

**DIASPORAS, REMITTANCES AND
AFRICA SOUTH OF THE SAHARA**

A STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

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GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANC: African National Congress

BCP: Basotho Congress Party

BNP: Basotho National Party

COSATU: Congress of South African Trade Unions

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States

FRELIMO: *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GNP: Gross National Product

INAME: *Instituto Nacional de Apoio ao Emigrante Moçambicano no Exterior*

IOM: International Organisation for Migration

IRA: Irish Republican Army

LCD: Lesotho Congress for Democracy

LLA: Lesotho Liberation Army

LTTE: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam

MASSOB: Movement for the Actualisation of a Sovereign State of Biafra

MECK: *Mutuelle d'épargne communautaire komorienne*

MISA: Mwali International Service Authority

MPD: *Movimento para a Democracia*

NDLEA: Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency

NUM: National Union of Mineworkers

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PAICV: *Partido Africano da Independência de Cabo-Verde*

PAIGC: *Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo-Verde*

PCDP: *Parti comorien pour le développement et le progrès*

PIDE: *Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado*

SADC: Southern Africa Development Community

TEBA: The Employment Bureau of Africa

UCID: *União Caboverdiana Independente e Democrática*

UNDC: *Union Nationale pour la Démocratie aux Comores*

UNHCR: United Nations High Commission for Refugees

UNITA: *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola*

Related websites

Mwali International Service Authority: www.mwali.org

Bureau for International Companies (Anjouan): www.anjouan.net

Offshore Financial Authority (Anjouan): www.anjouangov.com

Somali International Financial Centre: www.lowtax.net/lowtax/html/somalia/jsmbankingact.html

Nigerian 419 cases: <http://home.rica.net/alphae/419coal/>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Modern African “ethno-national” diasporas of today are very different from the “old” black diaspora which emerged out of the slave trade. Contemporary migrants are very much in touch with their homeland, to which they often remit money on a regular basis. They have an economic and political role to play in the countries of departure as well as arrival. In the homeland, they can contribute to development and democracy, especially in enclaves, island micro-states and war-torn countries which record disproportionate emigration flows. Yet the governments of developing countries are not fully aware of the opportunities that these migrant communities offer. Most of them still consider their nationals abroad as a nuisance, either because they resent the “brain drain” or because of the political threat they represent, especially to authoritarian regimes. Indeed some African diasporas back armed struggles, terrorist groups, and criminal organisations. However, one must be careful not to overemphasize their contribution either to development and democratic transitions or to disruptive forces.

INTRODUCTION

In a global world in which some 125 million people migrate from one country to another every year, modern African “ethno-national” diasporas are quite different from the “old” black diasporas which historically emerged out of the slave trade.¹ Contemporary migrants are very much in touch with their homelands, to which they often remit money on a regular basis. They also have a political role to play in both their homelands and the countries to which they have migrated. They can contribute to development and reconstruction in the former, especially in impoverished enclaves, island micro-states and war-ravaged countries which are particularly prone to exceptionally high emigration flows. They can also help to alleviate the sufferings of their fellow countrymen at home during humanitarian crises. In a failed state like Somalia, for instance, nationals who took refuge abroad provided a kind of welfare system during the civil war for those of their relatives who had remained in the Horn of Africa after 1991. In the same way, the Malians of Kayes who were living in France demonstrated how important a part expatriates could play by their interventions in Mali during the droughts of 1973 and 1984. And in Lesotho, where a state of famine was declared in April 2002, some analysts argue that the food crisis was caused, not by drought or bad harvests, but by a drop in remittances.

As public aid and structural adjustment programmes have proved unable to develop the continent, the issue is: are remittances going to “save” Africa? Before discussing this question, the author intends to provide a context within which funding from nationals living abroad can be seen as a positive factor. Financial transfers to the homeland by migrants have several advantages for the recipient countries:

- They can contribute to sustainable development since they are more endogenous than international aid;
- Through community networking, remittances can help to reduce poverty and the other detrimental effects on society of a globalisation process dominated by market values. They narrow the trade gap and break the isolation of countries in which foreign investment is low;

- Such transfers assist African countries with debt servicing, increase foreign currency reserves, and partly compensate for the flight of capital. According to the World Bank, the total value of official remittances reached US\$80 billion in 2002, as against US\$60 billion in 1998, and it is likely to continue to rise. This is less than the amount earned by the oil trade, but probably equal to the turnover from drug trafficking. Of course, such inflows cannot be compared with fixed investments. Migrants' financial transfers are not sufficient to pay off the Third World's debt or to reverse the flight of capital from developing countries.² But unofficial remittances that are sent via friends, relatives or private courier systems could amount to two or three times the official figure. As private capital flows have declined, they have become the second-largest source of external funding for developing countries after foreign direct investment (FDI);
- Remittances account for a substantial proportion of the incomes of states. In Mali, for instance, they funded 81% of the trade gap and contributed 17% of public aid to development in 1991. Since the 1980s, money sent from abroad has represented three times the average amount provided by official aid in Lesotho. In Cape Verde during the last decade, funds sent home by the diaspora were four times the value of international aid that stood at US\$325 per capita in 1990.

The analysis of the effects of remittances, must also include research at local level. A serious impediment to such a study is that developing countries are not fully aware of the opportunities offered to them by the presence of some of their citizens in other countries, and moreover they do not consider the "brain drain" as a potential asset. Some of them still see their nationals abroad as a nuisance, because migrant communities often represent a political threat to authoritarian regimes at home. The role that African diasporas can play in the development of their countries of origin is not obvious, and is dependent on the way in which they invest their money. Moreover, the contribution of migrant communities to democratic transitions at home remains doubtful. It is also important to remember that remittances can be used to launder money, support terrorist activities and mask the activities of organised crime syndicates.

This study attempts to assess the strategic value that remittances have in African countries situated south of the Sahara. In the first part, the focus is on political interaction between migrant communities and their homelands. Conspiracies, armed struggles and voting lobbies are not the only forms such interventions take: more subtle patterns of politics in exile are developed through ethnic

transnational networks, cultural exchanges and economic influence. All things being equal, the relative significance of remittances to a national economy can confer a political role on a country's diaspora, especially if the contributions made by the expatriates come with conditions.

Yet numbers are not the sole determinant of influence in the homeland, as is shown by the case studies in the second part of this monograph. In micro-states such as Cape Verde, the Comores and Lesotho, which depend heavily on their diasporas, the political and developmental effects of financial transfers are largely contingent on the receptivity of the homeland's government. Any link between migrants' political involvement and political transitions at home is questionable, because internal pressure is the main force for change. In Cape Verde, the diaspora played a major role in bringing to an end the one-party system in 1991 because the state was ready and able to channel remittances towards promoting foreign investment. But in the Comores, the diaspora seems to be as disorganised as the state. Lesotho is an intermediary case. These examples illustrate how difficult it would be to make generalisations on the impact that migrant communities have on governance and development at home.

Moreover, one should be aware of the possible criminal use of diaspora networks for money laundering, drug trafficking, arms smuggling, scams or terrorist activities. The globalisation of mafia-like syndicates, which is analyzed in the third part of this study, can have severe consequences for migrant communities, as in Nigeria. But one should not overemphasise the criminal elements among those Africans who are part of the diaspora. Since the countries of the industrialised world have closed their borders to refugees and migrants, a good number of aliens have become "illegal": that is, they have been denied citizenship or formal residence permits. Yet illegality is different from criminality, illegitimacy or unreliability. The focus of the police on illegal immigrants tends to outlaw any informal economic activities, including the sending of remittances. And cultural stereotypes of foreigners, especially black people do not help industrial countries understand the value of transnational expatriate networks, whether legitimate or criminal.

Notes

- 1 By referring to diasporas in the plural, as opposed to the singular 'black diaspora', the author refers to migrant communities that have a common origin (such as a national or ethnic background), and that produce trans-national networks connecting them with their homelands. For an historical review, see M-A Pérouse de

Montclos, *Les diasporas africaines et leur pays d'origine*, *Esprit*, 27 (300), 2003, pp114–24.

- 2 In Nigeria alone, the World Bank estimated that US\$15 billion could be found in foreign bank accounts at the end of the 1990s; but, according to other sources, the sum may be as much as US\$55 million.

CHAPTER 1

AFRICAN DIASPORAS AND HOMELAND POLITICS

From slave trade to modern migration

Globalisation is not a new phenomenon. Today on average, just under 3% of the world's inhabitants migrate from one country to another every year¹, a proportion roughly equivalent to the annual growth rate of the world's population. Yet invasions, settlements and forced displacements also took place on a large scale during the early part of the Christian era. Moreover, some migration patterns have not changed much. Nigerians, for instance, constituted the biggest African community in America for many centuries. The difference is that slaves were not referred to as Nigerians two or three centuries ago, while African migrants are now registered according to their nationalities. As Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, the predominance of people from that country is not surprising. The 70,000 Nigerians who officially settled in the United States (US) between 1974–1995 represented 17% of African immigrants, followed, in descending order, by the Ethiopians, the South Africans and the Ghanaians.²

Interestingly enough, this percentage was nearly the same during the time of the slave trade. After Angola and Congo, which supplied up to 70% of the slaves in Brazil in the seventeenth century, today's Nigeria became one of the main reservoirs of labour for traders of all nationalities. They landed on the coast at ports ranging from Calabar, near Cameroon, to Ouidah, the outlet of the kingdom of Dahomey. The latter was the main export centre for Yoruba prisoners of war whose homeland was the neighbouring Oyo Empire, especially in the years between 1700–1730.³ According to the shipping registers, the Bights of Benin and Biafra accounted for 14,5% and 25,1% of the human cargo which was shipped across the Atlantic under British or French flags between 1711–1810.⁴

In other words, many of the black peoples now inhabiting the Americas and the Caribbean are of Nigerian descent. The latter supplied 1% of the slaves who arrived in Peru between 1548–1560; 5% to Mexico at the end of the

seventeenth century; almost 9% in British Guyana between 1803–1807; 6% to the US between 1690–1807; 42% to Jamaica between 1655–1807; 60% to French Guyana in 1690; more than 36% to Santo Domingo between 1751–1800; and 41% to Cuba between 1817–1843.⁵ Because they lived near the coastline of the Bights of Benin and Biafra, the Yoruba, the Ijaw and the Ibibio in the hinterland were the first to be sent into slavery. In Santo Domingo, the Yoruba constituted 26,2% of the slaves who landed between 1760–1800, as compared with 21,8% for the Nupe, Somba, Chamba, Hausa and Gbari of Northern Nigeria. According to a census held in 1848 in Freetown, 63,7% of the slaves who were freed and settled in Sierra Leone by the British were also Yoruba, Nupe or Edo, with a few Fon and Goun from Dahomey. Of the remainder, 20,2% were from the Ibo, the Efik, the Ibibio and the Hausa tribes.⁶

From a quantitative point of view, these massive movements of population were much more striking than the African migrations of the present day, and one must bear that in mind so as not to over-emphasize the effects of modern globalisation. In similar vein, political interactions between emigrants and their homelands are not as recent as one might believe. Historically, Africa south of the Sahara has often been perceived as an isolated continent. Yet the slave trade influenced and even shaped political power in the countries of departure as well as those of arrival. In Latin America, deported communities helped with rebellions against colonial authorities. In Brazil for instance, Muslim Hausa from Nigeria led the Bahia uprisings of 1720, 1806, 1809, 1813, 1818, 1822, 1827, 1835 and 1838. Organized in secret societies called *ogboni*, they established fugitive slave communities, the *quilombos*, and tried to set up an Islamic state in the *Nordeste*.⁷ This early political manifestation of Islam was connected with the *jihad* in Nigeria, the Muslim holy war which devastated Northern Yorubaland's hinterland and supplied the slave exporters on the coast with Hausa prisoners of war.

The transatlantic slave trade also had political consequences for Africa. First, returnees funded the republics of Liberia in 1847 and Sierra Leone in 1787.⁸ Secondly, the slave trade sustained artificial city-states on the coast, and aggravated conflicts with communities in the hinterland, where people were kidnapped to be sold to the Europeans. In the Bight of Biafra, these cleavages between the coast and the hinterland are still apparent.⁹ Secondly, slave returnees were to form a political elite of freemen whose status owed much to their education in the West. In the Bight of Benin, *retornados* from Brazil mixed with Portuguese traders, and played a leading role in the nationalist movement leading up to that country's gaining its independence. As for the

influence the Arab world had on Africans sold into slavery in the north of Africa and the Middle East, its impact was considerable, because Islam became the dominant religion in many areas. In the Horn of Africa, it produced city-states on the coast; in the Sahel, it gave birth to an urban elite, especially in Kano, the most populated city in Northern Nigeria. There the name of the district of Madigawa still refers to the *madugu*, the leader of a caravan across the Sahara.

Of course, political interactions between emigrants and their homelands are more sophisticated and developed today. This is not only because of technological progress in communication and transport. From a cultural point of view, contemporary migrants are not as uprooted as those who were forced into an alien world in the past. The slave trade had contributed to a transfer or assimilation of ethnic identities. In the Arab world, African domestic workers were converted to Islam and integrated into the community, although they were stigmatized. In the Americas, segregation produced a race-based “community of suffering”. Ethnic identities were irremediably changed, mixed up and diluted. In the Caribbean islands, for instance, groups from Eastern Nigeria were called by different names: the Ibo became *Eboe*; the Ibibio, *Bibi* or *Mocoe*.¹⁰ In Cuba, the Ekpe secret cult society from the Efik of Calabar took another name, *Abakuá*, in 1836. Despite the Marxist regime of Fidel Castro, that cult is still active today, with 117 cells and some 20,000 followers, 75% of them in Havana. But its traditional priests (*oku ndem*) and chiefs (*eyamba*) do not now retain any link with the country of origin of the Efik slave communities.¹¹

Politics in exile: Oppositions, plots and elections

In contrast, “modern” emigrants—including asylum seekers who are the victims of forced displacements—can retain close ties with their homelands. Their loyalty to both the countries of departure and arrival depends on a variety of determinants.¹² In some cases, migrants back the opposition in exile, support armed struggles at home, or exercise their votes in the mother country (if elections are ever held there, and they have the right to cast a ballot). They often form national or ethnic lobbies that plead for more international aid to their homelands, or for economic sanctions to be imposed against an authoritarian regime at home. Some African authors argue that the “old” black diaspora could also relay similar messages to promote the economic interests and the foreign policy of various countries on the African continent.¹³ But in many cases, Afro-Americans and modern migrant communities lobby only for

their rights in their new homes. In France, for instance, Comorean immigrants are said to vote for conservative parties in the hope of retaining their privileges, as 80% of them are French citizens. In Africa too, most migrant communities maintain a low profile. In exchange for the promise of permanent residence and identity documents, Basotho migrant workers voted for the African National Congress (ANC) during the 1994 elections in South Africa; and in Kenya, Somali refugees did the same for the ruling party in 1997 and 2002.¹⁴

It seldom happens that migrant communities play a decisive political role in the homeland, even if their marginal vote can sometimes cause a change of majority when the ballot is closely contested, as happened with the diaspora from Cape Verde in January 2001.¹⁵ Very often, migrants are not allowed to vote at all. This exclusion is not restricted to authoritarian regimes: some South African expatriates were disenfranchised during the 1994, 1999 and 2004 elections. To claim their right to vote while resident outside the country, as stipulated in the law, they had to organize a lobby to argue that they still paid taxes at home, and therefore should be entitled to cast their ballots like South African diplomats abroad.

However, there are many ways to participate in elections without casting a formal vote. Nigerians living in the US pledged they would send US\$2,5 million to the candidate who would defend their interests in America during the presidential elections in 2003.¹⁶ The problems of Nigerians living abroad became an issue raised by parties like the Alliance for Democracy. Local politicians complained about emigrants being put in jail, for instance, and asked the Nigerian embassies in other countries to do more for nationals away from home.¹⁷

The situation is of course rather different in countries where there are no elections at all. Many rebel movements are launched in exile because of political repression or crisis in the homeland. Some of these use the countries of asylum as places from which they can inform against a dictatorship at home.¹⁸ Others plot against or support armed struggles. From neighbouring countries especially, refugees have various opportunities to launch guerrilla attacks against the authoritarian regimes that caused them to flee.¹⁹ As for emigrants abroad, it is often quite easy for them to fight by proxy (since they do not suffer directly in the conflict) by financing military operations (because they are usually richer than their relatives in the homeland).

