un taux de fécondité beaucoup plus élevé chez les Négro-mauritaniens (Haratine, Soninke, Haalpulaar, Wolof, Bambara);
> 2°/ la Polygamie qui est pratiquée presque exclusivement en milieu noir;
> 3°/ l'instabilité du ménage beydane en général caractérisé par un taux relativement important de divorces[51].

Thus, FLAM refuted the Arabs' power by criticizing the excessive space these occupied on the political scene because they were a minority in a country of Black majority and that was possible only by emphasizing the blackness of the *Haratines*, the major community in the country. Aware of the importance of the demographic weight of the *Haratines*, FLAM then proposed a sort of "Black brotherhood" to fight against the racist policies of political and social marginalization

[50] *Ibidem.*

[51] (« In Mauritania, a single Community is interested in keeping actual results of the 1977 census not public, it is the beydane. The Blacks, meanwhile, are convinced that census showed the opposite of what is usually said, namely: - The majority are Black-Mauritanians;
- The Haratine component is majority among the Negro-Arab-Berber community (NAB). Three main reasons lead to this conviction: 1° / Fertility rates much higher among Black-Mauritanians (Haratines, Soninke, Haalpulaar, Wolof, Bambara); 2° / Polygamy is practiced almost exclusively among Blacks; 3° / Instability of the Beydane household, generally characterized by a relatively high rate of divorce»). *Ibidem.*

carried out by a cruel minority based not on Human Rights but merely racial. *Haratines* were Blacks, then Blacks were the majority and the consequential marginalization of Blacks in politics and of Black culture had no justification.

Then, FLAM was not, at the outset, a movement *against* slavery, and neither was it *pro Haratines*. It was founded for the rights of the entire Black community. It could be supposed then that, in this initial phase, denouncing slavery would have weakened the movement in order to find support from the Black-Mauritanian audience where slavery existed, while it was at the same time difficult to break into the *Haratines* whose requests were already expressed by *El-Hor*. So, FLAM policy seemed to go in the direction of complementarity to *El-Hor*'s, but it had no success in finding sources of collaboration[52]. Moreover, FLAM criticized the land reform, promoted by the *Haratine* Minister of the Rural Development Ould Boulkheir to favour the exploitation of the fertile lands of the River by the *Haratines*, thus creating tension between them and the other Black communities.

FLAM were declared illegal by the regime and then expelled from the country and forced to find a temporary seat in Dakar, Senegal. Two-thirds of its leadership were arrested and, in 1987-88, about 700 Backs were purged by the Army for their proximity with the FLAM or because they were accused of having organized a coup against Ould Daddah[53]. The purge attracted international attention, giving FLAM external popularity that increased in the following years. In 1989, after some contention along the Mauritanian-Senegalese borders there was the burning of some Mauritanian shops in Dakar, mutual accusations and then clashes which caused hundred of deaths[54], Ould Taya expelled about 80-100,000 Black-Mauritanians[55] from the Senegal River

[52] E.A. McDougall, «The Politics of slavery in Mauritania», in The *Maghreb Review*, No. 35, 3, 2010, pp. 274-5.

[53] G.P. Chiari, «Conflitti etnici e integrazione politica in Mauritania», cit., p. 540.

[54] L. Ould Mohamed Salem, «De Ould Daddah à Ould Taya. La longue marche de la Mauritanie», in *Géopolitique Africaine*, No. 12, 2003, pp. 186-7.

[55] Most of the scholars speak of 80,000 expelled, others affirming they were more because, « du fait de la "porosité" de la frontière artificielle (frontière d'Etat) et de multiples liens de parenté entre les populations des deux rives, il est difficile de déterminer avec exactitude le nombre des personnes qui ont été obligées de franchir le fleuve». («due to the "porosity" of the artificial boundary (border State) and to multiple kinships between people on both sides, it is difficult to determine accurately the number of people who were forced to cross the river»). N. Kane, «Un nouvel élan du mouvement pendulaire de migration des gens du fleuve», cit., p. 290.

Valley, more than 60,000 to Senegal and about 20,000 to Mali, declaring they were unable to demonstrate their Mauritanian citizenship. Indeed, the expulsions had mostly economic reasons, because of the advancing desertification of dried up lands and pastures of Arab tribes and Ould Taya looked towards the territories of the Senegal River Valley to allocate *Haratines* shepherds and farmers of those tribes[56].

These events touched international public opinion, and *racism* and *slavery* became words around which to describe Mauritanian events. FLAM exported its fight against the Arabs' oppression in the Western political scenario, speaking at the United Nations and taking action in Europe and the United States, by associating the persecution of Black-Mauritanians with that of slavery to hit a larger audience. Moreover, to have a bigger impact, especially on North American public opinion, FLAM made repeated reference to *apartheid* to indicate the Mauritanian slavery system, a successful propaganda in a country sensitive to the theme because of its racist past.

7. Conclusion

The support of the old ally Saddam Hussein in the First Gulf War broke relations between Mauritania and Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia and so Ould Taya was forced to look for new allies to West. The International Monetary Fund and World Bank became the new international financers of Mauritania, asking in return some democratic reforms within the country[57]. In 1991, Ould Taya granted a new Constitution and multiparty elections, but banned the possibility to have religious, regional or ethnic based parties in order to weaken the potential force represented by *El-Hor* and Black parties.

The new measures by Ould Taya were successful and increased his popularity. His electoral promises to the *Haratines* of work and emancipation attracted the community[58], especially those living the *kebba* of Nouakchott, and, after the almost unanimous approval (97,94 per

[56] M. FRESIA, «Les enjeux politiques et identitaires du retour des réfugiés en Mauritanie : vers une difficile "réconciliation nationale" ?», in *Politique Africaine*, No. 114, June 2009, pp. 45-46.

[57] A. BULLARD, «From Colonization to Globalization. The Vicissitudes of Slavery in Mauritania», in *Cahiers d'études africaines*, No. 3, 179-180, 2005, pp. 753-4.

[58] E.A. MCDOUGALL, «The Politics of slavery in Mauritania», cit., p. 269.

cent of the Mauritanian voters[59]) of the new Constitution, the presidential election of 1992 was won by Ould Taya. The defeat of the other competitor Ahmed Ould Daddah, the beydane brother of the first president of the country at that time in exile in Paris, supported by *Union des Forces Démocratiques* (UDF) of Mauritania, with co-leadership of the old *El-Hor* founder Ould Boulkheir and Ould Daddah, weakened *El-Hor* and created harsh divisions within its founders who had already criticized the choice of final candidate.

This event marked a point of no return for *El-Hor* and the fight for the rights of the *Haratines* who saw their ancient leader Ould Boulkheir supporting a beydane of noble level. An old founder of the movement, Boubacar Messaoud, polemically abandoned *El-Hor* to create, together with Abdel Nasser Ould Ethmane, an ex-master of slaves who decided to devote himself to the anti-slavery cause, an association for the fight against slavery, *SOS-Esclaves*[60]. Its foundation revealed the internal differences in *El-Hor*, where three currents, Baathist, Nasserist and democratic, corresponded to the three different social status within the *Haratine* community[61]: the sons of rich *Haratines* owning slaves, sons of simple *Haratines* and sons of slaves, differences which were first obscured but increased in the almost twenty years of *El-Hor*'s life[62]. Ould Boulkheir, in 2007 President of the National Assembly, was son of long time freed slaves and very proud that his family was already free in 1943[63], Messaoud was a recent freed slave and this difference increased in importance over time. Moreover, «the desertion in 1990 of some of the leaders to join a group of Baathist Moors was seen as a defeat by some *Haratine* activists who wanted to remain equidistant from both Arab and Black African nationalism»[64].

[59] A.W. OULD CHEIKH, «Des voix dans le désert. Sur les élections de "l'ère pluraliste" », in *Politique Africaine*, No. 55, 1994, p. 33.

[60] Information about *SOS-Esclaves* available at http://www.sosesclaves.org [Accessed 16/06/2012].

[61] Another member who abandoned *El-Hor* to found the *Association des Haratine de Mauritanie en Europe* (AHME), tells of five currents: « *Baasiste*, patriote, radical, tendance *Koné Mahmoud,* tendance capitaine *Breïka* ». M.Y OULD CIREE, «L'esclavage en Mauritanie», cit., p. 62.

[62] R. BOTTE, *Esclavages et abolitions en terres d'Islam*, *op,.cit.*, p. 227.

[63] Interview to Ould Boulkheir by AHME, October 2003, available at http://www.Haratine.com/interview2.htm [Accessed 16/06/2012]. More than the veracity of the story, it is interesting where he placed his family within the *Haratine* community.

[64] Z. OULD AHMED SALEM, «Bare-foot activists», cit., p. 169.

Indeed, the creation of *SOS-Esclaves* also marked the transition from the necessity to fight for the rights of the *Haratine* community to the need to promote the abolition of slavery still afflicting Mauritania and the changeover from socio-political movements to modern NGOs. Moreover, the success of FLAM on the Western scene, together with the anti-slavery Mauritanian reports and actions of international NGOs such as Free the Slaves, Amnesty International, Anti Slavery International and others, suggested a new approach to the case of the *Haratines* that was the duty to address its commitment not for the entire community but for those who were still exploited and marginalized. The introduction of, although simply formal, multiparty system inspired in some activists the necessity to switch from political action to social action.

Moreover, the attempt of inclusion of the *Haratine* community within the Arabs, as the governments had tried by its Arabization, or within the Black-Mauritanians, as FLAM had attempted by affirming the "Africanity" of the *Haratines* due to their blackness, at a first moment was looser than the *El-Hor*'s statement of *Haratine* as an identity *in itself*, neither Arab nor Black, but rather, as *El-Hor* said in a slogan which became popular, «Arab but Black, Black but Arab»[65]. It can be said that, over time, it was the process of "Mauritanization" of the *Haratines* which proved to be successful, as well as of the entire population, and today we have a proof of that. In fact, despite the long time needed for the return in Mauritania of those expelled in 1989 and the continuous marginalization of Blacks even today, their protest against the national registration programme of 2012 has been carried out by affirming their Mauritanian citizenship more than ancestral rights over lands. The movement of young Black-Mauritanians born abroad within families expelled in 1989 and then repatriated, now fighting against the registration programme that refuses them citizenship, is named *Touche pas à ma nationalité* (TPMN), in that they state to be Mauritanian[66].

[65] Z. OULD AHMED SALEM, «Bare-foot activists», cit., p. 168.

[66] More information available at http://www.facebook.com/groups/touchepasmonpayslamauritanie [Accessed 16/06/2012].

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Between assimilation and exclusion: The case of Minorities in Botswana

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This chapter focuses on how minorities in Botswana have historically related with the Tswana majority, and the role they have occupied in society in colonial and post-colonial times. Botswana is a multi-ethnic society, where around seven or eight Bantu languages are spoken, two Germanic (English and Afrikaans) and about twelve Khoisan idioms. Moreover, Bantu languages spoken in the country are common in the neighbouring states: Tswana and Pedi in South Africa, Kalanga in Zimbabwe, Subiya/Tonga in Zambia and the Caprivi Strip, Herero in Namibia and Mbukushu in Angola[1]. Nevertheless, the country has often been mistakenly regarded as ethnically homogenous, which has led the Tswana in the post-independence period to carry out a policy of assimilation in the name of "Tswanadom". Minorities have for decades passively accepted this status quo, but recently they have started claiming recognition of their individuality, publicly fighting successive governments and their laws. Before analysing the role of minorities in Botswana, it is important to introduce the concept of citizenship.

The modern concept of citizenship appeared with the French Revolution, when for the first time new political doctrines were applied on a national level: civil equality, the institutionalisation of political rights, the rationalisation of the distinction between citizens and foreigners, the tie between citizens and nation[2]. The state stems its powers from the citizens it represents: the community of citizens (the nation) empowers the state, which, in return, represents and protects them within its territory[3]. According to Isin and Wood, "citizenship can be described as *both* as a set of practices (cultural, symbolic and

[1] N. PARSONS, «Botswana: an end to exceptionality?» in *The Round Table*, vol.82 n 325, 1993, p.74.

[2] R. BRUBAKER, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass 1992, p. 35.

[3] N. SOGUK, *States and Strangers: Refugees and Displacements of Statecraft*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1999, pp. 9-10.

economic) and a bundle of rights and duties (civil, political and social) that define and individual's membership in a polity" [4].

Citizenship, furthermore, entails the idea of exclusion and inclusion: it in fact distinguishes between those who belong to a given community from those who do not[5]. Citizens are those who belong, the insiders, because they are members of the community which forms the nation, while foreigners are considered outsiders, because they do not belong to that given community. Moreover, the "outsiders" are represented not only by immigrants and, in general, by people from other countries, but also by members of minority groups who challenge the central governments in order to have their rights of identity recognised. Kymlica and Norman drew a list of different kinds of minority groups that can be found within a state[6]. There are four main categories, each including *sub*groups: 1) "National minorities", which encompass a) stateless nations and b) indigenous people; 2) "Immigrant minorities", which include a) those with citizenship or with the right to become citizens, b) those who do not enjoy this right, and c) refugees; 3) "Religious groups", including a) the isolationists and b) non-isolationists. The final category is constituted by "*Sui generis* groups", such as a) African Americans, b) Roma (gypsies) c) Russians in former Soviet Republics. The groups that will be discussed in this chapter are national minorities, in particular indigenous people and immigrant minorities, with a focus on those who hold citizenship. Indigenous peoples constitute the original inhabitants of a territory, who strive in order to maintain their way of life and beliefs and whose land is "overrun by settlers and then forcibly, or through treaties, incorporated into states run by outsiders" [7]. In Botswana San people constitute the indigenous population of hunter-gatherers who were occupying the land before being dispossessed by the Tswana, Bantu-speaking people. Other minority groups migrated to what is now Botswana in different times in the past. Among them are the Xhosas and the Herero in the village of Mahalapye.

[4] E.F. ISIN,. P.K. WOOD, *Citizenship and Identity* Sage Publications, London 1999, p. 4.

[5] J.M. BARBALET, *Citizenship: rights, struggle, and class inequality*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes 1988, p.1.

[6] W. KYMLICA, W. NORMAN, *Citizenship in Diverse Societies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000, pp. 18-19.

[7] *Ibid*., p. 20.

This chapter analyses the evolution of relations between the Tswana majority with minorities living in the country. The first section outlines a historical account of Botswana society and describes how the British have empowered the Tswana chiefdoms over minority groups. The second section assesses the concepts of citizenship and belonging in the post-independence period. The third section focuses on the political involvement of minority groups and the last section presents the case of the San people and their long history of discrimination.

1. Placing Botswana in colonial context

Botswana became a British Protectorate in 1885 with the colonial name of Bechuanaland; the Molopo River traced a boundary with the southern part of the region, which became British territory under the name of British Bechuanaland[8]. It was eventually annexed to the Cape Colony in 1895[9]. Bechuanaland, as noted above, is an ethnically heterogeneous territory. There are small and large tribes: the Tswana ones are 16, but eight of them are considered the main ones: Ngwato, Kwena, Tawana, Ngwaketse, Kgatla, Malete, Tlokwa and Tshidi-Rolong. They had separate territories with defined boundaries officially called "Reserves" or "tribal areas", and the rulers enjoyed the title of "chiefs" given by the British Administration[10]. Two other Tswana tribes, Khurutshe and Seleka-Rolong lived in Francistown District, together with non-Tswana tribes: their territories had conventional defined boundaries, not statutorily as for the main eight tribes, and their rulers had the title of "sub-chiefs". The other Tswana tribes remained did not live in a defined area, and their rulers were called "headmen"[11].

The main Tswana groups, such as the Kwena, Ngwato and Ngwaketse, established themselves in the 19th century, but Tswana speaking people had been present for a long time; when they arrived

[8] A. SILLERY, *Founding a Protectorate: history of Bechuanaland 1885-1895* Mouton & Co., London 1965, pp. 40-43.

[9] A. SILLERY, *The Bechuanaland Protectorate* Oxford University Press, Cape Town 1952, p. 78.

[10] I. SCHAPERA, *The Ethnic Composition of Tswana Tribes* London School of Economic and Political Science, London 1952, p. 1.

[11] *Ibid.*, p.1.

in what is now Botswana, they found the San people, the first inhabitants of the area[12]. I will use the term "tribe" to define the different ethnic groups that constitute the country because tribe was the word used by the Europeans to translate the Setswana term *morafe,* the chiefdom that characterised pre-colonial and colonial Botswana[13].

Botswana is in fact considered a tribal society, where "tribal" refers to:

> A centralised chieftaincy, and hence the members of other ethnic groups who pledge their allegiance to a particular Tswana chief are members of that tribe. Individuals or groups may change their tribe by transferring their allegiance to a different chief. Thus, birth and ethnic homogeneity are not necessary components of this definition of tribe[14].

In order to become member of a Tswana tribe, the foreigner had to report to the chief and ask to join; membership of a tribe, in fact, did not depend on birth, but on allegiance to the ruler. The chief then used to ask the foreigner the reasons for leaving his or her previous tribe and contact the former ruler to make sure there were no outstanding matters, such as debts to pay. In cases where the foreigner was accepted, he or she had to undergo a year-long probation; thereafter he or she would be considered a full member[15]. Distinctions were highlighted in case of conquered people, according to their status: if they were Tswana as well, they could become full citizens (in the sense of membership of the Tswana tribe that annexed them) after some time. But if they belonged to an ethnic group deemed to be inferior, as Kgalagadi or San, they would have been considered serfs or forced to pay tributes[16]. In order to be able to exercise rights, it was necessary to be a member of a *morafe,* which meant being a member of a recognised ward[17]; most of the San were therefore excluded[18]. The status of non-

[12] B. BENNETT, «Some Historical Background on Minorities in Botswana» in I.N. MAZONDE (Eds.), *Minorities in the Millennium: perspectives from Botswana* Lightbooks, Gaborone 2002, p. 5.

[13] *Ibid*., p. 10.

[14] J.A. WISEMAN, «Conflict and Conflict Alliances in the Kgatleng District of Botswana», in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* vol.16 n.3, 1978, p. 487.

[15] I. SCHAPERA, *A Handbook of Tswana law and custom* 2nd Ed. Published for the International African Institute by the Oxford University Press, London 1955, pp. 118-119.

[16] *Ibid*., pp. 120-121.

[17] According to Schapera (*ibid*., p. 19) a ward is "a collection of households living together in their own hamlet, and forming a distinct social and political unit under the leadership and

Tswana groups varied, and although they were considered "subject people" three categories can be distinguished: commoners (who could be either non royal Tswana people or immigrants who had proved to be loyal to the *kgosi*. An example is the Birwa), foreigners (immigrants or conquered people who had no wish to mix their identity with the Tswana. Kalanga and Herero were considered as such) and serfs (people like San and Kgalagadi, with few rights and exploited by other classes). These categories were not fixed, and members therefore could change from one status to another. The BaYei, for instance, were treated by the BaTawana differently in different periods: sometimes serfs, sometimes foreigners and sometimes commoners[19]. Moreover, the *kgotla*[20], the forum where freedom of speech was theoretically guaranteed, showed in practice how members of "low status" (like the BaYey. Kalanga and Kgalagadi) were bullied when trying to raise their voices. The San, in addition, were completely excluded from participating at the *kgotla*[21]. On the whole, the degree to which subject groups were allowed to rule themselves varied according to culture: immigrants belonging to Sotho or Tswana ethnicity could have their own village with their leaders, providing they observed the rule of the Tswana *kgosi*. Other subject groups like Kalanga, however, were incorporated among the Bamangwato and placed under their rule. The BaYei were not allowed to have their *kgotlas* until 1948[22].

Concerning economic rights, those subject people who had their own ward with a headman were granted access to water and land; those who were not considered part of the *morafe,* and had no ward were denied access to water and land and did not have property rights. Being a client or a serf depended upon how close the subjected people

authority of an hereditary headman, who had well-defined administrative and judicial powers and function".

[18] B. BENNETT, «Some Historical Background on Minorities in Botswana» in I.N. MAZONDE (Eds.), *Minorities in the Millennium: perspectives from Botswana,* Lightbooks, Gaborone 2002, p. 5.

[19] A. MURRAY, K. DATTA, «Botswana's traditional and colonial experience with democratic practices: to what extent a democratic tradition – minority groups», in *Democracy in Botswana,* Gaborone 1988, pp.1-3.

[20] *Kgotla* is the place of assembly, where chiefs and headmen met to discuss issues around the community. After independence, women and servants were allowed to take part (I. SCHAPERA, *A Handbook of Tswana law and custom,* 2nd Ed. Published for the International African Institute by the Oxford University Press, London 1955, p. 19).

[21] A. MURRAY, K. DATTA, *op. cit.* , p. 6.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

were to the Tswana in terms of culture, geography and economy[23]. For legal rights, again, those who were members of a *morafe* had access to justice; serfs like San were denied the right to it[24].

The *morafe* in pre-colonial times was centralised and hierarchical, where the Tswana chiefs were the political and ritual leaders. When the territory became Protectorate, the chiefdoms lost autonomy and the chieftainship as an institution was undermined; the chief and the ruling elite, however, managed to retain their privileges[25]. The chiefs were thus used indirectly by the British administration to rule the Tswana tribes and they enjoyed almost unchallenged power. They were, in practice, not accountable for their actions in tribal matters. The only way the British had to curb any abuse of power was through the creation of some constitutional authority, like the Native Administration Proclamation in 1934, which however was contrasted by the most prominent chiefs of the Protectorate, Tshekedi of the Ngwato and Bathoeng of the Ngwaketse[26]. On the whole, however, there was a "coincidence of interest" between the Tswana elite and the British[27]. The highly-effective control of the chiefs over their people and the most important means (cattle and land) "provided the Administration with a structure-in-place that it could build on and, if necessary, attempt to co-opt" [28]. The colonial government, however, did not want to get involved in the internal affairs of the chiefdoms, including ethnic issues: in this matter inequalities were not excluded in principle and the rights of the inhabitants varied according to ethnic belonging (Europeans, Asians and Africans were treated differently in various situations) [29]. Consequently, the power of the chief in this sense increased, as people could not secede without the Administration's approval, which was usually denied. When minority groups tried to oppose some resistance, therefore, they ended up being crushed, with the colonial authorities supporting the chiefs[30]. The colonial government

[23] *Ibid*., p. 19.
[24] *Ibid*., pp. 20-23 .
[25] P. PETERS, «Struggles over water, struggles over meanings: cattle, water and the state in Botswana», in *Africa* vol.54 n.3, 1984, pp. 30-33.
[26] S. GILLETT, «The Survival of Chieftaincy in Botswana», *African Affairs,* vol.72, n.287 1977, pp. 179-180.
[27] P. PETERS, *op. cit*., p. 33.
[28] *Ibid*., p. 33.
[29] B. BENNETT, *op. cit*., p. 7.
[30] *Ibid*., p. 8.

enforced the Tswana ruling elite over their subject population: "colonial policy of supporting Tswana chiefs perpetuated the subjection of non-Tswana minorities" [31]. This is the policy of divide and rule, by which British authorities in their colonies tended to favour one tribe over others, "with the dual objective of securing loyalty of that group to the administration and encouraging rivalry between different tribes to prevent a sense of unity from evolving and threatening colonial rule[32]". In Uganda and Nigeria, for instance, the British favoured the Baganda and Ibo respectively, while in Rwanda the Germans before and the Belgian afterwards favoured the Tutsi over the Hutu[33].

The ultimate way the British showed their support towards Tswana elite can be seen when political parties appeared on the stage. As Tlou and Campbell explain, the first party to be founded was the Federal Party in 1959, but it vanished in 1962, without the chance to spread beyond the borders of Serowe, where it was formed. In 1960 the Bechuanaland (Botswana after 1966) People's Party (BPP) was constituted, and it was strongly influenced by South African nationalism. That same year in fact there was an influx of refugees who had left South Africa following the Sharpeville massacre and ban of the opposition parties, and crossed the border to Bechuanaland. Two of the founders of the BPP were Batswana members of those parties banned in South Africa: Motsamai Mpho was affiliated to the ANC and Phillip Matante to the PAC[34]. Because of its pan-Africanist ideology, the BPP was considered too radical, so it failed in gaining the support of the rural areas and the white minority, since the latter was afraid of being expelled should the BPP win the elections. The BPP was, however, popular among the Kalanga, who hoped they would take part in the governance of an independent Botswana[35]. In 1961 Seretse Khama, heir of the Ngwato royal family, founded the Bechuanaland (Botswana after 1966) Democratic Party (BDP). It was less radical than the BPP and therefore enjoyed the support of the colonial government (the Resident Commissioner Peter Fawcus above all) and the white community, which supported it by voting and, in some cases, by joining it

[31] A. MURRAY, K. DATTA, *op. cit.* , pp. 30-31.

[32] M. MULINGE, G. LESETEDI, «Corruption in sub-Saharan Africa: Towards a More Holistic approach», *African Journal of Political Science,* vol.7 n.1 2002 p. 55.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 55.

[34] T.TLOU, A. CAMPBELL, *History of Botswana,* Macmillan Botswana, Gaborone, p. 222.

[35] *Ibid.*, pp. 223-226.

as well. The BDP was closer to the British administration's position, as its members, like the authorities, disregarded the influence of South African nationalism in the Protectorate politics and spoke in favour of multiracialism[36]. Moreover, it was founded in response to the foundation of the BPP and many of its leaders were also members of the Legislative Council, created by the British administration to work with the government[37]. The BDP, however, was, like the BPP, a nationalist party which advocated independence: it was constituted by intellectuals and, like Markakis explains, African nationalist groups "were intrinsically linked by vested interests to the colonial economy"[38]. It was the BPP radicalism summed up with the fear of communist influence that concerned the British administration: in British Guyana, for instance, the colonial authorities employed divide and rule techniques to undermine the more radical opposition party[39].

The first elections in the country were held in 1965: the BDP easily won and Seretse Khama was nominated Prime Minister[40]. The following year Bechuanaland became independent, changing its name into Botswana.

2. Citizenship and belonging in independent Botswana

In 1966, therefore, Botswana became independent; the disparities and inequalities between Tswana and minority groups that characterised the country during pre-colonial and colonial time did not disappear, but were simply adapted into post-independence institutions. Bostwana was divided into eight Districts (Kgalagadi, Ghanzi, Kweneng, Central, Ngwaketse, Kgatleng, Ngamiland and South East District), crystallising the division in Tribal reserves made by the British. Each district is inhabited by the eight main Setswana speaking

[36] *Ibid*., pp.224-226.

[37] L. PICARD, «From Bechuanaland to Botswana: An Overview», in L. PICARD (Eds.), *The Evolution of Modern Botswana,* Rex Collings London, 1985, pp. 17-18.

[38] J. MARKAKIS, «Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Horn of Africa», in P. YEROS (Eds.), *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Africa,* Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1999, p.67.

[39] F. FUREDI, «Creating a breathing space: The political management of colonial emergencies», *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History.* vol. 21, n.3, 1993, p. 100.

[40] L. PICARD, *op. cit*., p. 19.

tribes, recognised as such by the 1966 Chieftainship Act[41]. According to the Act, non-Tswana tribes are not recognised and therefore should be absorbed into Tswana ones, whereas the 1966 Tribal Territories Act defines territory in respect of these eight tribes only. As a consequence, the eight Tswana tribes are the only ones which have group land rights[42].

Richard Werbner defines the policies implemented in independent Botswana as directed towards a One-Nation Consensus. Tribal interests in economic, political and cultural fields were in fact sacrificed in the name of national unity[43]. Regarding culture, the policies implemented were aiming at homogeneity and assimilation into the Tswana one: *building one state was building one nation – the Tswana nation*[44]. On the same line, the only languages allowed in social domains are English and Setswana, the former as the official one and the latter as the national one. English is the main language in courts, and Setswana the only indigenous language accepted in courts too (with translation into English) as well as *kgotlas*[45]. Setswana, therefore, as indigenous language spoken by the dominant class, was imposed over other indigenous languages in the country; a similar situation happened in Malawi under the rule of Hastings Banda, where Chichewa was preferred to the detriment of other languages[46]. English however, given its status of official language, is predominant in various sectors of both Botswana and Malawi societies, although Setswana and Chichewa are not entirely excluded: education (Setswana and Chichewa are medium of instruction in the first years of primary school), government affairs and mass media (national TVs broadcast in both English and Setswana and English and Chichewa) [47].

Before Botswana achieved independence, other languages were used in public domains, but afterwards they were all banned, at the

[41] L. NYATI-RAMAHOBO, «Ethnic Identity and Nationhood in Botswana», in I.N. MAZONDE (Eds.), *Minorities in the Millennium: perspectives from Botswana,* Lightbooks, Gaborone 2002, p. 18.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[43] R. WERBNER, «Introduction: Challenging Minorities, Difference and Tribal Citizenship in Botswana», in *Journal of Southern African Studies,* Vol.28 n.4, 2002, p. 676.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 676.

[45] L. NYATI-RAMAHOBO, *op. cit.,* p. 17.

[46] G. KAMWENDO, T. MOOKO, «Language planning in Botswana and Malawi: a comparative study», in *International Journal of the Sociology of Language,* vol. 2006, n. 186, 2006, p. 119.

[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 128-131.

advantage of Setswana and English[48]. Languages like Afrikaans, Ikalanga and Otjiherero were therefore excluded from education, government affairs and media, becoming in this way 'minority' languages spoken by people belonging to minority groups.[49] The uniformity of culture through assimilation and the non-recognition of the existence of differences became the means through which the Tswana built a nation state. According to Ornulf Gulbrandsen, assimilation in Botswana "meant a muted acceptance of being located in a very inferior stratum in the hierarchical order of the Tswana *merafe*" [50].

Ethnicity is officially not taken into consideration when it comes to voting, employment, education or land distribution. However, this no-ethnicity policy was by no means successful, as ethnicity is still a key issue in the political scenario: the House of Chiefs, one of the parliamentary chambers, is based on it[51]. The provisions of sections 77, 78 and 79 of the Botswana Constitution mentioned only the main eight Setswana-speaking tribes, relegating all others to a status of minorities[52]. One of the consequences was unequal representation in the House of Chiefs[53]. It took 40 years, however, before the issue of the House of Chiefs was publicly raised. In previous decades minority rights were not accorded space in political debate; they simply did not exist. In 1988 the issue of the composition of the House of Chiefs was raised for the first time, but soon dismissed. Only in the late 1990s did it become a national question with press coverage[54]. In 2000 Botswana President Festus Mogae appointed the Balopi Commission in order to investigate the articles of the Constitution; the following year the report was ready, and the government prepared a draft white paper

[48] L. NYATI-RAMAHOBO, *op. cit.,* p. 17.

[49] J. SOLWAY, «Navigating the "Neutral" State: "Minority" Rights in Botswana», in *Journal of Southern African Studies,* vol. 28, n.4, 2002, p. 714.

[50] O. GULBRANDSEN, *The State and the Social: State Formation in Botswana and its Pre-Colonial and Colonial Genealogies,* Berghahn Books, New York 2012, p.213.

[51] J. SOLWAY, «From Shame to Pride: Politicized Ethnicity in the Kalahari, Botswana», in *Canadian Journal of African Studies,* vol.28 n.2, 1994, p. 255.

[52] The articles guaranteed the paramount chiefs of the Tswana tribes an *ex-officio* membership of the House of Chiefs, while the other seven members were elected with the status of sub-chiefs. The position of the Tswana chiefs was hereditary and lifelong (J. SOLWAY, «Navigating the "Neutral" State», cit. , p. 719).

[53] F. NYAMNJOH, «Reconciling "the rhetoric of rights" with competing notions of personhood and agency in Botswana», in H.ENGLUND, F.NYAMNJOH (Eds.), *Rights and the Politics of Recognition in Africa* Zed Books, London 2004, p. 43.

[54] J. SOLWAY, «Navigating the "Neutral" State», cit., p. 712.

with changes to the Constitution that caused strong reactions from the eight Tswana tribes[55]. The paper suggested removing the *ex-officio* appointment to the House of Chiefs for the eight Tswana tribes, subjecting all members to designation. Furthermore, it asked that representation was based on territoriality rather than on "a perceived membership of tribal or ethnic group[56]". The Tswana tribes fiercely opposed the white paper, and President Mogae had to change it in order to meet their complaints. The *ex-officio* members were therefore reintroduced, and their number increased from eight to twelve in order to incorporate the chiefs from the districts of Chobe, Ghanzi, North-East and Kgalagadi; the total number of members of the House increased to 35. As Gulbrandsen noticed, the eight Tswana chiefs become members of the National Assembly because they are the main authorities of the *merafe*, thus because of their ethnic distinction; the other members are elected from ethnically mixed areas[57]. The revised white paper was largely rejected by minority groups, which accused President Mogae of bowing to pressures coming from the Tswana, and therefore ignoring the findings of the Balopi Commission[58]. All new arrangements in the Constitution, therefore, reinforce the role of the Tswana in the National Assembly, leaving the minorities as invisible as they were before[59].

