

**FOR THE GAMBIA, OUR HOMELAND: THE  
DIASPORA, DEVELOPMENT AND  
POLITICS**

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I, Sainabou Taal confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

## **Abstract**

This thesis aims to explore the potential of *small* diasporas to contribute to development and politics at 'home'. Thereby informing inter-disciplinary thinking at the intersection of migration studies, development studies and politics. I argue that where there is a discussion of diaspora's political engagement in the existing migration-development literature, it is either hidden behind the shield of 'development' or restricted to questions of violent conflict. The central claim of the thesis is that the migration-development nexus needs to address formal politics more explicitly. The Gambian diaspora are an interesting group to research because the country has not experienced violent conflict in recent years and the diaspora are making contributions to development at 'home'. However, they are also simultaneously seeking to intervene in homeland politics, which they view as another form of development contribution.

This research is a multi-sited study conducted in The Gambia, UK, and US. This thesis is based on 24 interviews with 52 participants undertaken in The Gambia with elites, students, government officials, politicians, and return migrants between February 2013 and December 2014. 49 interviews with members of the Gambian diaspora in the UK and US, and 10 interviews with heads of Gambian diaspora associations in the UK. The four research questions in this thesis address (1) development interventions, (2) political interventions, (3) the responses to these interventions from The Gambia, and (4) the relationship between development, migration and politics. The data used to address them came primarily from the interviews, participant observation, textual and visual materials acquired from newspapers, social media, archives, and secondary sources in the academic and grey literatures. Qualitative coding techniques were used for thematic data analysis.

The thesis concludes that the political activities of some members of the UK and US Gambian diaspora are inhibiting the ability of the diaspora as a whole to have any 'real' impact on national development. This is perpetuating the distrust between the homeland government and those outside the territory. Subsequently, development contributions are mainly focused on the family scale. Whilst these political interventions have some effects at 'home' they are only one component in a broader set of interventions seeking to change Gambian politics (alongside diplomatic efforts, structural economic forces and human rights lobbies for example) and their impact is constrained by the limited resources and capacities of those in the diaspora. Conceptually the thesis concludes that whilst it is useful to

maintain the distinction between development and politics for the purpose of organizing the analysis, in practice the two are inseparable. The case that is being made in this thesis is that politics in The Gambia is an 'anti-development machine', as formal political engagement is a barrier to active development in the country. Thus, paradoxically it requires diasporans who are sincerely committed to the development of The Gambia to withdraw from politics, despite simultaneously arguing that improving the political process is a part of development. Two weeks before submitting this thesis, a Presidential election occurred in The Gambia, which dramatically changed the political context of the country and its diaspora. However, given the timing, it was impossible to re-write this thesis to take account of the election, though some comments have been added to the conclusion.

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# Chapter 1:

## An introduction to the Gambian diaspora

### 1.1 Introduction

It was 6:30 am, on the morning of Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> December 2014, when I was woken from a deep sleep by the ringing of my mobile phone. At first, I thought it was my alarm going off, but when I looked at the screen I saw my sister's face, she was calling from Namibia. As I answered the call, I was wondering why she would call me this early in the morning and prayed that she was not interrupting my sleep to engage in frivolous conversation. "There is a coup in Gambia, President Jammeh has been overthrown." Her voice bellowed through the speakers. I sat up on my bed immediately; suddenly getting that extra two hours of sleep no longer mattered. I asked her "who has overthrown him?" "A group of Gambian men in the US went to attack the State House. There is news that they have taken over and Jammeh is gone", she answered. This man had been at the epicentre of Gambian politics since he seized power in 1994. I was stunned at what I was hearing. I hung up and sat in silence for what felt like a very long time. So many questions were going through my mind at this point (not all to do with my research). Composing myself, I arose and made my way down to my mother's bedroom. I woke her to share what I had just heard; she looked stunned. She then suggested we call my dad and other sister who were in The Gambia for the Christmas holidays. Neither of them responded to our calls causing us to resort to the next best thing; the online diaspora-owned radio 'Freedom Newspaper'. We listened intently to what the presenter was saying. His voice was filled with excitement as he reported news about an armed group of Gambian dissidents from the US engaged in gunfight with state guards at the State House.

At around 7:00am, I received a text message from another contact in The Gambia confirming that an attempted coup was indeed taking place. It stated, "I heard heavy weapon fire from 2:00am until around 4:00am. I heard the exchange of fire. I am following it. I understand some vehicles are being turned back at the Denton Bridge. I hope this goes through." Shortly after this exchange, I heard on Freedom radio that three of the coup-plotters were killed and the coup had been foiled.

Later that morning, the stories of the event began to unfold, and more information became available. But, what was most striking was the reaction of Gambians on social media. I cannot make the claim that the posts on Facebook reflected the views of the entire Gambian population, however, it quickly became apparent that

many people at 'home' did not support this form of intervention from the diaspora. For example, I came across a Facebook post, which said:

[Gambia *jama rek* (peace) we are a praying nation, God will never let us down. People in Europe with their children claiming they are Gambians and wishing bad for their country will fall on their heads, they are enemies of the nation...]

The rhetoric in the posts became increasingly aggressive as some people in The Gambia started portraying the entire Gambian diaspora population as villains. Simultaneously, some members of the Gambian diaspora were also criticising the coup-plotters for staging an amateur and flawed take-over and for going against efforts for a peaceful non-violent democratic change. For example, soon after one of my interviewees said: "the 30<sup>th</sup> December attacks were condemned by everyone because it was uncalled for. Their actions can be defined as terrorism and most of them were not citizens because they had denounced their citizenship" (Interviewee 17, male, 30s and highly educated professional). This interviewee has strong personal connections to the government and President Jammeh. However, their response was still surprising because during our personal conversations he talked about his dislike for President Jammeh and how he would support a change of leadership in The Gambia. Thus, I wondered if he would have said the same thing if the coup had succeeded, but I did not ask for fear of causing offence.

After the events of the 30<sup>th</sup> December 2014, I was left feeling confused by the reaction of my Gambian network. Having completed fieldwork in The Gambia two weeks prior to this event and from the many formal interviews and informal discussions I had with them. I was given the impression that they were unhappy with the political leadership in the country and thus would welcome the intervention of the diaspora. Perhaps the climate of authoritarian politics in The Gambia meant that people felt obligated to make these public statements in support of a system they had previously told me they did not support, but my sense was that there was more to it than this. Their hostility to the coup attempt was sincere. They wanted change but clearly, this was not *how* they wanted political change to take place in the country.

The reactions to this event illustrate the many paradoxes and contradictions in how Gambians at 'home' view politics and the political involvement of the diaspora and it prompted a series of questions that underpin this project: What do the Gambian people want from politics? How can I believe that what they say they want is what

they actually want? How do people in The Gambia see the diaspora? What emotions shape their relationship with the diaspora? What are the emotions in the diaspora that led to the coup attempt? What are the divisions within the diaspora? How is it that what seems so obvious from the perspective of the diaspora (the flaws in Gambian politics) can seem anything but obvious for those within Gambia? Given what I knew about the frustrations of the diaspora, why did I find the coup-attempt so surprising? Why did the Gambian opposition parties not use this as an opportunity to help change the political environment? Why did the Gambian military refuse to support of the coup plot? Is a democratic political change likely to occur in The Gambia or will there need to be another similar intervention from within to effect political change?

### **The Stalemate in Diaspora-Homeland Relations in The Gambia**

Like many developing countries, a significant number of people born in The Gambia now live abroad. According to data from the International Organization for Migration, there were 89,634 Gambians living outside of the country in 2015<sup>1</sup>. The skilled emigration rate of Gambians was at 64.7% in 2000<sup>2</sup>, making it the second highest amongst sub-Saharan African countries. The institutions in the country suffer from the brain drain of highly skilled professionals, but many people in The Gambia are greatly benefitting from the financial and material contributions of the diaspora. According to C Omar Kebbeh, a Gambian Economist working for the Bureau of Economic Analysis at the US Department of Commerce, the inflow of remittances into The Gambia in 2011 was more than twice the foreign direct investments (FDI) flows (\$90.7 million to \$35.9 million) (2013:6).

Certainly, diaspora remittances play an important part in migration and development theory and policy debates, not only because they sustain households (Gupta et al. 2007, de Haas 2012, Nyamongo et al. 2012, Chami and Fullenkamp 2013 and Gamlen 2014), but also because they are believed to contribute to national development (Torres and Kuznetsov 2006, Gupta et al. 2007, Terrazas 2010, Hammond 2011, Ratha et al. 2011, Newland 2011, 2012, Teferra 2015, Amagoh and Rahman 2016). According to data from the Central Bank of The Gambia, migrant remittances were roughly 20% of the country's GDP in 2013<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.iom.int/countries/gambia>

<sup>2</sup> Research conducted by Frédéric Docquier and Abdeslam Marfouk (2004) on measuring the international mobility of skilled workers from 1990 to 2000

<sup>3</sup> The exact amount of the inflow of diaspora remittances in The Gambia cannot be measured accurately because a large proportion of the remittances enter the country through unofficial channels, such as people hand carrying money. According to one interviewee "on one occasion I was given 12, 000 euros to bring back to Gambia to give to a family member" (Interviewee 62). They said they did not declare

The empirical evidence in this research revealed that the Gambian diaspora remit money to their families for food, clothing, school fees, medical bills, purchasing land, building houses, establishing small business enterprises, and embarking in hometown and village-led development projects through Hometown Associations. The interviewees posited that the money sent for these activities contribute to the economy through taxation within The Gambia.

However, the central problem currently facing the Gambian diaspora is that, in general, they are sceptical about the ability and intentions of the Government of The Gambia in relation to the implementation of the national development agenda. Put bluntly, many in the diaspora see the government at 'home' as an obstacle to the development they would like to see for themselves, their families, their communities and their country. They do not accept the government's claims that it is already delivering development.

Reciprocally, the problem the Gambian government faces is that, to some extent, without the diaspora's support, it is unable to maximize diaspora contributions in socially productive ways that could contribute to national development. Whilst there is an increasing understanding of how 'home' country governments can develop policies and institutions to enrol diasporas (Gamlen 2014). Such an agenda and knowledge base is of little value in this instance because there is a breakdown in the relationship between the government and many members of the Gambian diaspora, who say they are extremely dissatisfied with the political leadership of the country and thus are openly critical of the government. This is what I characterize in this thesis as 'the current stalemate' in Gambian government-diaspora relations.

The core strategy of the small number of Gambian diaspora groups that have formally mobilized politically is to expose what they perceive to be the negative activities of the Government of The Gambia to the international community, mostly centred on the government's human rights violations of Gambians at 'home'. Whilst other sources (diplomatic and international journalistic sources for example) might well have as much influence on donor decision-making, the fact that parts of the Gambian diaspora are lobbying the international community means that the government do not trust the diaspora in general.

Consequently, the Government of The Gambia does not appear to differentiate between the politically involved diaspora and the wider Gambian diaspora. They

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this money to customs and according to customs regulations there are no restrictions to carrying foreign currency into The Gambia

seem to have grouped the entire Gambian diaspora population together in marginalizing them from national development projects. The government views the diaspora as unsupportive and untrustworthy despite having openly made claims that they welcome those in the diaspora who want to contribute to development. However, the interviews revealed that the Gambian government ministries have made it difficult even for their overseas supporters to get involved by making the lines of communication difficult to access. Such an impasse raises significant academic and normative questions: how did this situation arise? What does it suggest about theories of the migration-development-politics relationship? How is diaspora-led or diaspora-funded development happening in The Gambia despite such a conflictual context? How might The Gambia move beyond this dead-end without resorting to violence?

### **Diaspora Interventions in Politics in The Gambia**

The empirical evidence in this research revealed the involvement of the Gambian diaspora in contemporary Gambian politics picked up momentum after the events of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> April 2000, when the Gambian security forces opened fire on student protesters, killing 14 students and one journalist. The Gambian Student Union (GAMSU) was protesting against the beating of student Ebrima Barry by fire service officers in Brikama, which led to his death. The students felt the government did not investigate the matter properly and thus took to the streets to show their disapproval. Since this incident, many members of the Gambian diaspora have become highly critical of the government's political practices and its use of violence. Thus, a small proportion of the diaspora has mobilized in their host countries (the majority of these groups are located in the UK and US) and formed civil society organizations and/or become extended branches of the Gambian political opposition groups.

This is the fraction of the diaspora that is referred to in this thesis as the 'political diaspora.' This group is distinguished by their explicit and conscious engagement in homeland politics. They claimed to be driven by the desire to rescue the Gambian people from the human rights violations they are experiencing under the leadership of President Jammeh. The politically involved groups feel it is their responsibility as 'citizens' of The Gambia to 'save' the people from an authoritarian undemocratic rule. But of course, the interviews and participant observation in this thesis revealed that not every Gambian wants to be saved from President Jammeh. In fact, the data showed that Jammeh has many loyal supporters who explicitly

reject the political involvement of the diaspora, which the 'political diaspora' feel is unwarranted, ill-informed and self-interested.

The Gambian political diaspora have established their own media outlets to engage in discussions, organize demonstrations, and lobby the governments in their countries of residence to take certain action against key members of the Gambian government. For example, the diaspora has been lobbying the US government to impose a travel ban on top government officers including President Jammeh and to seize his mansion in Potomac, Washington. This group argue that this property was purchased with money belonging to the country.

An opening hypothesis of this thesis is that the ability of the Gambian diaspora in general to influence either political or developmental change is greatly influenced by the effectiveness of their activities. The interviews undertaken revealed that the political diaspora have achieved some success with their advocacy i.e. creating awareness of the deteriorating human rights conditions in the country. However, the thesis argues that there are significant ambiguities relating to the impact the Gambian 'political diaspora' believe themselves to be having on influencing politics a 'home'. There are unanticipated negative consequences. For example, the attempts of members of the diaspora outside this politicized fraction to engage in development activities at 'home' is undermined by the stalemate between government and diaspora.

The interviews also revealed that the majority of the Gambian diaspora prefer either to stay clear of formal public politics or choose to engage anonymously online, to avoid risk and negative consequences for themselves and their families at 'home'. Many of them believe that being politically explicit will make their families at 'home' targets of the national security services. My interviewees suggested that fear of political repression is just as high amongst critics of the Gambian government in the diaspora as it is for people on the ground.

However, one of the aims of this thesis is to breakdown the 'firewall' between 'politics' and 'development,' by showing how development and politics are connected in The Gambia. The 'theoretical' discourse that operates within academia sees the distinction between development and politics as an illusion. For example, the entrenchment of authoritarian bureaucratic power through the institutions and aspirations of 'development' is a familiar story in Africa. Most famously analysed in Lesotho by the anthropologist James Ferguson (1990) in his classic account of the political effects of a multi-sectoral development programme

in his book *'The Anti-politics machine'*. On the other hand, 'a practical' discourse that operates in The Gambia is that some members of the Gambian diaspora and Gambians on the ground portray development as both political and apolitical. For example, methodologically it was easier for Gambians to talk about development than politics (largely due to issues of fear). However, there was also a sense from some Gambians that they believe Jammeh constantly and explicitly uses development achievements for political purposes. So part of the argument is that the practical side of this idea is paradoxical because some people can make the link explicit, whereas others find it more useful to keep them separate.

This thesis tries to insert a stronger focus on diaspora politics into the migration and development debate by showing how the political activities of the small groups in Gambian diaspora have multiple effects on migration and development in The Gambia. For example, the political activities of these groups have resulted in the wider Gambian diaspora being marginalized from national development. Thus, aside from their contributions at the family level (which is their primary focus) and to a much lesser extent the village/town level, the Gambian diaspora are not able to have much impact at the national level. In addition, the political activities of the diaspora have also exposed key issues such as human rights and bad governance (key conditions for development aid), which have contributed to the country losing aid from major donors and exacerbated poverty in the country. This shows that having a strong focus on diaspora politics in the migration and development debate is necessary, at least in the Gambian context.

The academic literature on the intersections between diasporas, development and politics make a series of claims that are scrutinized in this thesis: (1) increasingly diasporas are being recognized to play an active role in the development process of their countries of origin (Kapur 2001, 2003, Nyberg- Sorensen et al. 2002, Gundel 2002, Turner et al. 2003, IOM, 2006, de Haas 2006, 2012, Terrazas 2010, Davies 2012, Judge and De Plaen, 2011, Newland, 2011, 2013, Ratha et al. 2011, Agunias and Newland 2012, Crush et al. 2013, Gamlen 2014, Mercer and Page 2014, Resende – Santos 2015, Chikanda et al. 2016); (2) notions of autochthony and the 'politics of belonging' are assumed to explain why some members of diaspora have an inherent desire to assist their homeland in development as well as in politics (Lampert 2009, Kleist 2013, Kleist and Turner 2013); (3) diasporas have played significant roles in the domestic politics of their homelands, they are seen as instruments to influence political outcomes (Sheffer 2003, 2013, Hägel and Peretz, 2005, Brinkerhoff 2009, Esman 2009, Davies 2012, Lyons and Mandaville 2012, Adamson 2015 , NurMuhammad et al. 2015, Boccagni et al. 2015) and; (4)



diasporas can be either peace-makers or peace-wreckers, in times of crisis in their 'home' countries (Koser 2003, Bernal 2006, Smith and Stares 2007, Baser and Swain 2008, Brinkerhoff 2011, Hoehne et al. 2011, Iheduru 2011, McGregor and Pasura 2014).

## **1.2 Research Rationale, Aims, Objectives and Specific Research Questions**

The overall aim of this research is to understand the role and significance of the Gambian diaspora in seeking to shape politics and development in The Gambia. The question that underpins this study is to find out whether 'small diasporas' can contribute to development and politics at 'home' and thereby to inform thinking at disciplinary and inter-disciplinary levels about the intersection of migration studies, development studies and politics. Much of the literature in diaspora studies do not explicitly try to define the concept of 'small diaspora' but the few that have attempted define 'small diaspora' in three ways. First, they are groups from small countries with small economies such as the Pacific Island Countries like Tonga, Fiji and Samoa (OECD 2015). In Africa, these are groups from countries like The Gambia, Cape Verde, and Djibouti. Second, '*small diasporas*' are also defined by their size (Kuznetsov 2006). For example, countries such as Chile and Scotland have smaller size diasporas than countries like China or India. Similarly, Gambian has a smaller size diaspora than Nigeria and Ghana. Third, '*small diaspora*' have limited financial resources when compared to large groups like the Jewish, Chinese and Indians diaspora in the US (Devane 2006, Eckstein 2013, Ye 2014). Based on these three definitions, the Gambian diaspora fits comfortably within the concept of 'small diaspora' because they are small in size, The Gambia is a small country with a small economy and the diaspora has limited financial resources. Thus, by bringing the developmental and political interventions of '*small diasporas*' into conversation with each other the thesis sets out to forge new ground and contribute to the argument that

Even relatively *small* diasporas can and do establish and activate such organizations on the international level. For example, this is the case of the relatively small Palestinian, Serb, Kurdish, and Catalonian diasporas. Each of these diasporas is involved in activities on the international level to promote their interest in their homelands and hostlands (Kokot et al. 2013:72)

This introduction has set out to show the Gambian situation is an intellectually provoking one because the key parties lack trusts in one another. Furthermore, there is also a profound contradiction between the political ambitions of some in

the diaspora and the development ambitions of others. So, both analytically and normatively, the rationale for the study becomes one of solving two puzzles: how did it get to this stalemate between diaspora and government? And, how can I disentangle the relationship between politics and development in the diaspora? As a member of the Gambian diaspora there is little point in hiding the fact that searching for a productive route out of the current impasse is a part of the motivation for undertaking this research. Ultimately, my motivation is to help the country and its citizens (both those at 'home' and overseas) to move forward. I return to this normative dimension of the study in the final part of the concluding chapter of the thesis.

Additionally, within the broad fields of both 'migration and development' and 'migration and politics' this thesis develops a distinctive path. Subsequently, through this research, I have noticed that the Gambian diaspora has received very little academic research attention in comparison to other African diasporas like the Somali, Ethiopian, Ghanaian, Cameroonian, Nigerian, South African and Zimbabwean (to name a few). Analytically, the Gambian diaspora is an interesting group to study because they are involved in *non-violent conflict* with the Government of The Gambia. For Mohammed Bamyeh (2007) and Robin Cohen (2008) 'conflict diasporas' are refugees who flee from war either because they were civilians or combatants. Whereas for Gabriel Sheffer (2007) and Khachig Tölölyan (2007), 'conflict diasporas' are stateless and likely to support irredentist, secessionist and national liberation movements in their homelands, even if these are actively involved in bitter conflicts. Based on these definitions the Gambian diaspora does not meet the criteria for 'conflict diaspora' because they are neither stateless nor do they come from a conflict state like the American-Irish, Palestinians, Somalis, Eritrea, Ethiopia or Liberians. However, I argue that the Gambian diaspora should still be defined as a 'conflict diaspora' because conflict is not defined only by violence but also a breakdown in the relationship between parties (see Gregory et al, 2009). Additionally, real peace is not just the absence of war rather it is the opportunities for development, protection of rights and political inclusion. Without this, diasporas can engage in conflict with their 'home' governments. Therefore, I argue that the literature in diaspora studies should expand the definition of 'conflict diaspora' to include the Gambian diaspora. And to support this argument, this thesis will show that the conflictual diaspora-homeland political relations outside the context of actual armed conflict, post-conflict reconstruction, or peace-building are important for further exploration in the field of transnational diaspora politics.

This research is a multi-sited study of the UK and US Gambian diaspora. A total of 83 interviews in the UK and The Gambia were undertaken, with 111 participants. Observational and textual data were collected in The Gambia, the UK, and the US, from members of the diaspora, both those who are politically involved and those that are not. Also, those belonging to diaspora associations in the UK and those that do not. The interviewees included 88 men, 13 women and 10 associations. The samples were young, middle aged, old, professionals, skilled workers, and students.

**This thesis addresses four main research questions:**

1. *How, why and where does the diaspora contribute to development in The Gambia?*
2. *How has the Gambian diaspora in the UK and the US intervened in politics in The Gambia?*
3. *What is the response to these interventions in The Gambia?*
4. *What are the wider implications of this study in understanding the relationship between development, migration, and politics in the Gambian context?*

There are five main arguments in this thesis. The first argument is that the direct socio-economic development contributions of the Gambian diaspora are largest at the family level, to a much lesser extent at the town/village level and seldom at national level. This is due to fraught relations between the diaspora and the Government of The Gambia. The second argument is that the Gambian diaspora feel they have a strong obligation towards their families in The Gambia. This drives them to maintain links with the country and will override the incentive to get engaged with politics where it is perceived that their political engagement might threaten the ability to support their family. The third argument is that in the recent past the lack of cohesion of the political Gambian diaspora groups and of political opposition parties in the country has reduced support from Gambians on the ground. This in turn has reduced the ability of the political diaspora to deliver their desired political change in The Gambia. The fourth argument is that the political diaspora justifies its activities by claiming to fight for the people in The Gambia, whom they believe are unable to defend their rights because they are living in fear of politically enforced violence. The fifth argument is that there is a strong link between politics, development, and migration in The Gambia, however the relationships are as often contradictory as they are complementary.

### 1.3 Thesis Structure

This thesis contains eight chapters after this introduction. Chapter 2 begins by defining the concepts 'development' and 'politics'. It then moves on to discussing the literature on the migration and development nexus. Before going on to define the global diaspora, and then discussing the migration history of Africans migration and the importance of the homeland to the African diaspora. The review defends the merits of strategically essentializing the African diaspora in order to provide a general explanation for why they remain so involved in their homeland affairs<sup>4</sup>. This chapter will also critically review the literature on 'diaspora and development' and the transnational political engagement of diaspora. The key argument being made in this chapter is that research in diaspora studies and 'migration and development' studies tends to shy away from debates about the formal political practice of the diasporas. As such there are gaps in knowledge about how politics at 'home' has been transformed by the diaspora.

Chapter 3 is the country profile of The Gambia. This chapter provide a brief description of the geography, ethnic composition, demography, gender, religion, and poverty in The Gambia and then moves to discuss the political and economic history since independence. The chapter will also describe the post-independent migration history of Gambians to Western countries and the Gambian diaspora associations in the UK. The main aim of this chapter is to highlight some of the developmental and political issues in The Gambia that would create understanding of *why* the Gambia diaspora intervene at 'home'.

Chapter 4 is the methodology chapter, which provides details about the methods used to collect the data that informed this empirical research. It also sets out the research design and the various elements of the data collection stage of the research. This includes discussions of the sampling, triangulation/ data testing, detailed accounts of the three phases of fieldwork, the data analysis process, research limitations, risks, research ethics, sensitive issues, and research positionality.

Chapter 5 explores the different socio-economic development contributions of the Gambian diaspora. This is the first empirical chapter, which addresses research question one and the first and second main arguments in the thesis. The chapter

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<sup>4</sup> The idea of 'strategic essentialism' is taken from Gayathri Spivak. It argues that despite acknowledging the reality of internal heterogeneity it can be strategic for a particular group to present themselves as homogeneous in order challenge those who have power over them. In this case, by asserting the uniformity of the African diaspora, whilst knowing there is considerable diversity within that category.

looks at the development contributions of the Gambian diaspora in The Gambia at three scales, the family, town/village, and national level. Then moves on to discuss the contributions to the Gambian diaspora in the development of four sectors, health, education, housing, and agriculture. The main findings in this chapter are: (1) the Gambian diaspora are making the most significant direct contribution at family level, which helps to augment household consumption and alleviate household poverty, (2) it is seldom that they make direct contributions to national development projects, however, their contributions at family and town/village levels are having a multiplier effect on the country's economy and, (3) the Gambian diaspora are contributing to development of the health, education, housing and agriculture sectors, however, they are having a more profound effect in modernising the housing stock in The Gambia.

Chapter 6 focuses on the constraints and challenges the Gambian diaspora encounter when contributing to socio-economic development in The Gambia. This chapter is an extension of chapter 5 and it addresses the second main argument. This chapter looks at challenges at family, town/village, government, and institutional levels. The finding in this chapter revealed that some barriers are real whilst others are perceived. However, combined they provide an excuse for some members of the Gambian diaspora to be inactive in development at 'home'. This chapter argues that most of the barriers exist partly because the state controls resource allocations and determines who to involve in national development.

Chapter 7 focuses on the political interventions of the Gambian diaspora. It discusses the political mobilization of the Gambian diaspora in the UK and the US, their mobilization activities and tools as well as the triggers and justifications for their political interventions. The chapter also assesses the effectiveness of the political interventions of the UK and US Gambian diaspora. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how the diaspora seeks to *influence* democratic political change when faced with the challenge of a rallying large-scale support and divided and self-serving opposition parties and politicians. I use 'social movement theory' as the main theoretical framework to explain the mobilization of the UK and the US Gambian diaspora civil society groups. This chapter addresses research questions two and three as well as the third and fourth main argument.

Chapter 8 identifies and discusses the relationships between 'politics and development', 'politics and migration' and, 'migration and development' in the Gambian context. One of the main aims of this chapter is to articulate a better understanding of the relationship between development, politics and international

migration in The Gambia. I argue that fundamentally, politics in the Gambia causes underdevelopment and it is this underdevelopment that drives international migration – as is illustrated by the dramatic growth of the ‘backway’ in recent year. This chapter addresses research question four and the fifth main argument.

Chapter 9 is the concluding chapter, which summarizes the entire thesis as well as reflects on the contributions this thesis makes to the field African diaspora studies and development studies. In this chapter, I also give details about the contributions of the thesis to wider knowledge about the Gambian diaspora, ‘small diaspora’ and ‘conflict diaspora’. The conclusion then moves on to discuss future research direction in the field of African diaspora studies and development studies and closes with policy ideas and my update of the recent presidential elections in The Gambia with resulted in President Jammeh being democratically removed from power.

# Chapter 2: Theorizing the African Diaspora, their Development and Political Activities

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will introduce the fields of 'diaspora and development', 'diasporas in politics', and 'migration and development' to which the thesis plans to contribute with a new case study from The Gambia. The overall aim of this chapter is to develop a theoretical framework that will guide the analysis in this empirical research, whereas the objective is to critically assess the key literatures in the relevant fields. The main argument in the chapter is that diaspora-development literature pays relatively little attention to the formal role of the African diasporas in homeland politics, and discussions of politics are either hidden behind the shield of 'development' or solely in relation to violent conflict. The contribution of this thesis is to add to literature on peaceful diaspora political engagement in the context of the migration-development nexus.

The development contributions of diasporas to their homeland have become an increasingly important feature of recent policy debates (Mercer et al. 2008, Agunias and Newland 2012, Crush et al. 2012, Chikanda et al. 2016). It is now widely assumed that diaspora communities have a major contribution to make to development in their countries of origin (Davies 2012). As such, much of the literature that exists in 'migration and development' and 'diaspora studies' tends to focus on the positive relationships between international migration and socio-economic development (Horst et al. 2014). This is known as the 'migration and development' optimism (de Haas 2012) and in this context, *"Migration is no longer seen by many as a loss of human capital investment that ultimately results in a brain drain. Instead, migrants are "heroes of development" whose activities produce transformative impacts on both migrant sending and receiving societies"* (Castles and Delgado Wise 2007: 3 cited by Chikanda et al. 2016; 2). The migrant activities referred to here include sending remittances, skills and knowledge transfers, and entrepreneurial capabilities to their homelands (Ratha and Plaza 2011, Eckstein 2013, Ho and Boyle 2015).

The literature often draws a distinction between 'diasporas' and 'transnational migrants.' It suggests that transnational migrants regularly participate in transnational economic and political activities in their 'home' countries from their

host country (Levitt 2004). They are more mobile and their relationships with the host country are based on accessing the opportunities that are available to them in given periods. For example, attaining higher education qualifications or business opportunities (Vertovec 2009). According to Peggy Levitt (2004), 'home' means more than one country for transnational migrants and using the Indian immigrants from Gujarat State to illustrate, Levitt talks about how they own homes in subdivisions outside Boston, work, attend school, and build religious congregations, while simultaneously sending money back to India to open businesses or improve family homes and farms. Transnational migrant may also rely on connections in their 'home' country for their current business and make frequent visits to 'home'. However, 'diasporas' also maintain links with their 'home' country through investments, sending remittances, building houses, taking part in development and visiting that country occasionally. Thus, the meaning of both concepts overlap, and separating them would risk neglecting the rich "*panoply of definitions*" (Faist 2010; 13). The fact is diasporas also engage in transnational political and economic activities, therefore either concept would work in this thesis, however, I have decided to use the term diaspora as this is the term the participants used to describe themselves.

Going back to the point I made earlier in the introduction chapter pertaining to the literature in diaspora studies shying away from discussions of politics. I argue in this chapter that the literature either effectively depoliticizes the political practices of diasporas by calling it 'development' or relating it exclusively to questions of violent conflict (Koser 2003 and Bernal 2006, 2014 and Baser 2015). For example, it can be argued that the establishing citizen's rights and women's rights are part of development and in so many ways profoundly a political trajectory because it is about setting up the 'rules' of who participates in decision-making and can access resources. But, empirical evidence shows that diaspora interventions in peaceful homeland politics is nothing new (Lyons 2007, Knott and McLoughlin 2010), as illustrated by Gabriel Sheffer (2003) who asserts that the Jewish diaspora has played a significant role in influencing Israeli domestic politics since the Cold War in 1947, by creating successful mechanisms to provide financial and political support. In fact, in much of the literature on diaspora studies, the Jewish diaspora are used as a classic example of the everyday transnational engagement of the diaspora in politics both violent and non-violent. Their contributions to the building of the state of Israel and lobbying the US government to include their issues in US policy process in 1972 and 1974 (Hägel and Peretz 2005) has clearly impressed many academics writing in this field as a model of what is possible, though not common.



There are five sections in this chapter, the first section will seek to define and conceptualize the terms development, politics and African politics. The second section will seek to critically review the literature on the broader topics of 'migration and development'. The third section will seek to use the literature to define the global and African diaspora. This section will argue for the merits of strategically essentializing the African diaspora in an attempt to show how the connections (family, friends, businesses and properties) they have in their 'home' countries drive them to simultaneously set out to contribute to development and to intervene in politics. The fourth section covers the literature on narrower topics within the migration-development field by looking at African diasporas in development. The fifth section gets to the core literature with which this thesis engages by looking at the field of diaspora engagement in homeland politics. Lastly, the concluding section draws together the key arguments in the literature.

## **2.2 Defining the Terms**

### **Development**

Defining the term 'development' is not an easy task because it is used in different ways by the different academic disciplines engaged in the field of development studies (de Kadt 1974). For example, development economists might define 'development' using economic indicators like gross domestic product (GDP), income per capita and would conceptualise it using an economic model (Collier 2007, and Moyo 2011). In contrast, development sociologists such as Bernstein (1973), Barnett (1988) and Harris (1989) would define 'development' on a broader canvas as the enrichment of human life (Sen 1999) in which desirable socioeconomic changes contribute to improved quality of life and living conditions for the majority of people within a locality (Rist 2009, Todaro and Smith 2012, Wanyama 2013). The indicators of living conditions include education, employment, health, infrastructure, income, shelter, and equality. They are the 'basic needs' that represent the absolute minimum necessary for survival (Paul Streeten 1979). However, according to Emanuel de Kadt (1974), the problem with defining 'development' in sociology is that it does not attract the attention of policymakers who prefer to use economics to diagnose a country's problems. From de Kadt's (1974) point of view, 'Applied Economics' are more respected than 'Applied Sociology', particularly in crisis situations (1).

However, from the literature it is clear that 'development' is a loaded term (Staudt 1991), attached to changing theories and qualifiers. Most textbook accounts of the

history of the evolution of practical 'development' started with Modernization Theory. The key thinkers of this theory were American historian economist Walt Rostow (1960, 1971, 1990) and political scientist Samuel Huntington (1971). Modernization Theory posits a linear series of stages of development and a set of prescriptions about how to move between them. Another 'development' theory that emerged as a critique of Modernization Theory was Dependency/Underdevelopment Theory. The key thinkers of this theory were Andre Gunder Frank (1971, 1984, 1994), Samir Amin (1987) and Walter Rodney (1972). They argue that the exploitation of the satellite countries (Third World) by the metropolis (the west) has resulted in the underdevelopment of Africa states in particular. In addition, the development of the core was premised on the active underdeveloping of the periphery. However, neoliberal development theory led by Bela Balassa (1971, 1981) and Deepak Lal (1983), emerged in the 1980s as a solution to the underdevelopment of the Third World. The main idea of this theory was based on enabling free trade at a global scale and stripping away state interventions in commodity production and exchange. Such narratives of the different development theories are of course very familiar and oversimplified but is justified here to make the point that the disagreements are not only about what 'development' is and how to measure it, but also how to foster it.

Additionally, the different development theories have often been criticized for being Eurocentric (Cowen and Shenton 2003), because they place theory building in the metropolitan heartland. 'Development' practice in Africa is even more Eurocentric being steered mainly by non-African external participants such as former colonizers (UK and France), neo-imperialists (US and China) (Matunhu 2011, Black 2015) and international financial institutions (World Bank and IMF) (Shirley 2008, Moyo 2011). What has been unfortunate for development countries is that the development industry divides the globe between 'developed' and underdeveloped' (Staudt 1991) and uses a highly generalized 'one-size fits all' pathway to 'development' practice which takes little account of the diversity and heterogeneity of developing countries. When put into practice what works in one country may not in another (Black 2015). For example, the neoliberal structural development programmes of the 1980s and 90s were only successful in countries, like The Gambia, that not only adopted the principles wholeheartedly but also tailored the policy to suit the country context. Furthermore, 'development' qualifiers that seek to increase its precision have prefixed 'development' over the years. These include 'human development' (which combines social and economic criteria to advancement), 'sustainable development' (the need to conserve natural resources), 'participatory development' (attempts to increase Citizen participation

in decision-making) and 'equitable development' (concern with rising disparities and social justice) (Black 2015; 30).

The changing theories and qualifiers of 'development' have led analysts such as Gilbert Rist (2009) to label the term over-stretched and a "*plastic word*" (11). However, I would argue that this academic desire for analytical precision has little impact on the fact that 'development' is desired in every aspect of Gambian society. For example, Gambians associate 'development' with growth and progress and within these qualifiers, 'development' is relative as it means different things to different people. Thus, 'development' comes to be defined in a multiplicity of ways (Cowen and Shenton 2003) and its characteristics depend on the approach observers, analyst and practitioners adopt to solve a particular developmental problem (Zafarullah and Huque 2012: 44). In this thesis, 'development' is defined in sociological terms, and is most aligned to the 'human development' definition because this is closest to the understanding of most of the interviewees whose definition of 'development' is best captured by Amartya Sen's (2001) definition of the term, for example, "*the expansion of human capacities and quality of life*" (144). Like Sen, the interviewees believed that both the government at 'home' and their family members in the diaspora could enhance their capacities and facilitate an improved quality of life, by increasing public spending, creation of jobs and sending remittances.

However, this thesis aims to go beyond finding an interpretation of the definition of 'development', to understanding how 'development' is managed, particularly by the state (Zafarullah and Huque 2012, Turner et al. 2015 and Bawole et al. 2016). Bawole et al. (2016) define development management as, "*generally, development management is a deliberate attempt to cause development by actively steering institutional and organizational changes towards greater levels of efficiency and effectiveness*" (2). This involves consciously managing processes and building the capacity needed to improve the lives of people and removing the constraints that limit their achievements, for example, political, institutional, social and cultural constraints (Brinkerhoff and Coston 1999; 347). Development in this sense is a planned, intentional activity in which actors move towards specific goals in the name of progress.

Part of the literature argues that development management is inherently political (Staudt 1991, Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2006) because it deals with a process of planned social and economic change. Moreover, the language, labels and authority of those seeking to manage this process determine how development is

treated (Staudt 1991). In the context of a capitalist state, for example, a democratic government might place more emphasis on entrepreneurialism and free markets as a means to deliver development. Whilst a socialist government might see development in terms of central government's interventions in markets to control the distribution of profits for the common good. In each case, the language and labels of development will be different as will the ability of government to deliver. However, according to Abouassi (2010), citizens in the Global South are often more cautiously tolerant of allowing politics into development than citizens in other parts of the world. Abouassi explains that in the Global South, they view the state as the manager of development following many decades in which governments have made national 'development' their core focus. Thus, neither the individual, nor the private sector, nor civil society are expected to manage national development by African citizens, even though they are also acknowledged as important actors, but for most people, governments must take the lead role.

The evidence from this research suggests that the interviewees in The Gambia and the diaspora see the state as the key institution that manages development in the country because the government decides the development priorities and how they are implemented. For example, until recently, the practice of female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C) was not considered a 'development' priority partly because it has cultural implications<sup>5</sup>, even though gender equality is. Thus, the treatment of FGM/C as a developmental issue lacked political support and faced-off against stringent cultural beliefs. To address this, in 2010 UNICEF could only work with local charities like GAMCOTRAP and TOSTAN<sup>6</sup> to implement community empowerment programme that offered microfinance and adult literacy in exchange for communities to abandon the practice of FGM/C. Knowing that there was a lack of political endorsement, UNICEF worked at the grassroots level in 40 Sarahuleh communities in the Upper River Region, resulting in only 2 Mini Declarations on the Abandonment (UNICEF 2014<sup>7</sup>). However, in November 2015, FGM/C became a national development priority when President Jammeh publically banned the practice<sup>8</sup>. According to an informant at UNICEF, they were now able to directly work openly on FGM/C issues in more communities and UNICEF has received the go ahead to reach and sensitize Muslim religious leaders, who are in the process of producing a *fatwa*<sup>9</sup> against the practice. Whereas prior to this ban the Imams would not speak out against the practice because President Jammeh was openly

<sup>5</sup> It was believed by the participants in the study that 'culture' has a strong influence over politics in Africa, particularly since politicians do not want to be seen going against culture because of the fear that it would affect votes.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.tostan.org/empowerment-women-and-girls>

<sup>7</sup> Presentation at the Global In-depth review meeting in The Gambia

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/nov/24/the-gambia-bans-female-genital-mutilation>

<sup>9</sup> Islamic ruling

in support of it. However, the government has now validated the newly revised and re-costed UNICEF FGM/C strategy and the key insight here is that arguably it was not until the Government of The Gambia made FGM/C a 'development' priority that the wider Gambian population started to see it as such.

In conclusion, critics of 'development' such as Maggie Black (2015) argue it is very contradictory because it often reinforces the very poverty it claims it is trying to eliminate. For example, certain development projects like the World Cup in Brazil made poor Rio communities living in the favelas, targets of a real estate land grab. This mega project attracted many private investments in Rio particularly from real estate tycoons, but simultaneously caused the displacement of people living in the slums of Rio<sup>10</sup> (Zirin 2014). Human Rights Specialist Balakrishnan Rajagopal describes this form of forced dislocation as "*development cleansing*" (cited by Black 2015; 14) and it is for this reason that 'development' is at times criticized for having adverse effects on poor people. However, I maintain the argument that 'development' should be allowed to remain a relative term that is understood in context rather than one with a fixed, absolute definition. Thus, people should be allowed to define it in a way that suits their context, which is what this thesis has attempted to do by using 'development' in the way that is defined by the participants in the research. In terms of development management within the Gambian context, I argue that 'development' is inherently political from the perspective of the people, the government, and multilateral institutions who attach conditions relating to political practice to developmental aid. Nevertheless, having shown how the concept of 'development' will be used the thesis. The natural step would be to move on to define the other key concept such as politics.

### **Politics and African politics**

Politics, in its most general abstract sense, is about the socially constructed rules by which a group of people live (Heywood 2013). For example, the social rule that decides whether an unelected monarch or an elected representative in a parliament will make decisions about resource-allocations. Politics, according to Held and Leftwich (1984):

Is a phenomenon found in and between all groups, institutions (formal and informal) and societies, cutting across public and private life. It is involved in all the relations, institutions and structures that are implicated in the activities of production and reproduction in the life of societies. It is

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.truth-out.org/progressivepicks/item/24587-target-favelas-the-neoliberal-scramble-for-world-cup-wealth>

expressed in all the activities of co-operation, negotiation and struggle over the use, productions and distribution of resources which this entails (144)

According to this quote, politics affects every aspect peoples' public and private life. It is the process of making rules, which govern the distribution of power and resources in society (Leftwich 2004). It is also the process of changing those rules or defending them within a particular place. Arguing about what these rules should be *in public* is seen as central to the practice of politics in some contexts. For example, should the production of these rules be left to elite groups of experts or is it a matter that everyone in the society concerned should participate in? According to Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762) who shaped what is known as the modern participatory European democracy, every citizen in society should participate in decisions that shape his or her life through mechanisms like voting (Heywood 2013).

The heart of politics is in theory about conflict-resolution in the context of scarce resources and different people wanting different things. It is about finding institutions and mechanisms that can reconcile differences between people effectively and achieve consensus. In reality, such an ambition is not always successful as not all conflicts are resolved through recourse to the agreed political rules. This is where the academic study of political practice comes in. More critical academic readings of politics around the world are calling for broader definitions of politics as the study of power (Squires 1999). They suggest that in practice politics is a long way from the pursuit of conflict-resolution and instead is often the manipulation of government institutions or state bureaucracies in the interests of the powerful. Additionally, politics is the joust between different forms of power amongst elites (for example the power of the diaspora and the power of the government) usually at the expense of the weak.

Thus, the idea of politics as an abstract process of rule making and conflict-resolution often struggles to disentangle itself from popular images of the corruption, hypocrisy, self-aggrandizement, violence, ideology, lies and failure of individual politicians around the world. The academic and everyday use of the term politics is often at odds and, like 'development', it is another highly contested term (Leftwich 2004). For example, the members of the Gambian diaspora who participated in this research argue the practical field of politics generally covers the practices of government (how government operates). Whereas, the institutions of democracy (elections and political parties), adherence to the constitution (particularly in relation to the state monopoly on legitimate violence and defence of

basic rights) and the representation of ideas when providing the public with information about what is happening in The Gambia (for example control over the media).

Typically, the academic theories and frameworks of the practice of politics applied in contexts like The Gambia use variants of patrimonialism and neo-patrimonialism (prebendalism, clientelism and the politics of the belly), which are seen as the hallmarks of postcolonial African state politics (Chabal and Daloz 1999, Bayart et al. 1999, 2009, Boone 2003, Daloz 2003, Ganahl 2013). The key idea is that those in authority who are the 'patrons' buy the obedience and support of political 'clients' using resources stolen from the state (Van de Walle 2007). The whole system is a triangular hierarchy that reaches from the base of the population to the summit of the polity, as one person's patron is the client of someone else higher up the bureaucracy (Eisenstadt 1973). This patronage system is both informal and personalized as it is all about the number of connections that the powerful patrons have with their clients. It blurs the political boundary between public and private since public resources and positions are used for private gains and private friendships and social contacts become central to public authority and promotion within the administration. Neo-patrimonial states are often governed by personal rule in which the authority of the leader is beyond question and they personally control of running the affairs of the state (Hydén 2013; 99). Subsequently, analyst Bratton and Rothchild (1992; 263) depicted contemporary African politics as 'weak' and 'soft' because they assert that African governments are unable to apply governmental regularities throughout the political space of their countries. Yet one of the benefits of neo-patrimonialism is that it can translate social relations into geographical ones as the obligations between patrons and clients have a regional, spatial expression.

In most of the literature, the definition of the concept of 'African politics' is broad and focuses on 'leadership', 'governance', 'democracy' and where possible 'development' (Boone 2003, Hydén 2005, 2013, Thomas 2010). In other words, the focus here is on formal politics and state politics (as opposed to the politics of gender, ethnicity, religion or identity). The strong separation of state politics, identity politics, and personal politics is empirically hard to sustain, but for the purpose of setting out an initial analytical framework is an illusion that is retained. However, a more recent narrative sub-divides the post-colonial period in Africa. According to Chazan (1999), the first part of the 1960s saw single-party governments and the consolidation of patterns of rule in Africa. Then the latter part of the 1960s was the introduction of military rule and with it came the entrenchment

of administrative regimes and instability. By the 1970s, there was the rise of authoritarian rulers and personal coercive modes of rule. The 1980s saw repeated military takeovers, populist uprising, and growing economic malaise. Then in the 1990s came democratic systems, which began to replace former one-party system (140). This breakdown is extremely crude and simplistic in that it masks considerable geographical heterogeneity, but it is useful for developing a broad narrative of current African political systems or at least articulating how they emerged in the aftermath of decolonization. But, the drawback of this breakdown does not include the developmental outcomes of these systems, which perhaps could be obtained by looking at the political leadership in Africa. As according to Heinz Arndt (2011) political leadership plays a key role in development because leaders whose focus is on the management of the state as a whole as opposed to focusing on increasing their own authority are more likely to bring development to their countries.

Still, African politics has a prominent place as the exemplar of concepts associated with 'corruption' within state theory globally (Ganahl 2013). As Routley (2016) put it, "*the 'natural' state of African politics is configured as radically corrupt*" (30). Such analysis has itself been criticized as racist for its naturalization of the idea that criminal states are normal in Africa (Bayart et al. 1999, 2009<sup>11</sup>). Certainly, these are extremely negative views of African politics and though there is some accuracy in the literature in terms of African leaders treating state resources as their own and abuse of power. Such narratives do not acknowledge the recent (post-1990) democratizations in African politics, which is partly attributed to the demands of African people themselves (including the diaspora) and (but more ambiguously) to aid conditionality. Recent events in some African countries have shown the citizens becoming more involved in politics and influencing democratic change. For example, the general elections in Nigeria in March 2015 were described as an unprecedented success because young Nigerians ensured their voices were heard and they disseminating information about the electoral process, which resulted in a peaceful democratic political change in the country. This is not to say that Nigerian current politics cannot be understood through patron-client relationships, or that corruption has ended, but that neo-patrimonialism alone is insufficient to understand what is happening today in African states. Therefore, suggestion that this approach captures the totality of African politics is not tenable.

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<sup>11</sup> The authors argue that corruption at major scales, squandering of natural resources, and privatization of State institutions are features of public life in Africa, suggesting that the State is becoming a vehicle for organized criminal activity



In summary, the existing work shows a long history of state politics in Africa that pre-dates the colonial period as well as a rough pattern of how a distinctly African politics evolved across the continent after independence. There is an over-arching dominant analytical framework drawn from neo-patrimonialism, but there is a need to add some nuance to that framework not only in terms of challenges that came from aid conditionality, but more importantly from recent African assertions of democratic will. However, there is limited work that tries to link political change to intentional development. Thus, the thesis seeks particularly to build on this claim of the partial sufficiency of neo-patrimonialism as a framework for analysing African politics because it opens up a space for taking seriously the engagement of African citizens in bureaucratic and administrative systems, including those 'citizens' in the diaspora. Thus, this thesis will focus on the effects of African politics on development (refer to definition above), particularly in relation to leadership, governance, and democracy.

Lastly, within the discussions of politics in The Gambia fear plays a prominent role in determining the behaviours of the Gambian diaspora and those at 'home'. For example, fear prevents many Gambians abroad from openly participating politics because they fear that their families will be targeted. And for the majority of Gambian at 'home', the fear of state-sanctioned violence prevents them being politically engaged. According to Psychology Today<sup>12</sup>, fear can be triggered by traumas and bad experiences such as violence, terrorism and natural disasters. It is defined as an emotion that is subjective in the sense that it is in a person's mind. However, from a legal standpoint, fear becomes objective when there is supporting evidence (Clayton 2016). Within the debates of the 'politics of fear', fear is triggered by political propaganda disseminated by the mass media in the form of intimidating symbols and experiences such as crime and terrorism (Altheide 2009). For example, during the EU referendum in the UK in 2016, Ukip leader and Leave campaigner Nigel Farage unveiled an anti-migrant poster, which was compared to "*Nazi-style propaganda*" on social media<sup>13</sup> to arguably incite fear and racial hatred against EU migrant. In the interviews, the fear of political persecution appeared strong among all participants. For the most part, evidence of state-sanctioned violence against political oppositions and critics of the Gambian government supported the feelings of fear. Fear of persecution in the country is a 'real' and objective emotion because it is supported by evidence. Discussions of fear appear throughout the thesis in sections such as religion, dependency, risks and sensitive issues, physical safety, brain drain and weak institutional capacity. The next

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/fear>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/16/nigel-farage-defends-ukip-breaking-point-poster-queue-of-migrants>

section focuses on the broader literature on 'migration and development' nexus

### 2.3 Migration and Development

*“Financial flows from migrants and their descendants are at the heart of the relationship between migration and development” (Terrazas 2010:3)*

Between the 1950s and the 2000s, there have been several shifts in the debates around the 'migration and development' nexus. According to Hein de Haas (2012), *“the debate about migration and development has swung back and forth like a pendulum, from optimism in the postwar period to deep ‘brain drain’ pessimism since the 1970s toward neo- optimistic ‘brain gain’ since 2000”* (8). De Haas explains that during in the postwar period and the era of modernisation development theory, migration was seen as a process that benefitted both destination and origin countries. This was because surplus labour from poor countries provided wealthy countries with much-needed labour, and the expectation was that the remittances and skills and knowledge that migrants acquired before returning 'home' would greatly help developing countries in their 'economic take-off' (11). The issue of the migration of highly skilled nationals from poor to wealthy countries was introduced in UN discourse in the 1960s and at this point, it was clear that the organisation saw migration as a tool to stimulate growth in both origin and destination countries.

However, by the late 1960s, there was a shift in the debate to a more pessimistic direction and this coincided with the surfacing of dependency and underdevelopment theory (Binford 2003). During this time, migration became linked with both the idea of brain drain (loss of skills from poor regions) and the dependency on remittances from migrant-sending regions and countries, which was believed to aggravate problems of underdevelopment (de Haas 2012). The term brain drain was first linked to the migration of British scientists to North America from post-war Europe but it is now connected to the recurring patterns of underdevelopment in 'developing countries' (Bréant 2013; 100). Typically debates about brain drain focus on the loss of skilled professionals, such as medical doctors, who cost a lot to train, but who have skills that are valued in global markets at a far higher price than they are in the healthcare systems of Africa.

In response to the problems of brain drain, international organisations began focusing on return migrants and consequently the United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP) initiated the TOKTEN programme (Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals) in 1977 in Turkey to encourage highly skilled migrants to do short-term missions in their countries of origin to promote development (Bréant 2013; 100). Governments in the global north offered scholarship programmes like the Commonwealth Scholarships to provide opportunities to migrants from developing countries to gain education and expertise to take back and develop their countries of origin (Uwem, 2002, Manning 2003, Skeldon 2005, 2009).

Yet, despite these efforts, Ionescu (2006) argues that it has been difficult to determine conclusively the impact return migrants make to development because their contribution cannot be measured as easily, as say the inflow of remittances. However, the impact of return migration is central to the discussion of the benefits and costs associated with migration because remittances are believed to play an important role in bringing foreign exchange and lowering poverty in a country. Additionally, migration is believed to lead to other forms of beneficial transfers to 'home' countries, such as technological, managerial and entrepreneurial know-how (Gubert and Nordman 2008; 1). Gubert and Nordman (2008) study of return migrants from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, revealed that that returnees show high ability to create small or medium businesses and to generate jobs. However, returnees also "*face Administrative constraints, too much competition, not enough capital, lack of experience and management difficulties*" (16).

Carling et al. (2016) extend the return migrant and development debate further in their paper '*Root causes and drivers of migration. Implications for humanitarian efforts and development cooperation*' where they argue that the possibilities and realities of return migration can affect the developmental activities of migrants in their homeland, such as, the circumstance of which they have returned (deportation, removal or assisted return), and what they experience upon their return. For instance, though some returnees are motivated to help develop their countries, they can become discouraged by "*experience of corruption, nepotism, and sometimes kleptocracy can alienate idealistic returnees and undermine the sense of patriotism that spurred their return in the first place*" (30). In their case study of Iraqi Kurdistan migrants, they found that corruption emerged as the major concern for those contemplating return as well as for those who had returned (33). Nevertheless, it can be argued that though understanding the circumstances for return and experience of returnees is important to understanding why they may not have an impact in offsetting the problems of brain drain in poor countries (Sanjeev Gupta et al. 2007). The fact is that some sub-Saharan African countries are paying

a heavy cost for the large-scale migration of African healthcare professionals to OECD countries (Mills et al. 2011). Table 1 presents data from a study conducted by Mills et al. in 2011 on the number of doctors emigrating from sub-Saharan countries to Canada, USA, UK and Australia.

Table 1: Doctors emigrating from sub-Saharan countries to Canada, USA, UK and Australia

<b>Source country</b>	<b>Destination country</b>	<b>No of source country doctors in destination country</b>	<b>Estimated lost investment for source countries (\$millions)</b>
Ethiopia	Canada, USA, UK and Australia	567	25
Kenya	Canada, USA, UK and Australia	328	117
Malawi	Canada, USA, UK and Australia	41	2
Nigeria	Canada, USA, UK and Australia	7106	645
South Africa	Canada, USA, UK and Australia	10822	141
Tanzania	Canada, USA, UK and Australia	81	3
Uganda	Canada, USA, UK and Australia	409	14
Zambia	Canada, USA, UK and Australia	206	12
Zimbabwe	Canada, USA, UK and Australia	380	40

Source: Mills et al. 2011:13

This data shows a significant financial loss to source African countries, whereas Gupta et al. (2007) article, '*Making Remittances Work for Africa*,' highlights the magnitude of the loss of human resource in Africa in the medical field. For example, Gupta et al. (2007) report that between 2002 and 2003 almost one-quarter of new overseas-trained physicians working in the UK's National Health Service (NHS) came from sub-Saharan Africa. The same reference claims that about 80% of nurses from Liberia and equal number of doctors from Mozambique was working in industrial countries (3). Thus, there is no denying from this data brain drain is a huge developmental problem for some African countries. However, not wanting to leave the problems of brain drain unresolved, in the 1990s the UN system

attempted to shift the discussions around 'migration and development' to an exchange in which the interest of all stakeholders are adequately protected. According to de Haas (2012), it was during this time that the debates on 'migration and development' shifted to what he calls neo-optimism. It was also during this time that neo-liberal development ideas were in full swing.

Accordingly, on the 1st February 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 54/212, urging:

Member States and the United Nations system to strengthen international cooperation in the area of international migration and development in order to address the root causes of migration, especially those related to poverty, and to maximize the benefits of international migration to those concerned, and encouraged, where relevant, interregional, regional and subregional mechanisms to continue to address the question of migration and development (UN 2000: 4)

However, from this resolution, the UN system appeared keen to take leadership in the process of institutionalizing global migration governance (Bréant 2013). There are still no institutional systems of global migration or agreed global international deals and treaties around migration. However, within the UN debates around the time of the millennium, some African countries and individuals were keen to bridge the gaps caused by brain drain. For instance, African countries came together in Dakar in October 2000, to promote and strengthen the participation of migrants in the development of their countries of origin. The West African Regional Ministerial meeting reportedly triggered a series of other events, like a workshop in April 2001 in Libreville to prepare IOM Resolution 614, which laid the foundation of the programme called Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA). At the individual level, young African professionals living abroad like Didier Acouetey established a recruitment agency called 'Afric Search' to find jobs in the African continent for African professionals living outside (Bréant 2013; 103). Additionally, AfricaRecruit was established in 1999 by Dr Titilola Banjoko in the UK, which focused on capacity building through human resources using its various networks within and outside Africa<sup>14</sup>.

During the period of neo-optimism the literature on 'migration and development' and development policy broadened to include the contributions diasporas make to economic growth and social modernization in their 'home' countries The

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.africarecruit.com/Overview.htm>

discussions focused on maximizing remittances to enhance development in countries of origin (Newland 2011). Subsequently, homeland governments and international organisations began to take notice of the potential of migrants as important development actors and there came a proliferation of 'migration and development' policies that targeted migrant investments, skills, knowledge, and entrepreneurial capabilities (Ratha et al. 2011 and Gamlen 2014). Key examples are Mexico's co-development policies (private-public collaboration between the government and its migrants) like 'Three for One' in Zacatecas and the 'My Community' (*Mi Comunidad*) in Guanajuato (Torres and Kuznetsov 2006). These policies provided an avenue for the Mexican government to tap into migrant remittances and direct them towards community development projects. For example, the 'Three for One' policy encouraged migrants to contribute \$1 whilst the Mexican federal government, states and municipal authorities each contribute \$1 to community infrastructure projects. Thus, \$1 from a migrant turns into \$4 at 'home'. Consequently, this led to a \$4.5 million investment in development at 'home', which has funded 400 projects in eight years (Torres and Kuznetsov 2006). Additionally, the 'My Community' policy attracted migrants to invest in establishing *maquiladoras* (manufacturing) firms in seven municipalities. Migrants and local investors provided half of the capital and the state government contributed the other half. As a result, 12 *maquiladoras* firms were in operation and 500 jobs were created for local people in June 2000 (Torres and Kuznetsov 2006; 113). These examples demonstrate that creating development-friendly migration policies are more effective than governments marginalizing migrants or establishing policies that seek to manage migration (Newland 2004).

However, despite the apparent success achieved by the Mexican government, such policies merit critical scrutiny. Generally, policymakers are criticized for paying little attention to the practices of migrants, which determine where their developmental interests lie. According to the co-founder of the Migration Policy Institute, Kathleen Newland (2011), future migration-development policy should be based on deeper analysis of both migrant practices and analysis of the best practices that have emerged from governments over the last two decades (8). Additionally, Hein de Haas (2012) asserts that in order to develop a more nuanced view of 'migration and development', policymakers have to think of more subtle, sensible and realistic policy responses. To achieve this, it is crucial for the debate to move beyond the 'negative versus positive', 'brain drain versus brain gain' and 'consumption versus investment' (12).

Therefore, I argue that a nuanced view of the 'migration and development' debate can be achieved through looking at it from a gender perspective and mainstreaming gender into 'migration and development' policies. For instance, there is certainly a gender element in remittances sending and receiving, shown clearly in studies of migrant women. For example, Hammond's (2011) study of migrant Somali women in Lewiston, Maine, USA revealed that they participate in sending remittances 'home' and consequently, this has opened doors for the women to participate in clan matters that were once only accessible only to men. Such as, the *diya* system, which is a dispute resolution and social safety, net mechanism whereby the clan looks after its members (139). "*Since very often women are in a better position than men to contribute to such things as compensation for a crime committed, or a dowry for a girl about to be wed, they are beginning to play a role in the diya*"(140). Similar studies of migrant women in Viet Nam (Niimi and Reilly 2008), Philippine women in Italy and Dominican Republic women in the US (UN-INSTRAW and UNDP 2010) all reveal that these women send remittances more frequently than their men. Additionally, in the case of Philippine and Dominican Republic women, they are able to sustain their remittance sending practices for a longer period of time than their men and they send money to a greater number of recipients at 'home', including to women (28). In Senegal, women who receive remittances have more opportunities to invest in capitally intensive ways according to analyst Beth Buggenhagen (2004, 2012). "*Women often invest a proportion of male remittances into rotating credit unions and ritual associations through which they finance their own local trading activities, the purchases of housewares, and family ceremonies*" (Buggenhagen 2004; 48-49). However, not all women migrants have control over where they remit, for example, in Albanian tradition once a woman is married, her responsibilities are transferred from her family to her husbands. Thus, their remittances are directed to her husband's family. However, it would still be beneficial for policymakers to explore the remittance practices of migrant women and where their interests lie in order to formulate more 'sensible' 'migration and development' policy responses.

Davies (2012) argues that the 'migration and development' nexus is not as straightforward as is sometimes assumed, particularly in the African context where it is complex, multi-layered and unexpected dimensions and relationships are revealed. Thus acknowledging the profound importance of this context is imperative because development in Africa is determined by the uneven and contested political geography of the region (103). Therefore, there are many factors to consider in the 'migration and development' relationship, and viewing it just from a positive perspective restricts the possibilities for negatives outcomes to

be addressed in analysis or policies. So, whilst this thesis starts from the assumption that migrants make worthy contributions to their 'home' countries, empirical evidence also suggests that African countries need to hold on to their highly skilled and educated professionals because only then can they achieve sustainable development. This is because remittances are insecure financial contributions from migrants, which are affected when the economic power of the sender changes. For example, if the sender loses their job then they may not send remittances 'home'.

Furthermore, Nyamongo et al. (2012), argue that the *"volatility of remittances appears to have a negative effect on the growth of countries in Africa"* (240). Meaning they believe migration or migrant remittances cannot accelerate development or be a substitute for a sustained, domestically engineered development effort through industrialization or the growth of new job-creating businesses such as services. Critics of the 'migration and development' nexus argue that you cannot have development without new firms and investments that generate taxes as well as employment. Thus, the poverty reduction effect of migrant remittances is not as significant as it is assumed (Nyamongo et al. 2012). For instance an earlier study by Gupta et al. (2007) of 233 poverty surveys in 76 developing countries, including 24 in sub-Saharan Africa revealed *"a 10 percent rise in the remittances to GDP ratio is associated with a fall of a little more than 1 percent in the percentage of people living on less than \$1 a day"* (4). Thus, there is the question of who is receiving remittances and how are it is spent?

On the other hand, the more recent arguments in the 'migration and development' literature is that the expertise, skills and knowledge from highly skilled and educated migrants can yield sustainable development in their 'home' countries if migrants use their skill to help develop businesses, institutions, industries and good policies that could guide development. However, Hugo Bréant (2013) argues against the idea that there is an inherent connection between 'migration and development' because he asserts that intentional development may be a secondary consequence of migration but not often a motive for emigration in the first place (112). Bréant adds that few migrants plan to emigrate in order to develop their countries of origin, and in addition, many emigrants are not inclined to get involved with development activities even if they are in a position to do so. Thus, mobility does not always result in development. This indicates another shift in the 'migration and development' debate, which appears to be going in a neo-pessimistic direction. In which case, it may be wise for policymakers to take heed of de Haas (2012) advice in that they should:



Reverse their perspective on migration and development. Rather than asking what migrants can do to support development, or to forcibly, unrealistically and harmfully link the issue of return or temporariness to development, governments would be much better off identifying how to make conditions in origin countries attractive for migrant to invest socially, politically and economically (21).

Research on 'migration and development' has done useful work to refocus the attention of both academics and policymakers onto migrant contributions to their countries of origin. Even though I would argue that the swing between optimism and pessimism in the migration-development field present an unhelpful dichotomy that does not really capture a more messy reality in 21<sup>st</sup> Century West Africa. I would also argue that research in this field tends to shy away from debates about the role of formal politics in 'migration and development'. The narrow focus on economic development impact in this field means that cultural, social and especially the political dimensions of the engagement between migrants and their countries of origin is, relatively speaking, under-examined. This leaves gaps for more nuanced analysis of the complex and ambiguous role of migrants in changing their homeland. Additionally, much of the current work in 'migration and development' sits within the field of development studies (broadly construed) and tends to search for the sunnier, positive aspects of diaspora intervention, thus maintaining a built-in aversion to formal politics, which is generally seen as a barrier to effective 'development'. The whole literature around 'good governance' in development studies suggests 'politics' is often seen not just as a barrier to, but distinct and separate from 'development'. Perhaps, this is why Ferguson, (1990) argues that in practice 'development' can become an 'anti-politics machine' because it actively tries to do political things without acknowledging politics.

