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“On balance the United States has done fewer bad things in Africa than she has done in Asia and Latin America. But she has also done fewer good things in Africa than elsewhere”.<sup>1</sup>

Coming from a 1989 textbook on African politics, this overview still stands to encompass much of the current US-Africa relationship. With the exception of what concerns two or three oil-State producers of the continent and Egypt because of its peace treaty with Israel, whatever indicator is considered (Africa’s share in the US trade, American FDI or White House policies) it shows a decreasing trend since the end of the so-called Cold War.

The decreasing trend is part of the relative fall of the continent’s weight in the world market. In fact, “Africa’s share of global trade at 3% is too little”<sup>2</sup>. Capital exports to Sub-Saharan Africa are always smaller than to anywhere else, regardless of its *absolute* increase. For instance, between the 1980s and the 1990s, net foreign direct investment (FDI) to the region grew by 218 p.c. but 993 p.c. in East Asia, 556 in Latin America and 755 in the “developing countries”. Africa’ share of FDI for this class of countries dropped from 19 percent in the 1970’s to 3 in the 1990s<sup>3</sup>.

As capitalism works now with the USA absorbing much of the world capital flows, it is not surprising that her contribution to Africa’s investment is irrelevant. For an order of magnitude, suffice it to say that since the peak year of 2013 to 2022, the net accumulated US FDI for the whole Sub-Saharan region (including the oil-producing states) is 63 USD billion,

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<sup>1</sup> Mazrui and Tidy; Nationalism and New States in Africa, 1989: 363.

<sup>2</sup> CNN, Interview with Okonjo-Iweala, Director of the WTO, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2022 <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/02/02/business/wto-okonjo-iweala-africa-trade-spc-intl/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> Asiedu, Policy Reform file:///C:/Users/Utilizador/Downloads/9781589062627-ch07.pdf

the equivalent of 57 percent of the foreign net purchase of US long term securities (\$110,5 bn.) during the *last month of March*<sup>4</sup>.

Still, this is not the whole picture. Today's little status of Africa for US business does not mean that its non-tapped resources or its location close to Europe and the Middle East are to be Washington-neglected. African issues are once again recovering geopolitical importance. Similarly to what happened during the 1970s, i.e. the period during which African staff finally got an autonomous division within the State Department, the new overvaluation occurs because new "threats" were noticed.

To begin with, no former colonial power is now economically dominant in Africa. Former colonial powers used to act as proxies of US interests, even when frictions or diplomatic drawbacks arose from time to time (Washington meddlings in *Françafrique* policies, diplomatic side effects induced by the Pentagon's support of Portuguese colonial policies, clashes over French and Italian interests in Morocco and Lybia, etc.). Today, all this is dwindling *because* China is Africa's most important partner. Between 2000 and 2010, its trade grew more than 10-fold, being around \$200 bn in 2012. Besides, China is not just a trading partner: according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, for every 1 percent rise in China's GDP, the GDP of low-income African countries such as the DRC, Guinea, and Mali rises by 0.3 percent<sup>5</sup>, which means that Chinese influence is therein to stay.

Added to this, there is the backflow to Africa from the recent imperialist wars in the Middle East (Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria) and the regime change policies (Lybia). Small and big waves of *jihadist* movements

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<sup>4</sup> Based on US Department of Treasure <https://tradingeconomics.com/united-states/capital-flows>

<sup>5</sup> Njau, Barbara (2013), China redefines its Role in Africa <https://www.fdiintelligence.com/content/locations/asia-pacific/china/china-redefines-its-role-in-africa-45992>

combined with the French/UE military failure in the Sahel countries and later in Mozambique are another headache for the State Department. If this was not enough to justify a US comeback 2022-23 saw another backflow from a distant chessboard: the Russian (Wagner Group) filling of the French-growing vacuum in Central Africa.

Within this framework, one can say that the articles published in the core section of this 3<sup>rd</sup> issue do cover the most visible side of the US role in Africa: its “boy-scout” mission.

M’lili Amina’s “American Grand Strategy in Africa: From Hegemony to the Balance of Power?” attempts to describe the US’s recent geopolitical strategy face to newcomer “dangers”.

Jorge Teixeira’s ‘The United States, Iran’s Revolution, and the USSR Communist Phantom: The Linchpins that Triggered the Emergence of the Moroccan “Modern” Armed Forces from 1979 to 1982?’ focus on the comparative US policies towards Iran and Morocco and shows how both fit into a pattern.

With Abdulhafeth Ali Khrisat’s “African-American Identity in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987)”, one finds a different angle of the US-Africa relationship: the slavery-forged bonds. Needless to stress how much did the Afro-American struggles and their quest for cultural identity impact US and African politics, from Liberia to TV series. By analysing an important example of these cultural ties, Khrisat shows the broadness of the traditional side of the US soft power in Africa.

Out of the direct US-Africa section, this journal includes two sociological studies.

Augusto Nascimento’s “Eleições presidenciais de 2021 em São Tomé e Príncipe: “Povo põe, Povo tira”, “povo tira, povo põe” focus on the Sao Tome’s electoral process, arguing that it allows for an overall understanding of the island’s political society.

Thibaut Dubarry's « Pentecôtisme et sida. Illustration des relations entre religion et santé à la lumière de trois Églises dans deux townships sud-africains: entre métamorphoses et ambivalence » also uses an apparently marginal phenomena (African Pentecostal church's stand towards AIDS) to highlight features of the South African society.

As in previous issues of this journal, this section aims to enlarge the interdisciplinary scopus of the US-Africa Journal. To allow for a wider range of collaborations the editorial project includes since the last issue papers written in two more African official languages (French and Portuguese).

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# US-AFRICA

## American Grand Strategy in Africa: From Hegemony to the Balance of Power? ☐

M'lili Amina<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

This paper explores the American grand strategy in Africa; more specifically in response to economic and security issues and socio-political instability in different regions of Africa. Having said that, this paper does not seek to re/appraise the US economic areas or/and security role and/or strategies to avert and halt the widespread terrorism in different parts of the African Continent. Instead, it explores the American grand strategy in Africa from a theoretical perspective. To capture this argument, the study uses Kenneth Waltz's theory of Balance of Power (1979) as the most advanced theoretical framework to illustrate that the United States, as a great power, is power balancing China's and Russia's expanding geopolitical influence in Africa through military and economic cooperation. The paper argues that the United States' goal behind power balancing with China and Russia is to make sure that their presence is not used to turn the African continent into the Eastern sphere of influence. The theoretical contribution of this research paper is to expand the understanding of Kenneth Waltz's Balance of Power theory; especially balance by engaging in the competitive acquisition of territory and forming alliances.

**Keywords:** The Theory of Balance of Power, American Grand Strategy, Africa, Hegemony, China, Russia.

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<sup>1</sup> University of 08 Mai 1945, Guelma.

## Introduction

Since the end of the 1990s, it has been impossible to deny that the United States meets the requirements for being a superpower with a level of global influence well above that of other states. Although the majority of African states fell and continue to fall within France's zone of influence, the United States, since the end of the 1990s, continued to actively engage in some of the African states; especially in the Maghreb region by showing greater economic interest (e.g. the American Economic Program in North Africa launched in 1999). However, from the early 2000s, the United States has fallen behind the extraordinary rise of China<sup>2</sup> (Overholt, 1994) on the continent, which sought new perspectives and a fresh approach to a number of crucial concerns to strengthen unity and cooperation with Africa, especially in the contemporary era.

After the 9/11 tragic attacks, security/military cooperation between the US and the Maghreb and the Sahel regions experienced remarkable growth. It established security ties with Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya. Furthermore, considering the Sahel region's turbulent and complex characteristics, the US championed and applauded the 2015 Algiers Accord between the Malian Government and the rebels in the Sahel region of Africa. When it comes to America's economic involvement in Africa in terms of advancing prosperity through trade and investment, millions of Americans and Africans have benefited greatly from prior successes, including the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), the President's Malaria Initiative, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and U.S. trade and investment hubs (Signé, 2021).

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<sup>2</sup> Russia's current engagement with the African continent also indicates the severity of its search for security cooperation and having allies as part of a larger effort to increase its influence around the globe.

On a related note, America's economic engagement in Africa has been increasing with China's rise as an economic power in the region along with its emergence as an active player in the international arena.

Much ink has been spilled on US military/ security and economic interests in Africa. Accounts offered range from why the US decided to pay more attention to the Maghreb and how it developed to regional security cooperation (Zoubir, 2006; Iratni, 2019), what role the US played to ease the conflict in Mali and the Sahel region in general (Attalah, 2012; Bleck et al., 2015; Francis, 2013; Zoubir, 2009), the causes behind the United States' replacement of French influence in the areas (Schraeder, 2000) and ultimately US trade and investment compared to China trade and investment in Africa (Jones et al., 2022) among others. While these accounts bear validity, this article adds to the extant literature about the topic by providing a theoretical explanation of American foreign policy in Africa. The theory of Realism is explicitly adopted to illustrate that states are involved in a power struggle and that acquiring more power is their only foreign policy objective. This theoretical position is in harmony with Kenneth Waltz's theory of Balance of Power. By so doing, the aim of this article is to elucidate that the US, as a great power, is utilising military and economic cooperation to balance out China's and now Russia's growing geopolitical influence in Africa.

It is impossible to provide an in-depth analysis and discussion of the subject within the confines of this article, but the goal of this article is to add to the global discussion concerning the American grand strategy in Africa, particularly in the contemporary era. Africa is explored in broad terms in this article. This classification is problematic in that it sees Africa as a unified actor, ignoring the continent's various countries. While examining US efforts in each African country is worthwhile, they are not addressed here. This decision was made to present a theoretical explanation of the United States' grand strategy in Africa.

The research paper comprises five sections. The first section is the introduction. It sets the parameters of the argument and analyses. Section two

is dedicated to the literature on Realism theory and the concept of Balance of Power; a theoretical lens through which to consider America's grand strategy in Africa. Section three presents a short overview of the United States' grand strategy in Africa over the last two decades. While section five offers an analysis of the research topic from a theoretical standpoint, section five provides concluding remarks.

### **Realism and the Theory of Balance of Power**

Since the core argument of this article is substantiated by theoretical underpinnings, this section is committed to the literature on the theory of Realism and the notion of Balance of Power. This theoretical account offers an alternative theoretical lens for thinking of the American grand strategy in Africa. It is important to note that no single theory of international relations can account for all important facets of a complex and multifaceted subject such as US foreign policy. As Steve Smith (2007: 11) has put it:

*theories can be seen as different coloured lenses: if you put one of them in front of your eyes, you will see things differently. Some aspects of the world will look the same in some lenses, for example shapes, but many other features, such as lights and shade of colour, will look very different, so different in fact that they seem to show alternative worlds.*

In other words, all international relations theories help us study and understand state behaviour, each of which reflects a different theoretical perspective and makes various assumptions about the same subject. This study has focused on the fundamental theory of international relations known as Realism. This theoretical position is in concert with Waltz's theory of balance of power.

Realism is a school of thought in the discipline of International Affairs (IR) that emphasises the competitive and conflictual aspects of international relations. The roots of realism are claimed to be found in some of history's earliest books, particularly Thucydides' narrative of the Peloponnesian War,

which was fought between 431 and 404 BCE (Antunes et al., 2018). The theory of Realism is based on three major assumptions. First and foremost, states are the most significant actors. Second, the international system is inherently anarchic. As a result, all states within the system seek narrow self-interests, as power and security are the core concerns of all governments to guarantee their survival (Jervis, 1999). It is important to note that Realism should not be interpreted as a single, homogeneous theoretical standpoint since different Realists have presented competing interpretations of some essential components of this theory. For that reason, Realism should be understood in its two chief variants: Classical Realism and Structural (also known as Neo-realism) Realism.

Classical Realism is the first variant developed by IR scholars Hans Morgenthau in 1948 in his book entitled *Politics among Nations*. He sought to develop a comprehensive international theory as he believed that “*politics is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature.*” In other words, politics is regulated by laws that have their roots in human nature, much as society as a whole (Antunes et al., 2018). By removing Realism from its illogical presumptions about human nature, Kenneth Waltz modernised IR theory in his book *Theory of International Politics* (1979). As he placed a strong focus on the concept of “structure” in his explanation, his theoretical contribution was known as ‘Structural Realism’ or ‘Neo-realism’. For this variant, “*it is the structure or architecture of the international system that forces states to pursue power*” (Dunne et al., 2013: 52). Simply put, Neo-realists argue that the behaviour of all the states is determined by the anarchic nature of the system in which they all reside. As a result, if the states are to exist and survive, they will have to compete with one another for power.

The above characterisation is central to the explanation of the balance of power advanced by Neo-realists such as Kenneth Waltz (1979: 118). It is closely in line with the Neo-realist version of Realism. As Claude (1962) has put it, in the theory of Balance of Power:

*when any state or bloc becomes, or threatens to become, inordinately powerful, other states should recognise this as a threat to their security and respond by taking equivalent measures, individually and jointly, to enhance their power.*

This, therefore, would prevent hegemony, allowing states to preserve their security, survival, autonomy, and their status in the system. In a related sense, Sheehan (1995: 14) argues:

*Balance of power is never a static phenomenon and can never be taken for granted. It is always tending to move towards an imbalance. It, therefore, has to be constantly adjusted, either towards the restoration of an earlier equilibrium, or- more usually- the creation of a new one.*

An argument that this essay aims to adopt in order to provide a systematic and theoretical account of the American grand strategy in Africa. It is important to note that it is not the intention of this article to provide a detailed account of the evolving US policies, objectives, and approaches, nor to offer an analysis of successes and deficiencies in US-Africa policy. It is the use of theoretical prisms that allowed this paper to provide a conclusion that can be considered an original contribution.

Although the primary focus of this work is a theoretical investigation, its conclusions have intriguing ramifications for empirical discussions of US foreign policy and IR studies. Having set the theoretical and methodological frameworks, the following section turns to outline briefly, and as a starting point, the different US strategies undertaken in Africa, focusing briefly on political, economic, and military strategies over the last two decades.

### **American Grand Strategy in Africa after the 9/11 Attacks**

Throughout history, the United States of America had a longstanding relationship with Africa, but it did not constitute a vital region for US strategic concerns. Nevertheless, US-Africa relations post 9/11 attacks

shifted tremendously. An event not only influenced and changed the relationship between the US and Africa but also upgraded their partnership. After the 9/11 attacks, there has been a substantial increase in terrorism across the African continent. Three areas in Africa are particularly affected by violent extremism: the Lake Chad region (Cameroon, Niger, and Nigeria), which has seen major Boko Haram activity; the Maghreb and the Sahel region (Ansar Dine, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and al Mourabitoun); and the Horn of Africa (Al Shabaab) (Kenya and Uganda) (Wekesa, 2021).

In the context of the Global War on Terror, the United States reinforced a special type of policies that emphasised counter-terrorism, particularly in the Maghreb and the Sahel-Sahara. It collaborated with the Maghreb nations in the area of sharing intelligence on terrorist organizations. Furthermore, the US developed counterterrorism and security assistance programs on a bilateral basis. Starting by hosting presidents from several African nations who visited Washington (2002-2004) to offering various forms of American assistance to fight terrorism, such as the African Contingency Training and Assistance (ACOTA), Foreign Military Financing (FMF), and International Military Education and Training (IMET). Some of these US programs are aimed at training military trainers to conduct peace support operations. Others sought to offer some African countries students and military personnel training and education on a grant basis to enhance their defence capability against terrorism.

In 2002, the political crisis in Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger was also rapidly seized by the triumvirate of insurgent groups specialised in smuggling drugs, weapons, and the traffic of human beings. This prompted the US to start the Pan Sahel Initiative, which was subsequently superseded by the Tran-Sahara Counter-terrorism Initiative (TSCTI) in 2005. TSCTI's goal was to strengthen the region's capacity to combat terrorism by offering training and military experience. Additionally, the American Special Forces of the European Command (EUCOM) were assigned to train the security

forces of the Sahel states (Zoubir, 2006: 11). As part of the mission goals for 2018-2021, the United States as a member of the international community continue to support the efforts made to implement the 2015 Algiers Accord between the Malian government and the rebels to help its fragile peace, particularly by combatting terrorists and enhancing regional security (Bureau of African Affairs, 2021).

Meanwhile, areas of aid relations, diplomatic relations, and security issues were and continue to be of main importance when it comes to China's political and military involvement in Africa. On the basis of «*equal negotiation, boosting understanding, increasing consensus, deepening friendship and promoting collaboration,*» China founded the China-Africa Forum in 2000. Since its establishment, Africa has become a major focal point of Chinese diplomacy (“Report on Chinese Investment in Africa”, 2022). Moreover, China has always seen aid to Africa as a pillar of its foreign policy. For instance, President Hu promised to increase aid to Africa by 2009 at the China-Africa Summit in November 2006. In terms of military involvement in Africa, China has expanded its military support activities, from selling armaments to several nations to providing military training courses to African military officers such as Angola, Zimbabwe, and Sudan (Scobell, 2007: 01; Mc Laughlin, 2005: 01).

The extraordinary growth of the Chinese economy particularly in Africa has not gone unnoticed by US policymakers, especially that Chinese FDI flows to Africa have outpaced those from the United States, which have been steadily dropping since 2010 (China Africa Research Initiative, 2020). The majority of African nations choose to collaborate with China over western powers that impose governance conditions on their dealings with any country. For instance, because of their abuse of political influence at home, US businesses are not allowed to invest in Sudan or Zimbabwe (Goodman, 2004).

China's Ministry of Commerce reports that between 2004 and 2016, Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) in Africa increased at an average

compound annual rate of 18%. China was the top exporter to Africa in 2016. More than 10,000 Chinese-owned businesses were active in Africa by the middle of 2017. In fact, since 2010, Chinese state-owned businesses have financed and built a third of Africa's infrastructure and electricity system (China Foreign Investment: Statistics, 2018).

In 2018, President Trump subsequently unveiled a new strategy titled 'A New Africa Strategy: Economic and Security Ties on the Basis of Mutual Respect.' According to Jones, Ndofor, and Li (2022), "*this strategy was more of countering China than engaging with Africa. Africa just happened to be the battlefield.*" The Biden administration has mainly continued this approach. In his opening remarks during his testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee in November 2019, Tibor Nagy, a former assistant secretary of state for African affairs, said that the US strategy for Africa needed to "*promote stability, expand trade and investment, harness the incredible potential of Africa's dynamic people, and counter malign influence from China and Russia*" (Nagy, 2019).

Indeed, the US interests have been detriment by China's rise in Africa and continue to be so. In addition to changing the dynamics in Africa, China's active economic, political, and security alliances are also changing the power structure in Africa, which has historically been characterised by the lengthy era of US hegemonic leadership through French and European influence.

After a brief review of the US' grand strategy in Africa over the past two decades, the focus shifts to a study of the research topic from a theoretical standpoint.

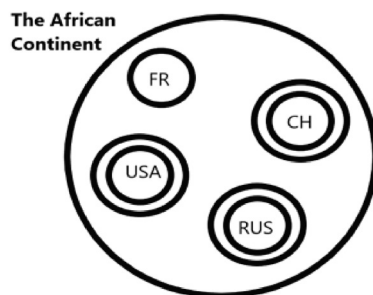
### **Theoretical Turn: from Hegemony to the Balance of Power?**

The American grand strategy in Africa, especially in the last two decades, maintains a realist philosophical perspective. During that period, the United States sought to preserve equilibrium to reduce great power threats (China and more recently Russia) to its international environment through a strategy

of the economy and cooperative security and partnership in Africa. Basing the analysis on Waltz's model of the Balance of Power, this new American grand strategy in Africa is a result of a potential emerging order in the same region shaped by the balance of power impulses. In other words, with the rise of China, along with Russia as china's key ally, the US is no longer the only major great power in Africa. In fact, the American old relationship- through French influence- with Africa is in transition to a new sort of order.

The extraordinary growth of the Chinese economic cooperation and partnership, as well as the Russian building of new military and economic ties in Africa, demonstrates that the continent is moving away from an American-led hegemonic order. With the growth of Chinese powers followed by the Russian powers more recently and the demise of the French influence in Africa, the US goal is to move to a post-hegemonic order that is increasingly defined by a balance of power calculations and logics, where security rivalry and Cold War geopolitics are ruling. Therefore, the American grand strategy in Africa seeks to provide a counterbalance to a growing new power in the region in order to restrain their influence in Africa. The key elements of this strategy are power balancing, alliance building, and engaging in the competitive acquisition of territory.

**Illustration 01 - Post-Hegemony Order in Africa:  
Balance of Power (2001-2022).**



Source: Own Elaboration

The illustration above demonstrates the main American grand strategy in Africa, especially with the rise of China, and more recently Russia, seeking a foothold in Africa. It represents the post-hegemonic order in Africa, specifically after the 9/11 attacks. Building on the Balance of Power theory, states, mostly great powers, act to preserve a balance of power in the international system in order to secure their first objectives, i.e. the preservation of their national interests, international and regional status, and most of all, to restrain states' power and its level of influence.

As the illustration indicates, China, through diplomatic, political, and economic engagements, is growing in power to the extent that it could dominate Africa. As a reaction, the US is engaging in policies namely political, economic, and security ones to achieve a balance of power or an equilibrium amongst in Africa to ensure that it cannot be dominated by China. In other words, since China experienced and continues to experience growth in power- an economic reason, the US, as a former single hegemonic actor<sup>3</sup>, is acting to balance that power in an effort to achieve equilibrium in Africa instead of restoring its hegemony.

Therefore, one would ask how America's position in Africa is changing as a result of China's ascent. As mentioned earlier in the article, the ties between the US and numerous African countries became stronger, especially after the 9/11 attacks. American emphasis shifted to policies that championed economic growth and political stability. It also established security partnerships to avoid the rise of terrorist organisations. By so doing, the idea was to pull Africa back into the western sphere of influence, since China's presence in Africa is steadily on the rise and moving towards being Africa's biggest trade partner.

It is important to note that the 9/ 11 tragic attacks, undoubtedly, encouraged the United States to pay much closer attention to the developments taking

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<sup>3</sup> Through French and European influence.

place in Africa as part of the framework of the “Global War on Terror”. However, it is clearly seen as geopolitical strategy hegemony and balance of power as this transformation is being driven by China’s attempts to project power and influence on the continent. This assertion serves as the foundation for the argument that the US grand strategy in Africa did not aim to end French hegemony in the continent. On the contrary, they have built stronger relations that are more complimentary than competitive (Zoubir, 2006: 01). More importantly, France lost influence across the African continent from the mid-1990s to 2022 (Mbembe, 2020), drove the US to actively engage in Africa, especially with the rise of Chinese economic, political and, diplomatic engagement followed by Russia steadily rebuilding its presence in Africa.

## Conclusion

The events of the 9/11 attacks, without a doubt, changed the US foreign policy abroad and more particularly its grand strategy in Africa, which, from a realist point of view, is an inevitable process as the United States attempts to survive and maintain its position as a superpower, especially with the spectacular rise of China as a great power in Africa and the contemporary international system. It goes without saying that the US has had, and continues to have, a substantial impact on the African continent in the areas of politics, economics, and the military sector. The African continent does, however, appear to be transitioning from an American-led hegemonic order to a post-hegemonic order that is more characterised by a balance of power calculations and logics.

The United States is no longer the only significant power in the continent, as this article has already demonstrated. China is changing power dynamics on the African continent, as evidenced by the country’s unprecedented economic expansion and its aggressive political diplomacy there. In order to limit a rising new power’s impact on Africa, the new American

grand strategy in the continent aims to provide a counterbalance to it. This argument is supported by the US' recent diplomatic, economic and political initiatives in Africa to counterbalance, China's key ally, the Russian influence, particularly since Russia is seizing the opportunity to expand its military footprint there. To illustrate, as part of a new agreement signed during the First Russia-Africa Summit in (2019), Russia began by establishing a naval logistic centre in Port Sudan on the nation's Red Sea Coast. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it is regarded as the first military installation in Africa. In addition, Russia's security links to the continent go beyond that, as evidenced by its involvement in the use of private mercenary groups (Wagner group) in nations including the Central African Republic, Mozambique, Madagascar, Mali, and Burkina Faso. More recently, The Wagner Group was in Mali to offer protection against Islamic extremist organizations. Its arrival in 2021 had an impact on France's decision to withdraw its soldiers from the country.

It is almost inevitable that the United States will struggle for leadership in Africa as the continent is becoming increasingly complex and decentralized. It is headed for post-hegemonic order often described as a multipolar balance of power system characterised by the presence of multiple centres of powers (the US, China, and Russia) in one continent. Therefore, the US is engaging and will continue to engage in policies in Africa to achieve a balance of power to ensure that the continent is not dominated by one actor via accommodating<sup>4</sup> the rise of China and counteracting Russia.

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<sup>4</sup> letting China develop and grow in exchange for letting the US develop as well.

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**The United States, Iran's Revolution, and the USSR Communist Phantom:  
The Linchpins that Triggered the Emergence of the Moroccan  
"Modern" Armed Forces from 1979 to 1982? ☐**

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**Abstract**

The ghost of the USSR was one of the most important weapons used throughout the Cold War. This phantom made the US act almost immediately, helping his allies or to outmanoeuvring his political opponents. In the case of Iran, it made the US try to solve a deep social/economic problem by showering Iran with military and economic aid, which would prove to be fatal.

Moroccan king Hassan II, an expert and savvy political manipulator, would use his position as a US proxy agent to manoeuvre in the shadows within the Arab-speaking world and Africa. This position came to be in full effect when Morocco invaded Western Sahara, with the confidence that it would be a short affair. This proved to be difficult, almost impossible, as a short war became a long one. However, when in 1979, Iran, a stable political ally of the US, plummeted there were a shift in the US politics. The very public rhetoric branding Polisario as a communist agent proved to be a stepping stone into reverting an almost lost war into a stalemate. The US, not wanting a replication of what happened in Iran to happen in Morocco, changed its policies. Polisario was now seen as a threat to the Moroccan Regime. Therefore, trying to prevent possible proxy problems such as

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internal un-ruling and uprisings that could lead to the fall of the kingdom, the US used the Iranian solution: military and economic aid.

**Keywords:** Morocco, USSR, US, Iran Revolution, Cold War, Weapons Trade.

## 1. Introduction

A worldwide chess game ensued immediately after the end of WWII. Risen from the change in geopolitics, the World saw the creation of two major blocks. The Western Block, led by the United States (US) and the Eastern Block, led by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). This division created an atmosphere of asymmetrical warfare which was exploited by the two superpowers, where the "Third World were likely to become the principal battlegrounds for the Cold War during the decades ahead." (Little 194). The USSR was viewed as "[...] a mortal threat to the United States and that dictated global vigilance against Russian-backed communist subversion, U.S. policymakers [...]" (Little 117). This period, between 1947 and 1991, became known as the Cold War.

