*Anticipatory tribalism: accusatory politics in the 'New Gambia'**

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the upsurge in denunciations of 'tribalism' in public debate during The Gambia's transition from the autocracy of Yahya Jammeh to the 'New Gambia' under President Adama Barrow. In these public debates, derogatory statements about particular ethnicities articulate fears of present or future alliances to monopolise political power. These fears are disproportionate to attempts of organised political mobilisation on ethnic grounds, which remain marginal. It is argued that accusatory politics are a salient, and neglected, feature of ethnic dynamics in contemporary Gambian – and African – politics. This politics of accusation involves the contestation and negotiation of moral legitimacy in the political sphere, in a manner challenging the separation of the moral and the political undergirding scholarly distinctions between ethnicity and tribalism.

Keywords: Ethnicity, accusation, public sphere, moral politics, political discourse, The Gambia.

INTRODUCTION

In the wake of The Gambia's 2016 presidential election and the ensuing stand-off that led to President Yahya Jammeh stepping down quite literally at gun-point, arguments about the role of ethnicity in The Gambia have dominated the Gambian political landscape (on these events, see Hartmann 2017; Hultin *et al.* 2017; Kora & Darboe 2017; Perfect 2017). Gambian media and social media, in the country and in the diaspora, feature frequent allegations of 'tribalism', with authors expressing alarm over, for example, the perceived 'Mandingoisation' of the security services (*Freedom Newspaper* 20.4.2017), alleged anti-Fula discrimination by immigration authorities (*Freedom Newspaper* 5.5.2017), and selective security policies targeting the Jola-dominated home area of former President Jammeh (*The Daily Observer* 5.6.2017). This theme has trickled into the international discourse surrounding what is often glossed as the 'New Gambia'. For example, following the parliamentary elections in April 2017, the European Union Election Observation mission noted that: 'during the final days of the campaign … the subject of political tribalism became more prominent in the campaign narrative. The [observation mission] observed rallies where ethnicity was exploited to mobilise political support' (European Union Election Observation Mission 2017: 20). Some scholarly observers have warned that there is a 'considerable potential… for ethnic rivalry' in the wake of Jammeh's departure (Wright 2018: 281).

Events in The Gambia thus appear to follow a familiar pattern. Political scientists and other scholars have a long record of linking authoritarian governments to the suppression of ethnicity, suggesting that ethnic conflict emerges in contexts of dramatic political transition and uncertainty. Posen's discussion of ethnic politics and the security dilemma is a particularly well-known example of this line of argument (Posen 1993; see also Rose 2000). From this point of view, the Gambian script goes something as follows: an authoritarian leader (Yahya Jammeh) of a multi-ethnic society and with a great deal of investment in the mythology of his person leaves office, and, as a result, latent ethnic politics bubble to the surface as the various ethnic identities offer a ready-made, hitherto suppressed, vehicle for political mobilisation and claims-making.

We do not think the Gambian case fits this model. Our argument in this article is that an understanding of the momentum of ethnicity in contemporary Gambian politics must take into account an accusatory politics in which contests over moral legitimacy in the political sphere hinge on the ability to articulate political claims along non-ethnic lines while, simultaneously, denouncing purportedly ethnically articulated claims as illegitimate, indecent and uncivilised. Ethnic politics are thus less about activating latent ethnic identifiers to stake claims to power, privilege or access to resources based on such identifiers, but more about articulating moral condemnation in a language that accomplishes three distinct, though related, things: first, it separates the present from the past in that it disqualifies the kind of ethnic invocations seen in the latter days of Jammeh's rule, whereby he tried to gin up anti-Mandinka sentiment, and