Methodologically I argue that historically most of the contributors in the 'migration-development' research field fall into the category of 'outsiders' (not belonging to the groups they are studying). As with development studies, there is not only an instrumental sense that outsiders risk missing complex and less obvious issues that determine groups' migratory practices and development activities. But there is a sense that it is inherently important that some of the voices in this field should come from the very diasporas being studied. Additionally, much of the literature in 'migration and development' tends to focus on high-level policy. However, to achieve more in-depth and nuanced analysis of the discourse, I argue that it is imperative academics and policymakers take a bottom-up approach and involve

individuals and communities in research and policy formulation processes alongside the participation of government officials and international organisations.

This thesis seeks to supplement the existing 'migration and development' literature both by adding a diaspora voice to the analysis and by working from a more ethnographic bottom-up perspective, rather than looking at high-level policymaking. The next section of this chapter focuses on creating a better understanding of what constitutes a diaspora as this concept is a vital precursor to this research and therefore needs careful consideration.

## 2.4 Global Diasporas

*“A ‘diaspora’ must therefore have a number of factors involving the origin of the (voluntary or forced) migration; settlement in one or more several countries; maintenance of identity and community solidarity, which allows people to make contacts between groups and to organise activities aimed at preserving that identity and; finally, relations between the leaving state, the host state, and the diaspora itself...” (Dufoix, 2008:21)*

Historically the term 'diaspora' was linked to the Jewish experience of forced long-term separation from the homeland and scattering over a wide geographical area (Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013). However, there have been significant shifts in the use of the term over the years from a *“notion associated with suffering loss, and victimization (to) self-conscious communities that call themselves Diasporas”* (Vertovec, 2009:129). Such is the confusion that one point of view seems to question the usefulness of having specific criteria that define a diaspora and distinguish it from other experiences of migration. However, analyst Oliver Bakewell (2008) argues for tighter and clearer definitions of the term in order to enhance its value as a precise specialist term. Nicholas van Hear (2010) and Pnina Werbner (2010) share a similar opinion while Werbner argues that the term has been stretched, remodelled and re-conceptualised to where earlier definitions no longer fit with what currently exists. A review of the canonical literature in diaspora studies (Hall 1990, Safran 1991, Clifford 1994, Brah 1996, Cohen 1997, 2008, Cohen and Vertovec 1999, Braziel and Mannur 2003, van Hear 2005, Dufoix 2008) confirms that this concept is not a straightforward one and has been attached to various definitions and contradictions over the years.

The review of some literatures in diaspora studies initially presented a strict criteria in defining the term 'diaspora', with William Safran (1991) insisting on limiting it to minority expatriate communities whose members share several characteristics like:

- They, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from an original 'centre' to two or more foreign regions;
- They retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland including its location, history and achievements;
- They believe they are not – and perhaps can never be – fully accepted in their host societies and so remain partly separate;
- Their ancestral home is idealised and it is thought that, when conditions are favourable, either they or their descendants should return;
- They believe all members of the diaspora should be committed to the maintenance and restoration of the original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and
- They continue in various ways to relate to that homeland and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are in an important way defined by the existence of such a relationship (Safran 1991, 83-84)

Borrowing from these characteristics, sociologist, Robin Cohen (2008) goes further to argue that there are nine features of a true diaspora but insists diasporas are not required to display every one of these traits, just a significant number:

1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically (slavery, holocaust, genocide etc)
2. Alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambition (Lebanese, Indians, Chinese traders)
3. A collective memory or myth about a homeland (Jewish Diaspora/Israel, blacks (Garveyites/Africa and Rastafarians/Ethiopia)
4. Idealisation of the supposed ancestral home (Rastafarian and Zionist movement)
5. A return movement or at least a continuing connection (Zionist movement)
6. Strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time (Sikhs),
7. Troubled relationships with host countries (Armenians, Jews, Africans, Sikhs etc)
8. A sense of co-responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries
9. The possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in tolerant host countries (all modern world diasporas?)

The ninth feature of a 'true' diaspora perhaps needs more explanation in terms of defining what constitutes a creative and enriching life. According to Cohen (2008), this involves more opportunities for the diaspora to enrich their lives and gain intellectual achievements whilst being in their host countries. For example, Cohen claims that the Jewish diaspora could not have achieved their intellectual and spiritual achievements in the diaspora if they stayed in their "*narrow tribal society like that of ancient Judea*" (2008, 167). Arguably, those achievements would include education, employment and financial stability, but Cohen does not make this feature as explicit as the others do. This may be because one person's definitions of a creative and enriching life is different from another, and perhaps Cohen decided it would be best to leave it to the individuals' interpretation.

Furthermore, the older literature also argues that a distinguishing feature of a diaspora is their existence over at least two generations (Bulter 2001). It suggests that only second and third generation migrants constitute as 'true' diaspora and not first generation. Therefore, a criticism of Safran and Cohen's features is that there is no mention of temporality in these characteristics. It can be argued that perhaps it was so obvious to Cohen that he felt it did not need saying, but traditional definitions have always emphasized the fact that diasporas have to endure over several generations to really be considered as such (van Hear 2010; 37).

Nevertheless, early definitions of the diaspora presented by Safran and Cohen have the great merit of precision and clarity and actual empirical communities can be tested against these criteria. However, they can also become restrictive. The problem with having such strict criteria like the ones in the lists Safran and Cohen present is they impose limits that restrict writers from exploring emerging characteristics of 'new' diasporas in new contexts (van Hear 2005). Therefore, increasing the risk of writers rejecting interesting empirical material because the characteristics displayed by certain groups do not fall within the requirements of the categorical definition. Thus, essentializing diasporas by defending a set of strict criteria creates inflexibility within the definitions, which ultimately means that writers end up arguing about the categories rather than the concrete realities they are observing. In addition, there is also the dilemma that some groups choose to define themselves as 'diasporas' even though they do not meet the criteria, in which case it is hard to justify why external analysts like Safran and Cohen would be entitled to tell them they are not a diaspora.

Rogers Brubaker (2005) provides slightly more flexible definitions of what he believes constitutes a diaspora in his paper '*The 'diaspora' diaspora*'. Brubaker

(2005) analyses three core criteria that he says are constitutive of a diaspora, and within each criterion, he provides different options for interpretation. For example, the first is dispersion in space, which can be interpreted as forced or otherwise traumatic dispersion but can also include dispersion because of “*ethnic communities divided by state frontier or as that segment of a people living outside the homeland*”(5). Brubaker (2005) asserts this “*allows even compactly settled populations to count as diasporas...*” (5). The second criterion is homeland orientation “*to a real or imagined homeland as an authoritative source of value, identity and loyalty*” (6). This includes maintaining a collective memory or myth about the homeland, regarding it as the true ideal ‘home’ to which one would return, collectively committed to maintenance and restoration of the homeland and continuing relation in the homeland in ways that would significantly shape one’s identity and solidarity (5). The third criterion is boundary maintenance, which involves preservation of a distinctive identity in the host country with the diaspora maintaining boundaries by deliberately resisting assimilating in their host societies (6).

Bakewell (2010) may argue that Brubaker’s criteria are too open and perhaps loses the value of what should be used as a more precise specialist term. This would be a valid criticism in that Brubaker’s definition leaves room for extended analytical appraisal, which can become confusing. However, I would argue that Brubaker’s definitions are more useful than Safran and Cohen’s characteristics and features of a diaspora because it is more inclusive and it allows for diaspora groups that do not fit in Safran or Cohen’s definition to be included. This shows that striking a balance between having a definition of diasporas that is flexible enough to include some groups but not too flexible that it loses its essential meaning of groups who have settled outside of their countries of origin is challenging.

Pnina Werbner (2010) adds that certain new generalizations about the diaspora concept have come to be widely accepted and often repeatedly rediscovered. For example, early discussions in diaspora studies stressed the social heterogeneity of diasporas. This definition is very relevant to this thesis because recognizing the internal heterogeneity of the Gambian diaspora is important to understanding their relationship with ‘home’ and the people there. The Gambians diaspora are heterogeneous by education, class, gender, age, religion and ethnic background. And understanding their differences helps to understand their engagement (in terms of how, why and where they engage in development or politics in The Gambia) with the ‘home’ country, as well as their engagement within the diasporic communities. For example, some interviewees said they preferred to focus on

integrating into their host society rather than engage in development or politics at 'home'. Some participants take part in funding village development projects via their associations and others preferred to do it individually. And some interviewees are open and explicit about their political activities and would take part in public demonstrations whilst others preferred to engage online and conceal their identity. Additionally, there are differences between the genders and generations in terms of how they engage politically as well. The young Gambians mostly engage in public demonstrations, whereas the older generation will not. And the Gambian women tend to keep their political opinions and participations private, whereas the men are more open to sharing information about their political and development activities. Lastly, some interviewees said they do not attend events organized by the diaspora associations because they preferred to limit their engagement with the wider Gambian diaspora. Subsequently, this thesis has attempted to highlight the internal heterogeneities of the sample group where necessary in order to avoid portraying a homogenised Gambian diaspora.

The second emergent consensus according to Werbner recognizes that diasporas are historical formations in process (meaning that though diasporas are formed by the past they are still changing in the present). The third growing consensus recognizes the dual orientation of diasporas to fight for citizenship and equal rights in place of settlement, whilst simultaneously continuing to foster transnational relations and to live with a sense of displacement and loyalty to other places beyond the country of settlement. Fostering transnational relations is particularly important to many of the participants in the Gambian diaspora who say they strive to maintain strong connections with their homeland either through their family connections or through networks. The fourth generalization is the emergent understanding that many diasporas are deeply implicated both ideologically and materially in the nationalist projects of their homelands (74). Again, some groups in the Gambian diaspora who are engaged in development and politics at 'home' display these characteristics.

However, another important shift, which Werbner does not touch on, is the increasing emphasis on both the centripetal quality of a diaspora (its capacity to cohere together as a unity) and its centrifugal quality (its tendency to splinter) that stems from its internal differences. Nevertheless, what this evolution of definitions shows is that over a couple of decades "*diaspora became the keyword to explain the hitherto seemingly inexplicable flows and counter-flows of migrants and refugees*" (Chariandy 2006, cited in van Hear 2010; 70), while also retaining parts of the traditional meaning.

In the literature, it is clear that the 'concept' of diaspora is moving with the times, to suit the periods and context in which it is used. To remain relevant, it is expected that ideas and concepts will shift to adopt or reject definitions that are no longer relevant. In essence, it is unrealistic to expect the definition of diasporas to remain the same, when arguably there are plethora of reasons (other than it being forced) for people to migrate and settle in other countries. Nevertheless, the concept of 'diaspora' is central to this thesis, despite it remaining a contested term, with different disciplines and individuals treating it in broader or narrower ways and placing emphasis on different aspects of diaspora experience. Whilst the 'checklist' definitions of Safran and Cohen provide useful certainty, the looser way of treating the term provided by Brubaker and Werbner are more productively deployed in data collection in the context of *small* diasporas. There is a need to include people in the sample and there is no incentive to exclude them because, for example, they are first generation migrants who cannot be part of the 'diaspora' as this rules out relatively new African diasporas like the Gambians.

The next section of this chapter talks about the African diaspora and the importance of the homeland, which I argue is key to understanding *why* Africans in the diasporas contribute to development and intervene in politics at 'home'.

### **African Diaspora Studies**

*"Within the literature, three different types of diaspora within Africa can be identified: those that look to their homeland outside Africa; those that are considered as diasporic mainly as part of a much larger diaspora living in other continents; and finally 'indigenous' African diasporas who look to their origins in different parts of Africa and where the majority population remain within the continent"* [Bakewell, 2008:16]

The movement of Africans in and out of the continent began long before George Shepperson and Joseph E. Harris coined the term African diaspora in 1968 (Manning 2003) and certainly before European-controlled transatlantic slavery (Akyeampong 2000, Segal 2001, Koser 2003, Ifekwunigwe 2003, 2013, Zeleza 2005). Yet, the transatlantic slave trade is often used as the starting point of the forced migration of Africans in the field of African Diaspora studies. According to Paul Tiyambe Zeleza (2008), this reduces the pattern of dispersal of Africans to the slave trade (8). The 'Atlantic model' used to conceptualize the dispersal of Africans (Ifekwunigwe 2003) has also been challenged by prominent African

scholars like Cheikh Anta Diop (1990) who asserts that there is archaeological evidence which proves that continental Africans were subjected to forced migration around the world *before* the Atlantic slavery. As well as historical evidence of the 'voluntary' 'international' migration of Africans, such as Egyptian and Ethiopian seafarers, trans-Saharan and Moorish traders and the Mandingo mariners, before the transatlantic slave trade (cited by Koser 2003). Furthermore, there are historical accounts of African settler communities that can be traced back to two thousand years ago in Europe particularly in the southern Mediterranean from Rome to Andalusian Spain, in Russia and Britain (Zezeza 2008; 10). Thus, many African scholars have collectively advocated for the literature to move away from making the transatlantic slave trade the starting point of African migration. As they believe that the focus on slavery risks distracting people from post-slavery migrations of Africans. Khalid Koser explains, "*a preoccupation with slavery and its descendants has diverted our attention from striking new patterns and processes associated with recent migration*" (2008; 3). However, despite these African analysts making their position in this debate clear, there is still some ambivalence amongst contributors in determining the exact starting point of African dispersal. Ronald Segal (2001) dates it back to the Islamic slave trade, but I argue that considerations should also be given to the 'Bantu Expansion' from the Niger basin to Southern Africa (c 1500BCE).

Notwithstanding the debates about the 'start point' of African migration, the intention of this research is to investigate the connections modern post-slavery African Diasporas have with their countries of origin, which drives them to contribute to the development and intervene in the politics at 'home'. As such, this research will adopt the African Union's definition of the African diaspora because it is flexible and emphasizes their relationship to development and 'home'. After all, you could be a short-term first generation migrant who fulfils hardly any of Cohen's criteria and still fit into the definition offered by the AU.

The African Diaspora consists of peoples of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union. (AU Report, 2005: 7.)

### **Africa: the Sacred Homeland for Africans?**

In some of the canonical literature in African diaspora studies, it is argued that the connection between the African diaspora and the African continent is embedded in



their shared history, identity, race and attachment to place. There are 'black' political movements such as Rastafarianism (Marcus Garvey 1918; Emperor Haile Selassie 1927), Negritude (Leopold Senghor, 1964) and (to a lesser extent) Pan-Africanism (W.E.D Du Bois 1917) that hold on to the belief that the 'black race' 'belong' in Africa in the same way the Zionist movement embraced the idea of the Jews belonging to Israel. These ideologies share problematic notions of exclusion, ethnic homogeneity, timelessness and a primordial ideology that is politically inflexible. In short, they accept 'race' as a reality. In 'Black Orpheus,' his preface to a collection of new poetry edited by Leopold Senghor, Jean-Paul Sartre (1948) describes the Negritude movement as a form of 'anti-racist racism' capturing a sense of the paradoxes of linking race to place. But, in this thesis, I argue that though the African diaspora is made of heterogeneous and fragmented groups exhibiting social division such as class, race, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation and social status (Chikanda et al. 2016; 5). It can still meaningfully be said to think of Africa as a 'homeland.'

Therefore, the notion that black people share a connection to a place of origin (Africa) through which their cultural expression can be traced back to their African heritage. Is illustrated by the fact that after many years of slavery in America, some freed black slaves were resettled in 'Liberia' from 1822, because both they and their sponsors (the American Colonial Society) felt that was where they belonged. Then the world was categorized racially and centred on the notion that Africa was the desired prime destination for black people, within this period (Manning 2003). However, this has created some problematic aspects to the Liberian constitution as a result of its history. For example, the 1986 constitution states "*only persons who are Negroes or of Negro descent shall qualify by birth or by naturalization to be citizens of Liberia*". This has wide implications for policy because non-African permanent residents are crucial contributors to the Liberia's economic activities and innovation system <sup>15</sup> mainly the wealthy Lebanese community.

The opposing views to the idea that the connection between the African diaspora and the African continent is embedded in their shared history, identity, race and attachment to place come from renowned scholars Stuart Hall (1990), Paul Gilroy (1993) and James Clifford (1994). Who proposed to abandon defining black identity as being connected to a sacred homeland in Africa because they argue that cultural identities of blackness emerge from the transnational and intercultural spaces of their diasporic experience (Zezeza 2005) and not from a historical place

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<sup>15</sup> An editorial by Samuka Kanneh a civil servant in the Liberian government  
<http://www.capitoltimesonline.com/index.php/editorial/item/104-rethink-discriminatory-nationality-law>

of attachment. In essence, these scholars are arguing that cultural identities are not fixed, but are constantly changing and that there is a never-ending process of *becoming* black. In particular, Gilroy asserts that race is a social construct and black people in Britain have a false sense of self-consciousness because they see themselves through the eyes of others. An experience labelled as 'double-consciousness' (double-consciousness was first developed by Du Bois (1903) and re-articulated by Fanon (1952)).

Double consciousness implies the thought process of being a Negro (i.e., Black) or an American (i.e., non-Black). To be a Negro is to be colored, Black, African American, or to be associated with the cultural heritage that stems from Africa. To be American is to be a Black person in skin pigmentation who mentally identifies with White people and European culture (Moore 2005; 752)

Gilroy asserts that diasporas have hybrid cultural identities and as such, those identities cannot be traced back to any one place. Whereas, Hall (who is also one of the great scholars of black identity in Britain) proclaims, 'black' identity is basically a politically and culturally constructed category that marginalizes black people in British culture. Black identity is always peripheral to a dominant sense of Englishness characterized by British racism. Hall further argues that British culture places all black people (despite their different histories, traditions and ethnic identities) in a single category that includes the idea of belonging to one sacred homeland of Africa. Africa, the place becomes centrally related to racist claims in Britain that black people should 'go home'. However, Clifford supports Gilroy and Hall's arguments that black identity is socially constructed in the context of racism, political domination and economic inequalities, but he criticizes Gilroy for relating the experiences of blacks in Britain with African American histories, and attempting to place a uniform approach to black experience when they have different patterns of struggle.

These scholars brilliantly argue their position and make salient points pertaining to the heterogeneity of the black diaspora, and at the same time explaining why not every member of the black diaspora has an attachment to Africa. However, Hall and Gilroy's anti-essentialist arguments raise the question; why do they reject the idea that 'black' diasporas have a connection to a sacred homeland in Africa when they are both of 'black' descent themselves? Arguably, Hall's rejection of the essentialist argument perhaps stems from the fact that he is from a Caribbean background (born and raised in Jamaica), whereas Gilroy was born and raised in

London. Thus, both scholars cannot see Africa playing a central role in shaping 'black' identity. But for Africans from mainland African like the Gambian diaspora, there is a strong connection to Africa. However, these are clearly my assumptions and the answer can only come from Hall and Gilroy themselves, thus they should only be taken hypothetically. But, for many of the new African diasporas of 21<sup>st</sup> century London the challenge for them is to retain the highly critical and political sense of what blackness means in the UK taken from Hall and Gilroy, whilst also recognizing and celebrating their meaningful connections to Africa and to their country of origin.

Subsequently, many contemporary diasporas around the world have shared identities with their homeland. As such, *some* individuals in diasporas chose to play a part in its development and politics. For example, the findings of Koser's (2003) study of the Eritrean diaspora revealed that some members of the diaspora continued to make a voluntary 2% income tax contribution to the Eritrean state at the time because they felt it was their duty to support their country. However, the Eritrean story has become much more complex and conflictual with many post-independence refugees being coerced into paying this 'voluntary' tax in exchange for citizenship if they want to re-engage with the states. The ability of the state to check and verify one's status have made the tax binding for those who want to avoid potential risks to themselves and relatives. In which case they are required to pay the 2% tax for the years they have missed. The Eritrean diaspora is profoundly divided with the divisions relating to the time when they left the country (Demissie 2015). This shows that the link diasporas maintain with their homeland is neither the simple 'mythic idealisations' of Cohen and Safran nor the forgotten disinterest of Gilroy, Hall and Clifford. Rather this thesis adopts the theoretical framework that posits the relationship between some diasporic communities and their homelands have to compete with their relationship to other places, and the politics at 'home' can shape the character of those relationships, which are different for different groups in the diaspora. Imperatively, most contemporary African diaspora groups are able to trace their roots to specific countries where they still have families and networks and they demonstrate their interest by sending money and visiting 'home' (Page and Mercer 2012). However, this does not mean it is the only place, which matters to them. The next section moves on to discuss the narrower literature on the development, the African diaspora, and the paradoxes of their history of migration.

## 2.5 Development and the African Diaspora

*“Diasporas accumulate human, financial, and social capital for the development of their home communities. Governments of countries of origin can have crucial role in channelling the initiative, energy, and resources of diasporas into economies and societies and institutionalising the linkage of the diaspora to the socio-economic activities of their home countries” [IOM 2011:16]*

Within the literature on ‘diaspora and development’, remittances feature centrally in the debates as the main form of diaspora contribution to their ‘home’ countries. This is largely because remittances emerge as an important form of capital flow in some ‘home’ countries (Teferra 2015). According to data from African Development Bank (2015), African migrants remitted US\$26 billion to West Africa in 2014 of which US\$ 20.9 billion was sent to Nigeria<sup>16</sup>. Subsequently, the focus on diaspora remittances within the literature is attributed to the fact that they have a multiplier effect on a country’s economy and peoples’ lives. For example, the monies diaspora remit to their families allows for goods to be purchased and services to be paid for, which in turn supports local businesses and contributes to the country’s GDP mainly via taxation. Remittances are also used to invest in health, education, housing, and entrepreneurialism (Terrazas 2010, Hammond 2011, Amagoh and Rahman 2016). However, within the recent literature, there are nuances to the debate whereby more emphasis is being placed on entrepreneurialism, skills and the mobilization of diaspora networks (Mullings 2012). These are viewed as being more sustainable forms of development for ‘home’ countries (Chacko and Gebre 2013), as such programmes like the Migration for Development in Africa<sup>17</sup> (MIDA) were founded to help mobilize skilled Africans in the diaspora to support development in at ‘home’ through skills and knowledge transfer. Within the Great Lakes region, more than 150 institutions have benefited from capacity building initiatives provided by over 400 temporary expert missions involving diaspora members under this programme (IOM 2013).

This section of the literature review chapter will seek to use the literature in African diaspora studies to address the first research question, which is *how, where and why* the diaspora contribute to socio-economic development in their homelands. It will begin with discussing *how* diasporas contribute to development, looking mainly

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<sup>16</sup> African Development Bank Group (2015) <http://www.afdb.org/en/blogs/measuring-the-pulse-of-economic-transformation-in-west-africa/post/remittances-from-west-africas-diaspora-financial-and-social-transfers-for-regional-development-14614/>

<sup>17</sup> MIDA was established after a workshop in April 2001 in Libreville, to prepare IOM Resolution 614 (Bréant 2013; 103)

at diaspora remittances, and investments. Then it will move on to look at *where* diasporas direct their contributions, this will focus on the family, town/village, and the national level. As well as the motivations for *why* the diaspora contribute to development in their homelands and the barriers they encounter when trying to make development contributions at 'home'. Lastly, this section will include discussions about the challenges of having diaspora development-centred and diaspora-led development in the homeland.

To begin, the literature on African diaspora studies shows that the African diaspora is contributing to development in their 'home' countries in a number of ways. This includes remittances, investments, skills and knowledge transfer, philanthropy, patronage, advocacy, volunteerism, circular and return migrants (Ho and Boyle 2015). For example, in 2009, the Senegalese diaspora in France financed up to €3.3 million worth of projects in Senegal (Plaza and Ratha 2011:193). In Cape Verde, in 2013, the diaspora deposited over \$530 million in diaspora savings "emigrant accounts" in the commercial banks. This benefitted businesses and consumers as it has helped to support the credit expansion of the country (Resende – Santos 2015:90). And Carling and Talleraas (2016) assert that the rapid growth of the Cape Verde economy has been driven by remittances, development assistance and tourism (18). In Somalia, the diaspora was reported to send US\$1.3 – 2 billion per year of which US\$ 130-200 million is for relief and development purposes (Hammond et al. 2011). Lastly, the Ethiopian diaspora through the Tigray Development Association had:

Constructed a total of 121 primary schools, provided grants to 750 primary schools to implement school improvement plans, rehabilitated 16 war-affected primary schools, and conducted school feeding programmes that benefited more than 32,000 children in 80 drought-affected schools. Certain measures were also taken to improve the quality of education in secondary schools. For instance, 14 schools were furnished with equipment, chemicals, and books (Zewde et al. 2014: 142)

There are many other examples in the literature of the African diaspora making development contributions at 'home'. However, the purpose of illustrating some of their contributions here is not to suggest that every African diaspora group contributes to development in their 'home' countries in this same way or at the same scale, rather it is to demonstrate the different ways in which some African diaspora groups engage in development at 'home'.

In the literature in African diaspora studies I discovered that diaspora contributions in their 'home' countries are directed in three areas, the family, town/village and national, but the family is the primary focus of the diaspora. Again, this is not to suggest that diaspora contributions are fixed in these areas. Rather, the literature argues that the family is very important to the diaspora because they have a strong sense of obligation towards them (Sinatti and Horst 2014, Horst et al. 2014) and families in developing countries are highly dependent on the financial support they receive from the diaspora (Obadare and Adebani 2009). Thus, the remittances diasporas send to their families are believed to increase household spending (Gupta et al. 2007, Nyamongo et al. 2012, Gamlen 2014), by augmenting private consumption and alleviating transient (household) poverty in receiving countries (de Haas 2012, Chami and Fullenkamp 2013). Largely because they are used to pay for feeding, school fees, clothing, healthcare, accommodation, utility bills, religious celebrations, weddings, and burials (Mercer and Page 2010, Judge and Plaen 2011). However, though this may help to fill the immediate needs of families, its developmental impact has been questioned in parts of the literature, which argues that contributions at the family level rarely go towards productive investments (Horst et al. 2014). In essence, analysts such as Newland (2011) believe that remittances sent for private consumption have limited impact on sustainable growth and development, making this one of the challenges of having family-led development in a country.

At town/village level, diasporas are also known to contribute to development individually or via their *associations* (Evans 2010). Mercer et al. (2008) make a seminal contribution to this field with their research of two Cameroonian and two Tanzanian communities in Britain. They found that though these groups engage in development projects in their hometowns, such as the construction of schools, health facilities, water supplies, toilets, town halls, libraries, internet cafes and orphanages (228). "*The capacity of home associations to improve the material quality of life in the homeplace is limited and awkward*" (229). This is largely because "*their development projects are sometimes overambitious, ill-conceived, perverse or reflect personal political ambition of the leadership*" (230) as well as being poorly articulated, transitory, intermittent and opportunistic. However, though this may appear as an overly negative conclusion, the authors attempt to balance this view with some observations about the merits of hometown the associations under study. For example, the fact that the cost of development projects is not as inflated as if development professionals implemented them, as well as development is defined according to what matters to them thus development becomes more targeted. Additionally, unlike international agencies and NGOs, the

diaspora had long-term commitments to development in their hometown. These are interesting findings because increasingly African diasporas are celebrated for their roles in enhancing development in their 'home' countries. However, the empirical evidence in this research suggests that not only is there more to learn about these groups but the outcomes of their contributions are not always as promising as believed. As such, Mercer et al. argue for new conceptualizations of what diasporas bring to development (50).

In a later paper Mercer and Page (2010) argued that diaspora associations *"in all their diversity are better characterised by an attachment to place rather than an attachment to ethnic group"* (113). It is, they suggest, a mistake to assume that diaspora associations are defined by ethnicity. *"There are a number of immediate problems with this view, not least the reliance on a static and essentialist view of ethnicity, which assumes that diaspora associations are generally mono-ethnic groups attached to an ethnically homogeneous 'homeland'"*(113). This emphasis on place-based rather than ethnic identities provides a different analytical perspective to how this research should view African diaspora associations and their relationships with 'home'. The empirical evidence on the case study group in this thesis also suggests that the formation and functions of the Gambian diaspora associations have less to do with their ethnicity and more to do with their shared interests to one place measured at a variety of scales. After all, there are more complex ways to belong to a 'perceived' homeland, which does not fall within the narrow concept of the ethno-national identity (Mavroudi 2015:184). Based on this, it would be pertinent to refrain from using the term 'ethno-national' to describe the Gambian diaspora associations in the UK, as they are not ethnically based groups.

The literature in African diaspora studies also argues that African diasporas are contributing at the national level, by producing financial flows and enhancing economic growth primarily through their remittances and direct investments. According to a study by Nyamongo et al. (2012) on the role of remittances and financial development on economic growth in 36 countries in Africa between 1980 and 2009. The findings revealed that firstly, remittances appear to be an important source of growth for these countries in Africa during the period under study, second, the volatility of remittances appears to have a negative effect on the growth of countries in Africa and third, remittances appear to be working as a complement to financial development (258). These findings show remittances being an important contributor to the economic growth; however, remittances do not have the same impact on the economies of all African countries. For example, Nigeria is one of the largest recipients of diaspora remittances but it only makes up

a small proportion of the country's overall GDP, 7% according to the World Bank in 2013.

Additionally within the literature, the African diaspora are reported to contribute to various sectors in their 'home' countries, particularly in areas of health, education, agriculture, and housing. There are multiple examples spread across Africa but here I have only pulled evidence from just a few African diasporas to illustrate this sectoral diversity. For example, in 2006, the Twinning Centre Volunteer Healthcare Corp collaborated with the Network of Ethiopian Professionals in the Diaspora, to recruit 44 diaspora volunteers with expertise in healthcare to work in 30 sites in Ethiopia (Terrazas 2010; 13). In addition, members of the academic diaspora from Ghana established a *Network* to facilitate a joint graduate-level curriculum in areas that are critical to the country's needs (Tetty 2016; 175). The members of the *Network* served as external examiners for graduate dissertations at partner Ghanaian universities. They also provided financial and technical support to help upgrade a computer laboratory at the Ghanaian university, by paying for the expansion of the bandwidth capacity and provided 15 headsets and 25 webcams to facilitate interaction via *Elluminate* (178-79). Then in 2014, the Diaspora Investment for Agriculture Initiative<sup>18</sup> by IFAD supported the investment of eight Somali diaspora investors in the AgriFood Fund programme in Somalia, to which they contributed 40% to 60% of the US\$ 435,600 financing that was awarded to six business owners in agriculture (IFAD 2016). Lastly, the Rwandan diaspora collaborated with their 'home' government to establish the One Dollar Campaign to commemorate the genocide in April 1994. This resulted in the diaspora funding the building of student housing for genocide orphans in Kigali (Turner 2013; 271).

The pre-occupation with development impacts means that there has been less research on diaspora motivations in recent years (Galetto 2011). Instead, older ideas developed by economists have been the root of claims that rational self-interest and family-based strategies is core to explaining why people remit. Stark and Lucas (1988) argue that migrants furnish their family with remittances, in exchange for insurance. They call this trade-in-risks example, as the migrant and the family have an incentive to turn to each other, by entering into an exchange agreement (469). However, each individual member of the diaspora has their own motivation profile that contributes to his or her investment decisions (Nielsen and Riddle 2007: 7). On the other hand, Chikanda et al. (2016) assert that diasporas are motivated to invest at 'home' if there is availability of investment opportunities,

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<sup>18</sup> The intent of the initiative is to leverage diaspora funds and their engagement in sustained economic growth through investment in agriculture, particularly in rural areas  
<https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/4fab1867-3435-4597-8968-80877b933faangage>



earning capacity for diasporas, minimal level of local development, suitable investment opportunities, and intra-household arrangements that facilitate the adoption of investment opportunities (2). However, I would add to this list the emotional linkages (to families and friends) diaspora have at 'home' (Moniruzzaman 2016). The desire to want to help the homeland to develop (Mavroudi 2015) as well as strong social networks that bind people together transnationally, which motivates groups like the Somali diaspora to support their country of origin (Hammond et al. 2011). This broad list may not be applicable to all diasporas, however, it is important that this research demonstrate what drives the Gambian diaspora to contribute to development at 'home' in ways that can guide policymakers in The Gambia to formulate diaspora engagement policies in the future.

Therefore, the assumption that all diasporas want to engage in development at 'home', is best understood by looking at who, what, when and why diaspora chose to help develop (Mavroudi 2015). Therefore, it is pointless to homogenize the African diaspora as it runs the risk of ignoring groups who chose to contribute to development in their host countries and not at 'home'. For example, studies of the South African diaspora in Canada (Crush et al. 2012, Crush 2013, and Ramachandran 2016) revealed that a significant number of them appeared detached from their country of birth, unconcerned about its future and disinclined to engage meaningfully with it (Ramachandran 2016:66). The reason being that the South African diaspora in Canada has a fraught relationship with their country of origin because of apartheid and anti-apartheid struggles, which left some members of the South African diaspora in Canada (particularly the blacks) with unhappy memories of 'home'. Ramachandran (2016) argues that the South African diaspora were separated by class, race, and ethnicity thus they were never a homogenized group (79). However, the wealthy members of this diaspora group are making significant contributions to the development of Canadian institutions. Therefore, the question then is does this make the South Africans in Canada less of a diaspora, because their contributions are not directed in their 'home' countries? On the one hand, according to the African Union definition of a diaspora, it does because it explicitly says African diasporas are people who are "*willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union.*" On the other hand, it can be argued that this opens room for more discussion about the role of the diaspora in development in the literature because currently, the 'diaspora and development' literature tends to focus on diaspora contributions at 'home' and not to the host country. For example, Plaza (2013) argues that diaspora contributions in destination countries are often downplayed or

minimized, however, she was referring to African diasporas within Africa and not in the West. But this argument also applies in western countries, where there are historical accounts diasporas contributing to building institutions in the UK. For example, a BBC documentary entitled '*Black Nurses: The Women Who Saved The NHS*' told the untold stories of how thousands of Caribbean women answered the call to come and help build Britain's National Health Service<sup>19</sup>.

Within the literature, I also discover some of the problems with diaspora-centred and diaspora-led development in 'home' countries. Diaspora-centred development refers to when the governments of 'home' countries try to capitalize on potential diaspora resources by developing policies that attempt to engage their diaspora (Délano and Gamlen 2014). For example, in 2009, the Rwandan government created the Rwanda Diaspora Policy, which has three pillars and one of them focuses on engaging their diaspora in development processes by offering treasury bonds and stocks to Rwandans living abroad. This policy was designed to collect their financial resources to invest in national development (Fransen and Siegel 2013; 15). However, similar to some of the academic literature, these policies also tend to treat the diaspora as a homogeneous group, who are not divided by class, race, ethnicity, religion or political affiliations (Chikanda et al. 2016; 5). In addition, Ho and Boyle (2015) argue that diaspora-centred development lacks a theoretical base and are implemented in a very opportunistic manner by 'home' countries prompted to act by global development agencies (167). What this means is that Ho and Boyle (2015) believe diaspora-centred development strategies mostly focus on diaspora money rather than on the other non-financial contributions of the diaspora. For example, the Ethiopian government in 2010 prohibited the diaspora from engaging with "*human rights, conflict settlement, and reconciliation, citizenship and community development, and justice and law enforcement services*" (Hoehne et al. 2011; 78). Yet, at the same time, the government sought to persuade the diaspora to finance major infrastructure projects, such as dams on the Nile, which was opposed by international development banks (Kebede 2015).

Another problem with diaspora-centred development is that policymakers have to balance the desire to tap into diaspora resources, without giving them too much influence in homeland affairs or opportunity to threaten the power of the existing political elites, which is difficult to achieve. For example, the Ethiopian diaspora in the US invest the most in their 'home' country but also tend to be the most politically active and influential (Chacko and Gebre 2012; 503). The group of literature concludes that diaspora-centred development policies are failing their

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/proginfo/2016/47/black-nurses>

mission because they are not engaging groups that are not motivated by a state-led development plan (Chikanda et al. 2016). But on the other hand, it can be argued these policies have been encouraging groups that are interested in being part of state-led development in countries like Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, and Rwanda and Senegal (Kebede 2015, African Development Policy Centre 2011, Fransen and Siegel 2013). Thus, this perhaps explains the rise in interest in diaspora-centred development in the literature, arguably, in response to its 'perceived' success.

On the contrary, the literature on diaspora-led development argues that it is more effective to reach grassroots and the people who really need it without any intermediaries. However, part of the problem with diaspora-led development (Mercer et al. 2008,) is that the capacity of diasporas to implement successful development projects is limited since they have little or no training in implementing development projects and are unlikely to use log-frames, monitoring procedures or independent evaluation reports (2008; 230). Therefore, diaspora-led development projects are not believed to be as effective as they are portrayed in some of the literature because they create undesirable development outcomes, such as dependency on remittances as well as increase developmental disparities because they tend to be concentrated in areas, where the richer population can be found. Analysts Davies (2012), Skeldon (2005, 2008) and Page and Mercer (2012) all found this to be true in their own research and they concluded that the spatial and social inequality effects of diaspora-led development are true for interventions other than just remittances.

Therefore, the problem is not whether diasporas are contributing to development in their countries of origin, which they clearly are (de Haas 2006, 2012, Terrazas 2010, Newland, 2011, 2013, Ratha et al. 2011, Resende – Santos 2015). Rather, there are a number of barriers, which affect the impact of diaspora contributions on the development in their 'home' countries. Such barriers also include high levels of demands and expectations from their families, lack of cooperation and willingness to work with the diaspora by those inside the country, high levels of bureaucracy, weak human resource capacity, and marginalization by homeland governments. For example, the high demands and expectations placed on the diaspora can become a barrier when diasporas are required to make self- sacrifices in order to meet those demands. Hammond (2011) study of the Somali diasporas in Lewiston, Maine, USA, revealed that some members of the diaspora are not able to fulfil their own ambitions for personal and professional growth because of they have to provide for their families back 'home'. For example, her interview data revealed

that a participant named Hassan; a part-time student is supporting five people who are living away from the core of the family, which has settled in Kenya. In addition to regular payment, Hassan sends six additional payments for 'extraordinary expenses' year (136-137). Additionally, "*the choice that Hassan feels obliged to make—to sacrifice his further study in order to support his family—is typical of many of those I interviewed*"(142). The demands and expectations placed on some Somali diasporas like Hassan have forced him to self-sacrifice by not obtaining further education and potentially affecting his ability to increase his own economic power in the future to be able to help their families more.

Other barriers such as lack of cooperation and willingness to work with the diaspora by those inside the homeland, the high levels of bureaucracy, and weak human resources were illustrated in the literature using the Ghanaian, Ethiopian, and Cape Verdean diaspora case study examples mentioned earlier. For example, the Ghanaian academics in the diaspora, who established a *Network* to support the development of a Ghanaian university, complained that:

It quickly became apparent that a number of faculty members in Ghana were unwilling to participate in the initiative because they could not see any direct pecuniary gains for themselves. They assumed that the diaspora members of the *network* were engaged in the project because of some financial reward, incentive or motivation, and thought that they deserved the same (Tettey 2016; 180)

Whereas, the Ethiopian diaspora complained about 'Bureaucratic red-tape' when trying to establish businesses, which included "*rules and regulations, an inordinate amount of paperwork, and associated delays*" (Chacko and Gebre 2012; 502). And in Cape Verde, the diaspora complained about the organizational and human resources limitations at the public agencies tasked with diaspora responsibilities such as the Ministry of Communities and the Institute of Communities (Resende-Santos 2015:94).

However, according to the literature the marginalization of diasporas from national the development in their 'home' countries, is the biggest barrier for some groups in the diaspora. As such, some key international development agencies have embarked on encouraging homeland governments to allow their diaspora to take part in development (Agunias and Newland 2013). According to part of the literature in diaspora studies, the marginalization of diasporas can affect diaspora remittances and limit diaspora contributions to the household level. Kapur (2003), asserts, "*it is politics that impact remittances*" (22). For example, the Gambian

government is extremely sceptical and reluctant to involve the diaspora in the national development agenda. This is because the government feels the diaspora is too critical of them and they have concerns that some Gambians in the diaspora will pose a threat to their power if they are allowed to take part in homeland affairs. However, if the Gambian government wanted to engage the diaspora without threats to their position, then they could offer treasury bonds and stocks specifically to the diaspora like in Rwanda. Or privileged tax regimes for diaspora investments like in Uganda. However, at the moment, there are no targeted diaspora-centred development initiatives or policies in The Gambia.

According to Bréant (2013), the Togolese diaspora provides a strong example of how governments affect diaspora contributions. In his paper, '*What if diasporas didn't think about development? A critical approach of the international discourse on migration and development*', Bréant explains that the Togolese diaspora was very disengaged with development in Togo because of the hostile relationship they had with former President Eyadema, compared to now when they have a more cordial relationship with the new government. He states that the relationship between President Eyadema and the diaspora, expatriates and emigrants was fraught because they were seen as opponents and thus were rarely directed towards local development actions. This clearly shows a need to explore the role politics in migration and development debates because as Hein de Haas (2012) has pointed out, "*if states fail to implement reform, migration and remittances are unlikely to fuel national development- and can even sustain situations of dependency, underdevelopment and authoritarianism*" (19). This argument is pivotal in this thesis, which aims to provide a good understanding of the relations between the Gambian government and diaspora, in terms of why it is currently the way that it is and the impact it has on diaspora development contributions.

However, since 2007, the World Bank's Africa Diaspora Program (ADP) has worked with national governments, the African Union, and other development donors to increase diaspora engagement with various development priorities (Gamlen 2014). Clearly, this is seen as the way forward for solving some of the development challenges in Africa, particularly as non-African countries like Mexico and Philippines have registered great success in engaging their diaspora in their country's development agenda. For instance, Mexico experienced significant growth in their construction sector by instructing the federal government financial institution *Sociedad Hipotecaria* to provide long-term financing and mortgages to emigrants that want to build houses in Mexico (Gupta et al. 2007: 7). Moreover, in the Philippines, the government has gone far ahead of many other migrant-sending

countries in developing initiatives to engage with its diaspora (Nicolas 2016: 33). For the past three decades, the government have created a plethora of initiatives targeting the diaspora, which in turns has contributed to growth in their economy. For example, the Philippine government eliminated practices that drove off remittances like overvalued exchange rates and mandatory remittance quotas and replaced them with giving tax breaks and privileged investments options for overseas residents (Newland 2012). Both governments have successfully removed obstacles that were preventing remittances being used to facilitate development (Chami and Fullenkamp 2013).

The table below details the incentives some African countries offer their diasporas as a means of engaging them in national development. Though these incentives are very encouraging for diasporas that want to invest in their 'home' countries, they do not guarantee engagement from all diasporas.

Table 2: Diaspora incentives in some African countries

<b>Countries</b>	<b>Diaspora incentives</b>
Cape Verde	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tax-free high interest rates savings account, specially designated "emigrant accounts" in homeland banks</li> </ul>
Burundi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created the Directorate of Diaspora in October 2009</li> </ul>
Ethiopia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethiopian Government enacted a law in 2000, to permit Ethiopians in the diaspora with foreign citizenship to be treated as nationals, by offering a "Person of Ethiopian Origin" identification card (locally known as the Yellow Card) for foreign nationals of Ethiopian origin</li> <li>• Income tax exemption from 2 to 7 years; 100% duty exemption on importation of machinery and equipment for investment projects</li> <li>• Land to diaspora for residential purposes</li> </ul>
Ghana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dual Citizen Act 2000</li> <li>• Foreign currency bank accounts</li> </ul>
Nigeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreign currency bank accounts</li> </ul>
Rwanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Bank of Rwanda (BNR) in cooperation with the Rwandan diaspora set up the Rwandan Diaspora Mutual Fund (RDMF). Investing financial resources from Rwandans living abroad in corporate bonds and stocks</li> </ul>
Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Privileged tax regimes and planning codes for diaspora investors – even those who no longer have Ugandan citizenship.</li> </ul>

Source: Assembled by Sainabou Taal

The next section looks at the transnational political engagement of the African diaspora and illustrates the various ways in which they engage in politics at 'home'.

## **2.6 The Transnational Engagement of the African Diaspora in Politics at 'home'**

*"Diasporas can try to directly influence homeland politics from abroad, e.g. by financing specific causes or spreading their vision of national identity and politics ..."* [Hägel and Peretz, 2005:473]

Within the literature on the transnational engagement of diaspora in politics at 'home', there are many examples of diaspora groups that have played significant roles in the domestic politics of their homelands. For example, during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, there was an increase in the transnational homeland activities of diaspora around the world. Groups such as the Irish Fenians organized themselves in the United States to oppose British rule in Ireland and Germans around the world supported the building of a "Greater German Empire". The Chinese communities in the Americas mobilizing to support the 1911 Revolutions in China and Jews around the world mobilizing around the cause of Zionism, and the ideas of a Jewish homeland <sup>20</sup>(Adamson 2015). This shows that the boundaries of politics have changed over the years to where diaspora groups are able to participate in the politics of their homelands from afar (Lyons and Mandaville 2012, Boccagni et al. 2015). Advances in telecommunication and international travel have made it relatively easy for diasporas to maintain political links with 'home' and to be involved in shaping domestic and international policies (Brinkerhoff 2009, Esman 2009 and NurMuhammad et al. 2015). This section of the chapter will seek to use the narrower literature on transnational diaspora politics to understand *how* and *why* African diasporas engage in politics at 'home', using social movement theory to explain the political mobilization of the African diasporas. This section will also discuss the mobilization tools used by the diaspora and their impact in influencing politics at 'home'.

The seminal collection *'Politics from Afar: Transnational Diaspora and Networks'* edited by Terrence Lyons and Peter Mandaville (2012), places diasporas in the same league as political parties, interest groups, civil society groups and insurgencies as instruments to influence political outcomes at 'home'. However, in their introduction, the editors argue that diasporas are distinctive because they challenge contemporary notions of how political life should be organized (3). According to Lyons and Mandaville, globalization has made it possible for

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/16224/blurring-the-lines-diaspora-politics-and-globalized-constituencies>

transnationals' to influence politics at 'home', and the political thinking and strategies developed by those in multiple locations around the world have shaped how diasporas are mobilized, issues are framed and outcomes are determined (3). Concurrently, the meaning and practice of national belonging and political participation are being reshaped through voting and the extension of citizenship rights across borders (Ragazzi 2014). Lyons and Mandaville argue that the most effective way to mobilize diasporas is to tap into issues of identity that are specific, parochial and territorially based (15). However, they also recognize that some regimes do challenge a diaspora's legitimacy and block their political access because they view certain diasporas as threatening and vilify them as disloyal and traitorous (14). In addition, the authors argue that the economic dimension of migration such as remittances often serve as an important vehicle for political endorsements. And new forms of media such as blogs, satellite television and text messaging have multiplied the places where political agendas are set, strategies developed and leaders identified (10).

This book provides a solid guide for any discussion on the contemporary transnational political engagement of diasporas. It demonstrates how diaspora politics affects many areas relevant to academics, policymakers and development practitioners. One of the particular strengths of this book are the questions that have been raised. For example, how have politics in countries of origin been transformed by the current upsurge in the political activism of increasingly mobile transnational population? And who is doing the mobilizing?

By looking for answers to these questions I discovered gaps in the knowledge within the literature about how politics at 'home' has been transformed by the diaspora. I also found that little attention is given to the roles certain actors within 'home' countries play in enhancing or reducing outcomes of the political activities of diasporas. For example, in this thesis I argue that part of the reason the Gambian diaspora has not been able to achieve political change in the country is because the opposition political parties and people on the ground have not been supportive of their political interventions. In my subjective opinion, this proves that it is imperative the literature analyses not just the homeland government, but other homeland actors and the political patterns of migrant communities in all their diversity. In order to get a better understanding of how politics in countries of origin have been transformed by diaspora involvement (Lyons and Mandaville 2012).

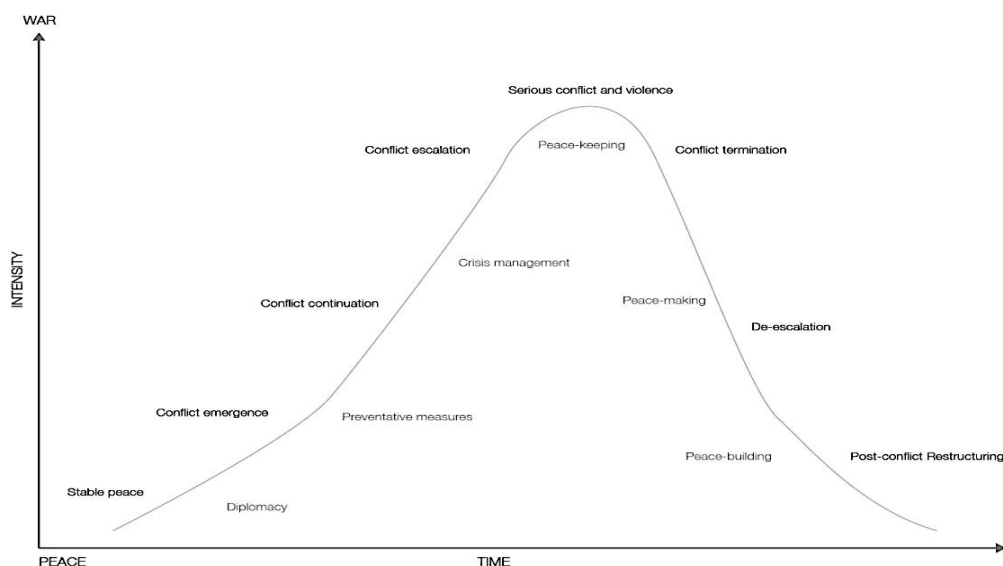
JoAnn McGregor and Dominic Pasura (2014) argue that the literature on diaspora politics has predominantly focused on the context of violent 'crisis' and the impact



of diaspora engagement through remittances and other interventions during such crises. In other words, it still has a broadly negative assessment, which is in contrast to development thinking which sees diaspora engagement in conflict in Africa as potentially more positive (4). This difference in focus can be attributed to the various roles diasporas play in their 'home' countries, which can either place them in positions of peacemakers or peace-wreckers (Smith and Stares, 2007, Hoehne et al. 2011). For example, research on members of the Ugandan Acholi diaspora in London revealed that this group helped to resolve conflict at 'home' by successfully bringing together representatives from the Ugandan and Sudanese government with the rebel group Lords Resistance Army to facilitate a conflict resolution (Baser and Swain 2008, Iheduru 2011). Whereas, research on the boundary wars between Eritrea and Ethiopia showed that diaspora on both sides perpetuated the conflict by contributing millions of dollars to their homeland government for the purchase of weapons (Koser 2003, Bernal 2006).

Similarly, Jennifer Brinkerhoff (2011) argues that within the pedagogy of diaspora studies there tends to be more focus on the support diasporas give to insurgencies and their contributions of political instability, rather than their role in conflict reconciliation. Brinkerhoff asserts that diasporas play varied roles in conflict management, which can result in peaceful resolutions, as illustrated by the diagram below.

Figure 1: Conflict phases and approaches to conflict management



Source: Smith and Stares 2007; 26

This diagram illustrates the general cycle of conflict management of any conflict and any attempts to manage it. The outside of the line shows the stages of conflict, and the inside shows the role diasporas (among other actors) could play during every stage of conflict. McGregor and Pasura (2014) argue that viewing diasporas as peacemakers is more useful because it recognizes their heterogeneity, plural interests, spatial variation, and change over time (8). But does viewing diaspora as peacemaker truly help us to recognize their heterogeneity? I argue that the only way to understand the true heterogeneous nature of diaspora in conflict is to understand the extent and willingness of diasporic groups to get involved in homeland affairs (Mavroudi 2015) and not by creating distinctions between those who are peacemakers and peace-wreckers as members from one diaspora group can assume both positions. Thus, it is important that the literature does not analyse the political engagement of diasporas at 'home' using a one-size-fits framework.

Within the debates of the transnational diaspora, politics there is a gender element that needs to be addressed but is widely under-researched. Analyst Liza Mügge (2013), found this out after conducting a gendered analysis of transnational politics of migrant women. She discovered that not only is transnational politics completely dominated by men but also the role of women in it is mostly invisible and private (67). In her research on '*Women in Transnational Migrant Activism; Supporting Social Justice Claims of Homeland Political Organizations*', Mügge (2013) uncovered that for a period of 20 years there were only two Turkish migrant transnational political organizations directed by women and these were the leftist Turkish Women's Federation in the Netherlands (HTKB) and International Free Women's Foundation. However, in both transnational programmes 'the woman question' was clearly subordinated to a broader political programme in these cases of Marxism and Kurdish nationalism (77). Mügge (2013) made a very salient observation about the literature not giving more attention to the role of women in transnational politics, particularly as often women are compelled to engage in politics when they are directly affected. For example, according to David Gardin and Marie Godin (2013), there is increasing political involvement of Congolese women in the diaspora in the field of women's rights advocacy, given the situation in Eastern Congo where women were exposed to widespread sexual assaults and gender-based violence. This opened up new paths of political action and on certain occasions, led to transnational forms of engagement of women.

However, Krook and Childs (2010) assert that though social movement and suffrage have been a central focus in studies of women, gender and politics.

Women have largely been excluded from other areas of political participation like election, political office and international politics. For example, the informal norms associating women with the private sphere and men with the public continue to exert influence, leading to fewer women than men holding top-level political positions (4). That is to say, women participating in politics are often relegated to more ancillary roles such as cooking, doing clerical work and mobilizing female voters (6). However, there appears to be no other solution to this problem in the literature other than encouraging women to assume roles that are more active in political leadership (Boccagni et al 2015). Which is clearly difficult to achieve in societies like The Gambia where cultural practices and customary laws place women in subordinate roles. Nevertheless, this thesis explores the role of Gambian women in the diaspora and at 'home' in politics and draws some very interesting comparisons between them.

Another gap within the literature on diaspora transnational political engagement is the limited focus on the generational difference in how diaspora intervene in politics at home (Gardin and Godin 2013 and Abdile 2014). Gardin and Godin (2013) argue that there are different ideas of political engagement between different generations within the Congolese diasporic community. According to their article '*Saving the Congo: transnational social fields and politics of home in the Congolese diaspora*', the authors explain that youth activists in the London Congolese diaspora organize their social movements 'horizontally' in contrast with the organizational model of the first generation's leaders. This often revolved around political party structure and was more rigid and hierarchical. This division between the older and younger generations has resulted in the disengagement of many Congolese youths, who see the older generation as being more interested in increasing their reputation in the diaspora and in Kinshasa than in delivering political progress in the DRC. This demonstrates the internal challenges and divides within diaspora groups, even when they share the same issues at 'home'. Thus, this thesis argues that diaspora engagement in politics at 'home' is partly determined by individual interpretations and opinions of what is happening in their 'home' countries, which is often shaped by their age and in some instances gender.

Still, within the literature, I found that social remittances<sup>21</sup> (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011) are another effective mechanism for diasporas to influence in politics at 'home'. In addition, so are providing financial support to opposition parties or for

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<sup>21</sup> Social remittances are ideas, values, norms and information diasporic actors, who gained particular experiences, knowledge, and skills from abroad bring to their homeland and political engagement of diasporic actors is a key example of social remittance because they transfer those attributes to their homeland (Hoehne et al. 2011; 77)

conflict reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction and, diaspora activism (staging demonstrations and protests, advocacy and lobbying host governments to shape policies that are favourable or challenging to their homeland governments). Vertovec (2005) asserts that:

Different diaspora-based associations may lobby host countries to shape policies in favour of a homeland or to challenge a homeland government; influence homelands through their support or opposition of governments; give financial and other support to political parties, social movements and civil society organizations; or sponsor terrorism or the perpetuation of violent conflict in the homeland. (5)

Boccagni et al. (2015) argue that diaspora engagement in politics at 'home' through social remittances involves them transferring the political ideas and practices they see in their host countries (448). For example, the Liberian intellectuals living in the US drew on the 150-year-old American constitution to form the basis for their indigenous models of political legitimacy and decision-making during the transition at the end of the Liberian civil war (Moran 2005; 460). In addition, according to Mezzetti et al. (2014) individuals of the Somali diaspora in Italy and in Finland who participate in local elections and join political parties have transferred this political activism to Somalia, in the form of diffusion of political ideas (183). However, the question that remains to be answered is, are social remittances an effective route for engagement? According to Anar Ahmadov and Gwendolyn Sasse (2015), too little is understood of the significance of social remittances in diasporic engagement in homeland affairs because this cannot be measured and diaspora do not always transfer their skills. Additionally, sometimes transnationally active migrants can reproduce salient homeland political ideologies. For example, though migrants can carry new political views that can make them agents of change in their countries of origin. Diaspora networks also help to reproduce the norms and rituals underpinning migrants' homeland political identities, because such networks are often fragmented along the lines that correspond to cleavages in the countries of origin (Guarnizo and Díaz 1999 cited by Ahmadov and Sasse 2015; 1172).

Part of the literature also argues that there are other more effective ways for diasporas to engage in politics at home other than using social remittances, such as making financial contributions to political parties that could change the balance of economic, political, and military power (Horst 2008), as well as influence decision-making in homeland politics (Baser and Swain 2008). For instance, the

remittances sent by Somalis from Norway and elsewhere during different conflicts served two purposes in Somalia. The first supported clan conflict in the Mudig and Galguduud regions in 2004 and 2006, when the Saleebaan and Sacad clan were in full conflict over grazing land. And the second contributed to peace-building through indirect engagement such as economically sustaining their families, providing forums for developing strategies for political reforms, and building infrastructures such as schools and hospitals (Hoehne et al. 2011).

The Somali diaspora provides a good example of how remittances can sustain parties engaged in conflict as well as provide basic needs and services to the most vulnerable in conflict (Brinkerhoff 2011). Clearly, the financial support diasporas provide to facilitate their political engagement have different outcomes for different groups. For example, groups like the Cape Verdean diaspora were reported to have been instrumental in influencing a change from the one-party state in 1991 through the support they gave to the opposition party (The Movement for Democracy) that won the multi-party elections that year (Andrade 2002 cited by Iheduru 2011). On the other hand, the Zimbabwe diaspora who aligned themselves with the Movement for Democratic Change opposition party against Mugabe ZANU (PF) government (McGregor and Pasura 2014; 7), have not been able to achieve their goal of political change in Zimbabwe. The reasons being that, unlike the Cape Verdean diaspora who have full voting rights in their presidential elections. The Zimbabwe diaspora is only allowed limited presidential and legislative voting rights and *Mugabe's skilful domestic, regional, and international political strategies proved significant obstacles to political change, and South Africa's leadership consistently supported the regime...undermining the impact of domestic political opposition as well as the potential political impact of the diaspora*" (McGregor and Pasura 2014; 7). This shows how provisions such as extending full voting rights to diasporas to engage in homeland politics can determine their effectiveness in influencing politics.

There is a wide range of tools in which diasporas use to take advantage of technology and liberal democratic rights in their host countries when pursuing their political goals at 'home'. For example, political activism of African diasporas often takes form through online engagement and cyber-activism, as well as staging demonstrations and protest, advocacy, fundraising and lobbying powers in their host countries to facilitate their inclusion in homeland politics. For example, in 2011- 2012 the Congolese diaspora in Europe and the US mobilized to contest the re-election of Joseph Kabila as President of DRC by organizing public demonstrations and picketing in front of the Congolese embassies, 10 Downing

Street and the Stock Exchange in London, the White House in Washington DC and the International Criminal Court in the Hague (Gardin and Godin 2013; 113). They also circulated petitions, wrote to British Members of Parliament, and attended forums such as those organized by UK All Party Parliamentary Groups (126). Whereas the Ethiopian Muslim diaspora involved in rights base advocacy are reportedly actively engaged in enhancing the wider game of democratic politics in Ethiopia. By sending delegations in Badr-Ethiopia and the Network of Ethiopian Muslims in Europe (NEME) to Ethiopia to advocate for legislative and public policies for the *“protection of the civil and humanitarian rights for Ethiopian Muslims by advancing the freedom of worship according to one’s belief and the right of the people to assemble peaceably, and by petitioning the government for a redress of grievances”* (see Feyissa 2014: 106).

These forms of diaspora activism are nothing new even with the changes in technology. Ramla Bandele (2010) provides a historical account of political activism by the Universal Negro Improvement Association’s (UNIA), who attempted to establish merchant marine called the Black Star Line (BSL) from 1919 to 1921. Bandele found that the political activism of the BSL was motivated by race and discrimination because black seamen and longshoremen were being replaced by returning white soldiers. The activism that the BSL engaged in was primarily fundraising for the purpose of establishing a profitable transport business to facilitate building a black nation-state on the continent of Africa and foster black economic independence in that state and throughout the diaspora (749). Between 1919 and 1920, the UNIA was able to raise \$800,000 for its plans (750). However, the fall of the BSL came as a result of internal and external problems from varied participation levels diaspora sister communities looking first at their own interests, global economic crisis and the US and Britain applying pressure and aggravating disagreements between the competing black organisations in order to preserve their own economic power and position within the marine transport industry. However, though this activism was directed at the host country, it is relevant to this current study because it demonstrates first, how internal issues within the diaspora can affect the effectiveness of their political engagement, and second, how politics and business can be very closely linked.

Returning to analyses of the present, research has shown that host countries play an important role in facilitating the environment for diasporic interventions in homeland politics (Zapata-Barrero et al. 2013). According to Adamson (2015), the power of diasporas is further intensified via social media and living in global cities like London that act as a hub for diasporas to engage in politics in places as

diverse as Nigeria, Somalia, Iraq, and Bangladesh. However, the political activism of the African diaspora is also centred on their participation in online forums (Crush et al. 2016). Increasingly diaspora groups are using the Internet to unite around a political cause and galvanize members for action (Siapera 2014). Also increasingly, the academic literature is discussing the 'digital diaspora' or groups that organize online on behalf of homeland causes (Simon Turner 2008, Bernal 2013, Eric Turner 2013, NurMuhammad et al. 2015, Quinsaas 2015, Adamson 2015). But how useful is the Internet, in particular, social media sites in mobilizing the diaspora? On the one hand, I argue that in this digital age the Internet is the most useful and cost-effective tool for the diaspora to mobilize large groups for a cause. But on the other hand, Nur Muhammad et al. (2015) argue that the Internet allows for selective engagement because some people who engage online will not take part in physical demonstrations. This is viewed as a new model of activism called clicktivism<sup>22</sup>, whereby 'digital activists' engage in politics through online petitions and mass emails. This form of activism is criticized for undermining the intensity and quality of political engagement because it becomes a matter of clicking a few links (White 2010). So for groups like the Gambian diaspora who are trying to get the attention of the international community and host governments, their presence online is felt more heavily than physically at protests and demonstrations where the turnout is often significantly lower than expected.

In this thesis, I argue that the political mobilization of diasporas can be better understood using 'social movement theory' (McAdam et al. 1996, Sökefeld 2006, Marsden 2014, Quinsaas 2015), as this paints a picture of a movements' life-cycle as it is occurring, starting from emergency, coalescence, institutionalization, and decline (see Pullum 2014:1378). The social movement theory posits that diasporas need *political opportunities* that would enable the rise of social movements. *Political opportunities* are important to the formation of diaspora as they include "*communication, media and transport, as well as the legal and institutional (for example multiculturalist) frameworks within which claims for community and identity can be articulated*" (Sökefeld 2006; 270). For example, Victoria Bernal (2013) talks about how political events at 'home' provide an opportunity for the Eritrean diaspora to use the Internet to "*participate in real time in homeland current events and to produce and/or circulate national political content from outside the nation*" (246).

Social movement theorists also posit that diasporas need *mobilizing structures*, such as networks of people, to allow them to form groups to address their shared

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/aug/12/clicktivism-ruining-leftist-activism>

issues and interests (Sökefeld 2006; 269). For example, the Gambian political diaspora has approximately 11 groups who have the shared interest of influencing a democratic political change in The Gambia. According to Pierre Bourdieu (1991), the transnational political field gives diasporas power to mobilize and form opinions in ways that they cannot in their 'home' countries (cited by Brun and van Hear 2012). And Koinova (2012) asserts that the advantage these diasporic organizations have is that they are autonomous in their ability to solicit funds and frame their own meanings to events that take place in their homelands. But often a key problem with these groups is that they behave as though they are speaking and acting in the name of others, particularly those at 'home', while at the same time ignoring the voices of those who do not want the diaspora to speak for them. This thesis argues that sometimes diasporas are self-aggrandizing in their political interventions and this often hinders the effectiveness of their political engagement and their relationship with those at 'home'

Another useful concept in the social movement theory, which adds to our understanding of the political mobilization of diaspora, is the *framing* process. This is the process of assigning meanings and interpretations to events in ways that would mobilize and legitimize action (McAdam et al. 1996, Sökefeld 2006). Seminal contributions on the role of framing in social movement theory can be found in the work of David Snow and Robert Benford (2000). Snow and Benford, claim that framing is the strategic effort by groups to transform certain conditions into issues, such as human rights, which help to define grievances and claims (Sökefeld 2006:270). For example, the Zimbabwean diasporas have continued to mobilize physically and on cyber-space to make the world more aware of human rights violations and torture in Zimbabwe, particularly on matters like Gukurahundi<sup>23</sup> that would otherwise have been long forgotten (Mbiba 2012). In the case of the Gambian diaspora, political mobilization of some members was framed around the events of the April 2000 shootings of student protesters in The Gambia by national security forces. This event was interpreted as a gross human rights violation and lack of freedom of expression in the country.