Communism was seen as a major threat to Western Democracies, capitalism, and Western Values. Hence, the US "[...] waged a Cold War against the Kremlin from the sun-drenched shores of the Eastern Mediterranean to the snow-capped mountains of Afghanistan." (Little 117). Within this logical framework, the Middle East was seen as the gateway to the control of three continents: Europe, Asia, and Africa. As it also holds another important resource, oil. If it falls into the hands of the USSR, the Kremlin's sphere of influence would be guaranteed access to those resources, as all the geopolitical and military advantages of the region (Little 216). This would also compromise the defence of one of the US's most important allies, Israel.

The strategies were simple in design but very complex to implement. As the smoulders of WWII were still fading out, the Allies started to drift apart, and the USSR, the great victor in Europe, started to consolidate its power in Eastern Europe. In response, in 1949, a coalition of European nations, the US and Canada, created the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In 1955, the USSR and the seven socialist republics of Central and Eastern Europe signed the Warsaw Pact (WP) as a direct response to

NATO. This period was characterised by indirect intervention via proxy wars, economic influence, and trade agreements, creating an asymmetric war environment. The focus was to negate advantages, utilise the enemies' vulnerabilities, avoid attrition, and exploit the initiative (Eaton 52). Why enter a direct confrontation, where the most important resources of a nation would be depleted when it is possible to gain a strategic advantage?

After the Suez Canal Crisis and the continuous rise of communist sympathisers in the region. Securing key strategic points such as Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia became even more important (Santos, 184). The US strategy passed through an "improvement of quality of life and modernization" to stop the spreading of communism (Little 195). This would be achieved by inciting social reforms, economic growth, and the spread of western-style democracies. The US would provide the necessary help<sup>2</sup>.

In this paper, we will try to see the ripple effect caused by the fall of the Pahlavi regime in 1979, had on the US foreign policies to fight against communism. For this, we will go through the change in stance towards another US strategic partner in Africa, Morocco. By analysing the US and Morocco's weapons sales and military agreements between 1960 and 1980.

## **2. The decline of the Iranian State**

The US applied an economic approach in trying to maintain the Middle East away from communist hands. However, this strategy will be proven, at the same time, plentifully and fruitless. For example, after years of being pro-west, Iraq would fall into a prolonged dictatorship that would be pro-soviet at the start (Little 202-203). Later, when Saddam Hussein grabbed the reins of power, it became a more traditional-religious-based dictatorship (Little 206). So, when we analyse the US policies in Iran, we

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<sup>2</sup> Either through military assistance and loans or through Financial Assistance Programs, grants, and direct financial aid, depending on which administration was in power.

see that "Nowhere in the Middle East did the United States push more consistently for reform and modernization after 1945 than in Iran, and nowhere did America fail more spectacularly." (Little 215).

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of August 1945, an Anglo-Soviet coalition invaded Iran and deposed Reza Shah Pahlavi. The objective was clear, remove a Nazi sympathiser from power<sup>3</sup>, and protect the USSR's southern flank. Replacing him with Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, his twenty-one-year-old son (Little 215). The US would counterbalance both by being the one that helped the young Shah to consolidate his power. Immediately focusing on the 20 million Iranians that were impoverished and abused by the Majlis<sup>4</sup> (Little 215). Despite all US efforts, the problem subsisted by the Shah only focusing on security, prompting the US to "encouraged the Iranian government to focus on political and economic reform, as opposed to national security, which, to all intent and purposes, was taken care of by America." (Murray 2).

In the 1950s, the Tudeh Party, a left-wing party with ties to the USSR led by Mohammed Mossadegh<sup>5</sup>, tried to take over Iran despite being in charge by trying to steer the country towards left-wing policies. Like the nationalisation of the AIOC. This prompted the intervention of the Iranian army, with secret/covert support of the US, which restored the power of the Shah and the country to a right-wing political course on 19<sup>th</sup> August 1953 (Little 217). A US analyst would later confirm that the failed attempt by the Tudeh Party was a direct result of the abject poverty Iranians still lived in (Murray 3). Moreover, the US support to the Shah, via the support for the coup d'état, put them in the middle of the brewing storm. In 1958, despite the US State Department putting together a 125M USD stimulus package,

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<sup>3</sup> To protect the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) a British oil company.

<sup>4</sup> Majlis were the Iranian parliamentary elites that controlled the land.

<sup>5</sup> A sixty-nine-year-old Majli.

the Shah asked instead for military aid. Stating the fear of a new Communist Party due to the new Iraqi government's influence (Little 217).

In the 1960s, Presidents Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy (JFK) ordered a review of Iran's situation. And both teams bore the same conclusion "Unless the Shah embarked upon widespread and pervasive social, economic and political reform, he would lose control of Iran." (Murray 4). The JFK Administration, proposed a plan of action based on "[...] appoint Ali Amini, a pro-Western technocrat [...] stimulating growth, redistributing land, and cleaning up corruption [...]" (Little 219).

However, the Shah had become increasingly more worried about his safety, although he believed that Iran was on the verge of becoming a powerhouse in the Persian Gulf. Such reform would only hinder his supporters (Little 219). This attitude led to several meetings and pressure from Washington, resulting in 1963 in the so-called White Revolution (1973-1979), that is "a series of reforms designed to address some of the most egregious social and economic problems but without similar progress on the political front." (Murray 4). As long this revolution maintained the feeling that it was local and occurred in the local timeframe, not as an American-imposed one, it had a chance to succeded.

With the assassination of President JFK on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 1963, Vice-president Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) became the 36<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. This unforeseeable occurrence made the situation in Iran flip out of control. LBJ was less interested in dealing with the Shah, and more preoccupied with the situation in southeast Asia (Murray 4). The result was a Shah that became more defiant with the US<sup>6</sup> in public, claiming that he was the true responsible for Iran's progress. At the same time, in private, "It was by now a relationship bound by so many ties that the US could ask for and be granted an immunity law that effectively gave carte blanche to

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<sup>6</sup> Albeit Iran needed to import weapons from the US, and need to export oil.

American citizens of all hues in Iran.” (Murray 4). The “security situation” escalated to the point that the White House believed that the Shah “was justified in citing the Soviet threat as a reason for his substantial military purchases.” (Murray 5). The CIA formed and trained the SAVAK<sup>7</sup>, and increased weapons sales and military exchange programs.

During the Nixon Presidency, Iran had become the go-to ally in the Middle East, especially against the USSR’s influence in the region. And between 1962 and 1970

“US–Iranian relations reached an apex. [...] this resulted in a 600 per cent increase in Iran’s military expenditure and a 10-fold increase in US military sales to Iran. [...] At the same time, increasingly segregated US personnel in Iran (largely tied to the military equipment sales and training) exacerbated the underlying tensions in Iran.” (Murray 5).

Iran was now allowed to buy any type of weaponry, except Nuclear, from the US. The regional political influence of Iran became so entrenched with the American anti-communist sentiment that they, with the blessing of the Ford Administration, intervened in Afghanistan in favour of Mohammed Daoud Khan in July 1973. Mohammed Reza Pahlavi offered a “\$400 million loan to encourage political reform, strengthen Afghanistan’s economic infrastructure, and accelerate Kabul’s tilt toward the West.” (Little 223). This program was not appreciated and led to violent protests all over Afghanistan in 1975. Not from communists but Islamic landowners and clergy that fled to Pakistan due to the heavy persecution (Little 223).

Internally, the continuous overreliance on the US and the almost state of impunity Americans enjoy, enhanced by SAVAK’s continuous violent repression, foster even further the anti-American sentiment within Iran’s population (Murray 7).

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<sup>7</sup> The Pahlavi dynasty secret police, formed in 1956 to protect the Shah, that turned to be a source of contest, contempt and hate due to its interrogation practices.

The protests against the “White Revolution” started in 1963. Being Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini<sup>8</sup> a leading figure. (Little 220). Protesting against “American-backed initiatives as secular education, women’s rights, and land reform as affronts to Islamic tradition” (Little 220). With this rhetoric, he gathered around him the disenfranchised of the major cities of Iran. The first wave of repercussions happened almost immediately. With the blessing of US diplomats, “the shah ordered a brutal crackdown that left more than 1,000 Iranians dead and then placed Khomeini and dozens of other clerics under house arrest.” (Little 220) led by the SAVAK. Six months later, when Khomeini resumed his rhetoric, the Shah had him exiled<sup>9</sup>.

On January 8<sup>th</sup> 1978, a group of students and mullahs, supporters of the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini, started a protest against the Shah. Government forces gunned them down, and two dozen were killed. This led to a wave of protests and violent repressions. On September 8<sup>th</sup>, a group of “20,000 pro-Khomeini protesters gathered in Tehran’s Jaleh square, killing 400 and wounding 4,000. Angry students, shopkeepers, and mullahs responded by organizing even bigger protests against Pahlavi rule.” (Little 224).

Despite the visible escalations of the violence, the US still denied the problem and supported the Shah. This was the start of the countdown to the end. Marked by the realisation by the Carter Administration that Shah’s policies, brutal repression of protesters, and dependency on the US, while publicly maintaining the version that he was in control, made Iran a loose cannon. Trying to avert a civil war, “President Carter rejected last-minute calls for an American-backed military takeover in Tehran and quietly encouraged the shah to leave the country instead. [...] On 16 January 1979 Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi bid his unruly subjects farewell and departed for exile in Egypt.” (Little 226).

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<sup>8</sup> A right-wing conservative unknown muslim clergyman in the holy city of Qom.

<sup>9</sup> First in Turkey and then in Iraq.

### **3. Morocco, Iran's shadow in Northern Africa for the United States?**

While believing the danger would come from outside Iran, especially the communist sphere of influence. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's rhetoric and its acceptance by the population proved two points:

- 1) Iran's fall came from the inside, not the outside.
- 2) The US and the Shah were blind to the problem.

And while still blaming outside communist forces, Iran's bubbling situation worsened to the point of a revolution-enforced change. So, we must ask, was there another country within the logical structure of the Cold War where the US applied the same policies? The answer is yes, Morocco.

Although the relations between Morocco and the United States date to 1777 (United States Government). The figure Sultan Sidi Muhammad Ben Abdullah<sup>10</sup>, sought and formerly sign an official treaty in 1786 (Roberts & Tull 249; U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Morocco). The actual modern relation started with WWII when the US used Morocco as a Logistics platform during the war. The relationship flourished after it, and now it is common to see US Navy ships call ports in Morocco's Atlantic shore (Solarz 293), both countries doing joint military exercises. Morocco was even designated, in 2004, as a Major Non- NATO Ally, by the US. As we see in Table 1<sup>11</sup>, between 1950 and 2021, US exports of weaponry to Morocco represented 42.2%, making the US the number 1 provider of military weaponry to Morocco.

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<sup>10</sup> Modern Morocco didn't exist at that time, so we cannot say that it was the Moroccan State that sign the treaty, we can only say that it was Sultan Sidi Muhammad Ben Abdullah that sign it.

<sup>11</sup> The USSR cease to exist in 1991, so the data shown in Table 1 for the USSR will only go up to 1991.

Although, despite their long relationship, the first weapons trade treaty was signed in 1960<sup>12</sup>, with one of its major clauses being “prohibiting use of U.S. arms by Morocco outside its internationally recognized borders, and the U.S. Arms Export Control Act, which limits to defensive purposes the use of American weapons by recipients of military aid” (Zunes 425).

Signed amid the Cold War, the US-Morocco agreement was part of the fight against the communist Soviet area of influence in Africa and to protect NATO’s Southern flank (Saidy 87). At that time, both Libya and Algeria had significant diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union (Hodges 254). Morocco is at a very strategic point. Located in the northern part of Africa, right next to the entrance of the Mediterranean Sea, which means that: 1) no ship can enter or leave the Mediterranean without passing through Moroccan territorial waters; 2) makes this country a point of entry into Africa.

As a political player, “[...] has long had a special place in U.S. diplomacy and strategic planning.” (Jensen 1), and vice-versa. Morocco intervened quite a lot in favour of the US interests.

In Africa, they intervened in 1) the Shaba crisis of 1977-1978<sup>13</sup> (Solarz, 293; Santos, 185); 2) Hosted a joint military training facility with the US<sup>14</sup>; 3) the Comoro Islands in 1982<sup>15</sup>; 4) Benin in 1979<sup>16</sup>; 5) Equatorial Guinea in 1979<sup>17</sup> (Zunes 434).

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<sup>12</sup> This is confirmed when we analyze the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) database for Morocco’s overall imports of weapons.

<sup>13</sup> Sending troops to help squash a communist rebel coup, trained in Angola, into Zaire.

<sup>14</sup> Where members of UNITA, MNR and MMD were trained.

<sup>15</sup> Moroccan armed forces have played a significant role in overthrowing the government.

<sup>16</sup> the forces that tried a coup d’état were trained in Morocco.

<sup>17</sup> Moroccan forces were sent in support of Colonel Teodoro Nguema Mbasago, after his coup d’état.

In the Middle East, 1) helped to establish the first contacts between Israel and Egypt<sup>18</sup> (Solarz 293); 2) Military intervention against Israel in 1973<sup>19</sup>; 3) Lebanon in November 1973<sup>20</sup>. In 1982 King Hassan was chosen as the Arab League representative for a meeting with President Reagan during the Fez Summit 1981 (Zunes 433-434). For its troubles, Morocco received, between 1963 and 1983, more than 1 billion USD in aid from the US (Hodges 355) and the "shadow" protection of a superpower (Zunes 436). Overall "the United States gave more economic and military aid to Morocco than to any other African country since the end of World War II, with the exception of Egypt." (Jensen 2).

Although the clear pro-western politics, Morocco had economic agreements with the USSR, in particular,

"[...] on March 10, 1978, it sealed a multi-billion-dollar deal [...] The USSR agreed to export oil, chemicals, timbre and ore-carrier ships to Morocco in return for phosphates and phosphoric acid over a period of thirty years and to finance an estimated \$2-billion investment in the development of a new phosphate mine at Meskala [...]" (Hodges 355).

Algeria had a closer diplomatic and economic tie with the USSR and could not come close to those values. And if we look at the data shown in Table 1, we see that the USSR was the ninth largest arms exporter to Morocco, with 85 Million USD, representing 1.3% of the Top 10 biggest exporters.

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<sup>18</sup> Which ultimately would lead to the Camp David Agreements and the 1979 Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel

<sup>19</sup> Morocco still holds secret meetings and was considered one of Israel's closest contacts within the Arab-speaking world.

<sup>20</sup> Morocco offered to send 3900 troops for a peacekeeping mission to President Amin Gemayel.

**Table 01** – Top 10 Countries that sold weapons to Morocco between 1950-2021

Position	Supplier	Total of Weapon Sales (\$ Million US) 1950-2021	Percentage
1	United States	4794	42.20%
2	France	4017	35.30%
3	Netherlands	572	5.00%
4	Spain	498	4.40%
5	China	478	4.20%
6	Italy	448	3.90%
7	Belarus	17	1.50%
8	Russia	156	1.40%
9	Soviet Union	142	1.30%
10	Austria	85	0.70%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>11356</b>	

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, Consulted in: 02 July 2022 at 16:14, [https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export\\_values.php](https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_values.php).

By virtue of Hassan II disavowal of the USSR in 1977 (Garí 71-72) and by pro-west political approaches, it constitutes no surprise, that the idea that “que no existía causa de liberación nacional saharauí, sino solo interés expansionistas de Argelia y, tras ella, de ambición hegemónicas de la Unión Soviética por el control de África”<sup>21</sup> was spread by Morocco (Garí 64).

Although the Saharawi cause is one of the “[...] the only major liberation movement in Africa that has not received direct Soviet, Cuban or Chinese military assistance. [...]” (Solarz 287), a 1975 United Nations Visiting Mission, composed with representatives from Iran and Ivory Coast, contradicted Moroccan version (Solarz 286). The social geography of

<sup>21</sup> Translation of the author: “that there was no cause of Saharawi national liberation, but only the expansionist interests of Algeria and, behind it, the hegemonic ambitions of the Soviet Union for the control of Africa”.

Western Sahara<sup>22</sup>, could not support the traditional Marxist view of the world, an explored population by the capital (Zunes 432). Plus “[...] Polisario has affirmed its ‘opposition to imperialism, colonialism and exploitation’ and its commitment to ‘national construction and socialism’. Its socialism, it claims, is inspired by Islamic rather than Marxist precepts. The Front advocates ‘the suppression of all forms of exploitation’, the ‘just distribution of national resources and the suppression of disparities between the countryside and the towns’, the Arabization of education and the provision of free medical care, free, universal, compulsory education, and adequate housing. [...]” (Hodges 87).

So, why does the “[...] impression has developed in some Western circles that the Polisario is the cutting edge of Soviet expansion in the Maghreb. [...]” (Solarz 287) stay so prevalent?

#### **4. Moroccan Armed Forces**

In terms of manpower<sup>23</sup>, in 1974, before the invasion, the FAR total numbers were 56000 units. In 1975, during the invasion, we see a +9% increase to 61000 units. In 1979, four years after the invasion, that number increased by +42000 more units, to 98000. A drastic 75% increase in recruitment, training, and deployment.

This was achieved with the instruction of a law in 1976 that made mandatory military conscription for students (Hodges 293).

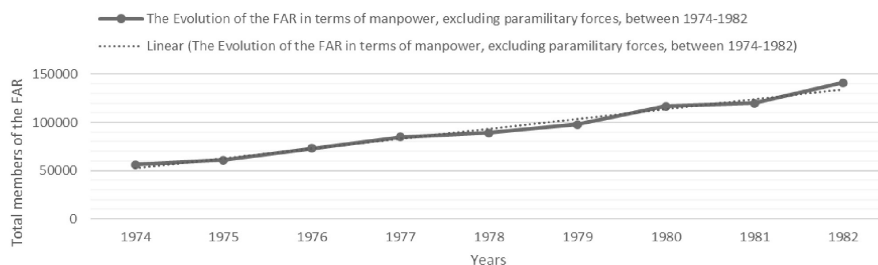
If we add the numbers for the paramilitary units, which have also increased from 23,000 to 30,000. Morocco had, in 1982, nearly 171,000 soldiers ready to fight in Western Sahara (Hodges 293). How much did Morocco spend with their armed forces?

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<sup>22</sup> Group of nomads, travelling from point-to-point, in search of water for the cattle.

<sup>23</sup> Excluding paramilitary forces.

**Graphic 1 - The Evolution of the FAR in terms of manpower, excluding paramilitary forces, between 1974 and 1982**



Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, Consulted in: 02 July 2022 at 16:14, Link: [https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export\\_values.php](https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_values.php)

**Table 02 – The Evolution of the FAR in terms of manpower, excluding paramilitary forces, between 1974 and 1982.**

Year	Total Forces	Increase	Increase (%)	Average Increase	Mode	Median	Standard Deviation
<b>1974</b>	<b>56000</b>	–	–				
<b>1975</b>	<b>61000</b>	<b>+5000</b>	<b>+9%</b>				
1976	73000	+12000	+20%				
1977	84650	+11650	+16%				
1978	89000	+4350	+5%	10625	#N/A	10325	6093.234
<b>1979</b>	<b>98000</b>	<b>+9000</b>	<b>+10%</b>				
1980	116500	+18500	+19%				
1981	120000	+3500	+3%				
1982	141000	+21000	+18%				

Source: (Hodges 293)

**Table 03 – Military Expenditure – Morocco between 1960-1980**

Year	Military Expenditure (current USD)	Military Expenditure (% GDP)
1960	41 596 762.37	2,32%
1961	48 275 957.47	2.70%
1962	53 848 540.36	2.57%
1963	74 893 933.20	3.20%
1964	69 993 222	2.84%
1965	63 175 700.38	2.43%
1966	67 938 085.05	2.68%
1967	70 348 918.78	2.62%
1968	90 900 288.31	3.00%
1969	84 972 008.64	2.39%
1970	88 924 195.09	2.32%
1971	111 288 010.20	2,63%
1972	140 446 991.60	2.84%
1973	185 783 993.80	3.06%
1974	241 889 161.20	3.15%
1975	413 326 127.90	4.60%
1976	577 239 433.30	6.22%
1977	731 455 472	6.62%
1978	772 559 382	5.84%
1979	896 353 802	5.63%
1980	1 117 955 622	5.94%

Source: The World Bank- Retrieved in 10 July 2022, at 17:41 <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?end=1980&locations=MA&start=1960&view=chart>

In 1960, the total value of Morocco's expenditure on the military was 41,5 billion USD, a total of 2.32% of its GDP<sup>24</sup> (Table 3). In percentage, it did not grow much until 1974 (3,1% of GDP). Average of 14% up to 1974, with a value of 241,889,161.2M USD, as demonstrated in Graphic 2.

<sup>24</sup> Gross Domestic Product

From 1974 to 1975 we see an immediate increase of 71%, going from 241,889,161.21 USD to 413,326,127.88 USD. Onwards we see an average increase of 31% in the expenditure, with no negative values of increase, like in 1964-1965-1969, being the biggest value registered at 71% and the lowest at 6% (Table 4). Note that

“Morocco’s army was also battle-tested. Moroccan troops had seen action in the Congo (1960-1961); against Algeria in the 1963 “Sand War;” and with Syrian troops against Israel in 1973. Most Moroccan troops, Arabs and Berbers were drawn from populations north of the High Atlas. These soldiers were accustomed to a moderate Mediterranean climate and largely unfamiliar with the terrain and harsh aridity of the Sahara.” (Mundy 215).

This is reflected in the military budget’s weight on GDP (Table 5). And there are just the costs of maintaining an at-the-ready military corps. Since Morocco did not have a state-of-the-art weapons manufacturing industry, to these we must add the values/costs of weapons acquisitions, in other words, imports.

If we analyse the SIPRI Arms Transfers Database and divide the data by decades, we see that the overall weapons provider to Morocco is the US, with a total of 4794M USD. Followed by France with 4017 M USD. The data also indicates that France was the first country to sell weaponry to Morocco, having started to export weapons in 1956, Graphic 3. These weapons are just the most visible sign and the easiest data to quantify. However, accompanying the augmentation of “Morocco’s arsenal included arms supplied by the United States, Europe, and the Eastern Bloc, backed up by training programs”. (Mundy 215).

**Graphic 2 – Military Expenditure- Morocco between 1960-1980,  
 in current USD and % of GDP.**



Source: World Bank: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?end=1980&locations=MA&start=1960> and <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.CD?end=1980&locations=MA&start=1960> Retrieved in 10 July 2022, at 17:41

Putting this data into context, by comparing the data between the three major military powers of the region, we can see that between the 1950’s<sup>25</sup> and the 1980’s<sup>26</sup>, Morocco imported 5,554M USD, Algeria 11,795M USD and Libya 30,729M USD (Table 7).

Even though Morocco had the early lead, by the time of the Western Sahara invasion, in 1975, it was the region’s 3rd most powerful military powerhouse. Prior to the invasion, the ‘Alawi dynasty was in danger of being overthrown. Earlier in the 1970’s Hassan had survived two coup d’état perpetrated by the armed forces (Garí 9), so he was in a desperate situation even before the invasion of Western Sahara. And this act was

<sup>25</sup> The 1970’s, makes references to the data in the SIPRI database collected from 1950 to 1959

<sup>26</sup> The 1980’s, makes references to the data in the SIPRI database collected from 1980 to 1989

seen as a way for him to maintain his crown by redirecting the blame of his subjects to an exterior enemy. By sending them into the Sahara desert part of his military, he would keep away the bulk of the armed forces from the towns and cities, where they could congregate and consolidate power to try once again to topple him (Gari 9-10).