In their desire to revive “original” roots and “lost” identities, expatriates can be extremely radical. Economists from the World Bank assert that the more powerful a diaspora is, the more likely it is that a civil war will be prolonged.

According to them, the probability that a conflict will resume during the five years following a cease-fire or a peace settlement is increased sixfold if a strong migrant community has an interest.²⁰

Yet the political influence of diasporas is not restricted to the use of violence. More subtle feedback can change the situation in the homeland. Some authors notice a feminisation of migration, which often implies an empowerment of women. This helps to close the gender gap, and alters the balance of power in patriarchal societies.²¹ Because of the high level of abandonment and divorce of wives amongst Basotho men working in South Africa, for instance, it became more common for women to migrate out of Lesotho. According to some researchers, “their exchange of sexual services for money or evasion of the law” enabled them to bribe their way around the immigration regulations, and made it more difficult for the authorities to control their migration than that of males.²² In contrast to the patriarchal nature of society in Lesotho, these women encountered “greater gender equality and women’s rights to individual property and self-expression” in South Africa.

Refugee diasporas are also indicative of this trend towards feminisation, since civil wars usually produce many widows, who are then compelled to take over “male” responsibilities.²³ With the collapse of the Siad Barre regime in Mogadishu in 1991, for example, Somali elders first sent boys abroad, because tradition favoured privileging the education of the older male siblings. They did this partly because they feared that if they remained, the young men would be forced to fight, or would become targeted victims. But according to a study by the United Nations (UN), an increasing number of unaccompanied girls were then sent overseas, since they were believed to be “more trusted” and “more productive” than their male siblings, who “were more likely to slip into criminal behaviour and fail to send money home”.²⁴

Although the conditions under which migrants live in the country of arrival explain social changes within these communities, their reasons for leaving the homeland also contribute to these alterations. In Nigeria during the regime of Sani Abacha (1993–1998), ethnic groups like the Yoruba, who backed the civilian opposition, and the Ogoni, who protested against their exploitation by foreign oil companies, were deliberately targeted. It is estimated that 30,000 Ogoni sought asylum abroad, 1,000 of them in Cotonou, in neighbouring Benin.²⁵ These persecutions produced “ethnic communities of suffering”, which reinforced clan identities.²⁶ Unlike the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), which opposed Sani Abacha within the national political system, organisations like *Egbe Omo Yoruba* or the Oodua People’s Congress tried to

garner support from Yoruba migrants only, in America as well as in Europe. Also, a Southern Minorities Front was set up in the US to lobby for the interests of the Ogoni and the coastal populations of Eastern Nigeria in opposition to those of the oil companies and the military.

Two main schools of thought exist on this subject. One reasons that the greater involvement of diasporas in ethnic issues is attributable to the revival of cultural values, which in turn is the result of the decline in ideology that accompanied the end of the Cold War.²⁷ The other school of thought argues that migrant communities contribute to nation building.²⁸ Whatever the case, contexts of identification go from the smallest to the largest. Only at the global level does a sense of national belonging prevail. Region and lineage supply identity at the state and the local levels. Thus an Ijebu living in Lagos will tend to emphasise the specificity of his sub-clan within the Yoruba “family”. But in Northern Nigeria, which is predominantly Hausa, he will be perceived as a Yoruba first. And travelling abroad, he will be seen as a Nigerian citizen. This is why the national or ethnic orientation of migrant communities is so complex.

Politics in the homeland

The next issue to consider is whether the political activities of diasporas have an impact in the homeland. The propaganda against authoritarian regimes produced by radical exiles often reveals important differences from the positions taken up by the internal opposition, and even, sometimes, misinterpretations of the situation at home. This is not specific to Africa. Ahmed Chalabi, a rich businessman and a leader of the opposition to Saddam Hussein in the US, was extremely badly received when he was brought back in Iraq by American troops after April 2003. In Kabul, the government of President Hamid Karzāi was divided between members of the Northern Alliance, who had fought the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and returnees from the Southern Pashtun diaspora. In the constitution published in January 2004, a compromise solution had to be adopted to make it compulsory for ministers with double nationality to be approved by parliament.

Such cleavages have also been apparent in political movements south of the Sahara. After 1990, the ANC had to manage tensions between “outsiders” and “insiders”. The former were the returned guerrilla fighters of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, who had fought the apartheid regime from Angola or Mozambique; the latter, *civics*, who had organised the uprising within the South African townships. Exiles sometimes lack legitimacy in their own country on their

return, as they have had no access to the population in the homeland. In Ethiopia, for instance, the Mengistu regime fell in 1991 because of the actions of guerrillas in Tigray and Eritrea, and not because of the opposition it faced abroad. The Ogaden National Liberation Front was able to hold its first congress in the Somali Region of Ethiopia only in 1992, almost ten years after it was created by exiles in the Gulf in 1984. (It was officially launched in Kuwait in 1986).

Again, in Nigeria during Sani Abacha's dictatorship, NADECO, a civilian opposition coalition which was set up in Lagos in May 1994 and afterwards opened branches abroad, was torn between "outsiders" and "insiders". Amongst the professional politicians who had gone into exile were Wole Soyinka, the first black African writer to have won a Nobel prize; Anthony Enahoro, who had fought for independence before 1960; Bolaji Akinyemi, a former foreign affairs minister; Bola Tinubu, who had been a senator during the short-lived Third Republic in 1992; and Cornelius Adebayo and John Oyegun, former governors of the Kwara and Edo States. Kudirat (the wife of Moshood Abiola, the elected president who was put in jail by the military in June 1994) became their icon when she was murdered in June 1996. Exiles launched a "Radio Kudirat" (later renamed Radio NADECO) to broadcast short-wave programmes attacking the government. They lobbied the New York town council to rename 43rd Street, in which the Nigerian embassy was located, Kudirat Avenue. They were also instrumental in bringing about the commercial boycotting of the Abacha regime by the municipalities of Oakland (in California) and Amherst (in Massachusetts).²⁹ Wole Soyinka, who advocated armed struggle, was one of the most radical of the political exiles. He chaired both the National Liberation Council of Nigeria and the United Democratic Front of Nigeria, based in Pittsburgh.

But these moves were mainly symbolic. No guerrilla movement ever developed within Nigeria. The regime eventually collapsed when Sani Abacha suddenly died in 1998. As a matter of record, Nigerians did not expect much from the opposition abroad. Instead a good number of them believed that the exiles lived in comfort, accumulated wealth and took advantage of international sympathy for their exile status. They also suspected that some migrants had posed as political opponents of the regime at home to gain asylum and permission to stay in the West.³⁰ The elections of 1999 and the return to a civilian regime did not change this attitude. The leader of the radical faction of the Oodua People's Congress explained to the author that because the membership cards distributed to his followers had been used and abused to seek political asylum abroad, he had to stop issuing them.³¹ As for another

underground organisation, the Movement for the Actualisation of a Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), which started to fight for the independence of Biafra after 1999, it became more popular amongst the Ibo members of the diaspora than at home.

Interestingly, the suspiciousness with which exiles were regarded at home also extended to the descendants of the “old” black diaspora that had emerged out of the slave trade. In Nigeria, civil society did not trust black Americans who opposed Sani Abacha: some human rights activists even denounced “those delegations of dubious con men and women who had fed fat on our blood and misfortune”!³² In Kenya too, members of parliament refused to pass a bill that would have automatically granted Kenyan citizenship to Afro-American applicants. At independence, a westernised politician like Tom Mboya, who visited Harlem, publicly opposed immigration schemes in which black Americans would settle in Africa, because he did not believe that their wish to return to an idealised homeland was sincere. He regarded the project as merely a pretext to escape the urban ghettos of America.³³

African migrant workers also aroused a great deal of hostility in their home governments. Nationals earning a living abroad represented a direct challenge to dictators, because the implication was that the development policies at home were failing. This was especially true of so-called progressive regimes like the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen, which forbade emigration in 1973, ostensibly to contain the brain drain. Under President Jafaar al-Numayri, for instance, the Socialist government of Sudan passed the Passports and Immigration Regulation Act of 1970, which stipulated that exit visas should be issued only by the Ministry of Employment; Decree 950 of 1980 restricted the validity of passports, and another, 102 of 1985, established a state secretariat for emigration. As for the Marxist Ethiopia of Haile Mariam Mengistu, citizens who attempted to leave the country without due authorisation were liable to sentences of between five and 25 years in prison, because they were considered to be counter-revolutionaries according to Article 21 of the penal code of 1981.

Authoritarianism was certainly one of the major reasons why migrant communities were ostracized. When Sudan gained independence, parliament created a special “graduate” constituency, to attract the vote of the elite members of the diaspora. But this was short-lived, as the successive military governments that followed, especially the Islamic junta that came to power in 1989, considered all nationals abroad as potential opponents. During the 1996 elections, for instance, parties representing exiles were not allowed to

compete. Instead, voters were registered on the basis of the sugar ration cards distributed by the regime (which made it impossible for nationals living out of the country to vote).³⁴ In the same way, the junta of Sani Abacha in Nigeria did not allow the diaspora any share in the “national cake”. It even took action against one of its neighbours, the Republic of Benin, where many members of the Nigerian opposition had previously sought and obtained refuge, by backing the election campaign of a former dictator, Mathieu Kérékou. In February 1996, before the polls opened, Sani Abacha closed the border and gave one million dollars to Kérékou. Such support was based not so much on regional solidarity (because both men came from the Northern Sahel) as on political interference, because Benin’s outgoing president, Nicéphore Soglo, had given protection to Nigerians fleeing Abacha’s regime.³⁵

Even though many transitions to democracy took place in Africa during the 1990s, many of these governments continued to exclude migrant communities from taking part in domestic politics. However, this phenomenon is not specific to developing countries south of the Sahara. In Algeria during the legislative elections of 2002, only eight seats out of 389 were kept for representatives of the diaspora, including four for the migrants living in France. And in Morocco that same year, the polls, which were described as the first democratic election in the kingdom, did not include the votes of the 2,5 million workers abroad. This omission was all the more significant because their remittances constituted one of the country’s two main sources of hard currency, the other being tourism. In Latin America also, Mexico changed its constitution in 1996 to allow émigré nationals to vote and hold dual citizenship. But the amendment became a dead letter because no enabling law was introduced to bring it into force before the elections, which are due in 2006. As for El Salvador, where one citizen out of three lives in North America, in 2004 the government refused to allow members of the diaspora to vote, despite the great contributions of nationals abroad to the country’s economy.

In Africa south of the Sahara, transitions to democracy caused some authoritarian regimes to allow multi-party elections. Yet many national diasporas were excluded from participation while they were perceived as supporting the opposition parties. In 2000, President Robert Mugabe did not allow Zimbabwean emigrants to vote. The official reason given was that it would have been too expensive to register one million nationals abroad, but the unofficial explanation is that a large number of them had moved to the “new” South Africa, and were suspected of not supporting the government’s party. In the Seychelles, which were under a one-party system between 1977–1992, President France Albert René was also reluctant to allow migrant communities

in the UK, Canada and Australia to vote, since they were expected to support the opposition, the Seychelles National Party.

Regimes that had moved from a one-party to a more democratic system included diasporas in the franchise when they thought that migrant communities would support them, and show loyalty to the leaders of those groups that had fought for independence. In Mozambique after the 1999 elections, the Marxist *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO) found that its support had weakened. To avoid losing power, it looked for alternative constituencies abroad, while the opposition was poorly organized. FRELIMO created an institute, *Instituto Nacional de Apoio ao Emigrante Moçambicano no Exterior* (INAME), to promote the return of members of the diaspora, and planned to permit emigrants to vote during the presidential elections of 2004.

Economic power and remittances

Of course, the transnational influence of diasporas is not limited to ballots. At this juncture, it is relevant to consider the economic—and maybe political—power that migrant communities exercise through remittances. Such financial transfers are a global phenomenon from the Philippines to Albania, the poorest country in Europe, to which some 700,000 emigrants remit some US\$650 million per year, and in so doing provide 60% of the state's income. In Latin America and the Caribbean Islands, migrants sent home US\$30 billion in 2002 and US\$38 billion in 2003. This was more than the sums produced by foreign investment and public aid for development in the region. According to the Inter-American Development Bank, one South American out of every ten benefits from *remessas*. As for Northern Africa, figures from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) show that remittances constituted 9% of the GDP in Morocco, 5% in Tunisia and 3% in Egypt in 2003.

In Africa south of the Sahara, some economies are more reliant on remittances than others. (See the comparisons depicted in Figure 1.) All things being equal, war-torn countries, enclaves and island micro-states are the most obvious recipients of funds sent from abroad, because these countries record disproportionate emigration flows. Armed conflicts often produce huge diasporas—three inhabitants out of every four were displaced by the fighting in Somalia after the fall of the Siad Barre regime in 1991. Many went into exile in neighbouring countries, the Arab world or the West.³⁶ The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) registered 451,500 Somali refugees in 1999, or about 7% of the country's estimated population of approximately

6 million. Although Somalia had received remittances from migrants before the war, the commensurate growth in the value of money sent home, which was of the order of US\$140 million per year when calculated on the basis of individual savings in asylum countries, became very important.³⁷ According to surveys conducted within Somalia, the total could be as much as US\$800 million per year if commercial transactions and private financial transfers to other Somali communities in the Horn of Africa are included. Of this amount, US\$360 million were private donations to family members. These provided more than 22% of the resources of households in Somalia.³⁸

Figure 1: Remittances and domestic economies in Mali, Comores, Cape Verde and Lesotho

Homeland	Rough no of emigrants and their descendants	Emigrants as a % of the resident population	Main arrival points of the diaspora in decreasing order of importance	Approx amount of remittances per year, in US \$ millions	Remittances as % of the GDP
Mali	1, 000, 000	12% (1991)	Cote d'Ivoire France	75, 7 (1991)	3 % (1991)
Comores	111, 000	25% (1991)	France Madagascar	20 (2001)	12% (2001)
Cape Verde	483, 000	111% (2000)	USA Portugal Senegal Netherlands France	71, 8 (2001)	13% (2001)
Lesotho	700, 000	33% (2000)	South Africa	200 (2001)	27% (2001)

Source: OECD, World Bank, IOM, Central Banks, National Census.

It should be noted that it is very difficult to compare one country with another, because there is no standardized statistical definition of what constitutes migrants' financial transfers, especially as regards remittances in kind. Available data show considerable discrepancies, depending on the inclusion or the exclusion of informal remittances outside the banking sector. In Lesotho, for instance, the Central Bank computes only the remittances and the deferred

payments of Basotho mine-workers in South Africa. Yet this figure is less than half the amount recorded by TEBA, a bank and the main recruiting agency for mine-workers in Lesotho, which includes remittances, deferred payments, pensions, compensations, awards for long service, and lump sums paid to the wives' provident fund. Again, the TEBA data, which are limited to mine-workers, account for less than half of the total of US\$200 million that is estimated as the value of the informal and formal remittances sent home by Basotho migrants working in South Africa.

As for Africa's little islands and enclaves, the relative economic weight of their diasporas is largely explained by the geographical peculiarities of their location. An enclave naturally depends on the country that surrounds it. Again, lack of space and overpopulation usually result in high rates of emigration from island micro-states. Between one-fourth and one-third of the population of Equatorial Guinea lives outside the country. The diaspora from the Seychelles, numbering approximately 40,000 people, equals more than half of the current inhabitants of the archipelago.