Two crucial issues that need to be considered in order to understand contemporary Botswana are citizenship and belonging. Already the name of the country speaks about the ambiguities surrounding this matter[60]: it in fact derives directly from the dominant ethnic group and, as Murray (quoted in Nyamnjoh) noticed, the definition of nation has been in this way "manipulated to provide Tswana culture with a monopoly of political legitimacy in Tswanadom's new guise, the Republic of Botswana" [61]. So, whereas all may be Batswana when they relate to immigrants and outsiders in general, not everyone is a

[55] F. NYAMNJOH, «Reconciling "the rhetoric of rights" », *op.cit*. , p. 43.
[56] *Ibid*., p. 44.
[57] O. GULBRANDSEN, *op.cit*., p. 218.
[58] F. NYAMNJOH, «Reconciling "the rhetoric of rights" », *op.cit*., pp. 44-45.
[59] O. GULBRANDSEN, *op.cit*., p. 219.
[60] Botswana is the name of the country, and means "the place of Tswana". Motwana refers to one citizen but also to someone of Tswana ethnic identity. Batswana is the plural and refers to the population. Setswana is the language.
[61] F. NYAMNJOH, *Insiders and Outsiders: Citizenship and Xenophobia in Contemporary Southern Africa,* Codesria Books, Dakar 2006, pp. 93-94.

Motswana when it comes to ethnic identity and national politics[62]. Francis Nyamnjoh stated that although citizenship is guaranteed in principle to everyone by the Constitution, in practice it is apparently unequal:

> There is a hierarchy of citizenship fostered by political, economic, social and cultural inequalities, such that it makes some individuals and groups much more able to claim and articulate their rights than others. Being a right-bearing Motswana is a matter of degree and power relations, and some are less Batswana than others[63].

An example of disparities in terms of citizenship rights is provided by the successful struggle of the women organisation Emang Basadi, and in particular the lawyer Unity Dow, in 1990 against the Citizenship Law. The Act at the time did not grant citizenship to the children of Batswana women married to foreign men, while children born from Batswana men and foreign women were recognised citizens. Unity Dow therefore took the government to court, and in 1991 the High Court ruled in her favour; the judgment was confirmed the following year by the Appeal Court[64].

In the mid-1980s minorities started asking for better representation and more equity, with a "resurgent of identity politics and overt tensions over belonging"[65], about who has the right to claim to be rightful citizen[66]. In this sense the issue of belonging is tightly linked to nationalism, since, as Nugent, Dorman and Hammett argue, "it is arguably in the nature of nationalism to distinguish insiders from outsiders"[67]. Nation-building in its own vocabulary comprises inclusion and exclusion, and in many states, even those which were once regarded as ethnically homogenous like Botswana and Somalia, minorities are

[62] *Ibid*., p. 94.

[63] F. NYAMNJOH, «Reconciling "the rhetoric of rights" », cit., p. 41.

[64] G. GEISLER, «Troubled sisterhood: women and politics in Southern Africa, case studies from Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana», *African Affairs,* vol. 94 (377), 1995, pp. 563-564.

[65] F. NYAMNJOH, *Insiders and Outsiders,* cit., p. 82.

[66] F. NYAMNJOH, «Local Attitudes towards Citizenship and Foreigners in Botswana: an Appraisal of Recent Press Stories», in *Journal of Southern Africa Studies* vol.28 n.4, 2002 p. 761.

[67] S. DORMAN, D. HAMMETT, P. NUGENT, «Introduction: citizenship and its casualties in Africa», in *Making Nations, Creating Strangers: States and Citizenship in Africa,* Brill, Leiden 2007, p. 4.

excluded from the nation-building process[68]. Côte d'Ivoire provides an example of how nationalism, citizenship and belonging intertwine and are brought to an extreme level. In Côte d'Ivoire the concepts of autochthony and "ivoirité" have been used to determine who had the right to be elected in office, in order to exclude immigrants and those of 'mixed heritage' (namely those who were not born in Côte d'Ivoire, or whose parents were not) that had been favoured during Houphouët-Boigny's rule[69]. The concept of "ivoirité", thus, "profoundly reinforced the idea of territorialised autochthony as the ground upon which citizenship should be constructed" [70].

In Botswana the issues of minorities and belonging never degenerated into a vortex of violence like in Côte d'Ivoire, but questions about who has the right to claim to be rightful citizens still rose. Kalanga for instance, are perceived by some Tswana as not authentic citizens, but more similar to so-called *Makwerekwere* from Zimbabwe than other Batswana[71]. The issues of citizenship and belonging broaden up including foreigners. As Nymnjoh describes it, a hierarchy is present not only among Batswana (among who has the right to claim citizenship), but also among foreigners and migrants, making some more welcome than others[72]. Zimbabwean immigrants in particular are despised and accused of stealing jobs from Batwana citizens and they are accordingly more likely to be victims of police harassment, prejudices and stereotypes[73].

3. **Positioning minorities in the political arena**

When it comes more specifically to politics and party affiliation, minority groups in Botswana do not have parties representing them in

[68] *Ibid*., pp. 8-9.

[69] R. MARSHALL-FRATANI, «The war of "who is who": autochthony, nationalism and citizenship in the Ivorian crisis», in *Making Nations, Creating Strangers: States and Citizenship in Africa,* Brill, Leiden 2007, p. 45.

[70] *Ibid*., p. 46.

[71] I *Makwerekwere* is a derogative term that refers to African immigrants, with usually darker skin, coming from poorer countries. Kalanga people often have darker skin, so they are more likely to be labelled as such (F. NYAMNJOH, «Local Attitudes towards Citizenship and Foreigners in Botswana», cit., p. 761).

[72] F. NYAMNJOH, *Insiders and Outsiders,* cit., p. 86.

[73] F. NYAMNJOH, «Local Attitudes towards Citizenship and Foreigners in Botswana», cit., pp. 767-768.

the National Assembly. They did not organise into political organisations aiming at being represented in the Parliament in order to carry on their demands. As Gulbrandsen pointed out, minorities in Botswana do not fight for political power, but for the recognition of their culture and their language. There is no actual risk, therefore, of a mobilisation aiming at destabilising the country or overthrowing the democratic institutions[74]. Also, there is no threat of "tribalist" actions against the unity of the state, as President Masire in the mid-90s used to say, referring to calls for recognition of minority rights by Kalanga, Yei and opposition parties[75]. Minorities are thus perfectly inserted in the political scenario, and their party preference is skewed towards the opposition, which is considered closer to their interests than the ruling party, the BDP[76].

The BDP has ruled Botswana since independence; the main opposition parties are the Botswana National Front (BNF) and Botswana Congress Party (BCP), which, however, never really represented a threat to BDP dominance. Both parties carried out arguments appealing to minorities in order to increase the base of their support[77]. In this sense, it is important to highlight the fact that the main Tswana tribe, the Ngwato, was centrally involved in the formation of the BDP: its founder was Sir Seretse Khama, heir of the Royal family and first President of the country[78], while his son, Ian, is now President of Botswana, after a military career in the highest ranks. Solway provides an example of the preference towards the opposition in the Kgalagadi areas, where political commitment grew constantly, starting from 1979 elections, although at that time BDP support was uncontested[79]. In 1984 elections support for BNF increased, until 15 years later it won the local council seat. Kgalagadi people are backing opposition parties in the hope of the creation of a new district, where they can have their own capital, chief with full membership of the House of Chiefs, their

[74] O. GULBRANDSEN, *op.cit*., pp. 220-222.

[75] D. DURHAM, «Uncertain Citizens: Herero and the New Intercalary Subject in Postcolonial Botswana», in R. WERBNER (Eds.), *Postcolonial subjectivities in Africa* Zed Books, London, 2002, p. 151.

[76] J. SOLWAY, «Navigating the "Neutral" State», cit. , p. 723.

[77] *Ibid*., p. 726. The BNF, for instance, proposed important changes to the House of Chiefs.

[78] D. DURHAM, *op.cit*., p.148.

[79] J. SOLWAY, «Navigating the "Neutral" State», cit. , p. 727.

language, Shekgalagadi, recognised in courts and primary schools and more authority for local residents over the disposition of resources[80].

Deborah Durham provides another example of minorities and politics, with the case of the appointment of a headman in the Herero ward in the village of Mahalapye[81]. Mahalapye is an interesting village since it combines different communities of people originally coming from the whole Southern African region. Because of that, Mahalapye does not have an indigenous population, but different ethnic groups, including the Herero, who arrived from South West Africa after the genocide perpetrated by the Germans in 1904, the Batalaote (Kalanga-Shona), the Lozwi (from Malawi and Zambia) and the Xhosa from South Africa[82]. The latter were recruited in the Cape Colony by the British South Africa Company to work for the construction of the railway in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries[83], others arrived as employees of local farms and others as refugees from apartheid[84].

Deborah Durham explains how the junior chief, and heir of the Herero royal family, was not appointed as senior chief of the Herero ward when the one who was in charge retired. In his place a Tswana man from another ward was appointed. When he complained and elections were held, he won, but still the other candidate was appointed. Some people in Mahalapye suspected that political choices were behind this decision: Mahalapye is a BDP stronghold, and older generations of Herero support it, although the younger ones have leaned towards the BNF for its promises of guaranteeing minorities rights. Among this younger cohort was the sister of the junior chief, while the senior chief who retired used to be chairman of the local BDP committee before becoming village chief[85].

Interestingly a similar situation was described to me by the members of the Xhosa wards during fieldwork in 2011. During interviews

[80] *Ibid*., pp.727-728.

[81] D. DURHAM, *op.cit*., p. 144.

[82] B.B. KEBONANG, «The History of the Herero in Mahalapye, Central District: 1922-1984», in *Botswana Notes and Records,* vol.21, 1988 p. 44.

[83] Mmegi online, 17 August 2007 http://mmegi.bw .

[84] Interview of the author with Mr. J. N., Xhosa and citizen of Mahalapye, on the 15th and 21st June 2011. For reasons of confidentiality, only the initials will be used.

[85] D. DURHAM, *op.cit*., pp. 144-147. Two other factors, however, were brought up by people to explain the reasons why the junior chief was not appointed. First, the fact that, although he could read and write, he lacked of formal education credentials; secondly he was accused of bribery for buying a cow that turned out to be stolen (*Ibid*., p. 148).

and informal conversations, one informant revealed that now there are two Xhosa wards, but it used to be one only, and that the chief of Xhosa 1 is a Motswana[86], and not a local Xhosa[87]. The interviewee stated that, in his opinion, the reasons were political, because Tswana did not want Xhosa people to rule themselves, since they are still considered foreigners and "citizens by paper[88]". The case of the Xhosa community in Mahalapye supports claims made by Ornulf Gulbrandsen and Deborah Durham about minorities not being interested in political power. Xhosas in fact are interested in keeping their culture and language alive, although the latter is increasingly limited to the older generations, since only Setswana and English are allowed in schools and public domains.

In the same way as the Xhosas in Mahalapye struggle to maintain their culture, other minorities do the same. Solway describes the main cultural organisations founded by minorities groups, emphasising how their leaders are usually educated, urban-based young people, and typically "successful members of modern Botswana who desire to claim their particularistic identity, not instead of, but in addition to, Botswana citizenship"[89]. There are no political ambitions behind these organisations, demonstrating again how minority groups' claims do not represent a threat to Botswana unity. Nevertheless, President Mogae urged the organisations to show their contribution to national unity, in order to dismiss "public perceptions that some of these associations are para-political with a hidden agenda and masquerading as cultural organizations"[90]. Among these associations are SPIL, the Society for the Promotion of Ikalanga Language, founded in 1981 with the aim of achieving linguistic and cultural recognition, and Kamanakao, founded in 1995 to preserve Yeyi culture and language. Furthermore, there are cultural organisations representing the Birwa, the Herero and the Batswapong[91].

[86] The term here is used to refer to the man's ethnicity, not to his citizenship.

[87] Interview of the author with Mr. J. N., Xhosa and citizen of Mahalapye, on the 15th and 21st June 2011.

[88] This is an expression used by Tswana of Botswana to define and distinguish foreigners who applied for citizenship after being resident in the country for a certain amount of years. I often heard this expression during my research among South African former migrants and refugees who left Apartheid to settle in Botswana.

[89] J. SOLWAY, «Navigating the "Neutral" State», cit., pp. 723-724.

[90] . NYAMNJOH, *Insiders and Outsiders,* cit., p. 89.

[91] *Ibid*., p.723

4. The plight of the San

This section will focus on the case of the San population, indigenous people of hunter-gatherers of the Kalahari Desert, and the oldest inhabitants of Botswana[92]. Botswana has the largest concentration of San people, with a population of around 100 000 living in its territory[93]. The history of the San is a history of deprivation and subjugation to the Tswana majority. Hitchcock and Holms explain how they have been gradually incorporated by Bantu-speaking people when the latter expanded across the territory[94]. During the seventeenth century a number of Tswana *merafe* emerged, incorporating other ethnic groups such as the Bakgalagadi and Bayei. The San, unlike other groups, were treated as serfs and were excluded from political life: they could not attend public assemblies and could not speak in court. When white people and Tswana arrived they took the San's land and cattle, and exploited them for labour[95]. When the land was utilised for grazing Tswana cattle, the San had the choice of working for the Tswana in cattle posts, or migrating to towns or mines in South Africa. Many San, therefore, ended up being strongly tied to their employers by the fact that they had limited alternative[96].

Because of the fact that they did not have lands, Tswana elites developed the idea that San people "live like wild animals, without leaders and without law" [97]. This sentence had a powerful meaning: according to Kenneth Good, "an absence of law means a condition of lawlessness, not simply as supposed savagery, but rather as being without the protection of the law where it counts most; namely, property in land"[98].

[92] The San are most commonly known in the West by the name of *Bushmen*. In setswana they are called *Basarwa*, a term that equalise them to Tswana groups; in the past, however, they were defined with the derogative expression of *Masarwa* (R. HITCHCOCK, J. HOLM, «Bureaucratic Domination of Hunter-Gatherer Societies: A Study of the San in Botswana», in *Development and Change* vol.24 n.2, 1993, p. 313).

[93] K. GOOD, *Diamonds, Dispossession and Democracy in Botswana,* James Currey, Oxford, 2008, p. 109.

[94] R. HITCHCOCK, J. HOLM, *op.cit*., pp. 308-310.

[95] K. GOOD, «Interpreting the Exceptionality of Botswana», in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* vol.30 n.1, 1992 p.82.

[96] R. HITCHCOCK, J. HOLM, *op.cit*., pp. 311-312.

[97] A. KUPER, *Kalahari Village Politics: an African Democracy,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970, p. 45.

[98] K. GOOD, «Interpreting the Exceptionality of Botswana», cit. , p.82.

The status of servitude under which the San were living persisted during colonial times as well, although British authorities tried to improve their situation. Only in the late 1950s some improvements were registered, although not in the political arena, since they still did not participate in any activities of that sort[99]. After independence, San people were and are still victims of prejudice: Tswana still consider the idea of intermarriage as inconceivable and politicians often refer to the San as uncivilised people who know only nomadic life and cannot use technology[100]. Discriminations were portrayed in literature, for example in the novel *Maru* by Bessie Head, which tells the story of the trouble encountered by a schoolteacher of San origin in integrating and being accepted by Tswana[101]. In the political scenario, independence has not brought much change: across the 1970s and early 1980s there was very little evidence of San involvement in local and national politics. A shift occurred in the 1989 elections, when seven San ran for the office of local councillor in the Ghanzi district, and two of them were elected[102]. The change was explained by the interest of the BNF, the main opposition party, which decided to campaign in favour of San rights; as a reaction, the government continued to distribute food after the end of the drought and three San were appointed by the BDP in the district land board. In other parts of the country, however, participation in politics among San people is almost non-existent because, unlike in Ghanzi, in other districts they live scattered and in small proportions[103].

On the whole, the San still live under extremely weak conditions and are considered the poorest people in the country[104]: they are not represented by political organisations on a national level and are denied of land rights, which mean they are subjected to government pol-

[99] R. HITCHCOCK, J. HOLM, *op.cit.*, p. 313.

[100] *Ibid.*, p. 314.

[101] Bessie Head is considered one of the most important writers in Botswana. She was born in South Africa from a white woman and a black man, and moved to Botswana as a refugee in the early 1960s. Here she lived in Serowe, but never felt entirely accepted in her new country. Her application for citizenship was refused a few times before being accepted in the late 1970s. She died in 1980s.

[102] R. HITCHCOCK, J. HOLM, *op.cit.*, pp. 328-329.

[103] *Ibid.*, pp. 329-330.

[104] K. GOOD, «At the Ends of the Ladder: Radical Inequalities in Botswana», in *The Journal of Modern African Studies,* vol.31, n.2 1993, p. 205.

icies of relocation[105]. Regarding this last point, it is worthwhile noticing that the Botswana government in 2001 tried to relocate those San who live in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) into resettlement camps, attracting in this way strong criticism from the international community. In order to force them to leave, the government stopped providing food rations, pensions and water and issuing special game licences[106]. The given reasons underpinning the choice of relocation included the willingness of the government to preserve the wildlife in the CKGR, but many, such as the NGO Survival International claimed that the main reason was the exploitation of the area for tourism and diamond mining[107]. The San, however, fought against the forced eviction, and in 2002 they took the Botswana government to the High Court; the judges led by Unity Dow recognised the illegalities perpetrated and ruled in favour of the San, allowing them to return to their land[108].

5. Conclusion

The history of Botswana has shown how the Tswana majority has always tried to absorb minority groups, preserving pre-colonial and colonial patterns of predominance in post-independence, perpetuating the disparities in order to retain their power. What is interesting to highlight in the case of Botswana is the fact that minorities have almost always passively accepted this status quo, until the most recent fights against apparent discriminations established in the Constitution. Furthermore, their struggle concerns only their right of having their culture and language recognised at the same level as Tswana. In fact, not having constituted political parties to represent them in the National Assembly implies what little threat minority groups can present to the stability of the state. Nevertheless, claims of recognition are enough to alarm the Tswana majority, which accuses minorities of threatening the unity of the country. This attitude of ostensibly want-

[105] K. GOOD, «The state and extreme poverty in Botswana: the San and destitutes», in *The Journal of Southern African Studies* vol.37, n.2 1999, p. 191.

[106] I.TAYLOR, G. MOKHAWA, «Not forever: Botswana, conflict diamonds and the Bushmen», in *African Affairs,* vol. 102, n.407, 2003 pp. 275-277.

[107] *Ibid*., p. 278.

[108] K. GOOD, *Diamonds, Dispossession and Democracy,* cit., pp. 129-140.

ing to defend their privileges reflects the fear of the Tswana of losing their centenary predominance and power over other groups. The flip-side of the coin is the approach towards foreigners and non-Tswana in general, in the right of claiming belonging. Distinguishing between themselves and "citizens by paper" underlines Tswana willingness to draw a line between "us", namely those who have the right to belong, and "them", who are considered second class citizens.

Unity and stability of Botswana are not at stake. Personal interests are at stake: on the one hand Tswana fight to retain their privileges and historical power; on the other minorities have awakened and started claiming recognition. But considering the few results accomplished so far, the road towards equality between Tswana and minority groups remains long.

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Politics of Social Movements in Minority Contexts: Oil, Elections, Resistance and Representation in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

Akin Iwilade, Iwebunor Okwechime

1. Introduction

The idea that multiparty elections are key to democratic transitions, particularly in the developing world, has come under sustained and justified assault in the literature. Some of these critiques have focused on the contradictions inherent in liberal democracy itself and the way it is articulated in the developing world. Others are concerned about specific workings of the liberal system and argue that it is often prone to blatant manipulation by stakeholders; from regimes in power to the opposition and even international observers[1]. The conclusion is that elections often amount to "voting without choosing" and are merely another form of assault on democracy. In spite of this popular apprehension about the nature of elections in the developing world, it is still the single most popular way to guarantee some form of transition to nominal democracy. To underscore this, in 2011 alone, about 27 African countries held nationwide elections, with varying degrees of success[2]. The popularity of elections is perhaps most obvious in the political transitions of post conflict societies like Liberia and Sierra Leone. In those countries, a weary international community practically railroaded the, we dare say, ill-prepared societies, into elections which were considered to be high points of tortuous international intervention efforts. The remarkable reverses, particularly in Liberia after the

[1] For challenges to the liberal democratic model, see several chapters in T. LUMUMBA-KASONGO (ed.), *Liberal Democracy and its Critics in Africa: Political Dysfunction and the Struggle for Social Progress*, CODESRIA and ZED Books, Dakar. For specific concerns about electoral democracy see for instance S. ADEJUMOBI, «Elections in Africa: A fading Shadow of Democracy?», *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2000, pp. 59-73 and I. OKWECHIME, «The West and the Politics of Monitoring the 2003 Elections», in A. JEGA and O. IBEANU (eds.), *Elections and the Future of Democracy in Nigeria*, NPSA, Abuja, pp. 265-94.

[2] M. KIMENYI, «Africa's 2011 Elections», in *Foresight Africa: The Continent's Greatest Challenges and Opportunities for 2011,* The Brookings Institution, pp. 3-5.

Taylor transition in 1997, indicate that electoral democracy does not necessarily solve all social problems[3].

The above notwithstanding, elections have become powerful tools for both empowerment and disempowerment. They have provided opportunities for large scale social mobilizations that have sometimes challenged the very basis of power in many African states. This is the case in multi-ethnic societies like Nigeria where elections usually provide unprecedented opportunity for various minorities to articulate their sense of marginalization and demand greater inclusion in governance. They have also, unfortunately, helped many dictators or dictatorial regimes consolidate power in specific elite circles and have provided a veneer of international respectability and legitimacy to what is often a blatant manipulation of democratic processes.

This chapter takes a critical look at the manipulation of the rhetoric of (dis)empowerment and (in)exclusion by minority groups in Nigeria's oil rich Niger Delta. In particular, the chapter places social mobilization in election times within the context of the political economy of oil in the region and the historically rooted demands for political inclusion in the Nigerian state. Using the 2007 and 2011 general elections as templates, the paper maps the contemporary history of resistance to the oil multinational-state coalition in the region, its implications for economic reproduction, social inclusion and access to the resources of state and the way election time mobilization has come to represent this important social dynamic.

The dynamics of minority politics in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria is particularly relevant in this context because it captures three critical features of the emerging role of minorities in modern elections. First is the potential of minorities serving as game determinants in a multi-ethnic political system where social mobilization has clearly ethnic colourations. This often magnifies, or sometimes even exaggerates, the relevance of historically marginalized groups in the political process. Second is the push and pull effect of contradictory forces for "center-leaning" (that is those who would see mobilization towards a federal center) on the one hand, and for enclave politics (those who insist on provincialism as an end of mobilization) on the other. Third

[3] V. TANNER, «Liberia: Railroading Peace», in *Review of African Political Economy*, vol.25, No.75, 1998, pp. 133-47.

are the peculiar implications of resource extraction, control and distribution for ethnic mobilization and how it frames broader perspectives about the national question.

To address the above issues, the chapter is divided into four interconnected sections. The first section constructs a conceptual framework within which we can think about the underlying discourses of marginalisation and inclusion and how oil and minorities shape the discourse in Nigeria. The section that follows places the above within the specific context of social mobilization and resistance in the oil rich Niger delta region. Here, we show the role that the political economy of oil plays in social mobilization in the Niger Delta and what meaning it may have for the national question and the democratic project in Nigeria. The third section situates the above analyses within the specific framework of two recent national elections in Nigeria (2007 and 2011). It explains the (ir)relevance of minority discourses of (dis)empowerment and highlights the way election time mobilization tends to represent these pre-election grievances. It also addresses how political interactions, negotiations and horse trading between elite structures in both majority and minority groups; incidentally legitmized by political rhetoric of challenging social marginalization of minorities; often opens up new forms of discrimination. The last section provides a summary of the key arguments and points to lessons that may be drawn for Nigeria's democracy.

2. Oil, Minorities and Electoral Democracy in Nigeria

With regard to the critical intersection of Oil, minority identity and electoral democracy in Nigeria, three broad themes can be discerned. First is the concept of "oil minorities" which, as Obi put it, is an

> aggregation of small ethnic groups who share a commonality underlined by their physical location in the geography and political economy of oil, the lifeblood of the state, the very "glue" keeping the disparate groups, factions and elements that constitute Nigeria together[4].

[4] See C. Obi, *The Changing Forms of Identity Politics in Nigeria under Economic Adjustments: The Case of the Oil Minorities of the Niger Delta*, Research Report No. 119, Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, 2001, p. 10.

Second is the theme of ethnicity that runs through social mobilization and national politics in Nigeria and which has shaped electoral outcomes for decades. Third and last are the issues of participation and inclusion and the various ways in which minority demands for these in Nigeria have been articulated and responded to.

Before we address each of these themes, it is important to note that Nigerian politics has for long been designed to revolve around the three largest ethnic groups (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) and the elite competition and cooperation that arise from their interactions. Minority groups, some of which themselves, like the Ijaw in the Niger Delta for instance, have very large populations running into millions, and are effective majorities in their immediate region, have been regarded merely as pawn in a political game dominated by the three major groups. This has generated conflict in many parts of the country leading to widespread loss of lives and destruction of property. With a very diverse population of some 200 distinct ethnic groupings and even more languages and dialects, and so few concrete policies aimed at respecting such diversity, it is not difficult to see why Nigeria has been such a volatile social formation.

Contributing to the volatility of Nigeria has been the unrelenting resistance of oil minorities to their exclusion from political power and the gains accruing from oil exploitation. Oil minorities justify their resistance first by claiming ownership of the oil and thus the revenue that accrues from its exploitation. They argue that having effectively occupied, for centuries, the lands from which oil is extracted, they own the oil and should thus be able to enjoy its benefits. They also note that, unlike other parts of the country, the Niger Delta environment bears the brunt of oil exploitation and that the destruction of its ecosystem, diversity, and livelihoods can only be compensated by control over the revenue that accrues from oil. This perspective is challenged by dominant forces who favour the centralized control of oil and the coercive, extractive and distributive power of the state. These forces often call to a "national unity", peace and stability project as reasons to prevent the appropriation of such a key revenue earner by a section of the country.

These contending perceptions of what role oil should play in national life is further complicated by the ethnic colouration of social mobilizations by both dominant and minority groups. As Cyril Obi aptly describes it, "in the zero-sum context of politics in an oil de-

pendent-state, ethnicity plays a major role in defining the contending claims to oil" [5]. To justify their dominance of the discourses that shape perceptions about access to oil and the revenue it generates, elites on both sides of the divide often call to ethnic solidarity and identity. They legitimize their roles by framing what is often an intra-elite struggle as if it were embedded in popular apprehensions about social inclusion and marginalization. The ethnic dimension enables elites to embed their contestations within historical discourses of disempowerment and exploitation thereby deepening its social reach and complicating efforts at resolving it. With regard to how this plays out in the Niger Delta region, Obi notes that:

> issues of exclusion, marginalization and inclusion in power relations spawned by oil, pitch the oil minorities against those with power over oil. The state, which mediates between global oil and the people of the oil-producing communities, becomes both a site of the struggle, and a critical player in the politics of oil[6].

Electoral contests in Nigeria, particularly at the federal center and within the Niger Delta region have been significantly affected by these issues. No region of Nigeria reflects the "push and pull" effects of ethnic based social mobilization more critically than the Niger Delta. Politicians like Diepreye Alamamesigha, former Governor of oil producing Bayelsa State, for instance, became quite popular for championing a provincial type of politics that demanded greater autonomy from the federal center. Even though he fell short of calling for secession as was the case in the eastern region in the 1960s, his nationalist rhetoric eventually forced him into confrontation with the powerful federal government and, being mired in corruption scandals, he was subsequently impeached and jailed. Other politicians who worked with the federal government championed a pro-center discourse that, while careful not to alienate widespread and genuine social grievance in the region, preached peace and dialogue as the way to resolve the issues[7].

[5] *Ibid.,* p. 9.
[66] *Ibid.,* p.11.
[7] This class of politicians often worked as cabinet level ministers and bureaucrats at the federal center in Abuja. Their closeness to the seat of power in Abuja was however both an asset and a liability. While they could often call on the might of the federal government to

It is interesting to note that minority rights agitations have been going on in Nigeria for decades. In the years before independence, the agitations of minorities for some form of constitutional protection from the domineering influence of majority groups within the Nigerian federation resulted in the setting up of the Henry Willinks Commission by the British in 1957. This commission made far reaching proposals that were designed to strengthen and protect minorities. The collapse of the First Republic in 1966 and the consequent centralization of governance by the military effectively destroyed what protection the minorities might have enjoyed and firmly established the dominance of the three major ethnic groups in Nigerian politics.

The challenge of guaranteeing the participation and inclusion of minorities and the respect of their peculiar interests within the Nigerian federation was thus made more complex and indeed less of a priority by the command-style governance of the military. The return to civilian rule in 1999 provided minorities with a new and more liberal space within which they could articulate their grievances and challenge what they perceived as the destructive activities of the state-multinational oil coalition in the region. With regard to participation and inclusion, the creation of minority dominated states like Bayelsa, Rivers and Delta provided a political space within which minority discourses and interests could be prioritized. However, with the federal center retaining *de facto* control over the exploitation of oil and the resources that accrues from it, the states remained staked to the dominant logic of governance and politics at the center. This greatly diminishes the impact of creating specific minority dominated political spaces.

This challenge nonetheless, guaranteeing the participation of minorities in governance is a necessary element of democracy. As we have pointed out above, the implications of oil for Nigeria's political economy and its location within minority areas makes guaranteeing such participation a rather difficult proposition for the ruling elite coalitions.

push through their agendas, they were derided at home by their critics as "Abuja politicians" who sided with the oppressors and had no connection to the grassroots.

3. Contextualizing State, Social Mobilization and Resistance in Nigeria's Oil Delta

Why is the Niger Delta such an important site for the articulation of minority struggles and why has it evolved into a phenomenon so central to the national question in Nigeria? These questions are important because they help us make sense of the implications of the political economy of oil for minority rights agitations in Nigeria and why the state has managed resistance in particular ways.

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria according to Obi and Rustad is "a vast coastal plain in the southernmost part of Nigeria, where one of West Africa's longest rivers empties into the Atlantic Ocean between the Bights of Benin and Biafra, in the Gulf of Guinea"[8]. This huge wetland, said to be Africa's largest, has one of the world's widest biodiversities and is home to about 31 million people according to the 2005 census in Nigeria. It is a highly heterogeneous society, harbouring over 20 ethnic groups, most of which trace their origins to the Yoruba, Igbo and Edo[9]. The region has four ecological zones namely mangroves, lowland rain forests, fresh water swamp forests and coastal ridge barriers. The communities in the region are traditionally farmers and fishermen; livelihoods that are now being threatened by the ubiquitous oil industry.

Since the discovery of oil in commercial quantities in Oloibiri in 1958, the Niger Delta has grown to become the heart of the Nigerian economy, contributing about 80 percent of all federal revenue. This centrality of oil to the Nigerian economy and, perhaps more importantly, to the revenue accruing to the state, has made social convulsions in the region to be constructed as direct threats to national security and even to the very survival of the country. It has also bred social agitations and violent resistance from oil communities who consider their receipts from the proceeds of oil exploitation as grossly unfair and unacceptable. At the heart of resistance to the state in the Niger

[8] C. OBI and S. RUSTAD, «Introduction: Petro-violence in the Niger Delta- the complex politics of an insurgency», in: C. OBI and S. RUSTAD (eds.), *Oil and Insurgency in the Niger Delta: Managing the Complex Politics of Petro-violence*, London: Nordic Africa Institute/Zed Books, 2011, p. 3.

[9] I. OKWECHIME, «Oil Multinationals and the Politics of Corporate Social Responsibility in the Niger Delta», in: A. ALAO and R. TAIWO (eds.), *Perspectives on African Studies: Essays in Honour of Toyin Falola,* Lincom Cultural Studies, Munich: Lincom GmbH, 2011a, p. 5.

Delta are concerns over the implications of oil extraction for the environment[10], its effect on youth and youth protest cultures[11], and its gender dimensions[12]. Other concerns include its complex ethnic configurations and the conflict this generates[13], the implications of oil extraction for human rights[14], the role of oil capital in the (un)production processes[15], its corporate social responsibility deficits[16], the spread of

[10] See for instance GREENPEACE, *Shell-Shocked: The Environmental and Social Costs of Living with Shell in Nigeria*, 1994, Amsterdam: Greenpeace International; P. EPSTEIN and J. SALBER, *Oil: A Life Cycle Analysis of its Health and Environmental Impacts*, Cambridge M.A: Center for Health and the Global Environment, www.med.harvard.edu/chgeoil.html,2002 [Accessed 12/06/2012], and N. SHAXSON, *Poisoned Wells: The Dirty Politics of African Oil*, 2007, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

[11] C. IFEKA, «Youth Cultures and the Fetishization of Violence in Nigeria», *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 110, 2006, pp. 721-36; C. OBI, *Youth and Generational Dimensions to the Struggle for Resource Control in the Niger Delta: Prospects for the Nation-State Project in Nigeria,* CODESRIA Monograph Series, Dakar: CODESRIA, 2006 and E. OSAGHAE, A. IKELEGBE, O. OLARINMOYE and O. OKHONMINA, *Youth Militias, Self Determination and Resource Control Struggles in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria*, CODESRIA Research Reports, Conflicts and Conflict Resolution in Africa, No. 5, Dakar: CODESRIA, 2007.