**Table 04 – Military Expenditure - Morocco (Current USD)  
 between 1960-1980**

Year	Military Expenditure (Current USD)	Increase (Current USD)	Increase (%)	Average Value of Increase %	Mode of value of Increase %	Median of value of Increase %	Standard Deviation of the value of Increase %	Max value of Increase %	Minimum value of Increase %
1960	41596762.4	–	–						
1961	48275957.5	6679195.098	16%						
1962	53848540.4	5572582.892	12%						
1963	74893933.2	21045392.84	39%						
1964	69993222	-4900711.2	-7%						
1965	63175700.4	-6817521.62	-10%						
1966	67938085	4762384.67	8%						
1967	70348918.8	2410833.733	4%	14%	#N/A	14%	16%	39%	-10%
1968	90900288.3	20551369.53	29%						
1969	84972008.6	-5928279.67	-7%						
1970	88924195.1	3952186.448	5%						
1971	111288010	22363815.11	25%						
1972	140446992	29158981.4	26%						
1973	185783994	45337002.24	32%						
1974	241889161	56105167.37	30%						
1975	413326128	171436966.7	71%						
1976	577239433	163913305.4	40%						
1977	731455472	154216038.7	27%						
1978	772559382	41103909.92	6%	31%	#N/A	26%	21%	71%	6%
1979	896353802	123794420	16%						
1980	1117955622	221601820.2	25%						

Source: The World Bank- Retrieved in 10 July 2022, at 17:41 <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?end=1980&locations=MA&start=1960&view=chart>

**Table 05 – Military Expenditure – Morocco (% GDP)  
between 1960-1980**

Year	Military Expenditure (% GDP)	Increase of Military Expenditure (%GDP)	Increase (%)	Average of Increase %	Mode of Increase %	Median of Increase %	Standard Deviation of Increase %	Max of Increase %	Minimum of Increase %
1960	2.32%	–	–						
1961	2.70%	0.39%	17%						
1962	2.57%	-0.14%	-5%						
1963	3.20%	0.63%	25%						
1964	2.84%	-0.36%	-11%						
1965	2.43%	-0.41%	-14%						
1966	2.68%	0.25%	10%						
1967	2.62%	-0.06%	-2%	2.99%	#N/A	5.20%	12.49%	24.54%	-20.45%
1968	3.00%	0.39%	15%						
1969	2.39%	-0.61%	-20%						
1970	2.32%	-0.07%	-3%						
1971	2.63%	0.31%	13						
1972	2.84%	0.22%	8%						
1973	3.06%	0.22%	8%						
1974	3.15%	0.08%	3%						
1975	4.60%	1.46%	46%						
1976	6.22%	1.62%	35%						
1977	6.62%	0.40%	6%						
1978	5.84%	-0.78%	-12%	13.00%	#N/A	5.93%	20.77%	46.32%	-11.83%
1979	5.63%	-20%	-3%						
1980	5.94%	0.31%	5%						

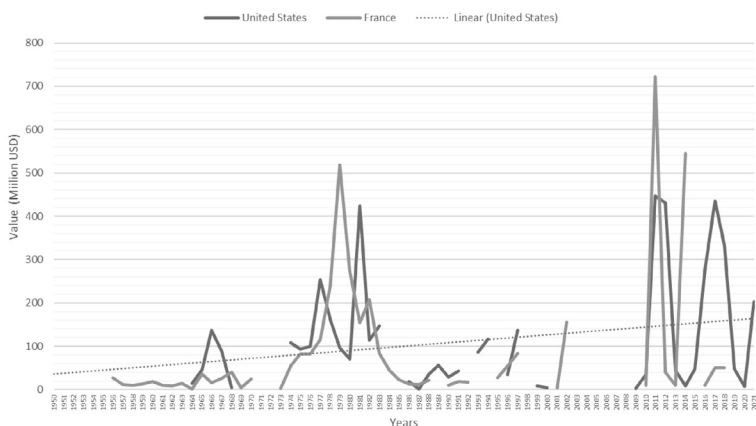
Source: The World Bank- Retrieved in 10 July 2022, at 17:41 <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?end=1980&locations=MA&start=1960&view=chart>

**Table 06 – Top 10 Countries, divided by decade, that have sold weapons to Morocco between 1950-2021**

Position	Country	Decades								Total of Weapon Sales (\$ Million US) 1960-2021
		1950's	1960's	1970's	1980's	1990's	2000's	2010's	2020's	
1	United States	0	314	814	868	454	27	2107	210	4794
2	France	63	177	1121	833	212	160	1438	13	4017
3	Netherlands	0	0	0	48	0	0	524	0	572
4	Spain	0	0	0	436	62	0	0	0	498
5	China	0	0	0	0	0	0	478	0	478
6	Italy	0	26	216	100	0	0	106	0	448
7	Belarus	0	0	0	0	51	120	0	0	171
8	Russia	0	0	0	0	0	156	0	0	156
9	Soviet Union	0	141	0	1	0	0	0	0	142
10	Austria	0	0	47	38	0	0	0	0	85

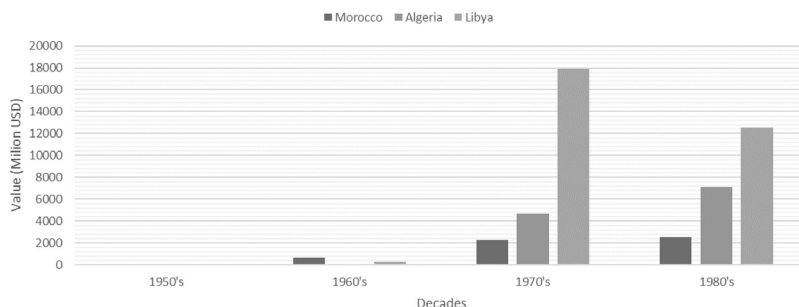
Source: The World Bank- Retrieved in 10 July 2022, at 17:41 <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?end=1980&locations=MA&start=1960&view=chart>

**Graphic 3 – TIV of arms exports to Morocco, 1950-2021 Seller: United States and France.**



Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, Consulted in: 02 July 2022 at 16:14, <https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/values.php>

**Graphic 4 – Morocco’s, Algeria’s, and Libya’s total of weapons imports between the 1950’s and the 1980’s (\$ Million US).**



Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, Consulted in: 02 July 2022 at 16:14,  
Link: [https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export\\_values.php](https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_values.php)

**Table 07 – Morocco’s, Algeria’s, and Libya’s total of weapons imports between the 1950’s and the 1980’s (\$ Million US).**

Country	1950's	1960's	1970's	1980's	Total of Weapons Imports (Million USD)
Morocco	63	679	2277	2535	5554
Algeria	0	36	4654	7105	11795
Libya	4	310	17886	12529	30729

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, Consulted in: 02 July 2022 at 16:14,  
Link: [https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export\\_values.php](https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_values.php)

However, this war would have a high cost and it would come in the form of an economic crisis. In 1975 Morocco was hit by the phosphate crisis<sup>27</sup>, alongside the oil crises, and a series of bad agricultural years would make

<sup>27</sup> Morocco main export. Not being an oil-based exporter nation, its main source of income is the export of phosphates and its derivatives. When the war started, this raw material was in high demand, but soon after the war started, there was a crisis.

the country's finances spiral out of control (Santos 186-187). Prompting the IMF "By 1980, facing an untenable economic situation, the Moroccan government accepted an International Monetary Fund (IMF) economic rescue package. At that time, the plan amounted to the second largest of its kind for a developing country and included \$1 billion in standby credit. Under the IMF's program, Morocco was forced to cut state subsidies, which resulted in "bread riots" of May 1981 and 1984." (Mundy 223)

If considering the economic situation, how did Morocco pay for the military equipment that it needed to continue the war?

### **5. The Anti-communist Rhetoric Turns into an Opportunity?**

The explanation for this misconception could lie in the fact that the biggest supporter of Polisario, as we have stated already, was Argelia and at a time Kaddafi's Libya<sup>28</sup> (Zunes 431). By virtue of both countries being within the sphere of influence of the USSR and that both supplied weapons (Hodges 354), made that a great part of the weaponry used by the Saharawi's being of soviet-origin (Solarz 287), the other part made of captured/abandoned (Santos, 186).

In fact, the USSR bogymen was one the most common cards that Hassan II played throughout the I Sahara War (Garí 59) the other one would (Santos, 187). Hassan's intent was to, undoubtedly, put Morocco on the Pro-Western Camp of the Cold War and to put Polisario as a new USSR conduit in Africa<sup>29</sup>. To be within the eastern side of the conflict could

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<sup>28</sup> Muammar Kaddafi was an unstable ally, this is supported by the fact that Libya only recognized the Saharawi nation, the SADR, in 1980. But still during the hight of his support, 1980-1983, he vehemently insisted in the idea that Mauritania and SADR should fuse and form a Federal State, because he was a supporter of a Pan-Arab unity. If a new Arab state should appear, it would be one more problem to the creation of his Pan-Arab unity.

<sup>29</sup> In spite the multitude of evidence that Polisario and the SADR never actually received, at the time, help from the USSR, Eastern States, China, or Cuba. And they would shoot at USSR fishing vessels when they were fishing in Western Sahara coast.

allow the claim that the Western Sahara War was part of the Cold War. (Mundy 211).

With this, Morocco could gain international support and, more importantly, access to military support, either by monetary aid, military equipment, or both. So how was the FAR adapting to the conflict? Not great, they would be outwitted by Polisario several times, and the economic strain the war aggravated the domestic recession. (Santos, 186-187).

In 1979, Morocco was already four years deep into the I Western Sahara War, a war that was seen as unjust, unnecessary, and unwinnable. Plus, the King was seen as unstable and on the verge of losing the throne (Zunes 429). So, when Iran's Shah departed to exile and the Iranian regime fell, and the USSR invaded Afghanistan, the opportunity arose for the claims that Morocco had been making since 1975. Although, the US were in possession of intelligence reports that clearly stated that Polisario had never received aid from the USSR (Zunes 430), and a few groups of people believed that the war in Western Sahara was a Cold War proxy fight (Mundy 224).

However, years of playing the role of proxy for the US interest in Africa and the Arab-speaking world (Zunes, 433; Santos, 188), had solidified Morocco's position as stable and important ally, bringing with it advantages as well. From 1979 to 1981, Morocco received financial help from Saudi Arabia, summing a total of 1 billion USD per year, halve that value on the years afterwards, and by pardoning Morocco debt in 1991 (Mundy 223). The Saudis have also acted as a surrogate of the US military industrial complex, by buying weapons from the US and suppling them to Morocco (Solarz 294). Reports from the World Bank, also suggest that, near 60% of the war cost were covered by Saudi grants.

When it comes to the US, and the rest of the West, they weren't in a position, that would allow the loss of another allied nation, like Iran (Zunes, 425; Santos, 188). However, it was only obtained when the public opinion in the US changed. The Carter Administration was reluctant to increase the

number of weapons, believing that “to view African problems in an African context, would also see such a change in policy as an implicit repudiation of the new direction in which the President has steered our African policy.” (Solarz 290). Arguing that the policy could not be changed because the US was prohibited by law, the 1968 Foreign Military Sales, in specific the Chapter 1 – Foreign and National Security Policy Objectives and Restraints, Sec.4 “PURPOSES FOR WHICH MILITARY SALES BY THE UNITED STATES ARE AUTHORIZED. – Defense articles and defense services shall be sold by the United States Government under this Act to friendly countries solely for internal security, for legitimate self-defense [...]”, the Arms Control and Disarmament Act of 1961, and the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, plus a clause in the 1960 US-Moroccan Agreement, prohibit the US to sell offensive weaponry and weapons sold could only be used for self-defense, within the international recognized borders at the time of signing (Solarz, 297; Zunes, 425).

The war in Western Sahara, was not part of Morocco, so, in the eyes of US Law, this was an offensive war. “It is hard to see how giving Morocco permission to utilize American military equipment throughout the Western Sahara could be in any way squared with the relevant legislation’s reference to “legitimate self-defense.” It would in fact be seen by the world as a reward for aggression.” (Solarz 292).

But this would turn with the events of 1979, by altering the perception of the war, by making appear that Morocco was the victim, not the perpetrator (Garí 65), and this was helped by the Polisario operations in Western Sahara “[...] attacking commercial and fishing ships of various national origins [...] Algerian-backed escalations of Polisario’s capabilities only engendered more sympathy for Morocco, one of the West’s most steadfast client regimes. The October 31, 1981, battle of Galtah Zammur (Guelta Zemmour) is a case in point. The multi-pronged attack saw Polisario’s use of tanks for the first time. More devastating, though, were Polisario’s Soviet-made SA-6 surface-to-air missiles. With these, the Sahrawi fighters downed

two F-1s, an F-5, a C-130 command plane, and a troop carrier.” (Mundy 220-221), and Polisario attacked within Morocco borders (Zunes 425) This, plus the political pressure that the Carter administration was facing (Gari 29), when allied with the same aura that Iran had (Zunes 438), plus USSR the invasion of Afghanistan 1979 (Ohaegbulam 129&131) made it easy for the political machine of Washington to spin the situation. By the end of the Carter Administrations, “direct U.S.-arms sales deliveries grew from \$33 million in 1977, to \$86 million in 1978, to \$133 million in 1979.” (Mundy 224), and the military aid grew from 4.1M USD in 1974, to 99.8M USD in 1978 (Zunes 425).

The Reagan Administration, doubled down on the military aid, by utilizing various programs such as the International Military Education and Training Program for combat flying (Mundy 224). This would become the main form of US help, weapons sales (through credit lines, loans, and programs) and military training (Ohaegbulam 130), “...despite their knowledge [US] of the economic hardships such military transfers imposed on Morocco and the northwest Africa region generally.” (Ohaegbulam 139).

The Moroccan armed forces also received training in counterinsurgency warfare, their military command and control strategies were update<sup>30</sup>, military grade weaponry and hardware was made available to Morocco.

The exchange of personel and knowledge, also increased between both countries. “By 1982, there were approximately 130 U.S. military advisors supporting the Moroccan armed forces, including members of the Special Forces (Green Berets), as well as U.S. military attachés seen wearing Moroccan uniforms in the Western Sahara battle zone. Over \$1 million is spent annually to train Moroccan military officers, and training has also been provided for counter-insurgency commandos and pilots. C-130s with side-

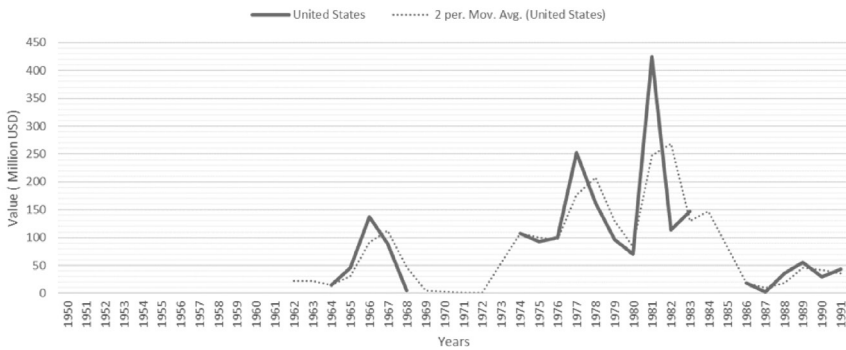
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<sup>30</sup> One of the Polisario main advantages was the snail pass that the orders and communications of FAR had. Due to the earlier 70’s coup attempts, every single decision and communication had first to received and passthrough Rabat.

looking airborne radars have been supplied along with other reconnaissance and intelligence assistance, possibly via satellites.” (Zunes 425-426).

However, if we look at the data (Graphic 5), we see the bulk of the US military help, would be concentrated between 1980 and 1981, the clear aftermath of the Iranian Revolution and the Invasion of Afghanistan. By adding the US financial aid and the change in tactics, initializing the constructing of the “Berm”, a US initiative (Zunes 426), a military wall that would divide the Western Sahara in two, it was enough to change the tides of war in Morocco’s favor, the war still was unwinnable, but this time, for neither side. The I Western Sahara war would be forced into a stalemate and the signing of a cease-fire in 1991, and in the end, it would trigger the evolution of the FAR into a “modern” military.

**Graphic 5 – United States United States weapons export to Morocco 1950-1991**



Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, Consulted in: 02 July 2022 at 16:14,  
Link: [https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export\\_values.php](https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_values.php)

## 6. Conclusion

Despite all the episodes that the US went through before the Iran Revolution, nothing was learned. The ghost of the USSR was enough to launch the US political machine of the 1970's, 1980's and the 1990's into overdrive, even though the ghost was just that, a ghost. The complete lack of oversight, lack of procurement of accurate information, and almost belief that the image of the US was at risk, paved the way for a right-wing revolution in Iran in 1979. This sent a ripple effect throughout the US, creating the need to strengthen its allies, and in the process reverting some of its policies of neutrality, and view that regional conflicts should be seen as that and should be resolved within the regional confinement. This posed a risk, but one that was assumed by the Washington political machine without a second thought.

Hassan II, king of Morocco, was a political savvy-man, and this is the biggest difference between Morocco and Iran. Hassan II understood two things: 1) Morocco's problems were internal instead of external; 2) Hassan tried to use the politics of the world powers, for his own benefit, and succeeded for a while, between 1979-1982. He did this by acting as the US proxy in Africa and in the Arab-world, just like Iran, but to a greater extent and success. With this he was able to gather the political will necessary to help his cause, although playing the realpolitik game, he gambled his throne by invading Western Sahara, and this powerplay, almost caused his downfall. The invasion rapidly became a source of problems, the constant need of weapons, resources and money, transformed the war rapidly and grew into a nation scale problem, due to consecutive economical and agricultural crises, the country's economics soured needing an IMF intervention.

All his public rhetoric, of accusing the Polisario of being a USSR and Algeria proxy agent, would pay off in the public eyes in 1979, when the Iran Revolution shocked the world, followed by the USSR invasion of Afghanistan. As a counter measure, the US, started to move into a

right-wing political spectrum, pressed by an increase of public fear of losing another important ally, despite the high spheres of power having information, that in the case of Western Sahara, this was not the case.

This was achieved by starting to invest and to give a helping hand to allies, like Morocco. This help could be either indirectly through allied nations, like Saudi Arabia that in the case of Morocco, first financed the purchase of weapons and secondly and gave monetary aid, and finally pardoned the debt. However, when it became necessary, the US intervened directly, by using military analysis, military joint exercises, financial aid and by offering programs/courses, that could benefit the armed forces of its allies. In the case analyzed in this paper, this changed the face of the I Western Sahara War. The restructure that the FAR would go through, would transform them into a "modern" armed force, capable of using modern equipment, that was given/bought, capable of acting in any theater of operations, which was impossible to achieve prior the US intervention.

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## African-American Identity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987)

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### Abstract

This paper aims to examine the African-American identity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987). The novel emphasizes the painful aspects of slavery such as sexual abuse and violence and explores the effects of the institution of slavery on the African-American character's identity. The paper also addresses what it means to have a name and be free. The slavery institution does not believe in individuality. Naming is significant since it identifies the character. An analysis of the character's identity and name will be studied since the characters have written their own stories and they are historically deprived of their humanity and language, a major constituent of the character's personal and fellow slaves' history. Therefore, the African-American character looks at the past as he/she longs for the sense of self. Moreover, the African slave is prohibited from being himself/herself or from belonging to a family. In this kind of institution, the African-American doubts the essential aspects of his identity, such as his value as an individual and the source of his manhood. Even after emancipation, the character feels that he has no identity, alienated and has no sense of self. After being freed, the characters try to reclaim their identities. The characters rename themselves in a way that they can now become 'definer' not 'defined': specific examples and references will be

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drawn from the narrative. The white founders of the institution of slavery commit acts of raping, an attack on one's freedom, stealing and stripping the slave's belongings and possessions, including his name.

**KeyWords:** Morrison, *Beloved*, Identity, African-American Novel, Slavery.



## 1. Morrison and African-American Literature

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) is set during the 1870s. *Beloved* focuses on the powers of history and memory. It is called the most technically-sophisticated work by using flashbacks, fragmented narration, and shifting viewpoints. In an interview with Angelo (1989), Morrison says about the novel:

I was trying to make it a personal experience. The book was not about the institution. Slavery with a Capital S. It was about the anonymous people called slaves. What they do to keep on, how they make a life, what they're willing to risk, however long it lasts, in order to relate to one another\_ that was incredible time (*Time*, 22 May).

Morrison has been regarded “the premier promoter of African-American literature” (Dan: 2007). Morrison presents the brutal effects of slavery. Morrison attempts to uncover the reality of the African-American past in her work: she makes the reader “journey to a site to see what remains were left behind and to reconstruct the world that these remains imply” (“Site” 112). In an interview, Morrison herself acknowledges that she is an “antipostmodernist author of black-topic texts passing them to her black readers” (*Living Memory* 11).

## 2. The Main Issues in Morrison's *Beloved*

*Beloved* “examines how social assistance that is contingent upon work and adherence to normative moral standards reinforces African-American marginalization, whereas unconditional social assistance has a greater potential to mitigate it” (Zamalin, 2014, 208). The plot in *Beloved* is about a story of Sethe, an ex-slave who was resettled to the outskirts of Cincinnati, Ohio with her daughter Denver at 124 Bluestone. The two women are joined by Paul D, one of Sethe's fellow slave's in Kentucky plantation called “Sweet Home”. It's after the Civil War in 1870s; although slavery as a legal institution is over, it has only started its haunting of Sethe's house by her deceased baby daughter. Readers never learn the baby's name but in

exchange for sex, Sethe has had a headstone carved for her girl, bearing a single word “Beloved”. Denver has no friends and is extremely shy. Howard and Buglar, Sethe’s other two sons, run away from home by the time they are thirteen. Once leaving the house, and upon returning to it, Paul D, Sethe, and Denver discover a young woman sleeping near the front door of their house. The young woman goes by the name Beloved, and from all appearances she is the embodied spirit of Sethe’s daughter. In the climax of the story, Denver reaches out and searches for help from the black community to get rid of Beloved who begins to be a great trouble in the house.

### ***2.a Morrison’s Beloved and Slavery***

In *Beloved*, Morrison explores the effects of slavery on the characters, Sethe, Denver, Baby Suggs, and Paul D, who try to repress and then come to terms with the painful memories of the past. According to Atlas (1999), critics face difficulties in their interpretation of the novel because of its complex design and sensitive subject matter (47). Bell (1992) notes that *Beloved* is an exploration of the “double consciousness” of black Americans (8). Franco (2010) suggests that one reads *Beloved* as a call for reparations, or recompense “for slavery and Jim Crow social oppression and marginalization” (428). Ayadi (2011) states, using Derrida’s deconstruction, that “*Beloved* shows the way African-American identity could be reconstructed through its own cultural heritage and social structure” (263). In the novel, Morrison reflects both the pessimism produced by racism and the optimism that supported African-American people to survive in spite of racism. In her novels, Morrison has a desire to make her reader examine the family values, gender politics and community secrets that shape individual and collective identity.

### ***2.b Morrison’s Characters: Names and Use of Language***

The effects of slavery on African-American identity are presented in the characters, their use of language and change of names. The characters have been deprived of their identity, humanity, and language. When they look

at the past, they long for the sense of self-struggle to assert their African-American identity.

From the outset of the novel, Sethe, the protagonist recollects her memories of slavery which are inescapable and continue to haunt her in the spirit of her deceased daughter. The story is written by the voices of people who historically have been denied identity, humanity, and language. *Beloved* focuses on memory and history: Sethe's memories of her daughter's death and her experience at "Sweet Home" are too painful to recall consciously. African slavery in America, says Fullweiler (2000), is "a brutal exploitation, but the paternalism of the planters sometimes instilled a sense of humanity in the exploited slaves" (113). What the slaves' desire most is freedom.

Like all other slaves, Sethe has no identity because the slavery institution believes in no sense of individuality. Therefore, she takes her role as a mother, desiring maternal bonding, to an extreme. Sethe thinks of her children as best parts of herself and she can now create her identity. Through her individual efforts and with the help of Paul D and other slaves, Sethe conceptualizes her identity as different from her children. She seems to be different from the rest of the slave community who avoid and keep themselves away from her because they believe Sethe, like Babby Suggs, is thinking too high of herself. In an incident that confirms the community's view, Sethe prefers to steal food from the restaurant when she works rather than wait on line with the rest of the black community. However, the community helps Sethe to find her identity after her release from being trapped by *Beloved*.

The voices of the women searched for the right combination, the key, the code, the sound that broke the back of words. Building voice upon voice until they found it, and when they did it was a wave of sound wide enough to sound deep water and knock the pods off chestnut trees. It broke over *Sethe and she trembled like the baptized in its wash* (my italics, *Beloved* 254).

Sethe becomes involved in the African-American community. She is reborn after emancipation and gained a new identity. As a member of this community to whom she belongs, she shares their past history and crossing of the Atlantic.

Sethe also reveals more details about her mother. In one instance, she recalls Nan telling her that she and Sethe's mother "were together from sea" and "taken up many times by the crew" (*Beloved* 74). Nan and Sethe's mother were on the slave ship during the Middle Passage and were both raped by white sailors. The act of raping is an attack on one's freedom; it is an intrusion into the privacy of the character's identity. Another act of aggression against the character's identity is stealing and stripping one's belongings and possessions. Sethe is still preoccupied with the schoolteacher's and his nephew's behavior when they have stolen her breast milk, which is stored for her infant daughter.

After I left you, those boys come in and they took my milk. That's what they came in there for. Held me down and took it. I told Mrs. Garner on em. She had that lump and couldn't speak but her eyes rolled out tears... As she [Sethe] raised up from the heart she felt Paul D behind her and his hands under her breasts. She straightened up and knew, but could not feel, that his cheek was pressing into the branches of her chokecherry tree (*Beloved* 20).

### 3. Seth and Paul D

When the school teacher finds out that Sethe has reported his and his nephews' misdeeds to Mrs. Garner, he has her whipped severely despite the fact that she is pregnant. During this narrative, Paul D cradles Sethe's breasts and Sethe "relived their weight". The narrator comments: it is the "responsibility of her breasts". In fact, they are symbols of her devotion to her children, but now they are Paul's for a moment. Usually defined by her motherhood, Sethe has a chance to be herself for a moment, whoever that may be. In this act, Paul D acquaints Sethe with her body as a locus of her own desires and not merely a site for the desires of others\_ whether those of rapists or those of her children.

Paul D has endured torturous experience in a chain gang in Georgia, where he was sent for trying to kill Bradywine, a slave owner whom he was sold to by schoolteacher. The African-American character is always feeling in agony because he/she doesn't own him/herself. Even those who try to survive think of others' losing their identity and humanity on the hands of the white. That is what happens to Sethe after the experience of *Beloved*. When Paul D comes back to Sethe, who was retreated to Babby Suggs bed to die, Sethe laments, "She [*Beloved*] was best thing." But Paul D replies, "You Your best thing Sethe." Paul D's identity seems to be vanished since he suffers physical and emotional brutality at Sweet Home. One of the means Paul D believes in and uses to repress his painful memories in order to survive isn't to become too attached to anything. Paul D has made a union with Sethe because this act provides him to come to terms with his past.

However, Paul D continues to doubt essential aspects of his identity, such as his value as an individual and the source of his manhood. Paul D considers himself a man in his own right but the schoolteacher proves to him that this claim to mankind is not inherent and it depends on the will of another. After wearing a bit like an animal, a portion of Paul D's identity is shattered. His relationship with Sethe and their bondage of the past form a coherent identity that has participated in putting together the fragments of their past.

#### **4. Seth and her Past**

It is Sethe's story and her past experience that is presented throughout the novel. The most striking characterization of Sethe is her motherly instincts. Sethe's past causes her to be a strong influence on the narrative. What Sethe has confronted in Sweet Home makes her take control of all what was happening to her family. Because Sethe is obsessed with the past, she has mistaken Mr. Bodwin for schoolteacher during the exorcism. Instead of repeating the past by running to protect her own children, Sethe does what she wishes she has done before: she directs her violence to attack this mistaken enemy.

Undoubtedly, the novel questions through the eyes of the schoolteacher: what is the difference between a man and an animal? The schoolteacher treats the slaves like farm stock, measuring their body parts and studying them like biological specimens. Once, Sethe overheard him giving a lesson to his nephews about her in whom he instructed them to categorize each of her characteristics as either human or animal. He manifests his cruelty; Sixo, Mr. Garner's slave, is whipped by the schoolteacher when he tells him about his reasoning that breaks the rule. The schoolteacher wants to demonstrate that "definitions belong to the definers" not the defined. The slaves' identities are determined by their white masters. All the slaves in Sweet Home are the property of the Garners. Mr. Garner believes that manhood is in the ability to live to make choices, although he doesn't provide many options for his slaves to choose. Mr. Garner boasts that his slaves are allowed to live as "real men", but Paul D questions how manly they actually are. Paul D thinks that "they [slaves] were believed and trusted, but most of all they were listened to" (*Beloved* 147).

Paul D feels that he has no identity at all even after his emancipation. That is what slavery has done to these people. Paul D believes that he is alienated and has no sense of self. At one point in the novel, he cannot tell whether screaming he hears is someone else's or his own. According to the slavery institution, slaves are sub humans and they are considered as commodities that can be bought and sold. Paul D's feeling is of insecurity because he is unaware about being a "real man". It always comes to Paul D's mind his value as an individual.

### **5. The African-American Character in *Beloved***

The novel shows that African-American is like any other man in America. Moreover, it addresses what it means to be free. The question to be raised: Is Babby Suggs truly free when white men are allowed to barge into her yard at any time? Does Paul D own himself and is he free when he isn't allowed to love whatever he wants to love? Thus identity is not just a matter of not belonging to a single master.

Furthermore, when *Beloved* accuses Sethe of leaving her behind and not being nice to her, Sethe seems to be referring to her mother, who left her behind on the slave ship. Each African-American's desire can be read as an element for recognition from the other; a signal of having an identity. However, the slaves are not permitted to be legally married because this matrimonial bond gives one his/herself and be in contact to another. This means that slaves become contracted to each other, where in reality they are already contracted to their owners. Regarding marriage between slaves, the slaves are prevented from any claim of their children because if they are legally married, they can claim their children.

## 6. Slavery and Its Impact

Slavery exists for the service of the white man, who just cares for his own advantages. Even giving a name seems to be a threat to the system: "He told the story of Paul F, Halle, Paul A, and Paul D" (*Beloved* 30). In his review of Duvall's *Identifying Fictions of Toni Morrison* (2000), Storhoff (2011) remarks that it is one of the most important books in which Duvall explores Morrison's "struggle to fashion an unseable identity". The African-American identity is associated with the jungle. The white people believe that "under every dark skin was a jungle" (*Beloved* 234): who is responsible for this jungle?