The Comores and Cape Verde, which became independent in 1975 from the French and the Portuguese respectively, are interesting examples because their local economies are very heavily remittance-orientated. In Cape Verde, the size of the diaspora is larger than the population of the archipelago. The major source of *remessas* (remittances) is its migrant communities in the US, followed by those in Portugal, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Germany and Switzerland. These sums accounted for 28% of Cape Verde's GDP in 1980, when the state had ruled out foreign private investment and became heavily dependent on international aid.³⁹ Since then, the proportion contributed by remittances has fallen from 15% in 1986 to 10% in 2002. The main reasons have been growth in the national economy, restrictions on immigration in Europe or America, and the integration of Cape Verdeans in the host countries, where they have settled, married and spent their money. Yet *remessas* remain a major asset to the archipelago's economy, totalling some US\$67 million in 2000, US\$72 million in 2001, US\$68 million in 2002 and US\$64 million in 2003. This partly explains why the GDP per head is higher in Cape Verde than that of the other four former African Portuguese colonies combined. Cape Verde is the only Lusophone African nation to be ranked in the World Bank's lower middle-income bracket. Moreover, the proportion of migrant bank deposits to GDP is on the rise, from 13% in 1995 to 23% in 2002. This compensates for the relative decline in *remessas*, and indicates a growth of confidence in the national economy following the end of the one-party system in 1991. As early as 1986, the national bank tried to attract migrants' savings. Legislation

was introduced to open the economy to private external investment from emigrants in 1989, and then extended to all foreigners in 1993, when the first commercial bank, the *Banco Comercial do Atlântico*, was established. In March 1998, when Cape Verde and Portugal signed an agreement to the effect that their respective currencies would become linked through a fixed exchange rate, the Cape Verde escudo (CBE) became convertible to the euro.⁴⁰ Official investment from migrants was promoted through the provision of tax exemptions for returnees and attractive rates for bank deposits. At the same time, informal *remessas*, usually passed from hand to hand, decreased.

The Comores, another island micro-state where the national currency is easily convertible to euros, also relies on remittances. One citizen out of every four is said to live abroad, and migrants officially send home some 10 billion Francs Comoriens (FC) per year, approximately US\$20 million. This is equivalent to the state's resources and the official savings of the population in local banks. The Central Bank in Moroni sometimes records larger amounts than that. In 2001, it had to change a total amount of FC15 billion into cash, owing to the conversion of French Francs' savings into euros. The inflow of private capital has tripled over the last 20 years. It now represents 10% of the GDP and up to 50% of the value of imports. According to some analysts, it might even be as high as FC120 billion if one includes the goods sent home by migrants and the hoarding of gold or jewellery to pay for the great customary wedding ceremonies, which confer on the groom (in this case the returnee) the status of a "full man".⁴¹

Of course, island micro-states are not the only small countries that produce big diasporas and depend on a high volume of remittances. An enclave within South Africa and a tiny mountainous kingdom with two million inhabitants, Lesotho is a classic example.⁴² During the 1860s, it lost large tracts of cultivable territory to, and was almost annexed by, the Orange Free State, a South African province on Lesotho's border. The shortage and degradation of arable land made even subsistence crops difficult to grow, while the droughts, the Great Depression, and lack of development (as a result of colonial policy) virtually put an end to commercial agriculture in the 1930s. From that time onwards, Lesotho imported food and exported labour. As early as 1933, there were more Basotho male workers in South Africa than in Lesotho. During the apartheid era (which started in 1948) Lesotho came to serve as another Bantustan, a rural labour reserve for its "big brother", especially in the mining industry.

Today, less than 13% of the land in Lesotho is cultivable, and, according to the 1999–2000 agricultural census, about 20% of Basotho household heads

work away from home, most of them out of the country. Some 175,000 labour migrants were estimated to be in South Africa in the mid-1980s, and the total number of Basotho who live there now is said to be 700,000 when descendants, illegal immigrants, short-term sojourners, and Sesotho speakers with dual citizenship are included.⁴³ Remittances to Lesotho equalled up to 50% of the GNP, 90% of the value of imports, almost 1,400% of exports and 360% of the agricultural output in the 1980s.⁴⁴ Some studies also showed that these financial transfers provided 80% of the income of rural households, in a country that had very few urban centres. Some 40% of peasants benefited from remittances, as against 15% of city dwellers.⁴⁵ Each migrant worker supported between seven and nine people in Lesotho.

Such a dependency on South Africa, which absorbs 90% of Lesotho's foreign trade, makes the latter very vulnerable.⁴⁶ Given the relative importance of earnings from water royalties and miners' remittances, the country's GDP is typically about 60% of the GNP. Any variation in the volume of financial transfers has a dire effect on the local economy. Lesotho suffered greatly when large numbers of migrant workers lost their jobs because of the crisis in the mining industry starting at the end of the 1980s, and the subsequent introduction, after the collapse of the apartheid regime in 1994, of affirmative action programmes which favoured the employment of black South Africans.⁴⁷ The number of Lesotho miners in South Africa was reduced from 129,000 in 1989 to 64,000 in 1999. During that decade some 61,000 unemployed Basotho returned to the kingdom. As a result, the contribution of remittances to the GDP fell from a maximum of 100% in the mid-1980s to 67% in 1990, 33% in 1996 and 27% in 2001, while unemployment rose to 45%.⁴⁸

What's in a remittance? Some determinants

Several parameters fix the level of private financial transfers. Among them are the savings capacity of an emigrant and his (or her) level of integration with, and standard of living in, the host country, on one side. On the other side are the opportunities to invest and the socio-economic status of returnees in the homeland. Of course, wealth is an important factor. Regarding the Comoreans abroad, for instance, remittances from metropolitan France were estimated to reach FF30,000 per worker per year in 1991, as against FF10,000 sent home from the island of La Réunion, which is poorer than the metropole France.⁴⁹ In the same way, surveys of the Malian diaspora in 1996 showed that annual remittances from France were close to FF10, 000, compared with FF1, 000 from Central Africa and FF300 from West Africa.⁵⁰ These gradations in relative

affluence were also reflected in the proportion of Malian emigrants who sent money home, from 32% in Côte d'Ivoire to 87% in France.

Such patterns are quite common. In Scandinavia where the state is highly involved in social aid, Somali refugees earn more and remit more money than their fellow countrymen in the rest of Europe.⁵¹ Yet the wealth of an emigrant does not depend only on the provision of social aid he receives. Many rich African emigrants live in the US, where the welfare state hardly exists, but where they are more likely to find jobs than black Americans. Their average annual income is about US\$30,000 as against US\$21,000 for the latter.⁵² According to a small sample of 226 individuals, on average Nigerians in the US earn US\$45,000 and remit US\$3,700 per year. On the basis of an estimated 40,000 households, their financial transfers are therefore likely to total US\$170 million, excluding the export of personal belongings. This is five times what Nigeria earns in hard currency by selling rubber.⁵³

To earn money is of course a prerequisite for sending cash home, but it is not sufficient: other factors must be considered. The richest migrants are not automatically the first to inject money into the homeland's development. Such investments are not ensured and guaranteed by governmental organisations such as the French *Compagnie française d'assurance pour le commerce extérieur* (Coface) or the American Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), as they would be in the case of transnational corporations. In unsecured business environments, migrants have to rely on family networks to protect their financial interests. Their investment in the country of origin tends to be highly emotional, but not always rational from an economic point of view. For a good number of migrants, diversifying their capital in developing countries is very risky. It would be more profitable for them to invest in pension funds and keep their savings in a Western bank, or to change their hard currency on the black market when they visit the homeland on holiday.⁵⁴

Investment in the country of origin is influenced by many historical and cultural factors. The degree of commitment migrants feel towards their kith and kin at home determines the volume and frequency of remittances, and economic success usually causes migrants to wish to redistribute some of their wealth. Cape Verdeans abroad, for instance, believe in Christian brotherhood, self-help (*djudá*) and solidarity (*djunta môn*). Emigrants from the Comores, on the other hand, save their money until they can afford to pay for the traditional grand customary wedding (*anda*). In the same way, Ibo migrants from Nigeria keep a strong attachment to the land of their ancestors; consequently, almost 83% of those living in Cameroon remit money home once or twice a year.⁵⁵

Some investments in the homeland can be market-orientated too. For example, westernized Ibo migrants from Nigeria are considered to be good businessmen, as their tradition and religion are thought to be more adaptable than those of the Yoruba and the Hausa. The Ibo are said to be competitive, hard-working, innovative, materialistic and individualist. They respect effort, do not delay what can be finished on the same day, devote much attention to the education of their children, and save money for that purpose. Surveys show that they take pride in being self-made men, and distrust social parasites who depend on clan solidarity for their livelihoods.⁵⁶ Moreover, Ibo migrants are prone to invest in their homeland since the Biafra war. They see this region as a last resort in case of problem. Iboland provided the only safe haven for returnees who were expelled from Northern Nigeria by the Muslims during the 1966 pogroms, and for those landlords whose properties were confiscated in cities like Port Harcourt after the Biafrans lost the war in 1970.⁵⁷

Time also plays a role. It is usually said that the longer a migrant stays away, the less concern he feels for his native country. Temporary expatriates often save as much as they can in order to remit funds. In contrast, social assimilation entails more spending in the country of immigration, especially when a worker settles, marries and raises his children there. In many cases, political and financial commitments to the homeland seem to have a negative correlation with social integration abroad. Consequently some armed movements have put pressure on "their" diasporas not to settle down in the host country, so that they would use their resources for the struggle "at home".⁵⁸

The loyalty of migrant communities is complex. Political apathy in developed countries can cause migrants to feel a lack of commitment for their homelands. Also, the involvement of immigrants in local politics can prevent them from taking part in transnational action. It is doubtful whether the Nigerians who were elected to municipal councils in Italy feel they have a role to play in Africa. The same question could be raised about Ayaan Hirshi, a Somali refugee who was a candidate for the Liberal Party in the Netherlands in January 2003.

However, the social integration of an immigrant and his (or her) acquisition of a family abroad do not always weaken the link with the homeland or the will to return. There is no obvious correlation between the length of time a migrant spends in another country and the loyalty felt towards the country of origin.⁵⁹ On average, Basotho workers in South Africa stay there three to six times longer than Mozambican or Zimbabwean immigrants. Yet they keep very much in touch with their native land. According to surveys, approximately 90% of them own a house in Lesotho and 89% send money home. This is especially true of

men in their forties who have a job and a family. This proportion is much higher than amongst Mozambican or Zimbabwean migrants, even if the amount sent in remittances is nearly the same: around R320 per household every month.⁶⁰ Unlike other African migrant communities in South Africa, the Basotho do not regard migration in a negative light. Only 3% of them consider that emigration has a bad effect on the homeland. The unique situation of Lesotho as an enclave within South Africa explains this attitude. The two countries have always had a very close relationship, and the border tends to be porous, despite attempts at control. On the whole, 81% of Lesotho's population have visited South Africa at least once.⁶¹ From a cultural point of view, one can hardly differentiate a Basotho from a black South African. As in the case of the seTswana of Botswana and the isiSwazi of Swaziland, there are more Sesotho speakers in South Africa than in Lesotho: over three million according to the 1996 census, as opposed to two million in the kingdom.

Notes

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- 3 M L Conniff (ed), *Africans in the Americas: A history of the black diaspora*, St Martins Press, New York, 1994, p 55; P Lovejoy, *Transformations in slavery. A history of slavery in Africa*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, p 51.
- 4 The English traders were eventually to colonise the mainland in the Bight of Biafra. As a consequence, the region provided 30,1% of the cargoes of British slave ships between 1690–1807, as compared with 11,3% from the Bight of Benin. These two zones exported 776,400 and 292,700 men and women respectively. However, the numbers were greatly reduced by the time of arrival in the Americas due to a mortality rate which was usually over 13%, and could be as high as 33% during the passage. Regarding the French, who were to colonise Dahomey, the Bight of Benin provided 18,4% of the cargo for their ships between 1711–1800, that is 175,700 slaves; and the Bight of Biafra contributed only 1,8%, or 16,900 individuals. See P D Curtin, *The Atlantic slave trade: a census*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1969, pp 150, 170 & 220.
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 - 17 *The Source* (Lagos), 23 July 2001, pp 32–33.
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- 24 L Hannan, *A gap in their hearts: The experience of separated Somali children*, Integrated Regional Information Network, Nairobi, 2003, p 16.
- 25 Political upheavals in Nigeria had already produced a good number of displaced persons and exiles. As early as January 1965, barely five years after independence, an electoral crisis in the Western Region, the stronghold of the opposition party Action Group, led to the departure of 2,000 Yoruba and the temporary closure of the border with Dahomey (today the Republic of Benin). Between 1967–1970, the Biafra War in the Eastern Region caused major forced displacements. Some Ibo fled to the Ivory Coast, which eventually granted asylum to the defeated leader of the secession. The military dictatorships that followed in Nigeria also caused various individuals and communities to leave the country.
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- 27 S Huntington, *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1996, p 367.
- 28 See I Cusack, Being away from home: The Equatorial Guinean diaspora, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 17 (1), 1999, pp 29–48.
- 29 R K Edozie, *People power and democracy: The popular movement against military despotism in Nigeria, 1989–1999*, Africa World Press, New York, 2001, p 205.
- 30 K Ogbaa, *Nigerian Americans*, Greenwood Press, Westport, 2003, p 183. See also the novel of I Oguine, *A squatter's tale*, Heinemann, Oxford, 2000, p 201, about Nigerians living in the US.
- 31 Ganiyu Adams, interview with the author, Lagos, 2 November 2001.
- 32 M H Kukah, *Democracy and civil society in Nigeria*. Spectrum, Ibadan, 1999, p 294.

- 33 J Drachler (ed) *Black homeland, black diaspora: Cross currents of the African relationship*, Kennikat Press, Port Washington, 1975, p 270.
- 34 A El-Battahani, Multi-party elections and the predicament of northern hegemony in Sudan, in M Cowen & L Laakso (eds), *Multi-party elections in Africa*, James Currey, London, 2002, p 271.
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- 36 Yet it is important to note that a substantial Somali diaspora already existed before the war. In Wales, for instance, there has been a Somali community for over 100 years. See Jordan, Glenn [2004], *Somali Elders: Portraits from Wales*, Cardiff, Butetown History And Arts Centre, p 191.
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- 39 République du Cap-Vert, *Emigration et transferts des Capverdiens émigrés*, SEDES, Paris, mimeo, 1989, p 76.
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- 43 I Sembajwe & T Makatsjane, *Migrations et crise rurale au Lesotho*, in M Touré & T O Fadayomi (eds), *Migrations et urbanisation au sud du Sahara*, Karthala, Paris, 1993, p 272.
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- 46 Economic interdependence with South Africa has increased in recent years due to a co-operative venture, the Lesotho Highlands Water Development Project, which aims to supply water and hydroelectric power to both countries. Over 90% of Lesotho's imports come from South Africa. But South Africa accounts for only one-third of Lesotho's exports, as against two-thirds in 1990. Since the Lesotho textile industry benefits from the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) facility, the US now absorb two-thirds of Lesotho's total exports.
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- 49 J-L Guebourg, *op cit*.
- 50 F Gubert, *La participation des Maliens de France au développement de la région de Kayes*, 1999, in P Bocquier & T Diarra, (eds), *Population et Société au Mali*, L'Harmattan, Paris, pp110–111.
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CHAPTER 2

THE POLITICAL VALUE OF REMITTANCES CAPE VERDE, COMORES AND LESOTHO

The level and the frequency of remittances are important components of the balance of payments in the recipient countries. Yet the transformation of such economic power into political influence is another issue to be analyzed. There seems to be no necessary connection between financial contributions and political participation. Countries that receive huge sums in remittances are not automatically the ones where the diaspora plays an important political role, and vice versa. Also, as migrant communities are often scattered, they seldom share sufficient common interests to constitute a homogeneous lobby capable of co-ordinated action. Unlike foreign aid, which is sometimes increased or decreased to reward or sanction developing countries, remittances are sent on a private basis, usually to individuals or families, and cannot be earmarked for other purposes. In small countries that are highly dependent on international assistance, aid can be used as a convenient diplomatic tool by donor countries. In the Comores, for instance, France halted most of its co-operation programmes to “punish” the regime of Ali Soihili, which claimed that Mayotte Island should have become independent in 1975. In Marxist Cape Verde too, aid was used in the 1980s as an incentive to liberalize the economy and end the one-party system. As for Lesotho, the US withdrew financial assistance when the government was dismissed and the parliament dissolved by the king in 1994.