[12] On gender, see E. TURNER and S. BROWNHILL, «Why Women are at War with Chevron: Nigerian Subsistence Struggles against International Oil Industry», in *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 39, Nos. 1 and 2, 2003, pp. 63-9; C. UKEJE, «From Aba to Ugborodo: Gender Identity and Alternative Discourse of Social Protests among Women in the Oil Delta of Nigeria», in *Oxford Development Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 2004, pp. 605-17 and I. OKWECHIME, «The Impact of Globalization on Women Peasants and Traders in Nigeria's Delta Region (1986 – 2002)», in B. OUEDRAGO and … (eds.), *Gender Exchanges and Perspectives in Africa*, Dakar: CODESRIA, 2011b, pp. 71-94.

[13] For interesting analyses of ethnic conflict in the Niger Delta, see K. NWAJIAKU, «Between Discourse and Reality: The Politics of Oil and Ijaw Ethnic Nationalism in the Niger Delta», in *Cashiers d'Etudes Africaines*, Vol. 178, No. 2, 2005, pp. 457-96 and C. UKEJE and W. ADEBANWI, «Ethno-nationalist Claims in Southern Nigeria: Insights from Yoruba and Ijaw Nationalisms since the 1990s», in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 3, 2008, pp. 563-91.

[14] R. HARSHE, «Politics of Giant Oil Firms: Consequences for Human Rights in Africa», in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, No.2, Jan. 11-17, 2003, pp 113-17 and I. OKWECHIME, «Gender and Environment in the Niger Delta: an analysis Human Rights Violations, Disempowerment and Confrontation», in O. AKINWUMI, et. al. (eds), *Technology, Knowledge and Environment in Africa: A Perspective from Nigeria*, Keffi: Keffi International Conference, 2009, pp. 69-103.

[15] J. BERMAN, «Boardrooms and Bombs: Strategies on Multinational Corporations in Conflict Areas», in *Harvard International Review,* Vol. 22, 2000, No. 3, pp. 28-32; C. IFEKA, «Violence, Market Forces and Militarisation in the Niger Delta», *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 31, No. 99, 2004, pp. 144-50 and A. ZALIK, «The Niger Delta: "Petro Violence" and "Partnership Development"», in *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 31, No. 101,2004, pp. 401-24.

[16] J. BENNETT, «Multinational Corporations, Social Responsibility and Conflict», in *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 55, No. 2, 2002, pp. 393-410. U. IDEMUDIA, «Corporate Social Responsibility and the Niger Delta Conflict: Issues and Prospects», in C. OBI and S.

small and light weapons, consequent militarisation and internationalisation of the region and overall implications for security[17]. These issues largely derive from a governance crisis in the region that is at once reflective of the general state of development in Nigeria as it reflects a peculiar state of affairs in the Niger Delta.

The Niger Delta context is a highly contradictory and complex one indeed. Three broad themes define the unique ways with which it shapes politics in Nigeria. First, in spite of providing the bulk of federal revenue in Nigeria, it is one of its least developed regions, with gross infrastructural deficiencies, widespread poverty and a highly distorted political economy. The region is thus a space of critical paradoxes, whose contradictions and tensions generate conflict in uniquely violent ways. For instance, while activities related to oil exploration generate billions of US Dollars for the Nigerian state and the elite (including in the Niger Delta), it permits little trickle down movement of capital. To further complicate its impacts on the political economy of the region, the extractive oil industry also destroys livelihoods through its widespread ecological damage which undermines the ability of local communities to effectively exploit rivers, farmlands and forestry resources. Another important paradox in the Niger Delta is what Ibeanu called a security paradox[18]. In this regard, there appears to be a conflict between the conception of security by Niger Delta Oil communities and that of the state/ multinational oil company coalition. Whereas the state conceptualizes its security in the context of unfettered extraction and distribution of oil, the communities tend to focus on the preservation of the environment, their culture and of course the

RUSTAD (eds.), *Oil and Insurgency in the Niger Delta: Managing the Complex Politics of Petro-violence*, London: Nordic Africa Institute/Zed Books, 2011, pp. 167-83 and I. OKWECHIME, «Oil Multinationals and the Politics of Corporate Social Responsibility in the Niger Delta», *op. cit*.

[17] See M. FLESHMAN, «The International Community & the Crisis in Nigeria's Oil Producing Communities», *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 29, No. 91,2002, pp. 153-63; C. OBI, *The Oil Paradox: Reflections on the Violent Dynamics of Petro-Politics and (Mis) Governance in Nigeria's Niger Delta*, University of Leipzig Papers on Africa, Politics and Economics Paper No. 73, Leipzig, 2004; J. FOREST and M. SOUSA, *Oil and Terrorism in the New Gulf: Framing US Energy and Security Policies for the Gulf of Guinea*, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006; O. OWOLABI and I. OKWECHIME, «Oil and Security in Nigeria: The Niger Delta Crisis», in *Africa Development*, Vol. XXXII, No. 1, 2007, pp. 1-40 and F. KEILI, «Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa: A Stock Taking», in *Disarmament Forum*, Vol. 4, 2008, pp. 5-11.

[18] See an analysis of this paradox in O. IBEANU, «Oil Conflict and Security in Rural Nigeria: Issues in the Ogoni Crisis», in *AAPS Occasional Paper Series*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1997.

control of not just the nature of oil extraction but also of the benefits that accrue thereof. The inherent tension in this and other similar paradoxes, and the shrinking democratic space for the articulation of dissent have conspired to make resistance in the region inevitably violent.

Second, the region appears to relate to the national question in unique ways. Even though the national question is also a key concern for other parts of Nigeria, it appears to have particular and peculiar resonance in the Niger Delta. This can be broadly linked to two reasons. In the first instance, the region is essentially a minority region. This fact however obscures the large population of its main ethnic group, the Ijaw, whose nationalist claims have included recognition not as a minority but rather as the fourth majority ethnic group in the country. It also does not say much about the historical dominance of some of these "new" minorities and the way it shapes their perception of (in)exclusion in contemporary Nigeria. Peter Ekeh's important work on this subject notes the "dissonance between the legacies of some historically-dominant minorities and their diminished status in modern political power alignments" [19]. A second basis for the peculiar resonance of the national question in the Niger Delta is the role of oil and the way the distribution of its proceeds is perceived to be designed to favour other parts of the country. This is the more significant given the centrality of this resource to the national economy. To further deepen grievance over this is the damage to the Niger Delta ecology that oil does and the uneven distribution of its environmental impacts. So, while the region receives an unfair share of the proceeds of oil exploitation, it carries the burden of environmental damage and consequential social disruption. The region, of course, also faces unique environmental challenges which threaten to irreversibly destroy its biodiversity and ecosystem.

Finally, the Niger Delta is the most internationalized and militarized region in the country. Both internationalization and militarization are a direct consequence of the oil industry and the widespread resistance that it generates. In fact, with growing international energy security challenges, a new and more threatening version of militarization appears to be rapidly evolving with the growing interest of for-

[19] P. EKEH, «Political Minorities and Historically-Dominant Minorities in Nigerian History and Politics», in O. OYEDIRAN (ed.), *Governance and Development in Nigeria: Essays in Honour of Professor Billy J. Dudley*, Ibadan: Agbo Areo Publishers, 1996, p. 34.

eign military forces in the entire Gulf of Guinea area[20]. The international environmental movement has also, since the Ogoni decade, maintained high interest and visibility in the region, further thrusting it into the center of global discourses on the excesses of multinational oil capital and the impacts on the environment.

In the context of electoral contests in Nigeria, the above issues have also made the Niger Delta region both a major prize to be won as well as a major dilemma for competing political forces. For one, the unique circumstances of the region and its peculiar relevance to the Nigerian political economy have made its demands and challenges central to electoral discourses and have made it a "beautiful bride" in unprecedented ways. The region's social movements also appear to thoroughly enjoy their new found relevance in Nigerian politics and have exploited the electoral desperation of disparate forces within the Nigerian political class to extract concessions and seek improved access to the resources accruing from oil exploitation. It is important to note however, that the bulk of the political conversation going on has been centered on elite interests and have thus failed to address in any fundamental way, the legitimate grievances of ordinary people in the region. For instance, one of the most celebrated recent peace building accomplishment of the Nigerian state with regard to the region is the 2009 Amnesty Programme that was initiated by the government of late President Yar'Adua. This programme, despite the fact that it involves the demobilization and rehabilitation of thousands of militant youth in the region, is in fact, another key elite based political concession that is likely to burn out in the near future. Negotiations that resulted in the Amnesty Programme were conducted by the federal government with prominent "elders" in the Niger Delta and with commanders of various militant groups. This strategy and the final implementation design gave much power to these specific categories to decide who should and should not be included in the Amnesty Programme. In fact, many people who were not involved in the Niger Delta militant struggles have, through extensive patronage networks, come to dominate the programme, further alienating genuine militants

[20]See M. FLESHMAN, «The International Community & the Crisis in Nigeria's Oil Producing Communities», *op. cit.*; D. VOLMAN, «The Bush Administration & African Oil: The Security Implications of US Energy Policy», in *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 30, No. 98, 2003, pp. 573-84 and J. FOREST and M. SOUSA, *Oil and Terrorism in the New Gulf: Framing US Energy and Security Policies for the Gulf of Guinea, op. cit.*

who had participated, one way or the other, in the struggle. The Amnesty project illustrates both the increasing ability of Niger Delta social formations to extract concessions from the Nigerian state as well as the inherent elite domination of that process and the implications for social stability.

What we have done above is to show why the Niger Delta is such an important site for the articulation of minority grievances. We also pointed at the centrality of oil to this dynamic and noted that, within the region, social movements engaging with the state are often primarily concerned with the control of oil and its resources[21]. This core demand is, of course, incompatible with the unitarist notion that drives governance in Nigeria and with the goals of oil multinationals operating in the region. Electoral contests and the rhetoric within which they are framed are therefore attempts at balancing two inherently incompatible goals. For the Niger Delta, elections mean much more than just bringing "democracy"; they are the kernel of representation and inclusion in a largely majority dominated political system.

4. When Elections do not mean democracy: Evidence from 2007 and 2011

One thing that can be inferred from the above analysis is that the politics of oil and the dynamics of social (in)exclusion and resistance in the Niger Delta region makes political contestations a highly complex zero-sum game in Nigeria. Elections in Nigeria are therefore, unfortunately, not the building blocks of democracy they are expected to be, but often merely another front in the violent and brutal elite struggle for access to the state and the resources it controls. The advancement of particular social or ethnic groups, are only incidental to what is largely a scramble for primitive private accumulation. The appropriation of minority discourses of (dis)empowerment by the political class for electoral purposes must therefore not be misconstrued for genuine interest in resolving the fundamental challenges that oil communities face in the Niger Delta. It is often merely a convenient rhetoric with

[21] This is in spite of the environmental rhetoric with which Niger Delta agitations were popularized by the Ken Saro- Wiwa led Ogoni Movement. For more on the core economic goals of the Niger Delta communities, see A. IWILADE, «"Green" or "Red"? Reframing the Environmental Discourse in Nigeria», in *Africa Spectrum,* 2012 (forthcoming).

which votes can be mobilized on the one hand, and on the other hand, favourable negotiations and horse trading can be guaranteed for the powerful Niger Delta elite.

The 2007 and 2011 elections provide compelling evidence that justifies this rather cynical view of politics in post military Nigeria. In teasing out and analyzing instances of minority rights rhetoric and the way they were manipulated in the two elections, we will place our analysis under two broad themes. The first will be the use of minority rights discourses by social movements and political stakeholders within the Niger Delta region itself. Second, we will examine the appropriation of minority rights rhetoric by forces outside the region. In addressing these two themes, we will demonstrate the critical intersection between them and how this has shaped perceptions of disempowerment and marginalization on the one hand and empowerment and inclusion on the other.

With regard to the mobilization of minority rights rhetoric by social forces within the Niger Delta, one of the most visible illustrations that can be discerned for both the 2007 and 2011 elections is the unprecedented presence on the presidential ballot of a Niger Delta indigene. In 2007, Dr Goodluck Jonathan, then Governor of Bayelsa state and an Ijaw, was nominated by the presidential candidate of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), Umaru Yar'Adua, as his running mate. This was the first time an indigene of the oil producing Niger Delta region had had a realistic chance of holding office as Vice President. The duo went on to win highly controversial elections and Goodluck Jonathan thus emerged as vice president. Within the Niger Delta, his nomination as a vice presidential candidate by the PDP generated mixed feelings. On the one hand, those who felt that Niger Delta politics should align more closely with the federal center considered it a prime opportunity to gain the second highest position. They mobilized for votes for the PDP within the core Niger Delta states by arguing that, with a "son of the soil" at the presidential villa, they would have unprecedented access to state resources and that the crises in the region could finally be sincerely tackled. Such rhetoric was bolstered by the assurances given by the PDP and its candidates that the Niger Delta crisis was going to receive priority attention if they won the elec-

tion[22]. For those who opposed the PDP, Goodluck Jonathan was considered a poor choice. They argued that even though his ethnicity was not in doubt, he could not be considered a representative of the Niger Delta communities. They also viewed him as a weakling who was imposed by the outgoing President Olusegun Obasanjo simply to give minorities some sort of sense of belonging in a federation where their fundamental demands continue to be ignored[23]. Groups like the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) made their displeasure known quite dramatically by bombing the private residence of Goodluck Jonathan and threatening his family. They also orchestrated widespread insecurity in the region, destroying oil facilities and threatening to scuttle the elections[24].

The heated debates generated by the candidacy and eventual vice presidency of Jonathan crystallized into widespread regional front by the 2011 elections. By that time, Goodluck Jonathan was contesting in his own right as president having served out the term of President Umaru Yar'Adua who fell ill and died in office. While the 2007 elections and the candidacy of Jonathan was met with some cynicism in the Niger Delta, the 2011 elections saw unprecedented regional consensus about the need to ensure the election of a "son of the soil" as president. In fact, the electoral rhetoric for that period was highly charged and filled with passion.

Within the region, the election was framed as a battle between forces of change and those of pseudo-imperialism that was perceived to be represented by the dominant ethnic groups in the country (most especially the so called northern cabal). By the time the 2011 elections

[22] The PDP was the party that articulated the most detailed plan about its coming intervention in the Niger Delta. Its candidate, Umaru Yar'Adua, promised to create what he called a 'Master Plan' for the Niger Delta. This was latched on by supporters within the region who considered the mere presence of Goodluck Jonathan on the ticket as a sort of guarantee of sincerity. See for instance Newswatch (Lagos), *2007 General Elections: The Bumpy Road to a New Regime*, April 16, 2007, pp. 13-32; Newswatch (Lagos), *Road to New Niger Delta: The Yar'Adua Blueprint*, November 9, 2009, pp.14-28.

[23] Several Niger Delta groups, particularly militant social movements like the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), condemned the choice of Goodluck Jonathan and expressed doubts as to the sincerity of the PDP in engaging the problems the region faced. See for instance The Daily Independent (Lagos), *Crisis Resolution: Niger Delta leaders Doubt Yar'Adua*, April 29, 2007, pp. A1-A2.

[24] See The News (Lagos), *Big Blow: Militants Paralyse Power Supply, Endanger April Polls*, April 2, 2007, pp. 20-29 and The Nation (Lagos*), Militants Blow-up Jonathan's Home*, May 17, 2007, p. 2.

were to hold, some key events had occurred which helped build regional consensus in support of Jonathan. First, consequent upon Umaru Yar'Adua's death, Jonathan had become president and could thus call on the immense powers of incumbency to build and fund patronage networks. Second, the Yar'Adua administration had, in 2009 launched an Amnesty Pogramme that had achieved two important things. First, it had greatly increased output for the oil industry by reducing incidents of militancy and willful damage of oil facilities. Second, it had brought thousands of militants into the mainstream of society and had earned the confidence of many of its most notorious commanders. These two factors created an atmosphere conducive for the mobilization of ethnic minority sentiments and sympathies in favour of the election of Goodluck Jonathan. It is not surprising that he won an average of 90 percent of the votes in most Niger Delta states in 2011.

The decision of Jonathan to contest and his subsequent victory at the primaries of the PDP however generated a lot of counter-hegemonic reactions from some other parts of the country, particularly Muslim dominated northern Nigeria. As one prominent leader of the region noted, the very decision of Jonathan to contest was a "betrayal of the North" and capable of destroying the country. This sentiment was highly popular in the North because opposition politicians were able to effectively argue that Jonathan was breaching an unwritten agreement that had zoned the presidency to the North for eight years[25].

The rhetoric of resource control, derivation and that of development have been dominant in the discourses that shape election time mobilization in the Niger delta. As Ibeanu argues, the politics of control of oil revenues which marked out the military era has "remained a cornerstone of the politics of this coalition" (a motley section of the Nigerian ruling class with similar interests) and "the rhetoric of right is the idiom of this politics". He goes on further to argue that this coa-

[25] These sentiments pointed to the death of President Yar'Adua after just two years of his first term and argued that the North ought to have been allowed to present another candidate for election for what would have been his second term in office. In an interview with a Nigerian newspaper, Alhaji Aliko Muhammed , the President of the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), a prominent northern political and cultural organisation, echoed these sentiments and declared that Jonathan could not be trusted because he had betrayed the North. See the interview in The Guardian (Lagos), March 7, 2011, p. 11.

lition of the ruling class orchestrate distinct forms of rhetoric of rights as they angle for control of oil resources[26].

The two elections we use as cases were deeply embedded in the questions that surrounded the articulation of the demands of oil minorities for control over oil resources. The ruling class, polarized along ethnic lines, used the elections to advance opposing views for the way oil revenue should be shared. Within the Niger Delta, the promise of comprehensive reforms and increased funding for the Niger Delta, coupled with the selection of a Niger delta indigene as vice presidential candidate of the ruling PDP appeared to make the party far more popular than opposing parties. Even though many militant social movements like MEND expressed skepticism about the significance of this for the representation and inclusion of oil minorities in governance, there was also no shortage of optimism. For instance, organizations like the Stakeholder Democracy Network expressed optimism that the 2011 elections were going to have a "profound effect on the future of the Niger Delta" [27]. Some of this optimism was based on the dominance of oil minority discourses on election mobilization and the candidacy of Goodluck Jonathan.

In all these however, it should be noted that minority discourses of (dis)empowerment appears to have had little impact on development in the Niger Delta region. Even though the current feeling of control, taking from exhilaration over Jonathan's victory at the 2011 polls, by many Niger Delta indigenes has allowed some form of tenuous calm to return to the region after about two decades of uninterrupted violent resistance, it is difficult for discerning observers to claim victory. For one, the underlying framework of the supposed "concessions" to oil minorities occasioned by vote shopping during elections is driven by elite consensus which is itself driven by a dominant governance logic that privileges primitive accumulation. It may be pointed out that since at least 2009, more Niger Delta citizens, particularly youth, have become involved in governance both at the regional and national level, it is likely that this is merely a superficial consequence of the presidency of Goodluck Jonathan who is himself from the region. This point is relevant because it raises the concern about the chronic lack of

[26] See O. IBEANU, *The Rhetoric of Rights: The Changing Discourses of Rights in the Niger Delta*, ACAS Bulletin, No. 68, Fall 2004, p. 15.

[27] See SDN Newswire, January 2011, www.stakeholderdemocracy.org [Accessed, 15/07/2012].

institutionalization of the so called concessions to the Niger Delta minorities. It is easy to imagine a reversal as soon as the presidency shifts to another region of the country.

In light of the foregoing, one may argue that elections do not necessarily mean democracy for the dominant class that controls the oil minorities in the Niger Delta. To them, elections are simply a way of getting assurances that their demands for control over oil or at least a greater share of oil resources will be respected. This is not necessarily a demand rooted in democratic principles. For one, it hardly matters to the negotiating elite in the Niger Delta that the elections will probably be rigged in blatant fashion, as was the 2007 election[28], or that the increased revenue that accrues as a consequence of this horse trading will simply be stolen to fund private patronage and interests as was done by convicted former governors like James Ibori of Delta State[29].

5. Conclusion

What we have done above is to demonstrate the role of oil in shaping minority discourses in Nigeria and how election time social mobilization has come to represent both popular feelings of marginalization and disempowerment on the one hand, and elite goals of access to the state, on the other hand. By looking at instances of minority based rhetoric in the 2007 and 2011 elections, we have demonstrated that minority discourses are only appropriated by dominant classes in so far as they are compatible with elite interests. In the case of the Niger Delta, the elite interest is encapsulated by the need for unfettered exploitation of the region's vast oil resources and thus the continued accumulation of rents accruable. The elite thus appropriate all forms of socially rooted rhetoric of marginalization and (dis)empowerment to advance the real goal of protecting the interests of the state-multinational oil company coalition.

[28] See reports of such blatant rigging in The Guardian (Lagos), *AC, ANPP Protest Yar'Adua's victory*, April 24, 2007, pp. 1-3; The Guardian (Lagos), *Polls: Outrage Across the Land*, April 17, 2007, pp. 1, 2 and 9;The Nation (Lagos), *Buhari Atiku Condemn Polls*, April 22, 2007, pp. 1 and 6; The Nation (Lagos), *Elections 2007: Flood of Petitions at Tribunals*, pp 2, 3, 10 and 11.

[29] See The Week (Lagos), *James Ibori: The Looted Billions,* June 4, 2007, p. 10-22.

What lessons can be derived from all this? First, for social movements engaged in resistance activities in the oil producing region of the Niger Delta, it is important to see through the deceit and crass opportunism of politicians who solicit for votes from the communities. It is also important that they more accurately read the needs of oil communities they purport to represent and thus build organic relationships that can collectively challenge the logic of elite domination.

For the country, there are implications for the dominance of minority discourses within a political system that still struggles with legitimacy questions and within which new and increasingly violent forms of resistance are taking shape. For one, it forces the question of marginalization more forcefully into the public sphere and thus provides some chance that it may be addressed in mutually beneficial ways. However, the dominance of elite interests in the way minority concerns are articulated clearly undermines both its legitimacy (that is the legitimacy of minority agitations) and the chances that it may bring about a honest conversation about the future of the country. If democracy will take root in Nigeria and grow beyond elections, minority rights have to be honestly and comprehensively addressed. This is more so for Nigeria given the way its minority and national questions are embedded so deeply in its very political economy.

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III. Religion

The political participation of Copts in Egypt: From the Nasser years to the sectarian strife of the nineties*

Alessia Melcangi

While still maintaining a significant presence (about 9% of the Egyptian population according to estimates provided by The World Factbook[1]), in a country inhabited mostly by Muslim populations, the Coptic Christians of Egypt have often tried hard to keep a space for the political and social action within a society which has shown little interest in dialogue.

In fact, during the history of contemporary Egypt, it is possible to find many episodes of discrimination and violence in the fight that the Coptic community has had to endure for its recognition, to affirm respect for religious freedom or the right of a political representation.

In the twentieth century there were different answers to the question of the core identity of Egypt that influenced the political participation of Christians. The shift to Islamic themes as the main constituent of the Egyptian community and the rise of sectarian tensions led Copts to be relegated to a secondary status, as outsiders, who have indeed certain rights as a "protected" and accepted ancient minority, but are not, and never can be, part of the Islamic core identity, and they must therefore be politically marginalized[2].

The political participation of the Coptic minority and the problem of its integration inside a national community went through several phases during the different Republican governments, but all Egyptian regimes have failed to deal with the problem of defining the Egyptian political community.

* I would like to thank Prof. Andrew Brayley for his precious help with the linguistic review of my contribution, for his suggestions and his courteous patience. I am very grateful.

[1] THE WORLD FACTBOOK 2009, *Egyptian People Section*, Central Intelligence Agency, Washington DC 2009. Available at: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html [Accessed 11/06/2012].

[2] P.J. VATIKIOTIS, *Arab and regional politics in the Middle East*, Croom Helm, London 1984, pp. 244-245; 257-258.

Moreover the Coptic question has often been analysed by relegating the debate within standard classifications: the Copts, as victims, appear trapped between the hammer of the Islamists and the anvil of the government. The studies on the Coptic community that show it as a monolithic group aligned with the deeds of the Church hierarchy, in particular of the Patriarch elected as unique representative, appears to be too cursory[3].

The Copts do not form a homogeneous grouping in terms of social status or political thinking; furthermore, one must grasp the current intellectual cleavages within the community, their social roots. These cleavages have had, and continue to have, a decisive impact on the Copts' relations with Muslims and the State.

The researcher Dina Al-Khawaga, studying the reform movement of the Sunday Schools[4], which involved the Coptic community in the fifties, and the renewal that affected the Church hierarchy in the sixties, underlines the emergence of a new interpretation of what can be defined as "political" and how the Coptic community answered the historical changes of that period[5].

Similarly, Nadia Ramsis Farah offers a detailed analysis of the variables which, in the seventies, helped to trigger the crisis of interreligious relations, considering not only the internal dynamics and the role played by Patriarch Shenouda III, but also how the Copts expressed themselves toward the State[6].

In fact the debate over the nature of the inter-communal relations between Muslims and Christians and between the latter and the State have to recognize the presence of different groups and social classes within the community, which operate in the framework of Egyptian society[7], which is sometimes marked by conflicts.

[3] A. BAYAT, «Egypt's sectarian playing field», *Al Jazeera* [on-line], 5 June 2011. Available at: http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/06/201163904835903.html [Accessed 30/03/2012]; P. SEDRA, «Class cleavages and ethnic conflict: Coptic Christian communities in Modern Egyptian politics», *Islam and Christian-Muslim relations*, vol. 10, n. 2 1999, p. 227.

[4] The Sunday Schools were founded in 1918 by Archdeacon Jirjis Habib in order to provide a Christian education for Copt state school students. The first generation formed in these schools started to operate in the thirties and forties, but only after the Second World War was this movement organized systematically and officially recognized for its activity.

[5] D. AL-KHAWAGA, *La renouveau copte. La communauté comme acteur politique*, Thèse de doctorat sous la direction de R. Leveau, Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris, Paris 1993.

[6] N.R. FARAH, *Religious strife in Egypt: crisis and ideological conflict in the Seventies*, Gordon and Breach, New York 1986.

[7] P. SEDRA, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

The aim of the paper is to restore the political expression of the Coptic community up to the end of the Mubarak regime through the constitution of movements, parties or civil society associations and their participation in the institutions of the State. Moreover it seeks to address the extent to which notions of inclusion and exclusion can be used as analytical tools to explain the evolution of social and political identities in Egypt.

Through the analysis of some newspaper articles and a study of the literature published, both in English and in French, this article will try to understand what place is reserved for non-Muslim communities within the social structure and the political organization of contemporary Egypt and if the political action of the Egyptian presidents and the call to Egyptian national unity have brought into question the juridical and political position of non-Muslims, encouraging the shift from the *dhimma* status to a status of equality.

1. Nasserist Egypt (1952-1970): the years of collaboration between Church and State

From the last decades of the nineteenth century until the first ones of the twentieth century Copts participated with Muslims in the national struggle against British colonialism supporting the independence of Egypt. There seemed to be a process of consensus forming around a secular and liberal Egyptian national identity, as best expressed by the popular nationalist and liberal *Wafd*[8] party. In this period, commonly referred to as a "golden age" for Copts, the secular elite participated actively in the political sphere.

This collaboration, promoted and supported by a common faith in Egyptian nationalism, came to an end in the thirties because of the emergence of political Islam which started to criticize the secular *Wafd* and questioned the legitimacy of Copts in places of authority, redefining the idea of an Egyptian nation based on a recovery of Islamic tradition[9].

[8] The *Wafd* (Delegation) party was a nationalist political party founded by Sa'd Zaghlul in 1918. It is considered Egypt's most popular and influential political party in the twenties and in the thirties. The party was dissolved in 1952 after Nasser's revolution.

[9] I. GERSHONI, J.P. JANKOWSKI, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930-1945*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1995, p. 113.

At the time of the revolution of the Free Officers in 1952 the Orthodox Copts represented 6% of the population[10] and they lived primarily in Upper Egypt (60% of the community), but also in Alexandria and in Cairo. Thanks to the ideology and the policies realized by President Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser during his leadership (1952-1970) the Coptic community could renegotiate a place in revolutionary Egypt.

In fact a strong Egyptian nationalism was the tool used by Nasser in order to assure the support of his country which was united in spite of confessional differences[11]. The Nasserist ideology avoided religious conflicts or, at least, tried to reduce them by moving the discussion to the political and social power sphere and to nationalistic problems.

Through some legislative reforms, Nasser put religion under the control of the State. This happened both regarding the Muslim sphere, by moderating the religious powers of the '*ulama*, and the Christian sphere, by interfering in Coptic community affairs.

As was noted, Nasser's attitude toward the religious question was exploitable; in fact, «for Nasser, religious instruction and the appeal to Islam in general were largely a matter of political convenience and an instrument for appeasing radical Muslims»[12].

During the 1950s the Egyptian government carried out some policies which damaged the old regime and the elite which supported it. The Coptic community suffered a loss of prestige and a restriction of political and social participation in the administration of the State: e.g. through the land reform in 1952, the law for the unification of the courts in 1955 (which stipulated that the causes related to the personal status law, the competence of which belonged to the *Majlis al-Milli*[13] only up to this period, would be resolved in the civil court of national tribunals), the nationalization laws of 1957 and 1960. However these

[10] B. VOILE, «Cyrille VI et Nasser: le face-à-face du saint et du héros 1959-1970», in C. MAYEUR-JAOUEN (edited by), *Saints et héros du Moyen-Orient contemporain*, Maisonneuve & Larose, Paris 2002, p. 161.

[11] C.D. SMITH, «The Egyptian Copts: nationalism, ethnicity and definition of identity for a religious minority», in M. SHATZMILLER (edited by), *Nationalism and minority identities in Islamic societies*, McGill Queen's Press - MQUP, Québec 2005, pp. 59-60.

[12] T. PHILIPP, «Copts and other minorities in the development of the Egyptian national-state», in S. SHAMIR (edited by), *Egypt from monarchy to republic. A reassessment of revolution and change*, Westview Press, Boulder 1995, p. 139.

[13] The *Majlis al-Milli* is a council composed of lay members of the Coptic community. It was by established in 1874 with the aim of supervising Coptic affairs alongside the Church. For further details see A.A. BESTAWROS, s.v. *Community council, Coptic*, vol. II, in A.S. ATIYA (edited by), *Coptic Encyclopedia*, 8 voll., Macmillan, New York 1991, pp. 580-582.

laws were not directly aimed at damaging the Coptic community but the old regime and the wealthy elite in general.

At the time of the 1952 coup, Christians in the army were few in number, none of whom was part of the Revolutionary Command Council, with the exception of Kamal Henry Abadeir, Major General who was appointed Minister of Communications in the sixties[14].

As a result of the new policy, the Coptic presence in the bureaucracy and government offices, already low before 1952, was again reduced to make place for the new leadership composed almost exclusively of soldiers[15].

Between 1952 and 1973 no Copt was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs or academic dean and Christians did not hold a post of Public Prosecutor, deputy Prosecutor or President of the Supreme Court [16].

To fill the gap the regime decided to appoint to each government department a single Christian minister, who had not only to carry out his departmental responsibilities, but also to control any Coptic problems and put forward their «view to the government and the government's wishes to the Copts»[17].

The Copts appointed were usually officials chosen for their technical skills and, therefore, able to lead the ministry assigned to them. In the difficult period following the Six Day War of 1967, the government tried to strengthen the sense of identification of the Copts with the regime within a strategy of enlargement of consensus. The reforms implemented in 1968, following popular protests after the defeat, led to an increase in ministerial seats entrusted to civilians. Consequently the number of Coptic ministers increased: two in the cabinet of March and October 1968 [18].

Among the members of the Coptic elite who held important positions in government we can find Jundi 'Abd al-Malek, Minister of Supply and Trade, and his successor Kamal Ramzi Stino, who was

[14] J.D. PENNINGTON, «The Copts in Modern Egypt», *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 18, n. 2 1982, p. 164.

[15] R.H. DEKMEJIAN, *Egypt under Nasir. A study in political dynamics*, State University of New York Press, Albany 1971, p. 83.