But it wasn't the jungle blacks bright with them to: this place from the other place. It was the jungle of the white folks planted in them. And it grew. It spread. In through and after life, it spread until it invaded the whites who had made it. Touched them every one. Changed and altered them. Made them bloody sill, wore than they wanted to be (234).

Slavery has its impact not only on the African-American characters but also on whites as well.

Bourdeau (2002) remarks that *Beloved* tasks a "tradition that valorizes suffering as the pivotal experience whereby an individual becomes human"

(285). In all his experience, the African-American undergoes continued suffering. He always looks at the past because he longs for the sense of self that history provides. Moreover, the character does not use his native language because since the moment he/she boards the slavery ship, it is forgotten in this new atmosphere where he has to learn the white man's language. The slave's language is a major constituent of his personal and his fellow slaves' history. This takes the character to the memories on the ship crossing the Atlantic.

In the beginning the women are away from men and the men are away from the women storms rock us and mix the men into the women and the women into the men that is when I begin to be on the back of the man for a long time I see only his neck and his wide shoulders above me I am small I love him because he has a song when he turned around to die I see the teeth he sang through ... there is no breath coming from his mouth and the place where breath should be is a sweat smelling the others don't know he is dead I know his song is gone now I love his pretty little teeth instead (*Beloved* 250).

This is a *Beloved's* stream of consciousness monologue describing the slave's ancestors' memories that are evoked. The speaker loves the man and his song because she understands the African language. Although he is on board this slavery ship, the man's singing releases her internal motives of being human like the other on the same ship which dehumanizes her and treats her as an animal. The man's song evokes the speaker's nostalgia and her African origin and identity.

The African-American character uses language to reflect on what goes around him. The slaves are forced to use English as a means of communication with the white man. However, Sixo, one of Mr. Garner's slaves at Sweet Home, avoids the use of English although others employ it to redefine the world on their own terms. In their attempt to claim their identity after release from slavery, Stamp Paid and Babby Suggs rename themselves in a way that they can now become definer not the defined. Other slaves like Paul D and

his inmates at Georgia prison manipulate the language and try to adjust its meanings so that the white man would be unable to understand what they are saying. This is a means of recollecting their past experience and hoping for their future dreams. Paul D and other inmates sing together about their dreams and memories by “garbing ... [and] tricking the words” (*Beloved* 234).

Powell (2000) emphasizes that Morrison initiates “the possibility of coherence and recognition for the characters in *Beloved* through freedom and alliance with community” (143). The community has a great impact on the individual: achievement and acceptance. The characters need to form an integrated self; they need to form an individual identity within their community. Sethe says: “Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another” (*Beloved* 95). This means that the white community denies the status of the African-American as a human: This results on the negative feeling of the individual’s internal mind, even though one is freed from the external bondage. The construction of one’s identity is very central to the novel. The characters embark upon the process of individuation in which they establish a sense of self and become men and women. The characters feel that they are part of the African-American community.

According to Schapiro (2000), “the self will still be trapped in an inner world that presents a genuine experience of freedom.” Shcapiro also believes that the novel “wrestles with the central problem of recognizing and claiming one’s subjectivity and it shows how this cannot be achieved independently of the social environment” (155). The community plays an essential role in supporting and protecting its members. At the end of the story, it is the community who saves Seth from mistakenly killing Mr. Bodwin.

Moreover, the community gathers at Sethe’s 124 and collectively drives *Beloved* away, releasing Sethe from her past. The community contributes to one’s understanding of identity as an individual. It is slavery that oppresses the African-Americans and denies their being humans. Although some of the slaves are released or escaped, they still feel the devastating consequences of

being held and their attempt to reclaim their individual identities seems to be in doubt. The slaves struggle is to obtain a true sense of self and self-worth.

On the individual level, Baby Suggs helps her African-American community. When she is freed by her son, Sethe's husband, who has worked years of extra labor, she has learnt what it means to own every part of her body and she begins to call other slaves to "love your body." Baby Suggs, this elderly woman, preaches to the black community in Cincinnati in the Clearing.

"Here," she said, "in this here place, we flesh, flesh that weeps, laughs; of flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard. Yonder they don't love your flesh. They despise it. They don't love your eyes; they'd just pick em out ... And O my people! They don't love your hands. Those they only use, tie, bind, chop off and leave empty. Love your hands! Love them. Raise them up and kiss them ... No they don't love your mouth. You got to love it ... Love your heart. For this is the prize" (*Beloved* 104-105).

In this preaching, Suggs attempts to assist her former slaves to reclaim themselves, to speak, and express their feelings: she encourages the blacks not only to love their hands, their mouths, and their flesh, but also to love their hearts. The white man never shows any respect to the enslaved African. Suggs also reminds her audience of the torture, torment, and despise practiced by the white man, like chopping their tongues, cutting their hands, and punishing them. Suffering physically and mentally are the results of slavery. Halle loses his mind when he watches powerless the schoolteacher's nephews rape his wife, Sethe, of her breast milk.

Sethe, a devoted mother, always tries to justify her actions to herself, particularly the beheading of her daughter in order not to return her child to the slavery by which she herself been violated. This, says Bourdeau (2002), "suggests that pain may not point the way to redemption but will instead perpetuate the process of violence in which it found its origin" (285). Even in freedom, the African-American family as an institution suffers

fragmentation and destruction. In the stream of consciousness monologue, Sethe says:

“How if I hadn’t killed her, she would have died and that is something I couldn’t bear to happen to her. When I explain it she’ll understand, because she understands everything already. I’ll tend her as no mother ever tended a child, or daughter. Nobody will ever get my milk no more except my own children” (*Beloved* 234).

Sethe has invested her identity in motherhood. Every sacrifice she has made in for her children is because, according to her, her children are extensions of herself as well as she is an extension of them. That is why she blames her murdering of the child on the oppression of slavery.

Sethe constructs the idea that her children are her best parts and it is from that idea she creates her identity. At the end of the novel, Paul D tells Sethe: “You your best thing, Sethe. You are” (322). This means that one’s identity is crucial to him/her success and happiness in life. Slavery splits a person into fragmented figure. The identity denial becomes a “self that is no self.” Where is the self? The self is located in a word defined by others. The characters suffer and face the challenge of an unmade “self” that is imposed of their recollection and defined by perceptions of language.

Coonradt (2005) remarks that the characters’ lives are “shattered” and so are their painful history remains “fragmented”. Denver plays a crucial role in the narrative; Denver grants Sethe love and compassion, but “Sethe wouldn’t have a story to tell, if not for Amy [Denver]”. In the following monologue, Denver also emphasizes family bonds.

Beloved is my sister. I swallowed her blood right along with my mother’s milk. She was my secret company until Paul D came. I love my mother but I know she killed one of her because of it ... That’s how come me and Beloved could play together. Not talking... Maybe it’s still in her the thing that makes it all right to kill her children. I love to tell her. I have to protect her (*Beloved* 242-43).

Then Denver switches to talk about her father: “I always know he was coming” (244). For Denver, her father has an identity although he is dead. During his life, he has been stripped of it but in his death she can give him an identity because he no longer belongs to the slavery. Denver struggles through her life to gain independence. Denver leaves into the town and attempts to find permanent world and possibly to attend college. This is a significant beginning for her in order to achieve independence and self-possession. Denver makes an effort toward an assertion of herself. When she realizes that her mother devotes her energies to Paul D, Denver feels threatened. She treats Paul D coldly much of the time. After Paul D’s departure, Sethe takes Beloved and Denver ice-skating, partly to show that she has not been devastated by Paul D’s departure. Later, Sethe hears Beloved humming a song Sethe made up to sing to her children. Faced with such evidence, Sethe finally recognizes Beloved as her resurrected daughter. Now that her dead child has rejoined her, she decides to discard the past and the future for the “present” of 124. Moreover, Sethe’s attachment to Beloved and her submission to Beloved’s demands oblige Denver to assume her responsibility: reaching out to the community to ask for help.

Beloved perhaps stands for all the transported slaves on the sides of the Atlantic. She is the one who embodies the “collective unconscious” of the oppressed under slavery. Beloved might be seen as a representation of the unfortunate past that is kept confronting Sethe and other African-American characters. Although Sethe becomes paralyzed by the past, Beloved plays a very significant impact on her. Beloved acts as an inspirer to Sethe for enabling her to tell stories from the past, particularly the desertion of her mother and the suffering she has endured at Sweet Home.

Morrison uses monologue by Beloved, Sethe, and Denver to portray the slaves’ loss of identity. In her description of the slave ship transporting the Africans to America, Beloved tells that many of them died of disease or starvation on their voyage to America. In each monologue, the character expresses her fragmented incoherent African-American identity. Certainly,

the three of them, Sethe, Denver, and Beloved confuse their identities. Not only the three characters confuse their identities but also there are others who are lost. Loss is one aspect of disappearance and vanishing. From the opening of the story, the situation at 124 reveals that several family members are lost. The boys, Buglar and Howard, left and Baby Suggs died. The two main characters, Sethe and Denver, have lost several people who were important to them:

124 SPITEFUL. Full of baby's venom. The women in the house knew it and so did the children. For years each put up with the spite in his own way, but by 1873 Sethe and her daughter Denver were its only victims. The grandmother, Baby Suggs, who died, and the sons, Howard and Buglar, had run away by the time they were thirteen years old (*Beloved* 3).

The slavery institution separates families and deprives the characters from living their own lives, leaving them without a sense of self-worth. In their discussion about children, Baby Suggs tells Sethe to be thankful because she has three children left. Baby Suggs has eight: "Every one of them gone away from me. Four taken, four chased, and all, expect marrying somebody's house into evil" (6).

Furthermore, slavery prevents the African-American people from having an identity. The slaves therefore invent their own means to identify themselves or their children. This is what Sethe's mother has done to her. Sethe tells Beloved about the mother she never really knew. The one memory she has of speaking with her mother, was when the woman showed her a brand on her rib that was a circle around a cross to identify her if anything were to happen:

... Right on her rib was a circle and a cross burnt right in the skin she said, 'This is your ma'am. This, and she pointed. 'I am the only one got the mark now. The rest dead. If something happens to me and you can't tell me by my face, you can know me by this mark' (*Beloved* 72).

Not long after that, the woman was hanged and Sethe was pulled away before she was able to see the brand. This loss of her own family as a small girl motivates her to love her children more than Baby Suggs and Paul D.

Moreover, slavery strips the slaves of their names. Naming is significant since it identifies the character. When Baby Suggs gets her freedom, she asks Mr. Garner why she is called Jenny. Mr. Garner asks her, “Ain’t that your name? What would you call yourself?” Baby Suggs replies, “Nothing ... I don’t call myself nothing” (161). She sees herself with no name and identity like all other slaves. Mr. Garner tells her that the name was on the bill-of-sale given to him by her former master, Mr. Whitelaw of Carolina. “‘Well,’ said Mr. Garner, going pink again, ‘If I was you, I’d stick to Jenny Whitelaw. Babby Suggs ain’t no name for a free Negro’” (162). After she has gained her freedom, Suggs becomes very excited and that is why she begins to ask questions about her name. Suggs becomes a source of emotional and spiritual inspiration to the African-American community. Gardner (2016) emphasizes that Morrison “exposes the hypocrisy of a culture that claims to be invested in the protection of women and children, all the while allowing them to suffer at the hands of laws that invest them with little power, and blaming them for the actions that result from their subordinated status” (210). After Sethe’s murder of Beloved, Babby Suggs stops preaching and retreated to a sickbed to die. She is the motivating power behind Denver’s leaving the house and requesting assistance from the black community.

Benston (1984) points out that “the refusal to be named ... thrust[s] the self beyond received patterns and relationship into a stance of unchanged authority” (153). The house is named 124 in the story. It consists of three digits that highlight the absence of Sethe’s murdered third child. As an institution, slavery shakes and shatters the family structure of the African people who are stripped of the foundation of any identity except their roles as servants to the white people. The institution is aware of the fact that naming is an assertion of independence and having a sense of belonging.

Hayes (2000) asserts that in African-American literature naming always holds a special double significance because of the “dual cultural heritage”. Naming the house becomes the physical representation of the spirits of the “unnamed” women who live in there when alive and when inhabits them still after death. Like Baby Suggs, Stamp Paid, an agent of the Underground Railroad, helps Sethe to freedom and later saves Denver’s life. He decides to change his name because he has to pay for his emotional and moral debts for the rest of his life; While a slave, Stamp has been forced to give his wife to his master’s son to sleep with, and that his wife was a gift so terrible that it has freed him forever after of all obligation. For this reason, his feeling of guilt, he has changed his name from Joshua to Stamp Paid. “‘They called me Johsua,’ he said, ‘I am renamed myself’, he said, and ‘I’m going to tell you why I did it’” (*Beloved* 274).

Stamp Paid, a name bestowed by him, creates a new identity. Stamp Paid’s renaming is a sign of strength and self-affirmation, self-actualization of a former slave. He has his own view regarding the need of the black people to work extremely hard because they wish to dissociate themselves from white people’s image of them as a savage, animalistic species. In their entire attempt to protect and emphasize their humanity, Stamp Paid notes, the harder they work, the more bitter and angry they become. Baby Suggs, of whom Stamp Paid was very fond, thinks about her late-life depression, which deeply saddened him. He tries to convince her to continue preaching God’s word, but she claims she has lost all motivation after the white men’s intrusion into her household. This intrusion, an act of interference into the privacy of the individual, is a violation of Sugg’s identity.

*Beloved* asks Paul D to name her in order to have an identity. In the seduction scene between *Beloved* and Paul D, *Beloved* approaches Paul D and requests him to “touch me on the inside part”. This request seems on the surface as purely sexual. But the reality of the situation is that *Beloved*, like all other African-American characters, looks for an identity, something to be recognized as a human being, not as a commodity. In the same scene,

Beloved continues her speech with Paul D and says to him, “And you have to call me my name” (*Beloved* 137). She reiterates, “*Call me my name ... Please call it. I’ll go if you call it*” (my italics, 137). Beloved wants an acknowledgment by others in order to construct her identity.

Slavery has left horrible consequences on the African-American people. From their painful experiences, slaves try to repress their past memories and not to remember or bring any of these moments into their present life. This dissociation from the past causes a kind of fragmentation of the individual self and a loss of identity. The past is a part of one’s self and of his identity. One’s identity can be formed from these past memories impact and the present. Denial of the past perhaps leads into no identity. One has no right to blame these individuals because they live in a world which is defined by others and they are subjected to suffer and to be stripped of anything that can be associated with identity. It is this racial system of separation and isolation that keeps these African-American people from claiming their identities.

## 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, Morrison’s *Beloved* stands an example of the African-American experience in the New World. Since their departure from Africa, African-Americans feel deeply the loss of their names, past (history), community and language. One of the major themes in Morrison’s *Beloved* is the African-American identity: it has been hidden in the whites’ dominating inhuman behavior. The novel portrays lives of several ex-slaves and the impact of the slavery institution on their lives. After being freed, the characters try to reclaim their identities. The characters struggle to identify themselves and fulfill an essential self. The impact of slavery is seen in its destruction and separation of the families and its deprivation of the characters’ from living their own lives and having an identity. Finally, the novel ends as if it asks this controversial question: Is it best to literally live with the past or to try to move into the future?

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# AFRICAN ISSUES

**Eleições presidenciais de 2021 em São Tomé e Príncipe:  
“Povo põe, Povo tira”, “povo tira, povo põe”<sup>1</sup>**  
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**Abstract**

Based on the 2021 presidential elections in São Tomé and Príncipe, this text focuses on the political confrontation in the archipelago, largely determined by the long-term strategy of Patrice Trovoada, head of ADI, a politician far from the land but decisively influential as none other, including those of the MLSTP, the independence party.

The description and analysis of electoral processes show how programmatic and doctrinal contents have long been abandoned in favor of adherence to political solutions focused on personalities, object of adhesion or rejection expressed in elections. This happened in the recent presidential elections that, permeated by political and legal litigation, dragged on from the end of July to the beginning of September 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> Este texto começou a ser escrito após a primeira volta das presidenciais de 2021. Foi concluído após a segunda volta em inícios de outubro de 2021. Ao tempo, Patrice Trovoada, chefe do ADI, primeiro-ministro entre 2014 e 2018, vivia fora do arquipélago. O governo, da Nova Maioria, resultava de uma coligação do MLSTP e do PCD. Em 2022, o partido ADI obteve outra maioria absoluta de deputados. Logo, Patrice Trovoada regressou ao país. Após a sua posse como primeiro-ministro, a pretexto de um dito golpe de estado, em 25 de novembro assassinaram-se pessoas no quartel de São Tomé. Este facto decerto feriu a expectativa de parte dos ilhéus relativamente à governação de Patrice Trovoada (nota de A. Nascimento)

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The results of successive elections are the episodic and volatile expression of the desire for political solutions of a more democratic or more authoritarian nature. Regardless of the promises of respect for democracy and the law, it is possible that the *vox populi* supports an authoritarian governance that asserts itself guided by the intention to instill order, which appears as a requirement for the desired economic growth and wealth.

**Keywords:** Democracy, authoritarianism, elections, São Tomé and Príncipe.

Aventada muitas vezes informalmente, aqui fica a opinião: nem sempre leva de vencida, mas Patrice Trovoada tem jeito e artes de ver mais a dormir do que os outros políticos são-tomenses todos juntos de olhos abertos (esta deliberada coloquialidade visa enfatizar as limitações das análises canónicas, que amiúde se revelam distraídas porque embaladas pela crença na bondade dos propósitos dos homens e escoradas em lucubrações teóricas, aparentemente sofisticadas mas apartadas da realidade, mormente da do arquipélago, onde grassam o desespero pelo pão para a boca e a falta de esperança para a maioria dos são-tomenses). Que o ex-primeiro ministro Patrice Trovoada faria tudo para voltar, era mais do que evidente... desde o preciso momento em que abandonou o país, logo após as eleições de 2018! (NASCIMENTO 2019)

Dia após dia, na campanha eleitoral das presidenciais e, especialmente, ao longo de aproximadamente mês e meio entre as duas voltas, 18 de julho e 5 de setembro, tornou-se mais certa a vitória de Trovoada por interposta pessoa, Carlos Vila Nova, apoiado pela ADI. Patrice Trovoada conseguiu esse desiderato, que nem todos lhe augurariam, como o prova, entre outros lances, a patética tentativa de o substituir na liderança do partido dele, o ADI, na sua ausência do país.

Independentemente de alegações de fraudes e de irregularidades – prontamente, e decerto não por acaso, de quem ganhara – os resultados de 18 de julho, confirmados a 5 de setembro, parecem revelar alguma consistência das identificações partidárias. Porém, mais do que significar adesão a valores, objetivos ou programas, o alinhamento partidário indicia identificação afetiva com o putativo chefe. Ou talvez signifique a persistência da raiva e da acrimónia repercutidas nos escrutínios eleitorais, marcados pela bipolarização decorrente do primado da adesão/rejeição de atores políticos.

Os resultados também parecem indicar uma perda relativa do “banho”<sup>3</sup>, provavelmente menos eficaz, porque, paralelamente à diluição de valores morais de antanho, o constrangimento do “dever” se esbateu. Por outras palavras, assistir-se-á à instrumentalização do “banho” pelos eleitores, os quais, perante a devassidão generalizada na esfera política, de há muito não têm pruridos em aceitar bens de um candidato e votar noutro, conforme, aliás, sugestão dos próprios políticos desde há anos.

Sobretudo, os resultados indiciam um desejo de uma mudança, conquanto, em rigor, ninguém saiba o que trará. Noutros termos, os eleitores de Vila Nova anseiam pelo governo de Patrice Trovoada, não podendo, todavia, asseverar o que isso significará. Vota-se no que se imagina à luz da memória, enviesada, de governações pretéritas de Trovoada.

A propósito, registre-se como instigante problemática a discrepância entre, por um lado, o juízo amiúde veementemente condenatório da ação dos políticos do MLSTP, PCD, MDFM e UDD, unidos neste governo, correntemente denominado da Nova Maioria (doravante, NM), que a “rua” crê que roubam a riqueza da terra, e, por outro, o crédito que se tende a conferir a Patrice Trovoada que nunca está na terra<sup>4</sup>, mas em quem a “rua” quer acreditar, apesar de a sua atuação suscitar perplexidade a quem olhe a evolução política no arquipélago com um mínimo de distanciamento. Não será caso único, mas a persistência desta dualidade de critérios no juízo das práticas políticas durante décadas é intrigante.

Fosse como fosse, essa comprovada duplicidade de juízos constituía-se como mais um crivo de exigência de que o atual governo da coligação não

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<sup>3</sup> Designação local da tentada compra das consciências e do voto através da oferta de dinheiro ou de bens. Prática corriqueira, tornou-se um constrangimento para os políticos, que, tendo-a iniciado, não retiram dela ganhos eleitorais. Acerca do “banho” ver VICENTE, Pedro C., 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Patrice Trovoada não vive em São Tomé e, apesar do exagero da alegoria, nem seria completa mentira dizer-se que passa por lá quando governa.

podia abdicar. Este era um condicionalismo da ação por que se teria de pautar um governo assente numa vantagem tangencial de deputados, conseguida pela união da oposição contra um ambiente de sufoco das instituições e dos indivíduos na legislatura precedente (2014 a 2018) sob a batuta de Patrice Trovoada.

Depois da acrimónia causada pela governação precedente em que, durante dois dos quatros anos da legislatura (2016 a 2018), presidente, assembleia, onde existia uma maioria absoluta da ADI, e governo estiveram às ordens de Patrice Trovoada, o atual governo da NM estava obrigado a ser irreprensivelmente imaculado. Afinal, este governo resultava, não do acolhimento de um programa exaltante ou de ideias novas, mas da rejeição, por margem muito estreita, dos ventos de insânia dos anos precedentes (NASCIMENTO 2018a e 2018b), tal o móbil da concertação de vários partidos contra Patrice Trovoada em 2018.

À louvável reposição da normalidade constitucional seguiram-se a inépcia e o desacerto. Rapidamente se formou a ideia de um governo sem liderança<sup>5</sup> nem coesão, onde poucos parecem capazes do cargo. Embora para essa apreciação enviesada concorra a proximidade com os políticos, com quem no passado se conviveu e cujas vidas e intimidade se escrutinam no presente, alguns ministros parecem completamente ineptos, creditando os alvítres que explicam a sua nomeação por imposições de nomes nas negociações entre os vários partidos. Os poucos com capacidade, ou verve, parecem orientá-la para os seus interesses, não se coibindo de alardear falta de sentido de Estado e de lealdade institucional (embora não se possa confiar na rádio *boca-a-boca*, ouvem-se alusões de ministros que desqualificam os seus pares e, inclusive, o primeiro-ministro). Não será difícil crer que os governantes replicam na esfera política os veios da interação de rua, desde

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<sup>5</sup> É constrangedor ver repetidos os cerimoniais de cumprimentos dos governantes do tempo do regime de partido único. Pior, dir-se-á que a autoridade se resume a esses cerimoniais...

há décadas assente em boatos e rumores<sup>6</sup>, não poucas vezes verdadeiros. Mesmo se falsa, a ideia de um governo sem chefia medra e é politicamente corrosiva: a “rua” conclui, para o bem ou para o mal, que cada um está por si, animado dos seus intentos, o que a leva à conclusão de que são mais uns tantos a “comer”, designação do enriquecimento presumidamente ilícito dos políticos. Que tais juízos sejam verdadeiros, ou falsos, é irrelevante a partir do momento em que correm.

A ideia de desagregação do governo nunca se poderia aferir pelo impossível escrutínio pelo primeiro-ministro de todos os atos governativos e administrativos. Seja como for, a percepção de uma manta de retalhos emana da aparente da prevalência de interesses pessoais, por regra atribuída à generalidade dos políticos. As lógicas particulares e avessas à eficácia da governação, iniciadas com a nomeação de ministros por empenhos pessoais, continuaram com sucessivos passos em falso, caso do projeto duvidoso – pelo menos, assim se afigurou à “rua” – de plantio de canábis para fins medicinais. Na terra, a discussão política é tão retorcida que não se asseveraria qual a principal razão da oposição a tal plantio, se a possibilidade danos sociais advindos de um projeto de difícil, se não impossível, controlo social, se a intuição de apropriação apenas por alguns, logo, indevida, dos réditos, que prontamente se propagou estarem a financiar a campanha eleitoral. Quando o conselho de ministros rejeitou o cultivo de canábis<sup>7</sup>, já este estaria apalavrado com os seus promotores (a 8 de julho, corria que já se alocara terrenos para esse efeito<sup>8</sup>). Três dias antes da primeira volta, o candidato Delfim

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<sup>6</sup> Acerca de boatos e rumores, ver SEIBERT 2002: 466 e ss; BRANCO e VARELA 1998: 44.

<sup>7</sup> A 5 de julho, o ministro das finanças dizia que o governo não aprovara o plantio de canábis (Governo não aprovou nenhum projecto para cultivo de cannabis e nem podia por não existir legislação para o efeito – STP-PRESS, acesso: 2 de outubro de 2021). A 4, o MLSTP demarcara-se do projeto (MLSTP distancia-se da Cannabis e desafia o Governo – Téla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 2 de outubro de 2021), decerto preparando o parceiro de coligação para a recusa do projeto pelo governo ou ensaiando captar o favor da “rua”.

<sup>8</sup> A 5 de julho, o Ministério da Agricultura dava nota de estar em curso a apreciação da

Neves, do PCD, presidente da assembleia, manifestou-se contra o cultivo da canábis<sup>9</sup>, mas certamente não arredou a suspeição de que o dinheiro do “banho” provinha de acordos entrementes firmados por ele.

As convicções sobre ambições reprováveis de políticos e respetivas clientelas pareceram corroboradas pelas 19 candidaturas à presidência validadas pelo tribunal constitucional, número inédito em termos relativos e, quiçá, absolutos. Para a “rua”, só o desejo de “comer”, para que a política é a arena apropriada, explica tão elevado número de candidatos numa terra onde abunda a privação.

Para uma ideia aproximada do impacto das assimetrias sociais e da crispação política e social nas votações, lembre-se, por exemplo, a prevalência do desemprego crónico entre os jovens. Persiste a pobreza<sup>10</sup>, não sendo desprezível a pobreza extrema. Enquanto isso, a “rua” tem como certo que políticos obtiveram dos bancos empréstimos astronómicos que não pagaram, nem nunca pagarão.

Cresceu a criminalidade, mormente os roubos e, independentemente da incidência, o abuso sexual de menores passou a estar na berlinda, não sendo incomum o *innuendo* de que não é reprimido por nele se envolverem poderosos. Justamente, neste novelo, de que se decantam a acrimónia e a maledicência, cite-se ainda o propalado aumento das regalias dos deputados, a greve contra a redução substantiva dos salários de magistrados, a cujos

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intenção de investimento, cf. Projecto de Canábis : Esclarecimento do Ministério da Agricultura, Pescas e Desenvolvimento Rural – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 2 de outubro de 2021).