However, it is important to recognize that diasporas can also make positive contributions after negative events such as violent conflict have taken place in their 'home' countries. Post-conflict Liberia provides a useful example of diasporas getting involved in national politics in ways other than through direct confrontation with the state (Antwi-Boateng 2011). For example, in 2007, members of the

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<sup>23</sup> Refers to the murder, rape, and torture of members of the Ndebele tribe in Zimbabwe by Robert Mugabe's 5th Brigade in 1980s. <http://www.thestandard.co.zw/2016/06/12/mugabes-gukurahundi-threats-revealing/>



Liberian diaspora became heavily involved in the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (LTRC) by mobilizing to promote international justice and human rights as part of the LTRC process for national healing, unity, and peace (Iheduru 2011). In essence, the mobilization of this African diasporas group supports an old but relevant assertion made by McAdam et al. (1996) that *“the very notion of framing reminds us that mobilization and ongoing collective action are accomplishments, even in the context of favourable environmental conditions”* (339). It is equally important to recognize that in many cases the various diaspora mobilization efforts have (so far) resulted in limited policy changes and rights, and demands for inclusion in homeland affairs are not always (or even often) met (Kleist 2013).

The main weakness of social movement theory is that it assigns negative reasons to the political mobilization of diasporas, whereas there are reasons other than having grievances or addressing negative events in their ‘home’ countries for diaspora mobilize politically (Pullum 2014). For instance, Ghanaian government have effectively mobilized the diaspora politically as a means to getting them to engage in development. The government passed a Dual Citizenship Act in 2002 (Kleist 2013), offering its citizen abroad dual citizenship and dual nationality. Additionally, other African states have extended voting rights to their diasporas to allow them to vote in presidential or legislative elections (Bermudez and Lafleur 2015). For example:

Most Francophone African countries, namely Benin, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, and Togo, permit ‘personal’, ‘proxy’, or ‘mixed’ (personal or proxy) voting by emigrants in either presidential and legislative/sub-national elections or both, as well as in referendums. All Lusophone countries (Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique) and Equatorial Guinea allow ‘personal’ voting for the diaspora in presidential elections (Cape Verde allows voting for both presidential and legislative elections). Of all former British colonies in Africa, only Botswana (presidential), Ghana (limited presidential and legislative), Lesotho (legislative by post), Mauritius (legislative/sub-national by proxy), Namibia (presidential and legislative), South Africa (limited presidential and legislative), and Zimbabwe (Iheduru 2011:191)

Though there is some scepticism from analyst Okechukwu Iheduru (2011), who argues that African states are engaging their diaspora not out of free will but because they are responding to the apparent foreign aid fatigue among

international financial institutions and aid donors. African governments are being pressured to redefine emigrants as 'development partners' or 'stakeholders' and to renegotiate the citizenship of diasporas to enable the 'home' states to tap into their resources, especially remittances (197). I argue that this only partially explains why some African states appear keen to engage their diasporas into homeland affairs. As according to Enoh (2014), the Cameroonian diasporas' demands for inclusion in mainstream social, economic, and political participation was openly denied by the Cameroon government and the diaspora have been banned from participation and inclusion in the municipal, legislative and the presidential elections because the government fear the unknown.

Finally, a survey of the literature on *why* diasporas engage in transnational politics at 'home' revealed a number of theories and some empirical data from case studies. For example, the homeland is under threat (Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporas), aspirations to establish own states and self-determination (Palestinian diaspora), corrupt and oppressive governments (Gambian diaspora), strengthening national identity (Ghanaian diaspora), showing support to particular ethnic and/or religious groups (Sri Lankan diaspora), and making emotional and financial investments in the homeland (Senegalese Murid diaspora).

Finally, my last criticism of the literature is that little is known about the impact diaspora political interventions have on the people at 'home' (in terms of families of those involved in politics being in danger), the host country (mitigating against conflicts between groups who support different political parties at 'home') and the relationship between the 'home' and the host countries. For example, the many tensions between the Gambian and Senegalese government include President Jammeh accusing the Senegalese government of harbouring Gambian dissidents plotting to destabilize the country and granting them political asylum (Point Newspaper 2013)<sup>24</sup>, the Gambian government still not taking action to start the construction of the Gambia/Bridge and the alleged Gambian involvement in Casamance. This question of impact on others is an interesting area for further research within the pedagogy of the transnational political engagement of the diaspora.

## **2.7 Conclusions**

The literature on development studies revealed that the concepts used in this thesis such as 'development', 'politics' and 'diasporas' are highly contested and

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<sup>24</sup> <http://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/jammeh-accuses-senegal-of-harbouring-gambian-dissidents>

difficult to define. This is because they are used in broader or narrower ways by different analysts and in different disciplines (de Kadt 1974, Hall 1990, Safran 1991, Clifford 1994, Brah 1996, Cohen 1997, 2008, Cohen and Vertovec 1999, Braziel and Mannur 2003, Leftwich 2004, Bakewell 2008, Dufoix 2008, van Hear 2005, 2010 and Werbner 2010). Additionally, reviewing the literature on 'migration and development' nexus also showed that this relationship is not as straightforward as it is often assumed (Rist 2009, Davies 2012, de Haas 2012). However, the migration-good vs migration-bad way of thinking is profoundly unhelpful since the reality is that migration is good and bad for development (de Haas 2012).

Within the literature we also learn that the starting point of the forced migration of Africans cannot be determined, (Akyeampong 2000, Segal 2001, Koser 2003, Ifekwunigwe 2003, 2013, Zeleza 2005), but respective of this, the thesis takes a strong position to connect the African diasporas to a sacred homeland in Africa because I argue that this helps to explain *why* new African diasporas make contributions to development and intervene in politics at 'home'.

The literature on diaspora studies revealed that the African diasporas are indeed making development contributions at 'home' to their families, towns/villages and at national level, through remittances and investments (Kapur 2001, 2003, Nyberg-Sorensen et al. 2002, Gundel 2002, Turner et al. 2003, IOM, 2006, de Haas 2006, 2012, Terrazas 2010, Davies 2012, Judge and De Plaen, 2011, Newland, 2011, 2013, Ratha et al. 2011, Agunias and Newland 2012, Crush et al. 2013, Gamlen 2014, Mercer and Page 2014, Resende – Santos 2015, Chikanda et al. 2016). Even though there are key problems that have been identified with diaspora-centred development and diaspora-led development, in that they do not always yield positive results as expected (Skeldon 2005, 2008, Mercer et al. 2008, Davies 2012, Ho and Boyle 2015, Chikanda et al. 2016). However, contributions from the diaspora are very important in sustaining and alleviating families from poverty (Stark and Lucas 1988, Mohan 2006, Lindley 2010, Mercer and Page 2010, Hammond et al 2011, Hammond et al 2011, Hammond 2011, Enoch 2014). This is also the most important level of development for the Gambian diaspora.

The literature also reports that diasporas engage in politics at 'home' from afar (Lyons and Mandaville 2012) through their various mechanisms including using the Internet or staging public protests and demonstrations (Simon Turner 2008, Bernal 2013, Eric Turner 2013, Gardin and Godin 2013, NurMuhammad et al. 2015, Quinsaas 2015, Adamson 2015). This they hope would allow them to influence politics at 'home', however to understand *how* and *why* they are able to have an

influence. The thesis uses social movement theory to create a better understanding (McAdam et al. 1996, Sökefeld 2006, Marsden 2014, Quinsaat 2015). I argued that this is the best theoretical framework to use to explain the political mobilization of members of the Gambian diaspora, despite it receiving criticism for only assigning negative reasons for diaspora mobilization.

Returning to the aim of this chapter, which was to develop a theoretical framework that will guide the analysis in this empirical research. I argued that the literature on migration and development, diaspora studies in general and African diaspora studies, in particular, provide sufficient critical analysis and case study examples to allow for this aim to be achieved. However, the main gaps in the literature are; very little is known about the case study group of the Gambian diaspora. Therefore, this thesis will contribute knowledge about this particular group by providing in-depth analysis of their political and developmental activities. Additionally, the literature also pays much less attention to *small* diaspora groups that are making significant contributions in their 'home' countries in comparison to the attention it gives to large and wealthy groups like the Jewish, Indian and Chinese diasporas. As such, this empirical research of the small Gambian diaspora will also contribute knowledge to our understanding of *small* diasporas, their development contributions and political interventions at 'home'. Lastly, the literature on 'conflict diaspora' also needs to be broadened to include the political activities of diasporas at 'home', and in particular in situations of non-violent conflict (Smith 2007), like in the case of the Gambian diaspora. In this sense, I argued that it keeps the idea of political conflict, without necessarily assuming it is violent conflict.

An aim in this research is to fill the gaps in the literature with a new case study and to also contribute to the field of African diaspora studies and development studies. But ultimately one of the goals of this thesis is to try and breakdown the firewall between 'politics' and 'development' by using the Gambian case study to show *how* these two concepts work 'hand in hand' within the Gambian context. This is something that the literature on migration and development, development studies or African diaspora studies has not tackled in depth. Rather discussions of formal politics have remained in the field of political science, whereas debates about the formal political practice of diasporas have been hidden either under the shield of 'development' or within discussions of violent conflict. Therefore, this thesis brings the ideas of formal politics (elections and political parties) into debates of African diaspora and development studies.

# Chapter 3:

## Depicting The Gambia and its Diaspora

### 3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to first give an account of the history of The Gambia in order to analyse its current context. This chapter is a vital prerequisite to understanding the arguments in this research as it sheds lights on some of the challenges in the country, which perhaps drive the diaspora to intervene through development/politics. Therefore, another aim of this chapter is to anticipate the links that can be drawn between the current conditions in the country and the interventions of the diaspora detailed in the empirical chapters that follow. The first section of this chapter discusses the history, geography, ethnic composition, demography, gender, religion, and poverty in The Gambia. It then moves on to discuss the political and economic history of the country since independence in 1965. The second section discusses the migratory history of Gambians, the diaspora and their associations. The last section is the conclusion, which draws together the key arguments and discussions.

### 3.2 The history of The Gambia

The Gambia became a crown colony in 1821 but its present borders were not established until 1889 when an agreement was reached at the Anglo-French Convention (Perfect 2008, 2016). Between 1821 and 1889, this British colony consisted only of the capital Bathurst (Banjul) but later expanded to include the full territory of what previously had been the protectorates (the rural areas). During the process of decolonization of African countries, The Gambia was considered too small and poor to become independent. The British government was considering joining The Gambia with Senegal to form a Senegambia Federation (Perfect 2008) based on the recommendations of a team of UN experts. However, a group of educated Gambian elites<sup>25</sup> who shared the desire for an independent Gambian state formed political parties and spent fourteen years fighting for the country's independence. Then on the 18<sup>th</sup> February 1965, The Gambia finally gained independence from the British and became an independent Commonwealth Realm, a constitutional monarchy with the Queen of England as supposed Head of State (like Canada and Australia today).

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<sup>25</sup> Reverend J C Faye (Democratic Party), I. M Garba Jahumpa (The Muslim Congress Party), Pierre S Njie (United Party), and Dawda Kairaba Jawara (People's Progressive Party) (ABS Taal 2014)

## Geography

The Gambia is the smallest countries on the African mainland, made up of a narrow strip of land approximately 400 kilometres long and 30 kilometres wide. The total land area is 10,689 square kilometres, which forms an enclave within Senegal and has a small coastline to the west of the country opening onto the Atlantic Ocean. Its main geographical feature is the River Gambia, which runs through the entire country and is used to transport goods from one end to the other.

Figure 2: Map of The Gambia



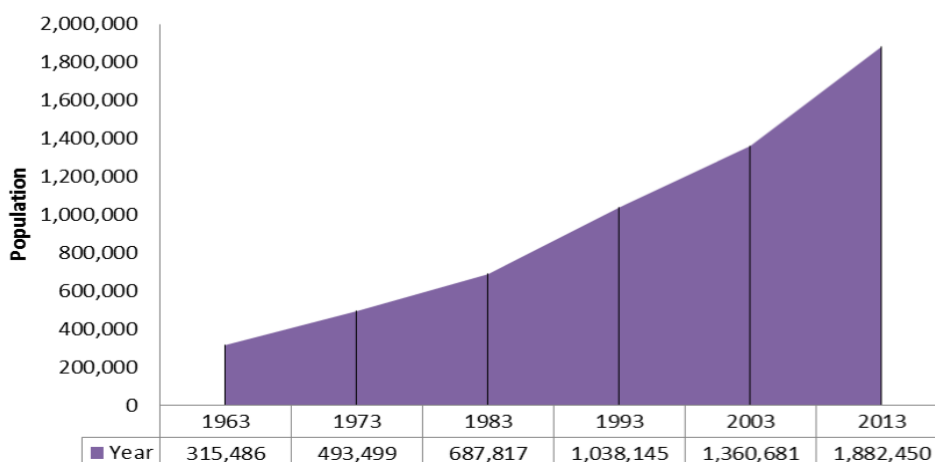
Source: [www.geology.com](http://www.geology.com)

## Demography

The population of The Gambia has been growing on average at a rate of 3.3 percent per annum (Population and Housing Census Preliminary Results 2013). In 2013, the population of The Gambia was recorded at 1.8 million, however, considering the small size of the country this makes it one of the most densely populated African states<sup>26</sup>. Rapid population growth since 1993 has seriously affected the government's ability to equitably distribute resources and deliver services. In addition, the rapidly increasing population has also exacerbated unemployment issues. The job market in The Gambia is simply not able to meet the demands of school leavers, many of whom are subsequently migrating out of the country (UNICEF 2010).

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.unescoafrica.org/edu/index.php/en/country-context>

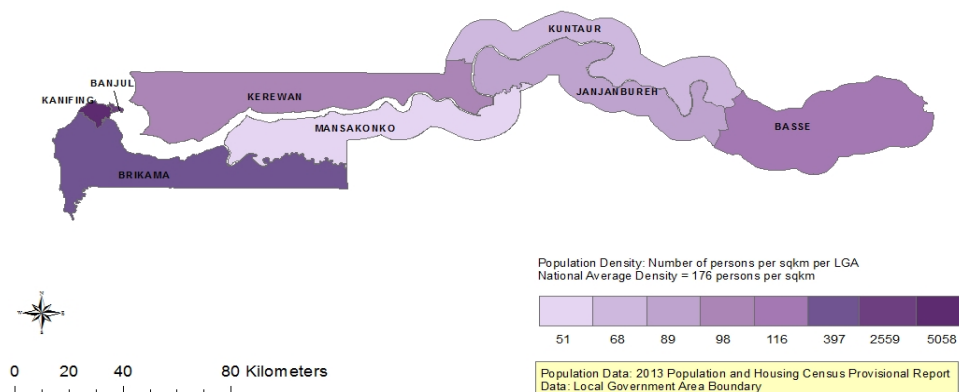
Figure 3: Population size and growth



Source: 2013 Population and Housing Census Preliminary Results

The high population growth and density in the country have resulted in the government re-establishing the National Population Policy 2007- 2015. This policy aims to tackle the problems associated with high population growth and density in the areas of education, health, and family planning by reducing birth rates. The government recognizes that people are more exposed to extreme poverty, poor sanitation, HIV infections, and tuberculosis (TB) as a consequence of rapid population growth in the context of poor urban services. As such, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) in collaboration with development partners have developed Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programmes across the country and behavioural change messages to sensitize the Gambian population. For example, during the height of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014, the Gambian government through the ministry and partners, provided public offices with hand sanitizers and put up notices reminding people to wash their hands with soap and water to prevent the spread of Ebola, this luckily did not reach the country. This shows the government recognizes the risks high population density poses to disease spread and thus attempted to do something about it.

Figure 4: 2013 Population Densities by Local Government Area



Source: 2013 Population and Housing Census Preliminary Results

The national household size in The Gambia has experienced a small decline since the last census in 2003. According to the preliminary results of the 2013 census, the decline in average household size has been in predominantly urban Local Government Areas (LGAs) like Banjul, Kanifing and Brikama and in Kuntaur, a predominantly rural LGA. But places like Kerewan, Janjanbureh and Basse LGAs, have experienced an increase (2013; 11). However, the census did not provide any explanations for the decline in urban areas and increase in rural areas.

Table 3: Household size in The Gambia

Household size	Year
8.3 persons	1973
8.9 persons	1993
8.6 persons	2003
8.2 persons	2013

Source: 2013 Population and Housing Census Preliminary Results

### Ethnic composition

The Gambia is 'home' to a number of different ethnic groups that also exist in a number of other countries in the sub-region, like Senegal, Mali and Guinea Bissau (to name but a few). The ethnic breakdown in the country consists of Mandinka: 36 percent, Fula: 22 percent, Wolof: 15 percent, Jola: 11 percent, and Serahule - 8 percent, with the rest of the Gambian population belonging to much smaller ethnic groups such as the Serer, Creole, Manjago (Population and Housing Census



2003<sup>27</sup>). However, this ethnic breakdown does not include the other nationalities currently living in the country like Senegalese, Sierra Leoneans, Nigerians and Ghanaians.

There is great tolerance between ethnic groups and religious faiths in The Gambia (Saine 2009), as inter-marriages between these groups are a common practice. As such, there is little history of ethnic tension, which is a particular benefit to tourism. However, in instances where ethnic difference does creep up, it is usually to criticize the political parties for putting the interests of one ethnic group over the other. For example, the former ruling People's Progressive Party (PPP) were often accused of putting the interests of Mandinkas first, and the current ruling party APRC is accused of appointing more Jolas in top-level government positions than any other ethnic group. Nevertheless, despite these grievances, there has not been any form of violent ethnic clashes in the country.

## Religion

Gambian people predominantly belong to the Muslim faith, with around 90% of the population identifying themselves as Sunni Muslims, 9% as Christians and 1% having traditional beliefs<sup>28</sup>. According to Gambian historian, Dr Florence Mahoney, Muslim traders brought Islam to the country from Senegal introduced to them by Berbers and Moors from North Africa in the eleventh century (1995; 91). Another Gambians academic Dr Sulayman Nyang (1977) claimed Islam came to the Senegambia as early as the ninth century, from Mauritania in the form of "*marabouts, merchants and jihadi warrior*" (130). However, Portuguese traders brought Christianity to The Gambia in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and asked the Prince Bemoi of the Jollof Empire to embrace the religion in exchange for their aid (Gray 2015; 9).

The Gambia has historically been marked by the peaceful coexistence between people from different ethnic groups and religious backgrounds. For example, the Point Newspaper (21<sup>st</sup> September 2011) describes the visit from a Catholic delegation, led by Father Edu Gomez, to pay a courtesy call on the country's most senior Muslim cleric Imam Ratib of Brikama to congratulate the Imam and Muslims on the occasion of Koriteh which marks the end of Ramadan<sup>29</sup>. However, recently

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<sup>27</sup> There is not a recent data on the ethnic composition. The published Population and Housing Census 2013 do not have this information available.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.accessgambia.com/information/religion.html>

<sup>29</sup> This information was published on a blog post by Ebou Taal

<file:///Users/sainaboutaal/Desktop/phd%20data/gambia%20data/misc/Senegambian%20History%20and%20Culture:%20ISLAM%20and%20PEACE%20IN%20A%20WORLD%20IN%20CRISES%20IN%20THE%20TWENTY-FIRST%20CENTURY.webarchive>

(February 2016) this peaceful co-existence was threatened when President Jammeh declared the country an Islamic State. This caused great concern for the Christians who fear that “over-zealous religious adherents may feel that government has not gone far enough in entrenching their faith and then take the law into their own hands” (The Knights of Saint Peter and Paul, 2016).

Religion and politics are increasingly woven together in The Gambia. Thus, it is safe to say that there is no separation between the state and religion, as some religious leaders are seen openly involved in politics. For example, some Islamic clerics have given the impression that they believe Jammeh has the ‘divine right of kings’ (the doctrine that kings receive their directive to rule straight from God) to rule the country. For example, Imam Ratib of Banjul was reported saying during his visit to State House in December 2015, “it was Allah who gave him (Jammeh) to us”<sup>30</sup>. This is significant for religious Gambians who may perhaps interpret going against President Jammeh as going against Allah.

But, to put this in context, President Jammeh has also targeted and arrested religious leaders for opposing his views and using religion to condemn his actions. For example, in 2012 President Jammeh ordered the arrest and detention of Imam Baba Leigh for publically saying the execution of death-row inmates (which had been ordered by the President) was not Islamic. In this instance, perhaps it can be argued that the support some religious leaders give to Jammeh is driven by the fear of persecution.

### **Gender Relations**

The Gambia is a polygamous society, where men can have up to four wives because Islam permits it. It is also a predominantly patriarchal society with some cultural practices and customary laws placing women and children in subordinate roles (Chant and Brickell 2010, Chant and Touray 2013). Girls and boys are assigned different roles within the family, particularly in the rural areas where girls are often pulled out of school early for marriage, to help their mothers with domestic work and farming or because their families cannot afford to pay their school fees. Recognizing this as a social and developmental problem, in 1996 the government created the Ministry of Women’s Affairs under the Office of The Vice President (who is a woman), to provide policy guidance to Government and stakeholders on gender issues and women (The Gambia Gender and Women Empowerment Policy 2010-2020). Then in 2000, the government introduced free

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<sup>30</sup> <http://observer.gm/muslim-leaders-express-support-for-islamic-republic-declaration/>

education for girls, under the Education for All Initiative supported by UNICEF. And in 2012 the government tried to show gender parity by awarding women 9.4 percent permanent seats in parliament<sup>31</sup>.

Irrespective of these efforts, gender disparities in Gambian society still places women at a disadvantage domestically and professionally. It is believed that women in the rural communities are more affected by this, as they are more responsible for the 'home', generating income to feed their families, bearing, and raising children. Whereas, in the urban areas middle-class women are more likely to have 'maids' take care of their domestic chores and raise their children. According to Judith Carney and Michael Watts (1991), there have been gender divisions of labour within the Gambian farming system since the 1730s and has continued to the present. Carney and Watts assert, "*women provided the majority of labor time on the pumped plots while the male household head maintained his customary control over maruo production*" (674). Another study by Jagne et al. (2007) revealed that on average Gambian women spend 8/9 hours a day on farm work whilst men put in approximately 4 hours a day. At the same time, women are reported to have no control of their cash income and often sacrifice their own nutritional needs for the men and children in their households (UNICEF 2010).

These studies paint Gambian women as weak and vulnerable members of society. This may be true for some Gambian women but there is great heterogeneity among them. For example, when the 'miniskirt revolution' in the UK in the 1960s made its way to The Gambia in 1969, it became a symbol of freedom of expression for urban Gambian women. According to Hassoum Ceesay (2012), the feminist 'mini skirt' movements disrupted social norms and religious beliefs. Urban women wore miniskirts in rebellion and as a symbol of emancipation from the patriarchal society that placed them in subordinate roles despite objections from religious leaders, and pressure on the PPP government to ban this piece of clothing. This form of personal freedom was upheld because the urban women used their vote as leverage, which they knew the government needed. Though the miniskirt itself is less symbolic now, this story describes strong, dynamic, and politically aware Gambian women, who still exist despite the gender disparities in the country.

## **Poverty**

Poverty in The Gambia is exacerbated by internal and external factors, for example, the economic recession in donor countries, the recent Ebola outbreak,

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<sup>31</sup> UN Inter-Parliamentary Union (2016) <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

poor economic management, and harsh political conditions. In 2012, The Gambia ranked 165 out of 187 of the world's poorest countries with comparable data based on a composite measure of three basic dimensions; health, education and income. This index places The Gambia below the regional average with life expectancy at birth being at 58.5 years (UNDP Human Development Index 2013)

The African Development Fund (2006), Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (2016), and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in 2016 all carried out studies on poverty in The Gambia and shared similar findings. These studies confirmed that The Gambia was indeed one of the poorest countries in Africa. According to the IFAD report, this is partly because the country lacks economic diversity, which is a major barrier to poverty reduction. Additionally, the disparities between rural and urban, men and women mean that people living in the rural areas are more exposed to poverty and women are most vulnerable to poverty.

To tackle the poverty issues in the country, the Government of The Gambia has developed a number of poverty reduction strategy plans over the years. For example, the PRSP I (2002-2006), PRSP II (2007-2011), and Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment (PAGE) (2012-2015), with each one running their course but achieving less than their expected outcomes. The main focus of the last national strategy document the PAGE's was to create employment and improve industries to tackle the poverty in The Gambia. However, youth unemployment remains as one of the main challenges in The Gambia as 36.7% of the Gambian population are aged 13-30 and 38% of young Gambians were unemployed in 2014 (UNDP 2014).

The Government of The Gambia has plausible policy documents in place that show poverty-reduction to be a central official aspiration. Strategies such as the Agricultural and Natural Resources Policy (ANRP) 2009-2015, (which commits the government to transforming the country's agriculture into a robust, market-oriented sector), the Gender and Women Empowerment Policy 2010-2020, and the National Youth Policy 2009-2018, all show the government's willingness to formulate plans to tackle the poverty issues. However, their efforts are often hindered due to lack of financial resources, skilled staff and political will. Senior civil servants who were interviewed for this thesis said they feel demoralized by the lack of job security because of President Jammeh's constant hiring and firing of Permanent Secretaries and Ministers. Thus, on the one hand, the government appears to be tackling poverty in The Gambia by establishing national policies and

poverty reduction strategy documents but on the other hand, they also appear to be impeding their own efforts.

## **Politics**

The Gambia became a full Republic in April 1970 with President Sir Dawda Jawara and People Progressive Party (PPP) as the leader of the first independent government. After gaining independence in 1965, Queen Elizabeth II remained the Head of State to 1970. During this period, the PPP government made two attempts to replace the monarchy with a republic in a referendum but lost on the first attempt in November 1965. However, in 1966 the PPP government won more seats in the general election, which facilitated their win in the second referendum in 1970 (Perfect 2008). In the 1970s and 80s the country was known internationally for its multiparty democracy, which was an 'exception' on the African continent where military regimes and authoritarian leaders were the norm (Gailey 1980, Sallah 1990, Wiseman 1996, Edie 2000, Hughes and Perfect 2008, Perfect 2008, 2016, Saine 2009, Saine et al. 2013). However, this glowing reputation was disrupted first in 1981, with an attempted coup led by Kukoi Samba Sanyang (Perfect 2016), then again on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1994, by four Lieutenants in the Gambia National Army (GNA), Yahya Jammeh, Edward Singhateh, Saihou Sabally and Sadibou Hydara (Perfect 2016), who succeeded in overthrowing President Jawara in a bloodless military coup after ruling the country for nearly three decades.

Calling themselves the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC), which later became Alliance for Patriotic Re-orientation and Construction (APRC). Lieutenant Yahya Jammeh and his co-conspirators took over the country and orchestrated referendums and changes to the constitution that would secure his win three years later in the national elections in 1997 and thereafter (Wiseman 1996, Edie 2000, Saine 2009, Perfect 2008, Perfect and Hughes 2008, Saine and Ceesay 2013). Jammeh and his small group of loyalists ignored the desires of the Gambian people expressed through the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) to have a presidential term limit included in the Constitution and to increase the presidential age from thirty to forty years, which was supported by the Gambian Bar Association (Saine 2009). In addition, the new constitution did not allow former PPP members and other civil servants to stand in the 1997 presidential elections and it disqualified people who had been 'dismissed' from public office, as was the case for many who worked in the Jawara administration (Saine 2009). Therefore, with these measures in place, thirty-year-old Yahya Jammeh won the presidential election in 1997.

In the first interview with the coup plotters on the 25<sup>th</sup> July 1994, Jammeh and his co-conspirators claimed they were motivated to overthrow the PPP government because of overwhelming corruption in the country. But although many Gambians agreed that corruption by top government officers was a huge problem (Saine and Ceesay 2013), subsequent evidence suggests that the desire to acquire significant amounts of wealth and power was also a strong driver of the coup. According to external analysts, President Jammeh's leadership has been marked by violations of the rights of Gambians throughout (Amnesty International Report 2015/ 2016 and Human Rights Watch Report 2015).

In the 22 years of his leadership, President Jammeh has maintained tight controls over the state apparatus and lived a lavish lifestyle while poverty continues to ravage the country (Saine 2009). However, Gambian analyst Abdoulaye Saine (2009) also recognizes that Jammeh has brought some 'real' development to The Gambia in the form of expanding access to health and education to those living in rural areas, by building schools, hospitals, and roads. But, these positive development initiatives need to be placed alongside his lack of transparency and intolerance for any political opposition.

The recent attempted coup to overthrow President Jammeh on the 30<sup>th</sup> December 2014 by the six Gambian dissidents from the US has made him tighten his grip on the country even harder by ordering arbitrary arrests and allowing the national security services to openly brutalize Gambians with impunity <sup>32</sup> (Amnesty International 2015). The interviews revealed that people in the diaspora and The Gambia believe Jammeh is becoming increasingly paranoid about losing his position which they say explains why he is constantly reshuffling his cabinet ministers, firing top army officers and state guards, keeping army officers ill-equipped and storing heavy artillery in his 'home' village of Kanilai (Interviewees 2,15,16,28,and 65). Such claims are hard to substantiate, however, what is certain is that in his small circle, Jammeh has kept those he believe are loyal to him and expelled those he thinks are not. The current political situation in The Gambia has triggered some members of the diaspora to become politically engaged because they claim to be the only people that can help The Gambia out of 'dire' political conditions (Interviewees 4 and 21).

In essence, the formal political system in The Gambia has remained largely unchanged since independence, despite having two very different types of leaders.

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<sup>32</sup> By the 30<sup>th</sup> January 2014 30 people including a 14 year old boy name Mustapha Lowe were arrested. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/01/gambia-charge-or-release-family-members-alleged-failed-coup-plotters/>

The system is still based on democratic principles in that it has a multiparty political system and holds parliamentary elections every five years. The table below shows the political parties in The Gambia, their leaders and number of seats per party in the current Gambian National Assembly.

Table 4: Gambian Political Parties

<b>Parties</b>	<b>Leaders</b>	<b>Number of seats</b> <sup>33</sup>
Alliance for Patriotic Re-Orientation and Construction (APRC)	President Yahya AJJ Jammeh	43
United Democratic Party (UDP)	Ousainou Darboe	-
National Reconciliation Party (NRP)	Hamat Bah	1
People's Democratic Organisation for Independence and Socialism (PDOIS)	Halifa Sallah	-
National Convention Party (NCP)	Dr Lamin Bojang	-
People's Progressive Party (PPP)	Omar Amadou Jallow	-
Gambia Moral Congress (GMC)	Mai Ahmad Fatty	-
Gambia Party for Democracy and Progress (GPDP)	Henry Gomez	-

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union<sup>34</sup>

Elections in The Gambia are organized and managed by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). According to section 43, chapter 5 of the 1997 Constitution, the IEC is responsible for conducting and supervising voter registration, registering political parties, ensuring the date and times of elections and referendums are determined in accordance with the law, ensuring that candidates in elections declare their assets at time of nominations, and announcing results of elections and referendums. But most important, the Commission should not be subjected to

<sup>33</sup> There were 53 seats in the last parliamentary elections in 2012. Four of those seats were won by independent candidates

<sup>34</sup> [http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2117\\_E.htm](http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2117_E.htm)

the direction or control of any other person or authority. However, despite the constitutional independence of the IEC, critics of the status quo argue it is unfair that President Jammeh appoints the chairman, even though it is stated in part two, section 42 of the constitution. The opposition parties highlight the paradox in this document in that they believe it allows Jammeh to appoint people he can control and manipulate to suit him. However, having the majority of seats in the national assembly also allows Jammeh to manipulate the laws of the country. For instance, the recent reforms to the electoral law passed by parliament July 2015 have made it even harder for opposition parties (particularly small ones) to operate. In June 2015, President Jammeh introduced a new amendment to the election law,<sup>35</sup> increasing the fees for running for elections by 100 times. Making candidates pay 1 million dalasi (£15,000) to stand for presidential elections. Additionally, the new electoral law states that parties are supposed to conduct congresses every two years and submit their annual financial reports to the IEC for scrutiny. Furthermore, all executive members of all political parties must be resident in the country, and individual parties must now supply 10,000 signatures for registration instead of the 500 that had previously been required<sup>36</sup>. An interviewee from one of the Gambian diaspora civil society groups working with the political opposition in The Gambia claimed that this electoral bill will make opposition parties look to the diaspora for help (Interviewee 14, male, 50s, professional/activist). I can assume this claim to be accurate, as this interviewee has been working closely with leaders of opposition parties like the PPP, UDP, NRP and PDOIS. Additionally, since this bill was passed, the diaspora founded organization Gambia Democracy Fund (GDF) have set up a 'gofundme' account for the opposition party, raising \$21,386 in 19 days<sup>37</sup>.

However, despite receiving support from the diaspora, in April 2016 the United Democratic Party (UDP) opposition political parties staged a peaceful protest for new electoral reforms. This was a first for the opposition parties who have previously been criticized for being inactive when the government makes unfavourable decisions. However, the demonstrations ended in violence as dozens of Gambian men and women were arrested and allegedly beaten by the national security services<sup>38</sup>. The UDP's National Organising Secretary Solo Sandeng, subsequently died while in custody and in July 2016 and the UDP leader, Ousainou Darboe and 18 others were convicted and sentenced to three years in

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<sup>35</sup> <http://observer.gm/independent-electoral-commission-amendment-bill-enacted/>

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/gambia/11694614/Gambias-president-increases-cost-of-running-for-election-by-100-times.html>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.gofundme.com/the-gambia-coalition-convention-2v3yp5zg>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/04/gambia-yahya-jammeh-protests-uprising-solo-sandeng>



jail for taking part in an unauthorized demonstration<sup>39</sup>. The outcomes of this April 2016 protest support the claims made by the politically involved Gambian diaspora and some of the literature that diasporas engagement in politics involves much less risk than for those at 'home'. Nevertheless, the 'unjust' way in which the government handled this protest triggered a series of other protests in The Gambia with people openly displaying their dissatisfaction with the APRC government in general and President Jammeh in particular. These protests indicated that some Gambians are now no longer willing to live in fear and silence. The photograph below is of the leader of the UDP party, Ousainou Darboe and his party members protesting for electoral reforms. The protests were held in the Greater Banjul Area called Serekunda, Westfield.

Figure 5: Protest by the opposition party for Electoral Reforms



Source: Kibaaro News

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-36853700>

## Economy

The Gambian economy performed reasonably well after independence until the early 1980s, when it began to decline due to the international oil crisis, droughts, and a fall in groundnut prices (Sallah 1990, Radelet 1992, 1993, Saine 2009, Perfect 2008 2016). It has been argued by analyst David Perfect (2008) that the economic downturn was a combination of both of these external factors and internal issues, such as poorly selected investment projects, a growing budget deficit, poor economic policies and over expenditure of the government on unproductive public enterprises (parastatals). These factors pushed the Gambian economy to the brink of collapse in 1985. The economic problems were so severe that the IMF and other donors refused to continue providing assistance to the country until a broad and comprehensive Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) was implemented in every sector. According to former-President Sir Dawda Jawara:

The government was obliged to consider and adopt the ERP, which was to help (the) development efforts of the country and was quite successful despite its difficulty. The ERP was approached and adopted as a whole and comprehensively despite rough conditionality<sup>40</sup> (Interview Jawara 2013)

The conditions of the ERP were the devaluation of the dalasi by 25% to boost exports, the revitalization of agriculture through changes in pricing policies, the promotion of tourism and fisheries, a reduction in the size of the civil service, an improvement in the performance of the parastatal sector, a cut in the budget deficit, and a reorientation of the public investment programmes in exchange for a rescheduling and refinancing of the country's external debt (Perfect 2016; 128-9). According to Jawara, the roughest conditionality in the ERP was freezing civil servants' wages as well as reducing the overall size of the civil service. This meant that some people in the Gambian Gambian civil servants lost their jobs though I do not have any data on the absolute numbers. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Finance developed and implemented the ERP and reformed every economic sector in the country (Radelet 1992). Subsequently, the Gambian economy grew approximately 12 percent from 1985-88. The success of this neo-liberal structural adjustment programme is perhaps surprising given the general assumption in the development studies literature that such changes are counter-productive (Easterly 2003). However, the success of this programme in The Gambia was attributed to it being

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<sup>40</sup> Interview was conducted with the former President Jawara at his residence in Fajara, The Gambia on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2013.

designed specifically for the country context and receiving little objection from the public when it being implemented (Radelet 1992).

By 1994, the economy was recovering from the previous economic problems, however, the military coup created additional challenges for the economy. Major donors, like the British, stopped aid to the country until a democratic government was restored. After the coup, Jammeh and his party lacked their own economic programme and vision, according to Gambian academic Abdoulaye Saine (2009). But in 1996, they introduced a neoliberal economic policy called the Vision 2020, which aims to transform The Gambia into a middle-income country that builds on a well-trained human resource base through a private sector led development strategy. According to the Vision 2020 strategy document, the government aims to enhance the contributions of the service sector (which constitutes 50% of the economy's output) by boosting the financial services, international trade and tourism<sup>41</sup> in the country. However, despite having this detailed plan in place, the recent economic performance of the country indicates that it is not yet close to middle-income criteria partly because the country lacks the financial and skilled human resources to implement the programmes effectively.

Notwithstanding, the main drivers of the Gambian economy have been the agricultural and tourism sectors. According to the Gambia National Agriculture Investment Plan (2011-2015), the agricultural sector employs 75 percent of the country's population, and women make up more than 50% of the labour force (IFAD 2016). However, the problems that affect the agricultural sector include the increasingly erratic rainfall, seawater intrusion into cultivable lands, food price volatility, and financial crises<sup>42</sup> (IFAD 2016; 1). Nevertheless, the future potential of the agricultural sector in relation to national development seems positive because the sector is the largest employer, and it meets 50 percent of the national food requirements. Additionally, the agricultural sector contributes 25 percent of the GDP and shares the country's total exports of 70 percent, thus constituting a substantial part of The Gambia's foreign exchange earnings (Gambia National Agriculture Investment Plan (2011-2015). Furthermore, small-scale farmers appear to be central to the farming system and pivotal in increasing Agriculture Gross Domestic Product (AGDP). They are likely to produce 'development' over the medium and long term because they cultivate most of the lowland rice and horticulture as well as engage in processing and marketing of agricultural products. According to a Gambian agricultural expert, even though groundnut production has

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<sup>41</sup> <http://statehouse.gov.gm/vision-2020-part-1-long-term-objectives/>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/e12761e1-8d18-4ab2-82df-5ddf5cacb305>

significantly declined over the year, there is scope to increase productivity, as it is cultivated in every district in the country and quite adaptable to the agro-ecology of The Gambia. However, this expert also recognized the need to diversify the crop production base in the country by growing and exporting rice, onions, soybeans and sugarcane.

The tourism sector is one of the biggest sources of foreign exchange in the country (Wolfgang et al. 2014). However, tourism has attracted a significant number of foreign men and women to the country to engage in paedophilia and other sexual activities (Brown 1992, UNICEF Study on Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in The Gambia 2003, Chant and Evans 2010). The Gambia has a reputation for being 'hotspot' for sex tourism, which places the government in a difficult position of wanting to stop the exploitation of local Gambians on the one hand but also needing the revenue from tourism on the other.

The other sectors which have recently been experiencing significant growth have been the telecommunication and banking sectors, largely because of investments by Nigerian banks and Lebanese telecommunication companies. However, the concerns associated with these new economic contributors are exposure to money laundering. For example, Prime Bank (Gambia) Limited was implicated in laundering \$200 million a month in drug proceeds from cocaine traffickers, which led to the bank's liquidation in January 2013 (Corr and Vadsaria 2013).

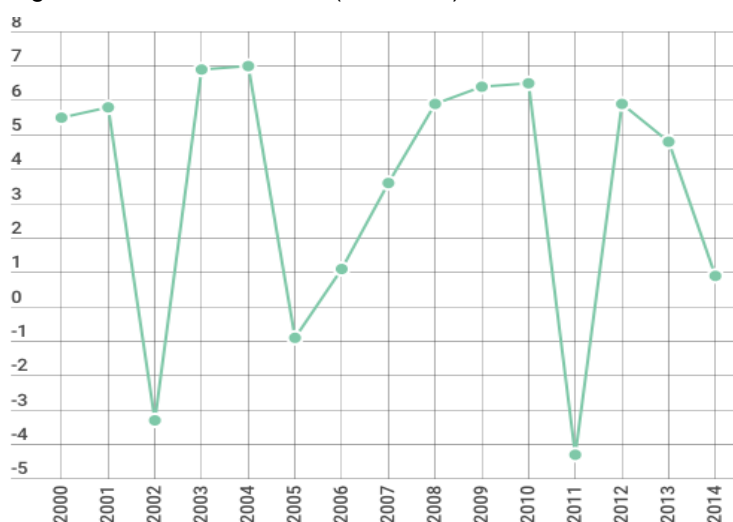
However, despite the many challenges facing the Gambian economy, there has been some growth since 2000 (see graph below). This is driven mainly by good performance in the agricultural sector<sup>43</sup>. But the Gambian people are not enjoying the benefits of the growing economy because poverty continues to increase every year. Perhaps, part of the reason the economic benefits are not reaching the grassroots is because the additional income is being used to service high debts. For example, in 2006 the country repaid 133.1 percent of GDP to service its external debt. Also in 2006, the country qualified for Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) debt relief, and after that remission of debt, repayments were reduced to around 40% of GDP. This has now risen to around 50% of GDP in 2015 (Central Bank of the Gambia). Also, at the end of 2012, the debt repayments were roughly 111.5 percent of exports plus remittances (Nord et al. 2013; 2), which shows that government's debts are increasing faster than the national economy is

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<sup>43</sup>[http://www.youthpolicy.org/library/wpcontent/uploads/library/2012\\_African\\_Economic\\_Outlook\\_Gambia\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.youthpolicy.org/library/wpcontent/uploads/library/2012_African_Economic_Outlook_Gambia_Eng.pdf)

growing. Therefore, spending on development is less and dependence on aid and loans is more<sup>44</sup>.

Figure 6: The GDP Growth (annual %) of The Gambia



Source: The World Bank – World databank<sup>45</sup>

### 3.3 The Migratory History and Features of The Gambian Diaspora and their Associations

The difficulty of obtaining data on the history of migration of Gambians to Western countries particularly during the pre-independence period means that the thesis has had to focus on the migration of Gambians to Western countries in the post-independence period where there is some data available though this is limited. In 2010, it was estimated that approximately 65,000 Gambians live abroad, constituting around 4 percent of the population (Kebbeh 2013). This has now risen to approximately 89,634 Gambians living abroad in 2015 (IOM 2015). The majority of Gambians to migrate to Spain (to work on farms) and other countries in Europe, the US and Africa, according to figure 7 According to Gambian economist C Omar Kebbeh (2013), the emigration trends of contemporary Gambians show that from the 1960s Gambians migrated largely to the UK for studies and work. Then there was a shift in the late 1980s as Gambians began migrating to North America in search of work and better living conditions because the Gambian economy was performing poorly and there were inadequate services at ‘home’ and because the USA provided more opportunities than the UK. The third push factor came in 1994 when the country experienced a military coup d’état, which caused many

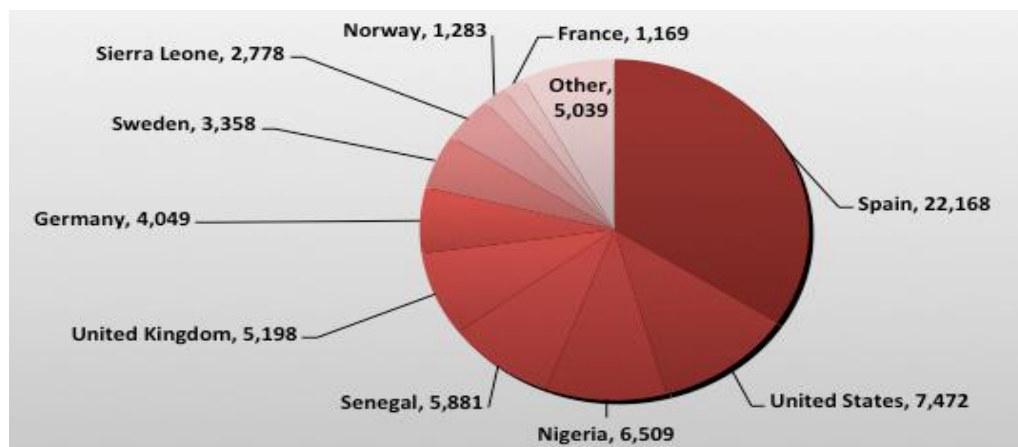
<sup>44</sup> UNDP Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (2014) Country Policy Brief [http://www.undp.org/content/dam/gambia/docs/GMB\\_UNDP\\_Gambia\\_Policy\\_Brief.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/gambia/docs/GMB_UNDP_Gambia_Policy_Brief.pdf)

<sup>45</sup>[http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?Code=NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG&id=af3ce82b&report\\_name=Popular\\_indicators&populartype=series&ispopular=y](http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?Code=NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG&id=af3ce82b&report_name=Popular_indicators&populartype=series&ispopular=y)

Gambians to migrate to the UK and other European countries as asylum seekers. And more recently, many young Gambians are embarking on the 'backway' migration journey on boats to the Mediterranean. According to Eurostat figure, Gambian asylum applications in EU countries in 2015 are 12,395, rising from 960 in 2008. This has prompted receiving EU countries to tighten their immigration policies to Gambians. However, this has not stopped many young Gambian men and women from migrating to Europe, illegally, in search of better opportunities (Kebbeh, 2013).

One of the benefits of the migration of Gambians is that they are sending remittance to help their families and simultaneously furnishing the economy. As outlined in some of the literature, migrant remittances help to alleviate household poverty, fund town/village developments, contribute to a country's GDP as well as brings foreign exchange into a country (Kuznetsov and Sabel 2006, Skeldon 2009, de Haas 2012, Newland 2011, 2013). However, the unfortunate aspect of this is that the Gambian government is not able to effectively tap into migrant resources to enhance development in socially productive ways because the relationship between the government and a proportion of Gambians abroad is fraught.

Figure 7: The distribution of Gambian emigrants by destination country, 2010



Source: The World Bank, 2010. Global Bilateral Migration

### The Gambian UK and US Diaspora

The Gambian diaspora in the UK and the US comprise of a heterogeneous group of people. According to the figure 7, there were approximately 5,198 registered Gambians living across the UK and 7,472 in the US in 2010. However, there are also a significant number of unregistered Gambians living in these countries. The Gambian diaspora is composed of first, second and even third generation migrants

and the empirical evidence from this research suggests that the majority of first generation Gambians in the diaspora have maintained links to the country through their families and/or properties. This is perhaps because they are a new diaspora that they migrated out of the country not too long ago. The second and third generation seem to follow the footsteps of the first generation in maintaining their links to the country through the same channels. Their engagement is demonstrated through the remittances they send and trips they make to their country of heritage.

The Gambian diaspora also form hometown associations through which they engage in development projects, such as building hospitals, sending medical supplies and equipment to local hospitals, donating books to school libraries, and offering scholarships to students, details of which are discussed in chapter 5. The empirical evidence shows that a significant number of Gambians in the diaspora also put great efforts into integrating into their host societies, whilst simultaneously pushing their children to retain their emotional links to the country. For example, the Gambian cultural week is held in London every summer and it brings together Gambians around the UK and other in European countries. During this event in 2013, I spoke to many Gambian parents who claimed to have attended for the purpose of re-establishing old friendships and to strengthen unity within the Gambian community, as they are “all one Gambia”. The informants also said they use this event as an opportunity to teach their children about Gambian culture. The table below provides a typology of Gambians living in the UK and the US. These categories are not fixed as the members move from one category to another.

Table 5: Typologies of the Gambian diaspora in the UK and US

<b>Diaspora</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>
Students	These groups study in UK and US colleges and universities. They migrate to the UK with student visas and in some cases stay and find jobs. Their migration is usually facilitated by academic or professional scholarships or privately funded by their families (parents).
Skilled and professional diaspora	These groups have acquired higher education qualifications from abroad and they work in reputable institutions in

	<p>areas such as higher education, medicine, legal services, or engineers. They tend to keep links with the Gambia through family or extended family who they support.</p>
Unskilled	<p>These groups tend to have limited academic qualifications unlikely to be beyond- high school level and they find work in the service sectors, such as supermarkets, security, and cleaners and care workers. They entered the UK and US usually with holiday visas and overstayed. To gain the correct immigration status, they married a citizen of their host country and have children. These groups also maintain their links to the country through family and friends and they often send remittances 'home'. Arguably, the unskilled Gambians in the diaspora tend to originate from the rural areas and have been exposed to extreme poverty, which has affected their education.</p>
Political exile diaspora	<p>The older generations in these groups tend to come from the educated elite class, which is not the same for the younger generation of exiled Gambian diasporas. Though they left the country for fear of their safety, they still maintain their links to the country and send remittances.</p>
Illegal diasporas	<p>These groups tend to not have the correct immigration status to remain in the UK or US because either they have overstayed their visa period or they entered the UK or US using someone else's travel documents. However, they tend to find jobs that pay cash in hand</p>



	or they borrow work documents like a National Insurance number from friends or family in order to work. This group also has the responsibility of caring for their families in The Gambia, thus they engaged in various income-generating activities (both legal and illegal) to send money 'home'. However, as their target is to obtain the correct immigration status, most would get married to nationals and have children to secure their stay in their host countries.
Second and third generations	These groups are born in the UK or US to migrant parents, but have remained rooted in their host countries, and have UK or US citizenship. However, they tend to visit the country on holiday and establish their own links and network of friends
Business diaspora	These groups travel between The Gambia and their host countries. They divide their time between 'home' and host country because they tend to have homes and families in both. They are not always highly educated but often highly skilled as they juggle their businesses in both places.

Source: Identified by Sainabou Taal

### **Gambian Diaspora Associations in the UK**

There were approximately 15 Gambian associations across the UK in 2013 (see appendix 2 for a list). Most of these associations were established when a member of the community passed away and people came together to raise funds to repatriate the deceased back to The Gambia. These hometown associations have varied numbers of registered members, ranging between 50 and 500. The interviews with the associations revealed only six of them were involved in development activities in The Gambia but they were infrequent. This finding is

similar to Giles Mohan (2006) study of the Ghanaian diaspora in Milton Keynes, which revealed their development activities in Ghana were also not frequent.

This research focused on the UK Gambian associations because they were more easily accessible. The interviews revealed that the association organize social and cultural activities to promote Gambian culture in their host countries and amongst the younger generation. These associations also help members with immigration problems as well as those struggling to integrate into their host society. These ten associations claimed to be apolitical and therefore did not provide space for political discussions; however, there are individuals in the associations who are involved in the political interventions of the Gambian diaspora at 'home'.

Some of the main challenges in the associations are building their memberships base and getting members to be active and pay membership fees. Additionally, there is a great lack of trust and co-operation between the associations, which affects their ability to collaborate on events (these will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6). Furthermore, the gender relations in these associations are such that the financial activities (including setting budgets and collecting membership fees) tend to be handled by the men, and the women are given domestic roles such as cooking and organizing refreshments at events.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter demonstrates the many political, economic and developmental challenges in The Gambia, as well as the efforts made by the government to address them through some key policies and initiatives. However, I argued that these challenges drive some Gambians to first migrate overseas and second intervene in the country through development and/or politics. It is clear that the poverty and political conditions in the country drives the diaspora to intervene in homeland affairs. For example, the current political situation in The Gambia has many people living in fear and unable to enjoy certain liberties, which has subsequently triggered some members of the Gambian diaspora to intervene in politics on their behalf. And their most effective form of political intervention is exposing the activities of the government, in particular, human rights violations to key international donors in the hope that it would put pressure on the government to respect the rights of Gambians. The Gambian diaspora is able to mobilize transnationally and form opinions that are unfavourable to their 'home' government, with little personal risk in comparison to those on the ground.

In addition, the poor performing economy has also meant that a large proportion of people in The Gambia are relying on their family and friends in the diaspora for financial and material assistance. Thus, some members of the Gambian diaspora feel they have a right to intervene in homeland affairs because they are filling the socio-economic development gaps created or exacerbated by the Gambian government.

However, the empirical findings also revealed that the relationship between the government and Gambians abroad was not always a difficult one. According to former President Jawara:

My government had a good relationship with the diaspora and was able to maintain it because the Gambian embassies kept in touch with the Gambian diaspora. When I was President, I would meet members of the diaspora on my travels and had direct contact with them. And Government representatives always maintained the relationship.

This shows there is hope for the country to move forward from the current stalemate created by the relationship breakdown between the current Gambian government and the diaspora. By looking at how the previous government managed that relationship. Though this would be a difficult task because some people's feelings towards Jammeh has drastically changed from when they believed he would rid the country of corruption to the seeing him grossly violate the rights of Gambians and mismanage the national resources. On the other hand, it is also important to recognize that Jammeh is not responsible for all the development challenges in The Gambia. For example, there are other factors (pre-Jammeh) that contributed to the economic challenges in the country. For example, The Gambia inherited a single cash crop export economy of groundnuts from the colonialism, which gets affected by the climate and the world economy. And more important every government since independence has found it difficult to diversify the economy. Therefore, I argue that the effects of colonialism in The Gambia warrants further research because the findings show that Jammeh had to contend with economic issues beyond his control.

Finally, as mentioned in the introduction and literature review chapters, this research aims to contribute to knowledge about the Gambian diaspora who have not received much research attention. However, this chapter has shown that the lack of data (both quantitative and qualitative) on the migration of Gambians has made it impossible to discuss the pre-independence migration history of Gambians

to Western countries. It has also made it difficult to determine the geography of the Gambian diaspora within the UK and US and the socio-economic characteristics of different groups from secondary sources. Therefore, there is scope for more research to further enhance knowledge about the Gambian diaspora in the UK and US and the impacts they have on development and politics in The Gambia.

# Chapter 4:

## Embarking on a Research Journey

### 4.1 Introduction

In chapter 2 it was argued that there is a need for more empirical research on the roles played by *small* diasporas in development as well as in politics at 'home'. In particular, groups like the Gambian diaspora who have not received research attention despite the significant amount of remittance they send 'home' and their increasing involvement in politics. This chapter sets out the research design, methods, and data used in this study in its attempt to meet this empirical goal. This research is a multi-sited study of the Gambian diaspora in the UK and the US and Gambian citizens in the 'home' country. It uses purely qualitative data although some quantitative figures from secondary sources have also been incorporated.

This chapter opens with descriptions of the puzzle that motivated my research and how my ideas evolved into a thesis. This is followed by a discussion of my understanding of 'methodology' and my reasons for choosing a qualitative approach. There is also a discussion of the key research questions, which organize the empirical research and from which the thesis design flows. After that, the chapter turns to more practical matters such as giving an account of how interviewees were selected and how the triangulation of data was approached. It then moves on to detailing the three-stages of fieldwork and data collection on which this thesis is based. This chapter also discusses the data analysis process and the limitations of the research, which includes addressing the sensitive issues, risks, ethics, and questions about the researcher's positionality.

### 4.2 The Journey to this Research Project

Growing up as part of the Gambian diaspora, I was inspired to research this group as an academic piece of work because I was intrigued by the intricacies of the relationship between the Gambian diaspora and 'home'. I understood the strong links the diaspora had with the people in The Gambia but I wanted to have a deeper understanding of how those links determine the activities of members of the Gambian diaspora who chose to get involved at 'home', what they did and why.

Additionally, my own curiosity about life in The Gambia encouraged me to move there in 2010. But after spending eighteen months living and working in the country for the national government and international development organisations.

It became clear to me that the country's public and private sectors were suffering from the brain drain of highly skilled professionals. The scale of this flow was captured in a World Bank report in 2010, which stated that 62% of the educated Gambian populace lived abroad and drew attention to the problematic development consequences. However, it was also clear to me that the financial contributions from the diaspora had a significant impact on alleviating household poverty and increasing consumptions at the household level. Thus, migration both undermined and sustained Gambian development and this paradox intrigued me. When I returned to the UK in 2012, I began conversing with members of the diaspora and found there were some frustrations about the practice of 'politics' in The Gambia. Yet these people remained in the diaspora and their capacity to intervene in politics from overseas seemed to be constrained even as they declared it to be a central goal. Again there was a paradox as the Gambian diaspora seemed to have leverage because of their resources and remittances, but they also seemed powerless to have any political impact at 'home'. These contradictions seemed to merit further examination.

Like any researcher, I had multiple choices (some conscious, some unconscious) about how my ideas, my data and my analysis relate to the process of research, the production of knowledge and, indeed, to the world itself. But, before I could make any decisions about how I was going to design this research, I needed to gain some understanding around the philosophies of what research is. Most textbook accounts of knowledge production organize these ideas along three axes: ontology ('theories of being'), epistemology (theories of knowledge), and methodology ('theories of method'). Thinking about my research through this framework helped me to bring my beliefs and choices into the foreground (Greener 2011). Thus, I sought knowledge in the literature on qualitative research methods and found key questions posed by Guba and Lincoln (1994), very useful. The questions that guided the planning process of this research were:

- *“What is reality like and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it?”*
- *“What is the relationship between the knower and what can be known?”*
- *“How can the would-be knower go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known?”* (108).

These questions helped me to understand ideas in the different research paradigms (Blaikie 2010). Additionally, I learned how different research approaches fit within the different answers to these questions. The table below from Guba and Lincoln (1994) proved to be very useful in this process.

Table 6: Basic belief (metaphysics) of alternative research paradigms

	Positivism	Post-positivism	Critical theory	Constructivism
Ontology	reality is apprehendable - this is known as naïve realism	reality is apprehendable – based on approximation which makes it an imperfect reality- this is known as critical realism	Reality is shaped by social, political, cultural, economic and gender values – this is known as historical realism	Reality is locally and specifically constructed – this is known as relativism
Epistemology	The researcher and participants are independent and the researcher is capable of studying the participants without influencing it or being influenced by it- this is known as dualist and objectivist	The researcher can approximate but will never fully know. Their findings are probably true but subject to falsification- this is known as modified dualist and objectivist	The researcher and participants are assumed to be interactively linked with the values of the researcher inevitably influencing the findings – this is known as transactional and subjectivist	The researcher and participants are assumed to be interactively linked and therefore findings are created as the investigation proceeds – this is known as transactional and subjectivist

Methodology	Hypotheses are set and tested using mainly quantitative methods – but conditions of experiment must be controlled to avoid outcomes being improperly influenced– this is known as experimental and manipulative	Hypotheses are falsified rather than verified – which may include qualitative methods – this is known as modified experimental/ manipulative	Conversation between the researcher and participants must take place in a way that would transform any lack of knowledge and misunderstanding into informed consciousness – this is known as dialogic and dialectical	The relationship between the researcher and participant can be refined through mediation and translation of language – this is known as hermeneutical and dialectical
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Source: Guba and Lincoln, 1994; 109

Ultimately, such tables invariably seem a bit simplistic and overly tidy in its categorization. However, I could empathize with elements of these paradigms that helped me to understand my own position, drawing particularly on post-positivist and critical realist traditions. On the one hand, I do feel that interviews and observation can guide researchers towards the possibility of re-presenting an already existing reality, but it is a representation that has to be understood as an interpretation of that reality. On the other hand, I am also drawn to the sense of knowledge production as a conversation or dialogue between the researcher and the object of their studies is more dynamic than a process of hypothesis testing. I hoped that the process of generating the data for this thesis was as consciously productive and elucidating for the people I encountered during my studies as it was for me.

Once I had a better understanding of research methodologies, I began formulating my research questions. During the process, I had to answer additional questions, like ‘if these are my questions, then what data do I need?’ and ‘if this is the data I



need then what methods do I use to generate that data?' Through answering them, I came to the realisation that this would be a qualitative study because I needed rich descriptions and individual points of view, which arguably could only be gained using qualitative methods, like in-depth interviews and to a lesser extent, participant observation. These are the data acquisition methods, which give a deeper understanding of people's behaviour and ideas.

As stated in the introduction chapter, there are four research questions in this thesis and they are as follows:

1. *How, why and where does the diaspora contribute to development in The Gambia?*
2. *How has the Gambian diaspora mobilized politically in the UK and US to intervene in politics in The Gambia?*
3. *What is the response to these interventions in The Gambia?*
4. *What are the wider implications of this study in understanding the relationship between development, migration, and politics in the Gambian context?*

The decision to use a qualitative methodology is based on recognizing my own assumption that it allows for an *interpretive approach* to the subject matter (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). "*Interpretive methods of research starts from the position that our knowledge of reality, including the domain of human action, is a social construction by human actors...*" (Walsham 2006; 320). Walsham defines 'reality' as how people make sense of the empirical world, thus is 'reality' a social construction. Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) argue, "*that people create and associate their own subjective and intersubjective meanings as they interact with the world around them*" (5). Therefore, 'reality' also is shaped by people's social interactions. These interactions are different for everyone; it is possible to discern some general patterns and the search for these patterns are what underpin the ambitions of a qualitative research study. As such, no single objective truth can be discovered from interpretive research and knowledge cannot be replicated or generalized. Therefore, believing that 'reality' is subjective and socially constructed makes it difficult to discern if some of the claims made in the interviews are real or perceived. Thus, in this thesis I have treated claims made by the interviewees as perceptions or falsehoods where there is no concrete evidence to suggest that they are objective truths. However, this should not be seen as a disadvantage for this study as the aim is to understand the realities and perceptions of this heterogeneous group of people in order to identify patterns

about what motivates them to get involved with development/politics The Gambia. The authority in this study is drawn from the depth of engagement rather than through recourse to representative sampling and statistical hypothesis testing.

### **4.3 Data Acquisition Methods**

#### **In-depth Interviews**

I chose to use in-depth interviews as one of the data acquisition methods in this research because it allowed me to embed myself in the milieu of the groups and build relationships that would enable me to obtain rich and descriptive information from the Gambian diaspora and those on the ground. The interviews allowed me to “*get to grips with the contexts and contents of different people’s everyday social, cultural, political and economic lives*” (Crang and Cook 2007; 60). This was extremely useful for this research because I gained insight into how the interviewees embody certain practices, feelings, and perspectives on the subject matter (Crang and Cook 2007 and Hitchings 2012). For example, the practice of sending money ‘home’, brought feelings of pride and happiness for the majority of interviewees (the diaspora and recipients), whose perceive this as a responsibility.

In general, the interviews I conducted in the field went well and I was able to obtain useful insight on the topics that were discussed. However, I had two difficult interviews, which resulted in me having to re-evaluate and adjust my interviewing techniques and approach. For example, the first challenging interview was conducted on the 25th July 2014 at a beachside bar with a non-Gambian man, who has lived in the country for a significant number of years, married a Gambian woman and adopted a Gambian child. This man (interviewee 56) was part of a Listserv called “Community of Gambianist scholars” of which I am also a member. I noticed his contributions to the group were often controversial and thus I believed he would be an interesting person to interview because it seemed he had a lot to say about different aspects of Gambian society and people. I assumed that as a non-Gambians he would be open to speak to me about politics. However, this assumption was entirely incorrect as the interview was a complete failure. It was uncomfortable for both the interviewee and I because he became rude and aggressive when I brought up the topic of politics. The interviewee refused to be recorded or give consent or answer my questions. They also tried to threaten me indirectly, by insisting that I give them the names of my primary and secondary supervisors, indicating that they were going to get in contact with them to report me. I learned from this interview that I needed to build relationships with all my

interviewees first and recognize that fear of political repression was as much a factor for non-Gambians living in the country as the Gambians. This made me think about the question of ethics and consent, thus I could not use the data I collected from this interviewee.