[16] L. BARBULESCO, *La participation politique de la communauté copte d'Égypte (1881-1981). Attitudes collectives et orientations idéologiques*, Thèse de doctorat, Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris, Paris 1990, p. 95.

[17] J.D. PENNINGTON, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

[18] R.H. DEKMEJIAN, *op. cit.*, pp. 188, 209-210.

also elected, in 1968, member of the executive committee of the Arab Socialist Union.

Regarding the parliamentary elections, after the abolition of the political parties law in January 1953, it became difficult for any Copt to run for general elections and succeed in being elected to parliament. The political *débâcle* of the Copts was manifested, in particular, during the parliamentary election of 1957 because not one of the Copt's representatives was elected.

At the next election the government, with the purpose of avoiding dangerous and harmful consequences to the cohabitation of different religious groups, created an informal arrangement whereby Muslim candidates withdrew their candidacy in certain electoral districts to ensure the election of some Copts in the Assembly.

In the National Assembly of 1960 only thirteen seats out of 400 were occupied by Copts[19]. This caused an uproar from Muslims, but also from Christians, who felt more segregated than before. As a consequence, Nasser decided to exercise his presidential prerogative and appointed ten Coptic deputies to the National Assembly[20]. This system was used to introduce Coptic representatives to the parliament until the Mubarak era.

Moreover the method was criticized as having counter-effects enshrining the exclusion of Copts from National Assembly elections, considering their presence in parliament as a "gift" and calling into question the old problem of political representation of minorities, making them a separate group from the rest of the community.

The following figures show the variation in the number of Coptic MPs in Nasserist Egypt:

Table 1: Variation in the number of Coptic MPs in Nasserist Egypt

Year	*Total Number of MPs*	*Elected Coptic MPs*	*Coptic MPs Appointed out of the Total*	*MPS of Coptic Origin - Total*
1957	350	-	-	-
1964	360	1	8	9
1969	348	2	7	9

Source: ARAB CENTRE FOR RESEARCH & POLICY STUDIES, *Can we speak of a Coptic Question in Egypt?*, May 2011[on-line], p. 14. http://english.dohainstitute.org [Accessed 4/04/2012].

[19] D. HOPWOOD, *Egypt: politics and society 1945-1990,* Routledge, New York 1993[3], pp. 164-165.

[20] J.D. PENNINGTON, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

Despite these problems the call for national unity continued to be the essential feature of the government and the basis of the reinforcement of power: Nasser became the representative of a new strong, nationalistic ideology.

Since the Constitution issued on June 23rd 1956, we find that the emphasis on the words "Egyptian people" was used to describe the new egalitarian basis of society. In fact, the Constitution formally emphasised Islam (article n.3) as the religion of the State, but «did not seek to subordinate the Copts to Muslims in the new national society»[21]. In particular, in article n. 43, it was stipulated that freedom of belief was absolute: «It purposely forbade the formal use of religion or gender differences as bases for discrimination. In this way, it hoped to secure equal citizenship rights for all»[22].

During the Nasserist years the political participation of Copts changed its aspect: the activism that had characterized the early years of the twentieth century gave way to an apparent communitarian retreat. If some Copts – in general belonging to the upper classes –, during the colonial period, were actively involved in Egyptian politics and militated in different parties, from the fifties onwards it is possible to find a progressive estrangement from any type of involvement in the political and ideological debate.

Actually, the changes of the fifties and sixties cannot be interpreted as a progressive marginalization of the Copts from the political world, but they highlight the presence of a significant reordering within the community which implied a revision of the language of action[23].

In fact, the reference to national unity in the political relations between the Coptic community and the government in power continued to be present, although the Church and the community responded differently to the political challenges.

The impetus of the revolution spread among many Coptic political associations and groups which demanded reform and change through-

[21] M.F. HATEM, «The pitfalls of the nationalistic discourses on citizenship in Egypt», in S. JOSEPH (edited by), *Gender and citizenship in the Middle East*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse 2000, pp. 47-48.

[22] *Ibidem*.

[23] D. AL-KHAWAGA, «Le débat sur les coptes: le dit et le non dit», *Égypte/Monde Arabe*, vol. 1, n. 20 1994, pp. 67-69.

out the structures of the Church and attempted to assert political and constitutional Coptic rights.

The *al-Tawfiq*[24] association, made up of students and young professional educated laymen, and the *Great Coptic Benevolent Society*[25] first supported the revolutionaries' policy.

Political demands were raised by a small party, *al-Hizb al-Dimuqrati al-Misihi* (The Christian Democratic Party), formed in the late forties by the Coptic lawyer Ramsis Gabrawi; it supported the revolution and the nationalistic rhetoric in order to obtain the acknowledgment of Coptic rights. The most notable example of a Coptic youth movement was that of *Jama'at al-Umma al-Qibtiyya*, the *Coptic Nation Society*, established by the young lawyer Ibrahim Fahmi Hilal with the aim of reviving and reforming the Coptic Church and claiming a political share for the Copts in post-revolutionary Egypt. It acquired a big following among the young[26] and organized the kidnapping of Patriarch Yusab II, on July 25th 1954, as an act of protest against the Church hierarchy which was accused of corruption.

During the fifties another movement, born among the clerical youth, asked for change, accusing the clergy of being unable to support the hopes and requests of the community. The *Coptic Renewal* (*Nahda Kanassiyya*) began with revitalizing of the spiritual sphere and replaced the secular elite becoming the spokesman for the community requests. The new model of action aimed at a "renewal from below"[27]. From 1959, the date of the election of the new Patriarch Kyrillos VI, the candidate supported by them, the young priests started a close collaboration with the Nasserist policies.

[24] The *Jam'iyya al-Tawfiq* was a philanthropic group created by members of the laity in 1891 with the aim of promoting the cultural and spiritual renewal within the Coptic community. For further details see V. IBRAHIM, *The Copts of Egypt. The challenges of modernization and identity*, I.B. Tauris, London 2011, pp. 104-105.

[25] The *Great Coptic Benevolent Society* was the first Coptic charitable society established in 1881 with the aim of serving benevolent purposes for the welfare of the Coptic community in particular and Egyptians in general. For further details see V. IBRAHIM, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

[26] Hilal declared that there were about 92,000 members, but in the opinion of many, this estimate seems to be somewhat exaggerated. For further details see A. GORMAN, *Historians, State and politics in twentieth century Egypt: contesting the nation*, Routledge, London - New York 2003, p. 169.

[27] D. AL-KHAWAGA, «Le dinamiche politiche dei copti: rendere la comunità un protagonista attivo», in A. PACINI (edited by), *Comunità cristiane nell'islam arabo. La sfida del futuro*, Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, Torino 1996, p. 206.

Nasser's policy weakened the Coptic elite, who had taken an active part in politics during the monarchy, and led to a reduction in political participation in favour of the clergy. During the last few years of Nasser's regime, especially in the sixties, the complete support of the Coptic community for the Egyptian nationalistic ideals, promoted by the regime, was achieved. This positive result stemmed from the friendly relationship created in that period between Patriarch Kyrillos VI and the head of the State[28].

Nasser started to address the clergy as his privileged interlocutor, helping the interests of the Church's hierarchy, but damaging[29] the traditional membership of the *Majlis al-Milli*, which were in conflict with the conservative Patriarch. The Pope became a sort of «*ra'is* of *Majlis al-Milli*»[30] and thereby the class which had led the Coptic community to enjoy wealth and influence was deprived of its power. From that moment, the old practice of dealing directly with the Patriarch as the representative of Coptic opinion was restored.

Thanks to the collaboration between the President and the Patriarch, the Coptic community again found a place for political and social participation. Although Coptic concerns towards State practice and policies remained consistent with those prior to the revolution, the Coptic community seemed, once again, to take part in the nationalistic spirit of that time based on the resistance against external enemies.

A new era for inter-confessional relations seemed to begin in consequence of new political incentives and the meeting of interests between the State and the Coptic Church.

2. Religious polarization under the Sadat government: Church versus State

The collapse of the Nasserist ideology led to the dissolution of nationalistic and socialistic projects, giving space to radical tendencies, oriented towards defining themselves only from a religious viewpoint.

Anwar al-Sadat, the President of Egypt from 1970, using Islam as a tool for political legitimation, opened the door to Islamic movements,

[28] L. BARBULESCO, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-107 ; B. VOILE, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

[29] In 1962 Nasser decided to abolish the *Majlis al-Milli* in order to leave total power in the hands of the Patriarch.

[30] L. BARBULESCO, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

such as the Muslim Brotherhood, for political participation; this new policy pushed Islam again to the fore as the common denominator of the majority, thus leaving the Copts out of the political arena[31]. During the seventies, religious tension between Muslims and Copts intensified following a series of clashes. The census conducted in 1976 recorded the presence of 2.3 million Copts (6.24%) in a population of 16 million[32].

In this period the Church emerged as the Coptic community's effective political representative and eclipsed the secular Coptic elite in consequence of the election of Bishop Shenouda as Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church in October 1971. The political leadership of Pope Shenouda III coincided with a growing sense of Coptic nationalism or ethnic consciousness; Sadat's appeal to religion and support of Islamic organizations alienated the traditionally quiescent community[33] and provoked several conflicts between the President and the Pope and violent social clashes between the religious groups. In fact, the election of Shenouda marked the end of the collaboration with the State. The Patriarch refused to pledge his loyalty to the regime; as Sadat revived Islam as a political idiom in Egypt, he insisted upon the preservation of Copts' rights of citizenship[34].

Shenouda consolidated his consensus among the community thanks to the network of social services created on his initiative in order to help Copts, in particular the middle-class, to survive in the midst of a rapid contraction of economic opportunity and of social mobility[35]. The availability of such services has meant that the public space has become increasingly confessional.

Moreover the Church denied Coptic laymen a role in both communal and national affairs, and thus drove a wedge between clergy and laity favouring the process initiated with Nasser which had led the political activism of the Coptic elite in the early years of twentieth cen-

[31] H. ANSARI, «Sectarian conflict in Egypt and the political expediency of religion», *Middle East Journal*, vol. 38, n. 3 1984, pp. 400-401.

[32] A. MCDERMOTT, *Egypt from Nasser to Mubarak*, Croom Helm, London-New York-Sydney 1988, p. 185; S. M. SOLIHIN, *Copts and Muslims in Egypt. A study on harmony and hostility*, The Islamic Foundation, Leicester U.K. 1991, pp. 12-13.

[33] D. ZEIDAN, «The Copts. Equal, protected or persecuted? The impact of islamization on Muslim-Christian relations in Modern Egypt», *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, vol. 10, n.1 1999, p. 57.

[34] P. SEDRA, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

[35] N.R. FARAH, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

tury to be replaced by the rise of the political role of the Church. According to Paul Sedra, «the Coptic elite has traded political aspiration for success in business»[36]. As a consequence of this, «the voice of Shenouda was considered by Church and State as the only legitimate voice of the Coptic community in political affairs»[37].

Shenouda had the ability to take charge of the Coptic requests defending them in political terms: the rights of equity, of juridical autonomy and security, of an appropriate political and administrative representation and the rights of the free building of places of worship and the respect of different beliefs represented the main concerns of the community.

Regarding the political sphere, the Sadat governments included two or even three Christian cabinet ministers, rather than one as under Nasser. Two of them, Fikry Makram Ebeid, Deputy Prime Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, and Boutros Boutros Ghali, member of the Central Committee of the Arab Socialist Union from 1974 to 1977 and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, came from prominent and wealthy Coptic families before the revolution; both held important and strategic posts[38]. Moreover he formed a new ministry, namely the Ministry of Immigration, to which two Coptic ministers were consecutively appointed «specifically to attract Coptic investments from abroad»[39].

In 1971 three out of 360 deputies were Copts, while in the parliamentary election of 1976 not one Copt was elected; in 1979 only four Copts were elected in addition to the usual quota of eight or ten Christian deputies usually appointed by the President. Some of the most prominent Copts were Fouad Aziz Ghali, who had a career in the army and, in 1980, was appointed a provincial governor[40], and Moussa Sabri, chief editor of the *Akhbar al-Yom* publishing house.

The following figures show the variation in the number of Coptic MPs in the Sadat years:

[36] P. SEDRA, *op. cit.*, p. 228.
[37] *Ibidem*.
[38] J.D. PENNINGTON, *op. cit.*, p. 168.
[39] S.E. IBRAHIM ET AL., *The Copts of Egypt,* Minority Rights Group International Report, London 1996, p. 24.
[40] J.D. PENNINGTON, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

Table 2: Variation in the number of Coptic MPs in the Sadat years

Year	*Total Number of MPs*	*Elected Coptic MPs*	*Coptic MPs Appointed out of the Total*	*MPS of Coptic Origin - Total*
1971	360	3	9	12
1976	370	-	8	8
1979	360	4	10	14

Source: ARAB CENTRE FOR RESEARCH & POLICY STUDIES, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

Despite this the Copts considered this open policy regarding the community as a "cosmetic operation"; in fact the Copts were underrepresented in the higher grades of the civil service and some sensitive government departments appeared to be totally closed to Copts on the ground that they could be a security risk. The government was afraid to provoke the Muslim reaction against the appointment of a Christian. Fear of discrimination led most Copts to avoid application for jobs in government-controlled sectors.

In 1977 relations between Church and State entered a very difficult phase. Coptic anxieties began to reflect the increasing strength of the *jama'at islamiyya*, and the particularly Islamic stamp Copts felt Sadat had given his regime[41].

Gradually the new policy abandoned the nationalist ideology that was inclusive towards Copts as Arabs and Egyptians. This fact was highlighted when the phrase "Islam is the religion of the State, and *shari'a* is a main source of legislation"[42] was added to the second article of the constitution in 1971, which was later amended to "*shari'a* is *the*[43] main source of legislation"[44] in 1980.

The ideological transformations of the new government, therefore, started to affect the political participation of Copts by excluding them from the electoral lists, due to the assumption that they were incapable of winning seats; their social issues and concerns were also excluded from the agendas of other political parties.

During the end of the seventies interreligious tension arose and much strife took place in Assyut and in Minya, the provinces with the

[41] J.D. PENNINGTON, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

[42] H. DOWIDAR, «Égypte», in E. CANAL-FORGUES (edited by), *Recueil des constitutions des pays arabes*, Bruylant, Bruxelles 2000, p. 91.

[43] Italics mine.

[44] H. DOWIDAR, *op. cit.,* p. 91.

highest proportion of Christians, and in the universities when students belonging to the Islamic groups harassed Christian students[45].

In order to implement the call for democracy and social peace Sadat decided, in 1980, to enhance the powers of the laity, damaging the Church, by appointing Albert Barsoum Salama, an ex minister, Assistant Secretary General of the ruling National Democratic Party, and Tala'at Yunan, a journalist who was given a party job dealing with Copts who emigrated abroad, in order to consolidate the President's image[46]. But the popular feeling supported the Patriarch and the hierarchy and this policy did not provide the strength necessary to rival the Sadat position as leader.

Sadat, facing mounting opposition from all political groups, used religious strife as an excuse and responded with wide arrests in September 1981: in that difficult period, Patriarch Shenouda was banished to a convent in Upper Egypt, and Muslim Brothers and Islamic group leaders were arrested and jailed.

According to Dina al-Khawaga a parallel between the political action of the Copts and the new Islamic group, in the course of this decade, is more than evident: «Overall, despite the reticence that each group displayed towards the other, during the seventies they started to impose their political visibility, to bring into question the legitimacy of power, introducing their respective ethics into the Egyptian political language, mobilizing international allies to gain official recognition as political actors, and finally cut off all dialogue with the government which was considered illegitimate»[47]. Between 1970 and 1981 it is possible to affirm that «the Coptic political action rearranged itself becoming only representation of corporative interests»[48]. So, the Coptic community operated and presented itself as a lobby which had abandoned the ideology of national unity.

In October 1981 a group of Muslim extremists assassinated Sadat while he was attending a military parade; the end of the Sadat regime didn't lead to a return of interfaith dialogue. On the contrary religious strife continued during all of the Mubarak regime.

[45] J. KEPEL, *Le Prophète et Pharaon: les mouvements islamistes dans l'Égypte contemporaine,* La Découverte, Paris 1984, p. 156.
[46] J.D. PENNINGTON, *op. cit.*, p. 175.
[47] D. AL-KHAWAGA, *La renouveau copte*, cit., p. 424.
[48] *Ibidem*.

3. Mubarak's regime and the birth of the "millet partnership"

Recurrence of religious strife marked all of the Mubarak regime (1981-2011): although he immediately began to keep the Islamic groups at a distance and tried to cement the President's image as protector of Muslims and non-Muslims with the "national unity" campaign of the early nineties, it remained difficult for Copts to see their claims fulfilled.

Mubarak's regime remained under severe Islamist pressure and compromised with the Islamic "moderates" in order to isolate and crush the violent extremists. This meant continuing the discriminatory trends of the *status quo*. Whenever Copts were being attacked the government remained passive and refrained from intervention or action. By the year 2000, random acts of violence against the Copts had become normative.

'Ala al-Aswani, one of the most important critical voices against the Mubarak regime, affirms that «the inconsistency of the State policy in the sectarian domain is due to the regime being afraid of external pressure, its over-reliance on the repressive State apparatus, and the general prosecutor's office being under the influence of the justice minister who is appointed and directed by Mubarak»[49].

A close examination of the conditions of the Copts under Mubarak reveals a slight opening on the part of the State. However, although Mubarak's administration was more willing to bring the Copts into the fold, their political participation remained limited to a number of appointed MPs and ministers with second-rate portfolios.

In naming his government in 1982, Mubarak appointed Fikri Makram Ebeid, deputy Prime Minister, Munir Fakhri 'Abd al-Nur, who became the secretary general of the *New Wafd* party, Minister of Tourism and Boutros Boutros Ghali, who remained Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

Coptic representation in the last cabinet before the recent Egyptian Revolution consisted of two ministers, Yusuf Boutros Ghali in the Ministry of Finance and Maged George in the Ministry of the Environment; after the Shafiq cabinet was formed – following Mubarak's ousting – only the Minister of Environment maintained his post.

[49] A. AL-ASWANI, *On the State of Egypt. The issues that caused the revolution,* American University in Cairo Press, Cairo 2011, pp. 131-132.

Regarding the number of Coptic members appointed by the President in the People's Assembly sessions, since 1964, it has, with one exception, exceeded the number of Coptic members elected by the people. The exception was in 1987 when six Copts were elected to the Assembly. However the system of proportional representation instituted in 1983 then in place was scrapped by the government shortly thereafter.

In the parliamentary election of 1990 we can find the minimum number of Copts elected, only 0.22%[50].

Discrimination resulted in voter apathy. In 1995 there was not a single Christian governor, ambassador or elected members of parliament. The only Christians in the People's Assembly were the six presidential appointees and those in the cabinet held two powerless ministries[51].

The next elections in 2000 brought a modest success: for the first time after the Revolution, three Coptic candidates won seats in parliament and three more were appointed by President Mubarak. The 2005 elections were held according to a new law intended to strengthen the legitimacy of the regime by opening the political process to different social groups. The real winner in this election was the Muslim Brotherhood, whose members – elected as independents – became the largest opposition group in parliament. Although the Brotherhood and several other parties supported Coptic candidates[52], only Yusuf Boutrus Ghali, candidate of the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), was elected.

As in the previous election, the President appointed five more Copts, raising the number of Christians to six.

The following figures show the variation in the number of Coptic MPs during Mubarak's presidency:

[50] S.E. IBRAHIM ET AL., *op. cit.,* p. 24.

[51] S.S. HASAN**,** *Christian versus Muslims in Modern Egypt: the century-long struggle for Coptic equality*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2003, p. 198.

[52] L. BLAYDES, *Elections and distributive politics in Mubarak's Egypt,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2011, p. 80.

Table 3: Variation in the number of Coptic MPs during Mubarak's presidency

Year	*Total Number of MPs*	*Elected Coptic MPs*	*Coptic Mps Appointed out of the Total*	*MPs of Coptic Origin - Total*
1984	468	4	5	9
1987	458	6	4	10
1990	454	1	6	7
1995	454	-	6	6
2000	454	3	3	6
2005	454	1	5	6
2010	518	3	7	10

Source: ARAB CENTRE FOR RESEARCH & POLICY STUDIES, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

Regarding the relation between the community and the State during the eighties and the nineties the Copts abandoned the method of protest as political action, trying to find a common ground for reconciliation with the leadership[53].

The relationship between the Pope and Mubarak was based on a sort of "tactical agreement"[54]: the former «started to adopt a low profile, to cooperate with the regime, to avoid confrontation and embrace the rhetoric of national unity publicly supporting Mubarak and consolidate his power within the Church»[55]. In the presidential election of 2005 Shenouda supported the candidacy of Mubarak suggesting to the community to do the same[56]. The President more than ever needed the support of the Copts in order to base its anti-terrorism policy and show this new image internationally.

It was in the Church's interest to limit the expression of Copts as individuals rejecting the idea of founding a Coptic political party; so the community started to reflect the image of an "exemplary minority"[57], as Dina al-Khawaga states. This behaviour provoked the severe reaction of the Coptic elite, made up almost entirely of eminent intellectuals, and young Copts who had repeatedly asked the Patriarch to

[53] D. AL-KHAWAGA, *La renouveau copte*, cit., p. 426.

[54] N.A AL-FATTAH (edited by), *La situation religieuse en Égypte*, Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, Cairo 1995, p. 90.

[55] P. SEDRA, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

[56] M. TADROS, «Vicissitudes in the entente between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the State in Egypt (1952-2007)», *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 41, n. 2 2009, p. 276.

[57] D. AL-KHAWAGA, *La renouveau copte*, cit., p. 427.

operate according to his role, accusing him of penalizing the culture and practice of full Egyptian citizenship[58].

The presidential and parliamentary elections have highlighted how the government tries to exploit the Coptic votes by making all kinds of promises to the Church and the people, but not offering anything in return after victory.

The only chance for average Copts to improve their lives would have been to take a high-profile position in the government-backed *National Democratic Party* (NDP), as well as in the leading opposition party, the left-wing *Tagammu*. As a consequence of these appointments «most Coptic Assembly members have remained beholden to the government for their presence in the Assembly»[59].

In the 1995 parliamentary elections, the NDP did not put forward a single Christian candidate; in 2000, the number of Copts listed was three; by 2005, Copts were disappointed when only one Copt, Yusuf Boutrus Ghali was included on the party's list and, in the recent 2010 elections, which were marked by increasing levels of fraudulence, the NDP selected only eleven Coptic candidates out of more than 800, claiming their inability to win the vote.

The government, supported by the Pope, manipulated the community as a sectarian bloc, instead of participating in the political process as individuals: «Individual political stances based on democratic convictions are the only way to solve on-going political problems. That is certainly more preferable than declaring loyalty, en masse, to the ruling party only to be met with unfulfilled promises. [...] Maintaining this position Coptic votes have remained a bargaining chip between the NDP and political authorities on the one hand, and the Church on the other»[60].

Moreover Coptic political representation depended upon a post-election presidential appointment, a practice that has resulted in the appointment of a handful of lesser-known individuals.

[58] B. NIKOLOV, *Care of poor and ecclesiastical government: an ethnography of the social service of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Cairo*, ProQuest UMI Dissertation Publishing, Baltimore - Maryland 2008, pp. 17-18.

[59] P. SEDRA, *op. cit.*, pp. 229-230.

[60] K. KAMAL, «The NDP's manipulation of Egyptian Copts», *Egypt Independent* [on-line], 19 November 2010. Available at: http://www.egyptindependent.com/opinion/ndps-manipulation-egyptian-copts [Accessed 25/04/2012].

Similar patterns of chronic under-representation can be seen within the cabinet, where the regime has strictly hewed to a rigid quota of two cabinet positions for Copts, and throughout the government bureaucracy and the military, police and state university system. It was a symbolic victory for Copts when Boutros Boutros-Ghali was appointed United Nations Secretary General in 1992 after having been denied the Foreign Ministry in his own country. The consistency of these longstanding patterns pointed to a system of institutionalized discrimination[61].

Nevertheless the Copts were present in other political parties, which were born as a result of the policy of multiparty democracy of the new government, such as the *al-Wasat Party* which, even though it was founded by moderate members of the Brotherhood, stated in the program the necessary recognition of the right of citizenship for non-Muslims; moreover they took part in the *New Wafd* party, which reappeared on the national political scene in 1984 after its dissolution in 1978 in protest at Sadat's oppressive policies and elected Ibrahim Farag, a Copt, as Secretary General[62]. «Copts, more than any other group in Egypt, welcomed the return of the *New Wafd* party to political life, especially with its traditional Coptic involvement, and its commitment to national unity»[63] although, in 1984, it entered into an alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood which cost the party votes among Copts[64]. A Copt, Georges Ishaq was, furthermore, one of the founders in 2004 of the movement of protest called *Kifaya*.

The fact that there were few appointees was often attributed to the disaffection of the Copts in political matters; but, in reality, the power exercised by the Church and the problem of being considered second-class citizens led to an estrangement of the secular group from the public sphere. During the 1995 election the community tried to break their political disaffection participating actively and presenting 57 candidates, the majority of whom were independent; at the end only

[61] M.W. HANNA, «The roots of Egypt's Muslim-Christian tensions», *Foreign Policy* [online], 17 January 2011. http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com [Accessed 12/01/2012].

[62] P.E. MAKARI, *Conflict & Cooperation. Christian-Muslim Relations in Contemporary Egypt*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse - New York 2007, p. 122.

[63] S.E. IBRAHIM ET AL., *op. cit.*, p. 21.

[64] P.J. VATIKIOTIS, *The History of Modern Egypt: from Muhammad Ali to Mubarak,* Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London 1991[4], p. 441.

five Copts were elected but this election was annulled in consequence of a recount of votes[65].

The problem of the Coptic political representation remained constant for the duration of the Mubarak regime; as a consequence, «in the absence of political channels to combat discrimination in employment and other sectors of public life, the Copts have turned to the Church […] which has provided them with a compensatory status system and a chance of upward mobility outside of civil society»[66].

The official regime limits Coptic citizens to a symbolic participation in the political system which is most evident by the President's appointment of Coptic representatives in the People's Assembly.

As Ibrahim points out, from 1952 Copts have been increasingly appointed to ministries that have very little impact on policy-making[67]. This strategy suits the regime because it helps to maintain a semblance of fair representation, while giving the ruling elite the last word in the management of political participation and inter-communal relations. The under-representation of Copts in political institutions strengthens the position of the Church as the main representative of the community *vis-à-vis* the State.

4. Conclusion

During the Republican age the Coptic community has had to experience different ways of relating to the power negotiating the modality of political expression.

In the struggle for the recognition of civil and political rights it has faced the emergence of internal conflicts which have destabilized the communitarian cohesion at the expense of the fulfilment of concrete political achievements.

The secular elite has often claimed the necessary division between the religious sphere and the political one. As soon as the Church took over some of the State's natural roles, it started to play the role of spokesman for the Copts, particularly during the Mubarak government. The Church and its institutions have in fact become something

[65] S. NAGUIB, *Les Coptes dans l'Égypte d'aujourd'hui. Angoisses et espoirs d'une minorité aux abois,* Solidarité-Orient, Bruxelles 1996, p. 105.

[66] S.S. HASAN, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

[67] S.E. IBRAHIM ET AL., *op. cit.*, p. 24.

of a citadel for Coptic Egyptians, providing them with educational services as well as pastoral care and economic assistance. A typical Copt views the Church as far more than merely a spiritual custodian, but also as a political cornerstone.

This utilization of the Church for political ends – within the political, social and cultural realms, in a bid to gain legitimacy and build public support, as well as to provide a check against other political forces – left a number of self-contradictory gaps in political discourse, coming from both the community and the government.

On the other hand when we look at the relationship between State and society in Egypt, we find that the State itself is not yet fully formed; there is not enough of a democratic political culture within the society to allow for civic forces to become full, dynamic participants in the drafting of the social contract[68].

Considering the rapid evolution of events, from the Egyptian revolution of January 2011 to the death of Patriarch Shenouda in March, the political roles and the balance of power are nowadays constantly changing; this could open the door to new scenarios. From this point it becomes possible to imagine that the Coptic community could play, in the Egyptian political framework, an active role for the recognition of its rights.

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The rise of Islamic Resurgence in Somalia

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1.The origins of Islam in Somalia

The first nucleus of an Islamic State in Medina came about as a result of a migratory process (*egira*) that originated in Saudi Arabia in the years 615-622 after Christ and spread to the African continent. This migration affected the coastline of Somalia in the 9th and 10th centuries, introducing the Islamic religion to the two major trading centres on the coast of Zeila, in what are now Somaliland and Mogadishu[1]. In fact Sunni Islam, principally of the Shafi'i school, took root on the territory inhabited by Somalis in the 12th and 13th centuries along the coastal trading routes, merging with the local social structures based on the clan principle[2].

In addition to the Shafi'i, the other main juridical-religious schools (*madhhab, pl. Madhahib*) in Sunni Islam are Hanbali, Hanafi and Maliki. They take the names of their respective founders and are focused on problems relating to the interpretation of Islamic law (*shari'a*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*). The Hanafi school was the most widespread in the Ottoman Empire and still claims the allegiance of about a third of the Moslems in Turkey, Jordania, some regions of Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh; the chief features of the Hanafi school are rigour and a systematic approach to the foundations of the Islamic tradition based on the accounts of the Prophet (*hadith*) and his companions as the basis for juridical theorising. The Maliki school, which now prevails throughout North Africa, tends to emulate the religious, juridical and social model that emerged at Medina, which was in turn based on the pursuit of unanimous consensus (*Ijima*) among the learned men of the city in the administration of the Caliphate. Conversely the Hanbali school, which originated in Baghdad in the period 780-855, opposes to the intromission of human reason in the interpretation of the two primary sources of Islam, the

[1] For a good description of traditional Somali Islam see I.M. LEWIS, *Saints and Somalis. Popular Islam in a Clan-based Society*. London, Haan, 1998 and E. CERULLI, *L'Islam in Somalia,* in *Somalia. Scritti vari editi ed inediti, Vol. I.* Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1957.

[2] I.M. LEWIS, 1998, op. cit., p. 7.

Quran and the Sunnah, and advocates a severe and in some cases ascetic life style based on strict observance of Islamic law and rejection of theological intellectualism. During the 18th century a follower of the Hanbali school, Muhammad ibn al-Wahabb, founded Wahabism, widespread in Saudi Arabia and, in the 20th century, also in Somalia. Lastly the Shafi'i school, which originated in Palestine in 767 and is now common in Yemen, Bahrain and East Africa including Somalia, recognises a hierarchy among the primary sources of Moslem law, with the Quran as the principal one, followed by the sayings of the Prophet which form part of the Sunnah, with interpretations being based on consensus and through reasoning and analogy[3].

Alongside the Shafi'i school the practice of Sufism also became current in Somalia. This was not so much a juridical-religious interpretation of the sacred texts as a sort of priesthood, a system of conduct fostering the quest for a spiritual dimension favouring contact with Allah and a consequent state of beatitude[4]. Over time the ascetics who searched for truth and the divine word made proselytes and founded numerous Sufi confraternities (*tariiqa, pl. turuq*). In Somalia the confraternities of Qadiriya, Ahmadiya and Salihiya developed in the 18th and 19th century. The first was originally linked to the Hanbali school[5] and thus considered the most orthodox in theological terms; whereas Ahmadiya, which subsequently gave rise to Salihiya, was associated with the Shafi'i school. In Somalia Qadiriya was propagated through the work of two important Sheikhs: Sheikh Awes Mohamed, from Brava, who made proselytes among the members of the Rahanweyn clan, and Sheikh Abd ar-Rahman, who was very popular in Mogadishu under the name of Sheikh Sufi. From the political standpoint Qadiriya was opposed to Salihiya, represented by Sheikh Mohammed Guled, and Ahmadiya, represented by Sheikh Ali Maye of Merca[6]. In fact, although Sufi clergy were largely seen as disinterested in local politics[7], they created settlements that constituted genuine villages of followers, known in Somalia by the term *gemaat*, ad-

[3] Encyclopaedia of Islam. CD Rom Edition.

[4] Definition derived from leading Sufi exponents, see www.sufi.it.

[5] The founder of Qadiriyya, still the most widespread Islamic mystical confraternity, was 'Abd al-Qadir al-Gilani.

[6] MARTINA I. STEINER, *La grande Faida. I processi di etnicizzazione e di segmentazione in Somalia*. Unpublished Manuscript, p. 154-157.