<sup>9</sup> Delfim Neves é contra cultivo de cannabis em São Tomé e Príncipe – STP-PRESS, acesso: 2 de outubro de 2021.

<sup>10</sup> Em abril de 2021, o primeiro-ministro disse: “A pobreza deverá aumentar pela primeira vez, em 10 anos. Era estimada em 62.3% em 2019 e agora deve aumentar para 65,2%...” Na circunstância, atribuiu a subida ao impacto da pandemia, cf. Índice de pobreza dispar após 10 anos de estagnação – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 17 de setembro de 2021.

sindicatos o governo teria ocultado as suas intenções<sup>11</sup>, e o reajuste salarial na função pública enviado à assembleia em maio, alegadamente também sem negociações prévias com os sindicatos<sup>12</sup>.

No domínio da justiça, os jipes e outras mordomias como que teriam contrapartida na redução da massa salarial. Entre as leituras subliminares, aflora a de que, em vista da impossível reforma da justiça, assim se agradaria à “rua”. Puro engano, em parte alguma a discussão política é racional, mas em São Tomé é sobremaneira emocional. Para a “rua”, uma reforma da justiça significaria expulsar, quando não todos, a maioria dos juízes<sup>13</sup>. O facto de tal ser inviável só aumenta a acrimónia relativamente aos juízes, cuja atuação por vezes parece alheada dos fins da justiça, evidentemente, não redutíveis aos dos próprios juízes. Numa terra onde campeiam o rumor e a *rádio boca-a-boca* – na circunstância, um contributo para a pluralidade de vozes e de opiniões –, processar jornalistas por noticiarem o teor de um relatório do tribunal de contas parece despropositado<sup>14</sup>. Igualmente, para o comum dos cidadãos, processos de juízes contra jornalistas por difamação perpetrada

<sup>11</sup> Reajuste salarial: Magistrados temem que sejam reduzidos à indigência – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 25 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Polémica à vista no ajuste salarial: Centrais Sindicais acusam governo de falta de diálogo – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 25 de setembro de 2021. Note-se a réplica da atitude de Patrice Trovoada no tocante à concertação social. Esta depende, não da institucionalização do diálogo social, mas da discricionariedade dos políticos (NASCIMENTO 2017). O projeto-lei foi retirado em outubro.

<sup>13</sup> Dizer, como fez Posser da Costa, que a reforma da justiça tem de tornar os juízes escrutináveis pode parecer um bom princípio (<https://fb.watch/7OdVyU9T8v/>, acesso: 16 de setembro de 2021), mas a “rua” parecerá uma tergiversação ou uma cumplicidade com a mediocridade.

<sup>14</sup> Os juízes visados no relatório do tribunal de contas são de diversos quadrantes políticos. O processo revestiu-se de aspetos quase caricaturais e ficou paralisado, cf. por exemplo, Advogado e réu jornalista abandonam julgamento, mas, juiz promete sentença dentro de 15 dias – STP-PRESS, acesso: 13 de outubro de 2021.

através de perfis falsos nas redes sociais<sup>15</sup> afigurar-se-á um ato de imparcialidade mais do que duvidosa e, sobretudo, um desperdício de meios. Em última análise, os juízes sujeitam-se ao juízo da “rua”, também ele parcial, porque dependente da privação, da acrimónia e dos ventos políticos.

No domínio económico, não se esperaria a inversão do empobrecimento de décadas num par de anos. Mas isso obrigava a recato e a rejeitar a ostentação, de que não faltaram demonstrações, quando falta de água no hospital<sup>16</sup>... Em consequência, a “rua”, animada pelas redes sociais, tira as conclusões que lhe apraz para justificar o seu ódio aos políticos, mormente aos que estão no poder.

Para o comum das pessoas, o quotidiano tornou-se infernal com faltas de energia meses a fio<sup>17</sup>. Afinal, que resultados se podiam esperar depois de semanas ou meses de privação de energia em São Tomé<sup>18</sup>? Como se isto não

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<sup>15</sup> Nilton Medeiros reage queixa-crime apresentada pelos Presidentes do Supremo e do Tribunal Constitucional – STP-PRESS, acesso: 12 de outubro de 2021. O advogado contestou a legalidade de obtenção dos meios de prova, um requisito básico que não poderia ser violado por atores da justiça. Seja como for, em muitos casos, à legalidade dos procedimentos impor-se-á a força dos mandantes.

<sup>16</sup> Já presidente, Vila Nova, ex-ministro das Obras Públicas entre 2010 e 2012 e das Infraestruturas entre 2014 e 2018, visitou o hospital (Presidente Carlos Vila Nova visita hospital central de defende melhorias – STP-PRESS, acesso: 12 de outubro de 2021). Não adotou uma pose de colisão, antes deixou perpassar um tom de superioridade, afinal, inerente ao seu cargo. Aduza-se, à beneficiação do hospital tinham-se supostamente destinados fundos que estiveram na origem da tentativa da sua detenção em 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Em governações anteriores já tinham ocorrido quebras de fornecimento de energia, mas a amplitude da recente falta de fornecimento tornou-se inaudita e, qual paradoxo, suportável por ser irremediável. Em maio, prometeu-se fornecimento regular para junho (Crise energética : EMAE aponta solução para Junho próximo – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 13 de outubro de 2021), mas as falhas persistem até à data.

<sup>18</sup> A 9 de junho, após manifestações contra a EMAE, empresa de água e eletricidade, o ministro pediu desculpa pelos cortes e anunciou a redução das tarifas relativas ao mês de maio (cf. Governo anuncia redução nas tarifas da EMAE do mês de Maio em 75% – STP-PRESS, acesso: 30 de setembro de 2021). Dias depois conhecia-se a rutura das nego-

bastasse, a EDP Renováveis e o governo regional da ilha do Príncipe viram deitados à sarjeta anos de estudos, trabalhos e dispêndios por decisão ministerial justificada (a admitir-se como justificação o que se escreveu) com alternativas... vindouras!<sup>19</sup> Perante a atitude, decerto inesperada, da EDP Renováveis, não será arriscado prever que a população do Príncipe terá pela frente mais uns anos com falhas e privações de abastecimento de energia...

As consequências políticas de decisões deste tipo aí estão, caldeadas na intensa circulação de epítetos e de invetivas, de que, no peculiar espaço público são-tomense, se formam as convicções referidas ao grassar da corrupção na terra. Aliás, algo perversamente, esta presunção funcionará como inconfessada racionalização, ou desculpa envergonhada, para se engordar celeremente antes que seja tarde... como, de uma outra perspetiva, impelirá à demanda de “banho” eleitoral. O “banho” denota a rendição de uma sociedade já sem valores para sustentar as instituições, as quais, faz décadas, os desampararam.

Outro caso simbólico: em 25 de março, um foragido à justiça entregou-se na prisão. Conforme alegação do diretor dos serviços prisionais, a ministra deslocou-se a sua casa na noite de 25 para forçar a entrega do preso à polícia judiciária<sup>20</sup>. Não se sabe por que razão, ou capricho, prevaleceu o empenho sobre o procedimento regulamentar. No dia 26, de manhã, o preso foi levado à judiciária. Ora, saiu da sede desta polícia cerca de duas horas depois

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ciações com a EDP Renováveis sobre produção de energia no Príncipe, comunicada aos governantes em carta desse dia 9.

<sup>19</sup> Estamos em presença de matérias complexas. Mas pode intuir-se a envolvente política do caso através das seguintes notícias: As Crianças num Infantário – Têla Nón (telanon.info), Reação do Ministério das Infra-estruturas ao artigo “As crianças num infantário” de Adelino Cassandra – Têla Nón (telanon.info) e As Crianças num Infantário II – Réplica ao conteúdo da nota Explicativa Pública do senhor Ministro Osvaldo Abreu – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 22 de julho de 2021.

<sup>20</sup> Lázaro diz que foi demitido pelo Governo por ter recusado entregar “Lady” à PJ na noite do dia 25 – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 17 de setembro de 2021.

para morrer no hospital, destino que, conforme um dos intervenientes, o preso teria predito. Prenderam-se preventivamente os presumíveis autores materiais do suposto assassinato<sup>21</sup>, mas não se ouviu a nenhum político uma palavra inspiradora de confiança<sup>22</sup> a respeito do desacerto institucional e político e das garantias devidas aos sujeitos a custódia. Neste caso, a omissão equivale à mentira. A explicação torna-se inconveniente por se antever que ninguém acreditará numa só palavra, também por os políticos já aparecerem como desqualificados...

Em finais de 2020, replicando uma iniciativa semelhante em 2014<sup>23</sup>, um projeto-lei proposto pelo PCD/MDFM/UDD previa a impossibilidade de eleição para presidente da República de filhos de são-tomenses nascidos na diáspora<sup>24</sup>, o que indubitavelmente visava Patrice Trovoada. Questionada na esfera pública, a versão aprovada no parlamento mereceu um veto político ao presidente Evaristo Carvalho<sup>25</sup>. Quase simultaneamente, outra iniciativa

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<sup>21</sup> 3 agentes da PJ em prisão preventiva, 5 em prisão domiciliária e 1 com TIR – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 17 de setembro de 2021. Será muito imprudente concluir que nada mais ocorrerá?

<sup>22</sup> Ver, por exemplo, Responsabilidades na morte do Nelson Rita das Neves, vulgo “Lady” – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 22 de julho de 2021. Na televisão, a ministra Ivete Lima apresentou pêsames aos familiares de “Lady”, indicou traumatismo craniano como causa de morte e anunciou inquéritos para apuramento de responsabilidades, cf. Traumatismo Craniano é a causa da morte de “Lady” – Têla Nón (telanon.info), 24 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>23</sup> Manifesto da Sociedade Civil apela veto do PR a proposta de revisão da lei eleitoral – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 17 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>24</sup> Manifesto da Sociedade Civil apela veto do PR a proposta de revisão da lei eleitoral – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 17 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>25</sup> O Veto do Presidente à nova Lei Eleitoral – Têla Nón (telanon.info), VETO : PR Evaristo Carvalho já respondeu a carta do PR da Assembleia Nacional – Têla Nón (telanon.info) acesso: 17 de setembro de 2021. Uma nova versão, retocada, viria a ser reformulada na Assembleia em inícios de 2021, cf. Presidente da República e a AN desembrulharam o pacote eleitoral – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 17 de setembro de 2021; na sequência do que o ADI criticaria o presidente, cf. ADI diz que o Presidente Evaristo Carvalho entrou em contra mão – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 17 de setembro de 2021.

politicamente inepta do MLSTP tinha em vista a melhoria do estatuto dos deputados<sup>26</sup>, que não teria seguimento. Estes foram alguns dos episódios desastrosos de uma governação que, falha de realizações materiais, era pontuada por desacertos e alvo de críticas cáusticas.

A não recandidatura de Evaristo Carvalho abriu as portas a variadas propostas e, como se referiu, o tribunal constitucional confirmou 19 candidatos<sup>27</sup>, a serem escolhidos por 123.302 eleitores, 108.609 no arquipélago e 14.693 na diáspora<sup>28</sup>. A primeira volta foi marcada para 18 de julho.

À semelhança das anteriores, a campanha foi dominada por ataques pessoais. Tais ataques visaram particularmente Delfim Neves: afora o realce da sua conduta inapropriada como presidente parlamentar, com ou sem fundamento aludiu-se a negócios pretéritos com lixos tóxicos, insistiu-se na tecla da intenção de promover o cultivo de canábis – intenção que lembrava o lance dos lixos – e de ser um devedor contumaz de somas avultadas a instituições bancárias, ao mesmo tempo que mobilizava dinheiro para o “banho”. Ao lema “o nosso Obama”, estampado nas *tee-shirts* dos apoiantes, contrapuseram os adversários o epíteto “Roubama”, tornado título de uma música<sup>29</sup>. Depois de uma manifestação de monta na cidade de São Tomé a 3 de julho, perante a intensíssima barragem de propaganda adversa, sem máquina partidária, Delfim Neves remeteu-se ao silêncio, atitude típica dos que levam vantagem, que ele talvez presumisse ser a sua condição depois

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<sup>26</sup> Caiu por terra a proposta do MLSTP para aumentar as regalias dos deputados – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 17 de setembro de 2021. A proposta acabou retirada em outubro de 2021.

<sup>27</sup> Corte Constitucional confirmou 19 candidatos para as eleições presidenciais – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 17 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>28</sup> CEN anunciou 123.302 eleitores inscritos para as eleições presidenciais – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 18 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>29</sup> <https://m.facebook.com/groups/684157302174588/permalink/852596941997289/?sfnsn=mo>, acesso: 2 de outubro de 2021.

da dita manifestação. Especular-se-á, decerto com mais votos do que o seu partido, PCD, seria mais temido do que Posser? E, para o MLSTP, não seria igualmente incómodo? Especulando, não se podem excluir tramoias dos parceiros de coligação, decerto pouco interessados numa tutela presidencial irrestrita e, de alguma forma, irresponsável. Mesmo não sendo decisiva, a campanha adversa surtiu. Jovens apareceram a dizer “Delfim vai apanhar chicote para ele aprender”<sup>30</sup>.

Entretanto, os argumentos contra Vila Nova tornavam-se como que inaudíveis. Segundo o juízo da “rua”, Vila Nova não tinha os pecados dos seus opositores. Politicamente, decerto se lhe poderiam assacar responsabilidades nos “atropelos” da governação de Trovoada, mas tal significava convocar o que se sabia ser o móbil dos seus votantes, o impronunciável regresso de Trovoada. Ao mesmo tempo que eram produzidos conteúdos audiovisuais que denotavam, se não profissionalismo, competência bastante, as manifestações engrossavam, também por conta da juventude, e Vila Nova mostrava maior à vontade nas passeatas do que nos começos da campanha.

Depois de alguma dificuldade, também a candidatura de Posser da Costa, candidato oficial do MLSTP, conseguiu realizar manifestações, de início marcadas por alguma tensão com alguns circunstantes.

Não se descarte que a participação nas várias manifestações tenha sido paga, mormente aos mais novos que as animam. Mas nem essa possibilidade anularia o ressentimento, mormente para muitos que teriam (ou pretenderiam ter) motivos para tal.

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<sup>30</sup> Veja-se <https://www.facebook.com/100005508882319/posts/1812861585574120/?sfnsn=wa>, acesso: 3 de outubro de 2021. Trata-se de um vídeo de propaganda, mas não será erróneo supor que correspondia a um sentimento generalizado. O tom é muito semelhante ao das vozes da rua nas eleições de 2010 quando a ideia do voto como arma já tinha claramente uma conotação de vingança, mormente entre os eleitores mais jovens, sequiosos de trocar Rafael Branco por Patrice Trovoada, cf. NASCIMENTO 2010.

Na noite eleitoral de 18 de julho, nas redes sociais correram imagens de atas em mesas com um apuramento de votos superior ao número de votantes, induzindo a inferência da viciação generalizada das votações, que os opositores do governo queriam como que confirmada pela alegada interrupção do acompanhamento do apuramento dos votos por parte da TVS tutelada pelo governo. Com habilidade política, elementos da ADI, que estranhavam que pela primeira vez não se tivessem dados provisórios na própria noite<sup>31</sup>, imputavam eventuais dificuldades no apuramento a questúnculas entre as candidaturas de Posser e Delfim. Verdade, ou não, pouco importava, a demora tornou-se fonte de suspeições, que, atento o ambiente político, se bastavam como confirmação da sua veracidade.

Uma vez conhecidos os resultados provisórios, que o colocavam em terceiro lugar e o arredavam da segunda volta, Delfim Neves contestou-os vivamente, por exemplo, com o fundamento de que não tivera votos em várias mesas onde estavam recenseados familiares seus. Em princípio, tal escoraria uma dúvida razoável, mesmo supondo uma menor densidade dos laços familiares do que a presumida pelo candidato (e, comumente, pelas análises sociopolíticas). Delfim basear-se-ia também na presumida cativação de votos com o “banho” (que se lhe atribuiu, tendo corrido fotografias de um caminhão com sacos da sua campanha que deveriam ser distribuídos a eleitores). Se o “banho” ocorreu e, se sim, importaria apurar a sua extensão. Todavia, desde há muito que a duplicidade prevalece e que, ao menos no plano retórico, parece gratificante aos deserdados de tudo a desforra de receber bens de um e votar noutro. Se verdadeira, à alegação de que nem um voto teve dos presumidamente garantidos contrapor-se-á que ninguém poderá asseverar que tal decepção de políticos seja inédita. Afinal, mais poderosa do que a afinidade dos difusos laços familiares ou a “dívida” com um promotor do “banho”, será a identificação com o puta-

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/carlosvilanovapresidente/videos/854080088421031/?sfnsn=wa>, acesso: 3 de outubro de 2021.

tivo chefe. Após alusões a pragas como castigo sobrenatural da quebra do dever e da dívida de honra contraída com a aceitação do “banho”<sup>32</sup>, Delfim Neves ficou sozinho, vindo a acusar os dois maiores partidos, ADI e MLS-TP, de uma trama contra si, o que, como noutras convicções ventiladas no espaço público, sendo plausível – ele poderia tornar-se um incómodo para o governo do parceiro de coligação liderado por Jorge Bom Jesus, a quem só servia a vitória de Posser da Costa –, se torna verdade para quem a queira adotar.

Se o “banho” não contou, menos ainda terão contado as promessas governamentais de obras de cuja execução a população não só desconfia mas também encara como areia para os olhos ou mais uma oportunidade para o desvio de dinheiro. Todavia, menos atacado, Posser da Costa conseguiu um segundo lugar.

Outra contestação dos resultados veio da candidatura de Vila Nova, que, começando por reclamar vitória com mais de 50% de votos<sup>33</sup>, aludia a cerca de 4.000 votos desaparecidos. Parte do fundamento advinha da insinuação, aceite na rua, de que a comissão eleitoral não podia ser independente por ser chefiada por um dirigente do MLSTP<sup>34</sup>. A reivindicação de vitória na primeira volta colocava pressão na comissão eleitoral com vista a precaver irregularidades e a animar os apoiantes. Justamente, o subsequente

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<sup>32</sup> Nas redes sociais correram, pelo menos, dois vídeos em que Delfim aludia a pragas derivadas do não cumprimento de promessas de voto (por exemplo, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/STP.TelaNon/permalink/10159883420471122/?sfnsn=wa>, acesso, 3 de outubro de 2021). Já os adversários consideravam que o povo devia “comer” o dinheiro, até por ser seu, e votar em quem quisessem. Opressivo para os políticos, o “banho” tornou-se uma demanda dos eleitores, perdeu qualquer eficácia e, dir-se-á, menos o teria em razão de uma ameaça de praga do que do compromisso com a consciência referido à palavra de outrora.

<sup>33</sup> Jornal Transparência – Diário digital de São Tomé e Príncipe ([jornaltransparencia.st](http://jornaltransparencia.st)), acesso: 25 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>34</sup> Carlos Vila Nova rejeita os resultados provisórios e denuncia a CNE – Tela Nón ([telaanon.info](http://telaanon.info)), acesso: 20 de setembro de 2021.

imbróglio político-jurídico serviu para a afirmação de força nas ruas e, em última análise, para a queima do governo e do candidato Posser da Costa.

Para a candidatura de Vila Nova, a sucessão de acontecimentos – imbróglio jurídico em torno da recontagem dos votos, discussão da vagatura do cargo presidencial após o termo do mandato antes de eleito o sucessor, propalada intentona de golpe, discussão da data da segunda volta – não visava senão impedir a concretização da vontade popular expressa nas urnas. Para Vila Nova e seus apoiantes, a prova irrefutável dessa intenção foi o acórdão n.º 9 do tribunal constitucional. Cumpre dizer, dificilmente se imaginaria um acórdão mais atamancado na substância e na forma, logo, interpretado como afrontosamente parcial porque, inferia-se, induzido pelo patrocínio do candidato derrotado Delfim Neves.

Neste ambiente exaltado, a imputação de intenções atentatórias da democracia – “os poderes estão contra a democracia”, “não aceitam a democracia, e, por isso mesmo, estão a combatê-la por todos os meios, vias e formas”<sup>35</sup> – estendia-se a qualquer ato ou palavra dissonante da vontade da ADI. Entrementes, a ADI abdicaria de reclamar os milhares de votos alegadamente desviados, decerto pela intuição de que a vitória não fugiria e porque os eventos se encarregavam de pôr a nu a deliquescência institucional e uma tentativa desesperada de instrumentalização das instituições, tudo a seu benefício.

Vejamos, formalizado num recurso para o tribunal constitucional, o pedido de recontagem de votos de Delfim Neves gerou um imbróglio político-jurídico, que forçou ao adiamento da segunda volta, prevista para 8 de agosto. Mais relevante, evidenciou a falência da justiça.

Aprovado sem quórum porque subscrito apenas por dois dos cinco juízes, um deles, o presidente, Pascoal Daio, o acórdão n.º 9/2021 a ordenar a re-

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<sup>35</sup> Veja-se a declaração do então candidato Vila Nova após a marcação da segunda volta das eleições, cf. <https://fb.watch/7upuQKob4N/>, acesso: 4 de outubro de 2021.

contagem dos votos foi publicado no domingo, 25, nas redes sociais. Para o comum dos cidadãos, o acórdão era um passo lamentável de dois juízes parciais, próximos do requerente<sup>36</sup>, constituindo uma violação grosseira, já não de ponderáveis articulados jurídicos, as mais das vezes ininteligíveis para a maioria das pessoas, mas da mera boa-fé. Considerado um golpe eleitoral – atribuído ao governo e, mais enfaticamente, a Delfim Neves e aos juízes Pascoal Daio e Hilário Garrido, aquele seu advogado, este cunhado –, o dito acórdão ignorava a decisão não publicitada do mesmo tribunal tomada na antevéspera. Nessa altura, o juiz Garrido, declarara-se impedido e o juiz presidente, Daio, fora vencido, pelo que se negara provimento ao requerimento de Delfim Neves a pedir a recontagem dos votos<sup>37</sup>.

Em maio, a ADI avançara com um incidente de suspeição contra o presidente da Assembleia e pré-candidato presidencial, Delfim Neves, bem como contra os juízes do tribunal constitucional, impedidos, segundo aquele partido, de avaliar as candidaturas do presidente da assembleia e, também, do seu candidato<sup>38</sup>. Diga-se, talvez nem o mais imaginativo dos seus promotores supusesse que este incidente, decerto encarado como ruído político, veria confirmada a sua razão de ser.

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<sup>36</sup> Veja-se Acórdão do Tribunal Constitucional decide pela recontagem total dos votos – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 26 de julho de 2021; Carta-dos-Juízes-Conselheiros-do-Tribunal-Constitucional.pdf (telanon.info), acesso: 26 de julho de 2021.

<sup>37</sup> Candidatura de Carlos Vila Nova diz que a decisão do TC é ilegal e denuncia “Golpe Eleitoral” – Têla Nón (telanon.info) e Acórdão do Tribunal Constitucional decide pela recontagem total dos votos – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 20 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>38</sup> ADI avança com incidente de suspeição contra Delfim Neves e os juízes do Tribunal Constitucional – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 17 de setembro de 2021. Na altura, o tribunal constitucional rejeitara um acidente de suspeição contra três dos juízes do tribunal constitucional, acidente que alegava possibilidade de violação das leis e de favorecimento, cf. Tribunal Constitucional rejeita incidente de suspeição interposto por um grupo de militantes do ADI – STP-PRESS, acesso: 30 de setembro de 2021.

Ainda assim, a pluralidade no tribunal constitucional – desprezada aquando da sua criação durante a governação de Trovoada com a cumplicidade do presidente Evaristo Carvalho – permitiu abrir caminho à resolução do problema, que passou pela menorização do presidente do tribunal constitucional. Instados a assinar novo acórdão, os juízes não subscritores pediram a intervenção do presidente da República para sanar a ilegalidade criada com o acórdão n.º 9, repor o normal funcionamento do tribunal<sup>39</sup> e viabilizar a continuação do processo eleitoral.

Perante o impasse, a 26 de julho, Patrice Trovoada acusou o primeiro-ministro Bom Jesus de cobardia, por estar refém dos deputados do PCD<sup>40</sup>: era inaceitável “uma democracia de fantochada”<sup>41</sup> e, bem assim, martirizar o povo são-tomense como o tinham feito os colonos e alguns durante o regime de partido único<sup>42</sup>. A 28, Trovoada voltou a exigir a realização da segunda volta a 8 de agosto, baseando-se na decisão, de sexta-feira 23, do tribunal constitucional<sup>43</sup>. Num tom assertivo, ao mesmo tempo que afirmava que quem mandava era o povo, diminuía os juízes, dizendo “o Daio não é a lei”, “não é um Daio” que vai impedir o povo de votar no dia 28<sup>44</sup>. Trovoada menorizou os adversários, tratando-os por “o Jorge Bom Jesus”, “o Daio”. Quando usado, também o termo “senhor” reforçava a menorização dos adversários políticos.

No dia 29 de julho, para o qual se apرازara uma reunião de vários órgãos de poder no palácio presidencial, a ADI organizou uma manifestação em prol

<sup>39</sup> Crise no Tribunal Constitucional – Juízes pedem a intervenção do Presidente da República – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 20 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNx0zATJKB0>, acesso: 15 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNx0zATJKB0>, acesso: 15 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNx0zATJKB0>, acesso: 15 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. <https://fb.watch/75nyQiZLzh/>, acesso: 15 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. <https://fb.watch/75nyQiZLzh/>, acesso: 15 de setembro de 2021.

do respeito pela lei e pela vontade do povo. Mesmo neste caso, em que era fácil mobilizar a raiva, fica sempre a dúvida se os manifestantes não receberam algum incentivo ou se bastaria somente o repúdio por um acórdão inepto e afrontoso. Em todo o caso, não será imprudência concluir que raiva, procura de excitação, “banho” e identificação com o putativo mandante pesam mais do que a razão política. Apesar da intensa carga emocional<sup>45</sup>, deste protesto enfatizou-se o seu carácter ordeiro, em contraposição à queima do jipe em 2018.

Na manifestação, enquadrada pela polícia, era dito que Delfim Neves não era dono de São Tomé (como anteriormente se dissera que o país não era dos Trovoada). Contra a recontagem de votos, contra Daio e Garrido, os manifestantes afirmavam que o povo estava a sofrer e à espera de Patrice. Acrescentava-se que a manifestação era ordeira, mas que se ouvia<sup>46</sup>. Tal como em 2018, a atuação policial pareceu “iluminada” pela antevisão do futuro: a polícia agiu de acordo com os cânones, mas não terá sido menor o peso da então já mais que provável eleição de Vila Nova.

Não por acaso, uma das palavras de ordem era “povo tira, povo põe”, uma significativa permuta da ordem das palavras de Evaristo de Carvalho – “Povo põe, povo tira” – perante os resultados das legislativas de 2018<sup>47</sup>.