The other challenging interview was with a Gambian religious Imam in the US who had fled from political persecution. This interview was also unsuccessful because I began by asking him to explain his reasons for leaving the country, which was clearly a sensitive issue. The interviewee immediately got uncomfortable and defensive, and even though he did not end the interview immediately, he rushed through his answers and did not give me a chance to probe. This was another error on my part because I went into this interview again assuming I knew this interviewees' story because I had been following it online. This annoyed the interviewee because they wanted to tell me their own story. They explained that they did not like how I started the interview and they would have preferred I asked them to give their background and not go straight into why they left the country. I realized this was an amateur mistake of a young researcher and thus had to accept that the information I was going to gather from this interview may not be helpful. However, I had the opportunity to meet this interviewee in person at the forum in New York and was able to redeem myself as a genuine researcher by sharing my findings and participating in discussions with the wider group.

Both interviews were a huge learning experience because I made mistakes that any new researcher would make. I went into the interviews with too many assumptions and did not invest time in building a relationship with the interviewees and gaining their trust. In hindsight, I would have received better outcomes from the first difficult interview if I had conducted the interview over the course of several separate occasions as well as waited to ask the more sensitive questions later.

I also learned from the interviews that the interviewees responded better if they knew we had people in common. Thus, before each interview, I would find out the connections I had with the interviewees and I would use that to create some familiarity between the interviewees and myself. For example, realising that family or personal connections are extremely important to Gambians, I would find out if I knew their children or other close relatives and I would start the interview by asking about that person and telling the interviewee my relationship with them. This proved to be very useful and it made the interviewees more open in talking to me.

## **Participant Observation**

Participant observation allows researchers to capture data that would otherwise be missed out in statistical studies (Phillips and Johns 2012). According to Davies (2008), the quality of data from participant observation is judged in terms of its reliability, validity, and generalization. The reliability relates to the repeatability of research findings and their accessibility to other researchers and the validity refers to the 'authority' and correctness of the findings. However, generalization is more complicated as researchers are often reluctant to make claims about generalizability beyond their immediate locale (95). The purpose of using participant observation in this research is to learn about the social realities of the diaspora and people in The Gambia. Participant observation is also about building up the trust between the researcher and the diaspora in the hope of increasing openness and thoughtfulness in interviews. This method is considered less artificial than interviews because the researcher's presence is less formal and less visible (see discussion of positionality later) so, the ambition was that participant observation gives a better insight into the workings of the diaspora as if the researcher was not there.

During my time in The Gambia, I attended the July 22nd celebrations at the national stadium in October 2014. The celebrations were in honour of the 22nd July 1994 military coup, which the government and their supporters have termed 'the revolution'. I attended this event to observe, take pictures, and speak to supporters of the government. Whilst making my way into the stadium, I saw crowds of people, (young/ old, men/women, boys/ girls) singing, and dancing. The majority of them were wearing green (the government party colour) and the elderly women wore traditional outfits made with material that had President Jammeh's face printed on it. There was a high presence of armed paramilitary officers and the atmosphere felt intimidating even though people appeared celebratory. I approached a group of young girls and boys (the green boys and girls) and asked if I could take photographs of them, but they absolutely refused. This made me cautious about my presence and whom I spoke to.

In the stadium, the people were clearly tired and dehydrated from sitting under the hot sun but they continued to cheer and clap for every official vehicle that entered the stadium. The heat was so extreme that members of the military band were fainting and being taken away by paramedics, yet people seemed undeterred to show their loyalty to the president, whom I learnt arrived five hours late. I left the stadium after two hours when I began feeling unwell from the heat.

What I learned from doing participant observation at this event was that it is important to blend in, especially in uncertain situations and to be prepared (for example, I should've taken water to drink and wore sunglasses and a hat so I could've stayed until the end of the event or at least to see President Jammeh arrive). Though people appeared happy, I did not feel safe to tell them that I was a researcher, because I did not want to create suspicion. Thus, I joined in with the crowd to cheer and clap for the officials entering the stadium. However, because of this, the people who sat beside me were open in talking about why they support the regime, and I was able to turn this information into interview questions for the politically involved Gambians in the diaspora.

### **Textual Material**

This research also acquired secondary data from textual material, including newspapers, reports from the British colonial Administration, online newspapers, blogs, Facebook posts, listserv group (Community of Gambianist scholars) Gambian, group chats on mobile applications such as Viber and WhatsApp, Government of The Gambia reports, studies, surveys and policies, and report from various UN agencies, IOM, EU, IFAD, World Bank, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Whilst in The Gambia, I frequently visited the national archives located in the capital city of Banjul, to look through the colonial reports and newspapers. My original intention was to gather information about the political, development and migration history of the country, in order to address research question four as well as have data for chapter 3. The archival materials gave details of the problems of underdevelopment and poverty since colonial times and possibly before. The newspaper articles dated back from independence to the early 2000s, and they confirmed some of the claims made by interviewees (for example in relation to President Jammeh's political strategies). For example, in the articles published directly after the 1994 coup d'état, Jammeh promised that the country would not be a dictatorship because he would improve leadership, governance and reforms to the electoral commission. These articles helped me to capture the mood at that time and to understand the disappointment of those who argued in interviews that Jammeh had gone back on his words.

In addition, there was many useful data collected from the Internet (Ó Dochartaigh 2012) for this research. The Internet is believed to be a powerful and efficient tool for researching (Olalude 2007). However, I learned that it was necessary to

evaluate Internet sources, because as Rubin et al. (2009) asserts, “*along with much information and websites of top quality, there is enough propaganda, disinformation and misinformation on the Internet that it pays to develop the suspicious side of your nature*” (86). For example, I found with some of the information from the blogs, Facebook posts and diaspora-owned newspapers, which seemed questionable. Thus, it took more time than expected to fact check, as I had to apply the CARS checklist<sup>46</sup> created by Robert Harris and Andrew Spinks in 2007, to determine if the data was accurate or simply speculative.

I also wanted to understand why some information was presented in certain ways and in what context some arguments were being made online. This required getting information about the contributors themselves, which was at times challenging especially on Facebook, which allows people to maintain their anonymity and selective engagement. This was different to listserv group (where membership is more effectively limited) as the contributors on this forums want to be known. This certainly shaped different types of political discussion because on Facebook the language was much more aggressive and people used profanities (see p. 206). Whereas, the language used in the listserv group was more professional and academic. The contributors also made effort to provide data and evidence to support their claims. There was also a lack of trust from people on Facebook, for example, I contacted many Gambian based on their posts, but I hardly received any responses to my messages. However, on one occasion, I saw an interesting comment accusing members of the Gambian diaspora of being ‘internet warriors’, who are too cowardice to identify themselves because they know they are wrong for tarnishing the country’s image. I immediately sent a message to this person, explaining that I was a researcher and would like to speak to them about their post. The person replied to my message simply saying, “I don’t trust you.”

#### **4.4 Sampling**

The majority of interviewees were referred by a group of initial key contacts. The advantage of using this method was that the interviewees were more open to talking to me because they had close relationships with the people who introduced me to them. And within the Gambian culture, relationships are easier to build when there are mutual connections. For example, during an interview with a key contact in London, I mentioned that I wanted to interview one of the key players in the Gambian political diaspora in the US. My contact informed me that this person

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<sup>46</sup> Credibility, Accuracy, Reasonableness, Support <http://www.virtualsalt.com/evalu8it.htm>

was going to be in the UK the following week and would be staying at their house. They agreed to introduce me to them and later that week confirmed that the person had agreed to take part in the research and that I could go to their house for the interview. During the interview, I established a relationship with this interviewee from the US who later became a valuable contact. They introduced me to colleagues in the diaspora civil society groups in the US and invited me to attend the forum in New York, where I was able to make further connections.

However, the disadvantage of using this method to recruit participants was that it did not allow me to get a diverse sample of people, as my contacts were referring me to people who had similar views to them. Realizing the need to capture the points of views of pro-government in this research, in particular, I went on social media (Facebook) and searched for President Jammeh supporters to interview.

However, I was only able to interview five women in the Gambian diaspora and eight women in The Gambia, out of the 82 interviews I had conducted. Though I was not aiming to get a representative sample for statistical purposes, this was frustrating considering that women make over 50% of the Gambian population and a similar proportion of the diaspora. However, when I made contact with possible female participants, they either did not respond to my messages or claimed to be too busy to take part in the research. I even proceeded to send the interview questions via e-mails, which were not returned despite sending a number of reminders. It was extremely difficult getting Gambian women to take part in the research and though I cannot be certain why the majority of women I contacted did not want to be involved. I can perhaps attribute it to a number of possible reasons based on my observations and subjective experiences with other Gambian women. The first, possible reason could be the lack of time and availability as some participants stated. This is understandable because Gambian women in the diaspora and at 'home' work outside and inside of the home to generate income as well as raise their children (as discussed in chapter 3) with little assistance from the men. Thus, perhaps they were discouraged after reading on the research information sheet that interviews would take one hour. Another possible reason could be that perhaps Gambian women preferred to keep their political opinions and development contributions private (Krook and Childs 2010, Mügge 2013), this is partly because political discussions in The Gambia and the diaspora are dominated by the men (see p. 200). And the last possible reason could be that the women were not comfortable talking to me the reason being young and unmarried. I came to this last conclusion after living in The Gambia and witnessing how sceptical Gambian women are of other women, particularly those that are young

and unmarried. This last claim is not easy to verify as it is based on my own subjective perspective of being among other Gambian women. However, the consequence of not having more female voices in this research is that it has missed out on capturing some gender perspectives that the male interviewees would not have considered.

#### **4.5 Triangulation**

During the course of the fieldwork, I compared the findings from the different methods and triangulated them. In experimental science, 'triangulation' refers to the process of independent research projects answering the same questions. Where these independent processes reach the same answer (ideally via different methods), the conclusions are thought to have more validity. For example, if two different medical laboratories test a drug independently and both conclude it is beneficial then we are more likely to believe them than if there is only one test. Like most qualitative social science research, this project can only loosely be described as 'experimental' when compared to medical science. Whilst there are many 'variables', it is not possible to speak clearly of dependent and independent variables let alone to control confounding variables. In this context, triangulation takes on a different character, for example, claims made in interviews were supported by data from observations and textual material. However, although this is not 'triangulation' in a classic scientific sense (because our routes to answering these questions are not independent) this should, at least, provide some assurance of the quality of the data.

Therefore, I used different methods to answer different parts of the research questions and I tested the data from one method with the other. For example, in addressing research question 1, I observed a group of students at the University of The Gambia talking about their tuitions fees and overheard one of them explain how their older brother in the UK is sponsoring them. Therefore, I created an interview question, which asked the students in the group interviews about the financial support they or their families were receiving from relatives in the diaspora. I found that over half of the students were receiving money from relatives abroad and some of that money was going towards their tuition fees.



## 4.6 Answering the research questions

Table 7: Answering the research questions

Research questions	Sources
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews: members of the Gambian diaspora in the UK and US, diaspora association heads, academics, economists, civil servants, students and private sector business owners and in The Gambia.</li> <li>• Textual materials: World Bank reports and statistics from the databank, UN reports, Government reports and studies, the Gambian constitution, Central Bank of The Gambia data, newspaper articles, journal articles and books</li> <li>• Visual material: photographs and YouTube video clips</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews: members of the UK and US Gambian diaspora, those that are politically engaged and those who are not. Academics, economists, students and private sector business owners in The Gambia</li> <li>• Participant observation: attended meetings, forums and symposiums organized by the civil society groups in the UK and US</li> <li>• Textual materials: blogs, Facebook posts, groups chats on Viber, diaspora online newspapers, reports from human rights organizations, UN and EU, UK and US government reports on The Gambia, journal articles and books</li> <li>• Visual materials: photographs and YouTube video clips</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews: members of the UK and US diaspora civil society groups, and those who are not politically engaged and the Gambian opposition political parties</li> <li>• Participant observation: July 22<sup>nd</sup> celebrations In The Gambia, civil society symposiums in London and civil society forum in New York</li> <li>• Textual material: online newspapers, blogs, Facebook posts, groups chats on Viber, Whatsapp chats, reports from human rights organizations, journal articles, books and UN reports</li> <li>• Visual materials: photographs</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews: members of the Gambian diaspora in the UK and US, diaspora association heads, academics, economists, civil servants, students and private sector business owners and opposition political parties in The Gambia.</li> <li>• Textual materials: books, journal articles, blogs, chats on Whatsapp,</li> </ul>

	<p>newspaper articles and archival reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual materials: photographs</li> </ul>
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Source: Assembled by Sainabou Taal

#### 4.7 Fieldwork

The practical design and execution of my research were completed in three stages from July 2014 to September 2015. However, before starting fieldwork officially, I conducted a pilot study in The Gambia for one week in February 2013, where I interviewed the former vice-chancellor of the University of The Gambia and former the President of The Gambia at his home in Fajara. I was able to gain access to the vice chancellor because I already had a relationship with him. However, a family member facilitated the interview with former President Sir Dawda Jawara via one of his sons. The purpose of this pilot was to determine if there was a story to be told and whether my ideas could turn into a PhD research. However, these interviews did not fully help me to answer these questions and therefore, upon my arrival in London, I made contact with Gambian diaspora associations in the UK, political activists and began attending events.

I identified one Gambian diaspora association in the UK and made contact with their Secretary, who agreed to meet me in Stratford (Westfield). I explained to them about my research and the stage I was in (pre-upgrade), as well as the information I required. I also assured them that data I collected would be anonymous before they gave their consent to be interviewed. After the interview, they agreed to send me the contact details of the other Gambian diaspora associations in the UK and out of the 15 associations, I approached I was able to interview 10. This exercise took place from mid- February to end – April 2013.

Following on from this, I went on Facebook and sent friend requests to a number of people who were openly involved in the political activism. In doing so, I was able to make contact and build a relationship with two key people in the Gambian political diaspora groups in the UK, who invited me to their events and introduced me to individuals that were also politically involved. I attended my first political event in London in August 2013, where I conducted observations and identified more people to take part in this research.

The multi-sited study officially began in The Gambia in July 2014 and ran to December 2014 (6 months). I collected data from interviews (with consent), conducted participant observation, took photographs and video recordings, and gathered newspapers articles and archival materials. I returned to London and

began organizing and analysing my data until the end of February 2015. Then in March 2015, I entered the second stage of fieldwork, which involved interviewing (with consent) Gambians in the UK and US, conducting observations at political events organized by the diaspora civil society groups and engaging in web-based research. This ended in June 2015 (4 months) and I proceeded to organize and analyse the data until early August 2015. Then in September 2015, I began the third stage of my fieldwork, when I travelled to New York for one week to attend a civil society forum organized by one of the Gambian diaspora civil society groups. This event was for two days and the data I collected was analysed and used in the research.

### **First Stage of Fieldwork in The Gambia**

I arrived in The Gambia in the second week of July 2014 during the Ramadan (month of fasting), which was not a good time to begin collecting data, as things were slow and I was advised by a family member to wait until after the Ramadan to start approaching people. Thus, after the fasting was over, I put together a list of people I wanted to interview including civil servants, economists, students, academics, and political opposition party members. With the help of a family member who is well placed in Gambian society, I was able to identify people working in these roles. However, before conducting the interviews, I obtained a research permit from the National Centre for Arts and Culture in Banjul.

By the end of the fieldwork in The Gambia, I conducted 24 semi-formal interviews with 52 participants in total, each interview lasting between 1 to 4 hours. The interviewees gave consent verbally because some were worried that the consent form could be traced back to them if they signed it. Thus, realizing that this could be an issue, I informed my supervisor and was advised that I could accept verbal consent. The level of formality adopted during the interviews depended on the environment where the interviews took place. For example, the majority of the interviews were done at the interviewees' places of work or in their homes. However, I found that I had to maintain a certain degree of formality during all the interviews because the interviewees responded well to it.

The interviews helped me to answer all four-research questions as well as unveiled some interesting information that I had no previous knowledge it existed. For example, an interviewee who worked for the previous government until 1994 informed me that there was an agreement in place to establish a university in The Gambia at that time of the coup. However, many people in the country do not know

this because the government has led them to believe that the idea came from President Jammeh himself. Consequently, the population associates this key national developmental contribution to President Jammeh.

Furthermore, whilst in The Gambia, I had the opportunity to attend some social gatherings, where I would engage with people on different levels. At family gatherings, I would bring up the topic of the diaspora and listen to what people had to say. These informal discussions were useful because people did not see me as a researcher (even though I made it no secret that I was doing a PhD) and thus they spoke freely. For example, during a birthday lunch for a family member at a local restaurant, I was having general conversations with some of the guests whilst the waitress was bringing out our food. I noticed one guest take out his mobile phone and take pictures of his food. Then he voluntarily said, "I take pictures of food and beautiful places to upset Pa Nderry at Freedom." Pa Nderry owns one of the diaspora newspapers and radio stations and he is extremely critical of the government. This sparked a conversation about the politically involved diaspora, and the impression I got from this group was that they were against the diaspora intervening in politics from the outside.

### **Second Stage of Fieldwork in London**

The second stage of fieldwork in London commenced in March 2015 and I used a similar process of seeking help from family members to get access to potential participants. I also relied heavily on social media platforms like Facebook, blogs, and listserv group and diaspora online newspapers, like Freedom, Kibaaro, and Gainako to identify participants. From this, I created a list of people I wanted to interview and began making contact with them in mid-March 2015. I sent e-mails and messages on Facebook and where possible, made telephone calls. The majority of the interviews were conducted over the telephone because of the location of the participants was not easily accessible (a significant number of the lived in the US or across the UK) due to cost factors. However, few interviews were conducted on Skype and face-to-face. The interviews lasted between 1 to 3 hours and consent was given verbally because some people shared the same concerns as those in The Gambia. After each interview, I asked the interviewee if they knew people that would be willing to take part in the research and by doing this; I was able to interview 49 Gambians living in the UK and the US. This number consisted of people that are politically involved and those that are not, but were politically aware. As well as a mixture of young, old, male, female, and highly skilled (achieve tertiary level education) and skilled (technical training) members of the Gambian

diaspora. The interviewees were mainly with first generation diasporans meaning that they born and raised in The Gambia and only migrated to the UK and US within the past twenty-five to thirty years. The interviewee also worked in different fields such as academia, journalism, finance, NGOs, and services sector.

I attended political meetings organized by the Gambian diaspora and occasionally, I would be asked to make a statement about my research. Thus, at one of the political events, I decided to share some research findings from my fieldwork in The Gambia. These findings were quite controversial and against some of the arguments made by the diaspora. For example, I informed the group that some people in The Gambia felt political change could only be achieved from inside the country and from the outside. In essence, they were saying they did not believe the Gambian diaspora could effect political change in The Gambia from outside the country. However, the response was surprising because the most participants agreed with this statement, and seemed to have a similar perspective to Gambians on the ground regarding the lack of impact with their political interventions.

Throughout the fieldwork, I received many comments from the interviewees about how valuable they felt my research would be to the country and how much this type of in-depth research of the Gambian diaspora was needed. They clearly had high expectations for this research, which was worrying for me because I got the impression that some interviewees thought my thesis would provide solutions to the problems the diaspora were encountering with their political interventions in particular. Thus to manage their expectations, I had to keep reiterating the aims of this research, which is to fills a gap in knowledge and create a better understanding of the Gambian diaspora in the UK and the US.

The data I collected from the interviews with members of the Gambian diaspora in the UK and the US helped to answer all four of the research questions and the observations helped to verify some of the claims made during the interviews.

### **Third Stage of Fieldwork in New York**

In August 2015, I received an invitation via Skype to attend the '*International Civil Society Forum on The Gambia: Human Rights; Democracy; Governance; Transparency; and Regional Security*' organized by Coalition for Change – The Gambia, in New York on the 1st October 2015. I arrived in New York on the 29th September and waited anxiously for the event. I met some of my interviewees in

person for the first time and they appeared even more open to me than before. I guessed this was partly because they felt they already knew me and I had made the journey to New York to attend an event that was clearly important to them.

At times during the forum, I noticed there was some disconnect between the Gambian opposition party leaders at the forum and the diaspora, as the former seemed to not what to respond to some of the questions from the audience. I also got the impression that they welcomed the financial contributions of the diaspora, but were not particularly interested in the diaspora being involved in politics in the country. The latter was so obvious, that a representative from one of the human rights organizations who is a non-Gambian, pointed this out to me. Lastly, the data from the observations conducted at this event helped me to answer research questions two and three.

#### **4.8 Data Analysis**

The data analysis process took place after each stage of the fieldwork, and it included cleaning and organizing data into folders and spreadsheets. The primary data from the interviews and participant observation were handwritten and then typed, which meant I did not have to do any transcribing. The interview data was transferred onto a spreadsheet, with individual sheets for the interviews conducted in the UK and The Gambia. The layout of the spreadsheet consisted of; column A going down, which had the interview questions and row 1 going across, which had the initials, gender, and locations of the interviewees. The responses were copied and paste next to the questions and I used two columns at the end to make my 'comments' and 'analysis'. The comments were the observations, ideas and issues that needed further research, whereas, the analysis column highlighted the key arguments and themes that kept appearing as well as signposts to theoretical arguments or empirical evidence. I also highlighted key quotes to use in the thesis. Having prepared the data in this way I was able to undertake a thematic analysis<sup>47</sup>. The themes in this research were concepts, for example, 'development', 'politics' and 'migration'. Under each concept, I pulled out data from the interviews, participant observation, textual materials, and visuals that addressed the research questions containing these concepts. For instance, I took the different expressions from interviews pertaining to remittances and placed that under the development theme. And from this data, I discovered that contributions of the Gambian diaspora

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<sup>47</sup> I decided to analyse the data manually because I was not confident in using software packages such as NVivo. I did not have training on using software packages because I missed the free training sessions offered by the university. Thus, I felt the analysis would be more reliable if I did it manually rather than use a package I was not familiar with.

were at three different scales, family, town/village, and national. These became sub-headings in chapter 5 and 6.

The interview data also contained many repetitive patterns, which were extracted during the analysis. For example, there were repetitions in the reasons the interviewees gave for migrating out of The Gambia, as captured in the table below. This information shows that education is important to the diaspora, and according to the literature on migration, the pursuit of higher education can drive people to migrate to other countries where they can attain that goal. Thus, this fell under the migration theme.

Table 8: Reasons for migrating out of The Gambia

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number of people</b>
Marriage	3
Fear of persecution	2
Studies	25
Exile	1
Employment	1
Grievance with political conditions in the country	3
Health	1
Greener Pastures and economic prosperity	10
Other	6

Source: Sainabou Taal

I used descriptive codes of words or short phrases to systematically assign a summative or essence-caption to the portion of data (Saldaña 2016). This provided an inventory for indexing and categorizing the data (Miles et al. 2014). For example, to code the interview transcripts I used words like 'obligation,' 'burden' 'grievance,' 'trigger,' 'motive,' 'democracy', and 'human rights' etc. To code the participation observation and visual data, I used phrases such as 'examples of mismanagement of funds,' 'negative impressions of the diaspora', 'support for Jammeh' 'example of influencing politics' and 'examples of grievances'. Lastly, to code the textual data and visuals, I used words to describe what that data was in

relation to, '30<sup>th</sup> December', 'power' and 'July 22<sup>nd</sup>'. In essence, the coding exercise helped me to link my data to explanations, as coding is an interpretive act and not a precise science (Saldaña 2016). This was very useful as it also helped me to identify the information I needed and arrange them into relevant chapters, which made the subsequent writing process easier.

#### **4.9 Limitations of research**

The main limitations I experienced whilst undertaking this study was contending with limited resources (time, money, research assistants). For example, I had to stop collecting data because I ran out of time, and I could not conduct many face-to-face interviews with members of the diaspora because a significant proportion of them lived across the UK and in the US. Thus, there was a cost factor and I had to resort to using cheap telecommunication tools such as the telephone and the Internet. Additionally, I could not afford to hire a research assistant whilst in The Gambia due to the cost factor. Having extra support with data collection would have allowed me to interview more people in The Gambia, particularly, the recipients of diaspora remittance. However, when I attempted to hire a young man at the national archives office, he quoted a price of £500

#### **Sensitive Issues**

The main sensitive issue in this research is the discussion about politics in The Gambia. This topic is often avoided or discussed covertly in the privacy of people's homes. This is because the government is known worldwide for being repressive and ruling through fear. Thus, anyone caught talking openly about politics in a manner that is deemed critical of the government is likely to be at risk of being blacklisted, harassed or even imprisoned by the national security service. Knowing that there have been instances where the government has targeted the families of their critics made me vigilant about my safety and also parents who reside in the country. I was extra careful with who I spoke to and the questions I during the interviews. This meant that most of my interview questions had to focus on development and the diaspora, and even with that, I had to be cautious about how I spoke about the diaspora because some are seen as opponents by the government.

I got the sense that many people in The Gambia were holding back on telling their true feelings about the political conditions in the country particularly their dissatisfaction with the government because they would complain about certain



things, which I knew they blamed the government for but would not explicitly say it. For example, they would make statements like 'things are tough in this country', 'food is expensive', 'there are no jobs' and 'taxes are too high' but would never link them to the activities of the government. Additionally, the fear of being caught talking about President Jammeh in public was so high that people used nicknames when referring to him. For instance, whilst getting my hair braided at the salon the hairdresser kept referring to President Jammeh as 'Baboucarr' and when I asked her why that was she said that where she lives the youths call him that when they do not want the elders and others to know they were talking about Jammeh.

## **Risks**

The main risk I was exposed to in The Gambia was having my research being perceived as too critical of the government and thus putting my family, the interviewees and I at harm. Therefore, any discussions about politics in The Gambia were approached with caution, partly, because there was the fear of being heard by security officers and persecuted. Additionally, there are legislations in place that arguably stifle 'freedom of speech', for example, the Information and Communication Act 2013, which permits the government and security services to prosecute persons accused of "spreading false news against the Government". This puts people in very precarious positions, as the government determines what constitutes as 'false news'. Therefore, people in The Gambia avoiding discussions of politics in public altogether. For example, whilst undertaking an interview at the Management Development Institute, I accidentally showed him the front cover of my upgrade paper, which was a picture of protesters holding placards saying, "Jammeh must go". The interviewee immediately showed expressions of shock, worry and suspicion and I got the sense that they were in two minds about allowing the interview to go ahead. Therefore, by unintentionally allowing the interviewee to see the cover, I believe that I put both of us at risk, and I got the impression that the interviewee felt the same way.

However, to mitigate the risk of being in unsafe environments in The Gambia, I conducted the majority of interviews in public places, however, I went with a family member on the few occasions I interviewed the people at their homes.

## **Research Ethics**

Following the principle of maintaining the professional and personal integrity of researchers from the UCL Ethics Code of Conduct was extremely important in this

research. I was as honest as possible, except on occasions when I came across useful data unexpectedly at informal events in The Gambia like at the family member's birthday lunch. However, everyone there was aware that I was doing PhD research and they had some knowledge about my topic. But mostly important, I adhered to legal and ethical requirements relevant to the area of research, which is to keep all participants anonymous. This was necessary because most interviewees were worried about maintaining their anonymity and thus refused to be recorded. Therefore, by providing them with the information sheet I drafted as part of my ethics application, which explained the aims of the research, and guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality of the data. I was able to put the participants at ease. I also took all necessary action to protect the identity of participants after I obtained verbal consent and this included not putting their name on documents and storing interview transcripts in password-protected laptops.

Notwithstanding the risks involved, I did not get the sense that any of the interviewees in the diaspora and The Gambia were more vulnerable than others because everyone was exposed to the same risks, which is why I took the necessary action to ensure that their identities were protected.

Lastly, I plan to disseminate the findings of the research to the interviewees who want to see them. I feel that this research has been objective in its presentation of data and would, therefore, be of particular interest to those in the diaspora and policymakers in The Gambia. My ethical obligation is to share the findings and to allow those who participated in this study to see how their contributions have been presented in this research.

### **Positionality**

In the last twenty years or so much has been written about the researcher's location within the research context. Thus, with increasing interest on positionality in qualitative research particularly in feminist scholarship (Sultana 2007), it is clearly important to pay attention to the positionality of the researcher as well as the power relations between researcher and researched, and the use of the knowledge that is being produced. Thinking about my own positionality in this research, I found it easy to position myself within the group I am studying because I belong to that group. Being part of the diaspora and having shared understanding, feelings and responsibilities at 'home' mattered significantly in this research as I understood the complexities and intricacies in the relation to 'home'. I also understood what the interviewees meant about certain realities at 'home' whether

they said it explicitly or not. This had a positive effect because I was considered as 'an insider' and I had 'insider' knowledge (Henry 2003) of certain 'Gambian' terms and expressions that an 'outsider' would not immediately understand. For example, I understood when one interviewee explained that their younger brother paid a smuggler to get them to Libya, where they made their way to Spain because they had 'nerves' (strong desire to travel).

In the article, *'Beyond the insider-outsider divide in migrations'* by Carling et al. (2013) asserts, *"an insider researcher is a member of the migrant group under study, whereas an outsider researcher is a member of the majority population in the country of settlement"* (1). They also claim that informants are able to detect a researchers' position from their name, which may signal a particular migrant background. However, Carling et al. (2013) argue that research from an outsider position often comes with particular challenges in migration research. For example, *"if the researcher is perceived to be associated with, or have influence on, the authorities, informants might expect assistance or fear of negative repercussions from sharing information"*(17). In which cases the information they receive could be broad and indirect. Furthermore, *"research conducted by an outsider can also be met with ideologically motivated scepticism, seen as exploitative and neo-colonial"* (17). On the other hand, the notion of 'insider' is founded on a logic of 'us and them', which comes with some privileges mainly inclusion, however, this can easily obscure the information the researcher gathers. This is because there is the risk that having a shared ethno-national origins could lead to the differences of class, education or migration history being missed, or the researcher not taking these differences seriously (17).

Going into this research as an 'insider', I concur to Ganga and Scott's (2006) assertion that being 'an insider' in migration research is more complex and multi-faceted than is sometimes acknowledged. Because although I was able to gain access to people easily it did not guarantee that, I would obtain rich data (Pechurina 2014) or prevent me from having to critically examine the power relations (Sultana 2007) between the interviewees and myself. Thus, my positionality had to be negotiated constantly and I had to adjust to the change in hierarchies during the interviews I conducted in the diaspora as well as in The Gambia. For example, throughout the fieldwork, I found that the interviewees placed me in different roles, where I had to negotiate my position and power relations in order to obtain the information I needed for this research. For example, some interviewees saw me as a 'daughter', 'sister', 'young and naive,' 'sexually available' and 'suspicious.'

However, the fact that I am a young, single and female had its advantages and disadvantages. For example, the advantage was that as the majority of the interviewees were men, I appeared unthreatening to them and thus was able to gain confidential information and access to private meetings like the meeting on the second days of the forum in New York. This experience confirmed the point made by geographer Linda McDowell (1988) that men perceive women doing research to be 'unthreatening' or 'not official', thus confidential documents are often made accessible or difficult issues are discussed relatively freely with women (cited by England 1994; 248).

However, what concerned me most about my positionality was that the older male interviewees in the diaspora spoke down to me. It was unclear whether it was because of young my age (which they associated with naivety) or that I am softly spoken or I used my uncles and siblings to make the introductions. But I felt this was a disadvantage because they had condescending attitudes towards my work and me. For instance, they would ask me questions to test my knowledge about the topic. One participant was telling me about the US government removing The Gambia from AGOA, and then he asked me if I knew what AGOA stood for. In these instances, I had to assume a subordinate role to show that I respected their position as older men, which in Gambian culture places them in at the top of the social hierarchy. This meant that I had to make the patriarchal bargain described by Kandiyoti (1998), for the purpose of getting the best results. This certainly prolonged the interviews but often the end result of the interviews was the interviewees became more open to me.

Another instance where being young, female, and single worked against me was with the male interviewees who tried to blur the line between professional and personal. For example, some interviewees tried to flirt with me and asked personal questions about my relationship status. One interviewee asked me if I was single, and when I replied yes, they said, "that's good for me, I was hoping you were single." I realized then that I had to negotiate my position to where I seemed open to having personal discussions with these interviewees, but remained focused on getting answers to my questions. Although I felt offended at times, I could not show it because I felt that I had to be diplomatic when responding to their advances and make them feel like what they were saying was important in order to collect the data I needed.

Another realization was that whilst in The Gambia the feeling of being 'an insider' was not as strong as when undertaking interviews in the diaspora. This was

because the people treated more like a 'guest', even though they knew I was Gambian. It seemed some could not ignore the obvious difference between them and me, in particular, my British accent, which let them know that I have lived out of the country for a long time. Therefore, some interviewees perhaps felt I could not relate to issues of deprivation in the country because I did not live there. Clearly, there was some truth to this assumption but I tried to position myself as a sympathizer and I listened to them speak without interrupting, which put the interviewees at ease because it made them feel like I was genuinely interested in what they were saying.

I was under no illusion that the only reason I was able to get access to people, particularly influential members of the society such as the leaders of the opposition political parties, the Deputy Governor of the Central Bank and even former President Jawara was because of my family connections. Coming from a family that belongs to the educated elite class, and that is well connected in Gambian society helped me greatly during the research process. Thus, the majority of interviewees in The Gambia treated me very well and with a lot of respect, which I am certain I would not have gotten if I did not have my family connections. However, I also wondered whether this had an impact on the responses I was given, but I could not test this query because I could not erase the fact that it was my connection that gave me access to them. Some interviewees were overly professional even when the interviews took place at their homes. They spoke to me in English even when I made it known that I spoke Wolof (one of the local languages). Part of me believed that this was their way of acknowledging the fact that I was 'not an ordinary Gambian' (as people euphemistically put it), in terms of my background, personal history and education.

Finally, the only situation where I felt like I was in the position of authority was during the interviews with groups of students at the University of The Gambia. I was in a superior position because I was also working as their lecturer and thus they afforded me a degree of respect that I did not get from other interviewees like some of the older men in the diaspora. This shows that coming from an educated elite class in The Gambia does not have any advantages in the diaspora because arguably the diaspora creates a level playing field for all Gambians. However, the two groups of students I interviewed genuinely treated this research as an important and interesting contribution to knowledge and they demonstrated this by staying behind after class to take part.

#### **4.10 Conclusion**

The strategy for conducting the fieldwork for this research clearly had its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, gaining access to participants was relatively easy because the group I was studying considered me 'an insider' and the fact that the country is small made it relatively easy to make connections. Additionally, my family connections also helped me to gain access to people in high places in Gambian society. However, a disadvantage was that I found it extremely difficult to get women to take part in the research.

Before going out into the field, I felt prepared because I had the theoretical knowledge of research methodology and methods. However, once I began collecting data, I made the mistake of going into some interviews with assumptions and then letting those assumptions dictate how the interviews were conducted. These errors reflected the fact that I was a new and inexperienced researcher, and by recognizing this, I learned from experience as I went along and re-evaluated my approach.

Another unexpected factor of the research was the constant negotiation of power relations between the interviewees and myself. I went into the field believing researchers were afforded with a certain degree of respect, which was entirely inaccurate. I did not expect to be spoken down to, ignored and even flirted with. This was another learning experience, however, I was able to negotiate and play different positions (mostly subordinate roles), which allowed me to obtain the information I needed and strengthened my research skills and patience.

I argued that the in-depth interviews, participant observation, and textual material were the appropriate methods to collect the data I needed to answer the research questions. However, I identified some gaps in the data that could have been filled had I conducted observations at diaspora associational meeting (which was not possible as the associations that invited me to their meetings were located outside of London and the notice they gave me was too short) and interviewed some British MPs, US senators and the human rights organisations (like Amnesty and Human Rights Watch) that support the Gambian diaspora. Additionally, I should have interviewed more people in The Gambia receiving diaspora remittances and other forms of support.

However, despite the many issues I encountered whilst out in the field, I was able to collect rich descriptions and individual points of views from and about the

Gambian diaspora, their development contributions and political interventions at 'home'. Additionally, this research meets the empirical need for an in-depth study of the role small diaspora groups play in development as well as in politics at 'home' and fills the knowledge gap about the Gambian diaspora in the UK and the US.

## Chapter 5:

# Developing The Gambia: the Contributions of the UK and US Gambian Diaspora

This first empirical chapter discusses and analyses the development contributions of the UK and US Gambians diaspora at the family, town/village, and national levels and in different economic sectors in The Gambia. This chapter addresses first the research question of, *how, why* and *where* does the diaspora contribute to development in The Gambia? It also speaks to the broader literature of 'migration and development' as well as the narrower literature in 'African diaspora studies' and 'diasporas and development'. This chapter is divided into three sections after the introduction. The first section looks at the different scales of diaspora contributions in The Gambia. These scales are presented in the order of priority according to the interviewees. Here I argue that the diaspora focus is on the *family* scale, and to a lesser extent town/ village and national. In fact, it is seldom that the Gambian diaspora makes direct contributions to national development projects. This chapter argues that some scales of intervention are much more significant to people in the diaspora than others, but even that there are some contradictions between them in the sense that contributions at some levels (eg the household) might undermine national development goals (eg to decrease social inequalities). The second section looks at the Gambian diaspora contributions to the education, health, housing, and agriculture sectors in The Gambia. The aim here is to analyse their contributions to the development of these sectors and I argue that some sectors are far more amenable to diaspora development interventions than others because relatively small, intermittent interventions are more likely to have positive outcomes in say a school setting than an agricultural one. In addition, the kind of interventions agriculture needs (eg farm to market roads) are not necessarily the kinds of intervention the diaspora can provide, whereas they can make more useful piecemeal interventions (eg the provision of desks) in school settings. Lastly, the third section is the conclusion, which brings together the main arguments and discussions in this chapter. The overall argument in this chapter is that development contributions by the Gambian diaspora are family-led partly because of the centrality of families, and the strong obligation they have towards them (Lindley 2010, Mercer and Page 2010, Hammond et al 2011, Enoh 2014, Sinatti and Horst 2014, Horst et al 2014). But, if the Gambian diaspora felt less marginalized then even though families would remain key, still some remittances might go to national development.



## 5.1 Introduction

The empirical evidence in this research revealed that out of the 82 interviews conducted, approximately 80% of interviewees believed the development contributions of the Gambian diaspora are highest at the family level, roughly, 15% stated at town/village level and 5% at the national level. As with other diaspora African groups like the Somalis, the Gambian diaspora showed that they too have a strong feeling of obligation towards their families (Hammond et al. 2011). However, in contrast to the Somali diaspora, the gross *national* development contributions of the Gambian diaspora is significantly less, when compared to US\$ 130-200 million per year sent by the Somali diaspora for relief and development purposes (Hammond et al. 2011). Nevertheless, 100% of the interviewees in the diaspora claim they provide financial support to their families every month. This speaks to the literature that emphasizes the importance of family to the diaspora (Stark and Lucas 1988, Mohan 2006, Lindley 2010, Mercer and Page 2010, Hammond et al 2011, Hammond et al 2011, Hammond 2011, Enoh 2014).

The essence of the Gambian diaspora is their commitment to their families, which motivates them to contribute to development at 'home'. This chapter argues that a sense of belonging and desire to want to help their families persists despite any state-scale activities. This is also despite their attitude to the Gambian government. The empirical research revealed that the contributions from the diaspora to The Gambia mainly involve sending remittances and material goods to their families at 'home'. This is parallel to Mohan's (2006) findings in his study of the Ghanaian diaspora in Milton Keynes, whose main obligation is also to their families and to a lesser extent friends at 'home' (874). The remittances to The Gambia are typically used to pay for goods and services, house-building projects, school fees, medical bills and fund various development projects in their towns/villages. However, it is seldom for the Gambian diaspora to contribute directly to national development projects, rather, their remittances have an indirect impact on the national economy because they indirectly generate sales tax revenue when recipients in The Gambia spend remittances. Nevertheless, the Gambian are still celebrated at 'home' for improving the living conditions of the majority of people in The Gambia (Wanyama 2013; 17).

According to the interviews, a key reason *why* some members of the Gambian diaspora are not making direct contributions at national level is because they believe the government does not want them involved in national projects. This is

despite the Gambian government making available treasury bills for investment via the commercial banks, which members of the diaspora can access if they hold current bank accounts in these banks<sup>48</sup>. The government has also made efforts to reach out to the diaspora, through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad. For example, in January 2012 the ministry organized the first “Consultative Meeting between the Government of the Republic of The Gambia and Gambians in the Diaspora”. According to the press release from the Office of the Gambian President, the main objective of the consultative meeting was to harness the potentials and talents of Gambians in the diaspora, including those serving in international organizations and others engaged in private ventures, which can be beneficial to the country. The release also stated, “the meeting will facilitate the evaluation of the extent to which latent potential residing in the Diaspora could be utilized to the fullest in support of Vision 2020 goals and objectives” (Kebbeh 2012). However, the government did not follow up policies, recommendations or other actions after the consultative meeting (Kebbeh 2013). Some interviewees in the diaspora saw this as the government not being serious about engaging the diaspora in national development. The subsequent situation in The Gambia is that diaspora contributions to families rarely translate to sustainable national development (Newland 2011). This is because remittances to families for private consumption make no direct contribution to national public infrastructures like improving roads and transport, power supply, large-scale water supply, education and health infrastructure (Mercer et al. 2008).

## **5.2 Scale and Diaspora Development Contributions in The Gambia**

### **Family**

The interviews suggest that there are a significant number of Gambians living abroad who are sending remittances ‘home’. Diaspora remittances have been described as the ‘new development mantra’ for the international development sector for over a decade (Kapur, 2003) because of their ‘development impact’ in countries of origin (Kapur 2001, 2003, Nyberg- Sorensen et al. 2002, Gundel 2002, Turner et al. 2003, IOM, 2006, de Haas 2006, 2012, Terrazas 2010, Davies 2012, Judge and De Plaen, 2011, Newland, 2011, 2013, Ratha et al. 2011, Agunias and Newland 2012, Crush et al. 2013, Gamlen 2014, Mercer and Page 2014, Resende – Santos 2015, Chikanda et al. 2016) and securing household food security and educating children (Crush 2011).

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<sup>48</sup> <http://www.cb.gm/securities/pdf/operational-notice-tbill-transfers.pdf>

According to the 49 interviews undertaken with the UK and US Gambian diaspora, they conscientiously send money and material goods to their families every month. They also claimed to remit on average between £200 and £600 per month to cover household expenses at 'home'. One interviewee stated:

I look after a family of 25-30 people and I have a family here (in the UK). The money I send is for the upkeep and maintenance of my family, and this includes feeding, accommodation, and paying school fees. They only depend on me directly. I also send second hand stuff from here and I set up a shop for my brother to run, so if ever there is a delay in sending money my family can go to the shop and get money from there. I send money 2 to 3 times a month. (Interviewee 38, male, 40s, skilled professional)

This corroborates the majority of findings from the literature, which asserts that diasporas send remittances to their families to pay for feeding, school fees, clothing, healthcare, accommodation, utility bills, religious celebrations, weddings, and burials (Mercer et al. 2008, Judge and Plaen 2011). But to what extent is paying for private consumption a development contribution given that the literature argues that poverty alleviation is the end goal for development? (de Haas 2012, Chami and Fullenkamp 2013). And must the contributions of the diaspora be at macro rather than the micro level to pass as development? In which case, do remittances have to be used in more economically productive ways (such as investing in family run businesses) in order to achieve this end goal, or would it be more helpful to look at how these micro-contributions are helping to alleviate household poverty? As one interviewee in the diaspora puts it "at the moment any development contribution is at the micro scale – my family" (Interviewee 27, male, 40s-50s, educated professional). Therefore, can it be argued that remittances used to pay for food, shelter, education, and health are helping to improve the living conditions of families, thus meeting the 'development' indicators used in the production of the HDI for example?

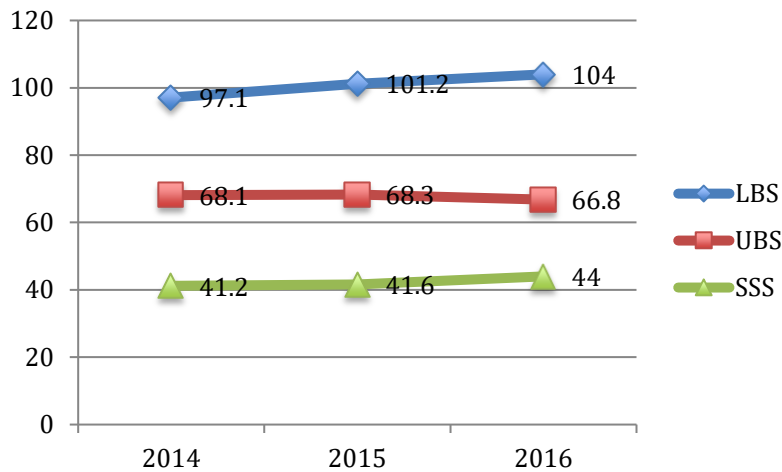
On the other hand, '*The Gambia Integrated Household Survey 2010*', revealed that remittances received by families in The Gambia are not as frequent as it has been suggested in the interviews. According to the survey, only 24% of the beneficiaries said they received remittances monthly, 15% quarterly, 33% occasionally, and 28% receive remittances annually (60). However, this survey was conducted five years ago, therefore, the data on receiving remittances may be different now. But, there is still a strong possibility that remittances sent by members of the Gambian

diaspora are not as frequent or regular as the interviews claim because as argued in chapter 2, remittances are volatile and unsecure financial contributions (Nyamongo et al. 2012). This raises the question about whether remittances are a less sustainable form of development (Gupta et al 2007, Mullings 2012, Nyamongo et al. 2012, Chacko and Gebre 2013).

Nevertheless, the focus here is to determine how remittances are used in The Gambia to contribute to development. For example, 100% of the interviewees in the diaspora stated that part of the remittances they send 'home' is used to pay for school fees. The empirical evidence suggests that paying school fees is a big challenge for many families in The Gambia. And although there are state schools, which cost significantly less than private and international schools, the many hidden costs such as uniforms, transportation costs, school lunches, books and stationary mean that some poor families cannot afford to pay for their children's education. Few analysts would question the link between children's education and development. But I argue that having someone in the diaspora paying school fees not only lifts a huge burden off these families, it potentially increases the chance of sustaining families from poverty. For example, it is assumed that the better educated a person is, the more chance they have to acquire good paying jobs (provided they are available) and thus having educated children is insurance for parents. Therefore, the link between children's education and development is that education has the potential to expand human capacities and improve the quality of life of people, which according to the literature in development studies defines what is 'human development'.

I also argue that increasing access to education at family level contributes to the development of the education sector because according to The Gambia Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education's Country Status Report (2011), "*The Gambia is still among the most advanced SSA countries in terms of actual enrolments and completion indicators at all level....*"(24). The graph below shows a steady increase of national enrolment rates in The Gambia, in Lower Basic Education (LBE), Upper Basic Education (UBE) and Senior Secondary School (SSS) from 2014 to 2015. Though this makes it difficult to separate the three scales of analysis used here, it is plausible to draw links between the contributions of the diaspora to the increase in national enrolment rates. In this instance, family-scale interventions have consequences for national development indicators.

Figure 8: National Enrolment Rates in The Gambia



Source: Joint Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education Sector Progress Report (2016)

Additionally, approximately 35% of the 49 members of the UK and US Gambian diaspora interviewed claimed their families solely depend on the remittances they send 'home'. Roughly, 45% stated their families partly depend on their remittances, 10% said they share the responsibility with their siblings, and 5% did not respond to the question. However, the belief amongst 10% of the interviewees is that diaspora remittances are responsible for the outright survival of households in The Gambia. According to an interviewee:

Majority of Gambians rely entirely on remittances... everybody relies on somebody outside to help them...those who do not have families outside are doomed. They are the ones you see begging in the streets (Interviewee 11, male, 50s, activist)

This interviewee is a strong critic of the government and exaggerations (families being doomed and begging in the streets) in the statement were common amongst the openly anti-government participants. This statement is clearly a perception and not reality because the empirical evidence suggests that there are people in The Gambia not merely surviving but thriving without financial support from the diaspora. For example, retired return migrants from middle-class backgrounds are receiving good pensions from previously working for international organizations. Additionally, there are young business owners who are running successful businesses in the country. According to Carling (2004), this is also the case for 'classic returnees' in Cape Verde. However, anecdotal evidence collected from

informal discussions in The Gambia revealed that many wealthy parents are providing financial assistance to their children and relatives in the diaspora, thus, suggesting that remittances do not flow one way in The Gambia. This perhaps challenges the literature that argues that remittances create dependency in receiving countries (Skeldon 2005, 2008, Davies 2012, de Haas 2012, Page and Mercer 2012, Horst et al. 2014).

This is not to dispel the fact that sometimes receivers underreport the remittances they receive from members of the diaspora because they want to hide the fact of such money coming in from potentially acquisitive friends and family, or they want to be able to exercise moral pressure on other members of the diaspora for more remittances. However, the fact that only 35% of the interviewees stated their families solely depend on their remittances makes the argument that people in The Gambia without family in the diaspora are 'doomed' hard to sustain empirically. In addition, the proportion of 89,634 Gambian people living abroad (IOM 2015) compared to the total population of 1.8 million in 2013<sup>49</sup> would also suggest that the statement is untenable. This makes the point that remittances are only going to some families in some parts of The Gambia, which according to '*The Gambia Integrated Household Survey 2010*' is the urban areas like Kanifing which received 33% of total remittances in The Gambia in 2010 (60). Therefore, should the argument be that remittances create development disparities in The Gambia as opposed to dependency? (Skeldon 2005, 2008, Davies 2012, de Haas 2012, Page and Mercer 2012)

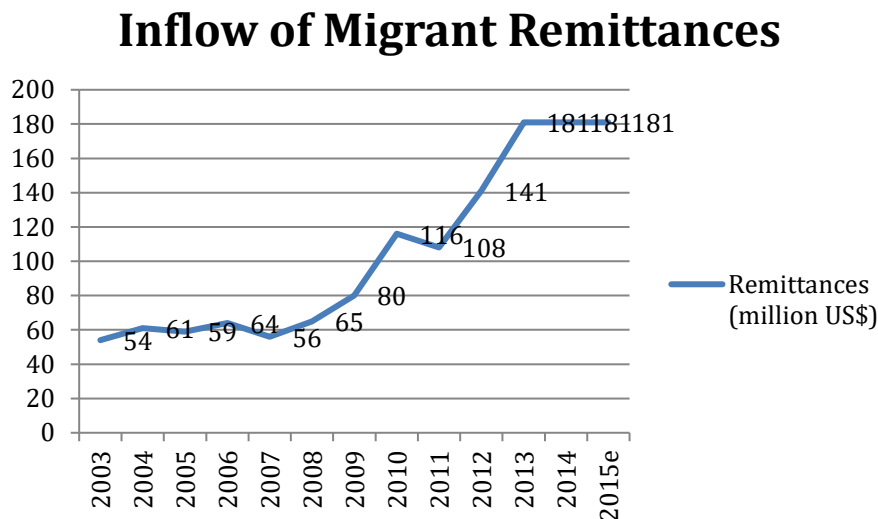
Nevertheless, such statements are self-aggrandising and they suggest some degree of post-hoc justification for why some members of the Gambian diaspora (including this interviewee) claim to have the right to be engaged in politics in The Gambia. By asserting their importance in the field of remittances and development, they justify their entitlement to be engaged in politics. So, even when the conversation is framed around development it quickly comes back to politics too.

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<sup>49</sup> With an average growth of 3.3 percent per annum making it approximately 2 million (Population and Housing Census Preliminary Results 2013)

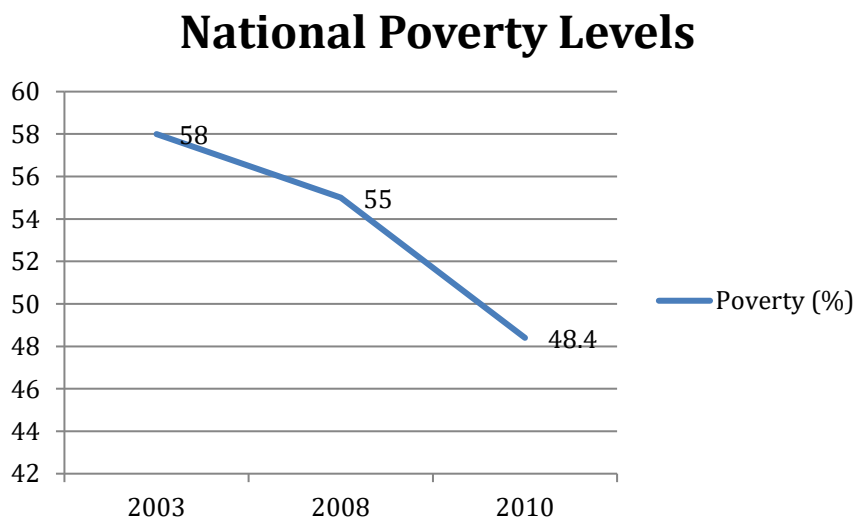
The graphs below show the remittances rates, poverty levels, and emigration rates in The Gambia.

Figure 9: Migrant remittance inflows in The Gambia



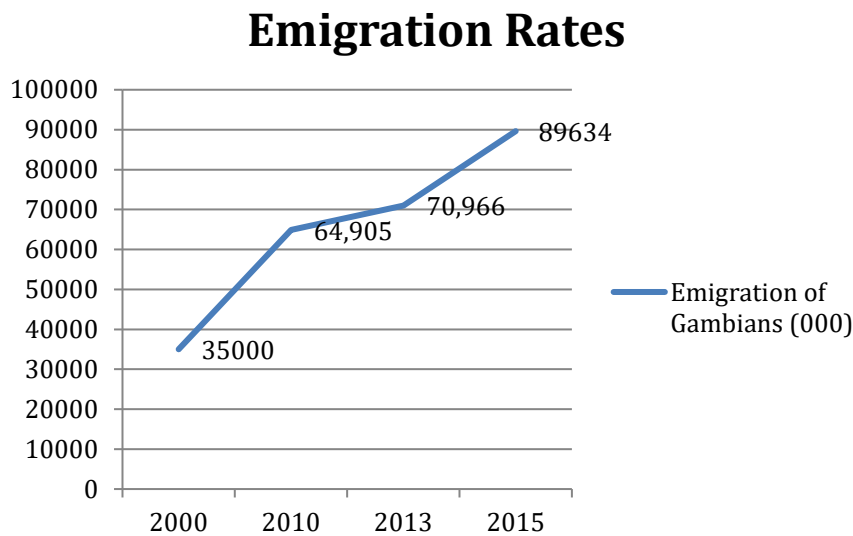
Source: Assembled by Sainabou Taal from The World Bank remittance data inflow 2016.

Figure 10: Percentage of Gambians Living under \$1.25 per day



Source: Assembled by Sainabou Taal from the Government of The Gambia Integrated Household Survey 2003, 2010 and Poverty Assessment 2008

Figure 11: Emigration rates of Gambians



Source: Assembled by Sainabou Taal from the World Bank bilateral migration stock 2000, 2010, and 2013. IOM Gambia country profile 2015

These graphs show poverty levels in The Gambia decreasing as emigration and remittance rates are steadily increasing. Thus suggesting that the higher the emigration of Gambians, the more money there is coming into the country and therefore poverty will be less. However, this is inaccurate because the empirical evidence revealed that remittances entering the country are not sufficient to meet the development needs. For example, to implement the activities of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper II (2007-2011) in The Gambia, the government committed US\$ 100.5 million and donors committed US\$ 174 million (IMF 2010), which exceeded the US\$ 116 million of remittances that entered the country in that same year. Therefore, remittances can only possibly be a part of the explanation for poverty reduction in The Gambia. Again, it is possible here to see politics-development connections. Some of the political popularity of the ruling APRC regime among resident Gambians might reasonably be explained in relation to delivering development and poverty reduction just as the President claims.

Moving on to discuss the responsibilities the Gambian diaspora feel they have towards their families. Approximately 75% of the interviewees in the diaspora stated they send money to their families is because they believe it is their responsibility to take care of them. One female interviewee explains, "it's a responsibility. It's what I do because since I have been here, I am more well off than them so I see it as my responsibility to support them" (Interviewee 7, female, 30s, highly educated professional). This supports the argument in chapter 2 that



migrant women also engage in the practice of remittance sending (Niimi and Reilly 2008, UN-INSTRAW and UNDP 2010, Hammond 2011). However, 15% stated that they felt guilty about their families being exposed to extreme poverty whilst they enjoy a better life abroad. As another interviewee in the diaspora puts it, “how can I enjoy life in the US when Gambian people do not even know where their next meals are coming from?” (Interviewee 5, male, 50s, academic/ activist). 5% said they wanted to give back to their parents “it is our duty to take care of our parents because they took care of us” (Interviewee 19). Another 5% claimed they felt they were being manipulated by people exaggerating their level of struggle in order to get support from the diaspora, “the people on the ground tell lies to the diaspora to get their money” (Interviewee 19). These findings align with claims in the literature that diasporas have a non-negotiable obligation to towards their families (Lindley 2010, Mercer and Page 2010, Hammond et al. 2011, Enoch 2014). However, part of the literature also recognizes that family members play on the conscience of the diaspora to get money from them. Horst (2004) narrated the experience of a participant who visited their family in Mudug in Somalia, only to discover that their relatives had been manipulating their conscience by saying their condition of living was very bad when in reality their standard of living was in many ways better than the participant’s life in Europe. This led to them reducing the money they sent ‘home’ from \$800 to \$400 a month as well as reduce their feeling of guilt. However, only a small proportion of interviewees in the Gambian sample complained about this, and it was far outweighed by interviewees who said that sending money to their family was their responsibility.

In addition, being seen to be doing the right thing is also an important motivation for family remittances. During an informal discussion with a member of the Gambian diaspora in the UK, this person claimed that they believed some Gambians in the diaspora support their families to avoid being talked about by their peers in negative terms. They explained that the disadvantage of being from a small country is that people are connected in so many different ways, that it makes it easy for a person’s reputation to be affected. You have to be seen to be doing what is considered right as a ‘social norm.’ In a way, this is a kind of ‘politics’ in that the social rule in the diaspora is that you should remit and allocate resources with your family budget. Therefore, within the Gambian diaspora, the visibility of this peer pressure is particularly pronounced. For example, if parents in The Gambia are seen to be struggling (which the interviewees interpret as not dressed well and living in poor conditions) by neighbours or visitors then people assume that they are not being taken care of by their children in the diaspora. A case study from a research participant revealed that on their last visit to The Gambia, they came

across friend's mother looking unwell and dressed 'inappropriately' at a wedding. Therefore, they called that friend and informed them of this, but because others had also made the same observation, rumours began spreading about that family. Consequently, members of the diaspora travelled to The Gambia to take care of their mother because they felt embarrassed about what people were saying about them. This is interesting because it shows that it is not enough for the diaspora to meet the needs of their families, rather they have to meet those needs in a manner that is acceptable to their peers, which can be difficult to sustain.

However, the relationship between the diaspora and their families at 'home' is mutually beneficial. Mazzucato (2010) calls this reverse remittance because she asserts the diaspora are getting something in return for their remittances, including a stronger sense of belonging. According to the empirical evidence, many Gambians in the diaspora enjoy the benefits of having the economic power in their families and like being included in the decision-making process, which ordinarily would be limited to the parents and elders, who have the experience of age. As one interviewee puts it:

When you provide economic support to any household it gives you power, that power results in your voice being respected and they are more likely to listen to you... in our culture we are supposed to listen to our elders, however, this is changing because it is the young people who are abroad... when it comes to daily family activities like weddings and naming ceremonies and issues we are being asked our suggestions and they are listening to us because we have the economic power. (Interviewee 4, female, 40s, highly educated professional/ activist)

There is a strong possibility that the economic power of the diaspora puts them in positions of decision-maker in their families. It is particularly interesting that a Gambian woman made this statement, as it shows that remittances also shift gender relations in The Gambia like it does for Somali women in Lewiston, USA (Hammond's 2011) who through their remittances were allowed participate in the *diya* system. However, what is not clear in this statement is how the Gambian diaspora in general and women in particular use remittances to get their families to listen to them and what politics are being played. For example, are Gambians in the diaspora using their economic power to coerce or persuade their families to listen to them? Yet again, the line between politics and development is looking rather thin even when viewed from a discussion of family-scale remittance sending.

Lastly, the 52 interviews conducted in The Gambia revealed that all the participants recognized the contributions of the diaspora to their families, however, the group that appeared most appreciative were the male and female students aged between (20 and 30) attending the University of The Gambia. These groups of students described the diaspora as “heroes and heroines...”, “bread-winners of this country” (51) and “people who are generous and hardworking” (Interviewees 51, 52). This is perhaps unsurprising in the context that the money they receive from their family members in the diaspora is helping to sustain them in education. Therefore, their enthusiasm and sincerity in describing the Gambian diaspora not only showed they valued the benevolence but they also expressed their own aspirations to someday travel out of the country and send money ‘home’ to take care of their families. However, it would be hard to measure the ‘inspiration’ provided by the existing diaspora for a younger generation, but if international migration does lead to development within The Gambia, then such inspiration is also part of the development process in itself. Yet, there is a political point to be made here too. If young people’s thoughts are focused on working overseas, their motivation for engaging in local politics in The Gambia is significantly reduced and the incentive to campaign for political change does not exist if your aspirations are to live overseas.

### **Town and Village**

There are multiple functioning Gambian diaspora associations in various host countries like Norway, Sweden, UK, and the US. This research interviewed 10 UK Gambian diaspora associations. And though you do not have to be a member of such an association to be a member of the diaspora, many of those who are most animated about development issues do join associations. This is partly because such associations can provide a vehicle for development (Mercer et al. 2008, Lampert 2009, Evans 2010) and partly because those with a strong sense of belonging are most likely to be engaged in transnational development activities. 60% of the associations stated they are engaged in development projects in various towns and villages across The Gambia. They send books and materials to schools (Interviewee 15<sup>50</sup>), give scholarships to outstanding students to attend high school (Association 3), and raise funds for disaster relief (Association 4).

The recent projects the Gambian diaspora associations in the UK have been involved with are diverse. For example, in 2011, the Reading Gambia Association sent 30 bicycles to schoolchildren. In June 2012, the Gambia United Society

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<sup>50</sup> Member of Amitage Secondary School alumni association

reportedly raised £10,000 for farmers affected by famine and the Brufut Association purchased an ambulance for the Brufut health centre<sup>51</sup>. All of the interviewees who belong to these associations stated that their attachment to their town and villages is enhanced through their participation in hometown associations and their engagement in development projects in their towns/villages (Mercer et al. 2008, Lampert 2009). For example, a member of one of the associations claimed they felt a “sense of belonging back ‘home’ because I have an emotional attachment to Brufut. That is why I contribute financially through the Brufut association” (Interviewee 42, male, 40s, highly educated professional). This finding is in line with the wider literature, which argues that diasporas contribute to development in their ‘home’ town or village because they have an emotional link to that place (Mercer and Page 2010, Mavroudi 2015, Moniruzzaman 2016).

These associations are contributing to development by increasing access to health and education for the people in the towns and villages. These are key ‘development’ indicators for expanding human capacities and achieving improved quality of life for people in the locality. Giving direct support to people by sponsoring children in education (who are not close relatives) will improve their long-term economic prospects (Durand et al. 1996, Connell and Conway, cited by Lindley 2007). And donating medical supplies, equipment, and ambulances to community health centres and hospitals will facilitate better health achievements and support economic productivity. As the World Health Organization (WHO) has rightfully stated, health is imperative to development both in its own right and instrumentally because a healthy population is more productive. Again, the boundaries between the scales of diaspora intervention seem to be breaking down here. These town/village scale interventions are good for the nation as a whole but as I have mentioned earlier, I am keeping the three scales separated to reflect the worldviews of interviewees in the diaspora. However, there are paradoxes in the findings in this section because on the one hand, they challenge the literature, which argues that the capacity of hometown associations to improve the material quality of life is limited because it is not their main function and they are not always very good at delivering projects (Mercer et al. 2008, Evans 2010). But on the other hand, they corroborate with the same literature, which argues that diasporas have long-term commitments to development in their hometown (Mercer et al. 2008; 230) and they prefer to fund projects that increase access to healthcare and education to people (Mercer et al. 2008, Lampert 2009).

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<sup>51</sup> Brufut Village is an old settlement, increasingly however, land is being sold to private individuals and estate developers due to the high demand for plots to build housing space. Brufut is located in Kombo South District, West Coast Region and is 23km by road to Banjul capital. The population is approximately nine thousand people. <http://www.accessgambia.com/information/brufut.html>

## National

According to Teferra (2015), diaspora remittances are the single most important foreign direct investment in some African countries. For example, in some countries (especially small and island economies) such as Cape Verde or indeed The Gambia, remittances provide a very significant proportion of GDP. But for much larger countries (such as Ghana or Nigeria) the volume of remittances may be greater but they make up a smaller proportion of overall GDP. Therefore, suggesting that the significance of remittances changes from nation to nation. However, remittances entering The Gambia through official channels like banks and money transfer bureaus constituted over 20% of the country's GDP in 2013 according to World Bank data.