[7] Cfr. I.M. LEWIS, 1998, *Saints and Somalis*.

ministering the land occupied by the settlement and organizing agricultural work and the distribution of profits, above all in the south of the country[8]. This activity of territorial administration gradually enabled them to take over the authority of the clan leaders and thus to a transformation of the traditional social structure, above all in the agricultural region between the two rivers. Thanks to their work on the land, for which they received payment in kind, those joining the confraternities secured economic independence from the clan. By the end of the 19th century the influence of Islam and the Shariʿa in the Somali social structure was largely confined to the private sphere (weddings, questions of inheritance), social sphere (Quran schools and religious training centres) and in a certain sense economic sphere up until the colonial period. It can be said that the Islamization of Somalia constituted a unifying factor in a traditional society lacerated by the clan structure. This unifying factor had its political counterpart in the rise of Somali nationalism and the first anti-colonial rebellions which were violently put down. In the first two decades of the 20th century, until his death in 1920, the figurehead of nationalism was Sayyd Mahamad Abdilla Hassan, provocatively styled the "Mad Mullah" by the British, who led the first anticolonial revolt in what is now Somaliland[9].

2. Islamic Resurgence in Somalia (1950-1960)

During the 20th century religious practices in Somalia underwent significant changes, above all from 1950 onwards when religious authorities associated first with Al Azhar University and then with the Gulf nations began to disseminate a reformist Islam[10] which offered young

[8] MARTINA I. STEINER, op. cit., p. 157.

[9] See I.M. LEWIS, 1998, op. cit., pp. 65-66.

[10] By reformist Islam we mean the approach that seeks to extend the Islamic religion to all the spheres of Muslim society. It is a project of social transformation which is in opposition to a secular state, considered as morally corrupt on account of the absence of a divine supervision. In Anglo-Saxon literature the adepts of reformist Islam are also referred to using the terms *Islamic movement, Islamic awakening, Islamic revival, Islamic Resurgence*. In general, reformist Islam is associated with the concept of a political Islam that features in Western literature. However, this notion is unacceptable to the reformers themselves, who consider the political sphere to be intrinsic to the Islamic religion rather than simply associated with it, as the notion of "political Islam" would suggest.

people the prospect of social advancement and became a model of success. The Sheikhs who spread reformist Islam were prosperous merchants and businessmen who aroused admiration and the urge to emulation among the younger generations.

The dissemination of political Islam in Somalia was closely linked to developments in Egypt between the two World Wars, in particular the rise of the Al Ikhwan Al Muslimin (the Moslem Brotherhood) movement founded in 1928 in Cairo by Sheikh Hasan Al Banna[11]. The objective of Al Banna's Moslem Brotherhood was to permeate government institutions and be in a position to form an executive headed by the Sheikhs and based on the Shariʿa . At that time the focal point for propagating the new religious ideas was Al Azhar University where Al Banna had studied. The group Ikhwan al Muslimin in Egypt soon split into two: the moderate pacifist movement, which took the name Ikhwan Al Muslimin A' Dowli, aimed to pursue its political objectives by collaborating with the government and gradually permeating its institutions, while the revolutionary movement preaching the use of force to overthrow the government and seize political power had a military wing and openly opposed the government.

From the 1950s Somalia came into contact with Egypt through education programmes and cultural exchanges with Al-Azhar University[12]. Each year during the two decades up to 1980 fifty Somali students went to study in Egypt, and from 1964 thirty or so returned to Somalia to spread the Salafite interpretation of Islam and the ideas of the Ikhwan al Muslimin group. In addition, from 1962 Al-Azhar University annually sent a group of Egyptian teachers to spread Arabic in Somalia, and they too disseminated the new Islam. Thus from the 1960s the ideas of the Ikhwan al Muslimin group and political Islam began to circulate in Somalia.

[11] Given the scarcity of historical sources concerning reformist Islam in Somalia and the topicality of this phenomenon, we have decided to propose oral accounts recorded during our period of field research. What follows, i.e. the history of the spread of reformist Islam in Somalia, is the firsthand account of Prof. Zakaria Mohamed Sheikh, who until 2006 taught secular law in the University of Benadir in Mogadishu. Currently Prof. Zakaria has taken refuge in Kenya: he is a distinguished scholar and an eye-witness of the birth and spread of political Islam in Somalia.

[12] Traces of the cultural exchanges between Egypt and Somalia can be found in various studies that describe the state of education in post-independence Somalia. See for example LEE CASSANELLI and FARAH S. ABDULKADIR, 2007, *Somalia: Education in Transition*. In *Bildhaan. An International Journal of Somali Studies*, pp. 91-125.

The relations with Egypt led to the creation of numerous associations in Somalia to promote the new ideals. Founded in 1952 by Sheikh Shariff Mohamud "Maraade"[13], the Somali Islamic League aimed to reinforce the role of Arabic in the education sector, setting up formal schools of Arabic to offset the presence of Italian schools and exerting pressure to ensure that the Arabic alphabet was adopted for the Somali language. The League was followed by the creation of the Institute for Islamic Studies in Mogadishu in 1953, directed by a teaching staff drawn almost entirely from Al-Azhar University in Cairo with Arabic as the teaching medium. The Institute oversaw the creation of numerous lay and religious schools using Arabic as their medium not only in Mogadishu but in all the major urban centres in the country, generating an Arabic-speaking Somali élite in opposition to the Italian- and English-speaking classes[14]. Many of the students who frequented the schools of Arabic organized by the Institute for Islamic Studies won scholarships to continue their studies in Egypt or Saudi Arabia, in Sudan, and in some cases in Syria and Iraq[15].

In 1967 the organization Al Nahda was founded in Mogadishu[16] by, among others, Sheikh Mohamed Ahmed Garyare, who went on to become one of the leaders of Al Islah, perhaps the most important Islamist movement in Somalia. Al Nahda was made up of former holders of scholarships funded by Egypt and Saudi Arabia who, thanks to their familiarity with the ideas of reformist Islam, began to propagate the writings of Said Qutb, Hassan Al Banna, and the Pakistani Said Abu Aala Al-Mawdudi in Somalia[17]. The main focal point for dissemination in Mogadishu was the Abdulqadir Mosque where Al Nahda Sheikhs disseminated the texts of the new Islamist publicists in the Somali language[18].

[13] The other founders of the Somali Islamic League were Sh. Adam Hashi, Farah Ishmael "Kabaweyne" and Haji Diriye Hirsi.

[14] ABDURAHMAN M. ABDULLAHI, *Tribalism and Islam: The basics of Somaline*ss. In Lilius, *Variations on the Theme of Somaliness*, Centre for Continuing Education, Abo Akademy University, Finland, 2001, pp. 227-240.

[15] ABDURAHMAN M. ABDULLAHI, 2001, op. cit., p. 234.

[16] The founders of Al Nahda, in addition to Sh. Mohamed Ahmed Garyare, were Sheikh Abdul-Qani Sheikh Ahmed (President), Abdurahman Farah (secretary), Sh. Mohamed Abdullahi Moallim (vice-secretary), Mohamed Osman Jimale (treasurer) and Abdurahman Samatar (vice- treasurer). Source: ABDURAHMAN M. ABDULLAHI, *The Islah Movement. Islamic Moderation in War Torn Somalia*. Manuscript received from the author in August 2008.

[17] ABDURAHMAN M. ABDULLAHI, *Tribalism and Islam: The basics of Somaliness,*2001.

[18] *Ibid.*, p.235.

In the same years, before the coup d'état which brought General Siad Barre to power, an association similar to Al Nahda was also formed in the north of the country. This was Al Wahda, apparently founded by Omer Abdirahman Eesh at Hargeisa[19], in what is now Somaliland, with the same objective of propagating the writings of the exponents of the new Islam. According to the reconstruction made by Roland Marchal[20], Al Wahda suffered a major setback on its defeat in the war to regain Ogaden, when the government of Siad Barre intensified measures to contain the Islamist opposition and arrested scores of members of Al Wahda, imprisoning them in Mogadishu. A second wave of arrests was carried out in 1983 when the members of Al Wahda, who had formed another organization called *Ufo*, once again came in for persecution. Those who managed to flee took refuge in camps in Ethiopia and fought alongside the Somali National Movement, which was organizing resistance to the dictatorial regime. When the government of Siad Barre was overthrown in 1991, the members of Al Wahda renewed their educational activity with the backing of Kuwait[21]. In 1997 they founded the Somali Relief and Rehabilitation Association (SORRA) which is still active in Somaliland[22].

One further Islamist organization which was set up in this fervent cultural climate was Al-Ahli in Mogadishu, formed by secondary school students who were won over by the sermons of the Sheikhs of Al Nahda and became activists and disseminators of the new reformist ideas of the Moslem Brotherhood[23].

According to contemporary evidence[24], the reaction on the part of Somali society and the government to these new influences was hostile. The Salafite groups were not accepted by the population of Mog-

[19] The source for this information is the book, which has been widely contested, of M. TADESSE, *Al Ittihad. Political Islam and Black Economy in Somalia*, p.14.

[20] R. MARCHAL, *Islamic Political Dynamics in the Somali Civil War*. In Alex De Waal, *Islamism and its Enemies in the Horn of Africa*, Shama Books, Addis Abeba, 2004, pp. 114-145.

[21] *Ibid*., p. 119.

[22] ABDIRAHMAN O. RAGHE, *Somali NGOs: A product of crises*. In H.M. ADAM and R. FORD, *Mending Rips in the Sky. Options for Somali Communities in the 21st Century.* The Red Sea Press, Asmara,1997, pp. 371-389.

[23] See ABDULLAHI, *Tribalism and Islam: The basics of Somaliness*, 2001, p.235. According to the account of Roland Marchal, however, Al Ahli was founded by Sheikh Mahamed Moalin, who completed his studies in Egypt. See MARCHAL, *Islamic Political Dynamics in the Somali Civil War*, 2004.

[24] Interview with Zakaria Mohamed Sheikh, 7 August 2008, Nairobi.

adishu who referred to them disapprovingly as *Bid'a* or "bringers of new ideas against Islam".

Although Somalia was already a Moslem nation, traditional Sufi Islam occupied a marginal place in this society. The reason for this lies in the intrinsic nature of Sufism, which was an ascetic brand of Islam whose prophets, despite being highly respected and venerated, lived on the charity of the faithful and professed poverty as a means of elevation towards Allah. Sufi exponents devoted themselves to prayer and religious instruction and played no part in the social order. By contrast, the new religious leaders actively preached the Salafite movement in schools and mosques; they were tradesmen, administrators, members of the police force, and an integral part of Somali society. In Egypt they adhered to and professed the ideology of the Ikhwan al Muslimin group, but in Somalia they were yet to organize in a proper association. Nonetheless they immediately began to be seen as a threat by the post-independence government which in the mid-60s set out to repress the potential religious opposition, arresting Sheikh Nur Ali Olo in 1966 and Sheikh Mohamed Abdullahi Moallim in 1968[25].

3. Development and repression of reformist Islam (1970)

In October 1969, the coup d'état which brought General Siad Barre to power in Somalia disrupted the proliferation of the first Islamist organizations in the country. A ban was imposed on freedom of expression and assembly, and all associations, including the religious ones, were declared illegal.

From 1970 Al Nahda and Al Ahli continued their work of propagation of a new Islamic awareness underground and organized outright opposition to the dictator, especially the imposition of scientific socialism as the state ideology. Initially Siad Barre sought to involve the religious authorities in national development programmes, exhorting about a hundred Sheikhs to participate in the process of transformation of the society which was set out in the three-year development plan for 1971-1973. This attempt at cooptation was undermined by the dic-

[25] The year before, in 1967, Sheikh Mohamed Abdullahi Moallim had founded the Islamist organization Al Nahda. He remained in prison until 1980.

tator's scathing criticism of the methods used in the Quran schools and above all of what he saw as the use of religion for political and personal ends. This criticism intensified in 1972, when Siad Barre declared the Islamic religion incompatible with development on account of the prohibition, laid down in the Quran, on gaining profit from lending money and speculation. He also drew a damaging contrast between these religious practices and scientific socialism, with its aim of reducing poverty and solving the nation's problems. Furthermore, as the culmination of an anti-Islamic campaign mounted by the President, in 1972 the Latin alphabet was chosen for the nascent written form of the Somali language, marking a notable defeat for the organizations which had been exerting pressure since the 1950s, with the support of neighbouring Arab countries, for the Arab alphabet to be adopted in Somalia.

Nonetheless, for motives of economic opportunity Siad Barre had to tread warily in his attitude to reformist Islam. In the country itself the General pursued a policy of open hostility towards those groups perceived as a potential threat to his hegemony; while when it came to foreign policy, in 1974 Somalia applied for membership of the Arab League, a manoeuvre which led to substantial funding being made available by Saudi Arabia. As David D. Laitin and Said S. Samatar[26] showed, between 1975 and 1978 Somalia received 361 million dollars in development aid from OPEC, making it the third largest beneficiary of aid from Arab nations after Mauritania and Sudan. However, there were strings attached to this contribution to the state economy from Saudi Arabia: the Saudi monarchy put pressure on the Barre government to ensure that the nation, as a member of the Arab League, should not adopt Western political doctrine, above all with a Marxist-Leninist imprint, and should promote the use of Arabic both in schools and society. This pressure, exerted through the mechanisms of bilateral and multilateral aid funds, led to the Somali Education Ministry adopting a parallel school curriculum in the Arabic language and sponsoring a six-month literacy campaign beginning in December 1983 designed to spread the Arab alphabet amongst the population. Although for Siad Barre these measures merely represented a way to maintain the flow of funding from Arab donor countries, the effect na-

[26] D. D. LAITIN and S. S. SAMATAR, *Somalia. Nation in Search of a State*, Westview Press, Boulder Colorado, 1987, p. 146.

tionwide was by no means negligible: while the government was openly persecuting the exponents of reformist Islam, part of the élite in the country spoke Arab and had been educated in Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Against the background of tension in both internal and international affairs[27], the event that precipitated an open rift between the Islamists and the government of Siad Barre was the promulgation as Somali state legislation of a new family law. In Somalia this was traditionally part of the sphere overseen by the elders, according to the Shariʿa , and the proposal represented a serious provocation. First of all it was an attempt to supersede traditional Islamic law by applying the secular law of the state. The Shariʿa lost an important area of its application in traditional Somali society, an unacceptable innovation both to the Sufi religious authorities, who usually paid little attention to political developments, and to Somali Islamists. Secondly and perhaps more importantly, it gave clear notice that the Barre government intended to effect a profound transformation in Somali society, altering long established conditions of social equilibrium. One example is the fundamental relationship between men and women, both in the short term, giving women the possibility of seeking divorce, and in the long term, enabling them to inherit on a par with the male family members. In the egalitarian Marxist perspective promoted by Siad Barre, women would secure a sphere of rights which up until then had been in the hands of the religious authorities and their interpretation of the Shariʿa. This provoked public protests in Mogadishu organized by the Sheiks of Al Nahda and involving the militant youth of Al Ahli and many other Sufi Sheikhs, who accused Siad Barre of violating the Quran and aiming to turn Somalia into a secular state[28].

In particular, according to Sheikh Mohamed Moallim[29], founder and vice-secretary of the Islamist organization Al Nahda, the protests

[27] The outcome of the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1967 increased tensions between Arab nations and the West and also exacerbated the divisions between the Islamist movements. In Egypt the Moslem Brotherhood came under attack from the Nasser government, which imprisoned many of their leaders.

[28] It is interesting to see how at the end of the 1920s this same criticism in Egypt led to the genesis of the Muslim Brotherhood under the leasdership of Al Banna. For more information see G. KEPEL, *Il Profeta ed il Faraone. I Fratelli Musulmani alle origini del movimento islamista*. Edizioni Laterza, Bari, 2006.

[29] The year after the creation of Al Nahda, in 1968, Sh. Moallim was imprisoned by Siad Barre for 12 years. He became, and continues to be, one of the exponents of Al Islah.

focused on the following points[30]:

- the unmotivated attack launched by the Socialist regime on the Islamic religion, leading to the persecution of the (reformist) Sheiks.
- the patent wish of the government to destroy the system of Quran schools on the pretext of modernization.
- the reform of the school curriculum, granting insufficient recognition to the teaching of the Islamic religion, together with the corrupt morals of the teaching staff, capable for example of smoking in class or consuming alcoholic beverages during Ramadan.
- the reform of family law, traditionally overseen by the Shariʿa , which assigned to women a role contrary to that contemplated in Islamic law, granting them the possibility of seeking divorce (*Dalaaq*).
- the discussion in parliament of the commercialization in Somalia of pork, prohibited under Islamic law.

This protest was brutally repressed and some two thousand arrests were made by the army. In January 1975 the National Security Court, on the orders of General Siad Barre, sentenced ten leaders of the revolt to be publicly shot. This execution of ten members of the clergy was deeply disturbing for Islamists and Somali society in general. Many of the young people who had taken part in militant activities with Al Ahli fled the country for fear of political persecution and took refuge in countries such as Sudan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Many of the Sheikhs associated with Al Nahda also left the country, and according to Abdurahman Moallim Abdulahi, by 1980 Al Nahda, Al Ahli and Al Wahda no longer existed. In 1978 there had also been persecutions in the north of the country, with virtually all the exponents of Al Wahda being put in prison[31].

[30] The account of Sheikh Mohamed Moallim is related by A. H. MOHAMMED, 1999, *Anatomy of a Failure: Causes and Consequences of the Somalia Tragedy*. Unpublished manuscript. After gaining a degree in chemistry at the University of Lafole in 1981, Abdi-nur H. Mohammed became a secondary school teacher and then, from 1985 to 1993, an official working for UNICEF Somalia. In 1999 he was President of a local NGO called Community Concern Somalia.

[31] A. M. ABDULLAHI, *Non State Actors in the Failed State of Somalia: Survey of the Civil Society Organisations in Somalia during the Civil War*. In *Darasaat Ifriqiyayyah*, 2004, n. 31, pp. 57-87.

The harsh repression conducted by Siad Barre in the years 1975 – 1978 dealt a body blow to the nascent political Islam in Somalia. It largely disintegrated, but rather than being entirely wiped out, its nerve centres were dispersed in the neighbouring Arab countries where the militants, who had not made personal acquaintance because of the clandestine status of Somali Islamist organizations, were able gradually to meet and regroup[32]. Following the shooting of the ten religious leaders, Saudi Arabia offered hundreds of scholarships to Somali students, many of whom were subsequently admitted to Islamic universities worldwide[33]. These scholarships were provided through Saudi religious organizations such as *Dar al-Ifta* and *Rabida al-Alam al-Islami*, which had entered Somalia with the objective of contrasting the propagation of scientific socialism and the support of the Saudi monarchy[34]. The Somali diaspora in the neighbouring Arab countries grew considerably at the end of the Ogaden war, in 1978, when 250,000 Somalis crossed to the Arabian peninsula[35]. These Somalis devoted themselves above all to commerce and gradually achieved positions of importance at management level in the host countries[36].

4. Diaspora and construction of the Islamist movement Al Islah (1980s)

The migration and return of the Somali young people who went to study in neighbouring countries with a Moslem culture meant that a network of relations gradually came into being linking traditional Somali Islam with Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, Egypt and Mediterranean Africa.

At Riyadh on 11 January 1978 a small group made up of Sheikh

[32] A. M. ABDULLAHI, *Tribalism and Islam: The basics of Somaliness*, in S. LILIUS 2001, op. cit., p. 235.

[33] A. M. ABDULLAHI and I. FARAH, *Reconciling the State and Society in Somalia: Reordering Islamic Work and Clan System*. Paper read at the *Somali Studies Association Conference*, Ohio 2008.

[34] A. M. ABDULLAHI, *Tribalism and Islam,* op. cit.

[35] A good description of the exodus of the Somalis towards the Arabian peninsula can be found in I.I. AHMED, 2001, *Remittances and Their Economic Impact in Somaliland*, in S. LILIUS, *Variations on the Theme of Somaliness*. Centre for Continuing Education, Turku, Finland. Pp. 184-188. See also J. GUNDEL, 2002, *The Migration-Development Nexus. Somali Case-Study*. Centre for Development Research Study.

[36] D. D. LAITIN and S. S. SAMATAR, *Somalia. Nation in Search of a State*, op. cit., p. 145.

Ahmed Nur Garyare, Dr. Ali Sheikh Ahmed, Dr. Mohamed Yusuf, Sheikh Abdullah Ahmed Abdulla and Sheikh Ahmed Rashid Hanafi met in the home of the latter to found the Islamist organization Al Islah in emulation of the Moslem Brotherhood in Egypt, from whom the group were receiving aid and guidance[37]. The group came together as an inter-clan Islamist movement in opposition to the dictatorial regime of Siad Barre; making propaganda against the regime was one of the chief goals of the organization at the outset. According to Hansen and Mesoy[38], General Barre was aware of the political activity of the Al Islah group, and several times asked Saudi Arabia to extradite the group's founders and hand them over. Thus the backing of Saudi Arabia was essential not only in the creation of the organization but also, and above all, for its survival in its early years. Nonetheless Al Islah appeared to be just a very small group of individuals rather than a structured, active Islamist organization; moreover, on account of the way the members of the organization were recruited, the sub-clans Sheikal and Aw Hassan of the clan Haawiye were predominant. Members were recruited from within the circles of kinship and friendship gravitating round the founders, and in 1979 Al Islah could count on a base which included some hundred Sheikhs in the three main Somali cities: Mogadishu (where the point of reference for Al Islah was Sheikh Muhamed Ibrahim Suley)[39], Hargeisa and Boroma. The Sheikhs preached the group's message in the mosques and acted in complete secrecy.

It is possible to reconstruct the history of the Islamist movement Al Islah in Somalia if we divide its existence into three macro-periods, each characterised by a particular type of activism. The first phase lasted from 1978 to 1988, i.e. from its creation to Siad Barre's bombing of the city of Hargeisa, in what is now Somaliland. This phase, according to Hansen and Mesoy, was marked by a high level of politicization, with activities of clandestine opposition to the dictatorial gov-

[37] For a good account of the genesis of the Somali Islamist organization Al Islah and the dissemination of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Horn of Africa see HANSEN and MESOY, *The Muslim Brotherhood in the wider Horn of Africa*. Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, 2009.

[38] *Ibid.*

[39] According to the account of Hansen and Mesoy, Sh Muhamed Ibrahim Suley subsequently became a leader of the Islamic Courts and is now an active member of the Alliance for Restoration of Somalia – Djibuti.

ernment. The bombing of Hargeisa generated a situation of acute humanitarian need, enabling the organization to intervene through its aid organizations without fear of repression. The second phase, from 1989 to 1999, was characterised by a significant increase in the size of the movement, and intense activity in the sector of the Islamic NGOs, also in response to the humanitarian needs deriving from the civil war, but scant political activity, merely the occasional initiative of mediation in the cause of peace promoted in the centre-south of the country. And the third phase, from 2000 to 2009, was characterised by renewed political activity, which saw a major participation of Al Islah in the Arta Peace Conference in Djibuti in 2000, and a shift in the movement's social focus from the humanitarian sector of Islamic charities and NGOs to participation in the peace processes being pursued in civil society. We can now look at each of the three periods in the history of the Islamist movement Al Islah to see how it evolved and how its short and long terms interests and objectives changed.

5. First period of Al Islah (1978-1988) – Political activism

During the 1980s Al Islah concentrated on consolidating its membership from among the educated élite in Somalia and in the diaspora. According to Abdurahman M. Abdullahi, the movement was open to anyone with an ideological and religious affinity who wished to contribute to the organization's objectives and activities. This contribution took the form of an annual membership fee and active participation in weekly activities[40]. In reality, in their investigation Hansen and Mesoy found that the organization was not so open, but rather took care to identify and choose potential members among the nation's élites and in particular among university students, religious leaders, doctors, engineers, military personnel and intellectuals[41]. This recruitment strategy gave rise to a perception, still widespread among the Somali population, of an elitist organization which was not soundly rooted in the country as a whole and made little impact in the rural areas[42]. However this may be, during the dictatorship the organization

[40] A. M. ABDULLAHI, *The Islah Movement*, 2008, p. 9.

[41] HANSEN and MESOY, *The Muslim Brotherhood in the wider Horn of Africa*, op. cit., p. 40.

[42] I often received confirmation of this perception in my field work, above all from Somalis who live in Nairobi and work in the humanitarian sphere.

could not have pursued a visible and open recruitment policy. There was a climate of extreme diffidence and suspicion concerning fervent religious believers and, in the words of Abdurahman Moallim Abdullahi reported by Le Sage, "anybody could have been a spy, life in Mogadishu was lived between home and mosque, with the constant terror of being arrested"[43]. During the eighties some exponents of Al Islah were indeed arrested by the regime. Among them Sheikh Gurhan Nur Barud, who was sentenced to death, although this sentence was subsequently changed to imprisonment, which he served until 1989[44]. The political objectives of Al Islah in this initial phase were focused on contrasting the secular transformation undertaken by the Siad Barre government and reinstating the role of Islam in Somali society. In the words of one of its leaders, "the objective of Al Islah was to match Somali culture and current legislation with Islamic values and bring them back into the Islamic juridical framework governed by the Shari'a "[45]. The Islamic values referred to in this quotation relate to the Shura or Consultation, meaning "democracy", justice and equality[46]. For the members of Al Islah the concept of democracy was set out by Dr. Ibrahim Al Dusuqi, who joined the movement in 1988 and became its leading strategist towards the end of the nineties[47]. Dusuqi stated that Al Islah strove to transform Somalia into a modern, democratic nation without doing away with Islamic values[48]. He placed the emphasis on the country's religious vocation as opposed to the trend of secularization and explained his vision of democracy as follows[49]:

[43] LE SAGE, *Al Islah in Somalia*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, 2004.

[44] According to the reconstruction provided by various sources, Sh. Gurhan Nur Barud joined forces with Al Islah as early as 1979, was arrested by Siad Barre in 1986 and held in prison for three years, being released in 1989. In 2009 he was living in Nairobi.

[45] A. M. ABDULLAHI, *The Islah Movement*, op. cit., p. 7.

[46] As has been clarified by A. M. ABDULLAHI, *The Islah Movement*, op. cit.

[47] Born in 1952, Ibrahim Dusuqi studied medicine at the Somali National University until 1977 when he was obliged to leave Somalia for his active opposition to Siad Barre. According to Hansen and Mesoy, Dusuqi is related to Ali Sheikh Ahmed, joint founder with Garyare of the Al Islah movement, which he joined in 1988 after completing his studies in medicine and cardiology at the University of Pavia, where he had taken refuge from political persecution in 1981. At the end of the 1980s, following a brief stay in America, Dusuqi returned to Somalia to practice medicine. He also became a businessman and activist in Al Islah. Source: reconstructed on the basis of LE SAGE, 2004, *Al Islah in Somalia*; HANSEN and MESOY, 2009, *The Muslim Brotherhood in the wider Horn of Africa*.

[48] This interpretation of Dusuqi is given in LE SAGE, *Al Islah in Somalia*, op. cit.

[49] Interview with Dusuqi in LE SAGE, *Al Islah in Somalia,* op. cit.

> The population must elect their political representatives, must be able to control them through Parliament, and must enjoy freedom of the press. According to my vision, Parliament and the constitution should not contemplate or issue any decree in contradiction with Islam. But this does not mean that Al Islah wishes to set up a theocratic state like the one in Saudi Arabia or Iran. We believe that the sacred texts provide guidelines, not rigid laws, to be respected in the government of human things. This leaves a lot of room for the elaboration of laws that served the interest of the society. If there is an open society, meaning a society with truly democratic practices and institutions, extremism will have no leverage. The interests of society and the interpretation of Islam will be one and the same thing.

The leaders of Al Islah spoke of transforming Somali society both politically and socially. In the words of the movement's Vice President, Abdurahman Moallim Abdullahi, the ideology of the Brotherhood which inspired Al Islah lay midway between traditional Islam and Salafism; Al Islah did not define itself as a Salafite movement, but attributed this term to the radical Islamist components who came from the Al Ittihad al Islam organization. In fact, unlike the Salafite groups in Somalia, Al Islah recognised an interpretation of the Quran (*Ijtihad*) that took account of modern changes in practices and customs[50]. Furthermore, the movement accepted the concept of innovation (*Bida*) because Dusuqi drew a distinction between innovation of the Islamic religion, which was not acceptable, and innovation of the way of life for individuals and society, which is not only desirable but necessary to avoid living "like a thousand years ago"[51].

The political activism of opposition to the Siad Barre government lasted until the end of the eighties, when Siad Barre no longer represented a threat in the long term because he was too taken up with combating the internal opposition[52]. According to the recollections of Sheikh Mohamed Garyare, the first leader of Al Islah at Riyadh in 1978, in the eighties Al Islah was invited to take part in the resistance organized by some political parties to oppose Siad Barre's regime. However the movement rejected these overtures because it refused to contemplate violence as a means to achieve political stability or rec-

[50] Interview with Abdurahman Abdullahi in LE SAGE, *Al Islah in Somalia,* op. cit.

[51] Interview with Ibrahim Dusuqi in LE SAGE, *Al Islah in Somalia,* op. cit.

[52] The internal opposition to the Siad Barre government was organized according to clan loyalties in the Somali National Movement (SNM), United Somali Congress (USC), Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), and Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF).

ognise the clan-based society as a criterion for association[53]. The bombing of Hargeisa in 1988 gave Al Islah the opportunity to put into practice its project for infiltrating the society by means of social activism, inaugurating what Hansen and Mesoy call the movement's "spring"[54].

6. Second period of Al Islah (1989-1999) – Social Activism

Following Siad Barre's bombing of Hargeisa in 1988 and throughout the nineties Al Islah could profit from the fall of the dictatorial regime and focus on expanding its base by being active in the sectors of humanitarian aid and the social services. During this period Islamic NGOs proliferated in Somalia in response to the humanitarian crisis, with the spread of the so-called "Islamic humanitarianism". Many members of Al Islah who were living in the neighbouring Arab countries were urged by the movement to return to Somalia as the heads of Islamic NGOs based in the Gulf states and affiliated to the Moslem Brotherhood[55].

The National Somali University, which had been specifically facilitated by Italian cooperation organizations in fostering development, became a highly important hub for spreading the activities of the Islamist group Al Islah, and the centre of the network of Somali students in the diaspora[56]. In 1991, with the fall of the Barre government, Al-Islah and Al-Ittihad, the two organizations in Somalia linked to the Moslem Brotherhood in Egypt, came out of secrecy and began to further their strategies to conquer power. Al Ittihad undertook a campaign of military conquest in the Gedo region in 1996, which failed when Ethiopia intervened, while Al Islah adopted a long term strategy based on infiltrating society through the work of Islamic charities and NGOs to meet the impellent needs of the population[57].

In this period some members of Al Islah joined Al Ittihad al Is-

[53] This account by Garyare is given in A. M. ABDULLAHI, *The Islah Movement*, op. cit.

[54] HANSEN and MESOY, *The Muslim Brotherhood in the wider Horn of Africa*, op. cit., p. 43.

[55] This statement by Garyare is given in HANSEN and MESOY, *The Muslim Brotherhood in the wider Horn of Africa*, op. cit.

[56] A. M. ABDULLAHI, *The Islah Movement*, op. cit.

[57] Interview with Zakaria Mohamed Sheikh, Nairobi, 2008.

lam[58], while others, in the wake of the famine of 1992, managed to set up a large number of Islamic charities. The Somali people were almost exclusively dependent on aid from Islamic charities, and in the years 1996-1997, also as a result of the military defeat suffered by Al Ittihad, Al-Islah acquired credibility and proselytes, becoming numerically far superior to Al Ittihad.

In the nineties Al Islah had turned its attention away from the political sphere as such in favour of infiltration of Somali society and the formation of an intellectual élite. In 1993 Abdurahman Moallin Abdullahi, the then Vice President of Al Islah, on completing a Master's degree in Islamic Studies in Toronto, returned to Somalia as head of the American NGO Mercy International, founded by Somali activists of the diaspora[59]. The same year the Africa Muslim Agency[60] also arrived from Kuwait, and its director, Sheikh Farah Abdulkadir, became one of the masterminds behind the constitution of the network of Islamic NGOs known as FPENS at the end of the nineties.

The expansion of Al Islah continued throughout the nineties thanks to its work in the sector of education[61]. Still today there are many schools funded by Al Islah all over the country, especially in the centre-south. The students in these schools are enabled to pursue their studies abroad thanks to exchange agreements set up by Al Islah with a network of universities in Sudan and Yemen. In a country with no effective government and an education system in a state of collapse, the chance to continue studies was a great incentive for boosting the numbers of students attending the schools of Al Islah, and hence of Somali young people who became followers of the movement. Al Islah succeeded in penetrating Somali civil society thanks to its chari-

[58] It has to be said that what little has been written about the genesis of the Islamist movements in Somalia is not unanimous about the difference between Al Islah and Al Ittihad. One approach, connected above all with Ethiopian and American intelligence, maintains that the two organizations are actually united. See for example M. TADESSE, *Al Ittihad,* op.cit.

[59] It is interesting to note that Mercy International does not define itself as an Islamic NGO, even though in an interview in August 2008 its spokesperson explained that the organization has a charitable sector because it is funded exclusively with money from religious donations offered by Muslim donors. Interview with Fathi Mohamed, Coordinator of Mercy USA, Nairobi Office, Nairobi, 19 August 2008.