But remittances do not work in the same way. Since they provide a basic means of survival for the relatives of the migrants, they cannot simply be stopped to put pressure on authoritarian regimes to organise democratic elections or to respect human rights. When exchange controls become stricter, remittances are reduced in number or sent by alternative informal channels. In other words, the political impact of remittances is largely dependent on the structure of the state and of the domestic economy. This is the central argument of this monograph. The absolute size of migrant communities is not enough to guarantee their political weight. Hence Nigeria, the most populated country on the continent, has the biggest African diaspora. Yet Nigerians abroad constitute a tiny fraction of the national population, and, as we have seen, they have not had much influence on local politics in the homeland since independence.

Yet in contrast, Somali refugees play an important role in their war-torn country, and are involved in various aspects of the peace process. The Somali diaspora, which is one of the poorest in the West, is not only very active in the Horn of Africa but is perceived by the populace as being very rich.

The question, then, is: does political transnational power really depend on the relative size of migrant communities? This question can be answered by using Cape Verde, the Comores and Lesotho as case studies, because their economies are heavily reliant on remittances.

Cape Verde

Like Mauritius and South Africa, Cape Verde seems to be an African country with a well-organised diaspora. Migrants were not only instrumental in ending the one-party system in 1991, but also in supporting the struggle against the Portuguese to gain independence. The Marxist *Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo-Verde* (PAIGC) was originally founded in Guinea Bissau and backed by nationalist migrant workers. It had no presence in Cape Verde before the islands were granted independence in 1975. Until the breakaway of Guinea Bissau in 1980, it was predominantly African, as distinct from the *Crioulo* and Lusophone culture on the islands. After having been renamed the *Partido Africano da Independência de Cabo-Verde* (PAICV) in 1981, the party started to lose support in the diaspora, as a new generation that was disillusioned with socialism emigrated. The *União Caboverdiana Independente e Democrática* (UCID), which had been launched in 1974 to oppose the PAIGC in exile, especially in Boston and Rotterdam, advocated multi-party elections. The *Movimento para a Democracia* (MPD) won the democratic elections of 1991, but the new regime was marred by mismanagement and corruption that did not inspire confidence. In 2001, the diaspora voted for the PAICV.

There were several reasons for this reversal. First, because it lacked permanent structures, the MPD was less able to mobilize support in the diaspora, being less well organized than the Marxist PAICV cells in exile. Second, Cape Verdeans in the US remained loyal to the PAICV, even if they were said to be prone to vote for the Republicans in America. As they were richer and better educated than other communities in the diaspora, they had greater power to oppose colonialism, unlike the Cape Verdeans in France or Portugal, who were closely watched by the *Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado* (PIDE) in the years before the islands gained independence. The “younger” members of

the diaspora in Europe had experienced the one-party system from the inside and had been directly hurt by its radical policies, and therefore supported the opposition in the 1980s. In contrast, the “older” Cape Verdeans in the US continued to back, and vote for, the PAICV in 1991, 1995, and 2001. Regionalism also contributed to this trend. Some islands are linked to specific migrant communities in other countries: Brava and Fogo to the US, and São Nicolau to Holland, France and Italy. The Cape Verdean president, Pedro Pires, who was voted into office in 2001, comes from Fogo, which explains the support his candidacy was given by the diaspora in America.

However, such voting patterns cast doubt on the capacity of Cape Verdeans abroad to form a unified political lobby based on their *crioulo* monolingual identity. The proliferation of expatriate organisations, the dispersion of Cape Verdeans abroad and their integration in the host countries did not encourage members of the diaspora to pursue common aims. The older migrant communities were usually concentrated in ports such as Lisbon, Boston or Rotterdam. In Portugal, where the number of Cape Verdeans is estimated at 83,000, 90% of them are to be found in Greater Lisbon. In Holland, 85% of Cape Verdeans, or 14,000 individuals, live in Rotterdam.¹ In the US, where more than 46,000 residents reported at least one person of Cape Verdean ancestry in their families in the 1990 census (as against 18,000 in 1980), 58% are located in Massachusetts. Some districts like New Bedford in Boston or Delfshaven, which accommodates almost half of the Cape Verdeans in Rotterdam, are strongholds where proximity helps to foster a sense of communal identity. Yet in France, the 21,000 Cape Verdeans who were counted during the 1999 census are more widely scattered, especially in the suburbs around Paris like Clamart, Sarcelles, Clichy and Malakoff. Another factor is that the diaspora in Europe did not always settle in the country of arrival, and therefore became more dispersed. For instance, some manual workers followed Portuguese migrants to Luxembourg, where they now number 1,700 according to official statistics. The actual figure may be 4,000, almost 1% of the total population, which would make it the highest ratio of Cape Verdeans in any foreign country.

In any case, neither the concentration nor the embeddedness of migrant settlements entail a close link with the homeland. Fewer than half of the Cape Verdeans in the US still speak *crioulo*. In Portugal, less than 19% belong to local expatriate associations, and most of the latter focus on culture rather than politics. According to the archipelago’s embassy in Lisbon, only 40% of Cape Verdeans in Portugal use their right to vote in the host country, and this proportion falls below 28% when it comes to elections in the homeland.²

The situation is similar to that of France, where 70% of those Cape Verdeans on the voters' roll participated in the 2001 elections, but there were very few who had registered.³ Political apathy seems even more prevalent in Africa, where Cape Verdean creoles used to avoid mixing with the indigenous population. As Catholics living in Muslim Senegal, Cape Verdeans enjoyed the status of "civilised" persons, saw themselves as Portuguese and provided little support to the domestic struggle for independence. In Angola, Guinea-Bissau and São Tomé, they were used as colonial auxiliaries of the Portuguese. This collaboration created acrimony. It also encouraged the breakaway of Guinea-Bissau, whose president, Luis Cabral, himself a Cape Verdean, was removed by a *coup d'état* in 1980.

To sum up, the role of the diaspora was important, but not sufficient to bring about any major political change on the archipelago. Local dynamics were more instrumental in this regard. In point of fact, the liberalisation of the economy and the replacement of the one-party system were introduced by the PAICV itself during a congress in 1988, when it was agreed that multiple candidatures were to be allowed in local elections. Moreover, the contribution of the diaspora to the empowerment of a new elite was probably limited. Because the upper class could emigrate more easily and prosper in their new countries, Cape Verdeans abroad did not disrupt the existing hierarchy and their remittances often strengthened social inequalities. All things being equal, the richest islands like Boa Vista and São Nicolau, for instance, got more funding from the diaspora. On the contrary, a poorer island like Santo Antão, whose economy was based on agriculture, received much less remittances because its migrant communities consisted of peasants who worked as casual labourers and earned little.⁴

The Comores

In contrast to Cape Verdeans abroad, the diaspora from the Comores appears to be much more disorganised. Before independence in 1975, some anti-colonial migrant groups were formed, such as the *Mouvement de libération des Comores* (MLC) in Marseilles, the *Front National Uni des Comores* (FNUC) in Nairobi and the *Mouvement de Libération National des Comores* (Molinaco) in Dar Es-Salaam in 1961.⁵ But their influence on the homeland and on the French government was negligible. No armed movement was ever started on the archipelago. After independence had been achieved, these groups experienced internecine divisions. Some opposed the *Marxist Association des Stagiaires et Étudiants des Comores* (ASEC), which was founded in 1967, and

the Socialist *Parti Socialiste Comorien* (Pasoco), which backed the revolutionary regime of Ali Soilih in Moroni. After Ali Soilih was ousted by a former president, Ahmed Abdallah, and mercenaries in 1978, a group of the former's supporters, the *Organisation de la Jeunesse Comorienne* (OJC), went into Algeria to launch the *Conseil National pour un Parti Alternatif aux Comores* (CNPAC) in 1979. ASEC stayed in Paris, and set up a Democratic Front in 1982 whose leaders were arrested during a failed coup in 1985.

Back from exile in France, Mohamed Taki Abdulkarim may have been the only presidential candidate to receive massive support from the diaspora through his party, the *Union Nationale pour la Démocratie aux Comores* (UNDC), which won the 1996 elections. Others were not as successful. In 2002, Colonel Azali Assoumani, who had seized power in a coup in 1999, was not welcomed when he toured migrant communities in France to persuade them to invest in the homeland and back his government. Despite their claims that they were preparing for a smooth transition to a democratic government, the military in Moroni arrested returnees campaigning for the election, accusing them of plotting against the government. They also claimed that the returnees were infringing the new electoral code, which barred candidates who had not been resident in the Comores during the previous six months from standing. Returnees who eventually took part in the election in April 2002 were low-profile figures. Among them were Mohamed Zeina, a man from Mbéni and a former prefect in France; Saïd Saïd "La Guerre", previously a Finance Minister under Mohamed Taki Abdulkarim and a civil servant in the French Foreign Office in Paris; and Saïd Larifou, a lawyer in La Réunion Island and the founder of a small party, the *Rassemblement pour une Initiative de Développement avec une Jeunesse Avertie* (Ridja). As for those exiles who attempted to launch a raid on the military, they failed miserably. In 2001, a lack of fuel left the mercenaries paid by Achirafi Saïd Hachim, a former Home Affairs Minister under Mohamed Taki Abdulkarim, stranded on Mohéli island.

The political role played by the diaspora is not related to its size. Some Comoreans tend to exaggerate its importance because they see that the domestic affairs of the islands are still influenced by France. But this perception is distorted. Not all migrants are politically aware and many of them are illiterate. At home they stay close to their native villages and do not think about their country in terms of national issues. On the other hand, those migrants who belong to the educated elite do not participate in the grassroots organisations favoured by the peasants. The diaspora is very fragmented, and reproduces the social divisions of the islands: the bushmen (*wamatsaha*) and the urban nobles (*kabaila*) in Anjouan, the descendants of slaves and of princes

in Grande Comore, and so on. As a result, migrants are not considered an asset by political leaders like Ali Mroudjae, the former Prime Minister of President Ahmed Abdallah and founder of the *Parti Comorien pour le Développement et le Progrès* (PCDP), now the leading party on Grande Comore island.⁶

The dispersion of Comoreans abroad also prevented the formation of a unified political lobby. Before independence, it was quite easy to travel because the archipelago was French territory, governed as part of Madagascar from 1914 and 1947. For historical, geographical and religious reasons, Grande Comore was connected with Eastern Africa, Zanzibar, La Réunion and France, whereas Anjouan was closer to Mayotte and Madagascar. But after independence, the Comoreans were no longer entitled to French citizenship. In Zanzibar in 1968 and in Madagascar in 1975, hundreds of them were expelled or slaughtered. This forced them to explore alternative migration routes and other destinations, for example Britain and Germany.⁷ Today, France continues to accommodate half of the Comorean migrant workers abroad: maybe 40,000 in and around Paris and 30,000 in Marseilles, especially in the northern suburbs and the old Panier district. But the new Schengen regulations have barred the direct entry of Comoreans to France. Migrants therefore have to travel to Europe via La Réunion or Mayotte. (One-third of the diaspora are now said to live in the latter.)⁸ As Muslims, many more Comoreans went to the Gulf, especially to Saudi Arabia, to pursue religious studies.

In a way, the wide distribution of the diaspora reflects the political fragmentation of the archipelago (Anjouan and Mohéli seceded in 1997). The proliferation of migrant organisations abroad illustrates this dispersal. Of the 350 Comorean associations in France, only 130 seem to be operational. Sixty are registered; and none is representative of the whole diaspora, not even the *Fédération des Comoriens de Marseille* (Fecom) or the *Association des Travailleurs Comoriens* (ATC), a kind of African trade union founded in 1973.⁹ Different migration patterns from one island to another also explain the political fragmentation of the Comoreans abroad. Despite a higher density of population, Anjouan does not have as big a diaspora as Grande Comore.¹⁰ Its migrants are said to be more individualistic than other Comoreans. Once settled abroad, they tend to lose contact with the homeland. For instance, they did not try to mediate in any way after the island seceded in 1997. Some analysts argue that this was a major reason for the continuation of the civil war and the perpetuation of internecine divisions. In contrast, migrants from Grande Comore belong to larger families, practice levirate, and are more involved in the domestic affairs of the homeland. While the *anda* (wedding) ceremonies are restricted to the urban aristocracy in Anjouan, in Grande Comore they extend to the

whole village. Also, in the latter the peasants raise funds to support a native student abroad. In return, the migrant is expected to buy something for the community: for example a generator or a water pump. Unlike the Anjouanais, migrants from Grande Comore return home when they retire, and are buried in the village when they die.

Some scholars also argue that emigration has not changed social hierarchies. Historically, only the upper class travelled, especially the aristocracy of the sultan in Anjouan (merchants, ship-owners, slave traders to Zanzibar, deported princes), and landlords whose property had been confiscated by the French. The emigration of peasants and former slaves from Grande Comore was to follow later, when the colonial armies and shipping companies started employing soldiers and sailors (the so-called “navigators”). After the islands gained independence, economic crisis and civil war eventually prompted many more Comoreans to try their luck in Europe, often by travelling via Mayotte. The proportion of migrants from Grande Comore rose from 50% in 1945 to 90% today. But the poorer migrants continue to pay homage to their local chiefs, and to raise funds for them. Village allegiance has remained stronger than social class.¹¹ Returnees have also been co-opted through the *anda* ceremonies, which confirm traditional social structures by conferring on the bridegroom the status of a “full man”, which in turn allows him to participate in the deliberations of the Council of Elders.

Lesotho

Compared with those of Cape Verde and the Comores, the diaspora from Lesotho in South Africa is unique, not because of its organisation, but because Basotho migrants do not regard themselves as foreigners in South Africa. Until 1963, there were no immigration controls, and no identification documents were necessary to enable Basotho to cross the border. Being the inhabitants of an enclave country gave these migrant workers special characteristics. They seldom settled in South Africa and had no sense of being a diaspora. However their political links with the homeland also followed patterns that can be found elsewhere in Africa, particularly as related to plots by exiles and involvement in armed struggles.

Before Lesotho was granted independence in 1966, family divisions within the monarchy had already affected Basotho migrants. The competition for the throne between Letsie I, Molapo and Masupha, three sons of King Moshoeshoe, divided their followers, both in Lesotho (the Matsieng in the

North, and the Matsekha of Peka and Thaba Bosiu in the South) and in South Africa (in Vereeniging in 1947; in Evaton in 1950; and in Newclare, a Johannesburg township, in 1954).¹² Modern politics after independence also produced refugees. Following the general election in January 1970, for instance, King Moshoeshoe went into exile for 11 months after the government had declared a state of emergency and suspended the constitution. He had to flee again when Major-General Justin Lekhanya took over the king's executive and legislative powers in March 1990.¹³

Forced migrations across the border went the other way round as well. During the South African War (1899–1902), Basutoland (as Lesotho was then called) was a British base which sheltered many destitute white refugees from the Free State. After 1948, Lesotho accommodated ANC exiles who had taken part in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. These asylum seekers were to become a source of major dispute between the two countries, even though most aspects of domestic politics in Lesotho were influenced by Pretoria. As early as 1965, the conservative, Catholic, aristocratic Basotho National Party (BNP), led by Chief Leabua Jonathan, won the elections because the party was favoured by both the colonial administration and the South African government. The BNP's opponent in the election was the nationalist, Protestant, anti-aristocratic Basotho Congress Party (BCP), which had been founded by Dr Ntsu Mokhehle in 1952.

The events that followed were to confirm the importance of cross-border politics. After a bungled coup attempt in 1974, the BCP split into external and internal wings. The latter was persuaded to join a government of "national reconciliation", while the BCP members who had gone into exile in Botswana formed the Lesotho Liberation Army (LLA). This was initially supported by the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), and its forces were trained first in Libya and later in Syria and Tanzania. As Botswana refused to provide a sanctuary for the LLA and the PAC was riven by internal disagreements, the BCP found itself lacking support. It had no alternative but to operate under the umbrella of the apartheid regime in South Africa after 1978. Armed incursions into Lesotho from Botswana would in any case have been logistically impossible. So the LLA established bases in the South African homelands of QwaQwa and Transkei near the border of Lesotho.¹⁴

There was no ideological affinity between the LLA and the apartheid regime, but the former was considered by many to have the potential to act as a counter-revolutionary terrorist force like the *Resistência Nacional Mozambicana* (RENAMO) in Mozambique. It was used by Pretoria to put pressure on Lesotho

to deport the Nationalist regime's opponents who had sought refuge there: liberals like the editor Donald Woods, or cadres of the liberation movements. An example of the latter was Chris Hani, the leader of the South African Communist Party, who took up residence near Maseru in 1974. As a tool in the hands of the apartheid security forces, the LLA never became a "real" liberation army. The number of attacks it made on Lesotho decreased after the South African Prime Minister, Pieter Willem Botha, met Chief Leabua Jonathan in August 1980 to negotiate the withdrawal of the LLA in exchange for Maseru's clamping down on ANC activities.

