

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

- 1 S Castles & M Miller, *The age of migration: International population movements in the modern world*, Macmillan, London, 1993, p 338.
- 2 A Gordon, The new diaspora: African immigration to the United States, *Journal of Third World Studies*, 15 (1), 1998, p 93.
- 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.
- 5 P D Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1969, pp 97, 113, 155, 157, 160, 189, 200 & 247.
- 6 *Ibid*, pp 202 & 244.
- 7 P Lovejoy, Background to rebellion: The origins of Muslim slaves in Bahia, *Slavery and Abolition*, 15 (2), 1994, pp 151–180; J H Rodrigues, The influence of Africa on

- Brazil and of Brazil on Africa, *Journal of African History*, 3 (1), 1962; G Shepperson, The African abroad or the African diaspora, in T O Ranger (ed), *Emerging themes in African history*, Heinemann, London, 1968, p 165; and A Ramos, *The negro in Brazil*, Associated Publishers, Washington, 1939, pp 24–41, quoted in G W Irwin (ed) *Africans abroad: A documentary history of the black diaspora in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean during the age of slavery*, Colombia University Press, New York, 1971, pp 339–51.
- 8 Interestingly, the US domestic agenda (more than foreign policy) pushed Washington to support the creation of Liberia. Yet the American Colonisation Society, launched in 1817, proved a disappointment both to southerners, who expected it to rid the slave states of free Negroes, and to northerners, who hoped that it would promote the manumission of slaves.
 - 9 M-A Pérouse de Montclos, Pétrole et conflits communautaires au Nigeria: Une perspective historique, *Afrique contemporaine*, 190, 1999, pp 20–38.
 - 10 D Chambers, Tracing Igbo in the African diaspora, in P Lovejoy (ed), *Identity in the shadow of slavery*, Continuum, London, 2000, pp 55–71.
 - 11 I Miller, A secret society goes public: The relationship between Abakua and Cuban popular culture, *African Studies Review*, 43 (1), 2001, pp161–88.
 - 12 G Sheffer, *Modern diasporas in international politics*, Croom Helm, London, 1986, p 349.
 - 13 O B C Nwolise, Blacks in the diaspora: A case of neglected catalysts in the achievement of Nigeria's foreign policy goals, *Journal of Black Studies*, 23 (1), 1992, pp117–134.
 - 14 M-A Pérouse de Montclos, Elections among the Kenya Somali: A conservative but marginalized vote, in M Rutten, A Mazrui & F Grignon (eds), *Out for the count: the 1997 elections and prospects for democracy in Kenya*, Fountain, Kampala, 2001, pp 296–309.
 - 15 In this regard, Cape Verdeans abroad can be compared with Croatian migrant voters, whose 12 seats out of 148 influenced the election results in November 2003 considerably. In Cape Verde, the diaspora was entitled to choose six MPs out of 72, and as a result President Pedro Pires defeated Carlos Veiga by a margin of only 17 votes.
 - 16 *Guardian* (Lagos), 26 July 2001.
 - 17 *The Source* (Lagos), 23 July 2001, pp 32–33.
 - 18 M Israel, *South African political exile in the UK*, Macmillan, London, 1999, p 281; S Thomas, *The diplomacy of liberation: The foreign relations of the African National Congress since 1960*, Tauris Academic Studies, New York, 1996, p 333.
 - 19 C Benard, Politics and the refugee experience, *Political Science Quarterly*, 101 (4), 1986, pp 617–636.