[60] Interview with Mohamed Bashir, Director of the AMA office in Mogadishu, Nairobi 14 May 2008.

[61] For more details on the activity of Islamic charities in the education sector see V. SAGGIOMO, From Charity to Governance: Islamic NGOs and Education in Somalia. *Open Area Studies Journal,* 2011, 4, pp. 53-61.

ty activities, not least in the health sector. In Mogadishu two hospitals still function, Hannana and Hayad, both run by Al-Islah, the first funded from Dubai. In 1997 the University of Mogadishu was founded, and in 1998 FPENS, a network of schools supported by charities mostly linked to Al Islah, but also to Islamist movements representing other schools of Islamic interpretation[62].

Thus at the beginning of the nineties a network of resources was installed which the movement could draw on in pursuing its objectives, exploiting the "freedom of action" left by the absence of the state and the fragility of the local administrations that emerged after each bout of inter-clan fighting. These resources were skilfully bound to the movement through the organization of a series of conferences, hosted in the countries of the diaspora, which brought together the most important members of Al Islah and associated organizations[63]. It was at one of these conferences that the movement discussed a change of strategy to achieve its objective in the political sphere. We can recall that the ultimate goal of Al Islah was political, i.e. to set up an Islamic state based on the Shariʿa . According to Ibrahim Farah, a follower of the movement and political analyst at the American embassy from 1991 to 2000, Al Islah adopted three strategies to bring about the formation of an Islamic state: maintain a neutral, impartial profile in the political sphere for as long as Somalia remained without a government; favour the installation of a "friendly" government that is not totally unconnected with the organization, with this dialogue would be possible; take power, presenting itself as a political actor and winning the elections that were bound to follow on the installation of the first government[64].

7. Third period of Al Islah (2000 - 2009). Policies for the civil society

In order to pursue these objectives the movement adopted a new policy in 1995 that had already been discussed in Toronto during the

[62] Interview with Zakaria Mohamed Sheikh, Nairobi, August 2008.

[63] The first conference was held in 1992 in Canada and served to disseminate the new objectives of Al Islah in Somalia and to activate the organization's resources abroad.

[64] Interview with Ibrahim Farah, Nairobi, 31 July 2008.

annual meetings held to agree on progress made and future guidelines. This new policy took the name of *Dealing with Reality Policy*[65] and marked an important step forwards in the strategy of permeation of Somali society by Al Islah in all sectors. This policy was seen to be necessary following an analysis of the Somali conflict, which the movement was unable to influence because, true to its policy of neutrality, it maintained no links with any of the factions. Keeping its distance from the competing factions had not paid in the early nineties: attempts at intervening in the sector of pacification, which had been limited to organizing the occasional march for peace, had made little impact and brought negligible results. The movement had to become more incisive, and to achieve this it was necessary to renounce a measure of the neutrality that had characterised its interventions since the early nineties.

The *Dealing with Reality Policy* offered greater scope for entering into strategic alliances, and enabled the members themselves to unite, participate in and infiltrate other political and humanitarian organizations, where they could then import the strategic vision and objectives of Al Islah. Up until 1995, when it was decided to implement the *Dealing with Reality Policy,* various factors had precluded this possibility. First of all the wish to abide by the movement's principle of distancing itself from clan-based politics and from using violence to perorate its cause, which remained the prerogative of the Al Ittihad Islamist movement[66]. Nonetheless, refusing any links with the clan-based and religious organizations that favoured different methodologies of activism had the effect of isolating Al Islah in the Somali political panorama and making it difficult for it to gain access to the country's political life. Besides, for Al Islah as for the Moslem Brotherhood in Egypt, participation in political life is a duty deriving from the premise that Islam is at one and the same time religion and State, so that its practice cannot but include political activism. In 1994 the movement considered three possible options: allying itself with a political party already in the arena; that Al Islah should itself become a political party; or permitting its members to join existing organizations and parties, whether clan-based, religious or whatever. The first two hypotheses were discarded because the political panorama at the

[65] Reported by Hansen and Mesoy from Abdurahman M. Abdullahi.
[66] A. M. ABDULLAHI, *The Islah Movement*, op. cit, p. 269.

time was chaotic and hopelessly unstructured. In fact, as Abdurahman M. Abdullahi recalled, the representatives of Al Islah, having been formed in the school of the Moslem Brotherhood, possessed the theoretical tools for gradually transforming a laical state like Egypt into an Islamic state, but had no means to orient themselves in a panorama where the state and its institutions had collapsed and where society was "at war with itself"[67]. Participating openly in political life in such a context did not represent a viable solution. Thus it was decided to opt for the third hypothesis, putting in place an intricate network of relationships that would link Al Islah to a vast range of political, humanitarian, development, economic and commercial organizations. Following the *Dealing with Reality Policy*, Al Islah began to develop ramifications and networks in virtually all the sectors of Somali society and extended its influence in the political processes supported by the international community which have been ongoing in the country since 2000, particularly the Arta Peace Conference in 2000. Here Al Islah managed to gain access to the political entourage which participated in the conference without actually making its presence known. Its members infiltrated the various clan associations and thus became numerically predominant in the assembly that produced the National Transition Government[68].

The *Dealing with Reality Policy* in effect implied, and continues to imply, the infiltration of members of Al Islah into organizations, including the clan-based ones, where they have the possibility of attaining key positions so as to exercise influence on national policy-making. All organizations, whether political or humanitarian could be infiltrated by members of Al Islah as long as they were non-violent, and these exponents would then seek to guide the decision-making processes according to the wishes of the movement. 1995 saw the start of a period of great expansion of the Islamist group, whose structure nowadays has the aspect of a network of organizations and institutions.

[67] *Ibid*., p. 270.
[68] Interview with Zakaria Aden Sheikh, Nairobi, August 2008.

8. **The Al Islah Network**

The structure of Al Islah has been described by André le Sage as comprising an executive committee, made up of the President, Vice-President, General Secretary and eight other members, with three sub-groups beneath it: the Somali Reconciliation Council (SRC), with its own director, specialized staff and voluntary activists forming work groups; the Al Islah Charity Society, charged with collecting funds and supervising projects in the education sector, also with its own director and staff; and a grouping of the organization's affiliates, which in 2004, in Le Sage's estimate, numbered about 50 activists and 500 supporters[69]. The movement, according to Le Sage, was organized in cells in order to preserve members' anonymity. In reality, as the Vice President of Al Islah stated in his doctoral thesis, the cellular structure was already called into question during the civil war because, in a context of open conflict and marked social disintegration, it threatened the movement's very survival[70].

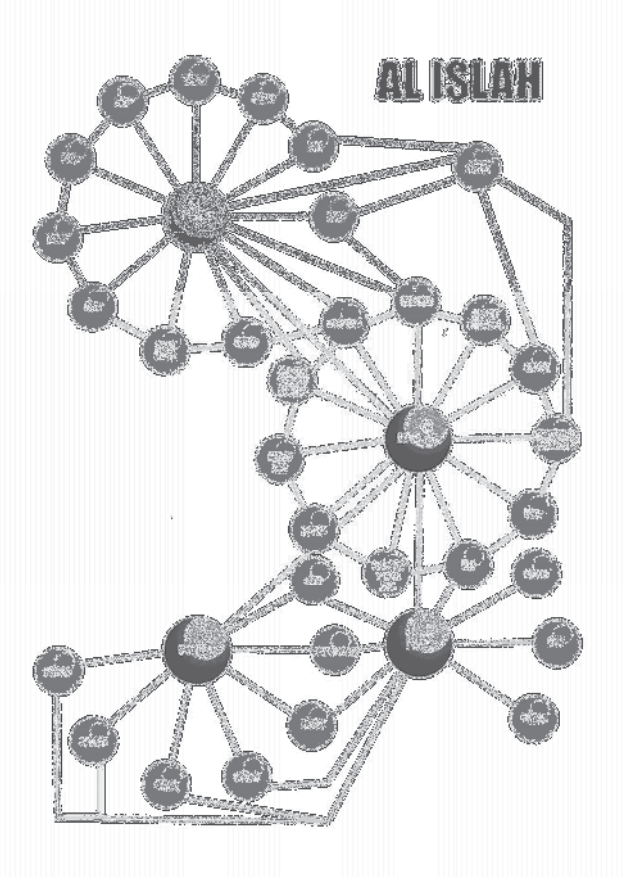
On the basis of the processes of aggregation involving the organizations created at the instigation of Al Islah, we would suggest that the Islamist movement actually had a different structure, corresponding to a network of NGOs which in turn formed part of other networks. I refer to this as satellite networks, because in each of these networks there was at least one member of Al Islah able to influence the strategic choices in the direction that suited the movement. The advantages of acting as a network consist in the ability of the movement to influence the political sphere without being openly visible and thus susceptible of being sidelined; to take advantage in the humanitarian sphere of the funding opportunities offered by the community of donors for Somalia based in Nairobi; to acquire visibility at the local level through the provision of high quality social services while at the same time forging credibility at the international level thanks to the efficiency of its NGOs in Somalia.

An example in this respect is the international NGO Mercy-USA, created and manned by founding members of Al Islah, but fully accredited in the humanitarian and development sector as an American

[69] The organization structure proposed by Le Sage is in LE SAGE, *Al Islah in Somalia,* op. cit.

[70] A. M. ABDULLAHI, 2010, *The Islah Movement in Somalia. A Historical Evolution of Islamic Moderation*. Doctoral thesis. Unpublished manuscript received from the author, p. 261.

NGO, with access to funding made available by the government for the benefit of local NGOs like ZamZam and Tadamun, which also belonged to the movement. Thus it was not just a question of having access to economic resources but of the possibility, for Al Islah, to benefit, through the network, from a whole series of opportunities offered by the international community to legitimise its own scheme for the reconstruction of the country and of the Somali state in general, starting from civil society. The profile that follows is how we have been able to reconstruct the structure of the Islamist movement Al Islah on the basis of the research presented here[71].



This account of the Al Islah organization makes no claim to being exhaustive. The network as identified to date can be subdivided into five main categories of organisms or non-governmental organizations

[71] The big circle indicates a network, the small circle a single organization.

(NGOs), according to the broad definition we have adopted, viz.:

1) professional associations, such as the Somali Medical Association, reconstituted around the Harafat Hospital, a clinical structure set up with the support of Dr. Ibrahim Dusuqi, and the Somali Law Council, made up of professionals of the British diaspora bringing together all Somali lawyers to promote human rights and ensure civil rights in the country;

2) political organizations, such as the Somali Reconciliation Council, created in 1994 by Al Islah to ensure the movement's involvement in political life in the country;

3) culture-producing institutions, the prime examples being the Mogadishu University, funded with the support of numerous Arab countries and the Islamic Development Bank, and also the Somali Institute for Management and Development (SIMAD), designed to train Somali professionals and future generations of management, administrative and technological experts for the public and private companies of the future;

4) development and humanitarian aid NGOs, such as Mercy USA, founded in 1986 at Plymouth, Michigan by a group of Somali emigrées to the United States operating not only in Somalia but worldwide, and the ZamZam Foundation and Tadamun Social Society, both founded in 1992 in Somalia to meet humanitarian needs in the country;

5) and finally what I refer to as the "satellite networks", meaning authentic networks of organizations in civil society active in various sectors, such as peace and human rights, gender issues and education, linked to Al Islah in order to extend its network[72].

Starting in the mid-nineties, three networks of NGOs were set up by exponents of Al Islah and the Islamic NGOs linked to the movement, namely the Peace and Human Right Network (PHRN) in 1997, the Formal Private Education Network in Somalia (FPENS), in 1998, and the Coalition for Grassroots Women Organizations-Somalia (COGWO) in 1995[73].

[72] This statement is by A. M. Abdullahi, vice president of Al Islah, in A. M. ABDULLAHI, *The Islah Movement. Islamic Moderation in War-torn Somalia*. 2008, p. 23, note 42.

[73] For more information on the Network Satellites see V. SAGGIOMO, *Rebuilding the State From Below. Networks of NGOs and the politics of civil society in Somalia*. Paper presented at the 11th Horn of Africa Conference with Focus on Peace and Security. 8-10 June 2012, Lund, Sweden.

Although set up at the instigation of Al Islah, these networks are not exclusive, in the sense that they are not made up of Islamic NGOs in which members of the movement necessarily predominate or adhering to its strategies. The only essential parameter for Al Islah is that the NGOs which participate in its networks do not violate Islamic law as interpreted by the movement. In fact these networks of NGOs vary in nature, origin and composition, with among them Islamic NGOs promoted by exponents of Al Islah. The organizations present in these five categories do not always or necessarily define themselves "Islamic". The Islamic identity can be alternately revealed or concealed according to the context in which the NGO acts and the need to forge relationships and alliances with the various actors they come into contact with, whether local, such as Imams and religious leaders, or international.

Nonetheless all contribute, directly or indirectly, to the general objectives of Al Islah, i.e. reconciliation *"Islah dat Al bayn"*, proselytism *"Al-Da'wa Wal Irshad",* and humanitarian aid and development benefiting society, *"Al-Igatha wa Taqliim"*[74].

8. Conclusions

Today Al Islah continues to be an underground political movement, and will remain such, according to its Vice President, until such time as there is an unconditioned political scenario in which it can compete with the other political forces in democratic elections. Meanwhile the process of penetration of the hearts and minds of the Somali people continues through the institutions created by members of the movement, such as Mogadishu University, hospitals, schools, and NGOs for humanitarian aid, so as to cover all the various categories of Somali society, from the poor and marginalised to the intellectual élites that are currently emerging. This process represents today on one hand a response to the lack of social services which has characterised the country for two decades, and on the other Al Islah's chosen method of

[74] These are the declared objectives of the Islamist movement Al Islah, as formulated by A.M. ABDULLAHI, *The Islah Movement. Islamic Moderation in War-torn Somalia.* Paper delivered at the *Second Nordic Horn of Africa Conference.* Norway: Oslo University. 2008, p. 12.

consensus building, on the model of the Moslem Brotherhood in Egypt, whose policy of penetration of the Egyptian society has been reaping its rewards in the events of recent months.

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III. Boundaries and Territories

Minorities as a Political Majority: Power and Reciprocity Within and outside the Small Geographic Boundaries of a North-Central Nigerian State

Henry Gyang Mang

1.Introduction

In most Sub-Saharan African countries, citizenship and the rights thereof are defined locally rather than in national terms[1]. Although this has been a processual post-independence development in most of these states, the changing political environment in contemporary Africa has mutated these localized identity based processes into autochthony based ones. It is likely here that the reader will question whether a "politics of the local" does not necessarily mean politics of autochthony. I differ here, and argue that the local in the immediate post-colonial did not necessarily mean an autochthonous milieu; rather, it meant the compromises of colonial and post-colonial constructions within the polity. Therefore, the contemporary struggle for autochthony is a product of processual "nationalistic" tendencies within the African post-colony partly acquired in colonial times. Suppressed identities which became more emergent at the terminal point of colonialism have due to a new wave of *multi-partyism*, either been transformed into small cohesive political fronts or small cohesive rebel groups. These small fronts have then chosen to wield rooted and stronger authority within their spheres of influence, since in most cases they can't access the larger national "cake".

This work looks at majorities and minorities and their attempt at controlling political domains either as autochthons or citizens in a federal system. The main area of study is Plateau state in the north central

[1] P. GESCHIERE, *The Perils of Belonging: Autochthony, Citizenship, and Exclusion in Africa and Europe*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2009, pp. 54-55.

part of Nigeria[2]. Blench classifies the ethnicities local to the areas as being part of the "Plateau language group"[3]. There is also a preponderance of the Hausa, the largest ethnic group in Northern Nigeria. Although not accepted as being indigenous to the area by the Plateau groups, they are evidently deeply rooted and in some cases dominant in certain sectors within their host communities.

2. Access and Power in the Nigerian Context

Identity and primordiality have been an issue in Nigerian politics since the pre-independence era of Nationalist struggle. Although purveyors of Nigerian historical memory would otherwise encourage the idea that Nigerian Nationalism was a cohesive force, and its actors were allied in the fight for independence, evidence of cracks in the frontlines were clearly evident. The forging of new national, religious and political identities, began with the unification of Nigeria in 1914. The British colonial authorities in their experiments with administrative processes constructed different perceptions of the different ethnicities within their carved dominion. This saw different administrative processes for the different geographical units. Ethnic identity, religion and perceived histories were the primary instruments used by the British to build administrative models for the amalgamated Northern and Southern Provinces demarcated. The general idea of "indirect rule" which Fredrick Lugard (1858–1945) had borrowed from his days in India, was to encourage a localized but subordinate authority, answerable to British administrators, and at the same time recognized by the local groups. Depending on the areas, while some leaders were *de jure*, others became leaders basically as proxies foisted upon their communities. Indirect rule was relatively successful in the North of the country, because the colonial authorities found the mainly Hau-

[2] In the 1990's, the Nigerian state under Sani Abacha, politically divided the country into six geo-political zones (North-central, -east and -west; South-east, south and west) in an attempt to share power. This nomenclature is still in use today. Although Kaduna state is under the North-west, its southernmost inhabitants share a lot in common with the people of Plateau state in the North-central area, and so have built a unique relationship.

[3] R. BLENCH, *Recent research on the Plateau languages of Central Nigeria*. http://www.rogerblench.info/Language/NigerCongo/BenueCongo/Plateau/General/Plateau%20State%20of%20the%20art.pdf [Accessed 20/05/2012].

sa/Fulani Caliphate and emirates in the North, compatible with their desired process of administration. The Emirates had within them a hierarchical authority with a reasonably recognizable bureaucracy, quite adaptable to Western types. But not so much in the North-Central areas and the South, most especially in the South Eastern Igbo areas, where there was the highest resistance during the British quest for subjugating the peoples within its territories. The Idea of "the state" by the Igbo was more of a misnomer, observes Bohannan; they "[…] see the state as unavoidable tyranny; they seek and find order in other institutions"[4]. To the Igbo, "Ezebuilo" which means "a king is an enemy"[5], was the symbolism of tyrannical authority, and only dialogue among peers resolved matters of the state. It could then be implied from this, that the British colonialists destroyed Igbo democracy when they foisted "Warrant Chiefs" as indirect British rulers. Most of these warrant chiefs were not recognized by the Igbo elders, but they were condoned because of the barrel of the British gun. In other parts of Nigeria, like among the Berom in Plateau State, Central Nigeria, there was a designation of "warrant chiefs" as the "Gwom Nasara" (white man's chief) in contrast to the "Gwom Kwit" (priest chief) who was a diviner and intermediary with the spiritual[6]. Pre-colonial Berom society gave prominence to two people primarily, the priest and the blacksmith. These people, who determined the success of harvest and game, meant more in authority than the pursuit of a king, who provided little in terms of tangible value[7].

Therefore, the emergence of a new form of authority in areas that were historically termed as stateless, introduced a new dimension to the politics of the emerging Nigerian state. Primarily in the Jos Plateau and its adjoining Lowlands, the drive for a unique "Middle Belt" (Central Nigeria) encouraged a new opposition to an agreed "homogenic" northern Nigeria, this was not a real truth, but well peddled political convenience for the northern Hausa oligarchy. Obafemi Awolowo, one of the country's foremost nationalists, once described

[4] P. BOHANNAN, *Africa and Africans*. The Natural History Press, New York, 1964, p. 194.

[5] G. AYITTEY, *Stateless Societies: The Igbo, the Fulani, the Somali*. [online article] Available at: http://seunfakze.wordpress.com/2012/02/21/stateless-societies-the-igbo-the-fulani-the-somali-by-prof-g-n-ayittey/ [Accessed 03/06/2012].

[6] T. BAKER, *The Social Organisation of the Birom*. Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1965 (see chapter 4).

[7] *Ibid.*

Nigeria as "[…] a mere geographical expression. The word *Nigeria* is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not". He had a great worry for minority ethnicities in the country whom he saw as always getting the short end of the stick, and observed that " […] these minority groups are at a considerable disadvantage when they are forced to be in the midst of other peoples who differ from them in language, culture and historical background"[8].

Awolowo's sense of ethnic ideology was not initially his primary motivator, but this side of him emerged with the development of ethnic alliances within the early nationalist struggles.

3. Nationalism and Ethnicity at Independence

1938 saw the emergence of an attempt to merge ideologies, with the creation of the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM). Amoda, points out that the Nigerian Youth Movement was the last vestige of a unified Nigerian front in approaching independence. The NYM disintegrated over issues of leadership and representation, Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Igbo, resigned from the Movement and all the lbo members followed suit thus inaugurating the process of the formation of ethnically based political parties. The resultant political parties were the National Council for Nigeria and the Camerouns (NCNC) in 1944, the Action Group (AG) in 1950 and the Northern People's Congress (NPC) in 1951. A new constitution was introduced in 1953 where all parties agreed that Nigeria should become a Federation of three regions[9]. Adebanwi gives an interesting analysis of the relationship between Awolowo and Azikiwe, where he points out that undelaying their nationalist zeal, there had always be the disaffection of the "other" and there was nowhere this was made more obvious than in the Lagos

[8] O. AWOLOWO, *Path to Nigerian Freedom*. Faber and Farber, London, 1947, pp. 47-48.

[9] M. AMODA, «Background to the Conflict: A Summary of Nigeria's Political History from 1914 to 1964», in J. OKPAKU (Ed.), *Nigeria: Dilemma of Nationhood; An African Analysis of the Biafran Conflict*. The Third Press/Greenwood Publishing Company, New York, 1972, p. 18. See also R. SKLAR. Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent African Nation. Africa World Press, Trenton, New Jersey, pp.48-55.

press[10]. Lagos in the South-West of Nigeria had a large population of Igbo from the South-East, an estimated 44,6%[11], this formidable number, at the emergence of political awareness and processes in the Lagos area encouraged polarities based on either ethnic or social status. The Cosmopolitan nature of the city began to raise fears among the Yoruba who saw the potential of losing out, both as an identity group and as a political force. These fears and the subsequent actions which were taken[12] introduced into the nationalist sphere in Nigeria, the dangerous but pertinent spell of ethnic nationalism. This pertinence we can see in the previous words of Awolowo on the mistake of Nigeria's formation, ethnic and identity conflicts were more or less inevitable.

4. **The Nigerian North and Nationalism**

The British colonial administration, although not much troubled by the processes of the NYM, had branded the Movement a southern-based group. And while political and nationalist tendencies were tolerated in the South (most especially Lagos), this was virtually frowned upon in the North. The relationship between the colonial state and the Northern oligarchy which comprised largely of Hausa and Fulani Muslim emirates under the Sultanate of Sokoto, was very cordial. But what was (and still is) considered the North then, comprised of large populations of non-Muslim and non-Hausa or Fulani who considered themselves independent of the Sultanate. The Jos Plateau for instance, which the British took control of from 1905 after the discovery of very large deposits of Tin, was primarily settled upon by 'stateless groups' which had most likely long before, sought refuge in the hills and ranges of the area, from marauding armies of larger more cohesive groups in the lowlands. Colonial occupation and the exploitation of Tin in the area encouraged a large influx of various peoples giving the modern city its heterogeneous outlook similar to Lagos[13]. Also like Lagos, Jos

[10] W. ADEBANWI, «The City, Hegemony and Ethno-Spatial Politics: The Press and the Struggle for Lagos in Colonial Nigeria», in *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 4, (cited 36-40) article pp. 25-51.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

[12] J. COLEMAN, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism.* University of California press, Los Angeles, 1958, pp. 226-229.

[13] B. HODDER, «Tin Mining on the Jos Plateau of Nigeria», in *Economic Geography*, Vol. 35, No. 2, 1959, pp. 109-122.

was to become the beacon for Northern nationalism. The NYM found it a convenient starting point in entrenching and projecting their nationalist persona up north. The problem was that unlike the South, the North's establishment was uncomfortable with this. The colonial administration, whose primary aim in the Jos area was to protect its mining interests, was not comfortable with the idea of nationalist struggle in the Jos area. Three main factors are adduced for that: First of all there presented the case of a Westernized non-Muslim/Hausa elite group emerging in the North which had all the while been submerged under indirect rule. The Northern Emirs had a good relationship with the British under indirect rule, and they, just like the colonial officers saw this emergent group as a threat to the establishment. Secondly, the cosmopolitan nature of Jos, which was quite similar to Lagos, presented a logical political choice for democracy, which at that time would stifle the free hand with which affairs were run in the tin fields, where many questionable acts occurred[14]. A third factor was the fact that with the emergence of a nationalist group, there was likely going to emerge a local group which would agitate against the exploitation and abuses of the rights of the autochthonous groups. This third factor plays a major role in further discussion.

The NYM emerged slowly in the Jos area, it composed of a mix of both Northerners and Southerners. The Northerners were mainly from within the ethnic minorities of the North, most of whom got the privilege of Western education through Christian missionary schools. The NYM in the North was quite critical of colonial methods of governing the region, the colonial government ruled mainly by proclamations emanating from the Governor rather than through any form of bureaucracy or proper governance structure. This was highly criticized by the group, which realizing its weak presence, encouraged the formation of the Jos Tribal League (JTL). The league's nomenclature continued to change from JTL, it became the Middle Zone League, then the Middle Belt League; maintaining its socio-cultural identity and significance as a front fighting for the rights of Northern minorities. Although having members with political affiliations, it did not emerge as a political front until it later merged with the more political Middle Belt Peoples Party formed by Joseph Tarka from the Tiv areas to create the United

[14] See C. GONYOK, *A History of Labor in the Tin Industry on the Jos Plateau 1903-1960*. Ph.D. thesis. Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria, pp. 85-102.

Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) in the mid 1950's[15]. Although divided not long after based on ideology and alliances[16], the UMBC became instrumental as an opposition to the establishment, both politically (as with the Northern People's Congress which was ran by a prominent member of the Sokoto Caliphate and later the Premier of the Northern Region, Sir Ahmadu Bello), and administratively (against British colonial policies which were detrimental to minority groups of central Nigeria)[17].

Even as early as the 1930's when the Jos Tribal League emerged, it became evident that the running of the Jos Plateau and its adjoining lowlands would not be as convenient as it had been in the previous three decades. Its main sponsors, Patrick Dokotri and David Lot had primarily different backgrounds, while Lot was a clergyman, Dokotri was a forest officer with the colonial service. They both accepted the authority of the colonial office, but rejected the influence of the Hausa and Fulani north on affairs of their area, which they alleged was strongly upheld by the colonial administration. Another issue which further polarized them was religion, while the colonial government forbade missionaries from affecting the Muslim religion in the Sultanate and its emirates, the "pagan" regions of the central areas became fallow ground for Christian missionary activity, this was further strengthened by the cosmopolitan outlook of the city which encouraged tolerance, although with the presence of a "big stick" of colonial control. Christianity grew among the ethnic minorities in the area and with this growth also came educational opportunities as pointed out earlier. People like Dokotri and Lot, who were beneficiaries of this, held the banner of Christianity high, and in a way, the Christian religion fused itself with their ethno-nationalistic fervor.

Consequently, although not violent or radical in their approach towards their politics of ethnic identity, these initial politicians never failed to warn of an impending agitation of the "sons of the soil" who were steadily emerging as new Westernized elite. Educational ad-

[15] P. LOGAMS, *The Middle Belt Movement in Nigerian Political Development: A Study in Political Identity 1949-1967*, Centre for Middle Belt Studies, Abuja, Nigeria, 2004, pp. 99-104; 117-147.

[16] J. COLEMAN, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 367.

[17] M. DENT, «A Minority Party: The United Middle Belt Congress», in J. MACKINTOSH (ed.), *Nigerian Government and Politics*. Allen and Unwin, London, 1992, pp. 186-207.

vantage, mixed with the sympathy of the Western church which was beginning to build up, encouraged a re-think from the colonial administration. Another major factor too was the fact that the approach into studying the history of societies in the area had begun to be more methodical, cancelling out the former inaccuracies penned by early colonial administrators. This encouraged a much more detailed and factual amount of data in describing and therefore distinguishing better the different ethnicities which were in the area. These and the fact that the south had fast moved on politically, encouraged the realization for a need towards modification of some processes in Central Nigeria.

In the 1940's, the colonial authorities decided to adapt some radical changes which saw the formerly ignored minorities gain place within the process of administration in the areas of present day Plateau and Benue. A previous policy which encouraged the placement of Hausa/Fulani administrators over the ethnic minorities, was stopped, instead the creation of new institutions which recognized the authority of the autochthons was encouraged. There had been a perception that some groups were martial and more administratively organized than other, this encouraged the British to align with some ethnicities compared to others. In the case of the Hausa in Nigeria, the British began to accentuate values that would be put to good use after subjecting the post *Jihad* Caliphate created by the 19th Century reformer, Uthman Dan Fodio[18]. The Hausa were of value to the British first because they impressed them in their mode of resistance to colonial occupation[19]. The Sokoto Caliphate also proved to have impressive administrative qualities once its doors were forced open. The British took advantage of this and emphasized Hausa and Northern recruitment into the colonial army and also in different areas they saw as being administratively difficult due to what they saw as being stateless.

To the British, these qualities were non-existent in the Berom, Tiv and other minorities on the Plateau and its adjoining lowlands. First, they had shown too much uncoordinated resistance, and they were composed of small unitary communities which were hardly cohesive enough to form large towns and cities like those of the Caliphate[20].

[18] F. D. LUGARD, *Northern Nigeria reports 1900-01 to 1908-09* London 1902-1910. See also, F. LUGARD, *A tropical dependency* Cass, London 1964.

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] D. TAMBO, «The "Hill Refuges" of The Jos Plateau», in *History in Africa*, Vol. 5. (1978), pp.201-223.

This also increased their tendency to hold onto their individual ranks and defences, thereby posing a more complicated front than the Hausa whose pre-colonial administrative structures made for convenient occupation of the areas once the larger Caliphate was subdued. The northern minorities on the other hand had to be individually subjugated, and so the British had a much more difficult task. This and the fact that the people generally rejected the British presence in their areas, discouraged early British relations with them in the early part of the 20th century, the Hausa and others who arrived with the colonialists became the preferred choice for local authority and politics.

The radical reform in the minority areas saw the formation of the Berom led *Gbong Gwom* institution in Jos by 1955. Before then, the native areas around the city were technically under a Hausa chief[21]. This loss of traditional and political power for the Hausa was unsettling and grievous. It was this singular act which introduced a new dynamic in ethnic and political mobilization in the area. Billy Dudley points out the significance of the 1955 events as very harrowing for the Hausa community in Jos. The blow with which the establishment of the *Gbong Gwom* stool dealt them led to the establishment by the Hausa community in Jos, a political party tagged; '*Jammiyar Hausawa* or Hausa Triba Party "to protect the interests of the Hausa elements in the Jos area"[22]. The fears of the Hausa community emerged from the growing influence of the natives, mainly the Berom who within those years had not just established a tribal union, but had attempted to subsume other ethnicities in the Plateau area as a collective front. Although not successful, the formation of these groups encouraged reasonable cohesion among the Plateau ethnicities who had been intimidated by what they saw as a more favorable disposition which the colonialists had for the Hausa. Thus the creation of the *Gbong Gwom* position, although not completely convenient for the other Plateau groups, was a great coup for the Plateau ethnicities in general, and on the other hand a wake-up call for the Hausa in Jos.

From 1960 when Nigerian gained independence, the Jos Plateau and its adjoining lowlands became one of the very few areas of opposition in what became the Northern Region of the country. The estab-

[21] A HIGAZI, «Violence urbaine et politique à Jos (Nigeria), de la période colonial aux élections de 2007», in *Politique Africaine*, issue No. 106, June 2007, p. 69-91.

[22] B. DUDLEY, *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria*. Frank Cass & Co Ltd, London 1968, p. 112.

lishment of the UMBC and its subsequent alignment with the Western Regions Action Group (AG) under Obafemi Awolowo, encouraged the minorities in the area to build for themselves a convenient following among the largely cosmopolitan town of Jos. But this following was less accomplished in the peripheries and in the lowlands. The Ideology of "One North" which had been propogated by the NPC was more decisive than a call for a nationalism which was newly invented.

As Mahdi points out, although there had been many cases of disaffection between the Hausa/Fulani and other groups, their influence and that of Islam were of the utmost importance in the historical memory of Northern Nigeria as was with most of West Africa[23]. The history of the conflict which emerged between Christianity and Islam in these minority areas is discussed in detail by E.P.T Crampton, and a more contemporary view is expressed in a paper by Musa Gaiya[24]. Religion became a prominent factor in Nigerian politics after independence when the Hausa/Fulani north realized the fact that although there was an, assumed "north" the Hausa/Fulani Muslim population was not fully ready to impact the bureaucratic polity, both in the regional and national levels. On a relative basis, the mainly Christian minorities had the eligible manpower to run most of the bureaucracies and even largely, the army.[25] The fact that there was a perceived cohesion in the north did not necessarily mean that there was tolerance, Jos for instance became embroiled with rivalries between the Hausa, Afizere, Anaguta and Berom, who although being northern minorities, had significantly large populations around the peripheries of the colonially created city, and with independence a large number of people from these groups moved to areas they claimed were ancestral lands[26].