Soon the LLA became completely redundant, because Pretoria decided to intervene in Lesotho's domestic affairs directly. In December 1982, the South African army staged a raid on ANC refugee safe houses in Maseru, in which dozens of people were killed. Then in April 1984, South Africa applied strict border controls on its main frontier with Lesotho, resulting in food shortages in that country. Pretoria sent an ultimatum to the Lesotho government that it should either expel the 3,000 South African refugees it was harbouring or face the economic consequences. The following year, Pretoria tried to coerce Lesotho into signing a joint non-aggression pact similar to the Nkomati Accord it had concluded with Mozambique in March 1984. In January 1986, South Africa blockaded its border with Lesotho and supported a coup staged by Major-General Justin Lekhanya, whose paramilitary force toppled Chief Leabua Jonathan. The new government proved to be more amenable to South Africa's policy on regional security. A week after the coup, 60 members of the ANC were deported from Lesotho, and the South African blockade was lifted. Pretoria gave military equipment to the Lesotho Defence Force, and the South African Police were granted the right to pursue criminals over the border.

The LLA was disbanded in 1989, and the two factions of the BCP reunited under the leadership of Ntsu Mokhehle, who had returned from exile in 1988. During the election of March 1993, many migrant workers poured back over the border to vote, largely for the BCP, which swept to power. The government attempted to integrate former LLA activists into the Lesotho Defence Force, but they continued to be a source of disruption. In November 1993, a mutiny occurred that was apparently precipitated by a proposal that the military should be placed under the command of a senior member of the LLA. Skirmishes followed, parliament was dissolved, the constitution suspended again, and the Mokhehle government was dismissed in August 1994. In May 1998, another round of elections provoked further violence. Thousands of people fled to the countryside or to South Africa.

Since then, hundreds of Maseru businessmen have moved their places of residence to the border town of Ladybrand. A few have bought farms on the Free State side of the Calendon River.¹⁵ This elite has joined the professionals who moved to South Africa to escape the burden and oppressiveness of royal rule in Lesotho.

To sum up, cross-border politics have always been a major determinant of governmental affairs in Lesotho. Yet this does not mean that the Basotho diaspora exerts much influence. Remembering the brutality of the BNP dictatorship in the 1970s, migrant workers are said to support the “progressive parties”, the BCP and its offshoot, the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD). But because there are no facilities in South Africa for migrants to cast their ballots, they usually have to return to Lesotho to vote during the weekend. If the election takes place on a weekday, they are excluded. In 1965, one year before independence, a large number of migrant workers, the majority of whom inclined to the BCP, could not return to cast their votes on polling day. This was one of the reasons why the BNP won. The rural-urban divide also played a role. Most migrant mine-workers come from the countryside, and the LCD is quite active in the rural constituencies, unlike the BNP, which operates mainly in the urban areas.¹⁶

Historically, South Africa has been attractive to manual workers, and not to the elite. The members of Lesotho’s diaspora are mainly peasants who are not sufficiently organised to form a political lobby. Only the mine-workers are unionised, unlike those Basotho who work as agricultural labourers in the Free State or as domestics in South African towns. Yet there are fewer and fewer Basotho miners in South Africa, and they allege that the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) does not care about their fate once they have been retrenched. Derided as “bumpkins” (*mego*), most Basotho migrants are not educated.

For the better-educated Basotho, South Africa did not offer the same motivation to migrate. The churches and the colonial administration in Lesotho provided better educational and job opportunities for blacks than could be found under the apartheid regime. As British subjects who had retained their local tribal authorities, many Basotho considered themselves better off than their fellows across the border. Until recently, they did not perceive South African education as being progressive (that is, in tune with international trends). Even today, requirements in the Free State that pupils should be proficient in Afrikaans are still a barrier to Basotho seeking to educate their children across the border.¹⁷ Hence the Basotho diaspora was not part of the elite; it was poorly organised and did not have much influence on the government in Maseru.

Yet it was to become a major vector for change in public opinion. Many ordinary migrant workers now express admiration for “South Africa’s political modernism”. For them, sovereignty has little or no relevance, as the bulk of their income derives from South Africa. Unlike Mozambican or Zimbabwean migrants whose only claim is for economic rights, the Basotho migrants demand political rights. According to surveys, half of them call for a total opening of the border, and over a third apply for South African citizenship. These proportions are three times higher than amongst Mozambican and Zimbabwean migrants.¹⁸ Interestingly enough, these demands were initially supported by the South African trade unions. During a congress in Johannesburg in 1991, the NUM vowed to end the alien status allotted to Basotho working in South Africa, and called for the incorporation of the enclave country into South Africa.¹⁹ In 1996, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) even passed a secret motion that Lesotho and Swaziland should be assimilated by South Africa, if necessary by extra-parliamentary means.

The issue is not really new. Various experts have discussed the implications of integration, or the founding of a federation of Southern African states.²⁰ Pretoria first suggested the economic links between the two countries as the reason why Lesotho should join South Africa. As early as 1932, it was argued that the control of Basutoland ought to be transferred to South Africa because of the customs union. After 1948 the enclave country was viewed from a strategic perspective by the apartheid regime.²¹ But Lesotho refused to agree to political incorporation in 1949, and became independent in 1966. And South Africa gave up the idea of a merger with “satellites” like Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana when it became a republic in 1961. Today it seems unlikely that South Africa wishes to incorporate Lesotho, with its extreme poverty and largely unskilled labour force. A greater concern of the government is the removal of border controls. This could lead to an influx of illegal immigrants, especially Chinese, who would enter South Africa from Lesotho.

Yet polls show that 41% of Basotho migrants continue to favour integration. Within Lesotho, 46% of respondents also support incorporation. But residents in the North appear most interested in the prospect of becoming part of South Africa, in contrast with the inhabitants of the Maseru region (56% against it), where the interest of many lies in preserving the status quo.²² According to David Coplan,

“a small elite resist all discussion of devolution, because their ascendancy depends upon revenues from the Lesotho Highlands Water Project and the Southern African Customs Union... At the

other end of the political and economic spectrum, the majority of workers/peasants straightforwardly desire the abolition of the border, which they see as an obstacle to local development and their own economic survival. Such people do not identify the Basotho nation with Lesotho as a nation state. On the contrary, they regard the Lesotho government, the senior aristocracy, and the army as existing only to serve their own interests".²³

The elite in power want the country to remain independent because Lesotho's sovereignty provides economic opportunities both for local authorities and for foreign investors. The Maputo industrial area was established in 1972 at Ficksburg Bridge as a re-processing zone for South African exporters, so that they could circumvent the international sanctions that had been imposed because of apartheid. Later on, Taiwan and China opened clothing factories in Maseru because of Lesotho's preferential access to the European and American markets. In such a context, the Lesotho government has good reason to refuse incorporation into South Africa. Instead, it would prefer to recover the "conquered territory" lost to the Orange Free State when the three "Wars of the Cannon" (*Seqiti*) drove the Basotho over the east bank of the Calendon River in June 1865, March 1867 and August 1867. This boundary, which was confirmed by the Second Treaty of Aliwal North, has been in dispute since the British annexed Basutoland in March 1868, saving king and country from further depredations by the Free Staters.

The BCP and the BNP raised the issue of reclaiming the lost territory at the United Nations (UN) in 1962. Lesotho's claim was revived by the Jonathan government in November 1974. The collapse of the apartheid regime and the establishment of diplomatic relations at ambassadorial level in May 1992 did not resolve the matter. Friction with South Africa continued over both the unresolved boundary issue and the persistent problem of cross-border cattle theft. The military intervention of the South African army in Maseru during the crisis of September 1998 exacerbated nationalist feelings. Operation Boleas, which ended only in May 2000, caused outrage in Lesotho and strengthened the opposition to incorporation with South Africa. According to polls, 72% of respondents said they would prefer to integrate the "conquered territory" (that is, the Free State province) in the hope that it would make Lesotho a more viable independent state.²⁴ A much smaller number suggested that Lesotho should be joined with the "conquered territory", with its regional headquarters at Maseru, to form a tenth province of South Africa

The ultimate role of the state

Ultimately, it is the Lesotho government that will decide on political integration. The internal dynamics of the state counterbalance the weight of the diaspora's wishes. Obviously, the views of Basotho migrants on the advantages of a greater South Africa cannot outweigh the resistance of the local aristocracy to incorporation. As in the Comores and Cape Verde, the contribution of the diaspora to the emergence of a new elite is variable. Apparently, for senior chiefs in Lesotho, emigration means a loss of status, privilege and economic resources. But successful migrants join the Councils of Elders when they return to their villages, and in this way strengthen existing social hierarchies.

Therefore the hypothesis that there is a correlation between political transnational power and the relative size of a diaspora needs to be reconsidered. The three case studies have shown that the influence of migrant communities is ultimately determined by the capacity of the homeland to capitalise on the diaspora's contributions. The more organised a state is, the more effective a diaspora can be. In the Comores, the archipelago is as fragmented politically as are its migrant communities abroad. The military junta wished to encourage remittances, but implemented no consistent policy to bring this about. As for Lesotho, the state profited from the income accruing from migrant labour, but did not attempt to reward them by making it easier for returnees to acquire land.²⁵ Between 1974–1996, the deferred payment scheme compelled migrant mineworkers in South Africa to withdraw their savings only at the end of a contract or in emergencies. By treaty, a share of their wages—reduced from 60% in 1979 to 30% in 1990—automatically accrued to the Lesotho government. The purpose was both to ensure that a higher percentage of money paid to Basotho mine-workers was directed towards the domestic economy, and to prevent migrants from falling into debt (so that their families at home would not suffer from a falling off of remittances). Yet the government did not protect migrants from the effects of retrenchment. Returnees were helped by private voluntary organisations, not the state.²⁶

Only Cape Verde made an organised attempt to attract and support the diaspora. Launched in 1986 and renamed the *Instituto das Comunidades* in 2001, the *Instituto de Apoio e Protecção ao Emigrante* not only promoted *crioulo* culture around the world, but also assisted the organisation of migrant communities. The Institute now contemplates repatriating and allocating land to some 12,000 Cape Verdeans from São Tomé and Príncipe.²⁷ Of course, the transition to democracy helped the involvement of the diaspora in

domestic politics. When the one-party system came to an end in 1991, the new constitution allowed citizens to hold double nationality, and permitted migrants to vote in presidential elections.²⁸ The diaspora was granted three seats in parliament, then six in 1995: two for the Americas (the US and Brazil), two for European countries (such as Portugal and France), and two for African states (like Senegal and Angola). In contrast, the military governments in Lesotho and the Comoros excluded migrant communities from participation in domestic politics.

Yet in war-torn countries like Somalia, the diaspora could also be very active because of the absence of the normal structures of state. This cautions us against overemphasising the role of democratic regimes in assessing the political transnational power migrant communities can wield. The only correlation that has been proved is with the degree of organisation of the state (whether authoritarian or not). Such a link, it must be said, can be worrisome. It reveals a kind of permeability between migrant communities and political crises in the homeland. Failed states export their problems abroad. In return, the political behaviour of some migrants sometimes reflects shady businesses at home.

Notes

- 1 A Graça, *A Dinâmica Organizativa de Cabo-Verdianos na Holanda*, ANAIS/ECCOM (Mindelo), 2 (1), 2000, pp 81–104.
- 2 Embaixada de Cabo Verde em Portugal, *Estudo de Caracterização da Comunidade Caboverdeana Residente Em Portugal*, mimeo, Lisboa, 1999, p 281.
- 3 Interview with the author, Embassy of Cape Verde in Paris, 6 February 2003.
- 4 M Lesourd, *Etat et société aux îles du Cap-Vert*, Karthala, Paris, 1995, p 383.
- 5 M Soilih, *L'influence des émigrés sur la vie politique des Comores*, *Hommes & Migrations*, 1215, 1998, pp 60–65.
- 6 Ali Mroudjae, interview with the author, Moroni, 2 November 2002.
- 7 Comoreans in Madagascar were estimated to number over 60,000 at this time. There were a few in the highlands and some 1,700 in Antananarivo in 1960. Most of them lived on the coast, in Diégo-Suarez (5,000) or in Mahajanga (over 20,000). In 1975, they were repatriated to the Comores and their property was afterwards confiscated because the authorities claimed that their houses had been left vacant and that absentee landlords did not pay local taxes any more. The issue is still unresolved, especially in the former Comorean strongholds of Tanambao in Diégo-Suarez and Mahabibo near the abattoir in Mahajanga.

- 8 Of the four islands comprising the archipelago, Mayotte was the only one to vote against independence and to remain a French territory. (This was in violation of international law regarding referendums in former colonies.) From Mayotte, Comorean migrants can proceed to Europe.
- 9 G Vivier Géraldine, *Les associations comoriennes en France: processus migratoires, identités et transformations sociales*, *Hommes & Migrations*, 1226, 2000, pp 58–74; S Blanchy, *Les Comoriens, une immigration méconnue*, *Hommes & Migrations*, 1215, 1998, pp 5–19.
- 10 République Fédérale Islamique des Comores, *Recensement général de la population et de l'habitat de 1991, vol. 2: Analyse des Données, tome 6: Migrations*, Commissariat Général au Plan et au Développement, Moroni, 1996, p 81.
- 11 In France too, former notables still control the diaspora's organisations. A new elite of women and young people emerged only in a few neighbourhood associations which defend migrant rights.
- 12 D Coplan, *In the time of cannibals: The word music of South Africa's Basotho migrants*, University of Chicago Press, Illinois, 1994, p 187.
- 13 While in the UK, he was deposed in November because he had announced that his return would be conditional upon the lifting of military rule, the formation of an interim government by all political parties, the restoration of the 1966 constitution, and the holding of an internationally supervised general election. He eventually came back to Lesotho in July 1992, after Major-General Justin Lekhanya had been ousted in a coup led by Colonel Elias Phitsoane Ramaema in April 1991. Following the voluntary abdication of Letsie III, his eldest son, Prince Bereng Seeisa was restored to the throne in January 1995. He died in a motor accident in January 1996.
- 14 Unlike the Basotho ethnic homeland of QwaQwa, Transkei was inhabited by Xhosa. It backed the LLA for a number of reasons. One, it was resentful of Lesotho's independence, which was genuine, unlike its own. Indeed Maseru refused to recognise the independence of Transkei, which had been granted by Pretoria in 1976. Two, the former Rhodesian white officers who controlled the Transkei Defence Force feared the penetration into Transkei of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (ANC) guerrillas, who allegedly came via Lesotho. Last but not least, the BCP had personal connections with Tsepo Letlaka, a Pan-Africanist Congress member who returned from exile to become the Transkei Minister of Finance in 1976. See R Southall, *Between competing paradigms: Post-colonial legitimacy in Lesotho*, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 21 (2), 2003, pp 251–66.
- 15 J Crush & Sechaba Consultants, *The border within: the future of the Lesotho–South African international boundary*, Southern African Immigration Project, Cape Town, 2002, p 65.
- 16 R Southall, *An unlikely success: South Africa and Lesotho's election of 2002*, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41 (2), 2003, pp 269–96.