Da reunião no Palácio, os juízes do constitucional saíram com a incumbência, politicamente determinada, de sanar o imbróglio criado pelo insano acórdão n.º 9, para se dar continuidade ao processo eleitoral<sup>48</sup>. Tal interferia na independência do tribunal, interferência não questionada porque ditada

<sup>45</sup> Por exemplo, <https://youtu.be/ExrqPW3gG30>, acesso: 12 de outubro de 2021.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=127357236219252&id=106488204972822&sfnsn=mo](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=127357236219252&id=106488204972822&sfnsn=mo), acesso: 15 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>47</sup> Presidente da República avisou que “Povo põe Povo Tira” – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 3 de outubro de 2021.

<sup>48</sup> Juízes do TC receberam orientação clara do Estado para resolver a crise do processo eleitoral – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 20 de setembro de 2021.

pela leitura dos factos e do pulsar da “rua”<sup>49</sup>. Noutros termos, como juízes do tribunal constitucional – na verdade, Daio e Garrido, próximos de Delfim Neves – contribuía para a suspeição sobre o processo eleitoral, a pressão política enquadrava o tribunal<sup>50</sup>. Diga-se, embora este lance minorizasse o tribunal constitucional, a persistência de uma situação eventualmente anómala e de indeterminação política era insustentável.

Sexta, 30, nada se decidiu. No fim-de-semana ocorreram manifestações defronte da residência oficial do presidente, no Morro da Trindade, da do juiz Daio e do Palácio do Povo, eventos que, segundo o primeiro-ministro, brotavam de manipulações e testavam as autoridades. Na manhã de 2, ele afirmou que o governo não toleraria vandalismo ou desafios à autoridade<sup>51</sup>. Tais palavras, com o quê de forçosas e algo intempestivas, afiguram-se-iam dúplices, pois os seus adversários não esqueciam a pressão da rua aquando da contagem dos votos nas eleições de 2018 que o tinham guindado ao poder<sup>52</sup>. Mais do que quaisquer palavras do primeiro-ministro, o que pesava era a percepção generalizada de que a vitória de Vila Nova era inevitável. Logo, era este o azimute da atuação da polícia.

Nesse dia, 2, publicou-se o acórdão n.º 10<sup>53</sup> conforme às demandas políticas prevalecentes na sociedade. Lavraram-se argumentos para considerar improcedente o recurso para uma recontagem dos votos com base na pre-

<sup>49</sup> Não é a primeira vez que os tribunais decidem conforme as conveniências políticas. Não se exclui que a maioria pense que amiúde decidem por conveniências particulares.

<sup>50</sup> Eleições: Tribunal Constitucional precisa de forças e impulsos externos para regressar a normalidade – PR – STP-PRESS, acesso: 27 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>51</sup> Eleições: Governo não vai tolerar nenhum acto de subversão pública, vandalismo e desafio as autoridades – STP-PRESS, acesso: 27 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>52</sup> Em 2018 a ADI pediu a recontagem dos votos no constitucional. Pelo tempo que demorou, os votos terão sido contados e recontados (NASCIMENTO 2019).

<sup>53</sup> Os dois juízes que tinham produzido o anterior acórdão votaram vencidos, cf. Acórdão número 10 do Tribunal Constitucional pôs fim ao impasse eleitoral – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 21 de setembro de 2021.

sunção de que, independentemente de erros técnicos, os dados expressavam a vontade dos eleitores. E nem sequer se poderia insinuar que a posição do juiz Amaro Couto<sup>54</sup> visava favorecer Posser da Costa, apoiado pelo MLSTP, porque já se prefigurava a vitória de Vila Nova.

Conforme a fundamentação, o requerente Delfim Neves aludia a incongruências relativas a 4.497 votos inexplicados pela comissão eleitoral e a outras pressupostas irregularidades, por exemplo, votos sem carimbo. Um dos argumentos da recusa do conhecimento da pretensão do requerente foi a extemporaneidade do recurso, conquanto Delfim alegasse a impossibilidade de recurso em sede própria, dado que, por razões logísticas, não existiam delegados de cada uma das candidaturas em todas as mesas<sup>55</sup>. Auscultados os demais candidatos, a maioria admitiu a recontagem, ao passo que Vila Nova, ignorando os seus anteriores protestos<sup>56</sup>, opinou pelo indeferimento da recontagem. Independentemente do fundamento jurídico, a escolha foi a bem do “sacrossanto princípio da aquisição progressiva dos atos” do processo eleitoral<sup>57</sup>. Como se disse, o acórdão ia ao encontro da demanda política maioritária.

Reunida a assembleia de apuramento a 4 de agosto no tribunal constitucional, publicaram-se os resultados: Vila Nova teve 35.342 votos, 43,3%.

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<sup>54</sup> Já as posições políticas de Alice Carvalho parecem mutantes e de Jesuley Lopes não são evidentes.

<sup>55</sup> Embora possível enquanto raciocínio lógico, teria de se imaginar uma eficácia superlativa da máquina de viciação das votações dos adversários e de tergiversação e pusilanidade dos demais concorrentes. Não se descartam erros e vícios, mas dificilmente se aceita que influíssem nos resultados como provavelmente influenciaram quer a campanha contra Delfim, quer a vontade de ver regressar Trovoada.

<sup>56</sup> Logo, a 20 de julho, o “povo pequeno”, mormente os motoqueiros e palaiês do mercado Bobô Forro, tinha-se manifestado pela vitória à primeira, achando que a demora da comissão eleitoral se devia à tentativa de desvio de votos, cf. [https://m.facebook.com/carlosvilanovapresidente/videos/vila-nova-%C3%A9-o-vencedor-da-elei%C3%A7%C3%A3o/285585676690892/?refsrc=deprecated&\\_rdr](https://m.facebook.com/carlosvilanovapresidente/videos/vila-nova-%C3%A9-o-vencedor-da-elei%C3%A7%C3%A3o/285585676690892/?refsrc=deprecated&_rdr), acesso: 2 de outubro de 2021.

<sup>57</sup> ACÓRDÃO-10-2021-1.pdf (telanon.info), acesso: 21 de setembro de 2021.

Os resultados provisórios, de 19 de julho, atribuíam-lhe 32.022, 39,47%. Existia uma diferença de mais de três mil votos, mas não bastante para a eleição à primeira volta. Posser da Costa foi o segundo mais votado com 16.905 votos, 20,7% dos votos expressos. Os resultados provisórios apontavam para 16.829 votos, correspondentes a 20,75% dos votos. O terceiro candidato mais votado era Delfim Neves com 14.941 votos, 18,3% do total de votos. Os resultados provisórios davam a Delfim Neves 13.691 votos. Outros candidatos dividiam os restantes votos. A abstenção cifrou-se em 31,6%, correspondente a 38.875 eleitores<sup>58</sup>.

A despeito da intenção inicial de as limitar, pressupostamente para prevenir a *covid 19*<sup>59</sup>, as manifestações pela realização da segunda volta e em apoio de Vila Nova foram em crescendo, alimentadas pela mobilização de jovens e mais gente sem nada a perder. Nessas manifestações, ampliadas pelo hábil aproveitamento mediático, cantava-se o nome de Patrice Trovoada<sup>60</sup>. A 5 de agosto, fora do país, Trovoada, felicitava o povo e, em especial, a juventude pela mobilização na rua em defesa do respeito pela vontade popular, liberdade, democracia e legalidade<sup>61</sup>.

Entretanto, a 11 de agosto, a ADI demandou a demissão do ministro da Defesa, a quem acusou da tentativa de perpetração de um golpe de Estado a 7 de agosto<sup>62</sup>, que teria falhado pela recusa de adesão dos chefes militares.

<sup>58</sup> Resultados definitivos das eleições presidenciais contradizem os dados divulgados pela Comissão Eleitoral Nacional – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 22 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>59</sup> Jornal Transparência – Diário digital de São Tomé e Príncipe (jornaltransparencia.st) e Jornal Transparência – Diário digital de São Tomé e Príncipe (jornaltransparencia.st) acesso: 26 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>60</sup> Por exemplo, <https://m.facebook.com/sayedwali.jan.50/videos/247186453696274/?sfnsn=mo>, acesso: 15 de setembro de 2021. Email de 29/7

<sup>61</sup> <https://fb.watch/7tRjnPEudj/>, acesso: 15 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. ADI denuncia intentona golpista, por iniciativa do Ministro da Defesa – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 23 de setembro de 2021. Oposição pede demissão de ministro em São Tomé e Príncipe (noticiasaminuto.com), acesso: 15 de setembro de 2021.

Com a saída do país do indiciado autor do aventado golpe, caiu o silêncio sobre este lance, cuja importância reside na pergunta acerca do que ocorrerá futuramente: voltarão ruandeses a ser uma guarda pretoriana de Patrice Trovoada quando a instituição militar se mostrou fiel à constituição e aos chefes políticos?<sup>63</sup>

A 13 de agosto, a ADI rejeitava um golpe palaciano que desvirtuasse a vontade das eleições, desafiando o MLSTP a não pactuar com tal golpe, que seria a assunção ao cargo de presidente após o fim do mandato de Evaristo Carvalho, a 3 de setembro, do presidente da Assembleia, Delfim Neves, candidato derrotado nas urnas<sup>64</sup>.

Depois de adiamentos, a 17 de agosto foi aprovada na Assembleia a nova data do pleito eleitoral. Apesar de ser competência presidencial, a segunda volta foi marcada por uma lei especial para 5 de setembro em detrimento do dia 29 de agosto proposto pela comissão eleitoral. Para além da eventual conveniência no adiamento por dias da segunda volta, o MLSTP argumentou com formalismos legais, porquanto a data de 29 de agosto obrigaria à aprovação de uma lei relativa à campanha eleitoral entrementes começada. A ADI instava com o dia 29 de agosto por o “povo” assim o querer<sup>65</sup>, o que não seria mentira, mas que implicava obnubilar a lei e diminuir a mediação da função representativa, posição corriqueira quando à pulsão voluntarista se junta à certeza de que o poder está à porta. Foi assim com a “independência” em 1975, com a “mudança” em 1990 e, ainda, com o “povo pequeno” em 2014.

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<sup>63</sup> Ademais, no dia seguinte às eleições, dia das Forças Armadas, a banda militar deslocou-se a casa do presidente eleito para o homenagear. Na prática, de pouco vale, mas não deixa de ter algum valor político e simbólico, ainda que menos do que terá a repetição, ou não, da presença de militares ruandeses.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. ADI acusa Delfim Neves de orquestração de golpe palaciano – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 23 de setembro de 2021; também <https://www.facebook.com/AccaoDemocraticaIndependente/videos/731593664301561/?sfnsn=mo>, acesso: 15 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>65</sup> Eleições Presidenciais: 2.<sup>a</sup> volta só depois do fim do mandato de Evaristo Carvalho – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 24 de setembro de 2021.

Por mediação da comissão eleitoral, Posser da Costa e Vila Nova acordaram numa segunda volta pacífica. Num debate televisivo<sup>66</sup>, Vila Nova pareceu mais seguro, falando de estudo e de preparação de estratégia, isto é, acenando com o crédito de confiança na sua figura. Pela lógica do debate, Posser da Costa teve de andar a repetir Vila Nova, incorrendo em inanidades como a da subordinação das Forças Armadas ao poder político. Aliás, Posser foi cauteloso ao dizer que não se precisava de forças armadas vindas de fora sem autorização da Assembleia<sup>67</sup>, evitando a alusão expressa aos inenarráveis episódios relacionados com a presença de ruandeses a mando de Patrice Trovoada. Fosse como fosse, o debate contava pouco, pois já estava tudo decidido.

Posser da Costa, que lembrara ter estado na terra, pediu as bênçãos de Deus para o país e para os são-tomenses<sup>68</sup>. Mas foi Vila Nova, dito assíduo na igreja da Madre de Deus, que ganhou com 45.481, 57,54%, contra os 33.557 votos, 42,46%, do opositor. Votaram 80.535<sup>69</sup> dos 123.103 eleitores. Sem embargo do desempenho pretérito e futuro do presidente, o voto em Vila Nova foi pelo regresso de Trovoada ou, sobretudo, para rejeitar a governação de Bom Jesus.

O resultado de Posser da Costa, a quem se colaram intervenções danosas para os trabalhadores da Agripalma, os despedimentos no supermercado *CKdo* e a venda de um espaço público cidadão à Sonangol, não foi humilhante. Mas decerto se deveu menos ao seu perfil político e, menos ainda, à pueril injunção da obediência aos militantes do MLSTP do que à rejeição de Patrice Trovoada. Num certo sentido, é mais uma derrota do governo do que do candidato Posser da Costa. Noutros termos, se malgrado o estendal

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<sup>66</sup> <https://fb.watch/7OdVyU9T8v/>, acesso: 16 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>67</sup> <https://fb.watch/7OdVyU9T8v/>, acesso: 16 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>68</sup> <https://fb.watch/7OdVyU9T8v/>, acesso: 16 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>69</sup> Carlos Vila Nova é o novo Presidente da República Democrática de São Tomé e Príncipe – Têla Nón (telanon.info), acesso: 24 de setembro de 2021.

de atos criticáveis, Posser obteve tal votação é porque a rejeição de Patrice Trovoada ainda induziu ao voto útil, conquanto perdedor.

Noutras circunstâncias, não se sentenciaria que a sociedade está fraturada – resultados similares ocorrem noutros contextos –, mas, no caso, dificilmente se sustentará o contrário. Apesar da volatilidade das adesões a este ou àquele político, o arquipélago tornou-se uma sociedade fraturada, menos por quaisquer visões do futuro do que pela procura de ganhos imediatos. É uma sociedade politicamente plural e competitiva, mas resta saber por quanto mais tempo o será.

Se atos protocolares tivessem valor, caberia registrar, mais do que as promessas de unificação da sociedade, a suspensão da militância no ADI, cujo cartão Vila Nova entregou após a vitória<sup>70</sup>. A comparação com atos análogos não permite inferir nada acerca do significado do gesto, dada a diferença de contextos e de laços entre os atores. Ao arrepio das palavras protocolares<sup>71</sup>, o gabinete presidencial é politicamente monolítico<sup>72</sup>. É difícil imaginar que o novo presidente possa deixar de ser leal a Patrice Trovoada, a quem deve a presidência, mesmo que essa pose possa ser mais subtil do que a de antemão confessada subalternidade do antecessor.

Não surpreenderia que em tempo devido dissolvesse parlamento, embora também possa deixar o governo, já ferido de morte, queimar-se inape-

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<sup>70</sup> Jornal Transparência – Diário digital de São Tomé e Príncipe ([jornaltransparencia.st](http://jornaltransparencia.st)), acesso: 26 de setembro de 2021.

<sup>71</sup> As palavras do presidente apontam para o respeito pelo primado da lei e da constituição, evocadas durante o arrastado processo eleitoral. Todavia, elas não podem valer pelo seu valor facial.

<sup>72</sup> Presidente Carlos Vila Nova nomeia e dá posse a 13 membros do seu Gabinete Presidencial - STP-PRESS, acesso: 5 de outubro de 2021. Desconhecemos como Vila Nova foi escolhido, mas decerto Patrice Trovoada quis assegurar-se da fidelidade que outros hipotéticos candidatos não garantiam. Expectável, a composição do gabinete adensa a fidelidade partidária e, quiçá, pessoal a Patrice Trovoada. À análise fria, a composição do gabinete, um *inner circle* da ADI, sugerirá a hipótese de um estrito controlo da ação do presidente por Trovoada.

lavelmente. No discurso de agradecimento, diminuiu subliminarmente a governação de Bom Jesus<sup>73</sup>, o qual agora se encontra numa posição subalterna face à pessoa que, em abril de 2019, foi impedido de viajar para ser obrigado a prestar declarações na polícia judiciária, que opinava pela sua prisão preventiva, sendo a mesma rejeitada pelo ministério público que o considerou deputado. Para a “rua”, o governo cometeu à polícia judiciária a missão de deter dois ex-ministros de Patrice Trovoadá, um deles o atual presidente.

A terminar, destas eleições, que resultados se esperariam senão os do repúdio da continuação do que, aos olhos da “rua”, tem conduzido o país à desgraça? Conforme é sobejamente consabido, o voto de protesto e de raiva não será o mais informado, mas não se dirá que não foi o demandado pela atual governação. E mesmo que a maioria não confira razão – e é certo! –, no caso, a maioria tem bastos motivos para desagravo. Numa sociedade em que será difícil elencar uma acusação de qualquer um dos lados que não seja um *boomerang*, as invetivas e as acusações são avaliadas, não em função do conteúdo substantivo, mas da força de quem as enuncia. E para aí se movimenta, com ou sem razões, a mole dos sentimentos. Assim, numa espiral de ressentimento (também calado e dúplice) cada vez mais assoladora, a precária segurança possível dos indivíduos parece residir na rendição ao espírito de seita ou na adesão ao chefe de cada momento... uma espécie de geometria variável da dependência e da sujeição.

Perante as eleições e atento o curso da governação, no tocante ao exercício do poder de novo se coloca a questão de saber se, ao equilíbrio de poderes das democracias representativas, a “rua” do arquipélago não preferirá um governo com um chefe, que governe, que faça coisas – ao invés de dar largas à imaginação com a prometida construção de um mirífico mundo na anunciada zona franca do Malanza, diga-se, equiparável no delírio ao

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<sup>73</sup> <https://fb.watch/7OdVyU9T8v/>, acesso: 16 de setembro de 2021.

anteriormente apregoado desenvolvimento do Dubai –, sejam elas, ou não, investimento e suporte da coesão social.

Independentemente dos candidatos e do que eles dissessem ou prometessem, nestas eleições assomou o dilema da escolha entre a continuação desta desagregada ação governativa ou a aceitação de uma eventual disrupção num futuro próximo.

Trata-se de um dilema porque se, por um lado, se deveria poder esperar proteção do respeito dos políticos e das pessoas pelas instituições e pela lei, por outro, crer nisso é fazer a figura de Cândido de Voltaire... Esta é uma convicção dramática, porque a maioria das pessoas – que, por força da exiguidade insular, se conhece e a quem se aperta a mão – querará viver com a dignidade possível, com que granjeia esforçadamente a sobrevivência. Porém, a turbulenta evolução política e social não depende do somatório das boas consciências individuais (cada vez mais alienadas pelas cedências morais e éticas face à imprevisibilidade da vida e à insegurança). Prova disso, a usura das vidas segue infrene e inelutável.

### **Notas finais**

Por fim, algumas notas finais relativas à conjuntura, ao inescapável défice de políticas, e, bem assim, ao conhecimento destas derivas políticas, menos determinadas por idiossincrasias ou identidades do que pela falência institucional e ausência de massa crítica e de elites. Para a abordagem deste quadro não importará menos a intuição, nem, por vezes, será menos útil uma linguagem chã atida à usura das vidas pelo tempo acelerado e pautado pela maior reflexividade, inspirada pelas andanças do mundo, mas amiúde improficua.

No tocante à conjuntura, perante a magnitude do desafio que se sabia terem pela frente, pergunta-se como é que foi possível que no seio da NM, mesmo se puída, não se tenha forjado uma candidatura que evitasse as fissuras,

ampliadas pelo quase inevitável curso de recriminações veladas. É certo que não estava completamente na mão dos dirigentes concertar-se para uma candidatura agregadora, que eliminasse a proliferação de candidatos, mas não se evita a imagem de cada um por si em detrimento da terra. Talvez tivesse prevalecido a ideia de que, arredada a possibilidade de Patrice Trovoada concorrer, nenhum dos seus homens de mão de dispusesse a uma tarefa supostamente inglória, além de desdenhável, porque a mando de outrem, ou que seria facilmente vencido... mas a ter sido este o cálculo, dificilmente existiria análise política mais inepta. É certo, para o MLSTP, era difícil a escolha entre a hegemonia de Patrice Trovoada e a subalternidade a um parceiro de coligação que se poderia revelar imprevisível. Mas, em última instância, tal dilema só demonstra o dilaceramento que as dinâmicas corrosivas de há muito prevalecentes na sociedade – que vão da extração de areias das praias, com que irremediavelmente se destroem recursos valiosos, à alegada corrupção, passando pela contínua corrosão das instituições e da confiança social – provocam nas elites que renunciam a desempenhos diferenciados em prol de ganhos imediatos como única fonte de segurança.

Provado uma vez mais que pesa decisivamente na política, mesmo estando durante anos fora, Patrice Trovoada poderá agora estar menos interessado numa revisão constitucional do que há cerca de uma dezena de anos, porque, em princípio, o cargo presidencial teria um número limitado de mandatos e porque lhe requereria uma presença mais contínua no território. Se, durante a presidência de Pinto da Costa, a Patrice Trovoada, a mudança constitucional parecia o lance decisivo, a facilidade com que fabrica presidentes pode levá-lo a ser primeiro-ministro, o que nem o obriga à presença no arquipélago enquanto o governa. Mudou o roteiro da sua estratégia e saiu-se bem.

Nos antípodas da imagem de frouxidão associada a Jorge Bom Jesus, Patrice Trovoada incute a imagem de eficácia na ação, de liderança, de coesão, de um “pulso forte”, incluindo para com os seus, que colherá apoio ou conformará muita gente com a sua governação. A ostentação de riqueza e



a anomia puseram os são-tomenses em guerra entre eles, pelo que a “rua” encara o “pulso forte” como uma solução. Isto remete para a questão da solidez da democracia e para as condições do eventual acolhimento de derivas autoritárias, de redução do ambiente democrático, na circunstância protagonizadas por quem, sendo indiscutivelmente são-tomense, tem, é mister lembrá-lo, fraco laço com a terra.

Por hipótese, doravante poderemos ter uma fase de autoritarismo que, sem embargo da preservação de algumas “liberdades”, se poderá perpetuar. De momento, tal não será uma perspectiva que muitos não acolham, replicando pulsões anteriores relativamente a redutores e, no limite, até a formas de governação firme, se necessário, autocrática e justiceira. A par do desejo de ordem, imperará a gratificação pela prometida vingança pelo roubo de perspectivas de futuro pelos políticos.

Independentemente das feições das governações, num horizonte temporal concebível não se vislumbra solução para São Tomé e Príncipe. Ultimamente, lamenta-se o rumo de há muito anunciado. No rescaldo da reunião de 29 de julho no Palácio, pelo presidente Evaristo Carvalho foi dito que “os disfuncionamentos e os desregramentos que vem preenchendo o nosso quotidiano chegaram a um ponto, que não podemos fazer como se nada fosse connosco e como se tudo isso fosse normal, absolutamente, compreensível e justificável, considerá-los como parte da nossa idiossincrasia...”<sup>74</sup> Esta imaginada idiossincrasia são-tomense de tempos idos já não existe, embora, simultaneamente, se rejeite esta realidade inelutável. Noutros termos, as pessoas perderam capacidade de determinação sobre a sua condição e não se vislumbra qualquer sinal de inversão desse plano inclinado (note-se, como parecerão vãs as palavras de estudiosos acerca do tempo necessário à construção societária, desde logo por comportarem uma condescendência indevida face ao palavreado político).

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<sup>74</sup> Eleições: Tribunal Constitucional precisa de forças e impulsos externos para regressar a normalidade – PR – STP-PRESS, acesso: 27 de setembro de 2021.

É escusado elucidar na tentativa de forjar uma ação política de reparação. Basta ter presente o irresolúvel e insanável imbróglio da justiça, que medida administrativa alguma, forçosamente voluntarista e arbitrária, resolverá. À criação (inconstitucional) de um tribunal constitucional de feição na legislatura anterior, sucedeu-se o vilipêndio da função judicial ao mais alto nível, nem de propósito, a respeito de eleições.

Afinal, e até de acordo com diagnóstico da presidência, a “distribuição equitativa do ónus da cidadania, o tratamento igualitário de todos perante a lei e a administração pública, a imparcialidade da justiça e dos magistrados perderam todo o seu sentido e viraram letra morta”<sup>75</sup>. Cumpre referir, estas palavras tanto podem ser clarividentes e preclaras quanto decerto serão inúteis. Num alvitre superficial, conquanto dificilmente irrefutável, a chamada modernização da justiça redundará em dinheiro desperdiçado: greves com fundamento mas num contexto de pobreza atroz e de profunda injustiça social, impropérios de juízes nas redes sociais – onde, a par de róis de justificados motivos de desagravo, se destila ódio –, jipes parados à porta do tribunal, rumores acerca de envelopes que alimentam a ideia da indissociabilidade entre corrupção e justiça (e, por extensão, toda a administração pública), colocação em véspera de eleições de primeiras pedras onde parece calhar<sup>76</sup>, tudo dá ideia de um desnorte amparado pela complacência de instituições internacionais, que deveriam ser mais parcimoniosas no uso dos dinheiros do mundo e não menos na demanda de uma

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<sup>75</sup> Palavras de 2 de agosto, antes de divulgado o acórdão n.º 10, que já se antecipava como resolução do imbróglio dos acórdãos, o que não impediu que se considerasse a situação “tanto mais grave” quanto estava em causa “o Tribunal Constitucional” (Jornal Transparência – Diário digital de São Tomé e Príncipe ([jornaltransparencia.st](http://jornaltransparencia.st)), acesso: 26 de setembro de 2021).

<sup>76</sup> Torna-se particularmente confrangedora a fotografia da colocação da primeira pedra do futuro tribunal de Caué (Plano de modernização da justiça constrói 1.º Tribunal de Caué – [Téla Nón](http://Téla Nón) ([telanon.info](http://telanon.info))), seja pelo atamancado da cerimónia, seja pelo desperdício de recursos, incluindo o tempo, necessários à modernização da justiça.

aparente *gravitas* para menor enxovalho das instituições. Para ter residuais hipóteses de vingar, não só a reforma de justiça teria de ser radical como estanque a pressões políticas e sociais. Ora, tais são condições impossíveis. Logo, restam inutilidades ou propaganda sofrível, como, por exemplo, a do atabalhoado ato de lançamento da primeira pedra da construção do tribunal em Caué.

Mesmo se assaz sofisticada, uma explicação racional e formalizada será sempre redutora. Portanto, não vale a pena descrever a situação com palavreado que, ignorando a realidade, reafirme a fé nos homens, porque estes não dependem de idiosincrasias celebradas com palavras supostamente reparadoras e libertadoras ou com lemas mágicos, como o de “ilhas maravilhosas”<sup>77</sup>. Dependem, sim, das instituições, no caso, bastamente vilipendiadas e degradadas.

Salvaguardada a louvável circunstância de as eleições terem sido até hoje um espaço de quase absoluta e inviolável liberdade<sup>78</sup> (igualmente observável a nível dos direitos individuais), São Tomé e Príncipe é mais um exemplo de como a degradação política e ética pode afetar as pessoas em qualquer parte do mundo, sobretudo quando sujeitas a privações e, mais decisivo, a um horizonte sem esperança.