[23] A. MAHDI, The Hausa Factor in West African History. Ahmadu Bello University Press and Oxford University Press, Zaria & London, 1978, pp. 100-108.

[24] E. CRAMPTON, *Christianity in Northern Nigeria*. Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1975. See also M. GAIYA, Christianity in Northern Nigeria, 1975-2000. Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, 2004. Also available online – www.brill.nl

[25] Ubah points out that the Northern administrators and politicians, led by Nuhu Bamali, continuously complained about the lopsided nature of admissions into the boys military school. The complaints were that out of the percentage of northerners admitted; only two were Muslim and Hausa, implying that the Northern minorities were at an advantage, thus, leaving out the Hausa's. See C.UBAH, Colonial Army and Society in Northern Nigeria. Kaduna, Nigeria, Baraka Press. pp. 232-233.

[26] B. DUDLEY, *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria*. Frank Cass & Co Ltd, London 1968, p. 234.

Thus, by the early 1960's Jos became the Centre stage for opposition politics in the north, and the opposition emerged from two fronts. There were the minorities, who emerged from the UMBC, and also an emerging socialist opposition rallied by a radical Hausa politician and social activist, Aminu Kano. The party, Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), was highly critical, first of colonial indirect rule and subsequently the products of indirect rule that emerged as traditional and political rulers after independence. Although NEPU had a wide acceptance in northern Nigeria, its followership was largely about his rhetoric, most people in the Hausa north found his ideals interesting, but followed the reality of the day, which was the larger and more established NPC. In Jos though, this was different, the cosmopolitan nature of the town and its potentially large mix of Hausa, encouraged the Hausa community in Jos to build a strong ideology around Aminu Kano's NEPU[27]. Thus, Jos became more or less a hub for opposition politics in the north from independence, and the stage was set for the new dynamic of identity politics.

Adetula relates the problems which emerged after independence between the Hausa and indigenous groups in Jos with the constancy of being in the opposition. He points out that the attempts to forge indigeneity by the contending parties which had been in conflict have outmoded the urge for compromise and reconciliation[28]. From 1960 up to 2003 when there was a failed transition under the military, the area which is now Plateau state politically held a leftist view, and was always swayed in favor of the minority political parties in the north. Starting with the UMBC which was a relatively minor opposition to the NPC in the 1960's, Plateau joined the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) in 1979 in difference to the more northerly popular National Party of Nigeria (NPN), which won most of the electoral seats in the north. In the 1990's also, Plateau chose the Social Democratic Party (SDP) instead of the National Republican Convention (NRC) which had a larger northern following. All this was in the attempt to reject what the minority groups in the area saw as Hausa and Fulani domination of northern politics. And in realizing that there was really nothing

[27] A. HIGAZI, *The Jos Crisis: A Recurrent Nigerian Tragedy*. Discussion Paper No. 2. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Abuja, Nigeria. www.library.fes.de [Accessed 22/01/2012].

[28] V. ADETULA, «Ethnicity and the Dynamics of City Politics: The Case of Jos», in A. SIMONE & A. ABOUHANI, Urban Africa: Changing Contours of Survival in the City. Macmillan/Zed Books, New York, 2005 pp. 215-216.

much to be done in terms of fighting the larger north, these minorities resorted to building a formidable opposition within their own territories. This brings us to the core of this discussion.

5. Minorities as Majorities within their Domains

From the events leading to independence in 1960, Logams describes a concerted effort by the NPC to stifle any attempt for a growing opposition in the North, and doing so required no finesse. Outright intimidation and brutality was observed in the pre-independence politics of the central Nigerian area. One of the worst affected was the Tiv Division, which comprised the present Benue and Kogi states. The passion with which the minorities took their party politics in the areas led to many deaths, and their primary anger was the attempt by the Hausa dominated NPC – using a few rogue elements from within the division – to hijack the political structure built by Joseph Tarka through the UMBC. Tyu Abeghe in chronicling the events describes the barbaric killings which took place between Tiv and Hausa, and mainly between Tiv kinsmen, who saw their fellow Tiv who had joined the NPC as betrayers to the "Middle Belt" cause[29].

In the Plateau area on the other hand, the politics was more subtle. First of all, from the late 1950's, the Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sultan of Sokoto (a Muslim) began a proselytization drive in the central region which was mainly animist or Christian. His main aim then was to convert the traditional heads, who would subsequently encourage the conversion of their subjects. A particular case in point is made by Joseph Garba, a prominent military officer from Plateau, whose father, a traditional ruler and animist was in a dilemma as to whether he should convert to Islam after being entreated to by emissaries of the Sardauna, preceding a visit by him to Garba's domain. Mallam Garba felt he needed his son's advice, being that he was educated and work-

[29] The Tiv are the largest minority group in Central Nigeria, with an estimated population of over three million http://www.joshuaproject.net. On Tiv riots in the 1950's and 1960's see T. ABEGHE, *The Tiv and Tiv Riots*. Plateau Publishing Company, Jos, 1982; and O. NNOLI. *Ethnic politics in Nigeria*. Fourth Dimension Publishers, Enugu, Nigeria, 1978,

ing as a top military officer[30]. Many of these attempts at proselytization occurred in the Plateau area. Although not as successful, the Sardauna got a few prominent converts, including Mallam Garab. Also, with the drive the NPC was able to acquire a large following from among a lot of disenchanted Hausa and other Muslims who were disenchanted with the rhetoric's of Aminu Kano's NEPU, which although strong in the Jos area, was either too intellectual or too ideological for poor and dutiful laborers in the mines, who saw the symbolism and wealth of the Sultanate which the NPC seemed to carry as a sign of better things. Although the NEPU still maintained a good following, it generally was among the more intellectual Hausa and Muslim elements in the central Nigeria area and also an ideological faction of the UMBC[31]. In Jos particularly, many Hausa were sympathetic to the NPC struggle due to the fact that the post-independence politics was steadily growing into an identity based one. Although having with it another faction of UMBC, the Hausa and Muslim factor within the NPC gave the Hausa in Jos prominence in the party even though they were a minority group in Jos. Hausa, Fulani and other Muslims mobilized as a collective so as to build a controlling majority that would win elections locally within the Jos area, while the local ethnicities and the mainly Christian "others" fused to build their own political front. Although primarily comprising of people indigenous to Plateau and Tiv Provinces, there were others (mainly Christians) from the south sympathetic to their cause. Therefore, politics in Jos from independence carved its own dimensions, with both ethnicity and religion as the main focal points for most alliances[32].

The strength of Hausa and NPC majority lay in the collective North. The "One North" policy of the NPC outweighed the call by the smaller groups, most especially the UMBC under Joseph Tarka who pointed out his main agenda as the creation of a Middle Belt state. This strength and power of the Hausa north over Plateau most especially was broken with the 1967 creation of Benue-Plateau state. With

[30] J. GARBA, *Revolution in Nigeria: Another View*. Africa Books Ltd., London, 1982, pp. 55-58.

[31] J. COLEMAN, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, op. cit., pp. 367-369.

[32] P. LOGAMS, *The Middle Belt Movement in Nigerian Political Development*, op.cit., pp. 82-85. Also see S. TYODEN, *The Middle Belt in Nigerian politics*. AHA Publishers, Jos; Nigeria, 1993; J. COLEMAN, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, op. cit., and M. KUKAH, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*. Spectrum Books, Ibadan, Nigeria, 1993.

the creation of states in 1967, although there was war emerging, and the military was in power, thus not democracy, the stage was set for the instrumentation of ethnicity and religion in future politics. The creation of states all of a sudden created new political majorities and minorities in the Middle Belt.

Between 1967 and 1996, new states were created five times. The Plateau area was affected by these changes three times; 1967, 1976 and 1996. While the first occasion saw the carving out of a minority dominated state, the other two saw the reduction of Plateau state to its present geography. The significance of the last carving in 1996 is instructive in analyzing the nature of politics in Plateau.

Although the creation of Benue-Plateau was significant in clipping the wings of a largely Hausa run political party that covered the Northern Region, it had its negatives in that it created new hostilities between the minorities, primarily the Benue groups and the Plateau groups. These new hostilities emerged early in the military rule, and this was resolved by the carving out of Benue state from Benue-Plateau in 1976. Plateau state after 1976 became slightly balanced. The lowland areas to the south-west comprised of a large population of minority Muslims whose ethnic groups had been converted to Islam through the 19th century *Jihad* of Uthman Dan Fodio. The area comprised of a large number of emirates and vassals which were deferential to the Sultanate in Sokoto. Quite a number of politicians from these areas supported the cause of the NPC rather than align with UMBC or NEPU in the 1960's. The sizable number of Muslims from the lower south west Plateau added with that of the Hausa in Jos and other areas provided a formidable number which gave them bargaining power on the political table. The presence of a large population of Plateau ethnicities who were Muslims within the polity encouraged tolerance, and considering the fact that this era was a military dictatorship, tolerance was not just encouraged, but enforced. Evidence of this tolerance is seen in the 2nd republic political era in Nigeria (1979-1983). Although the animosities of ethnicity and religion were saliently present, many compromises were promoted and made, leading to a relatively peaceful and tolerant election in Plateau state. As usual, the Plateau political train chose to oppose the larger northern supported National People's Party (NPN), aligning with the south-eastern dominated National People's Party (NPP). Although the NPN lost out both in the

governorship and legislative elections in the state, Plateau was only one of 3 states among 19 which the NPP won, making it quite obvious that the choice was more of a statement of opposition to a larger north than it was strategic. Still the observed tolerance as pointed out earlier, arose from the large minority Muslim population in the south-western part of the state. Most of the Muslims were of minority ethnicities from the areas around present day Nassarawa state, a group categorized by Yoroms as "The middle class of Moslem minority ethnic groups." Yoroms also observes that these peoples have partly assimilated the lifestyles of the Hausa/Fulani, and thus have found it convenient to identify with them[33]. In 1996, Nassarawa state was carved out from that section of Plateau, leaving Plateau with relatively the largest Christian population in Northern Nigeria after Benue. This creation of Nassarawa state profoundly changed the stability of politics in Plateau. The presence of ethnic minorities that were Muslim encouraged a lot of tolerance within the political environment. In 1979, during the campaign for state elections, the NPP in the state, comprised of both Christians and Muslims, mainly minorities. A compromise was made that the gubernatorial candidate would be from the upper Plateau, while his deputy would emerge from the Lower Plateau. The compromise also established the need for religious balance. Therefore, while the governor was Christian, his deputy was Muslim. The 1979-1983 transition in Plateau was interesting in that it saw the encouragement of a high level of tolerance. This was also the case in the next attempt at dispensing democracy from 1990 to 1993, also called the third republic. The process of balancing from the highlands to the lowlands was kept and it worked very well. The main strategy was to keep religious tensions in abeyance by encouraging the presence of Muslim minorities instead of Muslims of either Hausa or Fulani identities in the politics of Plateau. This was further fastened by the relatively large state, and relatively large local government areas. Jos for instance, which was before 1991 composed of the three local government areas of Jos-East, Jos-North and Jos-South; was politically stable because of a largely dominant collection of minorities. These collections of minorities were not necessarily a cohesive front, but their differences

[33] J. YOROMS, *Dynamics Of Northern Ethnic And Religious Politics*. http://www.nigerdeltacongress.com [Accessed: 22/03/2012].

were normally settled in political compromises, and also they had a common perception of the Hausa and Fulani in Jos being their general contenders to authority in the area. This encouraged tolerance between these collective minority groups which helped them emerge as a majority within Jos, and generally in Plateau as a whole.

The partition of Jos in 1991, leading to the creation of three local government areas from within it, unlike that of state creation, displaced harmony in the ethnic and religious politics of the area.

The process of local government creation in 1991 was alleged to primarily be for the sake of gerrymandering in favor of the Hausa in Jos[34]. The Ibrahim Babangida military administration was alleged to have supported the Hausa/Fulani minority in Jos politicall by creating an enclave which created a political majority for them. Jos-North, where most of the Hausa community resided was carved in such a manner that in almost any possible manner, there would not be a more cohesive voting group like the Hausa community in the area, therefore, the Hausa were more likely than not, always to win any local government election in the area in terms of cohesive numbers. By that, the only possibility for the Plateau ethnic majority to ever win in Jos was if they chose to be more cohesive from within themselves. As pointed out earlier, although contending a common threat of Hausa/Fulani politicians, the Plateau groups themselves were only peripherally cohesive. They had a common agenda, but a strongly divided house when it came to how to approach it. Divisions arose as to which of the Plateau ethnicities should take specific positions in a coalition. In many cases one party felt shortchanged by others or vice versa. This constant bickering between the various Plateau groups created a largely polarized Plateau polity in Jos, thereby giving the Hausa/Fulani groups great advantage in the political affairs of Jos. This immediately became evident with the local government elections which were held immediately after the local government formation. The winner that emerged as chairman of Jos-North local government was Sama'ila Mohammed a Hausa. This win exposed that fragile so-

[34] D. SHA, *The Politicisation of Settler-Native Identities and Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Jos, Central Nigeria.* Stirling-Horden Publishers Ltd., Ibadan; Nigeria, pp. 50-56. Also see S. EGWU, *Ethnicity and Citizenship in Urban Nigeria: The Jos Case, 1960-2000*. Ph.D. University of Jos, Nigeria. 2004.

lidity of the Plateau ethnicities. Although the elections passed off peacefully, the indigenes complained about Hausa attempts at controlling the local government completely, and alleged sideling of Plateau ethnicities. A major dispute which arose was about the issuing of indigene certificates[35]. The Plateau groups saw the issuing of indigene certificates as the preserve of certain Plateau ethnicities, for Jos, this specifically transmitted to the Afizere, Anaguta and Berom ethnic groups. That Hausa on the other hand saw themselves as not only eligible for indigene certificates, but also as 'custodians of Jos', a position which they believed was wrongly collected from them in 1955, (*Supra*, p.10) [36]. With the premature end of the democratic experiment of that era, a new era of transitional politics emerged in 1999. The uniqueness of this era is in its charged atmosphere. The events of state and local government creation since 1991 had been under military instruction and guidance, the authoritarian hold on the polity had restricted rebellion and claims to fundamental rights as it were, and so 1999 introduced a charged atmosphere, many groups, not only in Plateau state, but nationwide were spoiling for a fight based on various grievances created by state and local government creation. These military era creations had primarily created new majority and minority groups which had come to emerge from the cases of inconsiderate boundaries created during the formation of the states and local governments. As seen with the case of Jos, the politics which emerged in 1991 only set about a latent grievance which was conveniently exposed with a free for all democracy, and the absence of the military.

Therefore the 1991 elections served as a national gunpowder keg for minority-majority politics nationwide and for Plateau state particularly.

[35] The "Federal Character" principle in Nigeria, enshrined in the Nigerian constitution (1979-1999), declares that the composition of the Government of the Federation should ensure "that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few States or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that Government or in any of its agencies" (Federal Government of Nigeria 2010: Art. 14-3). This has encouraged the use by local governments in the country, of "Indigeneship Certificates" which they claim help to identify various candidates for opportunity in the state and federal levels. For more on indigenship in Jos, see the citations in footnote 28 above and also; P. OSTIEN, (2009), *Jonah Jang and the Jasawa: Ethno-Religious Conflict in Jos, Nigeria. Muslim–Christian Relations in Africa*. www.sharia-in-africa.net [Accessed 22/03/2012].

[36] PLATEAU STATE GOVERNMENT, *Justice Aribiton Fiberesima Commission Report* [government document], 1994. PLATEAU STATE GOVERNMENT, *Justice Niki Tobi Commission Report* [government document], 2001.

Quite a lot of work has been done on the crises in Jos from 2001. Phil Ostien gives an outstanding history and analysis of contemporary politics of Plateau state and the dynamics of ethnic and religious politics in the area, and so this work would rather not dwell too much on these at this time, instead it will analyze the process of minority-majority power dynamics in Jos as described earlier.

Unlike the rest of the north of Nigeria, the people of Plateau pride themselves with the historical fact that they evaded the 19th century *Jihad* of Uthman Dan Fodio[37]. And it is assumed in many cycles within the Plateau ethnicities that contemporary attempts by the Hausa community to "dominate" the politics of Jos, is part of a larger northern Hausa agenda to win the little portion of Northern Nigeria which they were never able to conquer. From elder statesmen to local politicians, radical Christian clerics to youth leaders and even academics, there have been calls within the Plateau groups to fight these attempts. Accordingly issues like the 1991 gerrymandering of Jos-North, an action perceived by the Plateau ethnicities as taken irrespective of their wishes, which went against the creation of a small Jos-North to a Federe (or Jos-East) local government alone[38], further deepened these suspicions. Whether these deep suspicions were of any significant truth or not, the actions taken by the Plateau groups were meant to radically uphold their majority locus within what they saw was their rightful state. Da Victor D. Pam, the late *Gbong Gwom*, once noted that

> people mix up citizenship and indigineship. Citizenship is a constitutional issue. Anybody in Nigeria is a citizen of the country. Even foreigners can come in and naturalize and become citizens. But indigineship is a different game…it is that you have a virgin area, an area that is God-given and you have been there from day one[39].

By this, the traditional ruler places the Afizere, Anaguta and Berom as the "God-given" owners of Jos, while the others (Hausa inclusive) just have rights as citizens of Nigeria. In rejection to this, Dr. Datti

[37] D. TAMBO, «The "Hill Refuges" of The Jos Plateau», op. cit.

[38] PLATEAU STATE GOVERNMENT, *Bola Ajibola Commission Report* [government document], 2009, p. 205.

[39] *Tell Magazine*, 31st May 2004. Interview with the *Gbong Gwom Jos*, His Royal Majesty, Da Victor Dung Pam (GCFR), The Paramount Traditional Ruler of Jos, and the Chairman, Plateau Traditional Council.

Ahmed, a prominent Hausa and Muslim leader, who is not a resident of Plateau state, but in defense of the Hausa in Jos says

> People want to change history, you cannot change history by force. Jos, if you like it or not is an Hausa town. It was established by the Hausa, it was not established by the Biron (sic). Though it is Biron (sic) territory, but the Hausas were those who established the town[40].

Datti discounts originality as the main reason for claim of authority, and emphasizes purpose and numbers. The interesting issue with that is the fact that being a majority in Plateau politics doesn't depend just on numbers, but geography. This geographic disposition to counting identity groups sizes has further been encouraged by the conflicts which have emerged since 2001. Dung-Gwom and Rikko in a study of Jos from 2001 have observed that polarization has encouraged the creation of a new demography in Jos based on ethnicity and religious identity[41]. This portends a dynamism in political demographics and strategy. Although the politics of Jos has historically been entrenched in identity, recent conflict events which have emerged and created new forms of settlements have created new pockets of majority-minority political spheres. The Hausa areas for instance have greatly consolidated on their domain in Jos-North, by creating an almost wholly Hausa community, politically active enough to poll a majority in any local election ran in the local government. On the other hand, the indigenous groups who now have had to resettle in the periphery of the local government, have resorted to active mobilization as one entity (although with much difficulty) and secondly, using their political advantage as a larger majority in the state to influence state machinery. Although questions of political ethics might arise from the Plateau ethnicities use of their majority status in the state, and the use of state machinery, reflexivity call to mind the fact that the history of majority-minority politics on the plateau has revolved around the use of state machinery, even from colonial times. From the creation of the *Gbong Gwom* stool to the formation of Jos-North, the politics of using

[40] *Guardian Newspapers*, Tuesday, 25th September 2001. Interview with Dr. Ibrahim Datti Ahmed, member of the Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria.

[41] J. DUNG-GWOM & L. RIKKO, *Urban Violence and Emerging Land and Housing Markets in Jos, Nigeria*. Paper presented at the International Sociological Association Housing Conference, Glasgow, 2009, p. 9.

state authority and power to the advantage of a majority (or in some cases, the minority) has not only been encouraged, but has only been condemned by the logic of analysis and not the judiciary or the state itself. This abeyance of rule of law by the state and judiciary of the political machinations of majorities and minorities has legitimized them in a way, and has allowed for an atmosphere of continuous grievance which has pervaded the political circles in the Jos Plateau area.

6. Conclusion

This paper has looked at the history and dynamics of identity majority-minority politics in central Nigeria, concentrating on Plateau state. Observing that from colonial times, various identity groups carved their own views and strategies based on their perceptions as either being in the majority of minority. The paper also observes that there is hardly a clear determination of who is in a majority or minority identity status just based on numbers, but factors like political inclinations, religion and geography become great determinants for the status of majority or minority politics and authority.

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Being a Minority in Zimbabwe: A Case Study of the Matebeleland Question

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1. Introduction

> Zimbabwe is one entity and shall never be separated into different entities. It's impossible. I am saying this because there are some people who are saying let's do what Lesotho did. There is no Lesotho here. There is one Zimbabwe and one Zimbabwe only[1].

In 2006, Zimbabwean political scientist Eldred Masunungure argued that both nation-building and state-building were work of political art. He noted that while African leaders might have proven to be good state-building artists they had also demonstrated that they were very poor nation-builders. This was apparent in those "countries with a kaleidoscope of cultural, ethnic, racial, religious and other salient social identities" that made "nation-building is a big challenge"[2]. Perhaps a less dichotomous approach is closer to reality than Masunungure's analysis because nation-building and state-building processes are inextricably intertwined to the extent that one cannot be fully realised without the realization of the other. Postcolonial African leaders inherited colonially-created states which they have been failing to rebuild into legitimate political formations. What is celebrated by Masunungure as successful state-building is nothing but personal political power construction underpinned by manipulation of majoritarian notions of governance and dominant "ethnies" to suppress ethnic minorities in most cases[3].

The epigraph that is used to open this chapter captures the dominant mentality of those leaders hailing from majority ethnic group and

[1] President Robert Gabriel Mugabe of Zimbabwe responding to rumours of Ndebele secessionist politics, see *The Sunday Mail,* 20 November 2005.

[2] E. V. MASUNUNGURE, «Nation-Building, State-Building and Power Configuration in Zimbabwe», in *Conflict Trends Magazine*, 1 April 2006, p. 3.

[3] S. NDLOVU-GATSHENI, *Do "Zimbabweans" Exist? Trajectories of Nationalism, National Identity Formation and Crisis in a Postcolonial State,* Oxford, Peter Lang, 2009.

who have manipulated ethnicity for power construction and consolidation to the extent of developing extreme arrogance of refusing to listen to any demands from the minorities who are on the receiving end of "tyranny of the majority"[4]. Zimbabwe is one country in Africa where a flawed idea of a tight correspondence between the nation and the state is projected while the reality of existence of suppressed and marginalised minorities is brushed aside. When Zimbabwe gained political independence in 1980, the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) that was popularly supported by the majority Shona-speaking peoples propagated the idea of power that was based on majoritarianism (*Rhuzhinji* in Shona language). One of the leading ZANU-PF ideologists the late Eddison Zvobgo went to the extent of saying his party and government worshipped the majority in the same manner that Christians worshipped God[5]. ZANU-PF and the government it produced became extremely hostile to the Ndebele-speaking people who supported the Patriotic Front-Zimbabwe African People's Union (PF-ZAPU) that was led by the veteran nationalist Joshua Nkomo.

The Ndebele-speaking people occupy the two Matebeleland provinces and part of the Midlands province in Zimbabwe. Prior to colonization they existed as an independent nation-state founded by Mzilikazi Khumalo. Their language known as IsiNdebele is a dialect of the broader Nguni languages that are spoken in South Africa, Swaziland, part of Malawi, and Mozambique right up to part of Tanzania where Zwangendaba Jele's group ended[6]. Originally, the nucleus of the Ndebele-speaking people was the Khumalo clan that became part of the Ndwandwe and Zulu kingdoms of South Africa in the 19th century. It was Mzilikazi Khumalo who created a Ndebele nation out of Nguni, Tswana and Sotho speaking peoples in the period 1820-1837[7]. This was a period known in southern African history as that of the *Mfecane*, that is, a period that coincided with the rise of King Shaka of the Zulu and the intensification of violent nation-building processes

[4] L. GUINIER, *The Tyranny of the Majority: Fundamental Fairness in Representative Democracy*, New York, Free Press, 1995.

[5] Eddison Zvobgo was quoted as saying this by *The Chronicle*, 23 January 1983.

[6] S. J. NDLOVU-GATSHENI, *The Ndebele Nation: Reflections on Hegemony, Memory and Historiography*, Rozenberg Publishers and UNISA Press, Amsterdam and Pretoria, 2009.

[7] R. K. RASMUSSEN, *Migrant Kingdom: Mzilikazi's Ndebele in South Africa*, Rex Collings London, 1978.

that led to the migration of some groups from coastal areas of Durban into the interior[8]. It is also a period that was characterised by rising mercantilism, including slave raiding orchestrated from Delagoa Bay and the Cape Colony that also contributed to intensification of building of defensive Nguni and Sotho-Tswana communities.

The same period witnessed the movement of Afrikaners from the Cape Colony into the interior in what became known as the Great Trek. This movement contributed immensely to increasing violence and migration of other peoples in search of security[9]. The Ndebele-speaking people emerged from this turmoil as a political community hat incorporated Nguni, Sotho and Tswana speaking peoples before they migrated into Zimbabwe in 1838. In Zimbabwe they incorporated some local peoples like the Kalanga, Venda, Tonga, Birwa, Rozvi and other smaller groups that inhabited the south-western part of the Zimbabwe plateau. So they are a minority with other minorities inside that have combined to form a Ndebele-speaking community.

This chapter unpacks the core issues of what has come to be known as the "Matebeleland question", which is a problem of postcolonial nation-building involving the challenges of accommodation of minorities, territorial sovereignty, and cultural identities that are different as well as attempts to weaken those particularistic identities like those of the Ndebele-speaking people. This is important because Matabeleland is not only becoming a theatre of secessionist politics but also a terrain of intense electoral contests. One of the long-standing challenges to the pretensions of a unitary Zimbabwe nation-state has been the Matebeleland question. The traditional view has been that the Matabeleland question is nothing but a form of tribalism rooted in pre-colonial history when the ancestors of the Ndebele-speaking people used to be overlords over the Shona. This history and memory is said to be making it difficult for present-day Ndebele people to accept Shona triumphalism and domination. While at the same time, the triumphant Shona groups are said to have not forgotten the history and memory of Ndebele raids, and this is making it difficult for them to accept the Ndebele as innocent and full citizens of Zimbabwe.

[8] J. D. OMER-COOPER, *The Zulu Aftermath: Revolution in Bantu Africa*, Longman, London, 1966.

[9] J. COBBING, «The Mfecane as Alibi: Thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolompo», in *Journal of African History*, 29, 1988.

The official government approach towards the Matebeleland question has been that of silencing the Ndebele through deployment of state violence while continuing to economically marginalise the Matebeleland region. This short-sighted approach has contributed to further radicalisation of Matabeleland politics, culminating in the region being a strong hold of opposition political formations and home to such political formations as the Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF) which is fighting for the establishment of the independent state for the Ndebele that is completely separate from Zimbabwe.

Even the recent "Zimbabwe crisis" that deepened in 2000 was partly a crisis of the imagination of the nation in monolithic terms that did not tolerate ethnic and racial diversities and pluralities. This thesis has been amplified and made more credible by clear moves by some political actors in the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Led by Morgan Tsvangirai and Welshman Ncube, the MDC aimed to fight for a "New Beginning" and a "New Zimbabwe", indicating frustrations with, and shortcomings of, the Zimbabwe that came into being in 1980[10]. ZANU-PF, which has ruled Zimbabwe since 1980, destroyed the nation through deliberate fragmenting of Zimbabweans into "settlers" and "natives", "patriots and puppets", "war veterans" and "born-frees", minority and majority, and this political practice has culminated in tensions, conflicts, and violence as well as ethnic factions within ZANU-PF itself, indicating beyond doubt the dangers of mobilization and manipulation of ethnicity for power purposes.

Besides all this there were also cases of politics of secession that were developing in the Matebeleland region. While the Matebeleland protest and secessionist movements were not yet fully developed with clearly identifiable leadership, its embers cannot be ignored as it is rooted in the broader Matabeleland question and threatens to challenge all the pretences of the existence of a unitary Zimbabwean nation-state. The manifestations of Matebeleland secessionist tendencies have been noticeable over the years on cyberspace. Within Zimbabwe, the Ndebele-speaking communities have become known for what has been termed "protest voting"– a form of voting that is consistently against ZANU-PF and benefits the opposition. These were signs of

[10] The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) has since its formation in 1999 promised to deliver a "new beginning" and a "new Zimbabwe".

political disenchantment that were ignored not only by those in authority but also by academics, who concentrated on understanding what they termed the "Zimbabwe crisis" as though the Matebeleland question was not part of it[11]. Even in the recent book *Becoming Zimbabwe*, the Matebeleland question (and ethnicity in general) are conspicuous in their absence despite the book claiming to track the idea of national belonging and citizenship in Zimbabwe[12]. In short, Matebeleland exists as an aside to the meta-narrative of the Zimbabwe crisis.

It was not clear from the 1960s whose "imagined community" was being constructed and who was to constitute the 'authentic' subject of the imagined postcolonial nation. Enocent Msindo argued that the founding fathers of the nationalist parties were vague in their definition of the nation beyond Zimbabwe belonging to *abantwana benhlabathi* (children of the soil/land). Ironically this "definition was flouted by the very people who coined it, making it difficult to assert that there was any founded collective ideology of the *nation* as we know it intellectually"[13]. Msindo questioned whether the founding fathers of nationalist parties even understood the fuller meaning and implications of nationalism itself: was nationalism just anti-colonialism? Was it "mere xenophobia, justifying an anti-white stance? Alternatively, was it about defining a nation in which questions such as *Who are we?* and *Who should be part of the nation* became issues in those years?"[14].

The issue explored in this chapter is that of the problematic one of politics of Matebeleland that speak to existential circumstances of being a minority in Zimbabwe. From the beginning of development of nationalist consciousness among black people the changing nature of politics in Matabeleland unfolded largely as a response to realities and perceptions of inclusion, exclusion, marginalisation and confinement to second class citizenship of Ndebele-speaking people that intensified in 1980. The politics that is emerging from Matebeleland region is that of protest to perceptions and realities of exclusion, marginalisation

[11] A. HAMMAR, B. RAFTOPOULOS and S. JENSEN (eds.), *Zimbabwe's Unfinished Business: Rethinking Land, State and Nation in the Context of Crisis*, Weaver Press, Harare, 2003.

[12] B. RAFTOPOULOS and A. MLAMBO (eds.), *Becoming Zimbabwe: A History from the Pre-colonial Period to 2008*, Weaver Press and Jacana, Harare & Johannesburg, 2009.

[13] E. MSINDO, *Ethnicity in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe: A Study of Kalanga-Ndebele Relations, 1860s -1980s*, Unpublished PhD thesis, Cambridge University, August 2004, p. 21.

[14] *Ibid.*

and domination. The launch of such radical formations as the Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF) in 2010 calling for complete secession of Matebeleland and Midlands regions from Zimbabwe is the climax of regional politics of frustration and resentment of domination. Mthwakazi is the name for the imagined independent Ndebele-people's state and is counter-posed to the name Zimbabwe that is being provincialised as a Shona-imagined independent state that would exclude the peoples and territories of Matabeleland.

The launch of MLF has been followed by an open letter written to President Robert Mugabe dated 24 February 2011 that demanded autonomy of Matebeleland and the Midlands regions. These regions have to reconstitute themselves into a new state called Mthwakazi[15]. While it is not clear whether the drafters of this letter were members of MLF, what is clear is that they set out the case for the secession of Matebeleland from Zimbabwe. *Gukurahundi,* which is an episode that is memorable in Matebeleland as that time in their lives where a Shona-dominated state unleashed a heavily-armed and specially-trained Fifth Brigade to annihilate them as a community in the period 1980 to 1987, is used as a clear justification for disengagement of "Mthwakazi" from "Zimbabwe". The letter consists of eleven articles. Article V explains why the peoples of Mthwakazi want independence. It reads:

> As you no doubt know, Your Excellency, uMthwakazi's desire for independence is historical, and dates back to the wars uMthwakazi fought to prevent the establishment of colonial rule in the first place. However, there is no doubt that the Gukurahundi massacres, and other things uMthwakazi nation believes Gukurahundi facilitated, provided heightened impetus for independence that has persisted, uninterrupted to this day. [...] To us as the nation of Mthwakazi, Your Excellency, Gukurahundi was not just a statement; a "moment of madness". Gukurahundi killed and maimed those we loved dearly. As a nation, and as individuals and families, we will carry the physical and emotional scars of the Gukurahundi to the end of our living days. As the nation of Mthwakazi, we also believe that Gukurahundi was an unprovoked attack on uMthwakazi as a people. For these and other reasons, Your Excellency, as a nation we have come to the conclusion that uMthwakazi's position within the present polity of Zimbabwe long became wholly untenable.

