

CHAPTER 3

THE DARK SIDE OF DIASPORA NETWORKING ORGANISED CRIME AND TERRORISM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Immigration and security: Some reminders

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Notes

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

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

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- 18 S Ellis, *The mask of anarchy. The destruction of Liberia and the religious dimension of an African civil war*, Hurst & Company, London, 1999, p 272.
- 19 The two countries share common interests and are separated by an artificial colonial frontier that cuts across Hausaland. After independence in 1960, Nigeria did not back the opposition party Sawaba in Niamey, and did not grant political asylum to its exiled leader. A few years later, President Hamani Diori was to support Lieutenant-Colonel Yakubu Gowon against the Biafran rebels. Unlike Cote D'Ivoire and other Francophone countries, Niger helped Lagos to buy weapons abroad. It tried to mediate in the crisis, and some Niger citizens were hired by the Nigerian Army to fight in Biafra. In return, Nigerian troops were ready to intervene in Niamey to rescue Hamani Diori, who was threatened with a *coup d'état* in 1972. See S S Ahmad, Niger–Nigeria Relations, 1960–1975, *Kano Studies New Series*, 2 (1), 1980, p 65; J Garba, *Diplomatic soldiering. Nigerian foreign policy, 1975–1979*, Spectrum, Ibadan, 1987, p 11.
- 20 W Miles, *Hausaland divided: Colonialism and independence in Nigeria and Niger*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1994, p 368.
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- 22 N Sudarkasa, The role of Yoruba commercial migration in West African development, in B Lindsay (ed), *African migration and national development*, Pennsylvania State University Press, London, 1985, p 47.
- 23 *Daily Graphic* (Accra), 10 January 1970; M Peil, The expulsion of West African aliens, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 9 (1), 1971, pp 49–71; N O Addo, *L'immigration de travailleurs africains au Ghana*, *Revue internationale du travail*, 109 (1), 1974, pp 51–75.
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- 32 C Tive, *419 scam: Exploits of the Nigerian con man*, Chicha Favours, Lagos, 2001, p 4.
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- 34 A Nweze & L Wapmuk, The police in Nigerian society, in B Takaya (ed), *Security administration and human rights*, Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs, Abuja, 1989, p 73.
- 35 *The News* (Lagos), 23 July 2001, p 53.
- 36 Hence American businessman, H. Baines, fell victim to a 419 and wrote his story of the experience, appeared to be full of duplicity, and not merely naive. See H Baines, *The Nigerian scam masters: An exposé of a modern international gang*, Kroshka Books, Nova Science Publishers, New York, 2001, p 147.
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- 46 A Richmond, *Immigration and ethnic conflict*, Macmillan, London, 1988, p 98.
- 47 *Guardian* (Lagos), 10 October 2000, p 9.
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- 61 D Coplan, 2001, op cit, pp.81–116.
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- 64 To attract foreign investors, the authorities argue that the US is only four hours by plane from Praia, and that there is a possibility that the Republic of Cape Verde will in due course start exporting garments under AGOA, since it is recognised as having met the necessary requirements for the rules of origin exemption in 2002. Yet Cape Verde is not as competitive as Mauritius because of the price of fuel and electricity, the lack of drinkable water and the cost of labour.