delegitimises analogous ethnic claims in the present. In the post-Jammeh context, this moral politics of ethnicity, or 'tribalism', is thus about separating oneself from the Jammeh-era and hitching one's political opponents to that dark chapter of Gambian history. Second, it draws the boundaries of the moral political community by articulating lines of political decency – or, rather, what kinds of arguments are decent and what that says about the people making those arguments – in a manner not possible during the Jammeh-era. Third, whereas ethnically based claims-making is in a sense based on past grievances, this accusatory politics is anticipatory and speculative: the urgency behind it is derived less from an actual state of affairs at present and more from a fear of what 'tribalism' might usher in. The kind of corporate politics along ethnic lines (be it in terms of electoral contestation or resource allocation) seen in many other African countries is simply not present to a significant extent in The Gambia. On a conceptual level, furthermore, our analysis suggests that the persistent, yet often critiqued, focus on identity in African politics – even if conceptualised in more subtle ways such as, for example, overlapping circles of identity (e.g. Chabal 2013) – needs to be supplemented by a focus on the moral re-constitutive effects of (anti-)identitarian slurs in political contestation and cooperation and, in the case of accusations of 'tribalism', a focus on the moral politics of anti-tribalism.

In order to capture the historical trajectories of these contemporary dynamics, this article examines the accusatory and anticipatory politics of ethnicity in The Gambia in a largely chronological fashion. Immediately following this introduction, we briefly address conventional understandings of the intersection of ethnicity and politics in sub-Saharan Africa and detail how our understanding of the Gambian example provides for a different framework. In the following section, we provide an overview of the social importance of ethnicity in The Gambia. In the next three sections, we take a chronological approach, starting with the lead-up to independence and the presidency of Dawda Jawara, followed by The Gambia under Jammeh (1994–2017), and ending with the 'New Gambia' under President Barrow (through 2019). In these three sections, we will show that while there have been attempts at political mobilisation along ethnic lines, these remain marginal and have been repeatedly disqualified by condemnations of 'tribalism'. These three sections further foreground the directionality of publicly voiced suspicions and accusations of negative 'tribalist' potentiality, the ways in which ethnicity figures in constitutional and legal documents, and the moral politics of public outcries against tribalism.

We are basing the analysis on primary sources, including online news articles and social media, and secondary sources. Online news articles, it should be emphasised, are used as documentation of political rhetoric, and the moral and political judgements therein, and not as straightforward evidence of past events. We also recognise that some of the online sources, such as *Freedom Newspaper*, are controversial in The Gambia and might in some ways represent the alarmist edge of political discourse – which, in fact, would go to support our argument.[1] We are also drawing on research conducted by us over the

last two decades (Hultin has conducted research in The Gambia since the early 2000s, Sommerfelt since the mid-1990s), focusing in particular on fieldwork carried out in 2017 (Hultin) and 2019 (Hultin and Sommerfelt), after the ascendancy of Barrow. Empirical material from this fieldwork is by and large ethnographic, generated in informal discussions and unstructured interviews.

ETHNICITY, POLITICS AND THE MORALITY OF 'TRIBALIST' ACCUSATIONS

In the scholarly literature on ethnicity in contemporary African politics, ethnicity is typically treated as a pre-existing descent-based identity that is both an independent variable in explaining particular outcomes (e.g. civil war) and a form of belonging that is manipulated by politicians in systems of clientelism (cf. Chandra 2006). Ethnicity thus frequently has a negative moral shading; it is seen as an obstacle to democratic consolidation and fertile ground for centrifugal social forces. Thus, we have, to give a few examples, studies showing how ethnic identities in countries such as Kenya and Burundi are mobilised (and strengthened) by a fractured political elite (respectively, Carrier & Kochore 2014; Daley 2006) while other scholars have linked ethnic identity to different policy preferences (Lieberman & McClendon 2012). This is not to say that ethnicity necessarily predicts political alliances and claims. Recent work in political science problematises the link between ethnicity and party preferences, which in turn suggests that ethnicity is but one of several variables affecting party loyalty and electoral competition (Basedau *et al.* 2011; Cheeseman & Ford 2007; but see also Eifert *et al.* 2010). Such findings, however, do not necessarily alter the negative conceptualisation of ethnicity as an obstacle to be overcome and a potentially troublesome variable in the African political calculus (e.g. Arthur 2009).

