

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 Guerra", 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.