This 20% GDP contribution from diaspora remittances is believed to go into national development because the monies are used to purchase goods and pay for services, which are taxed. However, there are no transaction taxes on remittances arriving in The Gambia, but the sender pays a fee<sup>52</sup> for the recipient to receive the exact amount they are sent. But, some of the goods and services paid for by remittance are taxed (VAT) at the point of sale. For example, the VAT applied to the supply of goods, services and imports is at a rate of 15% in The Gambia. However, food and drinks for human consumption is exempt from these taxes except imported food and drink<sup>53</sup> (PWC 2013; 43) and it is likely that diaspora remittances are used to purchase imported goods because The Gambia has an importer economy<sup>54</sup>. Other exempt services that are paid for by diaspora remittances include school fees, medical bills, prescription drugs, transportation, rental of residential property, small businesses, domestic electricity and water<sup>55</sup>. But it is very hard to trace a path between remittances and government revenues. Instead, most analysis tends to think about this in terms of GDP. Therefore, perhaps it would be helpful to look at government expenditure in health and education for example, and compare it to the amount of remittances coming into the country in order to create links between remittances and national development. For instance, according to World Bank data, the Gambian government expenditure on health and education in 2013 was 6.5% and 2.8% of GDP and the percentage of remittances in that same year more than double government spending on these public services. However, looking at it from this perspective is unhelpful because data on taxes in The Gambia shows that only a very small percentage of diaspora

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<sup>52</sup> Western Union charges £4.90 for every £200 sent from the UK

<sup>53</sup> A quick guide to Taxation in Gambia: September 2013 PWC

<sup>54</sup> In 2014, the country imported \$1.14B and \$187M of that was food stuff (<http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/gmb/>)

<sup>55</sup> <http://businessingambia.com/gambia-vat-exempted-goods-and-services/>

remittances end up as tax revenue and it becomes difficult to see how diaspora remittances are making significant contributions to the Gambian economy through taxation.

On the other hand, the interviews revealed that 80% of the interviewees in the diaspora believe their remittances are contributing to the country's economy through taxation because they pay taxes for their land and building projects in The Gambia. According to an interviewee:

I pay tax on the property, which is worth 2.2 million dalasi. I paid 75,000.00 dalasi (\$2309<sup>56</sup>), which goes to the government. Contributing to the country... I have bought a house though I am not getting all what I expected but the 75,000.00 dalasi is going to the government and the country (Interviewee 15, male, 40s and highly educated professional).

This interviewee is a highly educated professional and there is a sense of accuracy in this statement in terms of the amount of tax they paid for their property. However, concerning their comment about their tax contributing to the country, this is uncertain. This is because there is no evidence showing how the Gambian government spends these taxes. In this statement, there is a clear distinction between what is real (the amount paid) versus what is perceived (it is contributing to the country).

Some interviewees (5%) in the diaspora also made claims that diaspora remittances are responsible for the peace and stability in the country. They argued that their remittances are preventing Gambians at 'home' from engaging in civil disobedience because diaspora remittances meet the immediate needs of the people. The same interviewee 15 claimed that:

Gambia is stable and the driving force for the stability is the diaspora because if people cannot eat or go to school they will rise up (against the government) but because they are getting what they need from the diaspora, they are taking whatever the government gives them. That is why there is stability... development in Gambia is from people like you and me. (Interviewee 15, male, 40s and highly educated professional)

Clearly, viewing remittances as a driving force for peace and stability in The Gambia does not make it a development contribution. However, it can be argued

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<sup>56</sup> Based on a historically accurate exchange rate [www.exchangerates.org.uk](http://www.exchangerates.org.uk)

that peace and stability are necessary pre-conditions for development to take place. However, this is a perception and not a reality because there are other more obvious factors that play a bigger part in preserving peace and preventing popular unrest in The Gambia. The empirical evidence points to fear and coercion from the national security services as the main contributor to the peace and stability in the country. For example, it is common knowledge that the rights of people in The Gambia are often violated by the national security services, particularly those that are political opponents and critics of the government (Amnesty International Report 2015/ 2016 and Human Rights Watch Report 2015). Additionally, as I have mentioned in chapter 4, there are draconian laws like the Information and Communication Act, amended in 2013, which permits the government and security services to prosecute persons accused of “spreading false news against the Government” and more often than not, the ‘false news’ is defined as spreading information that is critical of the government. For example, in September 2013, Gambian broadcast journalist Fatou Camara was arrested and charged with spreading ‘false news’, because she was accused of providing information to the diaspora-owned newspaper Freedom with intent to tarnish the image of the President<sup>57</sup>. Though I do not know what that information was, but given the small size of the diaspora in relation to the overall population, it is inconceivable to argue that diaspora remittances are fulfilling the needs of every Gambian, thus preventing them from engaging in civil disobedience.

In addition, the idea that diaspora remittances foster development by preserving the political status quo corroborates with the literature that argues diaspora can contribute significantly to peace building through indirect engagement such as contributing to family economic survival (Brinkerhoff 2011 and Hoehn et al. 2011). However, it seems more likely that these interviewees are placing emphasis on their own contribution to the developmental consequences of preserving political stability in order to emphasize how much the country needs the diaspora or to justify their interventions in Gambian politics.

Nevertheless, I argue that the Gambian government knows those that are outside of the country will always send money to their families regardless of the political conditions in the country. Therefore, even though remittances may not be responsible for the peace and stability in The Gambia, they have been responsible for reducing the accountability of the government to the Gambian people. For example, 95% of the interviewees in the diaspora stated they would never stop

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<sup>57</sup> <https://www.article19.org/resources.php/resource/37304/en/gambia:-journalist-accused-of-spreading-false-news-flees-country>

sending remittances 'home' even if it would put pressure on the government to be more accountable. According to a participant in the diaspora:

Whether or not the government improves the social services in The Gambia, I would never stop doing what I do for my parents. I can never imagine not doing anything for my parents even if they are millionaires (Interviewee 29, male, 40s-50s, highly educated professional)

This is a paradox because, on the one hand, the interviewees in the diaspora (excluding the five pro-government supporters who were interviewed) have criticized the government for not doing enough for the people but on the other hand, the same people are saying that they would never stop providing for their families even if the government met the needs of the people. This shows the complexity of the relationship between the diaspora and the government and the relationship between development and politics.

### **5.3 The Contributions of the Gambian Diaspora to the Development of the Sectors**

#### **Health**

According to the empirical evidence, Gambians in the diaspora have paid for the renovation of health centres as well as built hospitals in respective towns and villages, such as Farafenni, Brufut, Brikama, Koina and Sukuta. According to a university student in The Gambia, "one Gambian in the diaspora built a health centre for his village Dongoro-Ba" (Interviewee 52). Further investigation found this claim to be accurate. The Dongoro-Ba Health Centre is located in Jarra, in the Lower River Region of The Gambia. The centre was established in 2013 and currently has nine staff members providing a range of services to children and women, including labour and delivery, ultrasounds and scans. People visiting the clinic have to purchase a 'ticket' for five dalasi to be seen by a doctor or nurse, after which they have to pay for medication. According to the informant, the monies collected from the patients are used to pay staff and purchase drugs. The cost to build this facility is estimated at around 32 million dalasi (\$678,541) by a board member (Interviewee 71). The clinic's website states that the village community initiated the creation of the clinic in 2010 and diasporan Alhagie Lamin Dem's (lived abroad) benevolent and philanthropic sponsorship made it possible in 2013. The health centre has also received donations such as drugs and medical



supplies from international donors like Dutch philanthropist Vera Van Den Broek<sup>58</sup>. The Dongoro-Ba health centre was inaugurated by the Minister of Health and Social Welfare, during which he stated: “the construction of the health centre is a cornerstone of the July 22nd Revolution and in line with the development objectives of the Gambian leader <sup>59</sup>”. Continuing with the theme of linking development to politics this shows how development successes are used boost the profile of politicians in The Gambia even though the government did not fund this project. However, the Minister has attached it to politics by linking it to the president’s own development vision. The photograph below is of the Dongoro-Ba Health Centre.

Figure 12: Dongoro - Ba Health Centre



Source: Dongoro-Ba Community Health Center Facebook page

In addition, between 2005 and 2007, the Birmingham Gambia Association arranged for eight junior doctors from the UK to travel to The Gambia to work for one-week, with support from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare who provided accommodation and transportation for the doctors. Then in 2008, the Birmingham Gambian Association arranged for 14 ambulances to be shipped to the Royal Victoria Teaching Hospital in The Gambia donated by the Sussex Ambulance Services. According to a member of the association:

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.dongorobahealthcentre.gm/index.php/about-us>

<sup>59</sup> <http://allafrica.com/stories/201304291323.html>

The Gambian Association in Birmingham realized the need for ambulance for The Gambia then step in to negotiate with the Sussex Ambulance Service. After a lengthy going and comings, we were able to secure the vehicles fully equipped with all that a modern ambulance needs. The Association was able to get some hospital equipment such as beds, nurses uniforms and incubators just to name a few. The Association also negotiated training for medical personnels. Shipment for the ambulances was partly financed by the Gambia Government and the Association. (Interviewee 21, male, 40s, highly educated professional)

There is not data available to quantify the contributions of the Gambian diaspora to the health sector. However, I argue that the Gambian diaspora is contributing to this sector in more tangible ways than the government given that monies meant for health sector development in The Gambia have previously been unaccounted for. Therefore, contributions such as building infrastructures, providing drugs, donating advanced medical equipment, and helping to build the skills and capacity of doctors through the exchange programme are likely to have long-term development effects in this sector. Similarly, these types of contributions appear to be the common forms of contributions made by other African diasporas groups like the Sierra Leonean, Somali, Ghanaian, Congolese, Rwandan and Burundi diasporas, who are also effectively building capacity in health institutions in their 'home' countries<sup>60</sup>. However, the impacts of these of contributions are difficult to quantify.

On the other hand, the Gambian diaspora is creating jobs for the labourers who build or renovate the hospitals and health centres they fund as well as the Gambian medical professionals working in these health institutions. Therefore, it can be argued that the Gambian diaspora is contributing to the economy through their contributions in the health sector. In addition, the diaspora is supporting the capacity building of medical professionals, which is particularly important to the sustainable development of this sector as studies by Clemens and Pettersson (2008) revealed that there is large-scale emigration of Gambian nurses and doctors. For example 53% of physicians and 66% of nurses born in The Gambia were practicing outside of the country in 2000 (7) and “*for every Gambian professional nurse working in the Gambia, likewise about two live in a developed country*” (8)., However, there is the question of whether there would be the capacity to pay the Gambian nurses and doctors if they had not left the country. This is a difficult question to answer, which involves a lot of speculation. On the

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<sup>60</sup> <https://diaspora.iom.int/sites/default/files/infosheet/dehpo.pdf>

one hand, it can be argued that if these medical professionals remained in the country and helped to build the sector, it would bring more revenue to the government. But on the other hand, the poor performing economy, high debt repayments, and the tax exemption of health services suggest that not much money will go back into the sector.

Nevertheless, the fact that the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare have shown a willingness to accept contributions from the Gambian diaspora is encouraging for those who want to help the sector develop. Perhaps health interventions are seen as exclusively developmental and are not politics. In other words, development is providing a shield behind which interventions can be made without having to engage in difficult discussions about the political failures of the Gambian state to provide these basic services.

### **Education**

The Gambian diaspora in the UK and US are contributing to the education sector individually and via their associations (Mercer et al. 2008, Lampert 2009, Terrazas 2010, Hammond 2011, Amagoh and Rahman 2016). Approximately 30% of the UK associations claim they are funding education projects like summer schools (Association 3), whereas 15% of the individuals in the diaspora said they have been involved in donating books and school materials to students in The Gambia. For example, one interviewee stated, "5 years ago we took \$200,000 worth of books to the university" (Interviewee 20, male, 40s - 50s, pro-government supporter). This claim was unsubstantiated and my ethnographic impression is that this was either overstated or false. However, I also cannot prove this. However, as discussed in chapter 4, any claims without supporting evidence would be treated as perceptions or falsehoods. In this situation, I argue that this claim is false because the participant did not give details about how they mobilized and sent \$200,000 worth of book to The Gambia and who was involved. Additionally, I have worked at the University of The Gambia and have not seen \$200,000 worth of books at the library. This is not to say that there is not a small possibility that the books were sent but diverted elsewhere or that the participant did send books but overstated the amount (the fact that he is a pro-government supporter creates further suspicion as they tend to overstate development contributions and conditions in The Gambia). However, without actual physical evidence, it is difficult to accept this claim as the entire truth. Nevertheless, the advantage of being in the diaspora is that they have flexibility with their contributions because they are celebrated regardless of whether or not they contribute the amount they promise.

Meaning this participant would be celebrated if he sent \$200,000 or \$2,000 worth of books to the university.

According to an interviewee in The Gambia, “the government has built schools everywhere across Gambia but there are not enough desks and chairs, proper functioning toilets or even basic resources for children to get a good quality education” (Interviewee 51, male, 20s and university student). This interviewee has had first-hand experience in the Gambian school system and therefore has a strong desire to see ‘real’ development in this sector. Therefore, the contributions of some members of the Gambia diaspora such as providing equipment that would help to develop the institutional capacity and operating ability of the schools is arguably more appreciated by students than building more schools. For example, in 2002-03, Association 3 ran a summer school programme at Gunjur Upper Basic School, and they supplemented the wages of ten teachers and two teaching assistants. 295 students were registered in 2003 (45 more students than in 2002) and successfully completed the programme, with nine outstanding students being awarded scholarship<sup>61</sup> and two students gaining entry to the University of The Gambia (Association 3). This has a long-term developmental impact because helping children to succeed in education would improve their long-term economic prospects (Durand et al. 1996, Connell and Conway, cited by Lindley 2007).

## **Housing**

Roughly, 50% of the interviewees in the diaspora said they have built one or two houses in The Gambia. They argued that this contributes to the development of this sector and the economy because it is providing shelter, tax revenue, jobs, and income for business people amongst other things. According to an interviewee in the diaspora, “I am building a house for my family which is giving employment to some local people and they are earning an income. I am paying taxes so the government is also eating their share. The house is improving the living conditions of my family by giving them a bigger and more comfortable space” (Interviewee 27, males, 40s-50s, educated professional).

This supports the literature, which argues that the African diaspora is sending international remittances from OECD countries for house building projects (Plaza and Ratha 2011) as well as adds to the literature that argues diasporas are responsible for inflating house prices and causing construction booms in their ‘home’ countries (McGregor 2014). In The Gambia, property prices have risen by

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<sup>61</sup> <http://www.ksa-uk.org/sommer-school-report/4531937008>

30% in the five years in some areas, and the average cost of a three-bedroom property is US\$ 100,000 (four million dalasis) and US\$ 50,000 (two million dalasis) for two bedrooms. The increase attributed partly to diaspora interest in property in The Gambia and partly on tourism (Hatfield 2016). The inflationary pressures created by the Gambian diaspora in the housing sector are on the one hand negative for local Gambians who cannot afford to buy or build houses due to the high cost of cement and building materials. But on the other hand, the boom in construction has been positive for commercial businesses that have expanded to areas like Brusubi where there is now a concentration of shops and active trade. In addition, the land value in this area has increased significantly, which is also positive for local Gambians who bought their land in Brusubi for a cheap price but are selling it at a much high rate.

A popular building contractor (Interviewee 59<sup>62</sup>) in The Gambia informed me that they build at least three houses per year costing between two and four million dalasis<sup>63</sup>, for members of the Gambian diaspora. However, they explained that a large proportion of labourer working in The Gambia are from Senegal, and not local Gambians, thus the money they earn is being remitted to their families in Senegal. The contractor also stated that building materials like rods, cement, doors, windows fitting and furniture are imported from Senegal, China, Dubai, UK, or the USA and not purchased from traders in The Gambia. In fact, they only purchase raw materials from The Gambia, such as sand and washed stones for aggregates, which they get from beaches in Sanyang. This suggested that the contributions the interviewees believed the diaspora are making to housing sector are not as great as they assumed to be. However, this was data collected from only one contractor and perhaps other contractors in The Gambia would tell a different story. But irrespective of this information, I continue with the theme of linking development to politics by arguing that diaspora houses contribute to infrastructural development as it is making parts of the country aesthetically pleasing, raising the profile of the government and adding to their rhetoric of bringing development to the country.

### **Modernising the Housing Stock**

Roughly, 70% of the interviewees in The Gambia argued that the Gambian diaspora is modernizing the housing stock in the country and thereby contributing

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<sup>62</sup> This interviewee originates from Senegal but decided to set up a constructions business in the country because they said there is a high demand in The Gambia for house building,

<sup>63</sup> US \$51,229.51 to \$102,459.00 based on a historically accurate exchange rate of \$39.04 to 1GMD [www.exchangerates.org.uk](http://www.exchangerates.org.uk)

to development. According to a student in The Gambia, “most of the beautiful mansions belong to the diaspora” (Interviewee 52). The majority of participant share this notion that the Gambian diaspora is contributing to the infrastructural development of the country. For example, a member of the Gambian diaspora claimed “the diaspora are making invaluable contributions to the socio-economic development of the country. If you travel around the country you see many people overseas have put up structures, which contributes to the infrastructure of the country” (Interviewee 14, male, 50s, professional/activist). This statement is clearly only relevant in the urban areas where there is a concentration of houses built by members of the Gambian. However, diaspora constructions are not spread across the country especially in the rural areas, therefore, creating uneven development in The Gambia (Davies 2012).

The photograph is an example of the kind of houses built by members of the Gambian diaspora. It has four bedrooms, multiple bathrooms, and is located in an upcoming area called Kerr Serign, where there are many houses with similar grandeur belonging to the diaspora. The ‘modern’ features of this house are the grand size of the house, the design and architecture, the air conditioning unit that is attached to the far right side of the house, the swing set and the shape and style of windows (which are not the conventional rectangular shapes you would find in old houses in The Gambia). The grounds around of the house are kept neat and tidy and the grass is irrigated and freshly groomed. In fact based on this picture alone, I would argue that this house does not look like it is located in one of the poorest countries in West Africa.

Figure 13: House owned by a member of the Gambian diaspora



Source: Sainabou Taal

Whereas the next photograph below is of a typical Gambian family house. This three bedroomed house is located in the affluent area called Fajara. However, there are obvious differences in the style and design of the house to the one above. Gambian people today do not find this house as impressive as the one above because it is a modestly sized bungalow, the design is plain and the windows are the standard rectangle shape with obvious burglar proofing (which is considered out-date. Though this house displays some features of modernity such as satellite dishes and air conditioning, I argue that Gambians are more likely to see the house above as making the bigger contribution to development than this older style house. For my interviewees, this modernization of housing was a visible sign of Gambian development.

Figure 14: House owned by resident Gambian



Sources: Gambia Property Shop<sup>64</sup>

Modernizing the housing stock in The Gambia contributes to economic development because it raises the house prices (McGregor 2014, Hatfield 2016), thus more tax can be collected and it improves the appearance of the country, which would presumably attract more tourists and foreign investors. However, this adds only one aspect of growing the tourism sector, as the country also has good weather, beaches, political stability and is in close proximity to Europe, which also attracts tourism and foreign investors.

On the other hand, the interviews revealed that diaspora do not build houses for the purpose of development even though links can be made. However, 45% of interviewees in the diaspora built their houses for their families, 25% for investment (rental property) and 15% stated that they wanted to eventually return 'home'. This supports part of the 'migration and development' literature, which argues that development is not a motive for emigration rather it is a secondary consequence of migration (Bréant 2013). But for one member of the Gambian diaspora, the reason people build big modern houses in the country is to show their families and affiliates that they have achieved success and also to elevate their social status within The Gambia.

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<sup>64</sup> <http://www.gambiapropertyshop.com/africa/gambia/city-of-banjul/fajara/property/fajara-m-section-3-bed-house-and-3-stores-for-rent>



Ostentatiousness - showing off, and competition. Of course, these variables largely depend on the personalities involved, their family's social status. So most of our diaspora and transnational migrant actions, aims and ambitions are inseparable from our social realities in the homeland (Interviewee 42, male, 40s, highly educated professional)

What this interviewee is saying in this statement is that he believes Gambians in the diaspora are motivated to build houses to show off and conform to societal expectations and not for the *purpose* of development. This is because the social realities in the country are such that a person's success in the diaspora is often measured by their ability to build a house at 'home'. This statement is arguably a perception and reality in the sense that the interviewee perceives members of the Gambian diaspora as "ostentatious" and 'show off'. However, the reality is that Gambian society places pressure on the diaspora to prove their success with material things like a house (Kabwe and Segatti 2003, Mazzucato 2010). However, the residual outcome of such constructions is development and, in some context, it is more comfortable to think about these houses in developmental terms than as a demonstration of personal success.

### **Agriculture**

The research found that some members of the Gambian diaspora are investing in the agriculture sector by establishing farms, agro-processing firms and marketing and distributing agricultural products in The Gambia. The literature on the African diaspora and development does not pay much attention to diasporas in agriculture, perhaps because the kind of interventions agriculture needs (eg farm to market roads) are not necessarily the kinds of intervention the diaspora can provide (as mentioned in the introduction of this chapter). However, according to IFAD, African diaspora groups like the Somalis are investing in the agriculture sector in their 'home' countries by providing financial support to business owners in agriculture and thus helping to enhance food security in Somalia. For example, IFAD supported eight Somali diaspora investors in the AgriFood Fund programme in Somalia, to which they contributed 40% to 60% of the US\$ 435,600 financing that was awarded to six business owners in agriculture (IFAD 2016). In The Gambia, there are a number of diaspora-owned agriculture businesses like Deggeh Foods International, which, is an agro-processing firm that exports products like palm oil, cassava, mangos, peanut butter and moringa to the US and other West African countries and was established in 2007. Then there is EverGreen Farm established in 2011, which is a five-hectare farm located in Manduar and Jambur in the

Western Division of The Gambia where they grow and sell fruits and vegetables. This is a 2 million GMD (USD \$67,363) ongoing project and in 2014, EverGreen Farm won the Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) Business Plan Competition Award and with it the sum of 1,000,000 GMD (USD 25,157,23<sup>65</sup>). Lastly, there is Farm Fresh established in 2015, which markets and distribute fruits and vegetables in The Gambia. This is the first online food service in The Gambia, and the owner is a return migrant.

However, only one interviewee in the diaspora claimed to have provided financing for a family farm. They explained:

Right now I am helping my younger brother start a poultry business. I have spent GMD 200, 000.00 dalasi (USD \$4644.68<sup>66</sup>) to build the chicken house, buy the chickens and the feed. Initially, I use to spend money to feed my family, but now that I have invested in the poultry business, I have made my family self-sufficient (Interviewee 41, male, 30-40s and post-graduate student).

From the interviews, it appeared that the participants in the Gambian diaspora were not engaged in this sector. However, the development contributions from the agricultural businesses listed above arguably include create employment, offer a market to farmers to sell their products and help them export their products as well provide tax revenues. However, unfortunately, there was no data available to conclusively determine the extent of the Gambian diaspora is contributing to the development of this sector.

## 5.4 Conclusions

This chapter addressed the research question *how, why and where does the diaspora contribute to development in The Gambia?* Using the empirical data, this chapter discussed the various areas in which the Gambian diaspora contributes to development in The Gambia. It also identified the different types of contributions they make at 'home' and explained the motivations behind them. In this chapter, I argued that the Gambian diaspora is making the most contribution directly to their families, which is helping to augment household consumption and alleviate household poverty (de Haas 2012, Chami and Fullenkamp 2013). In addition, six out of the ten associations were funding development projects in their 'home'

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<sup>65</sup> Exchange rate of Dalasi to US Dollars in May 2014 was at 39.75 [http://usd.fxexchangerate.com/gmd-2014\\_05\\_22-exchange-rates-history.html](http://usd.fxexchangerate.com/gmd-2014_05_22-exchange-rates-history.html)

<sup>66</sup> Exchange rate of Dalasi to US Dollars in May 2015 was at 43.06 [http://www.exchangerates.org.uk/USD-GMD-30\\_05\\_2015-exchange-rate-history.html](http://www.exchangerates.org.uk/USD-GMD-30_05_2015-exchange-rate-history.html)

towns/villages (Mercer et al. 2008, Lampert 2009, Evans 2010), they claimed this was because they have an emotional link to that place (Mercer and Page 2010, Mavroudi 2015, Moniruzzaman 2016). In this empirical research, I found strong notions of autochthony and the 'politics of belonging' were the key drivers for some members of the Gambian diaspora to assist the country in development as well as in politics (Lampert 2009, Kleist 2013, Kleist and Turner 2013). Lastly, the interviewees made no direct contributions to national development but felt the government is benefiting significantly from their remittances through taxation. These claims were disproved by the empirical evidence, which showed that goods and services paid for by diaspora remittance contributed a tiny percentage to tax revenue.

Another key finding from this research was that some scales of intervention are much more significant to people in the diaspora than others but it is hard to keep all three scales entirely separate. Sometimes contributions at one scale complement another (eg paying family members school fees improves national development indicators about school attendance). But sometimes there are contradictions meaning that directing remittances to the small proportion of Gambian families who have members overseas is likely to exacerbate spatial and social inequalities, which undermines development (Davies 2012, Skeldon 2005, 2008, Page and Mercer 2012). Nevertheless, the majority of the individuals in the Gambian diaspora are driven to make financial and material contributions to their families' wellbeing because they believe they have a non-negotiable obligation to towards their families (Lindley 2010, Mercer and Page 2010, Hammond et al. 2011, Enoch 2014, Sinatti and Horst 2014, Horst et al 2014). It was clear from the interviews that the relationships those in the diaspora have with their families in The Gambia are separate to the state. In this way, the intervention people make draws a strong separation in peoples' minds between the development benefits of these interventions and their role in Gambian politics. For example, if these remittances are not about the state then they are not about politics. Yet, it is suggested here that there are a number of ways in which they have a political effect. For example, they reduce the civil engagement of the people (Obadare and Adebawwi 2009) and allow the government to be unaccountable to the people (Saine 2009).

In addition, this research revealed that some sectors are far more amenable to diaspora development interventions than others because relatively small projects (such as school desks, books or bikes) can have a positive effect in education and health. It is quite easy to organize such an intervention and bring it to a conclusion. In contrast, setting up an agro-industrial enterprise or building a house requires

considerably more risks, planning, capital and time. Nevertheless, I found it particularly difficult to measure the impact of their contributions to these economic sectors partly due to the lack of data. However, by using case study examples of groups like the Somali diaspora in agriculture I was able to show that agriculture is an area of interest for diaspora intervention. In essence, these findings revealed that some sectors are basically easier to intervene in than others from the diaspora's perspective. But even so, one of the attractions of engaging these sectors is that they are unambiguously developmental and generally by-pass debates about interfering in politics.

## **Chapter 6:**

# **The Barriers to Developing The Gambia**

This chapter speaks to the same academic literature as chapter 5 but focuses on the obstacles that prevent the Gambian diaspora from being effective agents of development in The Gambia. This chapter is divided into three substantive sections after the introduction. The first section discusses and analyses the barriers at family and town/village level such as managing demands and high expectations, dependency and misappropriation of diaspora money. The second section discusses and analyses the barriers at the government level, which includes the marginalization of the diaspora from national development projects, fear of physical safety in The Gambia, fixing exchange rates, and high levels of bureaucracy. The third section discusses the institutional challenges, including operating diaspora associations, brain drain and the associated lack of skilled capacity, and academic freedom. The final section concludes the chapter by drawing together the key arguments and discussions.

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter primarily discusses the barriers the interviewees in the diaspora say they encounter when attempting to contribute to development in The Gambia. These barriers exist partly because of the politicization of development in the country, (which means the state determines who to engage in national development and controls resource allocations) and partly because there are high expectations and demands placed on the diaspora (which often means their resources are directed at family level, and thus rarely go towards productive investments). The main argument in this chapter is that the politicization of development within the country creates a fundamental barrier for the diaspora. Since the government claims a monopoly on the credit for delivering development and uses development as a political tool to preserve its reputation with the population, some members of the Gambian diaspora do not wish to participate in national development for fear of further entrenching the power of the state. I further argue that it is the responsibility of the government and policymakers in The Gambia to establish diaspora-engagement policies and targeted incentives that would attract diaspora investments. For example, lower tariffs on imported raw materials and equipment (a policy used in Mali), reduce or give diasporas discounts on certain state taxes (a policy used in Senegal) (Agunias and Newland 2011), create treasury bonds and stocks to Gambians living abroad (an incentive

used in Rwanda) (Fransen and Siegel 2013) or set up 'one-shop stops' to help investors in the Gambian diaspora avoid having to move between different ministries and have legislations that allow for new businesses to be established in a few days (policy also in Rwanda (Lemarchand and Tash 2015) . Even though these policies and incentives will not guarantee investment from members of the Gambian diaspora, however, the findings from the interviews suggest that some want to invest in the country but will only do so when they feel their capital and physical safety is not at risk. Nevertheless, for those in the Gambian diaspora who want to contribute to development at present, their options are to either direct their contributions through local NGOs like the Gambian United Society diaspora association in the UK in 2010, when they received no response from the Ministry of Health after expressing their interest in supporting flood victims. Thus, they directed £10,000 to the Gambian Red Cross. Or the Gambian diaspora can direct their contributions to fund village development projects that would contribute to key development indicators such as in the areas of health and education. Such projects (Dongoro Ba health centre and exchange programme for UK medical doctors) seem to be welcomed by the government.

This chapter responds to the objective set out by Ragazzi (2014) to find out "*why certain states engage or do not to engage with their population abroad*" (76). In the article '*A comparative analysis of diaspora policies*', Ragazzi (2014) creates a typology of sending states, against which he assesses various explanatory frameworks. However, the typology does not include politically repressive states like The Gambia, thus, I look to the empirical data to explain why the government does not engage the diaspora. As one interviewee in the diaspora puts it "we (the diaspora) are not even allowed to participate (at national level) – [President] Jammeh has said he does not want our ideas" (Interviewee 28, male, 40s and highly educated professional). This interviewee is not a member of the political Gambian diaspora, however, the fact that they commented about feeling marginalized in homeland affairs creates the impression that the wider Gambian diaspora has a shared feeling of exclusion in national development. On the other hand, an economist in The Gambia attributed the exclusion to the political affiliations of the Gambian diaspora. He explains that the "government places too much emphasis on the political affiliation of the diaspora rather than their development potential..." (Interviewee 61, male, 60, economist/former civil servant/highly educated professional). There is some truth in both claims, but the aim of this chapter is to analyse the barriers highlighted by the interviewees and to determine whether they are 'real' or they provide an excuse for some interviewees in the diaspora to be inactive in development at 'home'.

## 6.2 Family, Town and Village

### Managing the Demands and Expectations of the Family

All the interviewees in the diaspora stated that they felt compelled to send money 'home' to their families, to cover the cost of food, shelter, bills, education, healthcare, and other immediate needs. In chapter 5, I argued that these could be viewed as micro development contributions that would help the diaspora achieve their end goal of alleviating their own families from poverty. For example, one interviewee in the diaspora stated, "I am working for my family, the money is for my mother, wife and children and sometimes extended family..." (Interviewee 35, male, 40s-50s, highly educated professional).

However, from the 35% of interviewees in the diaspora who claim their families depend solely on their remittances, 10% stated that their families in The Gambia have high expectations, and at times they have to make sacrifices in order to meet their demands (Hammond 2011). For example, some interviewees stated that their families increasingly ask for money for things they do not consider to be necessities. One interviewee explained, "sometimes I have to deny my family here to send money there and they don't always spend it as they should" (Interviewee 13, male, 40s, highly educated professional).

In chapter 5, I also argued that feelings of guilt combined with high levels of poverty in the country play an important part in driving the diaspora to succumb to the demands of their families. For example, one interviewee stated, "if my mother calls and tells me she is starving then I have to send her money" (Interviewee 11, male, 50s, activist). Some interviewees seemed overemphasized their responsibilities particularly those that are involved in politics. However, they also simultaneously claim that people in The Gambia exaggerate the struggles of living in a poor country (Horst 2004). This contradicts the picture of an easy and untroubled regular flow of remittances. In addition, this same interviewee stated they send remittances religiously every month to their family, thus it is unlikely that their mother will be starving.

Nevertheless, it can be argued that the demands from 'home', however unreasonable, are not a barrier for the diaspora, as it has not stopped them from providing the financial and/or material support to their families. In fact, only a small proportion of the sample in the Gambian diaspora felt this was a barrier, whereas, the majority felt they are reciprocated for their contributions with a strong sense of

belonging and pride. Thus, 40% of the interviewees said they were happy to support the needs of their families, because as one interviewee explained “I feel proud and happy to be able to assist them with whatever they want as things are not easy for some of them who are not working so it’s a pleasure for me to help out.” (Interviewee 21, male, 40s, highly educated professional).

### **Dependency**

The idea that diaspora remittances create dependency among recipients (Skeldon 2005, 2008, Davies 2012, de Haas 2012, Page and Mercer 2012, Horst et al. 2014) was also highlighted as a barrier in the interviews with the Gambian diaspora. Approximately 18% of the interviewees expressed the view that dependence on remittances is a barrier for the diaspora because people look to them instead of the government to fill socio-economic development gaps. According to an interviewee in the diaspora:

The negative impact of remittances is, the more money we send increases the levels of dependency. The people think it’s the responsibility of their family to take care of them and not the government. (Interviewee 41, male, 30s-40s and postgraduate student)

This interviewee feels perhaps this burden more because he is a student. However, the opinion that remittances decrease accountability of government (Saine 2009) supports existing research that states remittances reduce the civic engagement of recipients (Obadare and Adebaniwi 2009). It also illustrates how difficult it is to treat development as distinct from politics. For example, while there may be many Gambians at ‘home’ who are comfortable asking their family members in the diaspora for help, a significant proportion of them will not use their votes to leverage resources or accountability from the government. For instance, the average voter turnout for the presidential elections in The Gambia has decreased from 1972 and 1992<sup>67</sup> to 2001- 2015<sup>68</sup>, from 71% to 62.30%. At the same time, it is hard to disentangle this cause of political inaction from other factors as more than half of the interviewees believed the reduced civic engagement of Gambian people is attributed to the fear of state-sanctioned violence in The Gambia. For example, the protest against the Gambian government by school students in April 2000 resulted in the death of 14 students and 1 journalist, after the security forces opened fire on them. More recently, the protest organized by supporters of the

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<sup>67</sup> <http://africanelections.tripod.com/gm.html>

<sup>68</sup> <http://www.electionguide.org/countries/id/80/> (25/7/2016)



UDP opposition political party resulted in one death and the incarceration of the party leader. According to students at the university:

There is the fear of criticizing the government, so people stay silent. Freedom is lacking here, we are talking now, but we are also looking over our shoulders. People are politically terrorized and nobody wants to stand and debate about politics. (Interviewee 51, male, 20s)

Fear, as discussed in the introduction chapter, is defined in the literature as an emotion, which is at most time subjective. However, the anecdotal and empirical evidence collected in The Gambia confirmed that fear of state-sanctioned violence is 'just' because critics of the government have been publicly persecuted by the national security forces. Therefore, in this case, fear is real and an objective emotion in The Gambia. In addition, fear can also be used to explain for why people in the country depend on diaspora remittances and not on the government.

Furthermore, the interviews in The Gambia and the diaspora also revealed that people believed development assistance from the government depends on the political affiliations of groups in different geographical areas. This is perhaps another explanation for the dependency of diaspora remittance. For example, according to a student in The Gambia, "those who support the APRC political party have development at their door step" (Interviewee 51, male, 20s). And according to an interviewee in the diaspora:

In 20 years, the energy sector has not improved and this is key to development but he (President Jammeh) makes sure he has power in his own village. He is diverting resources where it is not needed. Kanilai is an isolated village where all development is (Interviewee 39, male, 30s-40s and highly educated professional/ activist)

Analyst Donald Wright (2015) reported in his book '*The World and a Very Small Place in Africa. A History of Globalization in Niimi, The Gambia. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed*', that Kanilai village (where President Jammeh is from and has a significant number of supporters) was one of the only villages in The Gambia to have electricity, streetlights, paved roads, and running water. This claim supports the view in the wider literature on African politics that resource allocations are directed to areas where there is voter support (Abdulai and Hickey 2014). Nevertheless, approximately 65% of the interviewees in the diaspora claimed they would not encourage people to engage in civil disobedience for the sake of holding the

government accountable. This is because there are fears that it would trigger a civil conflict. For example, one interviewee in the diaspora professed, “we do not want war... if conflict happens then women and children will perish. We do not want what happened in Syria to happen in Gambia” (Interviewee 25, male, 30s and pro-government supporter). This argument is interesting not because it fits in with the rhetoric of President Jammeh and his many supporters that interference from the diaspora would lead to instability in the country. But because the current global humanitarian crisis in Syria and the role of outside forces in perpetuating the civil conflict in that country has arguably made some Gambians afraid of the transnational intervention of the diaspora even if it is done under the shield of ‘development’. This shows the Gambian diaspora are in a difficult position because, on the one hand, they want the government to be held to account, but on the other hand, they do not want family members to suffer from poverty. As such, this feeling of responsibility will not allow the Gambian diaspora to stop sending remittances, which of course creates dependency.

### **The ‘Misappropriation’ of Diaspora Money by Family and Village Members**

The ‘misappropriation’ of diaspora money occurs when members of the diaspora send money for their own personal projects or to contribute to group projects but that money is not spent as intended. When this occurs, the diaspora would usually react by either discontinuing the project or directing their money to other people they trust. For example, one interviewee in the diaspora explained, “they do not feel guilty about taking our money. It has gotten to the extent that if someone outside wants something in Gambia, they have to get someone local to buy it on their behalf so their families do not know it is for them” (Interviewee 4, female, 40s, professional/ activist). That is to say, if money was being sent for a diaspora house-building project it might be that it is sent directly to a supplier of materials rather than via a family member.

### **‘Misappropriation’ at Family Level**

Only a small proportion of the interviewees (5%) raised ‘misappropriation’ of diaspora money sent for personal projects as an issue in The Gambia. A female interviewee in the diaspora explained her experience with her brother-in-law ‘misappropriating’ £20,000 she sent to her sister for a personal project (Interviewee 70, female, 30s, highly skilled professional). She expressed her fury was further heightened when she learned her brother-in-law had used some of that money to marry a second wife. There is an important question of gender here as both

interviewees 4 and 70 are women complaining about their families 'unjustly' taking their money. Within the feminist literature, there is the argument that gender relations at 'home' are not shifted by remittances, as Beth Buggenhagen (2004) found in her study of Senegalese women. In this sense, the men remain as the head of the household and control the income that enters the home. Therefore, it can be argued that perhaps the brother-in-law felt it was their responsibility to make decisions about how that money was spent, even though it was meant for a personal project. The brother in law could also argue that the money was used as part of a broader family project because a new wife will contribute to the household. However, there is no evidence to support this claim but it does raise questions for further research. For example, who has the right to determine 'misappropriation', the giver or the intended/expecting receiver?

Nevertheless, since only a small proportion of interviewees highlighted this as an issue it would be hard to conclude that diverting remittances is a major problem for the entire sample. Though it was no doubt a significant barrier for interviewees 4 and 70, to whom it has happened and they felt disheartened that their family 'squandered' their money. Particularly as the personal projects interviewee 70 was funding was to provide accommodation and sustainable income for their family. These interviews cast doubt on claims from elsewhere in the literature that the African diaspora benefit from support with their investments from family members at 'home' (Mazzucato's 2010; 460).

### **'Misappropriation' at Town and Village Level**

The interviews also revealed that diaspora money for town/village developments project had been 'misappropriated' by members of town/village. According to an interviewee in the diaspora:

I started something to help the community in terms of health. I started a pharmacy and 10% of profits were to go back to the community. What happened then is I realised the people I was dealing with were more interested in their personal gain than helping the community. After that I did not go ahead with it (Interviewee 27, males, 40s-50s and educated professional)

Though, only one interviewee from the sample had had the experience of their money being 'misappropriated' by town/village members. This arguably has a larger impact on development, as it would have benefitted more people than at

family level. Again, it would be interesting to have heard this story from the opposite perspective, why, after all, would those people putting *work* into the project from the Gambian side not expect to see benefits? Can they really be expected to be in a position to be as altruistic as the donor? Nevertheless, this barrier has prevented interviewee 27 from supporting development in their community and perhaps explains why development contributions by the diaspora are at times believed to not improve the material quality of life in the homeplace (Mercer et al. 2008) as it prevented them from being able to implement their projects. This data also tells us something about the limited understanding and empathy on both sides of the diaspora/home resident divide.

### **6.3 The Government Scale**

This section argues that there are four key barriers to enrolling the diaspora into Gambian development that operate at a government scale. First, and most significantly there are the contested claims about whether the diaspora is actively marginalized by the current government in The Gambia. Second, there is the question of the disincentive associated with the 'political risk' of investing in businesses in The Gambia because the government cannot be trusted from a business perspective. Third, there is the manipulation of exchange rates by the government, which discourages investment by over-valuing the Gambian dalasi and finally, fourth there is the high level of bureaucracy associated with starting a business in The Gambia. This section provides evidence from those in the diaspora of the impact of these factors on their willingness to engage. However, government official and pro-government members of the diaspora refute the claims that these are barriers to engaging and instead argue that they are used by the diaspora as excuses for their inactivity in national development.

#### **Marginalization of the Diaspora in National Development**

The marginalization of the Gambian diaspora in national development has meant that Gambians abroad have had very limited participation in the country's development agenda. According to the interviews, the government's decision to largely exclude the diaspora from national development projects is attributed to President Jammeh and his supporters being extremely frustrated by the political interventions of some groups in the Gambian diaspora. These groups have set out to expose the activities of the government, such as the human right violations, political repression and mismanagement of the economy. This has resulted in mutual distrust.

According to some pro-government supporters in the interviews, the political interventions of some members of the Gambian diaspora are responsible for the government marginalizing the wider diaspora from national development projects. An employee of the Gambian government in the US stated “the very few who are in politics are creating a stumbling block for the majority of Gambians” (Interviewee 24, male, 30s-40s, diplomat). This interviewee gave the impression that he received the interventions of the diaspora as a personal attack, presumably because he is an employee of the Gambian government. In addition, during the interview, he was extremely defensive and aggressive almost appearing as though he was trying to bully me into agreeing with his criticisms of the political diaspora. It was clear that he felt he had to counteract the claims made by members of the diaspora in particular against the government. Therefore, he added that “the problem is on the side of the Gambian diaspora, the government has created an enabling environment for people to come and do something” (Interviewee 24)

These claims made by interviewee 24 and the pro-government supporters perhaps stem from the activities of some political groups in the Gambian diaspora who are using social media sites like Facebook and Twitter to criticize the government. The picture below was taken during the rainy season in The Gambia and shared on Facebook by the diaspora-owned online newspaper Gainako. The caption reads ‘Jammeh’s Vision 2020 is picture perfect’. Vision 2020 is the government’s development blueprint as mentioned in chapter 3, and one of its aims is “*to develop inland road and water-way transport networks* <sup>69</sup>” in The Gambia by the year 2020. The Internet had allowed this group to produce, and circulate national political content from outside the nation (Bernal 2013; 246), which the government and its supporter are highly against

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<sup>69</sup> <http://statehouse.gov.gm/vision-2020-part-1-long-term-objectives/>

Figure 15: Social media post criticizing government development efforts or lack thereof



Source: Gainako Online Newspaper Facebook page

There is a paradox associated with this post because though some members of the political diaspora have publicly mocked the Vision 2020 development strategy. The development desires of the diaspora for The Gambia are those listed as key objectives in this document (improved infrastructure, economic growth, strengthened public sector institutions and increased human resource capital). Therefore, from the perspective of pro-government supporter, it would be better for the diaspora to support the government in delivering these objectives rather than to mock them. Whereas the aim of the political diaspora is to disprove claims made by the government that development is taking place under President Jammeh because they recognize that 'development' is one of the reasons for his popularity in The Gambia.

The interviews also suggest that many people in the Gambian diaspora want respect from the government. Some interviewees stated that they want the government to acknowledge the scale and value of remittances to The Gambia<sup>70</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Which might include more accurate data collection in relation to remittances

and therefore acknowledge that the diaspora is making significant contributions to the nation.

Jammeh came to the US a few years ago and made a derogatory remark about the diaspora saying we are only here as dishwashers which show his lack of understanding of what is floating his economy... donor money is drying up, and they are depending on the remittances that are coming from the diaspora. (Interviewee 4, female, 40s, professional/ activist)

According to the literature, donors are pressuring African countries to redefine their relationships with their citizens abroad (Iheduru 2011) because they are increasingly recognizing the developmental potential of migrants (Ratha et al. 2011 and Gamlen 2014). However, the empirical evidence suggests that the Gambian government is unlikely to succumb to pressure from international donors. For example, in 2013 President Jammeh withdrew the country from the Commonwealth of Nations on the grounds that it is a “neo-colonial institution,” but the suspicion in the international media<sup>71</sup> is that this decision was a reaction to a Foreign and Commonwealth Office report in 2013<sup>72</sup>, which singled out The Gambia for its poor human rights records. Therefore, the government will not legitimize the contributions of the diaspora because they view the Gambian diaspora as hostile opposition. Reciprocally, some members of the Gambian diaspora will not legitimize President Jammeh’s leadership and internal development successes because he will not allow the diaspora to participate in national development. This in itself creates a major barrier for diasporas engagement in national development.

On the other hand, government officials in The Gambia dispute claims made by the diaspora that they are marginalized in national development. For example, a civil servant at the Ministry of Trade argued that the government offers financial incentives, tax exemptions or delayed tax payments to investors and this includes the diaspora. According to this interviewee:

The government provides Special Investment Certificates and protection to investors thus making it difficult for the same foreign items to be imported. They also protect investors’ money therefore, I do not see a barrier for someone to come and invest ... the environment is very liberal. No restrictions or conditionality (Interviewee 57, male, 50s-60s and civil servant)

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<sup>71</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-24376127>

<sup>72</sup> Human Rights and Democracy: The 2012 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report

However, despite presenting what appears to be a good incentive for diaspora engagement, I got the impression that this interviewee was also aware of the frustrations of the diaspora (though I felt they would not admit it in an interview). The Special Investment Certificates he referred is indeed available to the diaspora but the issue is that some members of the Gambian diaspora do not believe that the government would protect their investments. For example, one interviewee explained, “I lost 3 plots of land because the government took them and then sold them to other people even though I followed right channels to buy the land” (Interviewee 4, female, 40s, professional/ activist). This view is in line with research elsewhere that suggests that diaspora investors are very sensitive to the arbitrary and inefficient way in which some states work (Gamlen 2008;13). To further elaborate on this, the empirical evidence revealed that there are several cases of land grabbing by the Government of The Gambia. For example, Dr Malanding Jaiteh (a Gambian who teaches Geographic Information System (GIS) for International Studies at Columbia University in the US) set up a ‘*Landing grabbing in The Gambia*’ website<sup>73</sup> where people can report if their land has been taken by President Jammeh (for himself, or for one of his companies Kanilai Group International or Kanilai Farms or Presidential Farms). The website provides aerial views of where land have been reported to be taken and they are marked as verified or unverified reports. In addition, some interviewees used well-known cases of land grabbing in places like Batokunku (located in the Kombo South, Western Division)<sup>74</sup> (where the government demolished privately owned houses) to justify *why* they believe investing in The Gambia is too risky. In addition, two interviewees said they would rather invest in land and properties in neighbouring Senegal because they believe the environment there is more conducive, there are fewer risks and no language barriers.

However, the pro-government supporters in the diaspora claimed to have a good relationship with the government and this is centred on aspirations for development. For example, on the 19<sup>th</sup> December 2014, an interviewee shared photographs on Facebook of themselves, the Ambassador and embassy staff with other members of the diaspora. They included a caption, which read:

...Thanks to God and everyone that made it possible for this important meeting to take place for the betterment of all Gambians and The Gambia we all love...the embassy doors are open to all Gambians. The meeting was open for all Gambians to hear from the Charge de Affair Hon Sheikh

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<sup>73</sup> <https://gambia.crowdmap.com/main>

<sup>74</sup> <http://www.maafanta.com/laminceesayjammehaninsult>



Omar Faye welcome Uncle Falai and show the commitment of the Gambian government to reaching out to everyone who wants peace for the country and national development

What is especially interesting about the Facebook post is that 'Uncle Falai' (Baldeh) served as a member of the political diaspora in the US for over 20 years, but in 2014, he decided to 'reconcile' with the government. Thus, rather than seeing this event as a step from the government to engage the Gambia diaspora in national development, the meeting was criticized trying to 'ridiculing' the political diaspora by winning over one of their veterans activists. This shows that there are also for the government because their attempts to engage the diaspora are instantly dismissed by their critics. Therefore, it would be interesting to see who would participate if policymakers in The Gambia established diaspora-engagement policies. This also raises the question, are the Gambian diaspora genuinely interested in investing in national development or do they use the disincentive of 'political risk' and a breakdown of relations between government and diaspora as an excuse to justify their inactivity?

Questions of citizenship articulate closely with questions of belonging, and a strong sense of belonging is more likely to generate a willingness to participate in development (Lampert 2009, Kleist 2013, Kleist and Turner 2013, Ragazzi 2014, Moniruzzaman 2016). The interviews revealed a strong sense of belonging to The Gambia, however, I argue that when that sense is challenged (for example in relation to questions of citizenship) it reduces the likelihood of individuals participating in development initiatives. For example, an interviewee in the diaspora stated, "the diaspora are citizens they should be accorded basic respect for political rights and civic duties. But the diaspora is disenfranchised because we are not allowed to vote or participate in politics because the government does not see us as citizens" (Interviewee 13, male, 40s-50s, and activist). The denial of voting and other rights is a barrier that prevents engagement with development.

Nevertheless, according to the 1997 Constitution of the Republic of The Gambia, citizenship can be acquired by birth, by descent and by naturalisation. And as the interviewees in the diaspora were born in The Gambia, there are no questions about their citizenship according to the laws of the land. Therefore, the barrier is not citizenship but the lack of opportunity to exercise their rights as citizens. For example being voting in president elections. In other African states, the practice of political participation is being reshaped through voting and the extension of citizenship rights across borders (Ragazzi 2014) precisely to enrol diasporas into

national development visions. And many Gambians in the diaspora want the right to participate in elections. As one interviewee puts it:

Presently, diaspora Gambians cannot vote during elections. In my view, Gambians in the diaspora should be allowed to participate in our national elections. The need to enfranchise Gambians in the diaspora should be an important electoral reform and a preoccupation of all, as it is only fair that genuine efforts are made to give eligible overseas Gambians the opportunity to exercise their civic rights. The way forward, it must be underscored, must include the need to recognize and welcome Gambians abroad to participate in future national elections. Gambians in the diaspora have been contributing significantly to the country's socio-economic development and as a result, the Electoral Act should be amended to allow diaspora Gambians to perform their civic duties and choose their leaders in national elections. (Interviewee 3, male, 40s-50s and academic)

This statement also suggests the diaspora should be repaid for contributing to development with voting rights. However, for this to happen the government would have to see the diaspora as 'real' development partners, which they do not. This goes back to the claims made earlier that the popularity of government largely depends on the fact that people see them as the sole entity that brings development to the country. Therefore, allowing the diaspora to take part in national development would threaten this image and allowing them to vote would threaten their power and control over the people and resources (Enoh 2014).

### **Physical Security**

A small proportion of the interviewees expressed fear of their own physical safety in The Gambia as a result of their political activity in the diaspora. Individuals in such circumstances have a further disincentive for investing back 'home' though they do claim to be contributing to development through their political interventions. Part of the reason these interviewees said fear was a barrier is because of the disappearance of two US Gambian men, in May 2013, who were believed to have been mistaken by the national security forces as opponents trying to 'destabilize' the government. According to reports from the *Washington Post*, Alhagie Ceesay and Ebou Jobe (who were American citizens but had been born in The Gambia) travelled to The Gambia in order to invest in a computer service business after cashing in their savings from their retirement plans in the US. But on arrival, they were being tracked by the Gambian Intelligence Agency (NIA) (for reasons

unknown) as they moved around the country. They stopped communicating with their families around the end of June 2013<sup>75</sup> and have not been seen ever since.

The disappearance of Alhagie Ceesay and Ebou Jobe triggered a large-scale reaction from the Gambian diaspora. Their families and members of the politically active diaspora have been campaigning online and staging protests in the US, demanding to know what happened to these two men. And recently in October 2016, US officials wrote to the Gambian government enquiring into their whereabouts.<sup>76</sup> This event has demotivated some interviewees from investing in The Gambia. For example, according to an interviewee in the diaspora:

There are lots of barriers for people from abroad who want to invest in the country. I have heard stories about people going to set up business and having problems. Two Gambian-Americans disappeared and the government is not doing anything about it. Personally, I am a Gambian and would love to be in Gambia and invest but I am not comfortable going there (Interviewee 15, male, 40s and highly educated professional).

However, despite this being a genuine concern for some participants in diaspora, a great majority of them said they could travel back 'home' without the fear of their physical safety being threatened because they are not involved in politics. Therefore, it seems most participants see the barrier as politics and not to physical security. In which case, fear is subjective to those involved in the politics. However, the fact that the participants kept repeating the story of the disappearance of the two Gambian-Americans during the interviews suggest physical security has had a wider impact on the diaspora as a whole. Perhaps this incident has made people in the diaspora consider the risks involved in travelling 'home' but not prevented from going to The Gambia. This barrier is distinctive to the wider literature on 'diaspora and development' in that discussion of physical safety tends to focus on refugees fleeing violence in their countries of origin (Lindley 2007, Eckstein and Najam 2013, Enoch 2014) but not on people returning to their 'home' countries.

### **Fixing of Foreign Exchange Rates**

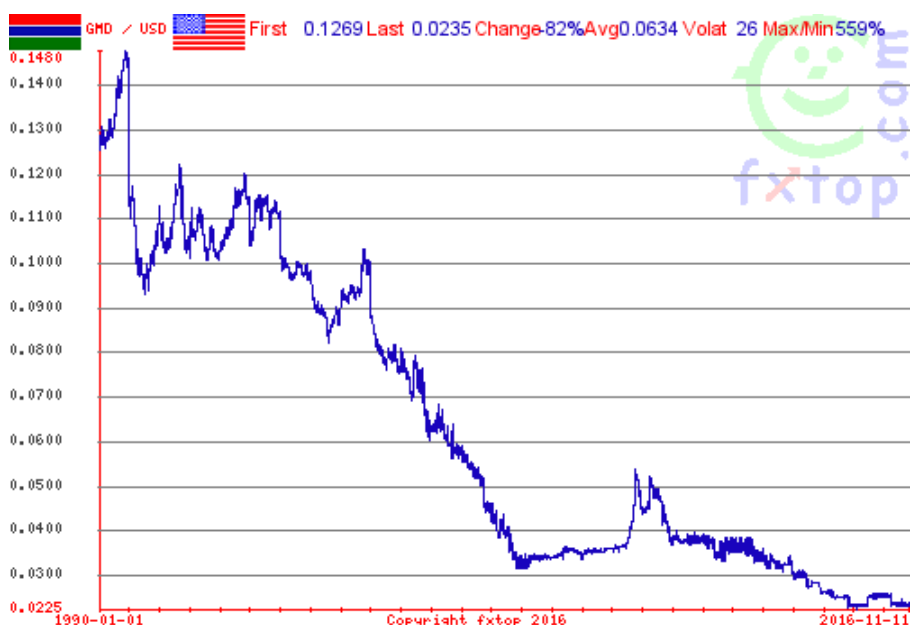
In May 2015, the Gambian dalasi depreciated D80 to £1, D52 to \$1 and D60 to 1 Euro. 15 years earlier 1 US dollar had bought 13 dalasis. However, when this depreciation occurred, the Office of the President released a statement ordering all

<sup>75</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-moore/two-americans-disappear-i\\_b\\_4850904.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-moore/two-americans-disappear-i_b_4850904.html) (27/09/2015)

<sup>76</sup> <https://gambia.smbcgo.com/the-gambia-agrees-to-u-s-request-to-deport-its-citizens/>

banks and currency bureaux to sell foreign currency at the following rates, £1 at D50, \$1 at D35, and 1 Euro at D40<sup>77</sup>. This was not the first time foreign exchange rates in The Gambia has been dictated in this manner, an act that the IMF has strongly warned the government against<sup>78</sup>. For example, President Jammeh took similar action in August 2013, when he ordered the rate of US dollar to be reduced from D38 to D35 to \$1<sup>79</sup>.

Figure 16: Dollar-Dalasi exchange rates 1990-2016



Source: <http://fxtop.com/en/historical-exchangerates.php?C1=USD&C2=GMD&A=1&DD1=01&MM1=01&YYYY1=1990&DD2=11&MM2=11&YYYY2=2016&MA=1&YA=0&LANG=en&CJ=0>

According to discussions on a group<sup>80</sup> set up on the mobile application 'Viber', by a member of the diaspora, to which I was invited to join. The diaspora participants were frustrated that President Jammeh was interfering with the foreign exchange rates because they saw the depreciation of the dalasi as an opportunity for them to reduce the amount of remittances they send 'home'. One contributor stated:

The Gambian dictator has issued an order to force the dollar down from D55 to D35 and the pound is coming down from D80.50 to D50. Now it is up to us in Europe and America to hold our money. He is ruining the

<sup>77</sup> <http://www.kaironews.com/the-foreign-exchange-rate-crisis-2/>

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2015/cr15272.pdf>

<sup>79</sup> [http://www.statehouse.gm/Press-releases/Forex-Exchange-Bureau-Licenses-null-void\\_13082013.htm](http://www.statehouse.gm/Press-releases/Forex-Exchange-Bureau-Licenses-null-void_13082013.htm) (27/09/2015)

<sup>80</sup> Viber is a free call and message app. The group is called 'Peaceful Change', there are 168 participants living mainly across Europe and the US

country badly, and he wants us to suffer. Don't send money to Gambia. Let the market dictate.

However, the empirical evidence suggests that Gambians in the diaspora did not stop sending money to their families because they believed the people would suffer and not the government. As one interviewee in the diaspora explained, "it's our people who will suffer first before the President feels it" (Interviewee 25, male, 30s, pro-government supporter). In this case, there was a sense of powerlessness amongst the diaspora because they could not do anything when President Jammeh took the decision to change the exchange rates. However, this was considered another disincentive in the group for engaging in development or investing in The Gambia.

In addition, for many people in the diaspora, the depreciation of the dalasi and attempt to manipulate exchange rates is a sign of economic mismanagement by the Gambian government. Therefore, as the price of goods and services increase (inflation) the diaspora have to send more money to their families to cover the same costs, and perhaps this creates a barrier for them to engage in other development activities. According to an interviewee in the diaspora, "when the economy goes bad and things start to cost more it's the diaspora that have to send more money to cover costs and the diaspora feel it more than those on the ground" (Interviewee 4, female, 40s, professional/ activist).

### **High Levels of Bureaucracy**

Some interviewees in the diaspora claimed they experienced high levels of bureaucracy when they attempted to register a business in The Gambia. This echoes research elsewhere that suggests the ease of opening a business is an important factor for investors. For example, in Uganda, the government offers privileged tax and planning codes for diaspora investors, which works as an incentive for the diaspora<sup>81</sup>. And in Rwanda, the government is widely credited by the business community for setting up 'one-shop stops' to help investors avoid having to move between different ministries and for introducing legislation to enable new businesses to be established in a few days (Lemarchand and Tash 2015).

One interviewee in the diaspora provided a detailed explanation of the frustrations he experienced when he tried to register his business in The Gambia. This

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<sup>81</sup> Home: The Compendium of Diaspora Investment & Business Opportunities. <http://www.ugandainvest.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Compendium-of-Investment-and-Business-Opportunities-Vol-I.pdf>

interviewee described it as a tedious, costly, and time-consuming process. And in the end, he became discouraged and decided not to continue with the business.

There is so much bureaucracy involved. I had planned to open a business in Gambia but the bureaucracy was frustrating. Even applying for licenses or getting applications approved is frustrating. At the end that put me off. They don't see it as I am trying to invest in my country and will create jobs and therefore I should be getting support. But if you don't have patience or you are on a short business trip in Gambia, then it is a big problem. And it is not only me who has experienced this, I have friends who have wanted to set up businesses and they experienced the same bureaucracy, which frustrated them too. (Interviewee 33, male, 40s-50s and highly educated)

However, on the contrary to the challenges experienced by this interviewee, the guidelines on the requirements for business registration<sup>82</sup> issued by the Gambia Investments and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA) spells out a very straightforward and not too costly process of registration. For example, the requirements include: a Memorandum and Articles of Association, photo ID, registration form (free of charge), reserve a unique company name (costs 500 GMD) and Tax Identification Number (TIN) (cost 500 GMD)<sup>83</sup>. Lastly, there are the registration fees of 1000 GMD, and if applicable a corporation fee ranging between 10000 GMD to 25000 GMD. So if the report from this interviewee is correct then the problem lies not in the regulations, but their implementation.

In addition, bureaucracy is not solely the responsibility of the government as corruption from civil servants also has an effect. However, during an informal conversation with a lawyer from The Gambia<sup>84</sup> who registers businesses for his clients in the diaspora. He stated that he did not agree with the claim that high levels of bureaucracy are preventing the diaspora from establishing businesses in The Gambia. The lawyer argued that if the diaspora genuinely wanted to set up businesses in the country then they have the opportunity to do so. I got the impression that they were implying that sometimes individuals in the diaspora are being disingenuous about their intentions to invest in the country. However, this lawyer is well placed in Gambian society, and they have contacts at these offices to help them to speed up the process of registering a business, whereas the

<sup>82</sup> <http://www.giepa.gm/node/12>

<sup>83</sup> The reservation of company, TIN and registration fees total to GMD 2000 which equals to USD \$47.23. GMD 10000 = USD \$236.13. GMD 250000 = USD \$590.31 (exchange rate of dalasi to dollar 42.35 as of August 2016- <http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/convert/?From=GMD&To=USD>)

<sup>84</sup> This was an informal conversation in London with the lawyer who was on holiday, and we were having a general conversation about some of the finding in the research, when the topic of some participants not wanting to invest in business The Gambia because of bureaucracy came up

members of the Gambian diaspora may not have the same levels of social capital. Without connections, there may well be some significant barriers to registering businesses in The Gambia, which affects the diasporas willingness to invest.

## **6.4 Institutions**

### **Barriers Associated with Diaspora Associations**

The barriers to undertaking more development in The Gambia outlined by the 10 Gambian diaspora associations that were interviewed in the UK in 2013 were broadly consistent. They pinpointed the low-level of participation by members, limited collaboration between associations, and emerging issues of tribalism<sup>85</sup> as their most significant issues. According to all the associations, the decrease in the number of members attending meetings has led to a drop in income from membership fees. The associations stated these pose a challenge to their survival because they rely on the fees to cover their administration costs. 20% of the associations attribute the decrease of members to petty disputes, 20% to people being too busy to attend the meetings, 10% to members having issues with their immigration status and 50% to members simply not wanting to pay the fees.

However, one interviewee in the diaspora gave a different reason as to why they believed the UK Gambian associations are experiencing low levels of participation. They claimed that some associations are not transparent with how they spend the monies they collect from their members, thus the people are sceptical about paying the fees. The interviewee stated:

I recently contacted Crawley Gambia Association because I wanted to join. But rather than being told about the association I received a text requesting I pay membership fees. I was not even told what these fees cover (Interviewee 44, male, 30s, highly educated professional/ activist).

These findings are similar to the study of the Congolese diaspora associations in London, which revealed that a lack of transparency in diaspora groups discourages other members from being part of the association (Gardin and Godin 2013). However, the low level of participation by members can also be attributed to other factors such as the internal heterogeneity of the Gambian diaspora, which means not every person is interested in participating in associations. In addition, another

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<sup>85</sup> The term tribalism is being used because it is the terms used by the participants in this research

reason could be that members have moved away from the area or transferred to other associations.

Furthermore, the limited collaboration between associations is another barrier to the implementation of development activities for six associations who claimed to have development projects in The Gambia. These associations argued that they could have a bigger impact if they came together and worked on common causes, rather than individual associations duplicating each other's projects.