It thus remains the case that ethnicity provides a central aperture through which Africans interact with the post-colonial state and its agents, paving the way for what Berman (1998) famously referred to as 'uncivil nationalism' or, in a slightly different way, what Ekeh (1975) sought to capture with his invocation of the 'two publics'. These two influential takes have in common a premise that ethnicity somehow has an existence prior and external to the political and, in many ways, trumps the idealised (if not naive) expectations of formal state politics. Lonsdale (1994) sought to develop this distinction by separating 'moral ethnicity' from 'political tribalism'. In Lonsdale's telling, 'moral ethnicity' takes on a more everyday sheen, consisting of the quotidian (though not inconsequential) claims of belonging, identity and morality, while 'political tribalism' is the activation of such identities for purposes of advancement and gain in political competition between similarly activated groups. Here, ethnicity in and of itself is not problematic (or 'uncivil'), but when mobilised it becomes problematically expressed as 'tribalism'. The challenge, as scholars such as Lonsdale, Berman and Ekeh all argue, is that the weaknesses of the formal state apparatuses in most of Africa are such that ethnicity becomes the default

basis for political contestation and identity formation. Something broadly akin to what political theorists and philosophers have referred to as 'constitutional patriotism' (see e.g. Müller 2009) or a patriotism directed less to an idea of a nation (or ethnicity) and more to a set of rules embodied in the state and its founding documents, is simply not possible.

We do not discount the importance of ethnicity in African politics generally and recognise that the distinction between ethnicity as an everyday identity and the political activation thereof is helpful, but we believe that this formulation is missing an important step, captured by a focus on the moral politics of accusation. Werbner's comments on Lonsdale takes us closer to this moral politics. According to Werbner, in his study of what he refers to as the 'reasonable radicals' of Botswana, the distinction between ethnicity and tribalism presumes that ethnic identities are relatively impermeable. Where they are permeable, as in Botswana (Werbner's case; and, we would add, in The Gambia), ethnicity is less about 'unprincipled factional competition' and more about 'moral relations in postcolonial super-tribalism' (Werbner 2004: 69). These relations need not, however, be understood solely along ethnic lines; in Werbner's post-colonial politics, ethnicity is simply one of several possible axes of disagreement and alliance-formation. In practice, this means that tribalism as we use it herein is agnostic on the time-depth, authenticity and habitus of ethnic identifications; insofar as ethnicity entails situationally invoked claims of belonging vis-à-vis others, it operates in this context as a meta-political claim where the important issue is not whether a particular ethnic group is being activated, in organisational terms, but whether ethnicity as a salient category is activated in the first place (cf. Yeros 1999). When scholars such as Berman (1998: 339) bemoan the absence of a 'trans-ethnic public arena grounded in universalistic norms and civic trust governing both political and economic transactions', they are thus not simply diagnosing a feature of African politics, but are also advancing a meta-political claim as to what politics ought to look like. This is, in effect, the 'radicalism' of Werbner's interlocutors. In Werbner's telling, what is radical is the attempt to bring into being a trans-ethnic public arena even when that goes against the grain of ethnicity, an attempt which is in presumed contradistinction to tribalism. The latter, when weaponised in the form of an accusation or slur, is a way to delegitimise a possible entrant into this trans-ethnic public arena, irrespective of whether that entrant is actually engaging in any kind or form of ethnic politics or not. The language of 'tribalism' is thus only in part functionally equivalent to ethnic stereotyping (e.g. Jackson 2006; Onoma 2017), with a key difference being that it not only delegitimises the target, but also the very way the target seeks to enter the political arena. The moral politics of accusation is thus a meta-politics that delineates the proper boundaries of politics.

Importantly, we are not presuming a kind of teleology to African politics whereby, with the right 'inputs', ethnic and other sectarian claims are assimilated into a trans-ethnic public arena. Such a teleology has been important to various African countries' post-independence nation building projects – for