- 17 D Coplan, A river runs through it: The meaning of the Lesotho-Free State border, *African Affairs*, 100 (1), 2001, p 102.
- 18 D McDonald (ed), *On borders: Perspectives on international migration in Southern Africa*, op cit, pp 32–36 & 188.
- 19 R F Weisfelder, Lesotho and the inner periphery, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 30 (4), 1992, pp 667–668.
- 20 J Gay, D Gill & D Hall (eds) *Lesotho's long journey: Hard choices at the crossroads. A comprehensive overview of Lesotho's historical, social, economic and political development with a view to the future*, Sechaba Consultants, Maseru, 1995, p 207.
- 21 F K Makoia, Debates about Lesotho's incorporation into the Republic of South Africa: ideology versus international survival, *Africa Insight*, 26 (4), 1996, pp 347–53.
- 22 S Rule & N Mapetla (eds), *Lesotho 2000: Public Perceptions and Perspectives*, HSRC, Pretoria, 2001, p 108.
- 23 D Coplan, op cit, p 111.
- 24 S Rule & N Mapetla, Ntsoaki, op cit, p 108.
- 25 According to the 1979 Land Act, the Lesotho government literally owns the country.
- 26 During the great strike of 1987, for instance, some 5,000 Basotho mine-workers were sacked and repatriated. The NUM formed 11 co-operatives of 15 members each to help these workers to return home. Five co-operatives were in the agricultural sector, three in brick-making, one in the production of candles, two in sewing and knitting. When the NUM set up its own development outfit in 1995, a training centre was opened in Lesotho. With funding from the EU, between 1995–1998 and the British Department for International Development from 1999–2004, the NUM also established two poultry distribution centres, opened greenhouses, backed integrated sandstone companies, supported tourism activities among other ventures. But very few returnees benefited from these schemes.
- 27 Between 1920–1970, approximately 87,000 Cape Verdeans were deported or hired by the Portuguese to work on cocoa plantations in São Tomé and Príncipe. Today, half of the inhabitants of Príncipe island are said to be of Cape Verdean ancestry, but most of them are landless and live below the poverty line.
- 28 L Andrade Silva, *Le rôle des émigrés dans la transition démocratique aux îles du Cap-Vert*, in Lusotopie (ed), *Des protestantismes en "lusophonie catholique"*, Karthala, Paris, 1998, pp 320–321.

CHAPTER 3

THE DARK SIDE OF DIASPORA NETWORKING ORGANISED CRIME AND TERRORISM

The negative aspect of diaspora networking takes two forms. First, migrants can directly finance and promote terrorist activities and armed struggles. Second, informal remittances facilitate money laundering and are open to criminal interference because they circumvent exchange controls and are therefore illegal. They provide opportunities for tax evasion, the payment of kickbacks for insider trading, the injection of forged currencies, the introduction of counterfeiting and the backing of various criminal undertakings: rackets, drugs and arms dealings, trafficking in organs, prostitution, kidnapping, the smuggling of human beings across borders and so on.

As regards the role of emigrants in providing funding for wars, the African diasporas are no exception to the common rule. Irish communities in America have supported the Irish Republican Army (IRA) for many years, and Jewish organisations were reported to have transferred over US\$400 million per year to Israel during the 1980s. The Lebanese diaspora, three or four million in number, also played a key role during their country's civil war, and remitted US\$2,254 billion in 1980, according to some analysts.¹ Today, the international financial support for Hamas, which has been declared a terrorist organisation by Washington since 1995, exceeds US\$100 million per year and is still flowing secretly through Arabic countries, in addition to US\$2 million from British Muslims and US\$20 million from the USA. As for the Liberation Tigers (LTTE), the annual resources provided by the Tamil diaspora are estimated at approximately US\$50 million. Interestingly, this guerrilla movement uses the African continent as a route for the transfer of money. The World-wide Congress of Tamils, which met in Mauritius in 2001, provided a good opportunity to raise funds for the cause. Several organisations in South Africa, such as the People Against Sri Lankan Oppression (PASLO), the Dravidians for Peace and Justice (DPJ), and the Tamil Elam Support Movement (TESM), support the LTTE. For instance, the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO), which is based in Durban, collects money for the LTTE which is then channelled through Australia. In November 1998, the Liberation Tigers were even suspected of trying to shift their headquarters from Britain to South Africa to avoid the new anti-terrorist legislation being introduced in the UK.

Of course, it is more common to find collecting centres for armed struggles in the developed world, since the poorest countries in Africa are usually at the receiving, not the donating, end of remittance flows. Hence during the border war in 1999, the Eritrean embassies in the West canvassed their migrant communities to raise money to fund their country's fight against Ethiopia.² The involvement of diasporas in armed struggles has revealed not only the existence of operational groups within them, but also helped to identify key individuals. In June 2004, for instance, a Somali named Nourredine Abdih was arrested in the US on charges of financing al-Qaida. And in November 2001, another Somali, Ahmed Noor Ali Jimale, was detained in Dubai because he was suspected of having remitted money to al-Itihad, an Islamist armed movement in the Horn of Africa.

Transferring money in contravention of exchange controls: From illegality to money laundering

The informal channels through which private financial transfers are sent allow criminal or terrorist groups to use "clean" diaspora networks to move "dirty" money to other countries. The problem is that most of the remittances transmitted to Africa south of the Sahara are not conveyed by means of formal banking procedures. Only 16% of the money remitted to Senegal by the so-called *modou-modou* migrants, for instance, is channelled through Western Union. As for the Sudanese in Arab oil-producing countries before the first Gulf crisis in 1991, only 10% of their remittances were sent through banks. Twenty percent was exported as merchandise, and the remainder of payments carried in the form of cash by "messengers", the *tujjar al-shanta*.³ This pattern explains the enormous discrepancies in the estimates of such financial transfers, which ranged between US\$277 million–US\$3 billion in 1983–1984, but might have been as much as US\$5.5 billion if remittances in kind were included. Even the number of Sudanese working abroad was an enigma. It varied from 350,000–550,000 in the mid-1970s: 65% of them were in Saudi Arabia, 15% in Libya and 5% in Egypt.

Unreliable statistics are also characteristic of Somali remittances. Their *hawilad* companies, as they are called, transfer money from the developed world to the Horn of Africa through two key points, Jeddah and Dubai. From these cities the banking system is relayed to operators who rely on individual connections and personal trust (*amaano*) as guarantees of loyalty, because the usual financial facilities are non-existent in this war-devastated country. Cash is given to the recipient in Somalia, while the bank account of the *hawilad*

operator is credited with a commission in hard currency in Dubai or Jeddah. In many cases, there is no physical transfer of cash. *Hawilad* companies use the proceeds of the sales of goods within Somalia to deliver the money to the intended recipients, while the corresponding credit earned abroad allows traders to buy and import merchandise from Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates, which is a free-tax haven. All of these arrangements mean that transfers are impossible to trace.

This system is not specific to Somalia. It is estimated that 160,000 *hawala* offices collect some US\$200 billion per year in the US, and similar arrangements are to be found in the Arab world and the Indian sub-continent, where they are called *hundi*, a Sanskrit word which refers to a reliable way of transferring money.⁴ The *chiti* "certificate" of the Hindi diaspora works like a letter of credit, and the Chinese abroad talk about *fei ch'ien*, that is, "flying money". The Thai expression is *phoe kuan*.

Several factors explain why unofficial remittances are likely to continue under this kind of system. First, it is quicker, cheaper, more efficient and more inconspicuous than any service provided by financial institutions or companies like Western Union. Second, it is supported by people who do not trust banks, work largely outside the formal economy, and are used to avoiding state regulations. Third, exchange controls, lack of hard currency, poor access to credit, bureaucratic procedure, heavy taxation and the risk of confiscation of foreign assets prevent migrants from investing officially in their homelands, and therefore underground transfers present an attractive alternative.

As they often lack legitimacy abroad, authoritarian regimes, in particular, do not inspire confidence in their country's diaspora. In 1988, for instance, the Nigerian military junta relaxed exchange controls and allowed citizens to keep hard currencies in their bank accounts. But the liberalisation of the economy and the World Bank's structural adjustment programmes suddenly stopped after another coup in 1993. So Nigerian emigrants continued to remit money through informal channels. In the US, less than 5% used banks to do so, and two out of three sent cash home through relatives or friends who were visiting Nigeria.⁵ In Cameroon, 87% of migrants participated in the so-called *jiangi* credit clubs, which were the most effective way to remit money home.⁶

Proximity also facilitates cash transfers from hand to hand, as is shown by the Basotho in South Africa who, unlike the members of other migrant communities, can easily come and go between the two countries without their having to settle in South Africa.⁷ Since a good number of them are not registered

workers, they do not use the official financial institutions. Less than 6% of their remittances are channelled through the banking system. Low-income migrants do not have bank accounts at all, and find it cheaper to send money by means of taxi drivers or friends. Bank-based transfer methods, whose fees are fixed whatever the volume of a remittance, become competitive only for amounts above R250.⁸

Yet distance does not prevent migrants from sending cash through private couriers. Hence the Comoreans in France give money to travellers returning home, to deliver to the family. Even if it is rudimentary, this system does not allow room for funds to be diverted, because everybody knows everybody else on the islands. Moreover, it is a quicker method than using the *Banque Internationale du Commerce* (BIC), a local branch of the *Banque Nationale de Paris* (BNP), which takes two weeks to transfer funds from France to the Comores. It is also cheaper than Western Union. The latter, which has operated in Moroni since the post office stopped accepting money orders in 1998, transferred FC3 billion in 2001. Remittances are usually sent in euros, which are easily assimilated into an economy where 40% of transactions are made in cash. Migrants also send gold coins called *pauni* (after the English word “pound”) to pay for dowries and other aspects of customary weddings. Because the FC is freely convertible to hard currencies, the *hawilad* system is seldom used. Comorean traders in Madagascar, where exchange controls are tighter, transfer funds by giving credit orders on private citizen-bands. Other islands like La Réunion or Mayotte, do not need to resort to such stratagems since, as French territories, they belong to the euro zone.

Reliability and efficiency explain why African migrants remit money by these informal means. But the flexibility of the system also has drawbacks. Clean money can become dirty money because migrants are unable to control the management of the funds they send to show solidarity with their villages once these have been put at the disposal of a loose clan network. The Malians of Kayes in France represent a rare example of a diaspora that tries to avoid the diversion of remittances into useless expenditure. Half of their remittances take the form of food coupons that can be spent only in local co-operatives. But in most other cases, capital sent to home villages from abroad is wasted in ostentatious spending which is not directly relevant to either production or development, like houses, cars, electronic equipment, or drugs like *qat* in Somalia.

Thus in the Comores, remittances are intended to help families survive rather than to support the small private sector, the local tontines (*sanduk*), or the credit

clubs (*meck*) that were set up at the beginning of the 1990s. When they visit on holiday, the so-called *je viens* ("I'm coming back") give their kith and kin many presents, and also build houses for the *anda*. Yet the development projects they back focus on their native villages only. As locals can hardly afford to buy fuel or electricity to use the equipment given to them by generous migrants from France, municipalities like Fombouni and Mbéni have had to tax 10% of the *anda* spending to finance and maintain necessary infrastructure.⁹

Remittances have also been identified as one of the reasons for Lesotho's lack of economic development and diversification. One of the prime concerns of Basotho migrants is to acquire the capital with which to make a *bohali* payment and establish a homestead. Because most of them are landless when they leave their villages, mine-workers usually prefer to buy cattle or build themselves a house when they go home. Their communities put extreme pressure on migrants to remit money. This prevents them from saving money to invest. At best, returnees buy and rent out taxis, or become the figurehead owners of coffee shops that are usually run by Chinese illegal immigrants. Others spend their money on the education of their children in South Africa, thus starting a new cycle of emigration. According to surveys, only 1% of Basotho mine-workers in South Africa own business enterprises.¹⁰ In Lesotho, the Basotho-owned private sector is very small. It has failed to integrate with the buoyant foreign sector. Some analysts argue that the availability of employment opportunities in South Africa explains the shortage of entrepreneurship in Lesotho.

In Cape Verde too, the diaspora does not seem to be inclined to become involved in productive activities. Because many incentives have been offered to attract remittances and investment, it is possible that some migrants with dual citizenship have registered companies as foreigners so as to gain preferential access to the free-trade zone in Mindelo. But in general, the private sector in Cape Verde is owned by former civil servants, not the diaspora. In Portugal as well, most Cape Verdean migrants are manual labourers, sailors, or domestic workers. Only 2% are professionals, and there are very few entrepreneurs amongst them.¹¹ And in Holland, the Cape Verdean community has few traders or businessmen.¹² Once back in the islands, returnees prefer to own houses. Many villas in the city of Assomada are said to have been built by drug dealers from the Netherlands.

Criminal elements can use remittances to launder money or back terrorist groups. This was done with the Somali *hawilad* during the attacks on the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar-Es-Salaam in August 1998. Diaspora networks

enable rebel movements to become global, and assist international mafias to stay competitive.¹³ In this way, migrant communities around the world can become strategic relays for crime syndicates.

In Africa, Nigeria provides an interesting case study because of its high profile in international prostitution, drug trafficking and fraud.

The Nigerian case: “419”, prostitution and drug trafficking

Nigeria has gained a reputation for crime internationally, and more especially in its neighbouring countries. An economic giant and the most populated country on the continent, Nigeria has a frightening presence in the region. As early as the 1950's, Ibo migrants in Cameroon were suspected of innumerable nefarious activities, including grabbing land, bribing civil servants, kidnapping children for human sacrifices, attacking women (and making them sterile), importing poisoned food, selling impure drugs, stealing church bells and forging currency.¹⁴ Perhaps their bad reputation had something to do with local beliefs in witchcraft, which are very strong along the border near Mount Cameroon.¹⁵ Nowadays, Nigerian migrants are still perceived collectively by the inhabitants of Cameroon as likely to be oil smugglers or dealers in stolen cars.¹⁶ These hard feelings were aggravated by the political tensions between the two countries. Their armies clashed in 1981, 1987, 1989 and 1994 because of disputes concerning certain islands in Lake Chad, and the territorial waters around the Bakassi peninsula.¹⁷

These examples imply that the bad reputation of Nigerians in Africa is shaped by politics, economic competition, nationalist xenophobia and ethnic differences. Fear of invasion prompted the governments of Ghana in 1969 and Equatorial Guinea in 1976 to expel thousands of Nigerian immigrants. And in 1990, the landing in Monrovia of Nigerian troops belonging to the Economic Community of West African States' Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) made Liberians afraid of a “malevolent spiritual power” that came “for sacrificial purposes”.¹⁸ After the Nigerian peacekeeping force had looted the port of Buchanan in 1992, ECOMOG was nicknamed: “Every Car Or Movable Object Gone”.