[15] Mthwakazi People, *Open Letter from the People of Mthwakazi to the Head of State and Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe, President Robert Mugabe*, 24 February 2011. It is not clear whether this letter was really handed to Mugabe and it is not clear who was the author of this letter but is drafted in professional legal style.

> uMthwakazi nation is now of the firm view that its aspirations and economic needs will best be accommodated and protected under an independent Republic of Mthwakazi[16].

Articles VI to VIII outlined the legal basis for Mthwakazi's desire for independence as "our inalienable right to self-determination". This claim is supported by reference to Article 20 of the African [Banjul] Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; Article 15 of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights; United Nations General Assembly's Resolution A/64/438 of 18 December 2010 on "universal realisation of the right of peoples to self-determination", and reference is also made to the African Union's declaration of January 2011 recognising the right of self-determination for the people of southern Sudan[17]. The letter has an Appendix/Annexure (A): "*Draft Independence Agreement made between the people of Mthwakazi and the people of Zimbabwe, on the creation of the new state of REPUBLIC OF MTHWAKAZI through the partition of present-day Zimbabwe"* that contains detail of terms of secession including articles on transitional arrangements that had to be followed by "an independence referendum"[18].

What makes the analysis of the Matebeleland question significant is that its secessionist embers resonate with other cases such as Cabinda in Angola, Caprivi in Namibia and Barotseland in Zambia and many other examples outside southern Africa where minorities are pushing for self-determination. For example, on 19 January 2011, Zambian authorities arrested members of Barotse secessionist movement and charged them with treason[19]. Zimbabwe has also reacted by arresting Ndebele-speaking politicians like Paul Siwela and others suspected of sympathising with MLF. These secessionist movements seem to have been boosted by the successful gaining of self-determination by Southern Sudan. In their small way, these secessionist movements are not only challenging notions of unitary nation-states like Zimbabwe and Zambia, they are also provoking some re-

[16] Mthwakazi People, *Open Letter*, cit., p. 3.
[17] *Ibid*., pp. 3-5.
[18] *Ibid*., p. 8-15.
[19] *Zambian Separatists in Treason Charge as Regional Secession Battle Grow*, http://www.afrik-news.com/article18791.html [Accessed 24/02/2011].

thinking of national self-determination to reflect ethnic groups' rights to secede if living under oppression similar to that exercised by colonial authorities.

What is being flagged by Matabeleland must not be dismissed because it reflects core contemporary questions that have a direct bearing on the life of the Zimbabwean nation-state. For instance, President Mugabe's refusal to swear-in Welshman Ncube (the leader of MDC-N and who hails from the Midlands region and speaks Ndebele language) as one of the Deputy Prime Ministers of Zimbabwe in line with clauses of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) of September 2008, has been interpreted as a form of exclusion of people from Matebeleland from any powerful position.

Mugabe refused to swear-in Ncube and told him to his face that he just did not want to do so and never gave any justification for his refusal. Tsvangirai, who is the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, never protested. Instead both Mugabe and Tsvangirai continued to recognise Arthur Mutambara as Deputy Prime Minister despite him having lost elections to Ncube as leader of MDC-N. Mutambara hails from Manicaland and belongs to a branch of Shona-speakers known as Manyika-people. The whole situation is read from Matebeleland as a clear sign of disdain for their elected leaders from the region[20]. In the light of all these developments it is, therefore, important to deploy a sober analysis that seeks to understand the motivating forces behind the character of politics in Matabeleland since the 1980s.

2.The idea of Zimbabwe and the "Matabeleland question"

The idea of Zimbabwe is traceable to the 1960s. It emerged as a nationalist imagination of the postcolonial nation. The idea emerged within a terrain saturated with various ethno-cultural societies such as the Matebele Home Society, Monomotapa Offspring Society, Kalanga

[20] MDC-N was born in 2005 following a split within the MDC over participation in the senatorial elections and other issues including tribalism and internal violence. Welshman Ncube led the split but invited Arthur Mutambara to lead the faction. But in December 2010, leadership change too place with Ncube replacing Mutambara. Ncube expected to be elevated to the position of a Deputy Prime Minister in line with the Global Political Agreement of 2008 and Mutambara was to take up a ministerial post. But Mugabe openly refused to demote Mutambara and elevate Ncube, a development that further incensed feelings of Ndebele people and their leaders being sidelined and excluded from power.

Cultural Society and many others – socio-cultural societies that indicated where members came from, how they were responding to the colonial environment and how they defined their identity[21]. The naming of associations indicated a formative consciousness that was torn between pre-colonial nostalgia and colonial realities. Zimbabwean nationalism had to spring from this milieu.

African nationalism as the medium of implementation of the idea of Zimbabwe became deeply interpellated by ethnicity from its birth despite some pretensions of unity by the early nationalists. At the centre of articulation of nationalism were such considerations as what the foundation myth of the imagined nation-state was, and which heroes, symbols and history had to be projected as an anchorage of the imagined nation. Beginning with the naming, Shona histories, symbols and heroes were increasingly forged into anchorages of the imagined nation[22]. This has partly to do with the fact that a majority of postcolonial nation-states had to be built and crystallised around the dominant *ethnie*[23].

But nationalists had the mammoth task of creatively managing and balancing such vectors of identity as race, class, ethnicity, region, gender, and generation as they imagined a unitary postcolonial nation-state. The difficult question is: were there real nationalists existing as de-tribalised actors committed to the imagining and building a stable nation? Was the label nationalist not only a respected one that masked tribalism? Did we not have "lip-service" nationalists who only assumed nationalist identities in front of crowds and then withdrew to their primal tribal identity soon after? These are important questions that beg responses.

The 1963 split in the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) that gave birth to a Shona-dominated Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) remains one important event that indicated how tribalism and ethnicity were deeply embedded within nationalism. However hard those who were involved in this split deny the prominence of tri-

[21] E. MSINDO, «Ethnicity, not Class? The 1929 Bulawayo Faction Fights Reconsidered», in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32 (3), Sept. 2006, pp. 430-476. E. MSINDO, «Ethnicity and Nationalism in Urban Colonial Zimbabwe: Bulawayo, 1950 to 1963», in *Journal of African History*, 48, 2007, pp. 245-267.

[22] S. NDLOVU-GATSHENI, *Do "Zimbabweans" Exist?,* op. cit., pp. 67-80.

[23] A. D. SMITH, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

balism and ethnicity as a factor behind the split, the subsequent events spoke loudly about the role of ethnicity in spoiling the birth of a nation[24]. The immediate post-split ZAPU-ZANU faction fights in Harare, Gweru, Bulawayo and other sites took clear tribal and ethnic dimensions. Later splits including the one that resulted in the formation of the Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe (FROLIZI) and others also indicated how ethnicity was playing havoc within nationalist politics[25].

The same is true of postcolonial splits that rocked the MDC in 2005. Even factions within ZANU-PF indicate the reverberation of regional, kinship, clan, ethnic and tribal alignments[26]. In short, the liberation struggle became a terrain of re-tribalisation of nationalism with particular ethnic groups positioning themselves as leaders in order to dominate the imagined postcolonial nation. Even a seemingly unitary Shona identity unravelled as the Karanga fought to eliminate the Manyika and the Zezuru fought for ascendance over the Karanga. Along the way lives were lost due to what Masipula Sithole termed "struggles within the struggle"[27].

The sum of all this is that the Zimbabwe nation-state that was born in 1980 was a product of a deeply tribalised nationalism. The nationalists who spearheaded the liberation struggle dreamt in both nationalist and tribal languages and terms. The nation-state was, therefore, born with a terrible ethnic-tribal birthmark.

Zimbabwe was born out of an armed liberation war that was spearheaded by ethnically fragmented leadership, fought by equally ethnically fragmented freedom fighters and supported by masses that were socialised into tribal politics. It was against this background that ZANU-PF's electoral victory in 1980 was celebrated as not only a victory of a liberation movement over settler colonialism but also as victory of Shona political elite over Ndebele political elites in PF-ZAPU.

[24] S. J. NDLOVU-GATSHENI, «Beyond the Drama of War: Trajectories of Nationalism in Zimbabwe, the 1890s to 2010» in S. J. NDLOVU-GATSHENI and J. MUZONDIDYA (eds.), *Redemptive or Grotesque Nationalism? Rethinking Contemporary Politics in Zimbabwe,* Peter Lang, Oxford, 2011, pp. 35-79.

[25] S. J. NDLOVU-GATSHENI, *Do "Zimbabweans" Exist?,* op.cit., pp. 130-136.

[26] J. MUZONDIDYA and S. J. NDLOVU-GATSHENI, «Echoing Silences: Ethnicity in Postcolonial Zimbabwe, 1980-2007», in *African Journal on conflict Resolution*, 7 (2), 2007, pp. 257-297.

[27] M. SITHOLE, *Zimbabwe: Struggles within the Struggle: Second Edition*, Rujeko Publishers, Harare, 1999.

While ZANU-PF built their political legitimacy on their nationalist liberation war credentials, they also openly connected the party, the state, and the nation to Shona historical symbols.

This set the stage for an ethnic showdown between the triumphant Shona and the defeated Ndebele that became openly violent in 1982. On this issue, Norma Kriger noted that from the very day of achievement of independence, the triumphant Shona-dominated ZANU-PF leadership displayed a unique desire to build a "party-nation" and a "party-state" that excluded other political formations, crafted around and backed by ZANU-PF's war-time military wing (ZANLA) and Shona historical experiences. Specific party slogans, party symbols, party songs, and party regalia of the liberation war time continued to be used at national ceremonies like Independence and Heroes Days[28]. It was amidst this fanfare and celebratory mood that Shona triumphalism unfolded against Ndebele particularism reeling under a feeling of defeat.

Through music and dance, the triumphalism of ZANU-PF over PF-ZAPU was openly displayed and conveyed to everybody as though the liberation struggle was a duality between the Shona dominated ZANU-PF and the Ndebele dominated PF-ZAPU[29]. A decidedly partial history of the liberation war and a decidedly partial imagining of the state and the nation ensued, backed by the development of an openly biased historical master narrative of the struggle for independence. The typical example of that history was David Martin and Phyllis Johnson's *The Struggle for Zimbabwe* which was freely distributed throughout the country into every school and college[30]. This book became the official history of ZANU-PF and ZANLA, celebrating their centrality in the struggle while at the same time sidelining the contribution of PF-ZAPU and ZIPRA.

The triumphant ZANU-PF politicians immediately used the state controlled media to cast PF-ZAPU, its leader Joshua Nkomo, and its military wing (ZIPRA), as no heroic liberators, as no committed na-

[28] N. J. KRIGER, *Guerrilla Veterans in Post-War Zimbabwe: Symbolic and Violent Politics, 1980-1987*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, p. 75.

[29] E. B. ABRAMS, *Strategy of Domination: ZANU's Use of Ethnic Conflict as a Means of Maintaining Political Control in Zimbabwe, 1982-2006*, Unpublished MA Thesis, Rutgers University 2005.

[30] D. MARTIN and P. JOHNSON, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War*, Zimbabwe Publishing House, Harare, 1981.

tion-builders, but as a threat to the country's hard won independence. Up to now Shona history, Shona symbols, and rituals still underpin state ideology at the exclusion of the Ndebele. Even such minor issues such as which news bulletin comes first on ZTV is permeated and driven by imperatives of Shona-Ndebele power imbalances. News in the Shona language must always come first. But in democratic countries like South Africa where there are eleven recognised official languages there is no rigid format of which news in which language comes first.

The central state of Zimbabwe sanctioned deployment of military and ethnicised violence against the Ndebele in the period between 1982 and 1987 within this background. The key feature of this period was the attempt by ZANU-PF to crush PF-ZAPU that had constituted itself as the strongest opposition in the country. PF-ZAPU and Joshua Nkomo were "provincialised" and stripped of their nationalist liberation credentials to the extent that Nkomo was openly disparaged as the king of the Ndebele and a father of dissidents[31].

3. *Gukurahundi* and the Ndebele

Eliakim Sibanda has noted that "The crisis in Matabeleland started in the army"[32]. This means that any analysis of how the Shona-dominated central state dealt with the Ndebele-speaking people as dissidents must take into account the complexities of a tale not only of politicised ethnicity and abuse of state power, but also a story of problematic integration of ex-ZANLA, ex-ZIPRA and ex-Rhodesian forces into the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA). It is also a tale of problematic nation building that was exclusivist as well as part of elite politics of competition for power and nationalist vendettas. As early as November 1980, the integration of forces was hit by its first crisis when ZIPRA and ZANLA forces fought against each other in Assembly Points (APs) [33].

[31] When Enos Nkala a ZANU-PF cabinet minister referred to Nkomo as the king of the Ndebele who needed to be crushed, he was recreating Ndebele particularism and reducing Nkomo to a tribal politician bent on destabilizing Zimbabwe.

[32] SIBANDA, *The Zimbabwe African People's Union 1961-87*, p. 243.

[33] Assembly Points were places where ZANLA and ZIPRA were gathered before their integration into the new Zimbabwe National Army.

The underlying cause of all these violent clashes had to do with a combination of inflammatory political speeches by ZANU-PF leaders, open discrimination of ZIPRA, open favouritism of ZANLA, and abuse of PF-ZAPU leaders to whom ZIPRA was loyal. Kriger noted that ZANU-PF began to behave as though Zimbabwe was a one party state. According to Kriger, "in other areas, too, ZANU (PF)'s grass-roots supporters and its national leadership exhibited a one-party mentality"[34]. The ZANU-PF slogans were openly provocative and disparaging of PF-ZAPU, the person of Joshua Nkomo and the liberation credentials of ZIPRA. This led Josiah Chinamano, a deputy president of PF-ZAPU to warn that these slogans would incite the anger of armed ZIPRA forces without any political platform from which to answer back except through their guns[35].

The violent clashes between the ZIPRA and ZANLA, the desertion of some ex-ZIPRA from the national army, the exploitation of the antagonistic situation by apartheid South Africa via sponsorship of Super ZAPU and the "discovery" of arms caches in PF-ZAPU- owned farms around Bulawayo gave government the pretext to use state power to crush PF-ZAPU[36]. ZANU-PF wanted to gain control of the south-western part of the country and to consolidate its power. As noted by Brian Eric Abrams, ZANU-PF and the state "developed a clear message, sharp media campaign and a multi-layered military response to achieve its highly focused political goals".[37] Within this ZANU-PF political agenda, PF-ZAPU was a party that sponsored dissidents, Joshua Nkomo was the father of dissidents, every young Ndebele man was a potential dissident, all ex-ZIPRA including those serving in the army were dissidents, and the entire population of Matabeleland constituted a dissident community[38].

The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) and the Legal Resources Foundation (LRF)'s Report of 1997, provides crucial details of how a military operation orchestrated through Fifth Brigade

[34] N. J. KRIGER, *Guerrilla Veterans in Post-War Zimbabwe*, op. cit., p. 74.

[35] *The Herald*, 7 November 1980.

[36] The squabbles between ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU gave the apartheid South African state an opportunity to destabilise the country through infiltration of what became known as Super ZAPU who pretended to be fighting on behalf of PF-ZAPU and Joshua Nkomo. These forces were in reality agents of destabilisation like RENAMO of Mozambique and UNITA in Angola.

[37] E. B. ABRAMS, *Strategy of Domination,* op. cit., p. 24.

[38] N. J. KRIGER, *Guerrilla Veterans in Post-War Zimbabwe*, op. cit.,pp. 134-135.

(Gukurahundi) became a bizarre combination of random killing of every Ndebele-speaker, hunting and killing of every PF-ZAPU supporter, raping of Ndebele women and girls, as well as abduction, torture, and forcing every Ndebele-speaker to switch to Shona language and then support ZANU-PF[39]. What started as a mission to stamp out dissidents became from start to finish an ethnicized crusade to make the Ndebele account for the nineteenth century raids on the Shona, and a purely anti-Ndebele campaign that deliberately conflated Joshua Nkomo, PF-ZAPU, ex-ZIPRA and every Ndebele-speaking person into a dissident, dissident collaborator, dissident sympathiser and sponsor[40]. This was a situation where the state itself became tribalist, with ethnicity being openly used as an instrument to eliminate a rival ethnic group. An estimated 20,000 Ndebele-speaking civilians perished under this campaign.

4. The impact and meaning of Gukurahundi in Matebeleland

The Unity Accord signed between PF-ZAPU and ZANU-PF on 22 December 1987 did not solve the ethnic animosities in Zimbabwe. It simply amounted to nothing more than a surrender document where the PF-ZAPU politicians threw in the towel and allowed PF-ZAPU to be swallowed by ZANU-PF. The only positive result was that atrocities stopped. Beyond that, the Accord became just a form of nationalist leaders accommodating each other across ethnic division but leaving the people still divided. It was very far from being a comprehensive conflict resolution mechanism[41]. Bitterness and the memory of having lost family members, relatives and friends remained engulfing in those areas where the Fifth Brigade had operated[42].

[39] CCJP and LRF, *Breaking the Silence*; J. ALEXANDER, «Dissident Perspectives on Zimbabwe's Post-Independence War», in *Africa*, 86 (2), 1998, pp. 151-182 and R. YAP, *Uprooting the Weeds: Power, Ethnicity and Violence in the Matabeleland Conflict, 1980-1987*, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2001.

[40] When Enos Nkala became the minister of home affairs, he made it clear that the Fifth Brigade was there to eliminate all those categories of people in Matabeleland and the Midlands. See S. NDLOVU-GATSHENI, «The Post-Colonial State and Matabeleland», pp. 18-38.

[41] W. Chiwewe, «Unity Negotiations», in C. S. BANANA (ed.), *Zimbabwe, 1890-1990: Turmoil and Tenacity*, The College Press, Harare, 1989.

[42] S. NDLOVU-GATSHENI, «The Post-Colonial State and Matabeleland», cit.

Realities of the 1980s violence provoked the rise of radical Ndebele counter-hegemonic ethno-nationalism and radical Ndebele-oriented pressure groups that openly questioned the dominance of the Shona in employment in general, senior civil service, security and education as well as open neglect of economic development of Matebeleland and the Midlands regions. Examples included *Vukani Mahlabezulu* (a cultural organisation focused of cultural revival), *Imbovane Yamahlabezulu* (a pressure group that wanted those who committed Gukurahundi atrocities to be made accountable), *ZAPU 2000* (a youth movement that sought to revive PF-ZAPU) as well as *Mthwakazi Action Group on Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in Matabeleland and Midlands* (MAGEM) and *Mthwakazi People's Congress* (MPC)[43]. The last two were diaspora phenomena, and they campaigned for atrocities committed by the Fifth Brigade to be internationally recognised as genocide while at the same time seeking establishment of an autonomous United Mthwakazi Republic (UMR) as the only way for the Ndebele people to realise self-determination[44].

The embers of the Matabeleland problem also pulsated around the death of Joshua Nkomo in July 1999. Despite having joined ZANU-PF in 1987, Nkomo was still revered in Matabeleland as *umdala wethu* (our old man). Nkomo occupied a special place within Ndebele particularism and was persecuted as a Ndebele leader for a long time. Nkomo himself provides details of his persecution by ZANU-PF in his autobiography[45]. During his burial at the Heroes Acre in Harare, a big delegation from Matabeleland and the Midlands regions came to pay their last respects. What distinguished the Matabeleland delegation was the persistent song – *uNkomo wethu somlandela, yenu Nkomo wethu* (We will follow our Nkomo where ever he goes). This was an old PF-ZAPU song of liberation that encapsulated the loyalty and confidence of ZAPU supporters in Nkomo's leadership[46].

[43] These organizations came into being in the wake of the swallowing up of PF-ZAPU by ZANU-PF in 1987 and they tried to pick from where such other earlier Ndebele particularistic cultural organizations as Ndebele National Movement, Matebele Home Society and Mzilikazi Family Association that were decentred by the rise of mass nationalism.

[44] The emergence of these organizations may also be interpreted within the broader perspective of the rise of civil society at the end of the Cold War.

[45] J. NKOMO, *Nkomo: The Story of My Life*, Methuen, London, 1984.

[46] I attended the burial of Joshua Nkomo and witnessed this myself in July 1999 while based in Harare.

The younger generation of Matabeleland politicians like the president of *Imbovane Yamahlabezulu*, the late Mr. Bekithemba John Sibindi, responded by repudiating the Unity Accord that was emphasised by Mugabe and calling for an apology from Mugabe and compensation for the people of Matabeleland[47]. The young generation of political activists in Matabeleland became even more sceptical of territorial nationalism as represented by ZANU-PF in the absence of Nkomo. This is how some people put it:

> ZANU-PF is a party that is founded on splitting Zimbabwe into tribal groupings, i.e. Shona and Ndebele, whereby Shonas must provide national leadership. ZANU-PF, usually referred to as "The Party", has always had in their leadership deck Shonas taking up key leadership positions with a lacing of Ndebele apologists making up the leadership elite numbers. The party had to enlist the services of Ndebele apologists to paint a picture of a government of national unity following the inconsequential "Unity Accord" signed in December 1987. The Ndebele apologists were to behave like gagged guests at this party – make no key decisions and above all don't raise questions about the development of the other half of the country[48].

Another young activist from Matabeleland Khanyisela Moyo states that: "In my opinion, the Matabele question is critical and cannot be cursorily thrust aside. It should be subjected to an intellectual and candid debate"[49]. Since 2000, the embers of the Matabeleland problems became more prominent in the diaspora than inside Zimbabwe. This was partly due to the fact that the Zimbabwean crisis that unfolded in 1997 had forced millions of people into the diaspora and partly because of the lack of democratic spaces in Zimbabwe to practise alternative politics to ZANU-PF's one party mentality.

5. Diaspora, the Matebeleland question and cyberspace

The plunge of Zimbabwe into crisis in 2000 not only forced Zimbabweans to migrate but also led to the development of secessionist ideas,

[47] Interview with Mr. Beithemba Sibindi, Craneborne, Harare, 22 July 1999.

[48] Ndaba Mabhena, *The Tribal Warlords that Rule Zimbabwe* http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/opinion64.12515.html [Accessed 10/02/2011].

[49] Khanyisela Moyo, *Ndebeles, A Minority that Needs Protection*, http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/gukgenocide16.13763.html [Accessed 10/02/2011].

initiated in the diaspora, that were actively articulated within cyberspace. This culminated in the creation of a 'virtual nation' known as the *United Mthwakazi Republic* (UMR), complete with its own national flag and other ritualistic trappings of a real national formation such as radio station. The United Mthwakazi Republic (UMR) emerged in the United Kingdom. If one opens the website, it becomes clear that this organisation was born out of grievance and resentment of Shona triumphalism, leading overseas Ndebele to define all the problems affecting the people of Matabeleland in ethnic terms. *Gukurahundi* atrocities provided the background against which cyber politics of secession of Matabeleland and the Midlands from Zimbabwe formed. This is combined with mobilization and appropriation of the proud memory of pre-colonial Ndebele history as well as the recent sad memories of the Fifth Brigade atrocities[50]. A separate history was claimed together with the appropriation of Joshua Nkomo, ZAPU and ZIPRA as the property and heritage of the Ndebele. Mthwakazi proponents declared that:

> For our part, for our present generation, this Zimbabwe, and any attempts to maintain it in any guise in future as a state that includes uMthwakazi, is as false as it is silly. It is only part of the grand illusion of the whole Zimbabwe project created in 1980. […] What we have is their Zimbabwe, of Shonas, and a fledging state for uMthwakazi which we have called UMR[51].

Internally, ethnicity continued to cause trouble within political parties with ripple effects on diaspora communities. The split of the MDC into two factions in 2005 immediately polarised supporters of MDC outside the country with many Ndebele-speaking ones opting for the MDC that was led by Welshman Ncube. This split affected MDC structures in Britain and South Africa. What became known as the Welshman Ncube faction was considered to be a Ndebele faction. The Tsvangirai faction was cast as a Shona faction. This was despite the fact that both factions retained both Ndebele and Shona supporters and leaders. Bringing in Arthur Mutambara as a compromise leader

[50] Mthwakazi, *Zimbabwe: A Project for the Humiliation of Nkomo and Mthwakazi* http://www.mthwakazionline.org/nkomo2.asp [Accessed 10/02/2011].
[51] *Ibid.*

of the Bulawayo-based faction did not prevent its being defined in ethnic terms as a Ndebele faction[52].

A number of community activists and political leaders including the late Governor of Matebeleland North Welshman Mabhena and former ZANU-PF Politburo member Joshua Malinga have complained about Matebeleland's marginalization since 1980. The Ndebele people's complaints about exclusion from the nation-state and domination by the numerically preponderant Shonas have been ignored by the central state. As a result, the people of Matebeleland not only continue to feel like second class citizens of Zimbabwe but also continue to seek alternative ways of redressing their political and economic grievances, with the younger generations increasingly calling for violence and secession to redress their plight.

Matebeleland has also been in the forefront of pushing the agenda of devolution of power in the recent constitutional outreach programme. But what is clear is that Matebeleland has successfully banished ZANU-PF from the region through consistent voting for the opposition since 2000. But ZANU-PF has consistently tried to use the Unity Accord as their bait to lure the people of Matabeleland into voting for it forgetting that this unity reminded the Ndebele of how they were brutalised and forced into being members of ZANU-PF after the death of thousands of Ndebele-speaking civilians. Joshua Nkomo's legacy and his support for national unity were also used by ZANU-PF in its attempts to win votes in Matabeleland. But ZANU-PF has not been successful.

The recent repudiation of the Unity Accord of 22 December 1987 by some high-ranking ZANU PF leaders from Matabeleland, such as Thenjiwe Lesabe, Cyril Ndebele and Dumiso Dabengwa, and their relaunching of ZAPU in 2009, is not only a big vote of no confidence in ZANU-PF's nation-building project but also a reflection of Matebeleland's continual cry for recognition. The relaunched ZAPU under the leadership of Dabengwa seeks to reclaim its pre-1963 national resonance and representativity which it claims ZANU-PF has destroyed through ethnicisation and racialisation of national politics and development.

[52] The Bulawayo based faction has some Ndebele and Shona leaders just like the Harare based faction.

6. Current Matabeleland politics and forthcoming elections

The Matebeleland region is currently issuing mixed and complex political signals. These range from a new repertoire of secessionist politics, to electoral unpredictability. The revival of ZAPU and reorganisation of the MDC under the leadership of Professor Welshman Ncube who, unlike Arthur Mutambara, is considered a politician from the Matebeleland and Midlands regions, have the potential to contribute to the intensification of electoral competition come new elections. There is even possibility of a new regional coalition being formed including ZAPU and MDC aimed at maximizing electoral success in Matabeleland and the Midlands regions. Already, some ZAPU officials have begun imploring the officials of the smaller faction of the Movement for Democratic Change to "surrender the cross" and join ZAPU before the forthcoming elections[53]. Some civil society groups have also implored the two parties to unite so that they can enter the elections as a strong regional force.

There is an incipient "political scramble" for Matebeleland from different political gladiators with MDC-T fighting to retain its electoral dominance that it has enjoyed since the split of 2005. Some ZANU PF party heavyweights from the Matabeleland region, whose political grip has waned over the years, have also made known their intentions to contest and recapture parliamentary seats in the region in the forthcoming elections. More than any region in the country, this has raised the spectre of bruising plebiscitary battles. There are some young Ndebele-speaking political activists who lump MDC-T together with ZANU-PF as political formations representing those regions inhabited by dominant Shona-speaking people rather than Matebeleland. To these young activists, the people of Matebeleland are just being used to propel MDC-T into power and once that is done Matabeleland would be forgotten and its marginalization will continue[54].

But ZANU-PF too has not given up on making inroads into Matebeleland using those former ZAPU members who decided to remain in

[53] Methuseli Moyo made the call for ZAPU and MDC to work together in a coalition so as to maximize their electoral power in Matebeleland.

[54] These critical minds often refer to how Morgan Tsvangirai had appointed a Karanga dominated cabinet and Matabeleland was not well represented. It was only after a regional outcry that people like Gorden Moyo were invited into cabinet.

ZANU-PF at the time Dabengwa revived ZAPU. The politics that has developed around the statue of Nkomo is revealing. Explain. It is widely believed that the recent Nkomo statue debacle is part of the continuum of the efforts to recapture Matebeleland using Nkomo's legacy and through the symbolism of Nkomo as a form of appeasement. The statue project was however hit by bad political weather taking the form of opposition from the surviving Nkomo family members and other members of the Matebeleland region tired of being recipients of ideas imposed from Harare.

Beginning with the refusal by Welshman Mabhena to be buried at the Heroes Acre, there is increasing snubbing of directives from ZANU-PF and Harare. When the other veteran nationalist Thenjiwe Lesabe died, ZANU-PF avoided another snub by not considering her for heroine status, with Didymus Mutasa of ZANU-PF saying "we could not confer on her the national heroine, which was rightful status, because she was not consistent when she joined ZAPU led by Dabengwa"[55]. Lesabe had made it clear before her death that she did not want to be buried at Heroes Acre. But a third "snub" came soon after. Cornius Nhloko hailing from Silobela in the Midlands and a former Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) intelligence chief died at the age of 63 during the same week of Lesabe's death. ZANU-PF conferred him a national hero status but his family indicated that Nhloko had made it clear that he did not want to be buried at Heroes Acre. These "snubs" reinforce the widespread criticism that National Heroes Acre has essentially become a ZANU-PF burial ground rather than a national shrine[56].

The Matebeleland question has continued to be felt throughout all aspects of national politics, and opposition parties like MDC and Mavambo have all struggled to deal with the issue. The MDC split of 2005, for instance, largely evolved around the question of Matebeleland and how to handle issues of regional and ethnic representation within the party[57]. Similarly, the split in Mavambo after its modest

[55] L. NKATHAZO, «ZANU-PF Suffers New Heroes Acre Snub», in *Newzimbabwe.com,* 18 February 2011.

[56] *Ibid.*

[57] The split in the MDC was caused by a multiplicity of causes including differences over strategy, leadership and management styles as well as accountability issues. However, the split was precipitated by conflicts rooted in regional and ethnic divisions. Tsvangirai and his group were strongly supported in Harare and other areas dominated by Shona-speaking

performance in the 2008 elections also had a lot to do with issues of Ndebele people's ethnic and regional representation within the party and how the party's policies dealt with issues of Matebeleland's historic marginalization.

The Matebeleland question has continued to loom large in the MDC-T's current internal politics, and the party has increasingly come under fire from its Matebeleland supporters for its alleged insensitivity to the problems of the region and its failure to come out with clear policies on ethnic power balancing as well as a concise justice and reconciliation framework that adequately deals with the *Gukurahundi* legacy. At the same time, there has also continued to be simmering ethnic and regional struggles within the Welshman Ncube-led MDC over how to handle the Matebeleland question. All these problems, in a way, indicate serious challenges in current approaches towards resolving the Matebeleland question. The topical issue today in Matebeleland is that of inclusion of devolution of power into the draft constitution. To the people of Matebeleland, devolution of power is viewed as a possible solution to the problem of marginalization and exclusion from the power that is concentrated in Harare at the heart of Mashonaland. MDC-N under Ncube is viewed by ZANU-PF as the leading proponent of devolution of power.

7. Conclusion

The Matebeleland question can therefore be at best described as a multifaceted one. It is historical and political. It is old and new. It is a national question. Its roots are traceable to the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial periods. It is deeply lodged within the development of the idea of Zimbabwe itself. It is about nation-building and authentic subjects of the nation. It is about who is considered a Zimbabwean and who is not. It is about inclusion of ethnic minorities into a single nation. It is a challenge to ethno-nationalism. It is about the style of governance and inclusive citizenship. It is about fair exercise of power and tolerance of diversity. As such, its resolution is inevitably about rethinking nation-building, citizenship and belonging as well as shar-

groups, while the Ncube-Sibanda group was strongly supported in Bulawayo and other Ndebele speaking regions.

ing of resources and power configuration. To resolve it, it is necessary to revisit the idea of Zimbabwe and to democratize it. ZANU-PF failed to rise beyond ethnocracy ever since its emergence in 1963. Its resolution needs genuine nationalists, not lip-service ones. The Matebeleland question in particular reveals the failures of nation-building. It indicates the limits of coercion as a lever of nation-building. It points to the limits of ethno-nationalism that masquerades as territorial nationalism. It cannot, therefore, be resolved simply by elections, as elections have proven to be more of an ethnic census. Mugabe has already ruled out the option of allowing Matabeleland to secede from Zimbabwe, arguing that Zimbabwe was "one entity" that "shall never be separated into different entities". He emphasized – in the quotation used in opening this chapter – that "There was no Lesotho here. There is one Zimbabwe and one Zimbabwe only".

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