- 20 P Collier & A Hoeffler, *Greed and grievance in civil war*, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 2355, Washington, 2000, pp11 & 21.
- 21 G Vivier, *Les migrations comoriennes en France*, Dossiers du CEPED 35, Paris, 1996, p 38.
- 22 D Coplan, A river runs through it: The meaning of the Lesotho–Free State border, *African Affairs*, 100 (1), 2001, pp 103 & 112.
- 23 M-A Pérouse de Montclos, *Des femmes au risque de la guerre: Une étude de cas de la Somalie et du Soudan*, in M Bozon, & T Locoh (eds), *Rapports de genre et questions de population*, Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques, Dossiers & Recherches 85, Paris, 2000, pp 161–175.
- 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.
- 26 On the way armed conflicts and violence sustain ethnic identities, see M-A de Montclos, *Les reconstructions identitaires de l'exode: Les réfugiés somaliens à Mombasa, Kenya*, *Autrepart*, 11, 1999, pp 27–46; and *Soudan et Somalie: De la fabrication ethnique par la guerre*, *Autrepart* 26, 2003, pp 53–72.
- 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.
- 35 The Minister of Industry, Rigobert Ladipo, fled Benin during the 1972 *coup d'état* led by Mathieu Kérékou. He was welcomed in Nigeria by Wole Soyinka, who helped him to gain an appointment as a professor in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. As a consequence, President Nicéphore Soglo later refused to hand over Wole Soyinka, who had sought asylum in Benin in 1995 after Sani Abacha had taken power in 1993.
- 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.
- 37 M-A Pérouse de Montclos, A refugee diaspora: When the Somali go west, in K Koser (ed), *New African diasporas*, Routledge, London, 2003, pp 37–55.
- 38 World Bank, *Somalia: Socio Economic Survey 2002*, United Nations Development Programme, New York, 2003, p 109.
- 39 République du Cap-Vert, *Emigration et transferts des Capverdiens émigrés*, SEDES, Paris, mimeo, 1989, p 76.
- 40 Since April 2002, Cape Verde has also sought to obtain “special status” with the EU, like the autonomous regions of the Canary Islands (Spain), the Azores (Portugal) and Madeira (Portugal).
- 41 J-L Guebourg, *Migrants et clandestins de la Grande Comore*, *Cahiers d’Outre-Mer*, 48 (191), 1995, pp 295–318.
- 42 Until 1980, it did not have a national currency, and instead used the South African rand. Since then, the loti has been fixed at par with the rand, and is therefore easily convertible.
- 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.
- 44 MA Kurubally, Labour migration in Lesotho: its implications on the national socio-economic development, in Union for African Population Studies (ed), *The role of migration in African development*, vol.3 (spontaneous papers), UAPS, Nairobi, 1990, pp 177–8.
- 45 I Sembajwe, Effects of emigration to South Africa on Lesotho’s demography and economy”, in *ibid*, p 160.

- 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.
- 47 M-A Pérouse de Montclos, 1997, *Les nouveaux enjeux de l'immigration en Afrique du Sud, Afrique contemporaine*, 184, 1999, pp 223–32; and *Immigration et montée de la xénophobie en Afrique du Sud: Le cas des Mozambicains et l'exemple de la township d'Alexandra, L'Espace géographique*, 28 (2), pp 126–34.
- 48 Miners' remittances rose again in 2002, thanks to better wages and more jobs in South Africa because of an increase in the price of gold. The current proportion of Basotho miners and non-mining labourers in South Africa now stands at 45% and 55% respectively. Miners still make up 15% of Lesotho's total labour force, and represent one-quarter of miners in South Africa. But under the new system, they are hired by independent contractors for a fraction of the wages paid to regular mining company employees. In Lesotho, the main contractors are The Employment Bureau of Africa (TEBA— gold and platinum), E.R. Ramsden Bleskop (platinum and coal), the Anglo-Colliery Recruiting Organisation (coal and diamonds), and the Ribaneng Recruiting Agency (coal).
- 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.
- 51 M-A Pérouse de Montclos, *A refugee diaspora: When the Somali go west*, *op cit*.
- 52 J Arthur, *Invisible sojourners: African immigrant diaspora in the United States*, Praeger, Westport, 2000, p 48.
- 53 C Egbe, & C Ndubisi, 1998, Institutional factors and immigrant investment in homeland: Nigerians in the USA, in A Nwaneri (ed), *Nigeria: Visions for the future*, Macmillan, Ibadan, p 43.
- 54 *Ibid*, p 63.
- 55 T L Weiss, *Migrants nigériens, la diaspora dans le Sud-Ouest du Cameroun*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1998, pp 227–8.
- 56 A & D Smock, Ethnicity and attitudes toward development in eastern Nigeria, *Journal of Developing Studies*, 3 (3), 1969, pp 499–512.
- 57 A Harneit-Sievers, J Ahazuem & S Emezue, *A social history of the Nigerian Civil War: Perspectives from below*, LIT Verlag, Hambourg, 1997, p 198.

- 58 The *Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan* (PKK) in Kurdistan and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) in Sri-Lanka are known for that.
- 59 J-P Garson & G Tapinos (eds), *L'Argent des immigrés: Revenus, épargne et transferts de huit nationalités immigrées en France*, Presses universitaires de France, Paris, 1981, p 352.
- 60 D McDonald (ed), *On borders: Perspectives on international migration in Southern Africa*, Cape Town, Idasa, Southern African Immigration Project, 2000, pp.29–30 & 177.
- 61 D McDonald, L Zinyama, J Gay, F de Vletter & R Mattes, Guess who's coming to dinner? Migration from Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe to South Africa, *International Migration Review*, 34 (3), 2000, p 820.