example, in Zimbabwe the post-civil war nationalist discourse dismissed ethnicity to the point of criminalisation (Mhlanga 2013) – but that does not mean it is analytically helpful. It should also be emphasised that we do not limit the use of the concept of ethnicity as descriptive of inter-group relationships (on such reductionism, see Banks 1996). In The Gambia, as developed below, ethnicity is permeable and does not always constitute clear-cut boundaries between mutually exclusive groups; it is made relevant in dyadic relationships, and occasionally in networks (e.g. trade). In local communities, relationships follow kinship distinctions more than ethnicity per se. In the Gambian legislature and in national politics overall, the 'notion of the "good constituency" MP is strong' (Wiseman 1991: 87), with National Assembly members' reputation depending on the extent to which they have pushed their constituents' interests irrespective of ethnicity. In political campaigning, candidates tend to appeal to residents in their constituencies regardless of 'tribe', promising services to local communities in return for political loyalty. For example, during the 2017 campaigns, representatives of the Gambia Democratic Congress (GDC) reportedly handed out cement and similar gifts, and in return at least one village chief promised that the village would vote for the GDC (European Union Election Observation Mission 2017: 20). This kind of localisation, or 'regionalisation' in Werbner's terms (2004: 4), cuts 'across prior ethnic and tribal divisions and [is]sometimes given a new cultural gloss … in reflection of the emergence of fresh identities'. Moreover, ethnicity works at the intersection of regionalism, urban–rural divides, caste, class and other mechanisms for differentiation (Kea 2010: 66).

Emphasising the effects of ethnic slurs in political contestation and cooperation, we argue that competitive accusations of tribalism demarcate and reconstitute boundaries of moral politics. Accusations and counter-accusations of tribalism constitute a discourse on moral being and highlight immoral relations in a manner that disqualifies certain political claims (and, by extension, the people making them) as indecent (cf. Englund 1996). Though public acts of moral distancing from 'tribalists' is thus part of identity-politics, Gambian debates on ethnicity foreground distinctions and notions of civility, entangling ethnicity with the political *and* the moral.[2] By the same token, accusations and counter-accusations of tribalism raise emotions that are simultaneously political and moral (cf. Johansen *et al.* 2018). The Gambian discourse focuses attention to the moral character of particular political persons, parties, and branches within political parties – and their negative potentiality. As Vigh (2015: 120) argues with reference to Guinea-Bissau, politics 'is in part seen as centred on a competition for the depths and intensity of perspective … Having eyes allows people to protect themselves from what conspires against them.' In question is not only the moral being of particular political persons at present, but a competitive accusatory form that drives societal and political process and that we dub 'anticipatory tribalism': recognition of the potential for a tribalist future, involving expectations, accusations, speculations or fears, about particular persons or groupings about their proving to be, or becoming, 'tribalists' in

the future. Anticipation takes the form of the constant 'awakening' of the present (Bryant & Knight 2019: 26) – encompassing efforts to ward off, prevent, or otherwise informally govern prospects of such a future.

Ethnic self-identification is part of daily life in The Gambia and ethnicity is linked, for example, to particular livelihoods, occupations and settlement patterns. Sarr (2016: 41) describes how, in pre-19th century Gambia, ethnicity was tied to land claims which in turn hardened and politicised these identities, 'however fictitious they were'. Where contemporary livelihoods are concerned, to mention a few examples, rice cultivation along the River Gambia remains particularly associated with female Mandinka cultivators, while in the upper river areas it is also associated with Soninke (or Serahuli) identity, and in southern Gambia with Jola ethnicity (Carney & Watts 1991: 654). In contrast, Wolof rice cultivation is held up as an oddity known only in a handful of settlements, as in the town of Kaur (Sommerfelt 2013a: 74). Wolof subsistence agriculture is to a greater extent associated with men's and women's millet cultivation, whereas ethnic stereotyping connects Fula to cattle herding. As cattle are a source of wealth across several of what are now known as ethnic groups or 'tribes', many majority Mandinka and Wolof villages in the rural areas have Fula households on their outskirts, with cross-generational relationships between particular Fula families and other members of the community being based on the exchange of services and produce relating to herding (Sommerfelt 2013b: 62). This is visible in built-up areas too, where Fula women predominate in sales of dairy products. Further, Lau & Scales (2016) report that Jola identity is key to women oyster harvesters, while Gaibazzi (2015) has described how Gambian Soninke ethnicity historically has been linked to particular constellations of agriculture and trade, for instance in diamonds (a notion which remains in present stereotypes that connects Soninke identity to 'high end' commerce).