Our has not worked with any other Gambian associations on projects in Gambia, as when the flood relief project was ongoing we were not aware that Gambian United Society was also raising funds for the same project. When we became aware of it, it was too late to collaborate with them (Association 4)

Clearly, this is attributed to the lack of communication and coordination between the associations. However, some associations have recognized this to be a problem and therefore have nominated one association to act as the coordinating body for their development projects. According to an interviewee:

The objective of GUS is to become a coordinating body for Gambian diaspora association in the UK and to act as a platform where all the Gambian associations can work together and collaborate on projects in the UK and in Gambia

However, there is still the problem of associations being fragmented. According to one association, "the challenge we face is the fragmentation amongst the groups as there are many small Gambian diaspora associations in the UK that are based on religious and village association" (Association 10). The consequence of this is that the different associations are competing with each other because "there is fear amongst the associations that one would supersede the other" (Association 3). Certainly, collaborating on projects in The Gambia is positive for development, however, only if there are financial resources available. This leads to another barrier identified by associations in the interviews. It seemed they were not aware of the external opportunities available in the UK. "We have challenges trying to obtain financial resources to fund projects here in the UK and in Gambia" (Association 4). These findings are parallel to those in the study by Plaza and Ratha (2011) about African diaspora groups in Denmark. The data revealed that those associations also did not know about the existing funding opportunities in



Denmark. Yet, there are organizations, such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), who work with diaspora associations. The 'Common Ground Initiative' co-funded by Comic Relief and the UK Department for International Development (DfID) provides funding for diaspora organisations in the UK. The African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) support diaspora associations that want to engage in development in their 'home' countries.

The final barrier (highlighted by 30% of the associations) was the issue of tribalism, which they claimed affected the cohesiveness of their associations. According to one association, "there is division among members of the association, as members tend to be reluctant to work together, I speculate that it is due to tribal differences" (Association 4). This is in line with the literature which provides extensive discussions on the divided nature of diaspora associations due to such issues, which the leads to low levels of cohesion, trust and development effectiveness (Mercer et al. 2008, Fransen and Siegel 2013). Nevertheless, in chapter 3, I argued that there is great tolerance between ethnic groups in The Gambia. And ethnic differences are only significant in the political sphere where parties are criticized for putting the interest of one ethnic group over the other. Perhaps these differences are now creeping into associations, which are institutions that make rules about where resources are allocated, like the government. Nevertheless, my ethnographic impression was tribalism that the issue of tribalism is a perceived barrier because even though members of associations are ethnically heterogeneous, there was no real evidence to suggest that tribalism was causing divisions in the associations. This is because these associations seem to identify themselves by place rather than along ethnic lines.

### **Brain Drain and Weak Institutional Capacity**

The issue of brain drain and weak capacity of institutions in The Gambia from a human resources perspective was another key area of discussion by the interviews. Approximately 65% of interviewees in the diaspora and in The Gambia stated that this is a barrier to development. The loss of skilled human capital has subsequently affected the private and public sectors in the country. According to a private business owner in The Gambia, "it is hard for us to fill vacancies because we do not have qualified people here. We discard 90% of the applications we receive. This is because the people with the skills do not want to stay here" (Interviewee 64, male and 40s-50s). Clearly, this increases the risk of businesses failing in The Gambia and is, therefore, a barrier for those in the diaspora wanting to run a business in The Gambia. This finding is in line with research elsewhere which

argues that brain drain is connected to the recurring patterns of underdevelopment in 'developing countries' (Bréant 2013). For example, the health sector is particularly affected by brain drain in The Gambia (Clemens and Pettersson 2006) and so is the Gambian civil service as many civil servants were reported to have left to work for international organisations such as the United Nations and the World Bank (Rohey Wadda 2000). In addition, according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2015<sup>86</sup>, women are migrating from The Gambia in large numbers, as are young people. The data also states that Gambian women make up 47.3% of international migrants, 34.6% of The Gambia's international migrants are aged between 0-19 years, 63.4% are 24-64 years old, and 2.0% are 65+. This data shows the highest age range of Gambian migrants are those in prime working age.

To address this problem, the Gambian government has attempted to bridge the gaps caused by brain drain by establishing the University of The Gambia. But, from personal experiences of teaching third and fourth year undergraduate students at the Brikama campus, from September to December 2014, I found the skills and capacity of graduates were low. This is largely because the university lacks the institutional capacity to provide a good quality of education. For example, the university suffers from a shortage of lecturers, poorly equipped classrooms and a poorly stocked library (which counters the claim made by interviewee 20 that they donated US\$ 200,000 worth of books to the university). In fact, reading materials are often provided by the lecturers, who have to contend with limited printing facilities, access to computers, poor Internet and inconsistent electricity supply. According to an interviewee in The Gambia:

The government keeps boasting about establishing a university and training Gambian doctors but these ill-trained students are just killing people at the hospitals and no one dare says anything. Since UTG started producing these doctors, the death rate at the government hospital is at a record high (interviewee 45, male, 30s, private business owner)

Though, I cannot substantiate the claim that Gambians student doctors are killing people in the hospitals. I can, however, confirm that the University of The Gambia has not filled the gaps created by the emigration of highly skilled Gambians. The problems of brain drain in The Gambia has weakened institutional capacity and inhibited development. However, within the literature, the optimistic reply to this problem are the brain gain and brain circulations arguments, which posits that

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<sup>86</sup><http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/wallchart/docs/MigrationWallChart2015.pdf>

individuals returning 'home' with skills, knowledge and capital acquired from abroad can counter problems of brain drain and enhance development in their 'home' countries. These are believed to be more sustainable forms of development contributions by the diaspora than remittances (Gupta et al 2007, Ratha et al. 2011, Mullings 2012, Nyamongo et al. 2012, Chacko and Gebre 2013, Gamlen 2014).

Subsequently, during an interview with Professor Muhammadou Kah (the former Vice-Chancellor of the university) in 2013, he claimed that the university had benefitted from input from the diaspora when it was part of an extension programme of St Mary's University Canada and after it became autonomous. Kah claimed he and his wife were part of the first members of the Gambian diaspora to teach at the university in the summer of 1997/98, as did Professor Samba Jobe, Professor Cordu Njie (Dakar) and Professor Joiner. In addition, when the university was established with a campus in Brikama, more members of the academic Gambian diaspora went to teach. Kah went on to say that the role of the diaspora in the development of university is evolving particularly now (in 2013) that the university has a web presence. He claimed to frequently reach out to members of the Gambian diaspora he knows work in academia but he would only get few responses. Clearly, there are paradoxes in this statement because initially Kah created the impression that the diaspora is willing to contribute to the development of the university, but he then goes on to say that only a few would respond to his calls. I got the sense that something had changed to make the Gambian academic diaspora unwilling to support the development of the university, but Kah was not going to speak on it. Therefore, based on my own personal experience at the university and data from one interviewee in the diaspora. I argue that the reason for this change was due to the lack of academic freedom at the university. For example, I was aware those national security officers were planted in classes, particularly those covering subjects in political science. In addition, one interviewee in the diaspora explained how they were arrested and detained for 72 hours and tortured after attending an academic forum in The Gambia where they spoke against the practice of worshipping idols. Apparently, this was seen as a criticism directed at President Jammeh who engages in this practice. Since this experience, this interviewee has not returned to The Gambia because they claimed, "fear is one of the barriers that stop me from going back and I cherish my academic freedom" (Interviewee 29, male, 40s- 50s and highly educated professional).

Furthermore, the coercion of Gambian academics is also extended to those at 'home', which has led to lecturers fleeing the country because of fear. Similar to Dick Ranga's (2015) findings (in his article 'The role of politics in the migration of

Zimbabwean teachers to South Africa') that political violence in Zimbabwe has significantly contributed to the emigration of teachers to South Africa. The fear of state-sanctioned persecution by lecturers in The Gambia is real and supported by case study evidence. For example, there was the case of Sait Matty Jaw, a history lecturer at the university who was first arrested in November 2014 and later charged with 'conspiracy', 'failure to register a business,' and 'disobeying statutory duty' in 2015, for working on a poll survey on 'good governance and corruption' for the market research company FACT International Ghana Ltd <sup>87</sup>. This clearly has an impact on the teaching quality in the university, which subsequently has an impact on the quality of graduates being produced as well as an impact on the human resource and institutions capacities in the public and private sectors of The Gambia.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I discussed the different barriers the interviewees in the diaspora said they encountered when attempting to contribute to development in The Gambia. The aim of this chapter was to analyse the extent to which these barriers prevented the participants from making development contributions at 'home'. I argued that the politicization of development in The Gambia created fundamental barriers for the diaspora because the government monopolizes development to safeguard their popularity in the country. Therefore, the government is not willing to recognize the contributions of the diaspora in fear that it would affect their image as the only party that delivers development in The Gambia. This combined with the breakdown in relations between the government and the diaspora has resulted in the Gambian diaspora being marginalized in national development.

Politics seemed to appear as the key barrier for the diaspora in The Gambia, even at the family level. For example, I argued that the dependency on diaspora remittances were attributed to politicians directing development resources to areas where they have voter support and ordering state-sanctioned violence against those they perceived as opponents. In addition, Gambians at 'home' are scared to challenge the government about the development gaps because evidence has shown the fear of political persecution was real and objective in the Gambian context. However, according to the government officials and pro-government supporters, some members of the Gambians diaspora were using politics as an excuse to be inactive in development at 'home'. And the marginalization of the wider Gambian diaspora is the consequence of small groups criticizing the

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<sup>87</sup> <http://communities.lawsociety.org.uk/human-rights/interventions/2015/gambia-sait-matty-jaw-human-rights-defender-at-risk/5046450.fullarticle>

government. This shows the difficulty in trying to separate 'politics' and 'development' in The Gambia.

In this chapter, I also argued that Gambians in the diaspora would invest directly at the national level if there were diaspora-centred policies and incentives in place (even though the interviewees did not make it clear which policies and incentives they wanted, except for the right to vote). However, what is not clearly understood from this research is; how does not having targeted diaspora engagement policies or incentives a barrier for national development in The Gambia? The assumption in the literature is that diasporas need incentives to contribute to national development at 'home' and diaspora-engagement policies encourage investment (Newland 2004, Torres and Kuznetsov 2006, Ratha et al. 2011, Gamlen 2014). The data required to answer this question, I argue could come from reviewing case studies of other African countries such as Cape Verde, Burundi, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal and Uganda that have successfully implemented diaspora-centred policies and incentives. And the questions that should be answered from this review are; how did the government build a relationship with their diaspora? How did they discover what their diaspora wanted and where they would invest? How much was the diaspora investing in national development before they introduced diaspora- policies and incentives? This last question would compare diaspora contributions before and after the policies and incentives were introduced, which would be particularly useful for countries like The Gambia to have a clearer picture of what diasporas can or cannot bring to the country. Answering these questions would also allow the researcher to conclusively determine how not having diaspora centred policies and incentives could be is a barrier for national development in The Gambia.

This case study of the Gambian diaspora adds to the fields of African diaspora studies because it shows the relationship between the diaspora and the state is not as tidy as in other African countries like Ghana or Senegal. In addition, the findings highlight the need for more comparative work on state-diaspora relations (Délano and Gamlen 2014) in this field. For example, the current relationship between the Gambian diaspora and the government suggests that it would take more than targeted diaspora engagement policies and incentives for the Gambian government to be able to tap directly into diaspora resources. The Gambian diaspora partly believes the government would protect their investment in The Gambia. However, mostly because the diaspora is dissatisfied with the political leadership of the country and the government is dissatisfied with the political interventions of some members of the Gambian diaspora. To address this issue, policymakers in

The Gambia have to create and uphold legislations that would protect diaspora investments in The Gambia, whereas the diaspora has to set aside their political activities and focus on building a relationship with the government on shared development aspirations. However, both would be very difficult to achieve.

Lastly, the findings in this chapter provides an explanation of *why* Gambians in the diaspora are not contributing directly to national development projects. This data is helpful to policymakers in The Gambia who in the future may seek to engage the diaspora in national development. An understanding of the barriers to engagement would allow the Gambian government to introduce the right policies to remove said barriers. However, it is also important to recognize that the internal heterogeneities within the Gambian diaspora mean these barriers are not homogenous to the entire sample group. For example, some interviewees in the diaspora did not identify with these barriers and were content with limiting their contributions at the family level, whilst others preferred to invest in their host country or simply did not have the financial resources or capacity to engage in national development in The Gambia.

## Chapter 7: Getting Involved Politically: the Transnational Engagement of the Gambian Diaspora

In this chapter, the empirical focus shifts away from having ‘development’ at the centre of the analysis to having ‘politics’ at the centre. In the next chapter, the subject focuses on the relationship between the two. This chapter speaks to the literature on the transnational political engagement of diasporas. It has four sections after the introduction. The first section discusses the political mobilization of the Gambian diaspora in the UK and US. The second section talks about the triggers for their interventions in politics at ‘home’. The third section discusses the justifications for their intervention. The fourth section assesses the impact of their interventions in politics and the final section concludes the chapter by drawing together the key arguments and discussions.

### 7.1 Introduction

According to the literature on the transnational political engagement of diasporas, their involvement in homeland politics (peaceful or otherwise) is nothing new (Lyon and Mandaville 2012, Boccagni et al. 2015, Adamson 2015). The Jewish diaspora in the 20<sup>th</sup> century provides a classic example of the role diasporas play in the domestic politics of their homeland (Adamson 2015). The literature generally argues that a diaspora can either engage in conflict or support a peaceful resolution of violent conflict. However, in the case of The Gambia, I argue that the diaspora has for the most part been involved in peaceful opposition to the homeland government. Except for the recent incident, which took place on the 30<sup>th</sup> December 2014, when six Gambian dissidents from the US attacked the State House in an attempt to overthrow the government while President Jammeh was out of the country<sup>88</sup>. Although this was a very controversial event, the Gambian diaspora has mainly been engaged in mobilizing politically in their host countries, to highlight the deteriorating human rights conditions in The Gambia. For example, on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015, the Gambian diaspora civil society group, ‘Coalition for Change – The Gambia’ organized the *‘International Civil Society Forum on The Gambia: Human Rights; Democracy; Governance; Transparency; and Regional Security’* at the Marriot Hotel in lower Manhattan, New York. This event brought

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<sup>88</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-30694726>

together two key Gambian political opposition party leaders, international human rights organizations and Gambian activists to share information and engage in discussions about the current political and human rights situation in The Gambia. They invited me to attend as a non-aligned observer.

On the morning of the event, I walked eagerly up the stairs and through the doors of the Marriot Hotel feelings excited and anxious, as I did not know what to expect from this meeting. Essentially, I wanted to collect data that would add value to the thesis as well as get a clearer understanding of how the Gambian opposition political party leaders felt about the diaspora being involved in politics in The Gambia. However, whilst waiting for the forum to start, I looked around the venue and concluded the diaspora did not pick up bill for this event. I was aware that these were financially challenged groups and it seemed unusual that they could afford to have this event at a five-star hotel in downtown Manhattan. My suspicion was that one or more of the human rights organizations funded the event, however, I was not able to verify this because the main organizer did not respond when I asked him about the funding of the event.

At around 8:30 am, some participants started trickling in, but they were not Gambians, they were from the international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. By 8:45, I started seeing some of the Gambians arriving and I proceeded to introduce myself. It was clear that I was the only person who came from the UK but wondered why members of the UK civil society groups did not attend.

During the meet and greet session, I was approached by one of the organizers who seemed delighted to meet me in person as we had only spoken over the telephone. We engaged in a long discussion about the event and our expectations. I had the opportunity to ask them why there was no representation from the UK Gambian civil society groups and they explained that they extended an invitation to the UK groups and some said they would attend, but cancelled at the very last minute. During this conversation, I also heard that the Gambian Ambassador and some pro-government supporters were invited, but chose not to attend. They did not want to be seen supporting this group because the Gambian Ambassador and some pro-government supporters felt the event would be too critical of the government.

Just as the facilitator asked us to take our seats, I posed a final question, which was if the leaders of the Gambian opposition political parties had arrived, as I had



not seen them. The organizer explained that only two out of the four major parties were going to attend, and they were Hamat Bah, leader of the National Reconciliation Party (NRP) and Omar Jallow (OJ), leader of the People's Progressive Party (PPP). The informant stated that the leader of the United Democratic Party (UDP), Ousainou Darboe (which is largest opposition party) was supposed to attend; however, they cancelled at the last minute due to poor health. The organizer seemed sceptical about this reason because according to them "Darboe has been travelling around Gambia campaigning every weekend last month" (Interviewee 12, male, 50s-60s, highly educated/ activist). I got the impression they thought it was suspicious that Darboe had fallen ill at the time of the forum.

However, after receiving criticisms from the diaspora for not attending the forum, the UDP issued a press release on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2015 explaining that Ousainou Darboe could not attend the forum, due to "*unexpected circumstances beyond his control*<sup>89</sup>". They claimed they were not represented at the forum because the organizers said they could not pay for the person they had nominated to replace Darboe to attend. According to the statement, the National Executive of the party had nominated Honourable Momodou Sanneh to replace Darboe at least 10 days before the forum. However, the organizers said they could not fund Honourable Momodou Sanneh's trip because they were over budget, which according to UDP was 'strange' because the organizers previously claimed to have the budget to pay for all the opposition party leaders to attend the forum<sup>90</sup>. My assessment was that the organizers were only interested in having the party leaders present presumably because they felt the leaders had the authority to convince their parties to accept the diaspora's request for unity.

On reflection, the conversation with the organizer highlighted three key issues: first, there is an obvious lack of active popular support in the diaspora for the events organized by the Gambian civil society groups. Whereas there is much more extensive participation online, thus the disembodied online space is a more accessible political space than formal parties, associations and physical meetings like the forum. Second, the diaspora was having difficulty bringing together the Gambian opposition political parties, because it seems these parties did not see the value of working cohesively with each other or with the diaspora. The opposition would be more effective if they united and the diaspora supported one party rather than spreading their resources across the different parties. Third, the

<sup>89</sup> <http://gainako.com/?p=9433> (2015)

<sup>90</sup> This press release was published in all diaspora online newspapers, because UDP received a large amount of criticism from the diaspora for not attending this event. <http://gainako.com/?p=9433>

disinterest and disengagement of the Gambian Ambassador in the US demonstrates the disconcertingly unproductive relationship the Gambian government has with Gambian civil society groups, which perhaps explains why some members of the Gambian diaspora have resorted to unconventional, illegal and violent methods (such as attempting to overthrow the government), in order to make things happen.

Once the event finally began at around 10 am, I observed there were many empty seats in the room. The photographs below illustrate this, however, a few more people arrived later on in the day but not enough to fill the room.

Figure 17: Civil Society Forum in New York



Source: Sainabou Taal

At the start of the morning session, a representative from Human Rights Watch played a short video<sup>91</sup> and although this video had a profound impact on some members of the audience. During the break, I overheard one opposition party leader and another participant comment that the video and presentation by the representative repeated things they already knew. But the leader expressed that they have no other choice but to sit and listen. I suspect they recognized that the Gambian civil society groups in the diaspora have few significant allies, and the

<sup>91</sup> Human Rights Watch produced this video and it is entitled Gambia: Torture, Repression Create State of Fear. It contains accounts from victims of torture at the hands of the Gambian Government. <https://www.hrw.org/photos/video/2015/09/17/gambia-torture-repression-create-state-fear>

human rights organizations are key. There is also the politics of diaspora politics, which reflects their relative powerlessness and the challenges they face in enrolling not only other Gambians but also non-Gambian allies to their cause. Thus as I returned back to my seat, I wondered if the high priority given to human rights issues in The Gambia was the diaspora's and political opposition's choice of agenda or whether they were responding pragmatically and strategically to someone else's agenda in a context where it is hard to get attention for their political cause.

When the opposition party leaders took centre stage, I was reminded of an argument made in the literature which states that 'home' country politicians are often more interested in the diaspora's money than their ideas (Tölölyan 2007). I got the impression that the political party leaders were not interested in engaging the diaspora in politics at 'home', particularly in the long term, and that they only granted the diaspora audience because they felt they needed to reciprocate for the financial support they receive from the diaspora. I came to this conclusion because both leaders failed to answer adequately my questions about what they were going to give the diaspora in return for their support. One leader seemed confused by this question as they thought I was suggesting giving members of the diaspora political positions in Gambian government. Which was not what I meant, I was thinking more along the lines of extending voting rights to the diaspora but I purposefully did not make this clear because I wanted to hear from them what roles they saw the diaspora playing in politics at 'home'. One of the leaders responded by saying he would not make any promises to the diaspora and the other leader ignored the question.

During the question and answer session I also observed that one of the opposition leaders conducted himself in a very dictatorial manner. He was arrogant and tried to dominate the discussions by excluding other voices, which clearly frustrated some of the other participants at the forum. For example, whilst answering a question from an audience member, this opposition leader noticed the person who asked the question was engaged in a conversation with their neighbour and was clearly not listening to them speak. Therefore, he stops in mid-sentence, leant over the table pointing his finger at that person and called them out for not listening to them. This startled everyone in the room and there was an awkward silence as people looked at each other disapprovingly. My ethnographic impression was that it felt like a competition between the diaspora and the opposition politicians but organisers did not give a follow-up interview thus I was not able to glean their impressions afterwards.

The personal histories of these political leaders also fostered cynicism and scepticism in the audience. The fact that these opposition party leaders have been leading their parties for as long as Jammeh has been President shows that they too are reluctant to relinquish the power they have in their respective parties. Therefore, I asked myself, why are the Gambian civil society groups not making more effort to engage President Jammeh and his government, when the opposition parties seem unwilling to help them have a place in politics at 'home'. Perhaps, it is because President Jammeh does not have any tolerance for opposition, making it is difficult for the groups to engage him and his government as opposed to the opposition parties who share their frustrations.

Irrespective of the low-level of political debate at the forum, it was considered a success by those who organized it and the participants because it provided a convivial space for the diaspora, political opposition and international community to discuss the political and human rights conditions in The Gambia as well as develop a strategic plan to push for reforms of the election practices in the country. This involved the opposition parties writing a joint letter to ECOWAS demanding for pressure to be the Government of The Gambia to reform:

- Voter registrations and attestation
- Appoint a new independent IEC Chairman
- Allow the opposition parties access to the media
- Allow the opposition parties permits to hold rallies
- Reduce the deposit requirements by parties for presidential elections
- Stop the harassment of political opponents
- Amend the constitution to ensure anyone over 65 can stand for presidency

The meeting resolved to solicit help from influential members of the Gambian diaspora to engage key players in their host governments. However, after the meeting, things went quiet and I had no more insight as to whether these plans had been implemented. I found the forum to be a bit disappointing and underwhelming because it was poorly attended, and though there were some productive conversations, there were also a lot of differences and disagreements hidden behind the friendliness.

The literature on transnational diaspora politics argues that the political engagement of diasporas at 'home' can take different shapes, such as forming civil

society groups that mobilize to engage in diaspora activism such as online cyber-activism, demonstrations and protest, advocacy, fundraising and lobbying in their host countries to facilitate their inclusion in homeland politics. The literature also asserts that advances in telecommunications and international travel has made it relatively easy for diasporas to maintain political links with 'home' and to be involved in shaping domestic and international policies (Brinkerhoff 2009, Esman 2009 and NurMuhammad et al. 2015). The versatility in the roles diasporas play in politics at 'home' and in their host country is illustrated in this case study. However, Lyons and Mandaville (2012) argue that little is known about how politics in the country of origin have been transformed by the current upsurge in the political activism of increasingly mobile transnational population. Thus, one of the aims of this chapter will be to assess how the political interventions of the Gambian diaspora have transformed politics in The Gambia.

The main argument in this chapter is that the ability of the Gambian diaspora civil society groups to influence political change in The Gambia is limited because they are fragmented, despite the fact that they all claim to share the same agenda: democratization, good governance and peaceful regime change. In addition, the lack of cooperation between the Gambian opposition political parties makes it increasingly challenging for the Gambian diaspora to have their desired impact on politics in The Gambia. The findings of this research challenge the literature, which argues that diasporas can directly influence politics from abroad (Hägel and Peretz 2005, Vetovec 2005, Baser and Swain 2008, Lyon and Mandaville 2012).

Using 'social movement theory' (McAdam et al. 1996, Sökefeld 2006, Marsden 2014, Quinsaat 2015) as the main theoretical framework to explain the mobilization of the UK and US Gambian diaspora civil society groups. Another aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how the diaspora seeks to *influence* democratic political change when faced with the challenge of divided and self-serving opposition parties and politicians.

## **7.2 The Political Mobilization of the Gambian Diaspora in the UK and US**

The literature on transnational diaspora politics argues the political mobilization of diasporas can occur in many different forms, yielding both positive and negative outcomes (Vertovec 2005, Smith and Stares 2007, Baser and Swain 2008, Hoehne et al. 2011). For example, diasporas can mobilize to fund political oppositions, organize protests and demonstrations, engage in online political activism, lobby host government to create policies that challenge or support 'home' governments,

or they can mobilize to support peaceful reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction efforts at 'home'.

The Gambian diaspora has been mobilizing politically since 2001 when some members sought to influence the outcome of the 2001 national elections by building an alliance with all the opposition political parties in The Gambia (Saine 2009). Since then, the number of Gambian civil society groups in the diaspora has risen but their activities have remained broadly the same. For example, they are still raising funds, lobbying the international community, engaging in advocacy and staging protests to create awareness about the deteriorating human rights conditions in The Gambia. The Gambian diaspora civil society groups have been using tools such as online newspapers and radio and social media to mobilize amongst themselves and to engage the wider Gambian population at 'home' to challenge what they see as the regressive political, social and economic conditions in The Gambia.

It is no secret that the aim of the Gambian diaspora civil society groups is to accelerate democratic change in The Gambia, and some members believe the upcoming national elections in December 2016 provides a *political opportunity* (McAdam et.al 1996, Sökefeld 2006) to work together with the Gambian political opposition parties to influence the outcomes of the election. Therefore, using the social movement theory (McAdam et al 1996, Sökefeld 2006, Marsden 2014, Quinsaas 2015), I argue that the 2016 presidential elections offer the Gambian diaspora a legal and constitutional framework within which they can make claims for their community and identity to help the rise of a social movement and to challenge the status quo. For example, the private meeting held the day after the forum in New York revealed that some participants had agreed to put the opposition party leaders in touch with their contacts who they believe have influence in ECOWAS. They offered to lobby this regional institution and bilateral partners such as the Nigeria Government on behalf of the opposition parties to put pressure on the government to reform the recently passed Electoral bill. According to a participant at the meeting:

The Gambian government does not have the funds to hold elections because they have severed relationships with donors. The UN is not contributing to the process, Taiwan use to donate ballot boxes which they are no longer doing, ECOWAS ruled the last elections were not free or fair so they may not observe these elections and Gambia withdrew from the Commonwealth who also use to provide funds for elections. The only

possible support may come from Nigeria. So we have to engage Nigerian President Buhari who seems to have the eye of the world leaders as well as engage former Nigerian President Obasanjo to seek their own personal intervention on situation in the Gambia. Also, Nigeria has good control of ECOWAS so if we engage Nigerian leaders then that will influence ECOWAS. (Male participant, New York, 2015)

This statement shows the diaspora trying to be pragmatic and strategic with their interventions. However, this participant was also being optimistic in thinking that ECOWAS can push Jammeh into reforming the Electoral Bill when history has shown the Gambian Government took no notice of ECOWAS previously when they declared that the 2011 elections were not free and fair.

However, with the 2016 elections quickly approaching some of the Gambian diaspora civil society groups have been directing their support to the political opposition parties that are active at 'home', by providing them with the financial resources to campaign effectively. The social movement theoretical framework would describe this activity as a *mobilising structure*, whereby various UK and US Gambian diaspora civil society groups who share the same issues (Sökefeld 2006; 269) have come together to influence the elections through increasing the resources of the opposition political parties. According to an interviewee who co-founded one of the diaspora civil society groups in the US:

Our success in the diaspora to a large degree is to support the opposition to take part in elections. To begin the process of elections and for them to state what they need so the process can begin. The mere fact that we are not on the ground limits how much we can do. All we can do is provide funding and encourage negotiations between opposition parties, but if they do not take the bull by its horn and set aside their differences then it will affect the impact the diaspora can have (Interviewee 5, male, 50s-60 and academic/activist).

Such views express an ongoing faith among Gambian diaspora activists in the possibility of democratic change. The electoral process is their peaceful, legal route to change. But what this statement does not quite capture is the other half of the diaspora's activity, which is lobbying the relevant international organizations to put pressure on the Gambian government to hold free and fair elections. The two aspects of intervention go hand in hand, as the opposition parties participating in the elections would not make any difference if the elections were not free and fair.

However, there is another constraint for the Gambian diaspora in participating in politics in The Gambia, which is a divided opposition.

### **The aims of the Gambian Civil Society Groups in the UK and the US**

21<sup>st</sup> century diaspora politics is transnational and occupies a virtual political space. The Gambian civil society groups based in the UK and US have their members dispersed around the world in countries such as Senegal, Sweden, and France. As such, the physical mobilization of members is often challenging especially when it comes to getting people to attend meetings and protests. Naturally, these organizations tend to implement their activities in places where they have the most members, but then some people feel left out and therefore, form their own organizations, often with similar aims and objectives. The table below details the different Gambian diaspora civil society groups in the UK and the US and the aims of each group.



Table 9: The Gambian diaspora civil society groups in the UK and UK

<b>Groups</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Aims (with sources)</b>
Gambia Democratic Action Group (GDAG) established in 2004 (Perfect 2016)	US	Restore democracy in The Gambia
Save The Gambia Democratic Project (STGDP) established in 2004 (Perfect 2016)	US	Create an environment in the Gambia within which democracy and all its instruments can be nurtured and enhanced for a better Gambia <sup>92</sup> (This organization is dormant)
Campaign for Human Rights Gambia (CHRG) established in “September 2010 in response to the increasing number of political killings and human rights abuses taking place in The Gambia <sup>93</sup> ”	UK	CHRG aims to raise awareness of the increasingly critical human rights situation in The Gambia and to mobilize public opinions to put pressure on the Gambia government to protect its citizens and to fully investigate these killings <sup>94</sup> .
Sene-Gambia Human Rights Defense League is a human rights group that established in 2010	UK	The aim is to “showcase human rights concerns in The Gambia and Senegal- but mainly the Gambia to the Gambian people, human rights organizations, and UK government and the EU” <sup>95</sup>
Campaign for Democratic Change (CDCG) was created to provide a platform broad enough for a concerted	UK	The aim is the restoration of democratic governance in The Gambia with, as

<sup>92</sup> <http://groupspaces.com/STGDP>

<sup>93</sup> <http://www.gambiacampaign.org/about/>

<sup>94</sup> <http://www.gambiacampaign.org/about/>

<sup>95</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsg-4DHIVB8>

<p>effort towards supporting the cause of change in The Gambia.<sup>96</sup> Established in 2011.</p>		<p>essential features, upholding the rule of law, respect for human rights, free and fair elections so as to produce governments that reflect the wishes of the citizens, and governance in both the political and economic spheres, that conforms to internationally accepted norms of transparency and accountability<sup>97</sup></p>
<p>Coalition for Change – The Gambia (CCG) describe themselves as a non-partisan organization that was started in April 2011 to challenge the dictatorship and restore basic freedoms in The Gambia through non-violent action <sup>98</sup></p>	<p>US</p>	<p>The CCG’s aim is “positively changing the human rights environment in The Gambia, in collaboration with several organizations and groups. AfRO / Open Society Foundations International Advocacy have supported this project, including a mission to Geneva in 2014”<sup>99</sup>.</p>
<p>Democratic Union of Gambian Activities - DC (DUGA) describes themselves as an umbrella movement to unite Gambians around the world. This group was established in 2012.</p>	<p>US</p>	<p>“End tyranny in all its forms Usher in a new democratic Gambia that shall guarantee to the people peace, progress, prosperity and liberty Guarantee people the unhindered rights to</p>

<sup>96</sup> <http://www.cdcgambia.com>

<sup>97</sup> <https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnxjZGNnYW1iaWF8Z3g6NTQ2ZmJhOTIzNmJlYjc1ZA>

<sup>98</sup> <https://changeegambia.org>

<sup>99</sup> <https://changeegambia.org>

		determine their manner of government through a transparent, democratic electoral process” <sup>100</sup> .
Gambia Consultative Council (GCC) “ <sup>101</sup> is a coalition of politically active Gambian dissident organizations, groups, and unaffiliated individuals from home and around the world, united by the burning desire for political change in the Gambia” The group was established in 2013	US	“unifying Gambians everywhere into a coordinated and productive monolithic organization” <sup>102</sup>
Committee for the Restoration of Democracy in the Gambia (CORDEG), describe themselves as an independent, non-profit transnational democratic umbrella organization that is committed to peaceful, non-violent democratic change in the Gambia. They were formed in March 2014.	US	“CORDEG is a progressive organization that is aimed at facilitating dialogue among Gambians about the Gambia, with a view to finding solutions to our country’s myriad problems.  CORDEG aims to expose and arrest his (President Jammeh’s) criminal economic exploitation of conflict and human suffering.  CORDEG will remain a democratic whole of its constituent parts, representing a broad range of ideas, strategies and plans aimed at

<sup>100</sup> DUGA Mission Statement

<sup>101</sup> <http://gccfreegambia.com/about-us/>

<sup>102</sup> <http://www.maafanta.com/mathewkjalowgccpressrelease>

		defeating tyranny in our country through peaceful agitation and building in its place a just, stable and prosperous Gambia” <sup>103</sup> .
National Resistance Movement Gambia (NRMG) was formed in 2014 by former Gambian soldiers living in exile. They say that they are prepared to remove the “illegitimate” Gambian government by any means necessary.	US	“To restore democracy and the rule of law to the Gambia” <sup>104</sup> .
Gambia Movement for Democracy and Development (GMDD)	US	To support the restoration of genuine democracy, human rights and respect for the rule of law in The Gambia <sup>105</sup> .
Gambia Youth for Unity (GYU) structured youth activism organizations. Established in May 2015	UK	To host and collectively engage Gambian youths, supporters alike, both in the diaspora and within The Gambia.

Source: Assembled by Sainabou Taal

On the surface, “restoring democracy” and “improving human rights” appears to be the shared explicit focus of almost all these groups. Their mission to promote what they believe is an ideal (or at the very least better) style of governance in The Gambia is central to this agenda as are ideas that existing political practices (tolerance of multiple parties and regular elections) are essentially a performance that masks a lack of real democratic sentiments in The Gambia. One interviewee explained that although democracy may appear to be at the forefront of these groups’ agenda, the human rights aspect is what is of great importance to the Gambian diaspora civil society groups, as they believe that “democracy in the absence of human rights is not real democracy” (Interviewee 44, male, 30s, highly educated professional/ activist). Again, social movement theory can be used here

<sup>103</sup> CORDEG Mission and Vision statement, that was presented to the public and shared with diaspora media houses in March 2014

<sup>104</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/National-Resistance-Movement-Of-The-Gambia-672127789514233/info/?tab=page\\_info](https://www.facebook.com/National-Resistance-Movement-Of-The-Gambia-672127789514233/info/?tab=page_info)

<sup>105</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/Gambian-Movement-for-Democracy-and-Development-GMDD-119354478143261/info/?tab=overview>

to explain how these civil society groups *frame* issues using language such as human rights and democracy to justify their political mobilization and intervention.

Consequently, the fact that the Government of The Gambia fails to respect and protect the rights of Gambians has resulted in some of these groups becoming more of a resistance movement hoping for dramatic change rather than a movement for democratic reform. That is to say, their activities seek to actively undermine the sustainability of the existing regime, rather than merely reform the current political system by making modest changes. However, the Gambian diaspora civil society groups do not call themselves a resistance, as they want support from the international community, which requires them to avoid direct action and constrain their own activities to demands for reform of democratic practices. Clearly one of the main reasons these groups want President Jammeh removed from power is because they view him as the biggest violator of the rights of Gambians and therefore an obstacle to achieving the kind of democratic political system some members of the Gambian diaspora want to see in the country.

However, the interviews revealed that a small number of the interviewees in the diaspora were concerned that there would be a political vacuum if Jammeh were removed from power. They argued that this could lead to political confusion and chaotic consequences. One interviewee expressed the view that, “we do not want violence or political vacuum. We need to rationalize, sit down and put aside our emotions so we can think of a plan that would not lead to the demise of the country” (Interviewee 16, male, 30s and pro-government supporter). To this small proportion of people, the aims of the civil society groups are better at indicating the ‘ends’ of their activities than the ‘means’. As such, I got the impression that these individuals do not believe the political diaspora have a meaningful plan for what to do in a post-Jammeh Gambia. For example, plans of how they intend to support the country and the people of The Gambia to transition into their preferred style of democratic governance. In addition, the interviews also revealed that the politically involved diaspora has little to say on how it seeks to address resistance from groups that are pro-Jammeh, though presumably, they would seek to do it in a democratic manner, by persuading them of the legitimacy of an alternative political leadership.

### **The Political Activities of the Gambian Diaspora in the UK and US**

The political mobilization of the Gambian civil society groups in the UK and US has primarily involved staging demonstrations outside key locations in the UK and US.

Part of the literature argues that host countries play an important role in facilitating the environment for diasporic actions in homeland politics (Zapata-Barrero et al. 2013). And certainly, the UK and the US have been valuable hubs for members of Gambian diaspora to engage in politics at 'home' with very little risk (Adamson 2015). For example, in August 2015 the UK diaspora civil society groups staged a demonstration in front of the House of Parliament.

Figure 18: Gambian diaspora demonstrations in London



Source: Gambian Youth and Women Forum Facebook Page

Figure 19: Gambian diaspora protesting outside the UK House of Parliament



Source: Gambian Youth and Women Forum Facebook Page

Though I did not attend this demonstration, I received reports from one of the organizers (Interviewee 44, male, 30s, highly educated professional/ activist) that roughly 50 people attended and they were mostly men and all young people. According to the feedback, the atmosphere was very lively.

The civil society groups in the UK and US also organize conferences, meetings, and symposiums in various locations in the UK and US. These forums allow them to openly engage in discussions about the political conditions in The Gambia. For example, in February 2013, the Democratic Union of Gambian Activists organized a meeting on “*Escalating the resistance against the Jammeh regime*<sup>106</sup>” and prayer vigil at a town hall in Washington DC. In February 2014, *Campaign for Democratic Change Gambia*<sup>107</sup> organized a symposium and general meeting, in London and they invited the leader of the PPP opposition political party, Omar Jallow.

These meetings provide a convivial space for explicit and critical discussion to take place, however, they tend to be small because attendance is always lower than expected. Nevertheless, the meetings are often streamed live on the diaspora radios so they reach a wider audience. These meetings tend also to be attended by mostly young to middle-aged Gambian men, and possibly a few older first generation Gambian men who may be living, effectively, in exile.

<sup>106</sup> <http://civilsociety-gambia.org/426/>

<sup>107</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r3HXbTT5-VY> EXPLAIN



The photograph below was taken at the *Human Rights Symposium on the Death Penalty in The Gambia* in July 2015. I attended, as a non-aligned observer and there were roughly twenty people from the UK Gambian diaspora, mainly young men, but also four women. There was only an older Gambian man, who was a panellist.

Figure 20: Human rights symposium in London



Source: Sainabou Taal

These political meetings rarely draw a large number of female participants. However, at this meeting, I observed that the four Gambian women who attended were disengaged with the political discussions. It was clear that the men dominated the meeting and the women were there just as observers. However, towards the end of the meeting, the men encouraged the women to share their opinions because they said they wanted a gender balance (they only realized this the end of the meeting) but the women seemed uncomfortable with that. However, a female participant stood up and made a generic statement about wanting political change in The Gambia without really going into much detail. This female participant spoke in English and Wolof (local language) but was extremely shy. I got the impression that perhaps she lacked confidence because her English was not very strong and during the discussions, everyone spoke English. However, during the break, I saw the same four women confidently engaging with the men, laughing and teasing them about personal things. This was very confusing as this



was not how they presented themselves during the discussions where it was obvious that they were uncomfortable with openly talking about politics. However, occasionally I noticed the female participants nodding their heads in agreement with what was being said, which indicated that perhaps there was some level of engagement but this was very private. This observation supports the existing literature, which argues that the role of women in transnational politics is mostly invisible and private (Krook and Childs 2010, Mügge 2013). However, unlike the same literature, which also argues that men actively subdued the voice of women in politics (Mügge 2013) in this case the Gambian women at this meeting made the conscious decision to subdue their own voices. It is difficult to understand why these women behaved in this manner, but I was not able to speak to them after the meeting due to time constraints. However, in an attempt to bring a nuanced analysis to this observation I would argue that perhaps the women preferred to keep their opinions private because the men dominated the forum with their presence. And maybe if more women attended the meeting then they would find confidence in numbers. Though this is difficult to prove there is some merit in this argument in that the photograph below of the women in the UDP opposition party protesting shows them expressing courage in their numbers. These women were demonstrating against the arrest and detention of their party leader Ousainou Darboe, on Kairaba Avenue in July 2016. It illustrates that some Gambian women are actively involved in politics at 'home', yet they seem less to the fore in the diaspora.

Figure 21: Photographs of women in the UDP opposition political party demonstrating



Source: 'Peaceful Change' Group on Viber

However, the Gambian women at the forum in New York presented a different image in that they appeared as dynamic as the urban women who were part of the 'miniskirt revolution' in The Gambia in the 1960s. These women were engaged in the discussion, well educated, vocal and confident in sharing their opinions, even though they too were small in number. For example, one female participant made the statement that<sup>108</sup> "women extend the voice of government but they are not represented" (female participant, New York, 2015). What she meant by this was that she believes Gambian women are very effective at mobilizing themselves to support political parties in The Gambia but when it comes to occupying high positions or making decisions in these parties, they are often left out. This perception speaks to the feminist literature, which argues that fewer women than men holding top-level political positions and women participating in politics are often relegated to more ancillary roles such as cooking, doing clerical work and mobilizing female voters (Krook and Childs 2010). These case studies demonstrate the internal heterogeneities of Gambian women in the diaspora, in that their environment, education level and political interests determine their political engagement.

### **The Role of the Internet in Gambian Diaspora Politics**

The Gambian diaspora groups rely heavily on the Internet and social media for their political mobilization because they are cheap and effective tools for communication. The literature asserts the Internet serves as a space for national and transnational political ideologies and culture to be expressed and counter-expressed behind the safety of your computer screen (NurMuhammad et al. 2015). Thus, the Internet serves as a key resource for the Gambian civil society diaspora groups to advertise their events and to safely engage people in debates and discussions about political, economic, and social issues in The Gambia.

The Gambian diaspora have a heavy presence on Facebook and Twitter, they own online newspapers and radio stations such as Freedom Newspaper<sup>109</sup>, Kairo News<sup>110</sup>, Kibaaro News<sup>111</sup>, Gainako<sup>112</sup>, Jollofnews<sup>113</sup>, Banjulfocus<sup>114</sup> and Faturadio Network<sup>115</sup>, as well as run blogs<sup>116</sup>. This allows them to have a geographically

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<sup>108</sup> This participant is recognized for openly condemning the government of the Gambia during the UDP stand off with government. Thus, she has gained a lot of respect from the Gambian diaspora.

<sup>109</sup> <http://www.freedomnewspaper.com>

<sup>110</sup> <http://www.kaironews.com>

<sup>111</sup> <http://kibaaro.com>

<sup>112</sup> <http://gainako.com>

<sup>113</sup> <http://www.jollofnews.com>

<sup>114</sup> <http://www.banjulfocus.com>

<sup>115</sup> [www.faturadio.com/](http://www.faturadio.com/)

<sup>116</sup> <http://sidisanneh.blogspot.co.uk>

widespread impact as well. According to a Gambian blogger who writes critical pieces about the government of The Gambia:

Related to my activity as a blogger I have much more impact at the international level. Most international organizations follow me and I get a lot of correspondence on email. It's an open dialogue and exchange with these organizations... (Interviewee 2, male, 60s-70s, former civil servant/activist)

Critics of this kind of 'digital activism' argue that this new model of activism (sometimes called 'clicktivism'<sup>117</sup>) undermines the intensity and quality of political engagement because engagement becomes a matter of clicking on a few links (White 2010). However, for small groups like the political Gambian diaspora, who face persecution in The Gambia and have limited financial resources, the Internet is clearly the best option for them to engage in politics at 'home'. Furthermore, part of the diaspora politics literature supports this form of activism because it argues that the power of diasporas is intensified via social media (Siapera 2014), largely because it allows those engaged in virtual politics to unite groups around a political causes and galvanize them for action with few risks (Simon Turner 2008, Bernal 2013, Eric Turner 2013, NurMuhammad et al. 2015, Quinsaas 2015, Adamson 2015).

Additionally, the Internet allows the politically involved Gambians in the diaspora to keep the wider Gambian population and international community informed and aware of what is going on in the country. To illustrate, the Internet was the most useful tool for the Gambian diaspora to let the world know about the attempted coup on the 30<sup>th</sup> December 2014. The diaspora online media outlets became very active in disseminating information about the coup plot and the plotters within hours of it taking place. The Internet also provided a mask for those who wanted to contribute to the discussions about the attempted coup but did not want to disclose their identity. According to a student in The Gambia, "the diaspora are contributing to the political awareness of the people inside and to the wider world" (Interviewee 51, male, 30s and student). This supports the claims made in the interviews that the diaspora is a vital source of information for the wider Gambian population.

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<sup>117</sup> Clicktivists – online petitions and mass email alerts - a tool used by digital activists believed to cheapen political engagement process.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/aug/12/clicktivism-ruining-leftist-activism>

The dissemination of political information is one of the most influential practices of the diaspora in terms of its political impact in the 'home' country. The virtual transnational political space includes The Gambia, however, information does not move as freely as it does in the diaspora because the government blocks the online diaspora papers like Freedom Newspaper. But, Gambians (particularly in the urban areas) seek out other websites that would allow them to access Freedom Newspaper. For example, at one point in 2010 Gambians at 'home' (including myself) could only access Freedom Newspaper via a website called 'anonymouse'. However, this is not to suggest that information only flows one way into The Gambia, rather most of the information (rumours, gossips, insults, confidential letters, data and photographs) the diaspora report on social media and in their newspapers come from people in The Gambia. For example, Freedom Newspaper publishes articles written by a popular informant who goes by the alias 'the Soldier'. This person claims to work at the State House in The Gambia and shares information about President Jammeh's activities and reactions to events. Certainly, there are questions about the validity of the information and whether this person is even in The Gambia and working at the State House. However, the comments left on the articles suggest that people are interested in the information 'the Soldier' is sharing.

The challenge from the perspective of the diaspora is to assess the veracity of that information and to measure its persuasive effects both at 'home' and in the diaspora. In Gambian politics, the government treats rumours and falsehoods as a punishable crime and people are persecuted under the Information and Communication Act 2013 (see p. 121). They also do the same for facts and realities that portray the government in a negative light. In which case the government labels those facts and realities as 'false information' and persecute the accused. However, in diaspora politics, sometimes members would create or publicize rumours and falsehoods to push an agenda or to create an avenue for discussions about a particular topic. Thus, making some readers believe this information is real.

Nevertheless, information shared by members of the Gambian diaspora has to compete for its audience in a world of information. However, 27% of the politically involved interviewees in the diaspora feel they can build resistance against the government by making Gambians at 'home' aware of the activities of President Jammeh. These interviewees gave the impression that Gambians at 'home' did not know much about the political activities of President Jammeh. According to an interviewee in the diaspora, "the diaspora are actively involved in educating people

in The Gambia about what the government is doing” (Interviewee 13, male, 30s-40s and highly educated professional/activist).

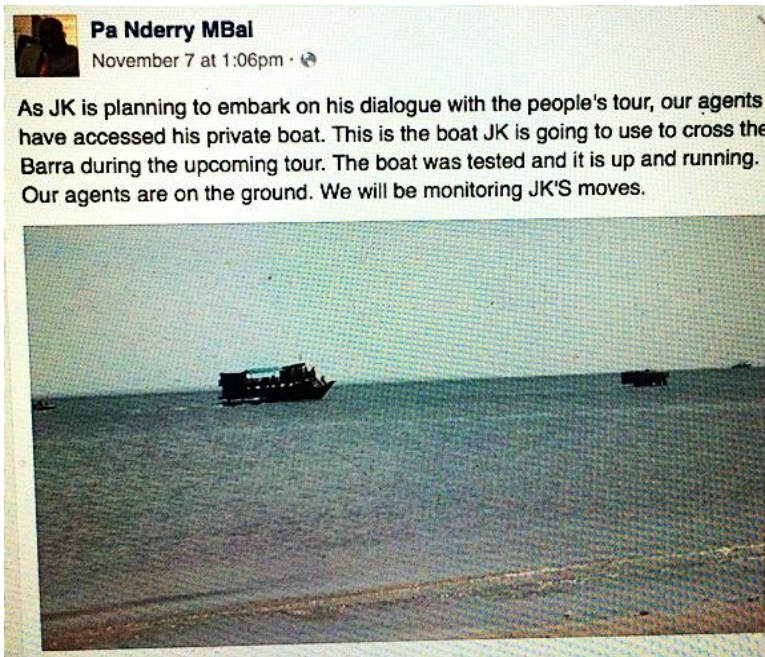
However, disseminating information is not without challenges as there have been times when diaspora online papers have been penalized for spreading false news and circulating rumours. The newspapers had to accept blame and issue rejoinders. For example, in August 2010, a Gambian businessman, Amadou Samba (who is a close ally to and business partner of President Jammeh) filed a lawsuit in the US against the diaspora-owned Freedom Newspaper, for falsely reporting in 2009 that he was arrested over a coup attempt and linking him to drug trafficking. The editor of Freedom Newspaper was forced to retract the story and publish a rejoinder<sup>118</sup>.

Certainly, some Gambians may see this as the negative aspect of relying on the diaspora for information and thus may trigger unexpected reactions from those receiving the information. For example, the Facebook post below shows the owner of Freedom Newspaper Pa Nderry Mbai sharing information about President Jammeh’s annual ‘meet the people tour’ in which he states an agent of theirs was on the Jammeh’s private boat. Supporters of the government felt this was a threat to President Jammeh and therefore, responded to this post in an irate manner. This shows the diaspora are not guaranteed support just because they share information they believe the people should know about the government.

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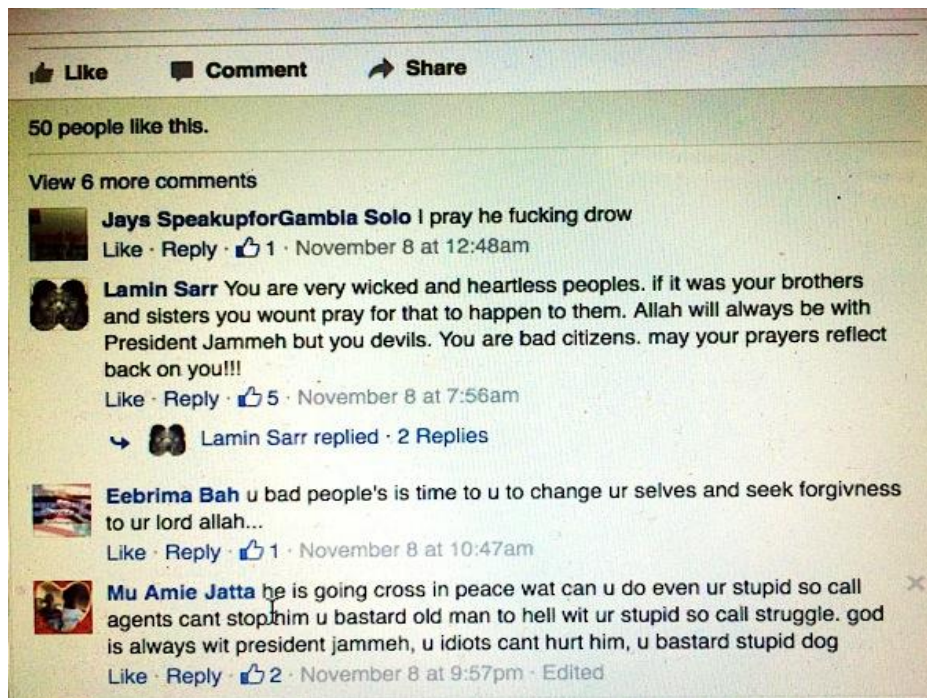
<sup>118</sup> <http://www.mfwa.org/country-highlights/gambia-human-rights-violations-in-2010/>

Figure 22: Comment about President Jammeh being monitored



Source: Freedom Newspaper, Facebook Page

Figure 23: Response to figure 22



Source: Freedom Newspaper, Facebook Page



Comments:

“You are very wicked and heartless peoples. If it was your brothers and sisters you wount pray for that to happen to them. Allah will always be with President Jammeh but you devils. You are bad citizens. May your prayers reflect back on you!!!!” (Facebook 2015)

“He is going to cross in peace wat can u do even ur stupid so call agents cant stop him u bastard old man to hell with ur stupid so call struggle. God is always wit president jammeh, u idiots cant hurt him, u bastard stupid dog” (Facebook, 2015)

Although there was no evidence to suggest that trolls were paid by the government to write these comments or that it represents the views of the entire Gambian population. However, I would argue the comments are only the view of those who managed to see the post or who decided to respond. Nevertheless, what is interesting about these types of exchanges is that they are not one-sided, as the empirical evidence revealed that members of the political Gambian diaspora also exchange personal insults with the pro-government supporter. As a result of this behaviour, some interviewees commented that they disapproved of these types of exchanges from the diaspora to pro-government supporters. For example, according to an interviewee in the diaspora, “people in the diaspora that are involved in politics from afar are making things worse. They are aggressive people going on social media and insulting people, which is not going to help” (Interviewee 27, male, 30s-40s, educated). This interviewee tried to come across as disinterested in the politics at ‘home’ by claiming to be unaware of the political situation in The Gambia. However, the fact that he explicitly stated he was against the political interventions of the diaspora suggests that he knew more about it than he was willing to say. This shows another paradox between what people say and what they do within the Gambian diaspora

The online activities of the Gambian political diaspora have triggered pro-government supporters in the diaspora to counter their claims against the government in the interviews. According to one pro-government supporter, “some people are talking rubbish on the radio like Freedom ... I am not going to listen to them and there are thousands of people who are not listening to them” (Interviewee 19, male, 50s and pro-government supporter). It may well be that this interviewee jumped to this conclusion because it is no secret that Freedom Newspaper and its editor Pa Nderry Mbai are staunch and consistent critics of President Jammeh and his supporters. However, the point here is that the very

freedom of these forms of media can also be their undoing in relation to their capacity to be persuasive. Furthermore, there is little evidence from the interviews that this source of information is changing opinions of President Jammeh and the practices of politics in The Gambia.

### 7.3 Triggers for Political Activity Among the Gambian Diaspora

What events would move someone from being politically inactive in the diaspora to being politically active? The interviews and empirical evidence revealed the triggers for diaspora intervention in politics in The Gambia include human rights violations, abuse of power, economic mismanagement and political repression. When the government is accused of perpetrating what people might call a 'crime' against citizens, for example ordering arbitrary arrests of oppositions or interfering with the judicial system. The source of information is extremely important as if something bad happens to someone and it is reported by the diaspora, it is more likely to galvanize support from people. For example, in March 2015, gender activist Aminata Manneh went into hiding after she posted a video on Facebook exposing a police officer brutally beating a ten-year-old girl. The diaspora newspapers (Freedom, Fatunetwork, and Kibaaro) reported her disappearance, which galvanized people to start a campaign called "*where is Aminata*"<sup>119</sup>. However, it was later discovered that she had left the country and made her way to the UK<sup>120</sup>.

The diaspora's political mobilization is often framed around conditions in the country, for example, human rights violations, corruption, and abuse of power. Part of the literature on social movement theory argues that *framing* is the strategic effort by groups to transform certain events into substantive issues that help to define grievances and claims, as well as those that legitimize and mobilize action (Sökefeld 2006; 270). For example, 35% of the interviewees in the diaspora claimed their intervention in politics in The Gambia was triggered by the April 2000 shootings of students. According to one interviewee:

I did not start out as politically committed, but I was writing about Gambia. I became an activist following the shootings of students on 10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> April 2000. That is when I began to be active and go beyond just writing about the conditions. I could not stand by being scholarly distant anymore. I

<sup>119</sup> <http://kairabanews.com/where-is-aminata-manneh-missing-gambian-university-student/>

<sup>120</sup> the information about Aminata being in the UK was provided to me by her family member in the UK who is a personal friend



could not sit and watch my country go down the drain and say nothing.  
(Interviewee 5, male, 50s-60s and academic/activist)

The April 2000 shootings were a shock to the nation and to the diaspora in particular, as nothing like that had ever happened before in The Gambia. According to these interviewees, it was a wake-up call because for the first time people started noticing the brutal nature of the current regime. This event was arguably the first to legitimize the political mobilization of the Gambian diaspora against the government. Subsequently, human rights conditions in The Gambia worsened after this event and the political mobilization of the diaspora has become more pronounced. The harsh political conditions and the 'real' fear of state-sanctioned violence in the country are reflected in the increasing number of Gambians seeking asylum outside of the country. For example, I reported in chapter 3, that Gambian asylum applications in EU countries in 2015 was 12,395, rising from 960 in 2008. Since 2004, there have been a number of events that have pushed Gambians, particularly journalist to seek asylum in Senegal, Europe and the United States. For instance, in December 2004, Deydra Hydara a prominent journalist and owner of opposition newspaper *The Point*, was murdered<sup>121</sup>. Then in March 2006, the editor-in-chief and general manager of *The Independent* newspaper was arrested and tortured and the newspaper was closed down<sup>122</sup>. In August 2009, six journalists including three members of the Gambian Press Union were convicted of sedition and defamation, sentenced to two years in prison and fined approximately US\$ 10,000<sup>123</sup>. Then in 2012, the government arbitrarily closed *The Standard and Daily Newspapers as well as Teranga FM radio station*<sup>124</sup>.

The extent of the human rights violations in The Gambia is captured in the Human Rights Watch 2015 report '*State of Fear, Arbitrary Arrests, Torture, and Killings*', which contains testimonies and statements from 38 victims and witnesses of human rights violations in The Gambia (9). These included journalists, political opponents, LGBT people, opposition party members, civil servants, and former national security officers. Some of the victims have subsequently fled the country to Senegal, UK, and the US. One interviewee stated:

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<sup>121</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/uk-gambia-uk-trade-unions-and-amnesty-international-call-halt-journalists-trial>

<sup>122</sup> [http://www.dc4mf.org/sites/default/files/plight\\_of\\_gambian\\_exiled\\_journalists\\_0.pdf](http://www.dc4mf.org/sites/default/files/plight_of_gambian_exiled_journalists_0.pdf)

<sup>123</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2009/08/six-gambian-journalists-sentenced-prison-20090807/>

<sup>124</sup> [http://www.dc4mf.org/sites/default/files/plight\\_of\\_gambian\\_exiled\\_journalists\\_0.pdf](http://www.dc4mf.org/sites/default/files/plight_of_gambian_exiled_journalists_0.pdf)

I was a prominent journalist who worked for the Daily Observer<sup>125</sup>, one of the most important newspapers operating in The Gambia during the period of military rule. I spearheaded a strong opposition to the military regime in The Gambia for two years and more. However, following several threats on my life, I was forced to move to the United Kingdom in late 1996 (Interviewee 3, male, 40s-50s and academic)

The standard rebuttal to these claims by President Jammeh is that these individuals are disingenuous, and they are fabricating stories to boost their claims for asylum and the whole human rights framing is really just a ruse for international migration. However, in a speech given by Jammeh at a political rally in Basse (Upper River Region) in May 2014, he made a policy pronouncement against gays when he was quoted saying “Some people go to the West and claim they are gays and that their lives are at risk in the Gambia, in order for them to be granted a stay in Europe. If I catch them I will kill them<sup>126</sup>.” Shortly after an anti-gay bill was passed in parliament confirming the risk of persecution of gays.

Since 1994 there has been significant evidence of President Jammeh and his government arresting and persecuting his critics and political opponents (Saine 2002, Saine 2009, Saine and Ceasay 2013, Perfect, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2013, UN Human Rights Council 2014, Human Rights Watch 2015, Amnesty International 2015, 2016). These actions clearly provide motives for the diaspora to intervene in politics, particularly as the empirical evidence revealed that some of the people involved in the political interventions in the diaspora were once victims of Jammeh and their testimonies have an impact on the diaspora. For example, Dr Amadou ‘Scattered’ Janneh’s whose case will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

On the other hand, the high levels of corruption in the country also work as a trigger according to interviews. Some participants argued that President Jammeh is spending state resources to increase his own personal wealth. According to one interviewee in the diaspora, “Jammeh came and said there was too much corruption which people agreed to but then he (Jammeh) realized he can make money for himself. Now he is not only the commander and chief but business and chief” (Interviewee 39, male, 30s-40s and highly educated professional/ activist). In

<sup>125</sup> The Daily Observer is one of the main newspapers in the Gambia <http://observer.gm>. However, since the coup in 1994, it has become a pro-government newspaper. They are often criticized for being bias in favour of President Jammeh, as they do not report news that is seen as opposing the President and his government. This could be attributed to the fact that the President appoints the Editor –in –Chief of the newspaper.

<sup>126</sup><http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/the-7-worst-things-gambias-president-yahya-jammeh-has-ever-said-about-gay-people-9977170.html>

addition, according to another interviewee in The Gambia whose partner works at the Central Bank of The Gambia, “the Central Bank of The Gambia is his (Jammeh’s) own personal bank” (Interviewee 45, male, 30s, private business owner). Corruption is not unique to The Gambia but the interviews suggested that Gambians believe it is often at the extreme end of the scale. For example, according to the Chairman of a government institution in The Gambia, “President Jammeh has been selling rice that was donated by the Japanese government to the Gambian people. He was selling it to the people for 500 GMD a bag, additionally, he has taken 40,000 tonnes of rice seeds donated to the national research institution for his own farms” (Interviewee 47, male, 60s, retired civil servant/agriculture expert)<sup>127</sup>. In 2003, President Jammeh gave a radio interview where he said he was selling rice and giving the proceeds to The Jammeh Foundation For Peace which aims to assist the less fortunate around the world, particularly the poor and the needy<sup>128</sup>.” Although I could not substantiate these claims on either side, the point is that stories like this fuel the anger that pushes people in the diaspora to get involved. Given that The Gambia is one of the poorest countries in the world, it is frustrating to members of the diaspora if the Jammeh Foundation For Peace is making profit to support the poor in other countries. Therefore, it matters less whether these stories are true or false, what matters is whether people are willing to believe them. The precise complexities of the President’s involvement in rice sales are unclear, but the rumours are enough to provoke action.

The interviews also revealed that 60% of the interviewees believe the abuse of power by the President is another major trigger for the Gambian diaspora to intervene in homeland politics. According to an interviewee in the diaspora, who used to work in a senior position in the Gambian government and is now involved in the political struggle of the diaspora:

The regime has formed into a one-man show of Jammeh. State resources are spent to celebrate his birthday, when he talks he says my country, I own the country... He is engaged in every sphere of the economic activity. With this type of system, no one should be blamed for looking at Jammeh when it comes to solving the problems of the country... people are arrested and locked up for disagreeing with Jammeh...Ministers do not have power to do anything in their ministries... policies are drafted without consulting them and if they agree to anything at international meetings

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<sup>127</sup> Unverified information

<sup>128</sup> <http://www.statehouse.gm/kanilaifarm-interview/interview-president.htm>

without consulting him, he would pull out and they would be arrested (Interviewee 14, male, 50s, professional/activist)

It is a fact that President Jammeh owns many private businesses in the country under the company name Kanilai Group Investment (KGI). This again is a major concern for the diaspora, as his company is accused of putting local Gambians out of business. For example, President Jammeh's company sells school uniforms, bread, fish, meat, cement, rice, vegetables, and rams during the religious celebration of Eid (Tobaski). The photograph below was taken in Banjul outside MaCarthy Square, a few weeks before the Tobaski celebrations. The rams belong to President Jammeh and one interviewee told me they were delivered to the square and sold by military personnel. According to an informal discussion I had with an informant who bought one of these rams, they explained that the buyers are not allowed to choose the ram they want. Instead, they have to tell the military officers how much money they want to spend, and the officer picks a ram in that price range. The informant stated it was a frustrating experience for them, as people could not reject what they were given because the military men were aggressive and they carried weapons.

Figure 24: President's sheep in McCarty square in The Gambia



Source: Sainabou Taal

For the interviewees in the diaspora, stories such as this fortify their belief that there is an abuse of power by political elite for personal economic ends in The Gambia. This is a powerful trigger for the diaspora's political mobilization because

it is a source of resentment and frustration for the diaspora (and for the people in The Gambia). Thus, 20% of the diaspora interviewees insisted that they are speaking and acting in the name of those at 'home' who are afraid to speak out. As one interviewee puts it, "people in the Gambia are afraid to voice their opinions about the government. But in the diaspora, we are free to say what we want so we do it for them" (Interviewee 7).