Yet the meddling of Abuja in other countries' domestic affairs is not the sole reason for the bad reputation of Nigerian immigrants in Africa. Hard feelings also developed in Niger, which had always had a cordial diplomatic relationship with Nigeria.¹⁹ In two villages separated by a very short distance but located on either side of the Niger–Nigeria border, the Hausa communities in both

belonged to the same ethnic group, were all Muslim, and participated together in various smuggling activities.²⁰

The specialisation of Nigerian migrants in commerce might be a reason for their involvement in crime. Unlike labour migrations, commercial networks facilitate smuggling. The Hausa and Yoruba traded in West Africa long before the region was colonised and borders were drawn. In Ghana at the end of the nineteenth century, for example, the Hausa monopolised the kola trade and occupied 20% of Salaga, a little city North of the White Volta.²¹ As for the Yoruba, they were traditionally travelling salesmen, especially the so-called *osomaafo* from the Nigerian town of Ijesha since 1900. They arrived in Ghana after the Hausa, but were estimated to comprise 1,5% of the population of the country in 1960.²² Whereas the Hausa were concentrated in the North, the Yoruba were scattered all over Ghana. They specialised in the importation of textiles and the export of cocoa, and took up an intermediary position between the local retailers and the European or Lebanese firms until they were accused of tax evasion and expelled in 1969.²³

Differences in the prices of goods were inducements for Nigerian migrants to turn to smuggling. They did so in Ghana as well as in Cameroon, Chad or Niger, where Nigerian peasants sold their groundnuts at artificially high prices thanks to Niamey's agricultural marketing boards, which wanted to get aid from France and to fill their European Union (EU) quotas.²⁴ The Republic of Benin is now the smuggling hub of the region, sometimes described as the thirty-seventh state of the Nigerian federation. To circumvent the strict regulation of foreign trade in Lagos, the port of Cotonou imports and re-exports tobacco, alcohol, second-hand cars and textiles to Nigeria in exchange for petrol and agricultural products like cacao or palm oil. The volume of smuggling is so high that the Beninise government eventually decided to legalize the transit of goods through the country in order to earn some income from it.²⁵ Such activities are concentrated on the coastal Nigeria/Benin border in the South, for obvious reasons. One, this is where the market is (between Cotonou and Lagos, the biggest city in Africa). Two, this is where Yoruba traders live and mix with the Goun of the Republic of Benin, who are culturally very close to them. Three, this is where the border is easier to cross. In the North, in comparison, the border is a river without a bridge, and the low density of population prevents smugglers from hiding in the surrounding villages to avoid being caught by customs patrols.²⁶

Yet although smuggling is illegal, it is not criminal. However, the Nigerian diaspora is also involved in organized crime. This appears to be the result of factors such as endemic local corruption, which facilitates illicit trafficking;

the Biafra civil war, which contributed to a proliferation of firearms; the oil boom of the 1970s, which led to the embezzlement of public funds; and the economic crisis of the 1980s, which was accompanied by a rise in robberies. The expansion of the Nigerian diaspora and organized crime went hand in hand. Global migration boosted prostitution, drug trafficking and fraud, the three main activities of Nigerian syndicates. The smuggling of Nigerian sex workers became a whole industry that now extends from Switzerland to France and Italy (where black prostitutes are called “fireflies”), and has even reached the prudish kingdom of Saudi Arabia, from which 1,000 women are said to be deported every month by the authorities.²⁷

Drug trafficking is in a paradoxical sense, a diaspora “success story”, for Nigeria does not produce any cocaine, heroin, crack or ecstasy. During the last 20 years, Nigeria has become one of the main purveyors of narcotics in the world. It supplied one-third of the heroin seized in the US, and more than half of the cocaine imported by South Africa.²⁸ Nigerian drug pushers have become more sophisticated as their activities have extended to the global markets. At the beginning (in the 1980s), drugs were exported by casual travellers: traders who hid them in electronic goods; sportsmen who were invited to participate in international games; and military officers who abused their diplomatic immunity. But in the 1990s, all Nigerian migrants were inevitably suspected of carrying drugs. Therefore the transportation of drugs to Europe and the Americas was entrusted to Kenyan women or white South Africans with British passports. Nigerian dealers abroad had to keep a low profile—in South Africa, for instance, they were generally not as violent and ostentatious in their behaviour as the local gangsters. In a sample taken for a study conducted in three South African cities in 2001, no Nigerian dealers were arrested for violent crimes. Instead, theft, drug offences, fraud and having illegal alien status were the most common offences among this group.²⁹

Eventually, the international enforcement of drug laws and intensive police investigations compelled the Nigerian syndicates to shift their bases to other locations all over the world. According to a director of the Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Nigeria is no longer the major transit point for drugs it used to be.³⁰ Small traffickers still supply the country, but the real barons have gone underground and now live elsewhere, where they are not affected by the Nigerian government’s reactivation of a 1931 extradition treaty with Britain, which was extended to the US by decree in 1966. The heads of the drug syndicates are unable to return to the homeland, especially if they have served jail sentences abroad, since under the Nigerian penal code they should be sentenced again for tarnishing the reputation of their country.

Frauds also rely on diaspora connections for their effectiveness. A world-wide enterprise that often uses the Internet to target businessmen, migrants, churches, non-governmental organisations, and even states, is run by Nigerians. In 2001, for instance, some Nigerians attempted to sell passports for the Republic of Lomar, a state which existed only on the web! Computer engineers were certainly involved in these scams. A Nigerian syndicate based in the Bronx, New York, stole credit card numbers and used them to divert US\$2,7 million from 30,000 bank accounts in America before the gang was arrested and charged with fraud. They appeared in a Manhattan court in November 2002.

Known internationally as “419” after a section of the Nigerian penal code, the advance fee fraud scheme is the country’s most notorious scam. Dubious requests by a “son” of Sani Abacha, Mobutu Sese Seko or Robert Mugabe were sent out to various potential victims targeted at random, using circular letters, faxes and electronic messages. The fictitious sender of the messages asked for help in transferring African funds to a bank account abroad, offering to reward any person prepared to assist with a sizeable percentage as a commission. If interested, the intended victim was requested to forward a variety of documents and to pay certain fees in order to effect the transfer of the money into his or her bank account. It was the fees that were the whole object of the exercise for the criminal syndicates and freelance confidence tricksters who administered the scheme.

The “419” scam was not violent, but foreign businessmen attracted by the false promise of a quick profit in Nigeria have been kidnapped or murdered. Others have committed suicide because they had been bankrupted, or were wanted by the police in their own countries because they had embezzled money and could not reimburse it.

The biggest financial fraud perpetrated in Nigeria involved US\$181 million which a Brazilian director of the *Banco Noereste* in São Paulo was duped into paying between 1996–1997.³¹ In the US, the loss to frauds instigated by Nigerians is officially in the region of US\$100 million per year, probably US\$300 million if one includes swindles that are not reported to the police by the victims. In 2001, “419ers” were said to have earned US\$500 million from victims all over the world. The highest estimate is a total amount of US\$7 billion since 1985.³² Even the World Bank has had to issue an official warning concerning fraudulent investment schemes that have been using its name. As Nigerian 419ers were arrested in Kenya, the Gambia, Ghana, South Africa, Canada, the US and the UK, they became a national concern in

Nigeria. It was asserted that they were a major explanation for the low level of foreign investment in the country, which had been blacklisted by the Financial Action Task Force, an arm of the IMF.

Such financial scams require an international organisation to operate effectively, since they rely on the credulity of foreigners and the impossibility of checking the details of a deal in Africa. In the local Nigerian context, cases of fraud and embezzlement were being reported as early as the 1920s. But they were not sophisticated crimes. (One budding forger wrote to a German firm to order a “machine for making money”!) At the time, the colonial market economy was still nascent. In the North, the Hausa disregarded banknotes, calling them “paper”, *takada*. To the Yoruba in the South, coins were “flat money”, *owo pelebe*, as opposed to the traditional cowries of an economy based on barter.³³ The level of embezzlement was low, and money obtained by theft or fraud was not reinvested abroad.

Then the oil boom introduced easy money to Nigeria. Gangs became increasingly active during the 1970s. Forgeries of hard currency and the naira expanded with the black market: the number of cases reported by the police was four times higher in the mid-1980s than in the previous decade, up to ten times higher for fraud.³⁴ In the context of coups and illegitimate military juntas, corruption at the highest level also created a sense of impunity. Today, many Nigerians consider that they are not responsible for 419ers, who they argue are a product of capitalism and neo-liberalism.³⁵ To them, foreigners are as guilty and greedy as the Nigerian conmen when they agree to transfer over-budgeted money and so deprive developing countries of their resources.³⁶ Such frauds are “moral”, because they punish corruption on both sides.

The way the responsibility for international crime is allotted shows the other side of the same coin. The perception of crime varies with points of view. For example, immigrants are often blamed for a rise in violence. In Johannesburg, more than half of South Africans believe that immigration is the primary cause of the high rate of crime in the city.³⁷ Police figures show that foreigners are responsible for only 14% of reported crimes, excluding offences relating to illegal alien status.³⁸ But migrants are also the victims of violence. According to some surveys, one out of every two foreigners has been robbed while in South Africa, three out of four in Johannesburg, and most of them think that crime is lower in their own homelands.³⁹ To migrants, their vulnerability to crime is as much a problem as finding a job or a decent place to live. Interestingly, African immigrants to Nigeria suffer from the same prejudices, in a very violent environment. They are treated as scapegoats and charged with many of the

evils that beset the country, from economic crisis to armed robbery. Hundreds of thousands of them were expelled for these reasons by the Nigerian government in 1983 and 1985.⁴⁰ Yet in Lagos, only 7% of armed robbers detained in the famous penitentiary of Kiri-Kiri in 1990 were foreigners. (These were mainly from Ghana and Cameroon.)⁴¹

Perceptions of crime need to be put into perspective. As far as Nigerian immigrants are concerned, one should be aware that the weight of numbers tends to distort the degree of their involvement in illegal activities. A breakdown of foreign criminals by nationality show that they are often the largest African group in jail abroad, as they come from the most populated country on the continent. In Ireland, for instance, they have incurred more criticism than any other black nationals. African immigration to Ireland is quite new: until recently, it was a country of emigrants, and its immigration legislation, based on the *jus soli*, was among the most accommodating in Europe. Before it was amended in 2004, the country's constitution automatically gave Irish citizenship to any foreign applicant born on the island, while it took three years for an asylum request to be processed before migrants could settle permanently. Unlike England, which began accepting African migrants as far back as the nineteenth century, Ireland was not accustomed to receiving black communities. Therefore the Nigerians, who represented 39% of asylum seekers in 2003, became the first African community in Ireland, and attracted most of the xenophobic feelings that resulted.

Immigration and security: Some reminders

In the light of globalisation, there is a temptation to exaggerate the part migrant communities play in crime, money laundering and terrorist attacks. Police target immigrants because they are foreigners, and so tend to overemphasise their role in crime. Being an illegal alien is a violation of the law, but it is not a criminal act, even if the closing of European and American borders tends to generate violence and the smuggling of human beings into countries. It is important not to forget the other side of the same coin: ethnic African diasporas that back armed struggles can also help to build peace. Examples are the role played by Somali refugees during the negotiations in Arta, Djibouti, in 2000 and Nairobi, Kenya, in 2004; or by the Acholi in the UK trying to find a peace settlement with the Lord Resistance Army in Northern Uganda.

Moreover, only a fraction of funds used for crime or terrorist activities is channelled through remittances. Money laundering focuses on discreet

economic activities in general. These are carried out through *bureau de change*, import-export companies, casinos, private post offices, travel agencies, businesses dealing in insurance, pawnbroking, jewellery, gold and so on. In most cases, criminal groups prefer to use offshore formal banks that have no connection with migrant communities and informal remittances in cash.

The same precaution should apply to the Islamic banks that were accused of sponsoring terrorist networks after the attacks on America on 11 September 2001. Founded in the 1970s in Egypt and the Gulf, Islamic banks follow the *Shari'a*, the Quraanic law that forbids usury. In the intervening three decades they have expanded and attracted many investors from the Arabic countries.⁴² With 186 financial institutions and 18,655 branches in countries around the world by the beginning of the 1990s, their assets are now said to be worth over US\$200 billion, as against US\$166 billion around 1995 and US\$7,6 billion in 1985. Yet it seems that the value of their deposits, which rose from US\$5,8 billion to US\$80 billion in ten years, does not represent a high proportion of "terrorist money".⁴³ The word "Islamic" is not equivalent to "fundamentalist", and not all religious radicals support armed struggle. In general, the majority of remittances sent by the Muslim diasporas are concerned with social values, not politics. On average, there is little activism in these communities for either secular or religious revolutions. According to some surveys in the US, only one Arab immigrant in 30 belongs to a political organisation, as against one in three amongst Jewish immigrants.⁴⁴

In the same way, the proportion of migrants to nationals in crime statistics is usually overestimated. The focus on illegal alien status makes the police more likely to arrest foreign than national criminals. And skin colour also fuels prejudice. In developed countries, blacks are easy to target, and are often perceived as would-be drug pushers, gangsters, counterfeiters, sex workers or illegal immigrants. On the other hand, as has already been noted, the number of foreigners who are victims of crime is underestimated. Because they do not trust the police (or lack proper documentation to justify their presence in the country), immigrants are reluctant to report crime to the authorities. Immigration restrictions in developed countries are a cause for concern in this regard, since they incite African migrants to enter countries clandestinely and to live in virtual hiding, which exposes them to the criminal world. As early as 1972 in Norway and 1974 in France, laws were enacted to limit economic immigration. The Schengen Convention of 1990 effectually closed the borders of the EU countries to immigrants from Africa, and the open-door policy of Northern America was brought to an end in the 1980s. As a result, requests for asylum became one of the last remaining means of entering rich countries,

which had politicised economic immigration. However, asylum laws were also made stricter. Only 4% of African asylum seekers are granted the right to enter the US nowadays, even though one out of four of all refugees in the world come from Africa.⁴⁵ In Canada too, various bureaucratic obstacles hinder African asylum seekers attempting to obtain refugee status.⁴⁶

Europe and Northern America are not the only regions to have resisted economic immigration. The Arab oil-producing countries have also restricted the issuing of visas, barring entry to Aids victims, for instance. Libya, the champion of pan-Africanism, deported thousands of Nigerian and Ghanaian immigrants in September 2000. According to the country's Minister for African Co-operation and Economic Integration, they were miscreants who had nothing to do in an Arab country.⁴⁷ In Saudi Arabia as well, health regulation has provided a good excuse to reject Africans, especially during the pilgrimage to Mecca, which is the main entry point for illegal immigrants.⁴⁸ In 1996, Nigerian Muslims were refused visas to Mecca because of a meningitis epidemic in Nigeria (the official reason given).⁴⁹ These moves contributed to the decrease of the number of Nigerian pilgrims to Saudi Arabia, from 100,000 in 1981 to 57,000 in 1999.

When it comes to the restriction of immigration, religious Islamic brotherhood in Saudi Arabia or Sudan is as rigorous as secular pan-Africanist solidarity in Libya. In Africa south of the Sahara, Sudan was one of the first countries to restrict economic immigration after gaining independence in 1956. The reason was that many pilgrims travelling to Mecca through Sudan elected to live in the latter.⁵⁰ According to the British colonial authorities in the mid-1920s, 3,000 out of 8,000 Nigerian travellers crossing Sudan every year never reached Mecca. Only 38% of them returned to their homes, and 28% stayed in Sudan, where they were known collectively as *Fellata*.⁵¹ At independence, these *Fellata* were excluded from economic competition and the civil service, and they were required to prove that they had been in Sudan for ten years or more in order to apply for citizenship.⁵²

In other African countries, xenophobic feelings were also on the rise. These were a major cause of the civil war in Cote d'Ivoire. In Nigeria during the oil boom, which attracted many African immigrants, foreigners were often despised by the Yoruba, who called them *ara oko* in Oyo, *elu* in Ife and *sesede* in Lagos. In 1983 and 1985, the government deported hundreds of thousands of aliens, despite having signed a convention in 1979, which allowed Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) citizens to circulate freely, and stay in Nigeria without visas for 90 days.⁵³ In South Africa too, the sudden influx of African immigrants provoked negative reactions after the end of

the apartheid regime. In mockery of their foreign languages, West Africans were nicknamed *amagongogo*; Zimbabweans, *amakalanga*; Mozambicans, *amakwerekwere*. Hundreds of thousands of them were deported and South Africa's immigration laws were made more stringent, despite the government's official stance that the region's human resources should be allowed to move freely in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries.⁵⁴ According to some surveys, one South African national out of every four supported a total closure of the borders.⁵⁵

Yet containment policies have severe drawbacks, experienced by both developed and developing countries alike. They force illegal immigrants to live in hiding, cause them to overstay visiting permits, and push them into the criminal world. To circumvent the Schengen regulations, for instance, Somalis smuggle their countrymen into Europe. Techniques used include stealing virgin passports, bribing the immigration authorities, manipulating their rights to family reunification, making false paternity or maternity claims, renting out legitimate European passports to members of the diaspora and filling in claims for lost passports in order to substitute different photographs. Containment policies have also contributed considerably to the creation of international mafias that specialise in the trafficking and smuggling of humans.