Several social entities that are referred to by Gambians today as 'tribes' result from mutations and consolidations of identities that precede colonial rule, and from colonial assignments of reified tribal, or 'ethnic', constructs (cf. Wright 1999; Nugent 2008). Moreover, the association of 'tribal' entities with distinct livelihoods may give a false impression of ethnicity as constituting fixed boundaries or categorical labels of personal belonging. In both rural and urban Gambia, ethnic identities are highly mutable. In conversations about personal background, changes in a family's ethnic identification appear more often than not – changes for instance brought about by the adoption of a new source of livelihood following migration. Thus, when a person's 'origin' is debated, it nearly always unleashes stories of migration, change and interchange: 'those here surnamed Kebbeh were Fulbe while living in Senegal five generations ago but now we are Wolof'; 'My father is Serahuli but I was raised by Mandinka relatives so I guess I am Mandinko now'; or, 'the families

surnamed Cham are Wolof or Mandinka now but were originally Fulbe from Futa Toro'; and so forth (see also Wright 1999: 417). When Gambians talk about their background in ethnic terms, they reveal layer upon layer of social integration across differences of language and tradition (Sommerfelt 2016). This is also manifest in notions of equivalent surnames (Juawara and Mbow, Willan and Fofana, Tunkara and Kanteh, Nyang and Sanyang) that reflect caste distinctions across ethnic difference; and in joking relationships between persons defined as different in terms of ethnicity or descent, village affiliation or region of origin. These relationships connote reciprocal obligations and permit inter-group banter that, absent the joking relationship, can be offensive. Thus, Davidheiser (2006: 845) argues, joking relationships are a 'ritualised social space' that diffuses tension both between and within ethnic groups. We further emphasise that ethnic banter of this sort is part of inter-personal dynamics as much as inter-group relationships, conveying ethnic differentiation but not necessarily ethnic incorporation at a group level.[3] Marriage across ethnic lines is also very common, a reality that distinguishes ethnicity from boundaries between groups of professional hereditary specialisation ('caste'), across which marriage remains contentious (Sommerfelt 2013a). In this sense, ethnicities are partly overlapping and permeable (cf. Werbner 2004: 68–9).

Ethnicity, then, intersects in complex ways with hereditary occupational specialisation or caste-like formations. Notably, and similar to 'caste' relationships, livelihood specialisations associated with ethnicity – and relationships between 'first-comers' and 'strangers' – have contributed to mutual dependence in local communities, as in the case of Fula herdsmen, as much as they have provoked rivalries (cf. Sarr 2016: 7–8). Furthermore, in The Gambia, as elsewhere in Africa, ethnicity is one of several 'criteria of stratification' (Kea 2010: 66) in daily life, intersecting with caste, class, gender, descent, nationality, generational, and religious differences. Unlike many other African countries, however, such ethnic identifications have not been successfully mobilised to a significant extent, at least not during the late colonial era through to today (a partial exception is, as we will see, is the late Jammeh-era).

ETHNICITY IN COLONIAL AND NATIONAL POLITICS UNTIL 1994

In light of the enduring presence of ethnic identification in everyday life, the relative lack of attention to ethnicity in the scholarship on recent Gambian politics, which in and of itself is quite small, is notable. In scholarly discussions of the 2016 election and its aftermath, Kora & Darboe (2017) and Hultin *et al.* (2017) discuss ethnicity in passing as an ultimately futile ploy by Jammeh (see below). Perfect (2017: 327) addresses ethnicity in relation to the 2016 election but concludes that it is difficult to assess this relation beyond noting that Jammeh continued to enjoy strong Jola support. Hartmann (2017) does not address ethnicity at all. Scholarship on Gambian politics prior to 2016 inconsistently addresses ethnicity, with notable exceptions (Hughes 1975, 1982; Hughes

& Perfect 2006; Wiseman 1985, 1991). In their thorough work on The Gambia's political history, Hughes & Perfect (2006) discuss the significance of ethnicity in party politics and in each of The Gambia's elections, but the volume focuses on the pre-Jammeh (pre-1994) era. The most comprehensive work on The Gambia, edited by Gambian scholars, only mentions ethnicity in relation to the practice of joking kinship, the Casamance conflict, and in the context of the history of political parties but not with reference to contemporary politics (Saine *et al.* 2013). Indeed, conventional wisdom holds that neither of The Gambia's two governments until 2017 – Jawara's Peoples' Progressive Party (PPP) government, and Jammeh's APRC (Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction) government – significantly exploited ethnicity for political ends (Hughes 2000: 48). This conventional wisdom is well expressed by Ceesay (2006: 202) who concludes that 'tribalism is a small factor in all aspects of Gambian political, economic, and social life, but not a viable one'.