#### **7.4 Justifications for Political Interventions from the Diaspora**

The interviews revealed that some 40% of interviewees justify their interventions in politics as their responsibility as 'citizens' of The Gambia to save the people from the 'tyranny' of having a 'despotic' leader. One interviewee explained, "Jammeh is a tyrant and people are living in tyranny" (Interviewee 11, male, 50s, activist). This view aligns with global justifications of 'liberal interventionism.' These political science theories argue that a direct intervention (including the use of force) is justified if a state loses its legitimacy by failing to practice good governance and engaging in illegal political behaviour like widespread corruption, leading to poor economic performance (Johnson et al. 1984, Tesón 2001 and Atkinson 2008). Liberal interventionism describes a doctrine that is normative, geopolitical, and military. It justifies intervention in foreign countries, including the use of violent force, in order to promote Liberal Values (freedom, democracy and human rights) (Peksen and Comer 2012). Liberal interventionism flourished in the 1990s in the Balkans and Sierra Leone but was still used in Iraq in 2003 and Libya in 2011 to explain why 'the West' was justified in using the military in foreign countries, a justification that was (sometimes) sanctioned by the UN. This doctrine has changed over time. Its latest iteration is the 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P) idea (Graubart 2013). The UN adopted this in 2005 and it allows the international community to deploy force when a state fails to protect its own citizens from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. The UN Security Council Resolution 1973 called on all members states to take 'all necessary measures... to protect civilians' in Libya for example. The language, ideas and terms of liberal intervention are subsequently deployed not by state actors, but by transnational actors. For example, when the Gambian diaspora argue that their interventions are justified on the basis that evidence has shown the Government of The Gambia engaging in widespread corruption, mismanaging the economy, and most importantly, violating the human rights of the Gambian people by abusing the monopoly of legitimate violence and manipulating elections.

However, the main difference between the way this idea is invoked in Libya and in The Gambia relates to its military dimension and the fact that this is not a situation of inter-state negotiation at the UN but is largely an encounter between a state and its own citizens living beyond its borders. The effectiveness of liberal interventionism according to its advocates William Ewart Gladstone, Woodrow Wilson, and Tony Blair, is the possibility of armed liberal interventions in states, which are abusing the human rights of citizens (Lipsey 2016), but most Gambians in the diaspora reject the use of armed force. The dilemma here is that diaspora activists focus on the 'original sin' of the current government, which was its violent birth in a military coup. Therefore, the diaspora is adamant that their interventions will not be to overthrow the government by military means but to push for a democratic political change in the country. So, the diaspora uses the justification for intervention but does not advocate the means. Additionally, the country finds itself in a situation where the military is in support of the current government and President Jammeh in particular. For example, military officers are seen openly wearing t-shirts and hats with President Jammeh face, particularly during the election period. To illustrate, the photograph below was taken on the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2016, the day President Jammeh went to nominate his party for the upcoming elections at the IEC and posted on Facebook.

Figure 25: Soldier wearing APRC t-shirt



Source: Gambia Youth and Women's Forum Facebook page

Does the close relationship between President and army amount to a situation that justifies external intervention? One of the ambiguities here is that there were two attempted coups by military officers wanting to overthrow President Jammeh in 2006 and 2007. Consequently, General Lang Tombong Tamba and six others were sentenced to death in July 2010<sup>129</sup>, though they were pardoned in 2015<sup>130</sup>. This perhaps worked as a deterrent for military personnel wanting to take similar actions because President Jammeh has shown that he will not hesitate to prosecute military officers if he believes they are plotting against him.

On the other, a key barrier for those in the diaspora who seek to justify their efforts to change the government at 'home' (even by peaceful means) is that much of the population within the country appear to support President Jammeh. It is important to recognize that many Gambians support Jammeh and his government, irrespective of what the diaspora believe. However, this does not mean that Jammeh is not engaged in human rights violations or that his supporters are not aware of it. Rather they downplay those accusations and emphasize the development they argue Jammeh has brought to the country. For example, when I observed the July 22<sup>nd</sup> celebrations (also known to the regime and its supporters as The Revolution<sup>131</sup>) at the Independence Stadium in Bakau, in October 2014. I saw a significant number of Gambians of all ages openly showing support to President Jammeh. They wore his party's colour (green) and their t-shirts, hats, and traditional clothing that had his face plastered on them and they were singing, cheering, and dancing. For example, the first photograph below shows an elderly Gambian man wearing his t-shirt. This photo was taken as the man was walking to the stadium and he was happy to oblige my request to take this picture. However, the second photograph of the crowds was taken in the stadium.

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<sup>129</sup> <http://www.foroyaa.gm/archives/2367>

<sup>130</sup> <http://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/more-than-200-pardoned-convicts-released-from-prison>

<sup>131</sup> President Jammeh and his supporter refer to the 1994 military coups as the 'revolution'



Figure 26: A pro- Jammeh supporter heading to the July 22<sup>nd</sup> celebrations. The caption on this t-shirt says, “His Excellency Sheikh Professor Alhaji Dr. Yahya A.J.J Jammeh. 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 22<sup>nd</sup> July Revolution 1994-2014”



Source: Sainabou Taal

Figure 27: July 22<sup>nd</sup> celebrations at the stadium in Bakau. This is a picture of one side of the stadium.



Source: Sainabou Taal



The crowds in figure 27 waited for hours under the scorching hot sun for President Jammeh to arrive. The atmosphere was lively in the stadium as people clapped and cheered for the dignitaries arriving. However, during the interval of the military band, people listened in silence as the Master of Ceremonies read out the list of developments President Jammeh brought to the different sectors of the country since 1994. From my own subjective opinion, the observations at this celebration confirmed the claims made by Cowen and Shenton (1996) that Third World" dictatorships attempt to legitimize its mandate to rule in the name of development, and this is partly to blame for the confusion in development studies as to what development means

There was a genuine sense from the crowds that they were in support of the regime, however, an argument can also be made that the attendance at the stadium does not mean approval or support for President Jammeh and his government. Indeed, there are those in The Gambia who show political allegiance to the government because of fear. Though this is difficult to prove, as people would not openly admit to it. However after I left the celebrations, I joined a conversation with two people who were watching the event on television. I commented about the large crowds and the support President Jammeh seemed to have from the people. But these two informants insisted that most of those people in attendance were brought to the celebration by force and that every village chief and alkali was given strict instructions to take a busload of people to attend the celebrations or risk being prosecuted. In addition, they told me that every school headmaster or mistress was also forced to take school kids to the celebration or risk being fired. I was left confused by this information because, on the one hand, I witnessed crowds of people cheering and showing support to President Jammeh in a very lively atmosphere but on the other hand, I was being told that most people were forced to be there. Then on reflection, I decided to treat this information as their perception, which they genuinely believed to be true. But they did not present proof to support this claims. In fact, the way the information was relayed to me sounded like 'hearsay'. But the empirical evidence from my observations supports the argument that the people there were sincere in their enthusiasm about showing their support to President Jammeh. This shows the gaps that exist within the population about whether or not Gambians *really* support President Jammeh.

According to some people in The Gambia, the diaspora is wrong for exposing the human rights abuses of the government. In the interviews, they argued that this is having a negative impact on the country's reputation. In essence, they blamed the diaspora for tarnishing country's image by airing its 'dirty laundry in public'. For

example, one interviewee claimed, “they go outside and tarnish the images of the country” (Interviewee 52). In this instance, the interviewees in The Gambia appeared disconnected to those in the diaspora. Even though they acknowledged that the government was abusing the rights of the people, however, they did not like the diaspora drawing attention to it. But in response to the accusation, some interviewees in the civil society groups argued that it is President Jammeh who is the one tarnishing the image of the country. For example, one interviewee explained:

It is Jammeh who is painting the country in bad light. All we are doing is telling the people what he is doing. The world is a global village and anything that takes place is open to global scrutiny. Gambia is a hostile environment that is creating victims and those victims are narrating their stories. Jammeh claiming to cure AIDS is disrespecting himself and the image of the country (Interviewee 8, male, 40s-50, lawyer/activist)

Certainly, President Jammeh has been open to international criticism ever since he claimed he could cure AIDS on national television<sup>132</sup>. But the point here is that when it comes to politics the relationship between the diaspora and the Gambians on the ground is more complex than either party would appear to believe. Even though the Gambian diaspora are celebrated for their development interventions, they are also criticized for their political interventions by people at ‘home’. I argue that the difficult relationship between the diaspora and those at ‘home’ is heavily influenced by the question of remittances. For example, those at ‘home’ who depend on such sources of money are likely to say what they think the diaspora want to hear not necessarily what they themselves believe. But for some interviewees in the political diaspora, they do not accept such complaints about their interventions in politics because they are convinced that they are doing what is right and not necessarily what the people at ‘home’ want. Thus, I was left questioning on whose behalf the diaspora are truly intervening and how this relates to the way they justify their actions.

## **7.5 Assessing the Impact of Intervention**

One of the claims made by Lyons and Mandaville (2012) is that little is known about how politics in the country of origin has been transformed by the current upsurge in the political activism of increasingly mobile transnational populations. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to assess the impact of the Gambian diaspora interventions in politics in The Gambia, UK and US.

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<sup>132</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LYt1gJo3nf8>

To begin, all the interviewees involved in the Gambian diaspora political activism claimed their political mobilization was influenced by contemporary politics in The Gambia. They argued that by creating awareness about the political conditions in the country, they have subsequently made President Jammeh and his government more cautious about its actions, as well as influenced President Jammeh to change his behaviour towards the diaspora.

These interviewees mentioned four specific government actions following diaspora intervention. First, they claimed to have had an impact in reducing corruption by the government. For example, one according to an interviewee in the diaspora:

A friend of mine working in the government departments told me some of the newspapers in the diaspora are contributing a lot to highlighting the corruption in government and this is making senior level civil servants careful of their actions. They know there are insiders in the ministries providing information to the diaspora, and when the diaspora publish it, the government investigate and this is what is making them very careful. This happened with someone in the Ministry of Health and when the government saw the article about them, they sent auditors to the ministry to investigate that person and they found that some of the allegations to be true... this to me is a big plus. (Interviewee 36, male, 30s, educated professional)

The diaspora considered this to be a very positive outcome because they claimed to be doing what Gambians on the ground cannot, which is making the civil servants and bureaucrats within the government machine accountable for their actions thereby reducing corruption.

Second, according to an interviewee in the diaspora, they were responsible to President Jammeh deciding to not take action on a specific issue that would have affected development in the farming communities in The Gambia. For example, this interviewee said he had written an open letter to the President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in Nigeria on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2014, informing them of President Jammeh's plans to establish the Food Security Corporation (FSC)<sup>133</sup>, which they believed would negatively affect the farming community. The interviewee claimed that their letter prompted the President of IFAD to visit The Gambia, after which there were no more talks of establishing the

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<sup>133</sup> <http://sidisanneh.blogspot.co.uk/2014/05/an-open-letter-to-ifad-president-kanayo.html>

FSC. However, it was difficult to substantiate this claim because according to a press release by IFAD on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2014, their President visited The Gambia to discuss investment in smallholder agriculture, strengthen partnerships and work to further transform rural areas into economic vibrant business<sup>134</sup>. Therefore, if there were discussions about the FSC they were behind closed doors.

Third, the interviewees argued that the diaspora were responsible for the government allowing two UN Special Rapporteurs (Christof Heyns and Juan Méndez) into the country to investigate allegations of poor condition in Mile 2 prison. The diaspora claimed that the sequence of this event started when Dr Amadou ‘Scattred’ Janneh (who spearheaded the diaspora campaign on this issue) was sentenced to life in imprisonment for distributing t-shirts printed by the diaspora civil society group Coalition for Change – The Gambia<sup>135</sup> saying “End Dictatorship’. Upon his release in 2012, Dr Janneh returned to the US and started campaigning against the poor conditions and treatment of prisoners in Mile 2. However, in an effort to dispel these accusations, the interviewees believed that the Government of The Gambia allowed the UN Special Rapporteurs to investigate the prison. Additionally, one interviewee claimed that some members of the political diaspora helped to direct the experts to cases in The Gambia to investigate. They also claimed to have given “the UN rapporteurs anecdotal evidence and introduced them to personal witnesses who had experienced atrocities in Gambia” (Interviewee 14, male, 50s, professional/activist). After the investigation was completed and the rapporteur published their report, this interviewee said he felt vindicated because the report confirmed that the national security forces were violating the human rights of citizens and the prison was in a poor condition. For example, the report stated:

Throughout the visit, we received many testimonies from people who did not want to be identified out of fear for either their own safety or their families, and we have therefore asked the Government to reaffirm its commitment not to engage in any reprisals<sup>136</sup> (Heyns and Méndez 2014).

Fourth, the interviewees also argued that the 30<sup>th</sup> December 2014 attempted coup influenced President Jammeh to change his behaviour towards the diaspora by showing a willingness to engage them. They asserted that this is because Jammeh started to see the diaspora as a real threat to his position therefore he

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<sup>134</sup> <http://www.ifad.org/media/press/2014/52.htm>

<sup>135</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2012/01/gambia-must-release-four-activists-jailed-distributing-anti-government-t-shirts/>

<sup>136</sup> <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15267&LangID=E>

was trying to appease them by granting amnesty to his critics in the diaspora. Which was accepted by some key members of the political opposition in the diaspora like Falai Baldeh<sup>137</sup>.

However, this claim of reconciliation between the government and the Gambian diaspora should be treated with caution. The apparent willingness of President Jammeh to engage can also be attributed to the fact that he was aware that the rest of the world (including key donors) was observing how he managed the situation. Though I argued previously that President Jammeh has not succumbed to international pressure, the fact that the country has lost significant amounts of development aid from the EU, Commonwealth, and US may logically have played a part in influencing him to consider his approach in dealing with the diaspora.

Overall, there is a sense that the diaspora is trying to 'make quite a lot out of quite a little' when claiming to have an impact in politics in The Gambia. Even the changes they do claim to have delivered are minimal when compared to their overall aim, which is to drive a much more extensive democratization of political practice in The Gambia. The consensus is that it would be extremely difficult to influence a democratic political change in the country, particularly through elections. The expectation amongst the diaspora is that the upcoming December 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 presidential elections will not be free and fair, as President Jammeh has already started taking steps to secure his win. Firstly by pushing for the amendments to the Electoral Bill, secondly, giving directives to the Chief Inspector General of the Police to refuse permits to opposition parties to hold rallies and third, by sanctioning arbitrary arrests and torture of political opposition party members, including women and young people.

Therefore, are obvious challenges from Gambian diaspora galvanizing support from those in the country (including the oppositions political parties) from afar, however, there must also be other reasons for the diaspora to have limited impact with their interventions? And are those reasons the lack of open participation and support from the wider diaspora, limited financial resources, fragmentation of the groups and lack of organization? The interviews revealed that the Gambian political diaspora have not been able rally large scale support from the wider Gambian population because of (1) fear of the consequences for their families in The Gambia (2) some people do not agree with diaspora interventions in politics and (3) there are some people in the wider Gambian diaspora who do not have faith that interventions will succeed in changing politics in The Gambia. However,

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<sup>137</sup> <https://jollofnews.com/2016/03/23/former-gambian-activist-regrets-opposing-jammeh/>

out of all these possible reasons, I argue that fear perhaps plays the most important role in discouraging people in the wider Gambian population from openly participating in politics at 'home'. For example, according to an interviewee in the diaspora, "I take part in the online discussions but anonymously and I have made financial contributions to the movement twice before but I am very anonymous because of my loved ones back home and security of family and friends" (Interviewee 40, male, 40s, highly skilled professional). This fear stems from the fact that families of political opponent in the diaspora have been targeted and harassed by the national security services. For example, after the 30<sup>th</sup> December 2014 attempted coup the government arrested and harassed the family members of those suspected of involvement. This included 14-year-old Mustapha Lowe, (the son of one of the coup plotters) was detained for months<sup>138</sup>. This makes the fear of state-sanctioned violence a real and objective emotion amongst the wider Gambian population.

Secondly, the limited financial resources available to the Gambian diaspora political groups also affect the impact of the interventions. Particularly the groups that do not have connections with international human rights organizations to help fund and advocate for their cause like the group 'Coalition for Change- The Gambia'. Instead, some members of these political groups use their own personal money to rent space for their meetings and print t-shirts and placards for their demonstrations. According to one participant, he has personally paid for the printing of t-shirts, placards and bought a bullhorn for demonstrations because his group did not have the money (Interviewee 44, male, 30s and highly educated professional/ activist).

There is also the issue of fragmentation between the Gambian civil society groups, which in some instances were caused by generational differences. Typically, in The Gambia, there is a hierarchy in decision-making processes based on age and gender. For example, it is the older men in society who hold the decision making power, and this structure exists in the diaspora as well. However, the growing number young and educated Gambians in the diaspora are challenging this structure and demonstrating their independence by forming their own civil society groups, such as Gambian Youth for Unity (GYU). This group organized protests and engaged in online activism without the support of the older and more experienced civil society groups. This has contributed to the challenge of unifying or even aligning the various Gambian civil society diaspora groups together. As such, approximately 80% of the interviewees in the diaspora claimed they did not

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<sup>138</sup> <http://afrol.com/articles/25158>

believe the political diaspora is having any impact with their interventions. For example, one interviewee in the diaspora asserted, “the Gambian diaspora is just making noise and the reason they are not making an impact is because they are not united” (Interviewee 31).

Lastly, there is a lack of organization with political interventions, which subsequently discouraged some interviewees in the Gambian diaspora from getting involved. For example, 55% of the interviewees complained that the political events organized by the diaspora started and finished late, and therefore, it makes it challenging for those who have to travel long distances to attend. Coincidentally, I witnessed the poor organization first hand when I observed the *Campaign for Democratic Change Gambia Symposium* in August 2013. I arrived at the venue at the scheduled time, however, no one was there, and the venue was closed. I contacted the organizer and they informed me that the event was not going to commence until 3 hours later than the time it was scheduled. I decided to return home but then hours later I received a telephone call from one of the organizers informing me that the event had started and they wanted me to return. This experience created the impression that there is a lack of ‘seriousness’ with their political interventions and this has exposed the groups to criticisms from the wider Gambian diaspora.

### **Effects of The Gambian Diaspora Lobbying in UK and US**

Part of the academic literature argues that the diaspora has a role to play in lobbying host governments to shape policies in favour of (or to oppose) a homeland government (Hägel and Peretz 2005, Vertovec 2005). The Gambian diaspora civil society groups are no different, as they too have been lobbying the UK and US governments to change their policies towards The Gambia since 2001. Certainly, all the interviewees involved in the political activism of the diaspora claimed to have achieved some success with their lobbying activities. For instance, they gave examples such as the UK Border Agency (UKBA) changing its asylum regulations towards Gambians in 2012, thus making it easier for Gambian fleeing from political persecution to be granted asylum in the UK<sup>139</sup>, the EU withholding aid to the country in 2014,<sup>140</sup> and the US government removing The Gambia from the

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<sup>139</sup> Home office Operational guidance note: Gambia, June 2013. This document incorporated numerous research material and publications from human rights organisations such as Amnesty international. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/311873/Gambia\\_operational\\_guidance\\_2013.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/311873/Gambia_operational_guidance_2013.pdf)

<sup>140</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-gambia-rights-donors-idUSKBN0JO19520141210>

Africa Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA) in 2015<sup>141</sup>. These interviewees explained that through their advocacy for human rights in The Gambia, they have been able to influence politics in the US and UK.

However, there are some doubts about whether these examples can be attributed to the lobbying efforts of the Gambian diaspora alone. Even though there is evidence which link the action of some UK members of parliament (MPs) and US government officials to diaspora lobbying. For example, UK parliamentarians such as Jo Swinson from the Liberal Democratic Party sponsored early day motion 2727<sup>142</sup> in 2012 as well as Labour MP Katy Clark who also sponsored early day motions 348<sup>143</sup>, 1213<sup>144</sup> and 1287<sup>145</sup> on human rights in The Gambia in 2013 and 2014. In addition, members of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) such as Patrick Harvie sponsored a parliamentary motion signed by 20 MSPs condemning the execution of prisoners in The Gambia<sup>146</sup>. And in the US, the Gambian diaspora gained the attention of US Senators such as Richard Durbin, which resulted in him sending a letter to the Gambian Minister of Justice in 2011 appealing for the release of local journalist Chief Ebrima Manneh<sup>147</sup> who was arrested by state security in 2006. Lastly, US National Special Advisor Susan E Rice issued a statement on human rights violations in The Gambia in 2015<sup>148</sup>, which was believed to be in response to the lobbying effort of the Gambian political diaspora. The achievement for the diaspora was getting host governments to even discuss human right issues in The Gambia, as often, Gambians have the impression that the country is of little interest to the international community because it is small and has no strategic natural resources.

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<sup>141</sup> it has been speculated that the Gambia was removed because of the human rights abuses and political instability <http://www.ictsd.org/bridges-news/bridges-africa/news/united-states-removes-three-countries-from-agoa>

<sup>142</sup> <http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2010-12/2727>

<sup>143</sup> <http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2013-14/348>

<sup>144</sup> <http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2012-13/1213>

<sup>145</sup> <http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2013-14/1287>

<sup>146</sup> Campaign for Human Rights in the Gambia in Edinburgh groups visited the Scottish Government in 2012 to highlight the human rights violations being perpetrated by the government. They caught the attention of the MSP because President Jammeh had just executed 9 prisoners, which made international news. The issues of human rights in The Gambia became a huge topic of discussion in the Scottish parliament and they supported the diaspora's appeal to the UK government and wider international community to 'seek a resolution at the UN General Assembly condemning the use of the death penalty and all human rights abuses in The Gambia and to consider that aid, trade, tourism and diplomacy all have a role to play in putting pressure on the Gambian Government to end its abuse of human rights.' <http://www.localnewsglasgow.co.uk/tag/campaign-for-human-rights-in-the-gambia/>

<sup>147</sup> The diaspora have been actively advocating to their host governments and international community to put pressure on the government to explain his whereabouts. This letter was sent by the senator in response to the advocacy of the diaspora, with support from the human rights organisations and Gambian Press Union. <https://cpj.org/blog/2011/11/us-senator-again-presses-gambia-on-missing-journal.php>

<sup>148</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/05/16/statement-national-security-advisor-susan-e-rice-lgbt-rights>



However, other players besides the members of the Gambian diaspora have also contributed to the UK and US paying particular attention to the human rights conditions in The Gambia. For instance, the international Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community have been lobbying the UK and US governments to take action against the Gambian government, since 2014, when the government passed a bill imposing a life sentence on homosexuals. And when President Jammeh publically threatened to “slit the throats” of gays and lesbians in The Gambia in 2015.

Thus, recognizing the potential for additional external support from the LGBT communities, the Gambian civil society groups in the diaspora have changed their strategy to solicit help from this community when lobbying the US government in particular. According to a member of the civil society groups in the US:

The diaspora in the US are raising awareness amongst the LGBT community who are great lobbyists and activists. We have been able to engage them about how gays and lesbians are being treated in Gambia. This partnership is helping to raise awareness and inform policymakers on what is going on and it is having an impact. (Interviewee 4, female, 40s, highly educated professional/ activist)

Figure 28: Man from LGBT community demonstrating against President Jammeh in the US



Source: Gambia Youth and Women's forum, Facebook page

The Gambian civil society groups see the LGBT community as presenting a big opportunity to enhance their lobbying power. However, what is interesting about this partnership is that the majority of members in the Gambian political diaspora do not, themselves, agree with the homosexual “lifestyle.” This claim was confirmed when I observed a meeting in London in July 2015 where it was suggested that they invite members of the LGBT community to participate in an upcoming demonstration. However, some participants appeared concerned because they did not want to be seen publicly supporting homosexuality to the rest of the Gambian population. However, it was decided at the end to invite the LGBT community to they needed them to make up the numbers. This finding revealed how the Gambian civil society diaspora groups would put their moral and religious beliefs that tie them to the country to one side for the sake of achieving democratic political change in The Gambia.

However, relations between the Gambian diaspora and the US government have not been cordial recently because of the 30th December 2014 coup attempt by the six US- Gambian citizens. This resulted in the FBI arresting and charging four US- Gambians under the 1794 Neutrality Act, for participating in a conspiracy to attack a nation with which the US is at peace<sup>149</sup>. When the interviewees were asked how they felt about the reaction of the US government to the attempted coup, 45% claimed they were unhappy about it. According to an interviewee who is part of the political Gambian diaspora, they were “absolutely disappointed. It is hypocritical” (Interviewee 11, male, 50s, activist). On the other hand, 50% of the participants claimed they felt it was the right decision, as according to another interviewee “I personally condemned the attempted coup. We should not allow violence of any form to take control of the government, so their reaction is something that I expected. I am on the side of the US, what they are doing is right thing” (Interviewee 31, male, 40, highly educated professional). And 5% appeared indifferent, as one participant explained, “I wouldn’t know because I did not read much about it. I know those involved were prosecuted by US government” (Interviewee 73, male, 50s, working professional/ student).

According to an article in the Guardian in July 2015:

Classified State Department cables published by WikiLeaks, running from 2006 to 2010, reveal a consistent US concern about Jammeh’s “penchant for erratic and sometimes bizarre behaviour”, and an awareness of the

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<sup>149</sup> The Gambian charged were Chern Njie, Papa Faal, Banka Manneh and Alagie Barro. <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/jan/06/gambia-coup-plotters-chno-nije-papa-faal-model-us-citizens>

brutal measures he employed against real and perceived opponents. Yet the communications suggest a willingness to look past his abusive practices for reasons of national interest. Jammeh assisted in at least one CIA rendition during the Bush administration. The cables referred obliquely to “specific bilateral [counterterrorism] efforts”, as well as unspecified “US aid to the NIA”, Jammeh’s intelligence service. Jammeh assured US diplomats that he was committed to assisting the fight against drug trafficking, though suspicions abound that the regime has profited from the trade<sup>150</sup>.

Based on the information in this Guardian article, I would argue that it is understandable why 45% of the interviewees were frustrated with the actions taken by the US government against the coup plotters. This is partly because the US government appeared to have been aware of the political repression and human rights violations in The Gambia. However, to maintain this argument would show a remarkable lack of understanding of geopolitical realities, whereby the interest of international political actors make them overlook certain violations, such as human rights abuses, as the leaked documents have proven. But on the other hand, perhaps the interviewees felt that as the US government was known to have helped to mobilize the Iraq-American and Afghan–American diasporas in the early 2000s, when their own national geopolitical and security interests are perceived to be at risk (Lyons and Mandaville 2012; 13), that they would do the for Gambians. But then again, the Gambian government does not pose a threat to the US, whereas the diaspora created a risk by nearly damaging diplomatic relations with The Gambia. Subsequently, the diaspora could have easily lost the political goodwill and sympathy they have earned in the US from years of lobbying.

Nevertheless, lobbying appeared to be the most effective strategy by the Gambian political diaspora however, it would have been more effective if there were not disunity and lack of good organization among the groups. In addition, lobbying has also been compromised by alliances with groups like LGBT in the context of a lack of lobbying skills and resources in the diaspora acting on its own. Furthermore such lobbying has to be understood in the wider context of diplomatic practice and geopolitical reality, in which the Gambians have little effective leverage in either the UK, the EU or the US even though if it has strategic importance to the US who

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<sup>150</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/21/how-former-us-army-officer-launched-disastrous-coup-the-gambia>)

provided anti-terrorist funding and the Russians who are interested in establishing a possible naval base in The Gambia<sup>151</sup>.

## 7.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that the civil society groups in the Gambian diaspora are having some successes with their political mobilization in the UK and US. For example, these groups have managed to get the help of key international human rights organizations to expose the human rights violations being perpetrated by the current regime. Integral to this have been transnational networks of information, underpinned by new ICTs that have enabled information about what is happening in The Gambia to reach the diaspora and from there it has been passed on to international organizations of political significance. In turn, many critical reports have been written and statements issued condemning the Government of The Gambia for abusing the rights of its people. Consequently, the country has lost aid from one of its main donors. It is logical, though not provable, to extend this conclusion to include the further claim that President Jammeh has made some attempts to change policy to counteract the negative image the world has of him thanks to the diaspora.

Though democracy already exists in The Gambia in the form of a multi-party state system that holds elections every five years, the general assessment is that the incumbent party extensively manipulates these elections. The diaspora clearly places improving the human rights of Gambians above their other key goal, which is to change the government in The Gambia. A change of government is seen by most of those interviewed in the diaspora as a necessary precursor to democratization. This focus on human rights reflects the pragmatic alliance the diaspora have struck with international organisations, which provides them with resources and a platform. This is much more easily done with human rights groups than LGBT groups. Yet, in relation to changing government and governance in The Gambia there is also a sense from the interviews in the diaspora that those who are outside fail to take into consideration the fact that their interventions are not always welcomed by some members of the Gambian population, and not just by those that genuinely support President Jammeh and his government but also by those who regard these interventions as counter-productive in relation to democratization because they antagonize the government.

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<sup>151</sup> <http://us.blastingnews.com/world/2016/04/there-is-more-to-banjul-moscow-relations-than-bilateral-ties-00877219.html>

The mutual dependence between those inside the country and those outside who are trying to lobby for good governance is illustrated by the ability of the former to provide information and stories about political life in The Gambia and the ability of the latter to give those stories air and authority via newspapers, radio stations and new media. However, the Gambian diaspora are faced with many other challenges that limit their ability to influence a democratic political change in The Gambia partly because each group is working individually as opposed to collectively and the lack of cooperation from the Gambian opposition political parties shows them being unwilling to work with each other or with the diaspora as a whole. During the interviews, there was an overwhelming sense from some of the interviewees that they felt the opposition party leaders were more interested in their own self-advancement than improving governance in The Gambia. However, they did not make this explicit and instead suggested that some opposition leaders drew on the diaspora for financial support and not their ideas. For example, one interviewee in the diaspora argued that “the opposition parties run to us when they need money but when it comes to us providing our input and recommendations they say you guys are not here so you don’t understand what is going on in the country” (Interviewee 4, female, 40s, highly educated professional/ activist). Observations from the forum in New York supports this claim as the opposition party leaders failed to answer the question about what they planned to give the diaspora in return for their support.

On the other hand, President Jammeh has labelled the diaspora as ‘troublemakers’ for some time, which was never an issue for his opponents in the diaspora themselves since it added to their public profile. However, the coup attempt of the 30<sup>th</sup> December 2014 has confirmed to many Gambians on the ground that his labelling of the diaspora is accurate. This can be seen in the insults some Gambians post on social media about members of the diaspora who are politically involved. Thus, President Jammeh has successfully tarnished the reputation of some members of the diaspora in The Gambia making it much harder for them to engage openly in political activities and debates.

The Gambian diaspora has been effective in mobilizing virtually but not in direct overt politics because some members do not want their families to know of their involvement in the political struggle, as they still want to maintain their relationship with the people in The Gambia. However, the literature on diaspora in politics (especially in relation to violent conflict) and social movement theory remains useful in understanding *how* and *why* the diaspora intervene in homeland politics. The evidence from the Gambian interviewees generally confirms claims from

elsewhere that the small size of the diaspora and the particular features of the government's authoritarianism mean that fear about public participation in politics in this case study is particularly acute.

The literature also tells us that homeland governments see diaspora interventions as positive when they are limited to nation-building activities, like post-conflict reconstruction (like the Liberian and Eritrean diasporas) and funding development projects (like the Ghanaian, Rwandan and Somali diasporas), but reject diaspora interventions in formal politics. For example, the political interventions of the Gambian diaspora have resulted in the government marginalizing them from participating in national development projects. Part of the literature argues that African states are not entirely committed to engaging their diaspora in homeland affairs because of fears that it would threaten their power (Iheduru 2011). I argued that President Jammeh now views the diaspora as a serious threat since the 30<sup>th</sup> December 2014 attempted coup. But, just as it has been stated in the literature elsewhere, President Jammeh also recognizes that the diaspora has the potential to be significant players in homeland politics (Vertovec 2005, Turner 2013). Thus in order to secure his position as President, he will not risk engaging with those parts of the Gambian diaspora who are already very critical of him. However, this has not prevented the diaspora from finding ways to get involved in politics in The Gambia often via the Internet.

The barriers for the Gambian diaspora to achieve democratic political change in The Gambia go beyond the problems of not having collaboration with each other or cooperation between the opposition political parties. I would argue that the limited civic engagement by the majority of Gambians at 'home' also plays a part in why the diaspora has not been able to influence democratic political change in the country. For example, the fact that voter turnout has decreased in every presidential election means that people are not taking up their civic responsibilities. Understanding why people at 'home' do not use their voting rights but are happy for the diaspora to fight for their rights to be respected and sustain them financially. And understanding why the diaspora continue to fight for people who are not using their votes to support democratic political change and thus making the political interventions of the diaspora more difficult are interesting areas for further research. Arguably, if the diaspora wants to influence democratic political change in The Gambia, they have to find a way to get those on the ground to votes against the current regime the upcoming elections.

There is a particular methodological challenge in terms of drawing conclusions about the political effectiveness of the Gambian political diaspora, as some of the claims made in the interviews were difficult to prove. For example, claims such as the Gambian diaspora being responsible in influencing the EU to withhold aid to The Gambia and the US government removing the country from AGOA. It might well be that the members of the Gambian diaspora played a role, but such events have multiple causes and reflect multiple interests, so it is hard to say with any certainty how important the Gambian diaspora was when these decisions were made by the EU or the USA. Perhaps, ironically, it is more useful to think of the effect these decisions have on the diaspora. The sense that their efforts might have an impact is, according to the interviewees, very energizing. It makes the apparently futile and never-ending task of campaigning for democratization feel worthwhile from a diaspora perspective if they believe they played a key role influencing powerful international organizations.

On the other hand, I also argued in this chapter that much of the information the Gambian diaspora civil society groups shared with these international organizations about President Jammeh and his government is public knowledge, often exposed by President Jammeh himself. For example, he made his feelings towards homosexuals very when he addressed the UN General Assembly. And in response to that statement, the White House issued their own statement condemning the treatment of homosexuals in The Gambia. This makes it challenging for the diaspora to maintain the claim that they are responsible for creating awareness about the government perpetrating the human rights violation when it appears that President Jammeh is doing it himself.

Lastly, the 30<sup>th</sup> December 2014 attempted coup showed clearly that elements in the diaspora are serious about influencing political change in The Gambia even if it meant abandoning the long-standing diaspora commitment to non-violence. However, although the coup plot failed, the diaspora did succeed in bringing more international attention to The Gambia. Therefore, the findings presented in this chapter adds to the wider debate in the existing literature in African diaspora studies by taking a holistic approach to understanding what drives small diaspora groups like the Gambians to get into conflict with their homeland government, where they can succeed, and the barriers that prevent them from having a more significant impact.

## Chapter 8: Relating Politics, Development, and Migration to the Gambian Context

One of the main aims of the thesis was to articulate a better understanding of the relationship between development, politics and international migration in The Gambia. In the previous three chapters, the thesis has sought to draw attention to the politics-development relationship when it is relevant, but here that relationship is brought into the foreground.

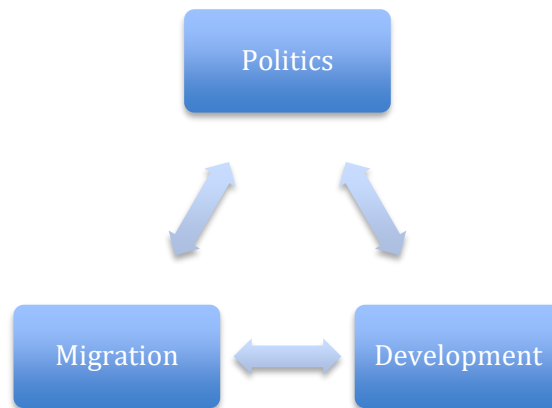
This chapter has two substantive sections after the introduction. The first section discusses the relationship between 'politics and development' in The Gambia. The second section focuses on the connection between 'politics and migration' in the Gambian context. This section describes the 'backway', which is the journey made by young Gambian men and women trying to get to Europe on boats. This migration route has expanded dramatically as The Gambia's political situation became increasingly authoritarian in recent years. This chapter will conclude by trying to tease out which sequence of relationships between the three key terms is more important than the others in the context of The Gambia. Ultimately, it argues for the primacy of politics as the cause of subsequent patterns of migration and development.

### 8.1 Introduction

The causal relationships between development, politics and international migration can be thought about in six general ways: the effect of migration on politics and development, the effect of politics on migration and development and the effect of development on migration and politics (Figure 29). Based on the empirical research a number of more specific ideas stand out within this framework. This chapter considers six of these ideas in particular: (1) performing 'good governance' can attract international development aid; (2) performing 'bad governance' can be a major barrier to the delivery of infrastructure or social welfare projects; (3) oppressive political regimes can drive international migration; (4) international migrants can contribute significantly to political change in their 'home' countries; (5) development can help to increase the profile of politicians; (6) politicians can direct resource allocation at maximizing voter support, and thus create social and geographical development disparities.



Figure 29: 6 way causal relationships between politics, development, and migration



Source: Sainabou Taal

Some of these relationships are more interesting than others within the Gambian context. For example, discussions about ‘politics and development’ and ‘politics and migrations’ allow me to introduce new examples in the debates in this chapter. Whereas throughout the thesis, I have already drawn attention to the reciprocal relationship between ‘migration and development’ therefore, I will only make some brief further remarks on this dimension at this point.

In chapter 5, I discussed how migration leads to development in The Gambia in that diaspora remittances alleviate household poverty and fund village development projects. Remittances contribute roughly 20% to the country’s GDP, as well as bring vast amounts of foreign exchange. But this needs to be set against some of the more negative development effects of emigration. For example, firstly, remittances create patterns of uneven development (some social groups benefit more than others, some geographical areas benefit more than others). Secondly, migration also masks the extent of the Government’s development failure, because as Chami and Fullenkamp (2013) argue, corruption and state failure matters less for households that receive remittances (2). According to Gambian academic Abdoulaye Saine (2009), “*remittances cushion the regime by rerouting or deflecting potential popular protest and frustrations to family members abroad or elsewhere*” (89). What this means is that remittances have diverted people’s attention away from the shortfalls of the government, thus I argued in chapter 6 that remittances reduce the civic engagement of people in The Gambia. Thirdly, the brain drain of skilled professionals from The Gambia (Wadda 2000, Docquier and Marfouk 2006 and Kebbeh 2013) has inhibited the development of the public and private sectors in the country. For example, according to an interviewee who is a former civil servant in The Gambia:

I attribute the development problems in African development to brain drain. Human resources and capacity is the most important asset to development. In Gambia, they have square pegs in round holes problem because of the brain drain in the country. For example, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs is manned by administrators and not people with qualifications in economics. (Interviewee 61 male, 60, economist/former civil servant/highly educated professional)

The current brain drain situation in The Gambia illustrates why parts of the 'migration and development' literature argues that countries need to do more to tap into entrepreneurialism and skills mobilization of diaspora networks (Mullings 2012) as a means to build a more sustainable form of diaspora-led development (Nyamongo et al. 2012). And governments also need to establish policies that target migrant investments, skills, knowledge, and entrepreneurial capabilities (Ratha et al. 2011, Gamlen 2014) and not just remittances. But, of course, the empirical evidence in the Gambian case reminds us that where there is a major breakdown in the relationship between the diaspora and the government such policies are futile. The migration-development couplet then is not the focus of this chapter, which instead sets out to focus on the politics-migration and politics-development relationships.

Indeed this chapter also aims to go beyond thinking about the 'bilateral' relationships between two concepts, to thinking about how all three concepts work together as one chain of causal relationships. For example, an interviewee in the diaspora explained:

We see the links between politics, migration and development manifest itself in the country because it has become difficult for the country to achieve economic development because of the poor political leadership and where there is economic underdevelopment, citizens tend to migrate, denying the country of its human resources. When you talk to the youths they want to leave because of underdevelopment and hopelessness and because the regime has not met the economic aspirations of the people, so migration has become the best option for them (Interviewee 14, male, 50s, professional/activist).

This chapter concludes by arguing that the key pathway through the three elements is that politics in The Gambia causes under-development and it is this underdevelopment that drives international migration, as illustrated by the dramatic

growth of the 'backway' migration in recent years. The logical chain could continue by reflecting on the development consequences of migration (as the fourth term in this argument), but there is more ambiguity at this point since migration has both negative and positive consequences for development in The Gambia as has just been explained. Whilst there are other possible chains of causation using these concepts, the argument developed here is that fundamentally the diaspora story starts with the effects of politics at 'home' and that this argument reflects the views of Gambians at 'home' and overseas.

## **8.2 Politics and Development in The Gambia**

The link between 'development and politics' is often not clear in the development studies literature despite the profound effects political practices have on development pathways. Rather development studies tend to treat politics in the technocratic, dispassionate form of 'good governance'. Conversely, development achievements or failures can profoundly shape the political trajectories of African countries by either securing or undermining the position of governments. The interviews revealed that Gambians tend to define political practice as the activities associated with leadership, democracy and governance in the country, which has also shaped the way African politics is defined in this thesis (Boone 2003, Hydén 2013, Thomas 2010).

The relationship between 'politics and development' in Africa became a key topic of discussion in the late 1960s after many African states gained their independence and the focus shifted towards enhancing development in their countries. More recent contributions to the debates on the relationship between 'politics and development' in the 'third world' have come from Adrian Leftwich (1993, 2006,) who argues that development is inherently a political process, meaning he believes that development is a fundamental part of politics. In their paper '*Politics, leadership and coalitions in development*', Leftwich and Wheeler (2011), assert that despite the role of politics *in* development, it is often ignored in technocratic debates about the institutional and policy environment (4). However, politics matters for all aspects of development, and as such, development is a political process that occurs at all levels in all aspects of society (8).

Other scholars who have also contributed to this debate include Heinz Arndt (2011) who as mentioned in chapter 2, argues that the relationship between 'politics and development' is seen in citizens' assessments of how political leaders manage development in their countries. According to Arndt, political leadership plays a key

role in development because leaders whose focus is on the management of the state (as opposed to focusing on increasing their own authority) are more likely to bring development to their countries. Arndt suggests that political leaders with strong management abilities such as good judgment of people (individuals and groups), who know their strengths and weaknesses, have skills in conflict resolution, the ability to balance interests, form coalitions and know when to be firm and when to compromise (55) are more likely to enhance development in their states. Perhaps, the examples of good political leadership in Africa are the leaders who have won the Mo Ibrahim Laureate for enhancing democracy and economic prosperity in their countries. Winners such as Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique, Pedro Pires of Cape Verde, and Hifikepunye Pohamba of Namibia, though no doubt some of their citizens might not agree with this recognition.

However, Abdulai and Hickey (2014) assert that the relationship between 'politics and development' in Africa manifests in the way politics shapes the actual distribution of state resources. Politics is often materially demonstrated through the distribution of scarce public resources, which according to the literature can be explained using theories of neo-patrimonialism, (Chabal and Daloz 1999, Bayart 2009, Boone 2003, Daloz 2003, Ganahl 2014). The core claim here is that patrons in positions of authority buy the obedience and support of political 'clients' using resources stolen from the state (Van de Walle 2007). Political scientist Harold Lasswell (2012) defines this form of politics as "who gets what, when and how." For example, political leaders who for the most part direct resource allocation at maximizing voter support (as opposed to meeting the basic needs of all citizens), are likely to create deep disparities in the development sphere of a country. These disparities are clearly illustrated in The Gambia. In chapter 6, I discussed how government-funded development is geographically concentrated in areas like Kanilai where they have strong voter support (Wright 2015) but not in areas linked to the political opposition like Wuli West, in the Upper River Region. In 2011 Wuli decided to support the President because they claimed to be 'suffering' from lack of development to which President Jammeh responded, "*the choice is yours. I will reward those who like me and vote for me,*" (Daily Observer<sup>152</sup>, 2011). The situation in Wuli shows how development in The Gambia is often used as a tool to reward supporters and punish opponents (Saine 2009). This supports part of the argument in the literature on distributional politics in Africa that suggests resource allocation decisions are often directed at securing existing voter support (Amutabi and Nasong'o 2013, and Hydén 2013) rather than being based on national interests.

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<sup>152</sup> [www.archive.observer.gm/africa/gambia/.../wuli-west-we-regret-ever-being-in-the-opposition-...](http://www.archive.observer.gm/africa/gambia/.../wuli-west-we-regret-ever-being-in-the-opposition-...)

However, one of the limitations of this thesis was the lack of quantitative data to show how politics influences the geographical pattern of government investments in The Gambia. This would have allowed for a comparison between the infrastructural development of opposition and government-leaning districts. Nevertheless, the qualitative empirical evidence has revealed that the interviewees believe this form of political practice is occurring and subsequently affecting the overall development of the country creating development disparities.

Historically, modernization theorists such as Walt Rostow (1990) and Samuel Huntington (1971) have argued that politics is, in fact, a result of development, meaning they believe a state has to achieve a certain level of economic growth and development in order to then have a strong democratic political system. Therefore, development has priority over politics. In contrast, contemporary scholars like Leftwich and Wheeler (2011), Arndt (2011), and Abdulai and Hickey (2014) argue that a state has to have a strong political system first before they can achieve development and economic growth. History is rarely so tidy in its separation of the political and the economic (as most of these authors themselves acknowledged). However, it can be argued that both points of view reflect the agendas of a certain period. For example, during the modernization period, development was about primarily achieving economic growth as a means of ensuring democracy but tolerating more authoritarian regimes to get there. This tolerance of African dictators often also suited the global geopolitical interests of the Cold War when superpowers turned a blind eye to their clients' political abuses of African citizens. In contemporary society, however, development is, in theory, seen as contingent on maintaining political stability and improving democratic rights, which are viewed as vehicles for further development and economic growth under the language of 'good governance'. Even so, some authoritarian and undemocratic rulers are still tolerated because their countries are seen as African development success stories (Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Uganda). However, what is more, important to understand is how these relationships manifest themselves in the individual country context.

Based on the interviews, 75% of the interviewees in the diaspora argued that 'bad political leadership', and 'bad governance' is directly inhibiting development in The Gambia. As discussed in the introduction chapter, politics is about the socially constructed rules by which a group of people live (Heywood 2013), it is also about dialogue and arguing about what these rules should be *in public*, which is seen as central to politics in some contexts. Politics is a social and public activity. However, the interviewees said this was not the case in the Gambian context, rather the practice of politics is limited to President Jammeh and his small group of loyalists.

This they said leaves room for the government to engage in corruption, without any accountability. Incidents such as the 'oil saga I' and 'oil saga II' which involved the Nigerian Government giving the Gambian government a significant amount of crude oil and money that has not been accounted for (Saine 2009, Perfect 2016) and an unaccounted for \$35 million loan from Taiwan (Saine 2009), are evidence of Gambian government corruption according to these authors.

Without *public* participation and debate of the current rules, the diaspora argued that the political choices made by President Jammeh are having a negative impact on development. Amartya Sen (2001) argues in his book '*Development as Freedom*', that human development includes certain freedoms such as political participation (17). In addition, those political scientists who are also interested in development have always seen meaningful, effective and widespread participation in politics as a key development indicator (Huntington and Nelson 1976, Leftwich 1993). Political participation is defined as "*all voluntary activities by individual citizens intended to influence either directly or indirectly political choices at various levels of the political system*" (Kaase and Marsh 1979 cited by Grasso 2016: 13). In essence, political participation is about citizens taking part in the conduct of public affairs (UN 2005), which is perhaps the most important element for Gambians. Thus, it may be the case that the liberalization of the rule-making process is 'development', for the people at 'home' and in the diaspora and what they would define as 'good political leadership'.

However, the interviewees create the impression that they believed the actual existing process of making political choices in The Gambia is unilateral. Development is what the government think it should be, and not what the people in The Gambia need it to be. For instance steady universal electricity supply, constant running water and a good drainage system to avoid flooding during the rain seasons. This was brought up in discussions of representation in Gambian politics. Political representation within modern studies of political science is loosely defined as having decision-making government institutions that reflect the wants, needs, and demands of the whole public in *proportion* to different interests *within* that public (Schmitt and Thomassen 1999). Thus, typically around the world, there is under-representation of women within political bodies in relation to the proportion of the population. The definition of political representation emerged from historical scholars such as Thomas Hobbes (1651), who argued in his book '*Leviathan*' that the represented transfers power to a representative and thus have a very little political role because they have given consent to whatever is done in their name. Meaning that the representative has the absolute power and authority to do what

they think is in the best interest of the represented. However, representation in the current democratic era means people do not simply authorize the representative to speak on their behalf but they have the right to participate in political process even after they have elected their representative (Knight 2010). Therefore, as an ideal practice, political participation and representation should co-exist, even though in reality this is much more difficult to achieve. For example, in chapter 7, the ruling APRC party has 43 out of the 44 seats in National Assembly (of whom under 10% are women), and though the people elected them, it can be argued that the government appears selective in which elements of model democratic political practice it chooses to adopt. For instance, they encourage public participation in elections but not in policymaking. Thus, it seems representation in Gambian politics has not evolved with the times. Perhaps because the government wants to appear democratic to achieve legitimacy and to obtain aid from western democracies, but in reality engages in autocratic practices in an attempt to remain in power. In this case, acceptance of the validity of existing forms of political representation can be viewed as an obstacle for those in the diaspora who want to achieve democratic political change.

The interviewees listed three recent political choices made by President Jammeh and implemented without public debate, which they said affected development in The Gambia (in terms of *the expansion of human capacities and quality of life* (Sen 2001; 144). First, in 2014 the *Vision 2016* development policy<sup>153</sup> was introduced, which aimed to ban imported rice into the country (a staple food in the country) in a bid to make The Gambia 'rice self-sufficient' by 2016. The second political choice was declaring the country an Islamic State in 2015, which interviewees believe has discouraged western donors. And third, was increasing ferry tariffs for Senegalese transporters, which led to Senegal closing its borders to The Gambia for several months in 2016 severely affecting imports and exports of goods. In addition, in 2013, President Jammeh made the unilateral decision to withdraw the country from the Commonwealth, which is believed to have had an impact on development aid in the country. However, due to limitations of space, this section will focus on the three more recent events listed above.

In his statement at the US-Africa Leaders Summit in Washington in August 2014, President Jammeh announced, "*we have recently launched Vision 2016 initiative for food self-sufficiency, especially in rice production. The goal is that by the year 2016 all the rice consumed in the Gambia would have been locally produced*" (2). Although this plan may sound impressive to the international audience as well as

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<sup>153</sup> <http://statehouse.gov.gm/visions/vision-2016/>

create a good impression amongst his supporters, some interviewees argued that President Jammeh made this declaration to maintain a narrative of perpetual development and create a sense of an on-going national project rather than because such a goal is feasible, or even desirable. Development is being used here to increase the political reputation of President Jammeh. However, according to an agricultural expert in The Gambia, the reality is the country is nowhere near being self-sufficient in rice production because the government does not have the pre-requisites in place to achieve the aims of Vision 2016. The interviewee explained that:

Vision 2016 in my view should have been a project like its preceding rice development project such as the Jahally-Patcharr, with components clearly defined and well arranged and described to attain the desired goal of self-sufficiency in rice. The questions that should have been asked are; how much rice do we need? The total rice import is at 160,000 to 175,000 tons annually. Is this rice consumed totally by Gambians? No. Some are re-exported. Total rice production is 60,000 tons, paddy or un-milled. After milling, you may be lucky to recover 60% as milled or cleaned rice, or 36,000 tons. With this in mind, I would have looked into the total cultivated land area available in the entire country for rice productions, in order to meet our needs. It is imperative to have at least 80,000 hectares or say 100,000 hectares suitable for rice cultivations, with suitable soil and adequate water, rainfall and irrigation. Adequate rice seeds, improved soil fertility, fertilizers to increase rice yield, combined harvesters, and not using hand sickles or cutlasses. Therefore, Vision 2016 was just a hollow dream, even up to 2026 is not going to be possible because the requisites for rice self-sufficiency are not in place (Interviewee 47, male, 60s, retired civil servant/agriculture expert)

However, knowing that the necessary prerequisites are not in place for this plan to succeed. What are the political effects of Vision 2016? Certainly, the main one is that it boosts President Jammeh's popularity amongst Gambians whether it succeeds or not. The mere fact that Jammeh came up with this initiative shows him thinking about what would make the people happy, in this case, the possibility of reducing the cost of rice. Though by banning imports he may well actually increase the cost of rice. The second effect is that this project was great leverage to gather support for the presidential elections. The fact that the government has injected a small quantity of money into rice farming, creating jobs and revenue for farmers and is promising much more money in the future will help him draw votes



from the farming community, even though the scheme has not delivered the results it promised.

Migration also plays a role in the Vision 2016 plans. On the one hand, the large-scale migration of Gambians could have implications on this plan because it means a shortage of labour to work on these farms. On the other hand, those in the diaspora that are interested in development, see this plan as an opportunity to invest in small-scale rice farming or help find investors that can invest in this projects. This would ultimately increase the chances of achieving rice self-sufficiency and perhaps reduce dependency on other countries (as imported goods should logically be more expensive than local products). It might also allow the diaspora to reduce the amount they remit to households for food consumption. As it stands buying a bag of rice (costing between 1,300 (£24) and 1,600 (£29) dalasi) is one of the more expensive foods to purchase. However, part of the political diaspora's project is about revealing the government's motivations for their political activities so vision 2016 was always treated with scepticism by most in the diaspora, including most interviewees.

At a political rally on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2015, President Jammeh declared that The Gambia is now an Islamic State<sup>154</sup>, despite the country's constitution clearly stating that The Gambia is a "*Sovereign Secular Republic*" (1997; 20). This clearly raised suspicion amongst some members of the Gambian population as well as insecurity amongst the Gambian Christian communities. For example, on February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2016, The Knight of Saint Peter and Paul, a Catholic group in The Gambia, wrote a letter to President Jammeh, in which they stated:

The declaration of The Gambia as an Islamic State is naturally not a welcome development within the Christian faith. In a society so integrated like the Gambia, the move, unfortunately, places emphasis on what makes us different, with a potential to tear us grievously apart, rather than what binds us together ... Governments can give even their most sincere assurances and efforts, but then somehow, over-zealous religious adherents may feel that government has not gone far enough in entrenching their faith and then take the law into their own hands... Our fear is not of our Muslim brothers and sisters, with whom Christians have amicably lived, worked, inter-married, and socialised since living memory. It is the fear of the alien fringe elements, even from outside the country,

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<sup>154</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-35359593>

who will consider this declaration as a window of opportunity to propagate intolerance<sup>155</sup>

This statement shows there are genuine concerns within the Gambian Christian communities that the country could become exposed to Islamic fanaticism. However, according to Western media, this declaration combined with Jammeh's anti-West sentiments particularly against the British and US governments has left the country even more isolated<sup>156</sup> and thus affected levels of development aid. But, there is no evidence that Western countries have cut or frozen aid due to this declaration, rather Russia has recently signed an agreement of military cooperation with the Government of The Gambia<sup>157</sup> to provide military support and training, despite the EU and UK withholding aid. Nevertheless, some Western media insist that declaring the country an Islamic State is a strategy to appeal to Arab Gulf states that also harbour anti-Western sentiments and to attract aid from countries like Kuwait and Bahrain<sup>158</sup>. In which case appealing to the Arab Gulf states is a pragmatic solution to find aid for the development of the country in the context of the loss of aid from major historic donors. According to an article published in the *Huffington Post*, The Gambia has secured "development assistance from high GDP, conservative Muslim countries with foreign policies less dominated by traditional Western human rights concerns, including Qatar and the UAE. These have included 11 loans totaling \$91.1 million from the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development" (DeFreese 2016). So, it can be argued that this was a clever geopolitical strategy, which has worked.

The political effect of declaring the country an Islamic State is difficult to determine, because though it may boost President Jammeh's popularity amongst the Muslim religious clerics, it has not received any 'real' reaction from people in the country. In fact, the empirical evidence revealed that it was the diaspora and political opposition parties who mostly spoke out against it, by posting videos on social media, writing articles and starting the campaign "not in my name – Gambia is not an Islamic State" on Facebook<sup>159</sup>. But there have not been any public outcries from the Christian communities in the country. However, this could be because of a number of reasons such as the fear of state-sanctioned violence, or the one million dalasi (£18,740) Christmas gift the Christian community received from Jammeh on

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<sup>155</sup> <http://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/our-view-on-the-declaration-of-the-gambia-as-an-islamic-state>

<sup>156</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-35359593>

<sup>157</sup> <http://observer.gm/russia-gambia-sign-agreement-on-military-cooperation/>

<sup>158</sup> <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21685736-how-tiny-west-african-tourist-trap-turning-itself-islamic>

<sup>159</sup> <https://jollofnews.com/2015/12/13/gambians-react-to-jammeh-s-declaration-of-an-islamic-state/>  
<http://gainako.com/dc-gambian-christian-organization-cries-foul-over-islamic-state-declaration/>

the 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2015,<sup>160</sup> or this community not taking the declaration seriously because Jammeh told Gambians to emulate Jesus Christ who, preaches and values peace<sup>161</sup> in his Christmas message in December 2015 Jammeh. Thus, for the general Gambian population, in particular, the Christians, this declaration is another one of Jammeh's erratic episodes to be ignored.

I argue that this declaration has had no impact on development in The Gambia, and perhaps its purpose was to divert attention away from the failing economy<sup>162</sup>. This declaration has also had no impact on politics in The Gambia. However, at an international level, it has exposed Gambian government to more criticism because the worry is that it opens the door for Islamic extremists in the sub-region.

Lastly, the dispute between the Government of The Gambia and the Senegalese Transport Union in February 2016 resulted in the border closure for several months. The government's decision to increase the ferry tariff <sup>163</sup> for all Senegalese registered trucks entering the country triggered a dispute that affected the economy and food security. The majority of food products consumed in the country come from or via Senegal, which also acts as a key element of The Gambia's export route to other African countries. According to a speech by the leader of the PPP opposition party, *"the move to increase the ferry tariff to almost one hundred percent was economic suicide."*<sup>164</sup> The border closure caused the inflation of food prices, food shortages, more frequent and longer lasting electricity outages, as well as loss of revenue from the export trade. According to an informant in The Gambia at the time, *"This border closure is starting to affect us. Nawec (national electricity company) is off today. Most of the spare parts and supplies come from Senegal. It will be a chain effect...Watch."* This informant explained that the electricity outage was due to one of the generators at the national electricity company (NAWEC) being faulty and the government not being able to repair it because the parts come from Senegal. In actuality, the parts could have been flown in, however, the point here is that this dispute illustrates how a political decision to increase the ferry tariff, affected the everyday lives of the people as well as inhibited the economy, thereby halting 'development'.

Part of the definition of politics in this thesis is that in theory, it is about conflict-resolution (Nicholson 2004, Crick 2013) in the context of scarce resources and

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<sup>160</sup> <http://observer.gm/president-jammeh-gives-d1m-christmas-gift-to-christians/>

<sup>161</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9b9zYsnOeU>

<sup>162</sup> <http://africanarguments.org/2016/01/28/why-does-jammeh-want-to-make-the-gambia-an-islamic-republic/>

<sup>163</sup> CFA 1000, which is roughly GMD 26,000.00, an equivalent to approximately £433<sup>163</sup>, (Forayaa Newspaper, 26/02/2016)

<sup>164</sup> <http://www.freedomnewspaper.com/gambia-leading-gambian-politician-blames-jammeh-gambiasenegal-border-closure/>

different people wanting different things. But what if instead of resolving conflict politics starts it? In which case does this dispute show the Gambian government abusing its power, by manipulating government institutions in the interests of the politically powerful? (Squires, 1999) Or could another interpretation be that perhaps the government is trying to increase revenue to develop the Gambian transportation sector by increasing the ferry tariff. For example, by improving the transport sector the country cater adequately for trans-shipment of goods to other countries in the sub-region (both coastal and land-locked), which is a key long-term development objective in the Government's Vision 2020 development blueprint<sup>165</sup>. The point being made here is that there is more than one way to view the role of politics in development in The Gambia even though some members of the Gambian diaspora tend to focus on it being negative presumably to justify their own interventions. Even so, the broad point emerging from all three of these examples is that President Jammeh made them arbitrarily in his own interest without meaningful input from elected representatives and certainly without the consultation or participation of the wider Gambian public.

The decision to increase the ferry tariffs had political effects in that it affected President Jammeh's popularity in The Gambia and gave the opposition political parties leverage to use against him during the upcoming presidential elections. The reason being that most Gambians and Senegalese value the relationship between the two countries, which use to be one country until it was divided by artificial borders created by British and French colonizers. Even now, people in both countries are often inter-related, and they enjoy free movement between the two countries, visiting relatives and engaging in small business ventures. Additionally, the geopolitical position of The Gambia (surrounded on all its landward sides by Senegal) means that the country needs Senegal for more than just its economic survival. Its security and protection also depends on Senegal, because it can be argued that the small size of the country makes it vulnerable to external threats. Thus having neighbours like Senegal to lend additional military support in threatening situations is vital for the country. On the other hand, Senegal also cannot afford for The Gambia's national security to be threatened by external forces because it would affect them. Therefore, demonstrating the importance of this interdependent (if asymmetric) relationship and undermining has subsequently been a politically unpopular decision in The Gambia.

To change the optic away from politics as the primary causal mechanism for a moment, it is next worth considering the role development plays in causing political

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<sup>165</sup> <http://statehouse.gov.gm/vision-2020-part-1-long-term-objectives/>

effects in The Gambia. As I have argued throughout the thesis, development is integral to ensuring President Jammeh's popularity at 'home'. However, according to some interviewees, President Jammeh uses development funds meant for the country to increase his personal wealth,<sup>166</sup> retain power and continue to abuse the rights of people. It is difficult to substantiate some of these claims, and certainly, President Jammeh would never admit to these allegations. However, the empirical research has uncovered some activities, which perhaps could be interpreted in ways that would support this view. For example, the lack of transparency of how development funds are spent has led many in the diaspora to believe that President Jammeh is stealing money meant for the country. In June 2015, the diaspora newspaper Kibaaro reported:

On January 17th 2012, Jammeh wrote to Trust bank ordering it to pay a sum of \$2, million from Gambia's coffers, to his dollar account, which was meant for his Jammeh Foundation for Peace. The check number 2664 was initially from the Embassy of the Republic of China (or Taiwan) and was signed by Sand Chen donated to the people of the Gambia, but President Jammeh diverted that same cheque to his dollar account with HSBC<sup>167</sup> (Darboe, 2015)

Photographs of the cheque and a letter from President Jammeh instructing the diversion of funds with his signature accompanied this very detailed report. Such actions have caused members of the Gambian diaspora to reject the political choices President Jammeh makes unilaterally and in *private*. The fact that he has openly made statements like "*his great-great grandchildren will never know what poverty is*" (Saine 2009; 157), has made people question how he can guarantee this on a salary of \$20,000 per annum if he is not stealing from the country (Saine 2009).

In addition, some interviewees argued that development funds allow Jammeh to remain in power. This is because they see Jammeh being celebrated by those at 'home' for development successes that have been funded by development aid and not out of Jammeh's own pockets as the government have led Gambians to believe<sup>168</sup>. On the other hand, organizations such as the IMF have prevented the country from reaching economic turmoil because it has not been able to meet its financial obligations. On 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2015, the IMF approved emergency financial

<sup>166</sup> <https://jollofnews.com/2015/03/06/gambia-will-never-develop-or-progress-under-yaya-jammeh-presidency/>

<sup>167</sup> <http://kibaaro.com/2015/06/26/breaking-news-president-yahya-jammehs-crazy-corruption-exposed/>

<sup>168</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/08/2012817922920726.html> Jammeh celebrated for development when it was aid -

assistance under the Rapid Credit Facility (RCF) of \$10.8 million<sup>169</sup>. However, the diaspora created an online petition against the bailout because they claimed, “*Gambians do not want a bailout that would strengthen Yahya Jammeh’s dictatorship and misrule*<sup>170</sup>.” But according to the IMF, this bailout was in response economic slippages because of a decline in tourism (which is the country’s principle foreign currency earner) due to the Ebola outbreak<sup>171</sup>. When this situation occurred, critics in the diaspora tried to make linkages between economic stability and politics and drew to the conclusion that financial mismanagement and government corruption has put the country’s economy in this dire position. However, supporters of the regime saw the acceptance of the bailout as Jammeh taking steps to prevent the people from suffering the outcomes of external causes. Therefore there were no complaints from people at ‘home’ (outside of the opposition parties) about the lack of a public debate before the government chose to take a bailout that increases the country’s foreign debt. Again, this shows the divergent interpretation of political practices in The Gambia by those outside and inside the country.

However, the main political impact of development in The Gambia is that development money is used in political ways, but under the disguise of development, which is presented as outside politics. For example, it can be argued that building roads, creating a national television and radio service and even establishing the University of The Gambia are all ‘development activities’ that can also be used to police the country by ensuring tighter controls over the people. For example, roads provide means for the army and national security forces to travel around the country policing people. The heavy censorship of the Gambian Radio and Television Station (GRTS) creates biased national news. And the university is not an autonomous academic institution because President Jammeh is the Chancellor. According to an informant who is a graduate of the university, in 2010 they were told the university was going to cancel their degree programme in ‘political science’ because President Jammeh said it would breed politicians. This last claim cannot be proven, however, the erratic behaviours of President Jammeh make it easy to believe that the university is being used to try to produce certain kinds of graduates with particular values and views that favour the government.