In Africa, the deportation of immigrants or settlers, as with Indian traders in Uganda in 1972 and white farmers in Zimbabwe after 1999, has disrupted domestic economies and boosted the black market. In Ghana, the forced departure of Nigerian immigrants in 1969 provoked a drop in cocoa production.⁵⁶ In return, the eviction from Nigeria and repatriation of Ghanaians in 1983 and 1985 put the finances of the government in Accra under great strain.⁵⁷ And in Nigeria, the prices of imported goods rose, precipitated inflation, exacerbated the economic crisis, and led to a massive increase in smuggling. These smugglers later became professional criminals.⁵⁸ African immigrants who remained in Nigeria after 1985 had to bribe the police in order to live there, or went underground.⁵⁹

In Lesotho in the 1990s, unemployment and rising crime were also said to be a consequence of the retrenchments in the mining industry in South Africa. Cross-border raiding and stock thefts increased after the return of the migrant workers. Some parts of the border became no-go areas, because Basotho village vigilante associations apprehended and killed cattle thieves. According to some authors, "the cycle is a depressing one—stock theft is a result of poverty, stock theft increases poverty and poverty begets more stock theft".⁶⁰

In general, borders in Africa represent a business opportunity rather than a limit. This is why containment policies promote smuggling and other crimes. The artificial colonial border between Lesotho and South Africa is a good example. Illegal trade in weapons, alcohol, and stolen livestock began as soon as it was demarcated.⁶¹ Arms smuggling even provoked a war in 1880, which resulted in the collapse of Cape rule in Basutoland and a reversion to direct administration by the British Crown in 1884. Bootlegging expanded after the South African War (1899–1902), and Lesotho's independence did not stop cross-border raiding, stock theft, and the “dagga for guns” trade. Paradoxically, the tightening of identification controls by South Africa offered new opportunities for corruption. At the border, officials prevented Basotho migrant workers with permanent South African residence stamps from using Lesotho passports, and *tjotjo* boys obtained documents or took people to the head of the queue on payment of a fee. The retrenchment of mine-workers also gave rise to shady “advice centres”, which charged money to collect disability or pension pay-outs for gullible returnees who believed they had not received what was owed to them.

The closure of borders and the deportation of illegal aliens raises a question: does a fall in remittances encourage crime at the highest level of government? Like oil-producing countries whose income is highly dependent on international market prices, developing economies that rely on private transfers from labour migrants are very vulnerable to a decline in remittances.⁶² Lesotho could hardly afford to repatriate all its nationals from South Africa, unlike Malawi, where the agricultural sector is very different. The latter was able to integrate over half of its migrant workers into the labour market with little disruption between 1970–1976.⁶³ In the same way, a massive deportation of Comorean or Cape Verdeans migrants abroad would provoke a major economic crisis on the islands. The main risk would be the emergence of an ersatz economy based on criminal business interests, as a substitute for the loss of remittance income. The failed state of the Comoros, for instance, has already shown it is ready to sell its sovereignty and its territory at a price. During the apartheid regime, it helped South Africa and Iran to circumvent international sanctions and to exchange weapons for oil. In 1994, it negotiated a US\$5 million contract with a German firm to store toxic waste. Likewise, corrupt customs officials turned a blind eye to the passage of the explosives that were used in the terrorist attack on the US Embassy in Nairobi in 1998.

Today, the Comoreans want to establish free-trade zones. These projects follow the model of the French colonial division of labour, and consist of an international airport near Moroni, a port at Moutsamoudou, and a marine

park in Mohéli. The free-trade zone of Grande Comore is located at the airport; that of Anjouan is situated near the airstrip of Ouani, a few kilometres away from the port of Moutsamoudou. Anjouan, which seceded from Grande Comore in 1997, hopes to attract entrepreneurs from Mauritius, whose own free-trade zone created thousands of jobs. Mauritius is now investing in luxury products like *haute couture*. A shortage of cheap and unskilled labour caused Mauritian textile and food industries to move to a new free-trade zone in Beira, Mozambique, and to invest in Madagascar. Compared with these, Anjouan does not sound very competitive, because of its political instability, the fragility of its private sector, and a lack of space at the port at Moutsamoudou, where goods have to be transported to the industrial area by truck or boat.

The project seems risky, from both the investment and the security points of view. Free-trade zones in the region (from Mauritius to the Seychelles) are known to be involved in money laundering. The offshore banking facilities on Anjouan and Mohéli are of concern because they enable money launderers to preserve their anonymity and to keep their financial dealings secret. Both islands have established central banks that are illegal according to the Comores' constitution. In Fomboni, the secessionists licensed a Mwali International Service Authority in 2001. In Moutsamoudou, a Bureau for International Companies was opened in 1999, and registered 20 firms in the three years following. It was closed in 2004. Managed from La Réunion island, its website also offered credit card services on the Internet. A British firm (DS) with a Russian representative in Moutsamoudou developed captive banking to enable companies to have their own financial facilities. In 2004, the secessionists backed a rival, the Offshore Financial Authority, which operates in association with the Global Bank.

Unlike the Comores, the Republic of Cape Verde is not a failed state. In fact, it could be transformed into an important offshore banking centre, not least because it has the highest density of fixed telephone lines in Africa, with 64,000 subscribers in 2001, as against 21,000 in 1995. Two offshore banks operate in Cape Verde since a law was enacted in 1997. These are the *Banco Fiduciário Internacional* and the *Banco Insular* of José Luís Fernandes, a former PAICV minister and ambassador to the US. Fernandes has good contacts in Angola and owns a factory that processes diamonds (which officially come from Guinea Conakry, but may originate in Sierra Leone) on Sal Island. Cape Verde also plans to develop gambling by building a casino in Praia, and to establish a further free-trade zone on Sal Island. In 1993, a law was passed which permitted enterprises producing goods and services exclusively for export to benefit from exemptions on tax and customs duties. In 1999, other

legislation provided for the transformation of the industrial parks at Mindelo and Praia into free-trade zones.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, Cape Verde established a flag of convenience in 1997, and an international ship registration agency was founded in Mindelo by investors from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the US.

In the same way that the Comores accommodated Iran and South Africa in the 1980s and Lesotho makes room for Chinese and Taiwanese textile factories today, poverty stricken Cape Verde may be ready to rent itself out for a price, sometimes to buyers at war with each other. Located in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, Mindelo was an important coal station for British ships on their way to America in the nineteenth century. During the Cold War, the airport on Sal Island was a strategic refuelling point for South African Airways, which was banned from flying over the continent because of international sanctions against apartheid. Until 1992, it was also a transit point for Cuban troops going to fight in Angola against the South African military who supported the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA)! Since then, the former Marxist Republic of Cape Verde can no longer depend on support from the West or the East. But other groups are still interested in the archipelago and some of the desert islands used by drug traffickers.

Notes

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- 2 K Koser, Une Diaspora divisée? Transferts et transformations au sein de la Diaspora Erythréenne, *Politique africaine*, 85, 2002, pp 64–74.
- 3 G Beaugé, L'émigration soudanaise vers les pays arabes producteurs de pétrole, in M Lavergne (ed), *Le Soudan contemporain*, Karthala, Paris, 1989, pp 543–571; R Brown, *Private wealth and public debt: Debt, capital flight and the IMF in Sudan*, Macmillan, London, 1992, p 334; R Brown, *Sudan's other economy: Migrants' remittances, capital flight, and their policy implications*, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, 1990, p 49.
- 4 *Le Monde* 12 September 2002, p 3.
- 5 C Egbe, & C Ndubisi, Institutional factors and immigrant investment in homeland: Nigerians in the USA, in A Nwaneri (ed), *Nigeria: Visions for the future*, Macmillan, Ibadan, 1998, p 57.
- 6 T L Weiss, *Migrants Nigériens, la diaspora dans le Sud-Ouest du Cameroun*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1998, pp.227–8.

- 7 Hence their rejection of the three immigration amnesties of 1995, 1996 and 1998. The South African government, which counted on inflated immigration figures, expected a high number of applications; but few were made. Out of 60,000 eligible Basotho, only 35,000 applied for permanent resident status in 1995. As a matter of fact, illegal immigrants were not informed of the regularisation process. They feared a trick by the police and were not interested in South African citizenship as such. To them, permanent resident status was simply a way to escape harassment by the authorities. See J Crush, & V Williams, *The New South Africans? Immigration amnesties and their aftermath*, Idasa, Southern African Immigration Project, Cape Town, 1999, p 94.
- 8 GENESIS, *African families, African money. Bridging the money transfer divide: a study of the South African money transfer environment*, FinMark Trust, Johannesburg, April 2003, p 69.
- 9 To create an example, presidents Ali Soilih (in power from 1976–1978) and Azali Assoumani (incumbent since 1999), as well as the opposition leader, Abdou Soulé Elbak, decided to marry without following the tradition of the great customary wedding.
- 10 T Foulo & M Moleko, *Survey of Basotho migrant mineworkers, April 1992–March 1993*, Central Bank of Lesotho, Maseru, 1995, vol.2, p 13.
- 11 J Santos Rocha, *Comunidade Caboverdeana em Portugal*, Praia, Instituto das Comunidades, 2003, p 3.
- 12 M Lesourd, *Etat et société aux îles du Cap-Vert*, Karthala, Paris, 1995, p 348.
- 13 Globalisation has compelled criminal organisations to concentrate, centralise and regulate their operations. Eastern European mafias after the collapse of the Soviet Union or *yakuza* groups in Japan had to merge and form cartels as they expanded. According to the police, there were 3,155 criminal organisations in Japan in 1991, as against 3,517 in 1970 and 5,107 in 1963, with 87,260, 139,417 and 184,091 members respectively. Their income, a figure in the region of US\$13 billion in 1991, probably more, was equivalent to the turnover of a transnational corporation like Mazda, or 25% of the budget of the Ministry of Defence and 2% of GDP in Japan. In order to make money laundering easier, 20% of this sum came from legal activities, 20% from various rackets, 30% from drug trafficking, and the rest from gambling, prostitution and the forcible recovery of bad debts.
- 14 V B Amaazee, The “Igbo Scare” in the British Cameroons, c.1945-61, *Journal of African History*, 31(2), 1990, p 286.
- 15 A Hallaire, *L'intérêt d'une frontière: l'Exemple des Monts Mandara (Cameroun-Nigeria)*, in ORSTOM (ed), *Tropiques, lieux et liens*, ORSTOM, Paris, 1989, pp 589–93.
- 16 K Fodoup, *La contrebande entre le Cameroun et le Nigeria*, *Cahiers d'outre-mer*, 41 (161), 1988, pp 5–25.

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- 18 S Ellis, *The mask of anarchy. The destruction of Liberia and the religious dimension of an African civil war*, Hurst & Company, London, 1999, p 272.
- 19 The two countries share common interests and are separated by an artificial colonial frontier that cuts across Hausaland. After independence in 1960, Nigeria did not back the opposition party Sawaba in Niamey, and did not grant political asylum to its exiled leader. A few years later, President Hamani Diori was to support Lieutenant-Colonel Yakubu Gowon against the Biafran rebels. Unlike Cote D'Ivoire and other Francophone countries, Niger helped Lagos to buy weapons abroad. It tried to mediate in the crisis, and some Niger citizens were hired by the Nigerian Army to fight in Biafra. In return, Nigerian troops were ready to intervene in Niamey to rescue Hamani Diori, who was threatened with a *coup d'état* in 1972. See S S Ahmad, Niger–Nigeria Relations, 1960–1975, *Kano Studies New Series*, 2 (1), 1980, p 65; J Garba, *Diplomatic soldiering. Nigerian foreign policy, 1975–1979*, Spectrum, Ibadan, 1987, p 11.
- 20 W Miles, *Hausaland divided: Colonialism and independence in Nigeria and Niger*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1994, p 368.
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- 23 *Daily Graphic* (Accra), 10 January 1970; M Peil, The expulsion of West African aliens, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 9 (1), 1971, pp 49–71; N O Addo, *L'immigration de travailleurs africains au Ghana*, *Revue internationale du travail*, 109 (1), 1974, pp 51–75.
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- 27 *The News* (Lagos), 16 July 2001, pp 42–3.
- 28 R Gelbard, Drug trafficking in Southern Africa, in R Rotberg & G Mills (eds), *War and peace in Southern Africa: Crime, drugs, armies, and trade*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington, 1998, pp 173–174.
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- 32 C Tive, *419 scam: Exploits of the Nigerian con man*, Chicha Favours, Lagos, 2001, p 4.
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- 34 A Nweze & L Wapmuk, The police in Nigerian society, in B Takaya (ed), *Security administration and human rights*, Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs, Abuja, 1989, p 73.
- 35 *The News* (Lagos), 23 July 2001, p 53.
- 36 Hence American businessman, H. Baines, fell victim to a 419 and wrote his story of the experience, appeared to be full of duplicity, and not merely naive. See H Baines, *The Nigerian scam masters: An exposé of a modern international gang*, Kroshka Books, Nova Science Publishers, New York, 2001, p 147.
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- 45 J Arthur, op cit, p 59.
- 46 A Richmond, *Immigration and ethnic conflict*, Macmillan, London, 1988, p 98.
- 47 *Guardian* (Lagos), 10 October 2000, p 9.
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- 49 C L Ejembi, E P Renne & H A Adamu, The politics of the 1996 cerebrospinal meningitis epidemic in Nigeria, *Africa* (London), 68 (1), 1998, pp118–34.
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- 51 G J Lethem & G F L Tomlinson, *History of Islamic propaganda in Nigeria*, British Empire, London, 1927, p 55.
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- 64 To attract foreign investors, the authorities argue that the US is only four hours by plane from Praia, and that there is a possibility that the Republic of Cape Verde will in due course start exporting garments under AGOA, since it is recognised as having met the necessary requirements for the rules of origin exemption in 2002. Yet Cape Verde is not as competitive as Mauritius because of the price of fuel and electricity, the lack of drinkable water and the cost of labour.

CONCLUSION

The Republic of Cape Verde is not exceptional. Micro-states with few or no natural resources are likely to put their territory at the disposal of anyone ready to pay a lump sum, perhaps even including criminal organisations. Islands in the Pacific or the Caribbean have set up free-trade zones and offshore banking centres. In Africa, only Mauritius and the Seychelles have possessed sufficiently sophisticated infrastructure to offer real financial services and attract foreign investment.¹ Other countries have tried in vain to do the same, as in Somalia, where the Transitional National Government established a Somali International Financial Centre in 2003 amidst the ruins of the capital city, Mogadishu.

In such a context, because their domestic economies are highly dependent on the diaspora, island micro-states, enclaves and countries ravaged by war may be forced by the deportation or retrenchment of migrants and the concomitant drop in remittances to consider criminal activities as a source of income. After the attacks on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001, for instance, the closure of Somali *hawilad* by the US created more than a humanitarian problem for vulnerable families who relied on financial support from their relatives abroad. Analysts were also concerned about a possible upsurge in drugs and arms trafficking resulting from the loss of remittance income. Since then, most of the *hawilad* companies have resumed their activities. Under pressure from the international community, a Somali Financial Services Association was launched in London in December 2003 to establish an Anti-Money Laundering Compliance Guide for Hawala. Yet self-regulation will hardly prevent criminal groups from abusing the system.

The dilemma can be summed up as follows: Informal private transfers from migrant communities can be used to support armed struggles or terrorist attacks, or to facilitate money laundering. But a crackdown on illegal immigration and the sending of remittances can provoke economic crisis in the homeland, encourage the black market, and force failed states to resort to radical solutions, including war or crime. Founded as remedies for a loss of income, offshore banks and free-trade zones present a global threat, partly because they are much more effective as a means of laundering money than remittances.

To sum up, remittances have both positive and negative consequences.² To believe that they make sustainable development in the home country possible and prevent further migration towards the “western eldorado” is naïve. Remittances cannot replace foreign direct investment, and the capital is usually wasted on showy spending which is not directed towards the development of agricultural or industrial production.

However, to deny the impact of remittances would also be a mistake. Even if African migrants do not have the financial power of the Chinese diaspora or the sophistication of Jewish expatriate organisations, they play a crucial economic and social role in countries where poverty is widespread and remittances are essential to survival. In the context of politics, diasporas are also important actors, although their influence has to be assessed over the long term. Because exiled parties often fail to organise and co-ordinate a common front against an authoritarian regime, it appears that informal migrants’ networks participate only indirectly in encouraging transitions to democracy in their homelands. Eventually, diasporas must be understood for what they are: major vectors for modernisation and technology transfers. One must not overemphasise their capacity to influence governmental policies in either the countries of emigration or of immigration. Therefore the author suggests that three main issues arising in this monograph would repay further research. These are the impact of exile politics, remittances and return migrations.

Notes

- 1 M-A Pérouse de Montclos, *Le charme discret des petites îles, Politique internationale*, 91, 2001, pp 381–401.
- 2 S S Russell, Remittances from international migration: a review in perspective, *World Development*, 14 (6), 1986, pp 677–96.