We believe that the conventional wisdom is, in some important respects, correct in that appeals to ethnicity in Gambian politics have been mostly unsuccessful or sublimated into other distinctions. Historically, the most significant fault line in Gambian politics has been the divide between the greater Banjul area and the rest of the country, which maps onto the colonial-era differentiation of the Colony and the Protectorate. This divide has created cross-constituency and cross-party cooperation in the legislature after independence between the Banjul area and the upcountry (Wiseman 1991: 87). It also largely translates into an urban/rural divide, though there are pockets of urban life beyond the Banjul metropolitan area.[4]

However, as rare as ethnicity as a mobilising factor seems to be in Gambian politics, it has loomed large as a kind of shadow presence. There is a long history in The Gambia of accusatory politics of ethnicity in the form of the strategic and affective deployment of tribal slurs. We will briefly discuss the run-up to The Gambia's independence from the UK in 1965, followed by a discussion of the Jawara (1965–1994) and Jammeh (1994–2017) eras. As we will see, there was a turning point towards the end of the Jammeh-era: during the last years of his presidency, ethnicity was exploited publicly in a more inflammatory fashion than earlier and it took the form of accusations of narrow, ethnically motivated political projects directed at his political opponents. This accusatory rhetoric was a strategy that must be understood against the background of the relative success of The Gambia's first post-colonial leadership in downplaying ethnicity in the political arena.

In the run-up to independence, ethnic labels, insofar as they were used in political rhetoric, reflected the division of Gambia into the Colony and the Protectorate, made up of the in-land and up-river rural area that held the absolute majority of the population. The colonial administration was concentrated in the Colony and administrative positions were dominated by Aku and urban Wolof (and these groups dominated Gambian 'high society' generally). In the Protectorate, in contrast, ethnic Mandinka (also spelled Mandinko or Mandingo) were in the majority. Political parties were initially based in the

urban area. Pierre Sarr N'jie, an educated Wolof urbanite, founded the United Party (UP) in 1954 (Hughes & Perfect 2006: 124) and 'was the first to make use of ethnicity as a means of widening his political base' beyond the Colony (Hughes 1982: 67). Importantly, insofar as this appeal to ethnicity was successful, it was as a negative identity, not a positive one; he ultimately sought to base the party less in an affirmative identity but in what it was not. At first, N'jie tried to appeal to Wolof communal sensibilities (see e.g. Hughes & Perfect 2006: 124, 145–6) but given their small numbers in the Protectorate he transitioned to an 'anti-Mandinka coalition of the numerically smaller communities; bringing together Fula, Serahuli and Wolof, but not the Jola, who chose to identify politically with the Mandinka' (Hughes 1982: 67–8; see also Rice 1967: 338–9). Even so, the UP candidates were ethnically diverse, and in the 1962 election, as many as a third (ten in number) of those who ran for the UP were Mandinka (Hughes & Perfect 2006: 152–3).[5]

N'jie's attempts to curry favour with (non-Mandinka) rural Gambians did not give him a huge following. In contrast, Jawara, along with other young Mandinka men, profited on the anti-elite and anti-colonial sentiments in the Protectorate. The PPP, founded in 1959, became a rural political movement, a 'green uprising' (Hughes & Perfect 2006: 134–59), that aimed to shift access to economic and political resources from the Colony and its population to the provinces. It appealed to pro-Mandinka communalism and anti-Wolof sentiments alike, though it was not explicitly framed as an anti-Wolof (or pro-Mandinka) movement. During its early years, the party had an almost entirely Mandinka leadership but it also became popular among Jola (Hughes & Perfect 2006: 145). Moreover, the colonially inherited resource divide between the urban core and the countryside was recreated as a political division only partly along ethnic lines. The PPP secured a victory in the election in 1962, led The Gambia to independence in 1965, and won every election till Yahya Jammeh seized power.