A paradox in The Gambia is that development aid allows Jammeh to continue abusing the rights of Gambians. Improving the protection of human rights was a

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<sup>169</sup> <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pr/2015/pr15155.htm>

<sup>170</sup> <http://gainako.com/gambians-petition-imf-against-bailing-out-jammehs-fiscally-irresponsible-government/>

<sup>171</sup> <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2015/cr15272.pdf>

key condition placed on the government before they could receive international aid. However, it took a long time for donors to recognize that the country has failed to meet this condition and it was only after many years of such political abuses that donors agreed to cancel aid. However, other donors such as Libya, China, Iran, and Saudi Arabia that have poor human rights records still continued to provide financial support in the form of aid and loans to the regime. This continued aid flow was used to boost Jammeh's popularity, which is based on his perceived 'development' contributions to the country. Therefore, having money available to spend on development projects here and there allows him and his supporters to further justify his leadership even when he is violating their human rights. This is interesting because it raises the question of what needs to come first, economic development or political development in The Gambia. Interviews suggest that people at 'home' are more interested in the economic development side of the equation than the political as such they will tolerate oppression from the regime in exchange for economic development (displayed by their lack of civic engagement). In which case, is politics a development process in The Gambia? Or is it the case that poor people in The Gambia are more worried about next meal than their political freedom. And therefore, they would rather sacrifice their civic rights in order to subsist (even if they would prefer not to live under an autocratic regime)? This means that people at 'home' will also accept a loss of political rights if it means possibly paying less for rice and having a hospital or school in their village rather than having to travel to the city for medical treatment or education. And perhaps the diaspora is not able to understand this because they live in societies where they do not have to choose between politics and economic development. The question is, where does that leave the political diaspora and should their intervention be focussed on politics or development?

Lastly, international politics has a great impact on development in The Gambia. Its human rights issues have lost the country several of its major donors such as the EU, who in 2015 withheld 33 million euros of development aid<sup>172</sup>. The rift between the country and the EU was further expanded when President Jammeh expelled Agnes Guillaud, the EU *charge d'affaires* from the country. This has had a profound effect on development at all levels because the EU funded projects in infrastructural development, climate change mitigation, and justice reform. The Gambian example supports the claims that development is closely tied to effective diplomatic skills and international politics (Staudt 1991, Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2006). However, the diversion of aid to buy votes has made donors become increasingly wary. For example, according to an informant who was an aviation

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<sup>172</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-gambia-eu-aid-idUSKBN0OX2HZ20150617>

expert in The Gambia, President Jammeh used one million dollars donated to the country for the Free Girls Education Initiative, to purchase a second-hand aircraft called Ilyushin IL-62 to be the Presidential Jet in 2005.

Therefore, what is 'political' and what is 'developmental' cannot be easily separated in The Gambia. This relationship has a greater impact at the grassroots, where people are more reliant on state-funded institutions. Thus, the development intentions of government should always be open for discussion even if critics see them as self-interested. And despite the Gambian government being able to convince people at 'home' that their political choices are resulting in development for the country as a whole. However, a general overview of this relationship tells us that politics in The Gambia is an 'anti-development machine' (to invert James Ferguson's formula), as formal politics is often a barrier to active development in the country.

### **8.3 Politics and Migration in The Gambia**

According to the literature, the relationship between 'politics and migration' is most visible when political violence and a deteriorating economic condition causes people to leave a country (Schmid 2016). The migration of Gambians in recent years has been driven by political repression, fear of persecution and economic deterioration (Kebbe 2013). But regional instability and conflicts have also pulled other West African nationalities into The Gambia.

As mentioned in chapter 6, according to Dick Ranga's (2015) the political violence in Zimbabwe has significantly contributed to the emigration of teachers to South Africa. However, there have been shifts in the debate whereby some scholars are arguing that a bad political environment can no longer drive migration because the current global refugee crisis has led some countries to be less welcoming of migrants. Thus, Africans are choosing to remain in their 'home' countries because there are no hospitable spaces for them elsewhere (Herbst 2014).

Certainly, Herbst's argument seems plausible because the immigration of EU citizens to Britain played a part major in driving a significant proportion of the British public to vote 'Leave' in the EU referendum (Brexit) recently. However, it is improbable that the lack of hospitable space has deterred all Africans from emigrating as the empirical evidence suggests that many young Gambians from taking the 'backway' to reach Europe and risking their lives at sea or in the Libyan desert. In 2015, 5,500 Gambians made it to Italy via the 'backway' according to



data from the Italian Ministry of Interior (Hunt 2015). This figure is not disaggregated by gender, nevertheless, an article written by the Washington Post in June 2015, entitled '*Africa exodus. Tiny Gambia has a big export; Migrants desperate to reach Europe*', features a story of a 38-year-old Gambian man named Susso, who was determined to leave the country, via the 'backway' despite one of his cousins being left to die in the Libyan desert by his smugglers and another cousin drowning at sea<sup>173</sup>. This supports the central finding from research in the region that migrants are defiant and determined in the face of dangerous journeys (Carling and Talleraas 2016).

Susso's explanation for considering the 'backway' to Europe was not directly linked to politics, as he claimed to be motivated by his desire to earn enough to support his family. However, politics plays a part in that the lack of employment opportunities and economic prosperity in the country drives men like Susso to take the 'backway'. This counters the argument made by analyst Hein de Haas (2011) in an article on his *blog spot* entitled '*Development leads to more migration*'<sup>174</sup>. In which De Haas claims "*development increases people's capacities and aspirations to migrate*", in the sense that development allows people to get the money they need, visa and qualifications to migrate. But on the other hand, it should also be acknowledged that the desire of many young Gambians to live in the 'West' drives them to immigrate to Europe on boats (Janson 2014). For example, to many young Gambians, the West represents economic prosperity, success, happiness and a chance at a better life. It is these ideas that young Gambians use to assign meaning to the 'backway' migration. A young male informant in The Gambia narrated to me that his friend made it safely to Europe via the 'backway' and soon he will try his luck and once he reaches Europe he will work to send money 'home' and buy his dad a car. Thus, I argue that the idea of what can be achieved living in the West also contributes to what drives young Gambians to go the 'backway'. It is not only a sense of frustration with the political situation in The Gambia.

The findings revealed that approximately 40% of the interviewees (including both those in the diaspora and in The Gambia) link the recent 'backway' migration to the political conditions in the country. According to a female interviewee in The Gambia:

The backway is the biggest business in the Gambia. "Government is eating the youths" - that is the new saying in Gambia. The youth here are

<sup>173</sup> [http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/world/2015/06/14/tiny-gambia-has-a-big-export-migrants-desperate-to-reach-europe/?wprss=rss\\_world](http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/world/2015/06/14/tiny-gambia-has-a-big-export-migrants-desperate-to-reach-europe/?wprss=rss_world)

<sup>174</sup> <http://heindehaas.blogspot.co.uk/2011/05/development-leads-to-more-migration.html>

so demotivated. There are no opportunities at all for them. That's why they are getting on boats. I heard that 1,400 Gambians land from boats every month in Italy. That's not to mention the ones that die on the way. The population between the ages 18-35 is slowly becoming extinct. The beaches are even empty. Here, everyone I ask for, they tell me 'dem na backway' (gone the backway) (Interviewee 72, female, 30s, highly educated/ skilled professional)

This statement shows that there is concern amongst Gambians about the 'backway' problem. Though there are clearly some exaggerations in this statement. However, the expressions are meant to demonstrate the magnitude of the problem rather than being literal. The international media has also set out to make connections between the rise of 'backway' migration and the political conditions in The Gambia. The BBC News, Washington Post, Guardian, Economist, and Telegraph have featured stories on how the political repression, human rights violations, and poverty are driving young Gambians to emigrate. However, as there have been no in-depth systematic peer-reviewed studies that explore why young Gambian men are emigrating, it is difficult to know definitively the extent to which politics plays a role in driving this form of migration in The Gambia.

Yet, the Gambian political opposition parties and critics of the government have accused President Jammeh of not doing enough to prevent young Gambians from going the 'backway'. Partly, because President Jammeh has shown a lack of sensitivity to this 'crisis.' According to reports from opposition sources, in June 2015 President Jammeh was quoted at a meeting in Sukuta saying "May your souls rest in peace in the Mediterranean Sea, in advance<sup>175</sup>" and again in Ebo Town, where he said "I heard that many of your sons died on the 'backway' to Europe, I also know for a fact that many of them in this meeting are planning to embark on the journey. May they all die at sea<sup>176</sup>". In other words, immigration is perceived as an act of treachery or national betrayal.

There is a gender element to 'backway' migration, which is often ignored in the media. The fact that young Gambian women are also taking the 'backway' to Europe and dying on the way <sup>177</sup> is not reported as much as the men. However, the

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<sup>175</sup> <http://kibaaro.com/2015/06/23/breaking-news-evil-yahya-jammeh-openly-wished-all-gambian-youths-aiming-to-take-the-back-way-to-die-at-sea/>  
[http://sidisanneh.blogspot.co.uk/2015\\_11\\_01\\_archive.html](http://sidisanneh.blogspot.co.uk/2015_11_01_archive.html)

<sup>176</sup> <http://www.faturadio.com/index.php/en/talk-shows/item/684-dictator-yahya-jammeh-prays-for-gambian-youths-to-die-in-the-mediterranean-sea> .

<sup>177</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/03/gambian-goalkeeper-who-died-in-mediterranean-wanted-to-play-for-major-club>

general impression given in reports about the women going the 'backway' is that they are isolated cases. Perhaps because there is no disaggregated data available to know how many Gambian women take this migratory path or arguably, the belief is that only the men are brave enough to make this dangerous journey.

The most obvious impact of migration on politics in The Gambia is that government find it difficult to implement development projects because of the shortage of labour and in particular of skilled professionals and artisans. However, the empirical research suggested that some critics of the government felt the migration of young Gambians is beneficial for the regime. According to a blog article by a member of the Gambian diaspora, President Jammeh is benefitting politically from the 'backway' migration of youths because they are a potential source of political opposition<sup>178</sup>. This is in line with existing research, which argues that youth bulges could be a source of political instability and violence (Urdal 2011, Azeng and Yogo 2013). However, Gambian youths have not engaged in any civil disobedience, apart from the April 2000 student protests. This suggests that having a youthful population may not be a particular threat to the government. Furthermore, the same blog article suggested that President Jammeh is personally engaged in human trafficking. They base this claim on the *US State Department Human Rights Report on The Gambia*.<sup>179</sup> Part of the report did discuss issues of trafficking-in-persons in The Gambia, but it did not link it to President Jammeh.

According to a report by Human Rights Watch "*in 2014, the number of Gambians seeking asylum in European Union member states almost quadrupled since 2013*" (2015, 15), which suggests that political repression and fear of state-sanctioned violence has reached a critical threshold and plays a key part in Gambians fleeing the country. However, the Government of The Gambia has tried to address the immigration issue of young Gambians in previous years when they introduced the 'back to the land' initiative to encourage the youths into farming in order to have gainful employment. But this initiative does not offer incentives such as land for people to establish their own farms, instead, Gambians are called upon to work on President Jammeh's farms. It is understandable, if this is true, why some interviewees believe that politics is all about the President and his circle. According to one in the diaspora, "Gambia is owned by one man, and he has a group of unqualified and uneducated lawmakers in parliament that always support President Jammeh" (Interviewee 12, male, 50s-60s, highly educated/ activist). I got the impression that this interviewee came to this conclusion because there is

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<sup>178</sup> 'How Jammeh continues to benefit politically and financially from the human migration' <http://sidisanneh.blogspot.co.uk/2015/11/how-jammeh-continue-to-benefit.html>

<sup>179</sup> <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/252897.pdf>

sufficient evidence in The Gambia, to suggest that Jammeh does not only dominate the political space in the country, but also every aspect of Gambian society. His presence is felt everywhere in the country as his pictures are plastered in hospitals, public, and private institutions, billboards and streetlights. Thus, it is comprehensible that some Gambians have a very negative perception of politics in The Gambia.

The photograph below was taken in October 2014 and on this day I counted over 5 similar size posters and 30 small posters of President Jammeh along Kairaba Avenue, which is approximately one mile long.

Figure 30: A poster of President Jammeh and APRC flag affixed to a lamppost



Source: Sainabou Taal

#### 8.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that politics in The Gambia causes underdevelopment and it is this underdevelopment that drives international migration as is illustrated by the dramatic growth of the 'backway' migration in recent years. This is the key

relationship between politics, migration and development in The Gambia. The findings revealed that a significant proportion of interviewees believed that 'politics and development' go hand-in-hand in the Gambian context. They expressed the view that politics inhibits development and causes the emigration of Gambians, which in turn has a significant impact on development in the country for either good (via remittances) or ill (via the brain drain). For example, political choices such as implementing the Vision 2016 plan, which according to an agricultural expert in The Gambia did not have the prerequisites to succeed were believed to have a negative impact on development. On the other hand, the findings also revealed that development boosts the public profile of President Jammeh and his government, as well as allows him to remain in power and increase his personal wealth. The general overview of the relationship between 'politics and development' in The Gambia is that politics in The Gambia is an 'anti-development machine', as political practices are a barrier to active development in the country.

The empirical research on the relationship between 'politics and migration' in The Gambia revealed that some links can be drawn between the political repression that exists in the country and the migration of Gambian people (particularly journalist and political opponents). For example, there has been a significant increase of Gambians fleeing political persecution and seeking asylum in EU countries in recent years, according to Eurostat figures. In addition, the lack of opportunities for young Gambians has also played a part in driving them to go the 'backway', as well as their desire to be in 'West' where they believe they will find economic prosperity, success and a chance of a better life, which they think is unattainable in The Gambia.

Within these relationships, the Gambian diaspora plays a significant role, particularly where development shortfalls affect individual lives. However, the diaspora could play a bigger role by investing and helping some of the development plans to succeed such as the Vision 2016 or Vision 2020. This would ultimately benefit the people they support at 'home'. However, throughout the thesis particularly in chapters 6 and 7, I presented different reasons for *why* the Gambian diaspora will not invest in national development projects. But the main reasons being the fraught relationship and lack of trust between some members of the Gambian diaspora and the Government of The Gambia. Subsequently, the diaspora has been marginalized from national development and the diaspora will not make investments in the country outside the family level. However, when the government tried to open dialogue with the diaspora they were met with resistance because some members of the Gambian diaspora strongly dislike and disapprove

for President Jammeh and his leadership. This messy relationship is arguably why 'politics and development' do not go beyond the national scale and leaves little room for international interventions from the diaspora. What I mean by this is that 'politics and development' are controlled by the state and there is no avenue for interference from outside the country. Thus, the constant push for the state to respect and protect the rights of Gambians by international elements of the population has resulted in President Jammeh isolating the country and taking his frustrations out on his opponents. Not being able to influence political change in The Gambia is a major problem for the diaspora because they have families at 'home' that are relying on them for their survival due what they believe are poor political choices made by President Jammeh in particular.

Nevertheless, the challenge in trying to develop a relationship between development, politics and migration in The Gambia is that the majority of Gambian people have the same perspective of these relationships. That is one man; President Jammeh is to blame for the problems of The Gambia. Thus, even when I tried to introduce nuance to the discussions such as looking at the effects of colonialism on development and politics in the country, the interviewees always found a way to bring it back to the actions of President Jammeh. I am certain this is because he has entrenched himself in Gambian society and the lives of people at 'home'. But frustrating because any attempts to engage in more interesting discussions reverted back to President Jammeh.

Finally, the empirical research suggests that the sequence of priority for many in the diaspora is first politics, then development. The diaspora view politics as the head of the 'snake', which directs the rest of the body. Whereas for people at 'home', the sequence of priority is arguably, development, then migration and then politics, because arguably their focus is their economic survival and the ability to eat. Therefore, they see migration (of themselves or their families), more than politics as the most viable means to facilitate social mobility. Furthermore, the most important relationship for the diaspora is the 'politics and development' relationship, because like much of the academic literature they see development as an inherently political process. In essence, they recognize the government has control of the key resources, which they distribute as they wish, thus development at the national scale is controlled by political calculations. Whereas for those at 'home', the most important relationship is 'migration and development'. For many, they see migration as their only opportunity to achieve what I define in this thesis as 'development' that is an expansion of their human capacities and quality of life, both for themselves and for their families. Which is why it is more common to see

parents in The Gambia encourage their children to emigrate than to stay back and contribute to development at 'home' or indeed fight for political change.

# Chapter 9: Conclusion

## 9.1 Introduction

Two weeks before this thesis was submitted on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016, the Gambian people went to the polls and voted to remove President Jammeh from power. The election thrilled and surprised many Gambians both at 'home' and overseas. The result endorsed some of the claims made in this thesis (for example the importance of uniting the opposition parties in a coalition) but would have changed some of the other claims (for example around the idea that the electorate was intimidated by President Jammeh's control of the military and media). The peaceful democratic change that occurred under very precarious conditions will be marked as one of the greatest achievements of Gambian history. The crucial role the diaspora played in helping the coalition opposition party win the elections is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

This thesis is not only important because it fills gaps in the academic literature but also because it has recorded the views of a group of interviewees in what turned out to be a critical moment in the country's history. Many of my interviewees felt this research could make a valuable contribution to the country by trying to synthesize different aspects of migration, development and politics and by presenting its findings to Gambians abroad and at 'home' in a way that might continue the political process of democratization and development. I cannot say whether my interviewees were just being kind or diplomatic when they said this or indeed whether they saw me as a spokesperson who would present their own actions in an uncritical light. However, I share their hope that it can contribute to an ongoing transnational deliberation about The Gambia's future.

The first section after the introduction provides a summary of the thesis, in particular discussing the answers to the research questions, the findings and how they fit in the literature. The second section moves on to discuss my thoughts about the weaknesses and limitations of the study. The third section discusses the academic contributions of the thesis, and the fourth section focuses on the implications of the research for policy and for future studies. The chapter ends with discussions of the recent elections and my final thoughts.



## 9.2 Summary of the Thesis

The aim of this thesis was to understand the role and significance of the UK and US Gambian diaspora in seeking to shape politics and development in The Gambia (see p. 17). And the question that underpinned this study was to find out whether *small* diasporas, in particular, can contribute to development and politics at 'home' and thereby inform thinking at disciplinary and inter-disciplinary levels at the intersection of migration studies, development studies and politics.

Within the literature on diasporas and development, I learned that diaspora remittances are used for different developmental purposes: increasing household spending, (Gupta et al 2007, Nyamongo et al 2012, Gamlen 2014); augmenting private consumption and alleviating household poverty (de Haas 2012, Chami and Fullenkamp 2013); making investments in health, education, housing, and profit-oriented businesses (Terrazas 2010, Hammond 2011, Amagoh and Rahman 2016). Remittances are also used to fund village- development projects, mostly via diaspora associations (Mercer et al 2008, Lampert 2009). The findings in chapter 5- address research question 1 as it reveals that the Gambian diaspora contributes to development at the different scales and sectors in the country. However, their contributions are greatest at the family level and they involved mainly sending remittances and material goods. This is driven by a sense of obligation to their families. The interviews revealed that remittances sent by the Gambian diaspora are used for different purposes, but hardly directed at national development projected. This partly because the majority of the interviewees felt marginalized by the government. Instead, they argued that their contributions at family level are having an indirect effect on the national economy because their remittances are used to pay for taxed goods and services. For example, tax on land and other purchases in The Gambia. Additionally, their remittances also bring foreign exchange into the country. The findings in this chapter add to the literature that emphasizes the importance of family to the diaspora (Stark and Lucas 1988, Mohan 2006, Lindley 2010, Mercer and Page 2010, Hammond et al 2011, Hammond et al 2011, Hammond 2011, Enoh 2014), as the interviews revealed that on average Gambians in the diaspora remit £200 - £600 to their families at 'home' for their upkeep each month. This also supports the literature, which argues that diasporas have a strong feeling of obligation to their families (Lindley 2010, Mercer and Page 2010, Hammond et al 2011, Enoh 2014, Sinatti and Horst 2014, Horst et al 2014). Similar examples can be found in the Ghanaian diaspora in Milton Keynes (Mohan 2006) and the Somali diaspora in the US (Hammond 2011). Remittances also have a gender and age element as it arguably gives women and

young Gambians leverage in families. Thus, the questions that this raises are; what role do remittances play in changing the family dynamics and gender-relations? Do parents feel obligated or forced to agree with their children in the diaspora because their children have the economic power? Do remittances create conflict within the family, for example, if the younger sibling abroad is being included in family decision-making processes and not the older sibling in The Gambia? This seems a profitable field for future work.

In chapter 6, the interviews revealed that the marginalization from national development projects is the main barrier for the members of the Gambian diaspora who want to be involved in national development. This finding neither confirms nor differs from the existing academic literature, which argues that diaspora engagement policies will encourage diasporas to contribute to development at home (Agunias and Newland 2011, Gamlen 2014). This is because there are no such policies in place in The Gambia thus, it is difficult to predict how the diaspora would react to them. The questions this raises are: how can the diaspora be included in national development in the context where the trust between them and the government has been lost? Should the diaspora stop their political interventions and focus on building a relationship as a development partner? Or are their political interventions done in the name of development because they believe having a democratic government will result in development in the country at some later point?

Chapter 7 addresses research questions 2 and 3 as it shows the different mobilization strategies of the Gambian diaspora in the UK and US. It also discusses how people in The Gambia and the international community respond to the political interventions of the Gambian diaspora. The literature on the transnational political engagement of diaspora recognizes that the geographical boundaries of politics have changed over the years to the point where diaspora groups are able to participate in the politics of their homelands from afar (Lyons and Mandaville 2012, Boccagni et al 2015). Part of the argument is that telecommunications and international travel have made it relatively easy for diasporas to maintain political links with 'home' (Brinkerhoff 2009, Esman 2009 and NurMuhammad et al 2015). In this chapter, the findings revealed that the UK and US Gambian diaspora have mobilized in various ways to intervene in politics in The Gambia. The Internet has played a vital role in their interventions (Simon Turner 2008, Bernal 2013, Eric Turner 2013, Siapera 2014, NurMuhammad et al 2015, Quinsaat 2015, Adamson 2015), as has easy international travel, which facilitated the six dissidents from the US to travel to The Gambia to attempt to

overthrow the government on the 30<sup>th</sup> December 2014. From the findings, I learned that the Internet allows members of the Gambian political to reach a wider audience with their political interventions. It also allows those who want to engage to do so anonymously. In addition, political events at 'home' also provide an opportunity for the Gambian diaspora to use the Internet to "*participate in real time in homeland current events and to produce and/or circulate national political content from outside the nation*" (Bernal 2013; 246).

The empirical evidence suggested that lobbying activities of the Gambian diaspora have not been as effective as they could have been because of their disunity and lack of good organization. The general impression of the political interventions of the Gambian diaspora is that they try to 'make quite a lot out of quite a little' when claiming to influence politics in The Gambia. This is because (until very recently) the changes they claim to have delivered are minimal when compared to their overall aim, which is to drive a much more extensive democratization of political practices in The Gambia. In which case the questions raised here are: to what extent is the Gambian diaspora responsible for the recent democratic political change that took place in The Gambia? What changes did they make to their intervention strategies that made it possible for them to play a part in influencing political change in The Gambia in December 2016?

The political mobilization of the UK and US Gambian diaspora can be understood using social movement theoretical framework (McAdam et al 1996, Sökefeld 2006, Marsden 2014, Quinsaat 2015). Events such as the April 2000 killings and the imprisonment of the UDP political leader Ousainou Darboe provided *political opportunities* for members of the Gambian diaspora to set up *mobilizing structures* and to *frame* their interventions in ways that were justified. However, using the theory of liberal interventionism (Johnson et al. 1984, Tesón 2001, Atkinson 2008, Peksen, Comer 2012, Lipsey 2016) to justify the political interventions of the Gambian diaspora was not very convincing because in the interviews, members of the political diaspora were adamant that their interventions will not involve the use of force but will push for peaceful democratic political change in the country.

In chapter 8, addresses research question 4 as it showed the complex series of relationships connecting politics, migration, and development in The Gambia. However, the key pathway through the three elements is that politics in The Gambia causes underdevelopment and it is this underdevelopment that drives international migration as is illustrated by the dramatic growth of the 'backway' migration in recent years. The findings showed that President Jammeh is engaged

in neo-patrimonial political practices (Chabal and Daloz 1999, Bayart et al 1999, 2009, Boone 2003, Daloz 2003, Ganahl 2013), which have triggered members of The Gambia diaspora to intervene in politics and development at 'home'. For example, the findings revealed that President Jammeh directs state resources to areas like Kanilai where he has voter support (Lasswell 2012). The relationship between 'politics and migration' in The Gambia is visible because the political repression and deteriorating economic conditions are driving Gambians to leave the country (Schmid 2016). On the other hand, I argued that the political impact of the 'backway' migration of young Gambians is indirect as there are other factors driving them to make the dangerous journey to Europe, for example, their desire to be in the West. But the political mismanagement of the economy has created little opportunity and the chance for economic prosperity for young Gambians, thus pushing them to leave for Europe.

### **9.3. Weaknesses and Limitations**

One of the weaknesses of this research is the shortage of secondary quantitative data. This thesis would have benefitted from incorporating more quantitative figures when showing the impact of diaspora contributions to development in The Gambia, particularly in the different sectors that interested me like health and education. But there were obstacles to accessing this information. As I mentioned in chapter 4, people at 'home' are extremely cautious about sharing official data (if they have it) because of the fear that they would get in trouble with the authorities if that information is used to portray the government in a negative light. Another weakness of this research was that I could only interview one building contractor. Therefore the claims about diaspora house-building projects not having much impact in terms of creating jobs and revenue for local merchants in The Gambia would have held more weight if I was able to interview more contractors. But due to the time constraints of the contractors, it was difficult to convince those that were approached to take part in the research. Perhaps another way around this would have been to visit construction sites and ask questions, but this would have raised suspicion and been too risky. Additionally, the majority of my fieldwork in The Gambia was done during the rainy season, therefore, there was not much construction taking place. The third weakness of this research is not interviewing more young people in The Gambian about the 'backway' migration. This would have allowed me to get a better sense of why they were choosing to make the dangerous journey and perhaps get a gendered perspective from the women, which appears to be missing in current reporting about this type of migration. However, this problem did not come to the forefront until 2015 when I had already

left the country. The fourth weakness was not interviewing British MPs, US senators and the human rights organisations (like Amnesty and Human Rights Watch) that support the intervention of the Gambian diaspora. This perhaps would have allowed me to conclusively determine whether the Gambian diaspora did play a role in influencing the actions taken by the UK and US government against the Gambians government as some interviewees had claimed.

#### **9.4 Contribution of the Thesis**

This thesis contributes to the academic field of African diaspora studies in three ways. First by analyzing a case study group who have previously received very little research attention. This thesis fills this gap by providing an in-depth analysis of the development contributions made by the Gambian diaspora in the UK and the US and also by analyzing their political interventions in The Gambia. Like many case studies, this one is distinctive in the sense that there are few other diasporas that have found themselves trying to articulate political alternatives in a context where their opponent has so many resources to control ideas and they have so few. The very unimportance of The Gambia on the world stage makes it important from an academic point of view to understand what role can resource-limited diasporas play in the politics and development of small states of limited importance?

The second contribution that this thesis makes is it helps to develop ideas about *small* diaspora groups, by showing how they contribute to socio-economic development and intervene in politics at 'home' with few resources and little influence in their host countries. In this thesis, I defined *small* diaspora as groups that are small in size, from small countries and have limited financial resources. I argued that *small* diaspora *can be* an equally important development resource for their 'home' countries as large groups like the Jewish, Chinese and Indian. However, within the diaspora studies literature there is less attention was given to *small* diasporas (cf Butler 2001, Sheffer 2013), which is surprising because there is an increasing number of them and they are becoming more visible. As some global cities become 'super-diverse' (Vertovec, 2007) the experience from the 'host-country' perspective is a rapid expansion in the number of *small* diasporas. In the case of London, for example, there is a dramatic increase in the number of Gambians, Ivorians, Cameroonians, and Congolese alongside the larger African diasporas who are better established such as the Ghanaians and Nigerians. More attention needs to be paid to these newer, smaller diasporas by scholars of development and migration. Yet, it is clear that some of these groups will have more impact in Africa than others. It is not just about the size of the diaspora *per se*,

but the wider character of the group and its relationship to 'home'. The key factors that matter when shaping the development influence of a *small* diaspora are the size of the population at 'home', the unity and level of organization within the *small* diaspora, the amicability of the relationship with the 'home' government and the economic position of those in the diaspora. *Small* diasporas have both advantages and disadvantages as for example, it is easier to achieve unity within a *small* diaspora than a large one (an advantage) but it is harder to raise large sums of money or hold a dramatically large demonstration in a host country (disadvantages). From this perspective, I argue for more research attention to be given to these small groups and for distinctions to be drawn within the category 'small diasporas' between those that are significant to homeland development and those that are not. As such, this research aimed to contribute some knowledge to this area, by using this case study group of the small and financially strapped Gambian diaspora, who despite these characteristics are important to development because the country is small and because weak economic management in The Gambia has inflated the importance of their remittances.

The third contribution is that this thesis adds to the discussions about 'conflict diaspora' but in situations of *non-violent* conflict. In this sense, it keeps the idea of political conflict, without necessarily assuming it is violent conflict. In some contexts (Sri Lanka or the Balkans for example) diasporas have an increasingly problematic reputation as catalysts of violent conflict. It is assumed that in post-conflict situations the presence of a politically active diaspora is likely to increase the risk of violence re-starting because diasporas tend to be more extreme in their politics than homeland populations. They can foment hostility and fund armed struggles at limited risk to their own safety (Lyons and Mandaville 2012, Boccagni et al 2015). What the Gambian case shows, however, is that it is also possible for some diasporas to find coherence through a shared political struggle whilst (generally) remaining consistently opposed to violent conflict. The thesis has developed new ideas of a 'conflict diaspora' in the context of non-violent conflict. Recognizing that the Gambian diaspora does not fit within the standard definitions of 'conflict diaspora' that are in the literature. The thesis argues for the broadening of the definition to capture this group and uses their transnational political activities to illustrate their conflict with the government. The literature asserts that a 'conflict diaspora' is one that has been produced by violent conflict. For example, refugees who flee from wars either because they were civilians or combatants produce such a social formation or a diaspora whose binding ties are about a specific insurgency or moment of violence (Cohen 2008). Or stateless diaspora, who are likely to support irredentist, secessionist and national liberation movements in their

homelands, even if these are actively involved in bitter conflicts (Sheffer 2007, Tölölyan 2007). The point I want to make here is not to diminish diaspora groups like the Liberians, Ethiopians and Eritreans who come from places that really have experienced war but to try and claim some solidarity with them in the Gambian case. The argument is that 'violence' can take forms other than war or insurgency and in the Gambian case there are no armed struggles but there is violent repression by an authoritarian government, which is a form of conflict. This thesis shows that the conflictual diaspora-homeland political relations outside the context of actual armed conflict, post-conflict reconstruction, or peace-building are important for further exploration in the field of transnational diaspora politics. I argued that real peace is not just the absence of war rather it is the opportunity for development, protection of rights and political inclusion. Without this diasporas find themselves in conflict with their 'home' governments and become defined by that conflict.

## **9.5 Implications of the Thesis**

### **Future Research**

- 1. There is a need to research the impact of differences within diasporas on transnational politics by moving beyond methodological nationalism within the field and by recognizing diversity within any diaspora.**

The literature in diaspora studies stresses the social heterogeneity of diasporas (Werbner 2010, Mavroudi 2015, Chikanda et al 2016). For any researcher studying the Gambian diaspora, it is important to recognize their diversity (despite its small size) as this would help to create a better understanding of the complex variety of relationships with 'home' as well as 'host' countries. For example, even though the Gambian diaspora groups have a shared history of belonging to one place, their affinities to 'home' are different. The interviews suggested that a significant proportion of Gambians in the UK and US have a strong connection with the country, particularly through their families who motivate them to stay connected as well as to send money 'home' (Moniruzzaman 2016). However, there were also Gambians in the diaspora who preferred to have limited involvement with 'home' and rather their focus was on putting down roots and integrating into their host countries, like some members of the South African diaspora in Canada (Ramachandran 2016). Thus, they had no interest or involvement in transnational politics. In light of these findings, I propose to move beyond the methodological nationalist assumption within the field of migration because it treats groups within the nation-state as homogeneous. *"By conflating society and a territorially*

*organized nation- state, scholars tend to produce the assumption that common territorial and national origin produces 'common individuals' who necessarily have the same rights, loyalties and culture"* (Nowicka and Cieslik 2014; 3). The criticism of methodological nationalism by analysts like Ulrich Beck is that the concept does not acknowledge the changing realities in the modern world, thus it does not help us to understand how transnational processes alter concepts of society in the age of globalization (Nowicka and Cieslik 2014). This is important as it has been argued that global and transnational forces that limit their ability to decide on policy shape nation-states and control migration flows (Saber 2014: 2). Britain's difficulties of managing migration in the context of EU membership illustrate this issue. These criticisms are based on the perspective that methodological nationalism is the assumption that "*the nation/ state/ society is the natural social and political form of the modern world*" (Wimmer and Schiller 2002: 301). According to Wimmer and Schiller (2003) there are three variants of methodological nationalism that have shaped social science and influenced mainstream migration studies, 1) ignoring or disregarding the fundamental importance of nationalism for modern societies, this often is combined with 2) naturalization, *i.e.*, taking for granted that the boundaries of the nation-state delimit and define the unit of analysis, 3) the territorial limitation, which confines the study of social processes to the political and geographical boundaries of a particular nation-state (578). In essence, what this means is that the nation–state is taken as the *natural* unit of reference in the analysis of citizens in social research (Ahponen 2016: 5). Subsequently, the risk of talking about 'a Gambian diaspora' is that it overlooks two key dimensions. First the internal differences within the groups For example differences based on ethnicity, class, religion, social status, political affiliation history (Chikanda et al. 2016; 5) as well as education and migration history (Carling et al. 2013). These are imperative to explore to understand the intricate and diverse relationships diasporas have with their country of origin (Lyons and Mandaville 2012). Second, future research could usefully consider affinities that cut across national boundaries. For example, the story of 'backway' is not unique to The Gambia but says more about youth, gender, employment and opportunity across West Africa. There is nothing specifically Gambian about seeking to find ways from West Africa into Europe, yet the analysis of such movements focuses on nationality quite heavily.



- 2. There is a need to do more research on the motivations of diasporas to engage in development even though it is increasingly recognized that their impacts are quite limited. Diaspora-led development may be less effective than its promoters in the development policy world would suggest, but even if it is not paradigm shifting it still merits further analysis because it is an aspiration of many who are outside.**

Within the literature on 'diaspora and development', it is widely believed that diasporas are contributing to development at 'home' (de Haas 2006, 2012, Terrazas 2010, Newland, 2011, 2013, Ratha et al 2011, Resende – Santos 2015). However, a small part of the literature also argues that diasporas do not *necessarily* contribute to development at 'home' to the extent or in the ways suggested in the literature, rather remittances are insecure financial contributions that can be affected if the circumstance of the person sending it were to change. Nyamongo et al (2012), assert that the "*volatility of remittances appear to have a negative effect on the growth of countries in Africa*" (240). And Gupta et al (2007) add that data from 233 poverty surveys in 76 developing countries, including 24 in sub-Saharan Africa showed "*a 10 percent rise in the remittances to GDP ratio is associated with a fall of a little more than 1 percent in the percentage of people living on less than \$1 a day*" (4). Thus, suggesting that remittances do not have much economic impact on poverty reduction in 'home' countries. Nevertheless, from the interviews, the Gambian diaspora *believed* their remittances were having a significant impact on the development at 'home', in particular improving the quality of life of people who receive the money. And though this may be true for the people in The Gambia receiving financial assistance from the diaspora, it is not the case for all Gambians. I argued that the proportion of Gambians in the diaspora is small in relation to the population, thus it is inconceivable that the diaspora is fulfilling the needs of *every* Gambian. Seeing the diaspora as *the* key actor of development would clearly be unconvincing. Given this conclusion (that there are limits to what diasporas do) it might seem logical to say that there is a reduced need for more research in this field. However, the point is that for some in the diaspora 'development' remains a key topic, so there is still a need for research about new places, projects and processes in the field. To get a better understanding of what motivates the Gambian diasporas to contribute to development at 'home', it is pertinent for future research to explore how development and political conditions at 'home' can shape the character of those relationships, which vary for different groups in the diaspora. This would help academics, policymakers, and development practitioners to know where and when they can get more access to diaspora resources.

- 3. There is a need for more research on the controlling role played by the intermediaries delivering diaspora-led development and political interventions who are based in Africa. There is a need to recognize the importance of local actors at 'home' in facilitating as well as affecting the development contributions and political interventions of diasporas.**

One finding of the research that requires further analysis in the future is the role of actors at 'home', and their capacity to determine the effectiveness of diaspora political engagement. Existing research has drawn attention to the need for analysis of actors and the political patterns of migrant communities in all their diversity in order to get a good understanding of how politics in countries of origin have been transformed by diaspora involvement (Lyons and Mandaville 2012). Thus far, the focus has been on analyzing *the role of homeland governments* in affecting diaspora political interventions. Without sympathetic allies at other scales through whom the diaspora can work the political space in which they can operate is highly constrained. During the time of this research, the political opposition parties in The Gambia refused to unite and accept non-financial support from the diaspora, which greatly affected the ability of the diaspora to influence democratic political change in The Gambia. Therefore, it is particularly important for researchers to look at *the role of local actors* when evaluating the impact of diaspora contributions in their countries of origin because local actors play a significant role in either making the activities of the diaspora successful or unsuccessful. As they are on the ground and they know the country context better than the diaspora. For example in chapter 6, I presented a case study of a diaspora funded development project (diaspora-funded pharmacy for the community) ending because of 'misappropriation' by members of the community. On the other hand, a better understanding of this story might be gained by hearing from those who are accused of misappropriating the money as well as from those who sent it. Furthermore, actors at 'home' can view the diaspora as threats and thus refuse to support their endeavours. For example, in chapter 7, I argued that President Jammeh labelled the diaspora as 'troublemakers' for some time, which was never an issue for his opponents in the diaspora themselves since it added to their public profile. However, the coup attempt of the 30<sup>th</sup> December 2014 has confirmed to many Gambians on the ground that his labelling of the diaspora is accurate. This subsequently made the diaspora appear to be a real threat to national security and thus they received many criticisms from the people in The Gambia. Local actors may also only be interested in using diaspora-funded projects to enhance their own profile, status, and authority. For example, in

chapter 7, I also argued that the opposition party leader at the forum in New York gave the impression that they were only interested in diaspora money to fund their political campaigns, and not their ideas. Clearly studying the role of local actors in future thinking about diaspora-development research would help to create a better understanding of why diaspora-funded activities at 'home' succeed or fail.

### **Policy implications**

Now that a democratic political change has taken place in The Gambia, the first policy implication should be extending voting rights to Gambians in the diaspora like in other African countries such as Cape Verde, Senegal, Mali, etc. (Iheduru 2011, Ragazzi 2014, Bermudez and Lafleur 2015). I would argue that this would strengthen the diaspora's commitment to national development<sup>180</sup>, increase their sense of belonging (Ragazzi 2014) and obligation towards helping the country achieve the desired development. Other policy options would also include introducing privilege tax exemptions for diaspora investors as in Uganda, creating a Government one-stop shop for investors and offer diaspora treasury bonds and stocks as in Rwanda. Arguably, these policy options would help remove the obstacles to investment described by the interviewees in Chapter 6. I anticipate that introducing these policies in The Gambia will also allow those that are serious about contributing to the development of the country to do so without feeling marginalized by the government.

### **9.6 Update and final thoughts**

In the four years of conducting this research project, I never would have imagined that by the end of it I would be reporting that the Gambian diaspora has succeeded in *helping* the Gambian people to achieve democratic political change in the country through peaceful elections. This is because the empirical research uncovered so many challenges and shortfalls in their interventions (such as the fragmented nature of their work and the lack of coordination in their efforts), it seemed almost impossible that they would be able to influence real, fundamental political change in the country. But at the eleventh hour, the opposition parties came together to form a coalition to contest the 2016 Presidential elections on December 1<sup>st</sup> and with that push and the financial backing from the diaspora they won. Adama Barrow, the President-elect spent some years living and studying in the UK, so understands the diaspora perspective, which is encouraging in terms of

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<sup>180</sup> It is interesting how an academic commitment to critiquing methodological nationalism struggles in the face of the tools of national policy-making and questions of citizenship in practice.

healing the divisions that have emerged over the last two decades between Gambians in government at 'home' and those overseas. The outcomes of the elections proved the validity of my arguments about the need for unity amongst the opposition parties and the potential importance of a *small* diaspora in shaping the trajectories of their 'home' countries. Without the cooperation of the opposition political parties, the diaspora would not have been able to play such a big part in the elections.

But exactly how did the Gambian diaspora have an impact on the elections? Around August 2016, a small group of the politically involved diaspora formed a taskforce whose aim was to convince the leaders of the political opposition parties in The Gambia to consider nominating a single candidate who will be the flag bearer for a united coalition party in the upcoming presidential elections<sup>181</sup>. This was a covert operation that was not shared with the wider Gambian diaspora, however, once the opposition had agreed to unite, the Gambian population was introduced to the 'possible' flag bearer for the opposition coalition, Dr Isatou Touray. She was selected on the basis that she is a gender activist with many years of grassroots experience and she was highly educated. The proposal was that the flag bearer would lead the coalition government for three years to allow all parties to work together to 'rectify' the constitution, afterwards another presidential election would be held where each party can stand. However, after some discussion the between the opposition parties they appeared not keen to have Dr Touray as the flag bearer. This is because some argued that she was showing signs that she would renege on the conditions that were agreed upon in this plan. The parties in The Gambia had their own conference and nominated Mr Adama Barrow, a businessman, to be the flag bearer, thus rejecting the candidate selected by the diaspora. The political diaspora still got behind the coalition candidate and raised approximately sixty-eight thousand dollars<sup>182</sup> for their campaign. They also became heavily involved in broadcasting the political campaigns of the coalition on social media and diaspora media, because the state-owned television station was not giving impartial coverage to the campaigns<sup>183</sup>. Additionally, the diaspora called on their families and friends in The Gambia to register for voting cards and to vote for the coalition. The night before elections, the government blocked the Internet and international calls<sup>184</sup>, which they said was a move designed to reduce the risk

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<sup>181</sup> This is privilege information from a member of the task force

<sup>182</sup> <https://www.gofundme.com/2016-gambia-coalition>

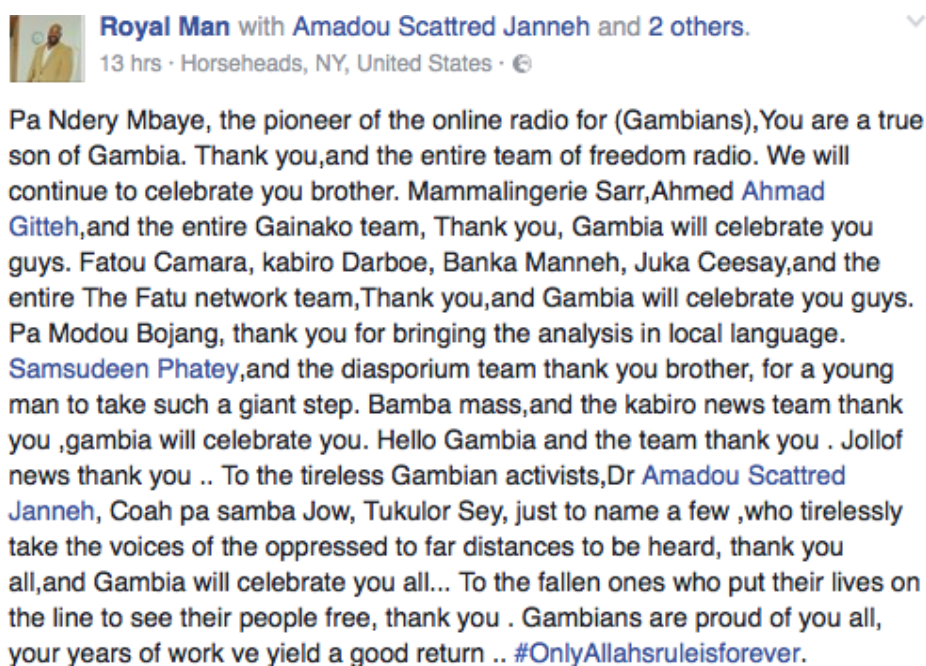
<sup>183</sup> <http://mgafrica.com/article/2016-11-16-gambias-jammah-arrests-three-journalists-as-presidential-election-campaign-begins>

<sup>184</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-38157127>

of unrest<sup>185</sup>. However, SMS services was still working so the diaspora were able to make contact with people at the polling stations and receive the results from the polls. By 5pm the diaspora started sharing the (unverified) results with the wider population, which were in favour of Barrow. By doing this, they created a situation whereby the IEC could not easily report any other result without their being some form of civil disobedience. Thus, when the IEC declared Adama Barrow the winner twenty-four hours later, President Jammeh was put under pressure to concede.

The general impression from the many posts on Facebook and Twitter was that Gambians everywhere were proud that they came together to effect a peaceful democratic change in the country. But, from the perspective of this thesis, it was also important that people started praising members of the politically involved Gambian diaspora in a way they had not done before. The post below is one of the many examples that were published on Facebook.

Figure 31: Facebook comment on members of the politically involved Gambian diaspora



Source: Gambian diaspora member's Facebook post

However, the question now is: how will development be managed given that political change has been achieved in The Gambia? According to Adama Barrow's 'My Vision and Mission' statement published before the elections. He aims to

<sup>185</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/gambia-election-president-yahya-jammeh-shuts-down-internet-phones-polls-open-a7449371.html>

*“promote and consolidate Democracy, Rule of Law, Good Governance and respect for the Human Rights of our people<sup>186</sup>”*. As well as to *“revamp the agriculture sector and the economy through investments and job creation for Gambian youths”<sup>187</sup>*. At this stage, it is a fairly vague manifesto. It can be argued that this seems very abstract because it is not clear how the coalition government plans to implement development or how development resources will be distributed. Perhaps it is too early to tell but clearly, there are bigger challenges ahead that may get in the way of the new government meeting the bold promises they have made to the Gambian population. These challenges include fixing the structures and institutions of the country to allow for ‘real’ development to occur; restoring relationships with key donors like the EU, Commonwealth, US and UK; and managing the very limited resources in the country. The goal is to avoid recycling the actions of the previous regime, where ‘development’ was more about talk than action. However, the focus, for now, is for the coalition government to restore democratic order, as Gambians believe this is a necessary first step for development. And even though parts of the literature argue that having a democratic state is not a necessary prerequisite for development (Leftwich 1993) or that democracy makes no material difference to the lives of the poor (Ross 2006 cited by Nooruddin 2010; 169) the current hope in The Gambia is that democracy will be a catalyst. The hope is that practising a better style of democracy in The Gambia will attract international donors and investors by regaining the faith of those who want The Gambia to succeed and by producing a more predictable business environment with less political risk. Thus, even though the future is still very uncertain for The Gambia, the outcomes of the elections have given the people at ‘home’ and abroad hope and faith that it will be a brighter one.

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<sup>186</sup> <https://jollofnews.com/2016/11/25/gambia-2016-adama-barrow-my-vision-and-mission/>

<sup>187</sup> <http://www.kaironews.com/coalition-to-restore-democracy/>

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## Appendix 1

Identifier	Gender	Country	Method	Month	Year	Additional information	Age range
Interviewee 1	Male	US	Telephone	April	2015	Religious leader living in exile	Old
Interviewee 2	Male	US	Skype	March	2015	Former civil servant and political activist	Old
Interviewee 3	Male	UK	Email	May	2015	Academic	Middle age
Interviewee 4	Female	US	Telephone	April	2015	Highly educated, professional and activist	Middle age
Interviewee 5	Male	US	Skype	April	2015	Academic and activist	Middle age
Interviewee 6	Male	UK	Telephone	March	2015	Skilled professional	Middle age
Interviewee 7	Female	UK	Telephone	March	2015	NGO worker	Young
Interviewee 8	Male	UK	Telephone	March	2015	Lawyer and activist	Middle age
Interviewee 9	Male	UK	Telephone	March	2015	Skilled professional	Middle age
Interviewee 10	Male	US	Telephone	March	2015	Academic and activist	Middle age
Interviewee 11	Male	US	Telephone	March	2015	Former journalist and activist	Old
Interviewee 12	Male	US	Telephone	March	2015	Highly educated, professional and activist	Middle age
Interviewee 13	Male	US	Skype	March	2015	Highly educated, professional and activist	Middle age
Interviewee 14	Male	US	Face-to-face	March	2015	Professional and activist	Middle age
Interviewee 15	Male	UK	Face-to-face	March	2015	Highly educated professional	Middle age
Interviewee 16	Male	US	Telephone	March	2015	Pro-government supporter and skilled	Young
Interviewee 17	Male	US	Skype	March	2015	Highly educated professional	Young
Interviewee 18	Male	UK	Telephone	March	2015	Activist	Middle age
Interviewee 19	Male	US	Telephone	March	2015	Pro-government supporter and radio	Middle age
Interviewee 20	Male	US	Telephone	March	2015	Pro-government supporter and skilled	Middle age
Interviewee 21	Male	UK	Telephone	March	2015	Highly educated professional	Middle age
Interviewee 22	Male	US	Telephone	April	2015	Skilled professional	Old
Interviewee 23	Male	UK	Telephone	April	2015	Retired diplomat	Middle age
Interviewee 24	Male	US	Telephone	March	2015	Pro-government supporter and diplomat for Gambian government	Young
Interviewee 25	Male	UK	Telephone	March	2015	Pro-government supporter and skilled professional	Young
Interviewee 26	Male	UK	Telephone	April	2015	Skilled professional	Young
Interviewee 27	Male	UK	Telephone	March	2015	Educated professional	Middle age
Interviewee 28	Male	UK	Telephone	March	2015	Highly educated professional	Middle age
Interviewee 29	Male	UK	Telephone	March	2015	Highly educated professional	Middle age
Interviewee 30	Male	UK	Telephone	March	2015	Skilled professional	Middle age
Interviewee 31	Male	UK	Telephone	March	2015	Highly educated professional	Middle age
Interviewee 32	Female	US	Telephone	March	2015	Highly educated professional and activist	Middle age
Interviewee 33	Male	UK	Telephone	March	2015	Highly educated professional	Middle age
Interviewee 34	Male	UK	Telephone	March	2015	Former Gambian civil servant – highly educated profession	Middle age
Interviewee 35	Male	UK	Telephone	April	2015	Highly educated professional	Middle age
Interviewee 36	Male	UK	Telephone	April	2015	Educated professional	Young
Interviewee 37	Male	UK	Telephone	April	2015	Educated professional	Middle age
Interviewee 38	Male	UK	Telephone	April	2015	Former state house chef – now works in the hospitality sector	Middle age
Interviewee 39	Male	US	Telephone	April	2015	Highly educated professional and activist	Young
Interviewee 40	Male	UK	Face-to-face	April	2015	Highly educated professional	Middle age
Interviewee 41	Male	UK	Telephone	April	2015	Economist/ PhD student	Middle age
Interviewee 42	Male	UK	Telephone	March	2015	Highly educated professional	Middle age
Interviewee 43	Male	UK	Face-to-face	August	2015	Lawyer	Middle age
Interviewee 44	Male	UK	Face-to-face	September	2015	Highly educated professional and activist	Young
Interviewee 45	Male	Gambia	Face-to-face	September	2014	Private business owner	Young
Interviewee 46	Male	Gambia	Face-to-face	August	2014	Retired civil servant	Old
Interviewee 47	Male	Gambia	Face-to-face	August	2014	Retired civil servant and agriculture expert	Middle age
Interviewee 48	Male	Gambia	Face-to-face	October	2014	Political opposition party leader	Middle age
Interviewee 49	Female	Gambia	Face-to-face	September	2014	Academic and gender activist	Middle age
Interviewee 50	Female	Gambia	Face-to-face	September	2014	Rural farmer	Middle age
Interviewee 51	1 Female and 5 Males	Gambia	Face-to-face	December	2014	Students	Young
Interviewee 52	3 Females and 21	Gambia	Face-to-face	December	2014	Students	Young
Interviewee 53	Male	Gambia	Face-to-face	September	2014	Private business owner	Middle age
Interviewee 54	Male	Gambia	Face-to-face	September	2014	Private business owner	Young
Interviewee 55	Male	Gambia	Face-to-face	September	2014	Civil servant	Middle age
Interviewee 56	Male	Gambia	Face-to-face	August	2014	Retired non-Gambian	Old
Interviewee 57	Male	Gambia	Face-to-face	August	2014	Civil servant	Middle age

Interviewee 58	Female	Gambia	Face-to-face	September	2014	Retired academic and Gambian historian	Old
Interviewee 59	Male	Gambia	Face-to-face	September	2014	Building contractor	Young
Interviewee 60	Male	Gambia	Face-to-face	August	2014	Academic	Old
Interviewee 61	Male	Gambia	Face-to-face	August	2014	Economist, former civil servant and private business owner	Middle age
Interviewee 62	Male	Gambia	Face-to-face	August	2014	Economist/ retired civil servant	Old
Interviewee 63	Male	Gambia	Face-to-face	September	2014	Civil servant	Middle age
Interviewee 64	Male	Gambia	Face-to-face	November	2014	Private business owner	Middle age
Interviewee 65	Male	UK	Face-to-face	February	2013	Highly educated professional	Middle age
Interviewee 66	Female	UK	Telephone	February	2013	Development practitioner	Middle age
Interviewee 67	Male	US	Telephone	April	2013	Highly educated professional and activist	Young
Interviewee 68	Male	Gambia	Face-to-face	February	2013	Academic	Middle age
Interviewee 69	Male	Gambia	Face-to-face	February	2013	Former President of The Gambia	Old
Interviewee 70	Female	UK	Face-to-face	March	2013	Nurse	Young
Interviewee 71	Male	Gambia	Telephone	July	2016	Skilled social activist	Young
Interviewee 72	Female	Gambia	Telephone	March	2015	Highly educated and skilled professional	Young
Interviewee 73	Male	UK	Telephone	May	2015	Working professional and student	Middle age
Association 1	Birmingham Gambia Association	Birmingham	Telephone	April	2013		
Association 2	Brufut Association	Manchester	Telephone	April	2013		
Association 3	Kombo Sillah	Slough	Telephone	April	2013		
Association 4	Reading Gambia	Reading	Telephone	April	2013		
Association 5	Gambian Association	Crawley	Telephone	April	2013		
Association 6	Coventry Gambian	Coventry	Telephone	April	2013		
Association 7	Portsmouth Gambian	Portsmouth	Telephone	April	2013		
Association 8	Sukuta Association	Birmingham	Telephone	April	2013		
Association 9	Greenwich Gambian	London	Telephone	April	2013		
Association 10	Gambia United	London	Telephone	February	2013		

## Appendix 2: UK Gambian Diaspora Associations

Name reasons for being established	History of the association	Activities and services	Development projects in Gambia	Challenges/ Barriers
<p>Reading Gambian Society</p>	<p>RGS take part in limited development projects in Gambia</p> <p>RGS was established in 2005 after a Gambian in the community passed away. The people came together to raise funds to repatriate the body back to Gambia</p> <p>RGS became a registered charity on the 09/06/2010</p> <p>RGS has 114 registered members</p> <p>Members are required to pay £5 membership fee every month</p>	<p>Monthly meetings</p> <p>Fundraising events</p> <p>Private tutoring to children of members</p>	<p>Ships and donate clothes to poor people in in Gambia</p> <p>Purchased and shipped 30 bicycles to Gambia in 2011 as part of the disaster relief project</p> <p>Donated t-shirts to Gambia School of Nursing - for Alzheimer awareness</p>	<p>Getting members to actively participate in the Association's activities</p> <p>Increasing membership amongst Gambians in the community</p> <p>Lack of awareness of the association by Gambians living in the area</p> <p>Division between members of the association</p> <p>Lack of financial resources and space</p> <p>Shortage of volunteers to provide private tutoring to children.</p>
<p>Kombo Sillah Association</p>	<p>KSA is a hometown association that takes part in development projects in Gunjur, in Gambia</p> <p>Established in 2000, and registered as Ltd Business in 2012</p> <p>KSA was established because there were a significant number of Gambians from the same area in Gambia (Gunjur) living in the same area in UK- in Slough</p> <p>KSA headquarter is now located in Bristol</p> <p>KSA has between</p>	<p>Raising funds for repatriation</p> <p>Support for immigration issues.</p> <p>Organize cultural events and concerts with Senegambia artists</p>	<p>The summer school project at Gunjur Upper Basic School,</p> <p>Collecting and shipping hospital and supplies to Basse Hospital</p> <p>Repairing the only ambulance at Gunjur hospital</p> <p>Providing scholarships to outstanding students to attend high school</p>	<p>Organising people and keeping the level of participation high.</p> <p>Trying to get the other Gambian Associations in UK to agree to form a federation of Gambian associations in the UK.</p> <p>Encouraging collaborations of projects in Gambia and in the UK.</p> <p>Creating awareness of the association to Gambians in the</p>

	<p>300-500 members.</p> <p>Membership fees either £5 every 3monthly or £20 – yearly</p>			<p>community</p> <p>Increasing memberships</p> <p>Competition between the different associations</p> <p>No involvement with association activities by the Gambian High Commission</p> <p>People discouraging other from joining the associations – including the Gambian High Commission from attending KSA meeting</p>
Gambia United Society	<p>The GUS is working to become a coordinating body for the Gambian associations in the UK.</p> <p>GUS works on limited development projects in Gambia</p> <p>GUS was established in 1997 and has registered as a charity in October 2005</p> <p>GUS is locate in London</p> <p>United Gambia was established when a member in the Gambian community passed away and his family could not afford to repatriate the body back to Gambia for burial. The community came together to raise funds and from this members in the</p>	<p>Organizes cultural activities like music, dancing, clothing and art</p> <p>Help Gambians to integrate with other culture as well as promote Gambian culture within their communities</p> <p>Organize educational activities- targeting young British born Gambians. Using Griots (traditional storytellers) to teach them about Gambian history and cultural practices.</p> <p>Organize concerts with Gambian and Senegalese artists.</p> <p>Support Gambian owned businesses in the UK by helping them reach the Gambian people in</p>	<p>Raise fund for malaria treatment sleeping nets</p> <p>Fund raise for national disasters. On 30<sup>th</sup> June 2012, GUS raised £10,000 for Gambian Red Cross Society to help Gambian farmers that have been affected by the famine.</p>	<p>No information about the number of Gambians (legal and illegal) living in the UK, therefore, most Gambians cannot be reached and offered their services.</p> <p>Issues of immigrations as there are some Gambians residing in the UK illegally and therefore, are reluctant to join the association or provide any information</p> <p>Tribalism amongst the Gambian diaspora in UK</p> <p>Gambian associations are fragmented and scattered all over the UK</p> <p>Government of The Gambia does not</p>

	<p>community started to recognize the importance of forming an association to support the community</p> <p>GUS has 300 registered members, however the turn out to some of their events is around 500</p>	<p>the UK</p> <p>Provide referral services for people wanting to purchase Gambian art and clothing</p>		<p>engage the diaspora groups as they are seen as threats and anti-government. Therefore, the Gambian Embassy in the UK does not acknowledge or work with diaspora association groups. They also ignore any attempts made by the associations in the UK to engage with them.</p> <p>The government ministries in the Gambia refuse to provide information to the association when they attempt to get involved in national development projects</p>
<p>Portsmouth Gambian Society</p>	<p>PGS has no direct involvement in development in Gambia</p> <p>The association was established in 2008 when a member of the community passing away. The community came together to raise funds to repatriate the body back to Gambia for burial</p> <p>PGS has 80 to 100 registered members. And the association has a £5 monthly membership fee.</p>	<p>Organize cultural programmes</p> <p>Organize community religious celebrations</p> <p>Organize summer Barbeques</p>	<p>PGA has no direct involvement in development projects in The Gambia however they work with Milton High School in Portsmouth who do charity work in the Gambia. The PGA provide advise parents and pupils about Gambia</p>	<p>Mobilising the Gambian community and driving active membership participation</p> <p>Division between members, particularly petty disputes between women</p> <p>The Gambian youth men are difficult to engage in associations activities</p> <p>No external funding</p> <p>Collecting the £5 monthly membership fee from members</p>
<p>Greenwich Gambian Association</p>	<p>GGA is not involvement in development in Gambia</p>	<p>Organize religious celebrations</p> <p>Offer learning</p>	<p>Not involved in development projects in The Gambia</p>	<p>Collecting membership fees from members</p>



	<p>GGA was established in 2011 because there was no formal representation of Gambians in Woolwich.</p> <p>GGA has 45-60 members, and families are required to contribute £100 a year, while individuals contribute £60 a year</p>	<p>support to Gambian children and adults in the community</p> <p>Host summer family day outings and football tournaments for Gambian community</p> <p>Offers legal advice on immigration matters</p> <p>Run study groups for children preparing for</p>		<p>Increasing member attendance at meetings</p> <p>Getting members to volunteer their time</p>
UK Sukuta Association	<p>SA is a hometown association which takes part in some development projects in Sukuta, Gambia</p> <p>Established in 1995 by a group of Gambians from Sukuta</p> <p>SA is located in Birmingham</p> <p>It has 100 registered members and membership fee is £20 yearly</p>	<p>Annual fund raising events</p> <p>Organize family day out</p> <p>Annual general meeting</p>	<p>Funds Sukuta Sponsorship Committee, which offers loans to members of the community</p> <p>Raise fund for Sukuta secondary school and health centre.</p>	<p>Driving attendance at their events</p> <p>Obtaining external funding</p> <p>Expenses incurred by immigration issues of members, who the association support</p>
Brufut Association	<p>BA is a hometown association that has limited involvement in development projects in Gambia</p> <p>The association was established in 2006/7 because there was a large concentration of Gambian from Brufut living in Manchester</p> <p>BA has 100 registered members and the membership fee is £5 a month</p>	<p>The association provide support to Gambians living in Manchester particularly with issues of immigration and repatriation of body</p>	<p>Funded the purchase of one ambulance for Brufut Health Centre</p>	<p>Getting members to attend meetings</p> <p>Getting member to make financial contributions to the association</p>
Birmingham Gambian Association	<p>Established in 1999 as a result of an elderly member of the Gambian community</p>	<p>Support members with immigration problems</p>	<p>Arranged for 8 junior doctors to visit Gambia and work for a week in the</p>	<p>Challenging getting volunteers to run the afterschool club</p>

	<p>passing away.</p> <p>The association has 200 members and the monthly membership fee is £5</p>	<p>Support repatriation of bodies</p> <p>Offers an afterschool club for children-</p> <p>Organize cultural events and concerts with Gambian musicians</p> <p>Raise funds for their services</p> <p>Organize football tournaments every year</p> <p>Provides Gambian history lesson to British born Gambian</p>	<p>hospital from 2005 to 2007</p> <p>Sent 14 ambulances Gambia and uniforms donated by the Sussex ambulance service to Gambia in 2008</p> <p>Sent hospital beds and medical equipment donated to the Gambia</p>	<p>Lack of external funding</p> <p>Lack of office equipment at the association headquarters</p>
Coventry Gambian Association	<p>Established in 2008 to address the needs of Gambians in the community</p> <p>The association has 120 registered members and there is a £5 monthly membership fee</p>	<p>Offers summer school for Gambian children</p> <p>Organize religious celebrations</p> <p>Disseminate information about weddings, naming ceremonies and death in the community</p>	<p>Not involved in development in The Gambia</p>	<p>Attracting Gambians to join the association</p> <p>Driving participation by members</p>
Gambian Association Crawley	<p>GAC has no direct involvement in development in Gambia</p> <p>Established in October 2008 because are a large number of Gambians living in Crawley and the people wanted to have a formal structure</p> <p>GAC have 120 registered members and the membership fee is £10 every three months</p>	<p>Organize Religious celebrations</p> <p>Offers educational activities- such as hosting a one day seminar to talk about HIV/AIDS</p> <p>Creates awareness about drugs awareness and Islamic extremism</p>	<p>No direct involvement in development projects in Gambia.</p>	<p>Driving membership</p> <p>Issues of transparency in association, as there are concerns that funds are not use for their purpose</p>