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<sup>77</sup> O que está em causa não é o descompasso com a identidade africana, é, sim, a oposição à lei, ao civismo e à decência, por vezes subliminarmente citados como “ocidentais” e avessos à cultura local, mormente quando se querem justificadas as ilegalidades, a corrupção e toda a sorte de práticas danosas, que não deixam de ser disruptivas por serem praticadas por mandantes da terra.

<sup>78</sup> Até hoje não irreparavelmente prejudicadas pelo “banho” nem por controvérsias em torno de resultados, até quando as eleições se manterão como um reduto incólume à degradação política?, tal uma questão não negligenciável para o futuro dos são-tomenses.

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**Pentecôtisme et sida. Illustration des relations entre religion et santé à la lumière de trois Églises dans deux townships sud-africains : entre métamorphoses et ambivalence** 


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**Résumé**

Le présent article propose une réflexion sur la dialectique entre religion et santé. Plus précisément, cette anthropologie religieuse se focalisera sur trois Églises pentecôtistes, ce, dans deux townships sud-africains – et, les relations qu’elles entretiennent par rapport aux séropositifs et à l’épidémie. On analysera, partant, comment les croyants et leurs proches vivent leur foi en temps de sida.

**Introduction**

Le présent article propose une réflexion sur la dialectique de la religion et la santé à travers le cas spécifique du pentecôtisme et du sida en Afrique du Sud. Cette recherche a été conduite dans le cadre d’un post-doctorat financé par l’*Institut Français de Recherche sur l’Afrique du Sud* (IFAS). Plus précisément, nous nous sommes focalisés sur trois Églises pentecôtistes et les fidèles qui y sont affiliés, ce, dans deux townships sud-africains. Soulignons que, selon l’estimation d’un rapport du gouvernement sud-africain<sup>2</sup> ayant pour objet, les affiliations religieuses des

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<sup>2</sup> « Pocket Guide to South Africa 2011/2012 | Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) ». <https://www.gcis.gov.za/content/resourcecentre/sa-info/pocket-guide-south-africa-20122013>

Sud-Africains 80% sont chrétiens, dont plus de 4,2 millions affiliés aux très actives Églises Pentecôtistes, à commencer dans les townships. Dans celui de Kayamandi, qui est à la périphérie de Stellenbosch, ma première ethnographie avait comme objet d'étude l'*Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa* (AFM). L'on estime que l'AFM sud-africaine est la plus grande Église Pentecôtiste. Elle compte environ 1,2 million d'adhérents. Ce qui fait d'elle le cinquième plus grand groupe religieux de la Nation arc-en-ciel, représentant, ainsi, environ 7,6% de la population (Clark, 2007). Elle est historiquement d'obédience assez conservatrice, bien que les dernières années, elle a modernisé certains de ses principes, inflexion, imputable, en partie, comme on le montrera, par l'ampleur de l'épidémie de sida. Toujours dans le même township, j'ai réalisé un second terrain au sein de la *Revival Fire Ministries*. C'est une institution très récente qui a été créée en 2008, par Tafadzwa Doyce au Zimbabwe. Elle compte environ 500 membres, majoritairement à Harare et dans le Western Cape, province sud-africaine. C'est, on le verra, un courant plus progressiste que celui de l'AFM.

Ma troisième ethnographie a été réalisée à Khayelitscha, le plus grand township du pays qui se situe à la périphérie du Cap. Indiquons la prévalence exceptionnelle (30%) et qu'il est l'un des premiers à avoir vu émerger un activisme contre le sida, tant institué par les pouvoirs publics, les ONG, mais aussi, on le relatera, par un certain nombre d'Églises et de FBO (*Faith Based Organisation*). On illustrera plus précisément cette lutte à travers une Église indépendante singulière, la *Way of Life Church*. Le pasteur Xola Skosana qui la préside la qualifie, non sans une verve raciste, d'Église destinée aux non-blancs (« *non white Church* »). Du point de vue doctrinal, elle oscille, on le détaillera plus loin, entre pentecôtisme et « *Black theology of Liberation* ». Elle connaît un succès exceptionnel d'autant que ce pasteur met en ligne régulièrement ses prêches sur You-

Tube et parcourt le pays pour tenir ce qu'il désigne comme des *Black Lectures*.

Cette recherche a été alimentée, en outre, premièrement, par un questionnaire auquel ont répondu dix-huit membres de ces Églises et, ensuite, par cinquante entretiens semi-directifs avec des individus âgés entre 16 et 53 ans. Cet échantillon était composé de 24 femmes et de 26 hommes. En ce qui concerne les fidèles, ils ont été recrutés, soit directement après les cérémonies pour la majorité des membres de l'AFM et la RFM, mais aussi par message de sollicitation sur le groupe WhatsApp pour la dernière, soit par une invitation sur le réseau Facebook du compte de Xola Skosana, en ce qui concerne les fidèles de la *Way of Life Church*. Trois autres entretiens ont aussi été effectués avec les pasteurs Russel (RFM), Ndebele (AFM) et Skosana (*The way of life Church*).

Notre réflexion s'ancrera, plus précisément, sur l'évolution des Églises pentecôtistes par rapport au sida et aux séropositifs. En effet, l'Afrique du Sud est, toujours, de loin, le pays le plus touché par l'épidémie de sida. 180.000 décès étaient ainsi imputables, en 2016, au virus<sup>3</sup>. En 2015, l'on dénombrait 7 millions de séropositifs, soit une prévalence de 19,2% chez les 15-49 ans à l'échelle nationale. Néanmoins, force est d'admettre une évolution radicale durant ces vingt dernières années puisque l'on est passé d'une absence de traitement dans les années 2000 à la mise en place d'un programme massif d'accès au traitement antirétroviral (ARV). Ainsi, plus de 2,5 millions de Sud-Africains en bénéficient actuellement.

Michel Foucault affirmait, à propos du biopouvoir au XVIIe siècle en France, « à la confluence du corps et de la population, le sexe est devenu une cible cruciale du pouvoir autour de la gestion de la vie plutôt que la menace de la mort (2014 :193). Aujourd'hui c'est, de manière spectaculaire,

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/southafrica>

laire, la menace de la mort qui figure dans les calculs des gouvernements, des ONG, mais aussi, on le mettra en évidence, des Églises.

La société sud-africaine, et, plus spécifiquement, ces terrains sont le théâtre de la confrontation, dans le champ de la santé, et plus spécifiquement de la lutte contre le virus, entre une myriade d'« entrepreneurs de bien du salut » à l'instar, en premier lieu, des cliniques publiques, des ONG, mais aussi des institutions religieuses ou des FBO (*Faith Based Organization*). Si l'on reprend l'expression wébérienne « bien du salut », c'est que, selon sa définition, « les biens de salut promis et proposés par les religions ne doivent nullement être cherchés par le chercheur empirique comme se rapportant seulement ou prioritairement à l'au-delà » (2006 : 345). La santé correspond donc à un « bien du salut » intramondain.

L'enjeu, via cette analyse, sera d'étudier comment les fidèles, qu'ils soient malades ou non, vivent leur foi en temps de sida. Par ailleurs, on explorera les relations complexes, ambivalentes et fluctuantes que peuvent entretenir les Églises par rapport au sida. Dialectique d'autant plus importante que, d'une part, selon le *World Christian Database*, ce courant religieux représente 12% des croyants en Afrique, soit environ 107 millions individus, sur une population africaine voisinant les 890 millions et que, d'autre part, le continent est le plus touché par l'épidémie avec 26 millions de porteurs du VIH.

On s'interrogera donc dans quelle mesure, sous quelles conditions et selon quelles modalités les Églises pentecôtistes – entendues, comme institution, édifiant une communauté où s'affirment des discours religieux, participant de la formation d'un habitus – s'apparentent-elles à une solution ou à un problème, eu égard la prévention de l'épidémie et l'attitude face aux malades et au reste des fidèles.

Dans une première partie, on montrera que, dans l'ensemble, historiquement, les diverses Églises, ne serait-ce qu'à l'échelle du continent afri-

cain, ont eu, initialement, une position ambiguë et contradictoire qui s'est progressivement et partiellement métamorphosée. On se focalisera, plus spécifiquement, dans une seconde partie, sur l'attitude ambivalente, fluctuante et contradictoire des Églises AFM, RFM et *Way of Life* par rapport au sida, aux malades et, par extension, aux fidèles. On explorera, enfin, toujours à la lumière de nos ethnographies, comment les membres de ces institutions appréhendent le sida et ont fait de celui-ci, à la fois une ordalie et un étalon de la légitimité de leur foi.

### I. Les Églises pentecôtistes ont eu une attitude ambiguë et contradictoire au début de l'épidémie qui s'est progressivement et partiellement métamorphosée

Les Églises ont joué un rôle historique en matière de développement, notamment en Afrique du Sud, ce dès la colonisation et à travers les différentes missions. Dans le champ de la santé, et plus spécialement à l'égard du sida, elles ont fait perdurer cette fonction, malgré des discours et des attitudes originellement ambivalents.

#### A. Le rôle historique des Églises dans le développement de l'Afrique du Sud

L'engagement des Églises chrétiennes dans la prospérité et le développement en Afrique est loin d'être nouveau. Il a commencé durant la période coloniale et missionnaire. Les Comarrof se sont livrés à une « ethnographie historique de l'évangélisme colonial » (2009 : 411), en analysant les « rencontres missionnaires » en Afrique du Sud, étayant la thèse que « depuis la perspective des missionnaires eux-mêmes, (...) l'effort avait deux dimensions séparées. La première, visant à sécuriser les convertis, était dominée par les récits sacrés, les bonnes nouvelles de l'Évangile. L'autre était la quête civilisatrice, qui impliquait une lutte sur le tissu et la fabrication de la vie quotidienne » (1997 : 7).

Plutôt que de peindre, de manière univoque, le colonialisme comme processus de domination économique-politique et les missions comme un système de conversion unilatérale de sujets subordonnés, annonçant comme corollaire que la situation se réduirait à une dualité : résistance ou refus des dominés, les Comaroff dessinent un tableau plus complexe. Cette opposition apparaît, en effet, simpliste en ce qu'elle élude la complexité de la situation coloniale. La « colonisation des consciences » s'est mise en place, en effet, concomitamment, avec une « conscience de la colonisation ». Les premières négociations témoignèrent ainsi, en l'occurrence, de la lucidité des chefs tswana quant au pouvoir subversif de l'installation missionnaire sur leur territoire. De la première partie du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle à la fin du siècle vont s'organiser, à mesure de l'ampleur des missions, des observations, puis des négociations. De là, en quelque sorte, une entreprise de « domestication » du christianisme (*taking hold of the Church*), pour reprendre l'expression des Comaroff (2009 : 71). Se constitua alors une dialectique de l'appropriation et de l'accommodement, autant que du conflit et de la résistance d'où vont résulter des produits hybrides, engendrés par cette « équation complexe d'échange et de synthèse » (2009 : 358). D'où, au fil du temps, un « bricolage spirituel » laissant une large place à « l'agencéité » historique des sujets, dans laquelle on s'inscrira, dans la suite de ce texte, puisqu'on tentera de démontrer comment, aussi bien les pasteurs que leurs fidèles ont fait évoluer les croyances quant au sida, en les adaptant au contexte singulier sud-africain, caractérisé par la prévalence exceptionnelle du virus, spécifiquement dans les townships.

## B. Les Églises face à l'épidémie : ambivalence, contradictions et adaptation

L'importance croissante des influences religieuses et leurs conséquences sociales et individuelles du sida ont été intégrées, progressivement et de façon disparate, selon les pays par les chercheurs en sciences humaines, que ce soit en anthropologie et sociologie *stricto sensu* ou en théologie

(Becker et Geissler, 2009). Fut ainsi développée cette dimension dans l'aire australe par un certain nombre de spécialistes, à l'instar des travaux de Prince et Denis (2009).

Au début, en effet, les études sur le Sida se sont souvent inscrites dans une perspective relativement large (Dozon et Becker, 1999), puisque ces approches analysaient l'épidémie prioritairement en termes médicaux. Il nous faut constater un intérêt croissant porté sur le sida comme expérience vécue, comme un champ d'expériences et de choix existentiels (Vidal, 2004 ; Le Marcis, 2010). Quant à l'analyse par le prisme religieux, elle permet d'offrir une grille de lecture souvent décisive, en ce qu'elle éclaire, à la fois, en amont, la prévention et les raisons de la propagation de l'épidémie, mais, aussi, en aval les soins et le mode de vie des malades.

Une série d'études sur la dialectique religion et sida a enrichi la bibliographie. Ainsi que des auteurs ont commencé à tenter de le démontrer (Nguyen et Becker, 2009), ces nouvelles médiations religieuses constituent de nouveaux espaces, où des groupes évangéliques notamment sont devenus très actifs dans la prévention de la maladie, l'accompagnement psychologique des malades, mais, aussi, de manière non négligeable, le financement de traitements médicamenteux, si bien que la religion n'apparaît plus nécessairement uniquement comme un frein aux politiques prophylactiques édifiées par les États.

De fait, dans de nombreuses régions d'Afrique subsaharienne, le Christianisme, particulièrement, a développé originellement un discours fréquemment stigmatisant sur cette maladie infectieuse, l'expression « punition de Dieu » étant récurrente – témoignant de cette logique de culpabilisation. Par-là, le discours religieux a initialement alimenté une dynamique excluante, entraînant, de facto, une dichotomie entre chrétiens « sains/purs » et « mauvais/impurs » à l'aune de la présence du virus chez les individus, renforçant du même coup les discriminations. Ainsi, souvent, dans les années 1990, la représentation publique, formée à travers les réponses reli-

gieuses à l'égard de la maladie, était dominée par une phraséologie, généralement virulente contre les malades, faisant de l'infection un châtement individuel, venant sanctionner d'hypothétiques fautes collectives, liées au non-respect d'une morale sacrée d'en haut, censée réguler les comportements humains d'ici-bas. Dès lors, les personnes infectées étaient jugées comme des parias devant « assumer » le poids de leurs « fautes ». Un certain nombre d'Églises, certes, de moins en moins nombreuses, notamment en Afrique du Sud, proposent encore de guérir du sida avec, par exemple, des plantes.

Les Églises ont toutefois eu, dès le début de l'épidémie, un rôle qu'on qualifiera d'ambivalent en cela que si elles ont souvent initialement appréhendé celle-ci comme une « maladie de Dieu et du diable » (Tonda, 2007), l'on ne saurait, néanmoins réduire cette attitude à sa dimension délétère, étant donné qu'elles ont, souvent, simultanément ou progressivement, apporté de l'aide matérielle ou psychologique, voire thérapeutique aux malades. Un « marché du salut » s'est formé, en cela que la confrontation entre des « entrepreneurs de santé » institutionnels que sont les acteurs publics ou les ONG avec les diverses institutions religieuses a introduit une concurrence. Ce qui a contribué à ce que ces dernières modifient leur offre et s'adaptent à la demande des fidèles qui ont commencé à pouvoir bénéficier de l'arrivée massive des premiers antirétroviraux. À ce titre, le cas de l'Église anglicane en Afrique du Sud est particulièrement illustratif. Tenant auparavant un discours conservateur, fustigeant les malades, vers la fin des années 1990, de nombreux pasteurs et fidèles se sentirent de plus en plus préoccupés par le virus du sida, à mesure que la maladie était de plus en plus visible parmi leurs paroissiens et qu'un nombre croissant d'autres acteurs, à l'instar des ONG et des cliniques publiques, proposèrent une offre concurrente salvatrice. En 2002, lors d'un synode du diocèse du Cap fut lancée une motion afin que l'Église s'engage davantage dans les programmes de lutte contre le sida. Un projet du nom de « Fikelea » démarra (Kareithi et Rogers, 2005). Fut consécutivement ins-

titué un système de recrutement, à travers lequel les membres du Fikelela allèrent visiter les Églises qui faisaient partie du diocèse et encouragèrent les pasteurs à former des équipes en charge de la prévention du sida. Les responsables de ce programme se sont investis dans différentes activités, en affichant, par exemple, des posters, en distribuant des brochures d'information ou en organisant des cérémonies de deuil et des activités pour la journée mondiale contre le sida. Ils mirent aussi en place des ateliers d'éducation sexuelle, recommandant les préservatifs et les traitements médicaux. En 2017, 92 des 132 communautés religieuses avaient institué ces équipes.

### C. Les institutions religieuses adjuvant des pouvoirs publics et des ONG

Les Églises et les FBO (*Faith Based Organizations*) gravitant dans leur orbite, œuvrant dans les townships, sont, dans leur majorité, issues des Églises anglicanes, méthodistes, presbytériennes et catholiques romanes. En raison de leur implantation ancienne et en vertu d'une tradition ancestrale de charité, elles ont pu bénéficier d'infrastructures existant depuis longtemps (Burchardt 2012 ; 2013). Elles s'engagent dans les problèmes liés au développement, l'assistance matérielle et humanitaire, s'occupent des orphelins, notamment imputables au sida que l'UNICEF évalue à 1,6 million d'enfants<sup>4</sup>, à l'éducation à la santé et ont parfois organisé des programmes spécifiques liés au sida, en promouvant l'usage des préservatifs.

Klaits a ainsi développé dans une riche ethnographie (2010), illustrant cette métamorphose des acteurs religieux, en rappelant, dans un premier temps, comment, pendant longtemps le sida a été étudié, avant tout, comme une source de jalousie, de peur, d'accusation, de paupérisation

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/southafrica/protection\\_6631.html](https://www.unicef.org/southafrica/protection_6631.html)

et de mort. Son ethnographie décrit finement comment, dans une Église apostolique du Botswana, le virus est dorénavant l'occasion, au contraire, d'amour, de compassion et d'attention au bien-être des autres. Les individus se rassemblent dans la communauté autour de la sollicitude. Dans son ethnographie d'une Église néo-pentecôtiste dans la Tanzanie urbaine, Dilger (2007) mit pareillement l'accent sur le fait que l'Église n'est pas devenue seulement populaire, car elle proclamait la guérison du sida, mais aussi parce qu'elle est devenue un réseau de soin et de soutien pour les croyantes dans un contexte d'urbanisation croissante et de processus de modernisation.

L'implication des jeunes dans les campagnes religieuses contre le sida s'est parfois aussi caractérisée par la volonté de « rompre avec le passé », laissant percevoir, dans certains cas, un conflit générationnel. Gusman (2009) a ainsi analysé les transformations des Églises pentecôtistes en Ouganda, où l'on a assisté graduellement à une implication croissante dans la société, détaillant les interactions entre ce processus et les changements dans les stratégies nationales quant à la prévention du sida, et comment le concept de « salut » prit une nouvelle signification dans ce contexte. Cette volonté de rupture a trouvé une nouvelle dimension dans la rhétorique de ce qu'il désigne la « Génération Joseph », dont l'ambition était de construire un pays chrétien, en s'opposant à la génération des pères qui fut accusée d'être à l'origine de la corruption morale, vue par de nombreux jeunes « *born again* » comme responsable de la diffusion de l'épidémie dans le pays.

## II. Sur l'attitude ambivalente, fluctuante et contradictoire des Églises AFM, RFM et *Way of Life* par rapport au sida, aux malades et à l'ensemble des fidèles

Nos ethnographies au sein de trois Églises ont dévoilé un dénominateur commun qui tient à ce qu'elles ont toutes instauré un système de soutien

à l'égard des malades. Si les discours et les attitudes des pasteurs ont évolué, de manière relativement positive, en ce que ne sont plus condamnés les séropositifs, et ont, au contraire, souvent mis en place une kyrielle d'aides protéiformes, il perdure cependant, dans certains prêches, des imprécations susceptibles d'être délétères à la résorption de l'épidémie.

#### A. Les Églises comme « entreprises des biens du salut »

Nos études de terrain et entretiens semi-directifs corroborent la thèse que de plus en plus d'Églises pentecôtistes sont devenues désormais des adjuvants des « entrepreneurs de santé » que sont, en premier chef, les pouvoirs publics ou les ONG. Ainsi aucune des trois, contrairement à un certain nombre résiduel d'autres Églises, ne propose de guérison divine spontanée. Si l'on prend le cas de l'*Apostolic Faith Mission* sud-africaine, indiquons toutefois qu'elle appela, durant longtemps, à se soigner avec des plantes traditionnelles. Elle a récemment reconnu, le 10 juin 2015, dans un communiqué national, la légitimité des médicaments et invite, depuis, ses membres à se soigner, au nom d'une nouvelle lecture des évangiles qui promeut inconditionnellement la vie.

En ce qui concerne plus précisément, les fidèles de l'AFM de Kayamandi et plus spécialement les séropositifs, souvent en situation particulièrement précaire, en raison d'une situation socio-professionnelle plus fragile, peuvent se rendre dans le centre communautaire afférent où l'on peut chercher des denrées de première nécessité (farine, lait, huile, couches pour bébé) ou seulement un peu d'écoute et un réconfort psychologique avec quelques bénévoles de l'Église qui assurent la permanence durant la semaine. Une banderole est affichée à l'entrée « Aucune barrière avec le sida. Tu vis avec le sida. Tu es encore mon frère, tu es encore ma sœur dans le Christ ». Un des membres qui occupe cette position me témoignera que « la honte sociale fait sans doute autant souffrir ces personnes que les maux physiques. Les évangiles nous disent l'importance de la fraternité

pour guérir. Quelle que soit la maladie, ce n'est pas à nous de juger. Dieu nous a dit de toujours aider notre prochain, jamais de le condamner. C'est le privilège de notre Seigneur ça ».

Nous avons pu observer aussi comment les leaders religieux intègrent activement leurs fidèles dans la communauté. Signalons que les cérémonies de l'AFM sont tenues par des pasteurs qui parlent essentiellement en xhosa. Précisons que pour élargir le public, un assistant est chargé de traduire les prêches les plus importants en anglais afin que les nombreux Zimbabwéens qui ont immigré puissent devenir, eux aussi, des membres de la communauté. Au début de chaque cérémonie se tenant le dimanche, un fidèle doit faire remplir aux nouveaux venus un formulaire en anglais, où il est demandé, si (1) l'on est « simple visiteur », (2) souhaite « être membre », (3) veut « être sauvé ». Le salut doit s'entendre dans une acception extensive. Cette dernière possibilité s'adresse à toute personne qui désire bénéficier d'un soutien plus actif, bénéficiant ainsi d'une plus grande attention, tant des pasteurs que des membres de l'Église.

Quant à la seconde Église, *the Way of Life Church*, le Pasteur Xola Skosana, qui la préside est très actif sur Facebook. Il envoie des messages quasi quotidiennement sur ce réseau, conspuant fréquemment la suprématie blanche à laquelle il impute parfois l'épidémie du sida, relayant parfois que celle-ci est la résultante d'un complot occidental pour faire décroître le nombre de Noirs sur le continent africain. Cinq membres de son Église me confieront leurs suspicions quant aux origines et causes de l'ampleur de l'épidémie en Afrique du Sud. Trois d'entre eux l'imputeront, de façon relativement évasive, à une politique suprématiste blanche, dont l'objectif serait d'éradiquer la surpopulation sur le continent africain. Deux autres incrimineront, plus spécifiquement, respectivement, une stratégie américaine censée avoir été élaborée par la CIA, et le Dr. Wouter Basson, qualifié usuellement dans le pays de Dr. La Mort. Indiquons que cette dernière rumeur complotiste peut s'expliquer par le fait que ce dernier s'illustra

dans le ténébreux *Projet Coast* qui avait notamment comme objectif de confectionner une « bombe noire », c'est-à-dire une arme chimique qui n'aurait touché – affaibli ou tué – que la population noire (Gould et Folb, 2002). Dans le même esprit, un programme pour maîtriser la fertilité des noirs était également en cours de recherche afin de limiter la croissance de la population noire (Purkitt et Burgess, 2005).

Quant aux répercussions de ces considérations en matière de diffusion de l'épidémie, une étude (Grebe et Natrass, 2012) a mis en évidence qu'il existait, d'une part, des disparités de genre puisque l'utilisation du préservatif était inférieure de moitié chez les femmes adeptes des théories complotistes. Tandis que, d'autre part, pour les hommes, c'est le déni du virus et ceux qui n'ont jamais entendu parler de la TAC (*Trématent Action Campaign*) qui le réduisait significativement. Néanmoins, l'une des singularités des prêches de Xola Skosana tient à ce qu'il invite énergiquement ses fidèles à minimiser les risques de contamination, en rappelant l'importance décisive des préservatifs. Il conseille, dans la même logique, la circoncision. Quant à l'arrivée des antirétroviraux, il fut précurseur dans le domaine, accueillant, avec joie et soulagement, la campagne qui a débuté initialement dans le Western Cape sous la férule de MSF. Il les a donc, dès la genèse, justifiés d'autant que deux de ses sœurs séropositives sont mortes au début de l'épidémie, faute d'y avoir accès. Il les légitime, en effet, car il juge que « Dieu a doté aux hommes l'intelligence de les élaborer ». Soulignons que les pasteurs de l'AFM et la RFM convergeront sur la nécessité d'accepter les antirétroviraux, en épousant une argumentation, peu ou prou comparable, puisqu'ils firent prévaloir la légitimité de leur administration, au nom de la précellence de la « loi du Seigneur (qui est) de faire tout en sorte pour respecter et défendre la vie », ainsi que le formula le Pasteur Ndebele (AFM).

Le discours de Xola Skosana s'enracine, contrairement aux deux autres Églises, moins dans le pentecôtisme, que dans la « *black theology of li-*

*beration* ». Cette théologie représente une doctrine plurielle, tant dans ses analyses que dans ses préconisations, dont le trait commun repose, ostensiblement, sur le projet de libération de populations opprimées, dans le contexte social, politique, économique, idéologique d'une supposée « suprématie blanche » (Hopkins et Antonio, 2012). Xola Skosana perpétue cette tradition, en l'appliquant au registre singulier du sida, puisqu'il reprend souvent la formule de Desmond Tutu à propos de l'épidémie qualifiée par l'archevêque de « nouvel apartheid ». Comme le développa Didier Fassin « le sida en Afrique du Sud ne peut pas se comprendre à travers une sorte de perspective ethno-centré et atemporelle qui a longtemps prévalu, mais sur la base d'une ethnographie s'étant enrichie d'une historiographie » (2007 : 15). Afin de rendre intelligible pourquoi les « corps souffrent », il va éclairer l'épidémie, non pas tant à la lumière de données médicales, de statistiques ou d'études de cas, mais à travers une histoire de comment nous pensons le sida et pourquoi nous le faisons ainsi, laissant percevoir comment « s'incorpore » le passé, en l'occurrence l'apartheid d'hier qui apparaît, dans cette optique, non comme une rupture, mais, en réalité, comme un continuum persistant, voire s'amplifiant dans la nouvelle « nation arc-en-ciel » que Mandela augura, pourtant, sous le signe de la rupture.

Dans une perspective différente, mais non, toutefois, sans analogie, le pasteur Skosana s'est surtout illustré par une formule qui fut l'objet d'une controverse internationale, allant même heurter des théologiens outre-Atlantique, puisqu'il « incorpora » le sida au plus auguste représentant de sa religion, affirmant, lors d'un prêche, que « Jésus avait le sida ». Lors d'un entretien, il tentera de me justifier ce que d'aucuns désignèrent comme un sacrilège en trois temps. Il m'expliqua, d'abord, que son expression était justifiée, en peignant, sur un ton élégiaque, mais teinté d'acrimonie, un tableau crépusculaire de la vie des townships où le sida décime les siens, insistant, notoirement, sur les inégalités de prévalence entre Blancs et Noirs. Ensuite explicita-t-il l'ambition politique de cette imprécation

qui, pût-elle paraître outrancière, avait comme intention d'écarter le malheur de la stigmatisation et de « choquer les masses afin qu'elles aient conscience de la tragédie de cette épidémie ». Enfin, il essaya de réhabiliter sa formule lapidaire, en introduisant une légitimité théologique. « Dieu s'est fait homme à l'origine sous la personne de Jésus pour se rapprocher de l'humanité. « Aussi cet apparent blasphème témoigne, à la fois, de la perpétuation d'une tradition théologique et d'une stratégie politique de déstigmatisation du sida, en ce que l'incorporation dans l'éminente et universelle figure théologico-politique du christ Jésus qui, parallèlement, divinise l'humanité, et humanise Dieu, permet de tenter d'arracher la contamination du domaine exclusif et irrévocable du mal, en l'affranchissant ainsi du péché et en délivrant ultimement des stigmates consécutifs.

Toujours afin de susciter l'attention sur le sort des déshérités des townships et politiser son combat, en premier lieu contre la pauvreté, la violence et le sida, Xola Skosana commença une grève de la fin d'un mois en mars 2004. En Noël 2010, sa campagne s'intitula : « Bienvenue dans l'enfer des townships sud-africains ». Depuis sept ans, chaque Semaine Sainte, il réalise un pèlerinage, parcourant les treize kilomètres qui séparent les townships de Khayelitscha et de Gugulethu, sous le poids d'une énorme croix en bois de quarante-cinq kilos, médiatisant ainsi les causes qui lui sont chères, en premier chef, la lutte contre l'impérialisme blanc et contre le sida, par de nombreuses interviews avec la presse locale et nationale. « Cette maladie est en train d'anéantir les nôtres. Nous devons nous mobiliser pour mener une guerre contre ce virus. Les médias méprisent les nôtres et nos souffrances. Je suis là pour leur rappeler qu'une grande partie des Noirs vivent et surtout meurent injustement dans ces trous à rats », expliqua-t-il ainsi à un journaliste du *Mail&Guardian* dans une interview qu'il a relayé sur Facebook. Il a, de surcroît, mis en ligne plusieurs de ses prêches sur YouTube et parcourt le pays pour des conférences qu'il désigne de *Black Lectures*, durant lesquelles il continue ses combats politiques, notamment dans ce champ précis de la santé publique.

## B. Les attentes des malades et l'ampleur de l'épidémie ont contribué à modifier l'offre des pasteurs

J'ai questionné individuellement dix-huit jeunes fidèles de l'AFM âgés entre 16 et 21 ans, en axant spécifiquement ces entretiens sur leurs opinions quant aux préconisations de certains pasteurs, plus ou moins conservateurs, qui recommandent l'abstinence avant le mariage, condamnent l'adultère. S'esquissèrent deux attitudes. De là a-t-on construit, de manière idéal-typique, deux catégories de fidèles. La première comprend six jeunes fidèles. Notons que cinq d'entre eux sont des membres récents qui ont choisi, initialement, le statut temporaire de « visiteur ». Ils sont très majoritairement de sexe masculin (cinq garçons) et jeunes – trois étant mineurs. Si tous condamneraient unanimement l'adultère, toutefois apparut, chez quatre d'entre eux, un léger embarras par rapport à la totale abstinence avant le mariage. Deux rires de malaise fusèrent, un « pfiouuu », une levée de yeux aux cieux cherchant une quelconque autorité supérieure à la légitimité de ces impératifs leur semblant excessivement utopiques. « Faut pas exagérer non plus » (Baba 18 ans) « Non, il faut quand même que ce soit quelque chose de possible ! On peut s'améliorer que si c'est réalisable ! Là, l'abstinence avant le mariage c'est juste un peu trop. On ne rencontre pas nécessairement la femme de notre vie à notre âge » (Sam, 16 ans) « On cherche à s'améliorer, pas à devenir des anges ! » (Wilson, 17 ans).

Une seconde catégorie, majoritaire, est composée de douze croyants qui se sont pour la plupart affiliés à l'institution il y a plus longtemps et fréquentent plus activement le centre communautaire. Soulignons que les femmes y sont fortement surreprésentées puisqu'elles sont neuf. Elles justifiaient, de manière consensuelle, avec alacrité l'abstinence. « Il faut respecter la loi de Dieu ». Toutes dénigrèrent, similairement, à l'unisson, l'adultère, dénigrant unanimement les fautifs comme des pécheurs.

Les pasteurs ont tendanciuellement, mais non uniformément et sans ambivalence, adapté leur offre à la demande si l'on étend la réflexion à

l'échelle nationale ou africaine.. On peut illustrer les modalités de ces entrepreneurs de « biens du salut » par la figure du Pasteur Russel de la RFM (*Revival Fire Ministries*). Plus jeune – il a 33 ans – et maîtrisant parfaitement l'informatique puisqu'il est « développeur de logiciel », il a ainsi mis en place un site internet, une cybercommunauté sur Facebook, une mailing-list et, de manière plus innovante, un groupe WhatsApp où il fait preuve d'une grande diligence, envoyant, chaque matin, un extrait des évangiles. S'ensuit, systématiquement, la leçon qu'il tire du passage sélectionné. Chacun de ses paroissiens doit ensuite écrire « Alléluia » ou « je rends gloire à Dieu ». En voici une illustration. « Zacharie 2 : 8. Il retient les eaux et tout se dessèche. Il les lâche, et la terre en est dévastée. » D'interpréter ensuite : « La Bible dit que même la mer est susceptible de détruire la totalité des terres. Si Dieu peut protéger le monde entier plein de milliards de gens, qui veut remettre en cause son existence ? Vous devez arrêter de vous plaindre sans cesse à propos de vos vies. Dieu vous protège ! Il est toujours à votre chevet. Que vous souffriez d'une maladie, que vous soyez dans la précarité et que vous soyez fragiles, le Seigneur est toujours là pour vous aider ». À bien des égards, aussi bien ses prêches que ses messages électroniques ont une fonction de coaching psychologique.

### C. Néanmoins persistent des discours potentiellement entravant la résorption de l'épidémie et disparates en matière d'égalité des genres

Toutefois, force est d'admettre que certaines Églises pentecôtistes ont encore souvent un rôle ambivalent et parfois néfaste dans la résorption de l'épidémie, particulièrement en condamnant l'usage des préservatifs. Katherine Attanasi (2013) a montré comment l'éducation dans les Églises pentecôtistes sud-africaines en matière de sexualité, de prévention du sida et du divorce contraignent les choix réels et imaginaires des femmes. En effet, elles prônent l'idéal de fidélité et d'abstinence ; nombreux sont encore les

pasteurs qui s'opposent, d'une part, aux préservatifs et rappellent, d'autre part, que « Dieu hait les divorces ».

Or, le pasteur Ndebele de l'AFM parlera, dans le même état d'esprit, à plusieurs reprises, de « *gouvernement condoms* » pour qualifier péjorativement les préservatifs. Il les condamne d'abord, car ils encouragent potentiellement une vie sexuelle qu'il juge licencieuse, les invitant, implicitement, à renoncer à l'abstinence avant le mariage et incitant, par ailleurs, indirectement, insidieusement, à l'adultère et à la multiplication des partenaires. Cette attitude renvoie à la description faite au Kenya chez les jeunes par Parsitau (2009) pour qui les pasteurs assimilaient, pareillement, les campagnes de promotion, à une sexualité débridée. Le pasteur Ndebele les dénigre aussi par leur fonction et leur dessein visant à ralentir la fécondité, qu'il impute à un programme occidental de maîtrise de la démographie sur le continent, allant à l'encontre du message des Évangiles qui rappelle-t-il fréquemment, institue la « vocation des Hommes à engendrer ». La promotion des moyens de protection traduirait, selon lui, à ce titre, l'ambition machiavélique, moins de ralentir la diffusion de l'épidémie, que de viser à diminuer la fécondité. Or la majorité des discours religieux continue d'encourager à la procréation ceci, certes, exclusivement dans la sexualité maritale.

Les prêches peuvent, certes, avoir un impact positif en ce qu'ils prônent l'abstinence ou la fidélité. Mais, la condamnation des préservatifs qui perdure chez certains pasteurs plus conservateurs et des impératifs que d'aucuns jugent trop utopiques de totale abstinence et de fidélité, ne risquent-ils pas, a contrario, d'étendre la diffusion du virus ? Afin d'évaluer dans quelle mesure les Églises sont susceptibles ou non de protéger du sida au regard des préconisations des responsables religieux, Garner (2000) a mesuré l'influence des discours et des impératifs qu'ils véhiculent sur les mœurs des membres selon les différentes obédiences. Il a ainsi comparé les Églises, selon qu'elles étaient affiliées au pentecôtisme, au courant

apostolique ou de Zion, ce dans le township du Kwazulu, de sorte d'évaluer le rôle de la religion dans la prévention du sida, en prenant en compte, en premier lieu, l'activité sexuelle avant le mariage et les relations extra-conjugales. Son étude conclut que les Églises pentecôtistes qui étaient associées avec des niveaux importants d'endoctrinement, et du niveau d'intégration dans la communauté, étaient les plus fidèles et avaient donc le moins d'enfants illégitimes. En effet, à condition d'appliquer consciencieusement les règles de vie prescrites par les pasteurs, l'adhésion à la communauté et l'application des préceptes religieux contribuent à ce que Burchardt désignait comme « immunisation par la foi » (2015).

J'ai assisté pendant un an aux cérémonies de l'AFM. J'ai pu constater, en particulier dans cette Église, une circulation des fidèles. J'ai calculé qu'en moyenne, sur une assemblée d'environ 80 personnes, il y avait trois nouveaux « visiteurs ». Moins du tiers de ces derniers sera assidu durant les trois mois suivants. Cette circulation s'explique par des dynamiques de migration urbaine, d'intermittence des attentes, de complémentarité et de concurrence des offres entre la RFM, l'AFM et les autres Églises anglicane, presbytérienne, romane catholique, évangéliques ou charismatique qui font florès à Kayamandi.

Ainsi, un fidèle séropositif de la RFM m'expliqua avoir « fréquenté un grand nombre d'Églises avant de se décider de devenir membre. La RFM et le pasteur Russel sont plus tolérants à l'égard des malades que les autres que j'ai précédemment fréquentés temporairement. Ici, on nous juge moins et la communauté est plus active. Elle permet de nous donner du soutien psychologique et les autres fidèles sont plus compatissants. On ne nous condamne pas, on nous comprend. Pour moi, cela correspond davantage à l'esprit du Seigneur que relaient les Évangiles ».

C'est pourquoi il nous faut maintenant analyser comment le sida doit être appréhendé comme une épreuve dans la vie des croyants.

### III. Les fidèles pentecôtistes ou le sida comme expérience ontologique et ordalie

Nos ethnographies ont montré, en outre, que lesdits pasteurs tiennent un discours marqué par l'empathie pour les malades. Ils tentent aussi de valoriser les sentiments amoureux. La communauté représente, par ailleurs, ainsi un espace commun ouvert où l'on peut se délivrer d'une possible culpabilité et de ses souffrances afférentes.

#### A. Les pasteurs invitent leurs fidèles à sacraliser leurs corps et à reconnaître la légitimité des sentiments

Les pasteurs de l'AFM et la RFM tentent, via la médiation de la théologie, de sacraliser les corps pentecôtistes. Le pasteur Russel invite ainsi ses fidèles à prendre en compte, comme il l'affirma « qu'il y a Dieu en chacun de vous ». Par conséquent, la chair est duale, en cela qu'elle n'est pas seulement la présence, sous certains aspects, profane, de soi au monde, mais, en quelque sorte, une théophanie, c'est-à-dire à la manifestation de Dieu transparaissant dans les corps des croyants. À ce titre, l'invocation au respect et à la tempérance passe par la maîtrise de ce que le pasteur Ndebele décrit régulièrement négativement, comme des « pulsions animales » qui déshumaniseraient ses paroissiens. Dans une séquence particulièrement charismatique, il apostrophera véhémentement ses paroissiens : « le diable, il est dans votre tête ! C'est lui qui vous possède à travers vos instincts primaires ! C'est lui qui domine vos pulsions sexuelles ! C'est lui qui alimente votre libido ! C'est lui qui vous fait succomber au péché de la chair ! »

Les discours, en particulier, des pasteurs de l'AFM et la RFM ont ceci de commun qu'ils valorisent, de manière consensuelle, les sentiments dans un contexte risquant d'alimenter une anomie. Comme le répéta, de manière impétueuse et récurrente, le Pasteur Russel, durant les cérémonies,

à ses fidèles : « Votre corps est sacré. Il contient la vie. Il vous appartient. Personne ne peut y toucher sans votre consentement ». Cette imprécation est d'autant plus importante que le pays affiche le record mondial du taux de viol puisqu'en 2015/2016, d'après les statistiques de la Police, 42.596 viols furent commis, soit un taux de 77 pour cent mille habitants<sup>5</sup>. En réalité, les spécialistes estiment que ce chiffre est largement sous-estimé de 30%, représentant, probablement, plus de 65.000 viols annuellement, ce qui signifie, en moyenne, un viol toutes les vingt-six secondes. D'où l'importance des prêches qui investissent donc les corps pentecôtistes de sacré. « Regardez le visage de celui que vous aimez. Il est aussi le reflet de notre Seigneur. Respectez-le en lui étant toujours fidèle » explicitera, dans la même verve, le Pasteur Ndebele.

Par ailleurs, nos ethnographies précises ont dévoilé que l'investissement dans la foi et la mise en pratique des idéaux religieux correspondent, sous certains aspects, à une stratégie pour établir davantage de respect et une plus grande égalité entre les genres. Ainsi, l'adhésion à la communauté et l'application des principes qu'elle véhicule « permet de calmer la libido des garçons » confessera, non sans malice, Andiswa, une jeune fidèle de dix-huit ans. Les prêches peuvent participer de la légitimation de la subjectivisation et de la reconnaissance morale, sanctifiée religieusement, de la nécessité de réciprocité du désir entre hommes et femmes. Ils permettent, à ces conditions, de résister contre un certain « consumérisme sexuel », en cela que les pasteurs encouragent leurs paroissiens, soit, fort majoritairement d'être abstinentes ou fidèles, soit, beaucoup plus rarement, de fortement tempérer l'accumulation compulsive de ses partenaires.

Le Pasteur Russel de la RFM, moins conservateur et plus pragmatique que celui de l'AFM, clamera ainsi que « Dieu ne vous juge pas avec le nombre de filles avec qui vous avez couché, mais à la lumière de comment

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<sup>5</sup> <https://africacheck.org/factsheets/guide-rape-statistics-in-south-africa/>

vous vous êtes comportés avec elle ». Il contribue ainsi aussi à relégitimer les sentiments et à faire comprendre à ses paroissiens leur insigne valeur puisqu'il explicita que :« vous ne devez pas avoir honte de désirer l'autre. C'est une puissance merveilleuse que vous a dotée le Seigneur. Mais il faut que cela soit réciproque. » Le pasteur Ndebele déclara, dans la même perspective, que « l'amour est une joie que nous a donnée notre Seigneur. Ne négligez jamais l'amour, car si vous l'ignorez, vous faites insulte à notre Seigneur. »

B. Les prêches et la vie de la communauté sont susceptibles de donner du sens aux souffrances du sida qui s'apparente dorénavant à une ordalie

En outre, la foi et la participation à la vie de la communauté peuvent procurer du sens aux maux tant physiques que moraux qu'infligent cette maladie, qui constitue alors, dans cette logique, à une épreuve visant à tester la force de leur croyance et légitimant les Églises en ce qu'elles offrent l'opportunité de délivrer, fût-ce provisoirement et partiellement, des souffrances morales dérivant des stigmates que continue de générer la contamination au virus au quotidien.

Ainsi, durant les cérémonies, souvent, deux ou trois fidèles, quasi-exclusivement des femmes, prennent la parole, en montant sur le tréteau et narrent un épisode difficile de leur existence, devant l'auditoire. Elles témoignent de la puissance salvatrice de leur adhésion communautaire dans leur quotidien. Légitimant ainsi, pour les nouveaux venus, la puissance de la foi et de la participation à la communauté. Plusieurs croyantes firent ainsi le récit de ce qu'elles endurent, en sanglotant, parfois, en hurlant. Le public murmure alors « Alléluia » à plusieurs reprises. Généralement, les causes sont semblables : précarité, mais, surtout, souffrances inhérentes aux souffrances de proches, voire perte d'un enfant ou d'un autre être cher. Très souvent, il s'agit probablement de décès liés au sida, même si

je n'entendrais jamais le mot prononcé dans l'Église AFM de Kayamandi. L'on dissimule cette maladie, encore honteuse, en camouflant la réalité, en parlant, généralement, de tuberculose ou autre maladie infectieuse.

Ainsi d'un dimanche à l'AFM où le pasteur Ndebele invita Gloria à s'avancer à côté du pupitre où il se trouvait. Pendant près de cinq minutes, elle racontera la progression de la maladie de son bébé. Elle finira par raconter, devant l'assemblée, avoir trouvé son enfant, un jeudi, à l'aube, inanimé ; et de mimer, alors, le désespoir qui l'agitait pour le ramener à la vie, en le secouant. Mère célibataire, elle doit faire face, seule, à ce drame. L'ensemble du public répétera, à de multiples reprises, « Le Seigneur est avec vous ». Le pasteur, ému, murmura « Le Seigneur comprend vos larmes et vous enlace avec gratitude ». Rappelons que, selon un rapport de l'UNAIDS de 2016<sup>6</sup>, 120.000 enfants sont morts dans le pays, des suites du virus, soit, en moyenne, 328 chaque jour.

La cérémonie est donc l'occasion d'une obsécration individuelle et d'une catharsis collective, puisque tous les témoignages font échos à des situations personnelles que certains préfèrent taire. L'ensemble de l'assemblée murmure ou pleure. Certains crient ou se mettent à « parler en langues », singularité pentecôtiste, désignée sous le terme de glossolalie. Délivrants ainsi des maux de la solitude, des tortures iniques de la perte d'un proche et offrant l'opportunité d'éviter de s'abimer dans la déréliction. Permettant, à chacun, d'accoucher, dans une maïeutique religieuse, de la culpabilité d'inavouables situations personnelles, en dehors des cérémonies, n'ayant pas de légitimité dans l'inconscient collectif qui règne, silencieusement, mais impérieusement dans les townships.

En effet, la souffrance est souvent perçue comme une faiblesse humaine qui, dans un contexte d'affirmation de la force de soi, est bannie. Gloria

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<sup>6</sup> [www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\\_asset/Global\\_AIDS\\_update\\_2017\\_en.pdf](http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/Global_AIDS_update_2017_en.pdf)

m'expliqua « en dehors de notre Église, on peut difficilement parler de ce qui nous fait souffrir. On est vite jugé. On passe pour des mauvaises personnes, des faibles. Je ne pourrais sans doute vivre avec cet atroce sentiment de culpabilité si l'Église et tous ceux qui m'entourent dorénavant n'étaient pas là pour me soutenir ». Dût-ce être éphémère, les maux acquièrent de la valeur. La contamination n'est alors plus considérée, ne serait-ce que transitoirement, comme une faute. Au contraire, la vérité et l'authenticité des contritions sont parfois l'expression d'un certain dolorisme, étant donné que les croyants acceptent leurs souffrances dans la mesure où elles sont susceptibles de réparer leurs péchés. De là procurent-elles, fût-ce partiellement, du sens à leurs douleurs. L'honnêteté semblant alors prévaloir sur la faute, en ce que la contamination puise sa source dans la transgression des sacro-saintes recommandations d'abstinence et de fidélité. Le péché de chair n'est alors plus grave, dans son acception théologique, mais véniel, en cela qu'il ne rompt aucunement l'alliance avec Dieu. Au contraire, il invite à se rapprocher du Très Haut, à travers, d'abord la fraternité qui scelle la relation à l'autre au sein de la communauté. Elle leur permet de renforcer leur estime d'eux-mêmes qui a fréquemment chuté, tant la maladie est encore source de stigmates. Les cérémonies s'apparentent, à ce titre, à une « structure d'opportunité discursive » (Gamson, 1982) permettant aux individus de réaliser que leurs situations personnelles ont une matrice collective commune et que l'adhésion active à la communauté a la propension vertueuse de les aider, voire les sauver.

Durant les cultes des trois Églises objets de notre étude, les malades ne sont donc plus condamnés *ex cathedra* comme des pêcheurs. La confession de leurs affres constitue une étape primordiale dans leur vie religieuse. Le virus n'est plus tant une instance d'excommunication qu'une ordalie. En effet, les souffrances sont, dès lors, considérées comme des épreuves sur le chemin de leur foi. Les confessions collectives invitent le reste de l'assemblée à l'introspection individuelle, tendant à sculpter un

nouvel éthos qui intègre le sida, non plus véritablement et exclusivement comme une condamnation divine, mais, désormais, davantage comme une épreuve de vie à surpasser que seule la foi peut permettre. Et ce retour sur soi est alors l'occasion de vérifier, d'abord, personnellement, la légitimité de la croyance et la participation active à la communauté, à commencer par la fidélité et l'abstinence sexuelle. Les témoignages durant la cérémonie justifient, ensuite, collectivement, pour les autres fidèles, la puissance salvatrice de la théologie en matière d'éthos.

### C. Le sida comme vecteur de la légitimation de la foi

Nous avons pu observer que l'épidémie de sida pouvait participer de la légitimation de la foi. Albert, nouveau fidèle de l'AFM, âgé de dix-huit ans, expliquera en quoi l'épidémie a contribué à légitimer les discours religieux. « Avec cette maladie, on a compris que la religion se justifie. Si on ne respecte pas ce que nous recommande le Pasteur, on risque alors d'être contaminé. C'est une raison de plus de toujours croire en lui. Il est clairement notre source incontestable de bien. Ses conseils religieux sont, au bout du compte, toujours salvateurs. On ne peut plus ensuite douter de la véracité de ses prêches ».

Jadis dans le monde occidental hantait la préoccupation de l'au-delà. Cette angoisse eschatologique a été brillamment dépeinte par l'historien des mentalités Jean Delumeau dans un ouvrage (1978) sur la peur en Occident du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle. À cette époque, les individus étaient terrifiés par la damnation éternelle, le jugement dernier et l'enfer. Dans les trois communautés pentecôtistes, les croyants ne sont guère effrayés par d'hypothétiques arrières mondes. Leur foi s'inscrit moins dans la perspective lointaine d'une eschatologie que dans l'immanence actuelle du social au sein duquel coexistent, en quelque sorte, le paradis et l'enfer. Le médiéviste Jacques Le Goff (2014) a retracé une généalogie du purgatoire dont il fixe la naissance au XIIe siècle. Dans la théologie pentecôtiste, à

la suite du protestantisme, s'éclipse le purgatoire. Les fidèles de l'AFM et de la RFM ne prient plus, en l'occurrence, durant les cérémonies, pour la paix des âmes défuntes, mais pour leurs frères vivants, en premier ceux qui souffrent du sida. Les responsables desdites Églises appellent systématiquement à la compassion et à la sollicitude à l'égard des malades. Le pasteur Russel conviendra ainsi qu'il n'a pas « la légitimité de juger les pécheurs », même s'il se doit de « condamner les péchés et de rappeler l'importance des principes évangéliques pour assurer une vie bonne ». Il encourage ses fidèles à soutenir certains de ses paroissiens malades en leur rendant visite à leurs domiciles ou en allant à leurs enterrements. Klaitz (1998 ; 2005) a décrit similairement comment une Église pentecôtiste du Botswana façonnait les expériences et les pratiques de souffrance et de deuil parmi ses membres, et que l'Église contribuait essentiellement à ce que les fidèles métamorphosent leur réalité consistant en « une bonne mort ».

De là, en somme, une logique de sécularisation du purgatoire qui souligne que les préoccupations des croyants de ces Églises sont, dans un contexte de sécularisation, avant tout, intramondaines, faisant du virus une ordalie et de leurs vies respectives l'expérience *hic et nunc* de leur propre purgatoire qui se déploie dorénavant, prioritairement, dans l'horizontalité de la communauté. Le paradis et l'enfer – auquel l'on peut prétendre pour le premier, ou dont on peut se soustraire pour le second, à condition toutefois, dans les deux cas, de s'investir dans la communauté et de mettre en pratique les préceptes religieux – sont donc primordialement ici-bas. L'épidémie de sida s'apparente, dans cette perspective, simultanément, à une mise à l'épreuve de la foi et à une preuve, tant des biens fondés concrets que de la légitimité théorique des idéaux édictés par la théologie dans leurs vies quotidiennes.

## Conclusion

La tragédie du sida n'a pas ruiné les Églises dans les townships, bien au contraire. Les théodicées, c'est-à-dire, les tentatives de concilier théologiquement l'abjection de l'épidémie à l'idée d'un Dieu infiniment bon, remettant potentiellement en question soit qu'il puisse l'être totalement, soit infirmant sa toute-puissance ont, simplement, évolué, *mutatis mutandis*. L'effort d'adaptation est inégal, certes, à l'échelle du continent africain comme celle de la nation sud-africaine. De condamnation massive et initiale « divine » par les intercesseurs que sont les pasteurs, au début des années 1990, le regard sur le virus s'est métamorphosé, pourtant, progressivement, inégalement et non sans ambivalence, dans les marges urbaines de la société arc-en-ciel, objets de cette recherche, en épreuve céleste projetée dans leurs espaces finis pour des fidèles qui n'y voient plus tant, ou plus seulement, une énième irrémissible injustice, mais, plutôt, en définitive, une ordalie et l'occasion de se confronter à soi, de vérifier l'efficience des idéaux spirituels prônés par les pasteurs sur les règles du monde. Épreuve personnelle, le sida est, aussi, l'étalon de la légitimité de la foi.

C'est donc ainsi un enjeu collectif pour les Églises qui ont su saisir là, non un fardeau insurmontable, une entrave à leur épanouissement, mais, au contraire, une opportunité pour se légitimer dans un monde en proie à une logique de rationalisation. Susceptible, dès lors, de capitaliser leur confiance et de démontrer, *in situ*, leur aptitude immédiate et temporelle à réaliser leur vocation à améliorer le quotidien de leurs fidèles, en leur proposant un croire qui s'est adapté au contexte de l'époque et qui s'offre comme un ultime viatique, immédiatement accessible, à condition, toutefois, de mettre en pratique quotidiennement les préceptes religieux, leur offrant alors aussitôt « l'éternité du présent ».

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