The leader of the UP, Pierre Sarr Njie, soon charged the PPP with 'using anti-Wolof slogans, while apparently adopting an anti-Mandinka stance itself' (Hughes & Perfect 2006: 153), but accusations of 'tribalism' also went in the opposite direction, from the PPP towards the UP. However, from the start of PPP rule, Jawara made an effort to unite the former Protectorate and Colony, at least in part because of political pragmatism and the recognition that The Gambia's heterogeneity necessitated support from multiple ethnic groups (Ceesay 2006: 47).[6] National reconciliation replaced the rural stamp of the PPP, and the Mandinka-element was consciously downplayed (cf. Hughes & Perfect 2006: 168–71). This was done so consistently by Jawara that it created tensions within his own party, both from its founding fathers and the youth. In 1975, a disgruntled rural, Mandinka opposition in the PPP broke out and established the National Convention Party (NCP), headed by Jawara's former vice-president Sheriff Dibba – reportedly in part due to frustration with Jawara's inclusion of urban Wolof and other minority ethnic groups, although personal schisms and ambitions likely played a significant role as well (Hughes & Perfect 2006: 171, 187–90). However, this party realignment did

not lead to a change in voting patterns along ethnic lines in the 1977 and 1982 general elections, nor in the 1979 council elections in urban Serrekunda (Wiseman 1985). President Jawara continued to downplay ethnicity in his own ranks and his government also condemned tribalist tendencies in public media. One incident that exemplifies this approach concerns Bella Jeng, a famous oral historian (griot) living in Banjul, who regularly spoke on the state-run Radio Gambia. In a broadcast in the late 1980s, Jeng echoed discriminatory formulations of N'jie when he held that Gambia's 'problems' and the reasons for developmental malaise were the 'three Ms': Mosquitoes, Monkeys and Mandinko. The then Information Minister, Lamin Saho demanded he apologise for the statement.[7] Accusations of tribalism were voiced explicitly in the run-up to the 1962 general election, between the PPP and N'jie's UP reciprocally (Hughes & Perfect 2006: 153). In the 1977 election, the NCP was thought of in both rural and urban areas as a party favouring Mandinka and the PPP accused the NCP of antagonism toward non-Mandinka (Hughes & Perfect 2006: 193). With reference to the 1987 elections, Hughes & Perfect note that 'The PPP's portrayal of the NCP as a Mandinka "tribalist" party and Dibba as an ethnic champion, rather than as a genuine national leader … was widely accepted by the electorate' (2006: 237).

The downplaying of ethnicity in Gambian politics following independence reflected the ideological line promoted at the founding of the Organisation of African Unity where nationhood was to be tied to the territory, rather than to ethnicity. The Gambia's first post-colonial leadership's efforts in downplaying ethnicity in the political arena were successful, on a par with that of Senegal (Lambert 1998: 587). Accusations of tribalism in the Jawara-era attributed narrow-minded agendas to others, and simultaneously, turned this charge into a form of moral and political defamation. Thus, the explosiveness of the charge was not to put the concerns of one ethnic group over another, but to be insufficiently deferential to the trans-ethnic or supra-tribal ambition of the post-colonial nation-building project (cf. Apter 2008: 108–9, on the drive to override ethnic particularism in post-independence Nigeria). Saine's (2009: 24) description of the nature of Jawara's rule as 'sembocracy', a portmanteau consisting of *sembo* (Mandinka for 'power' or 'force') and democracy, well captures this coexistence of de facto Mandinka pre-eminence and avowals of a trans-ethnic body politic. As Hughes (1975) has argued, furthermore, the PPP leadership and the President should be distinguished, as Jawara faced internal criticism for recruiting non-Mandinka who had not taken part in the independence struggle to ministerial posts. Thus, the notion of sembocracy conveys this debate, and a popular suspicion directed at Mandinka of hidden political agendas, that surfaced in Jammeh's later rhetoric.[8]

ETHNICITY AND POLITICS DURING THE SECOND REPUBLIC

In 1994, Yahya Jammeh, a lieutenant in the Gambia National Army, seized power along with a few other junior officers. The justification for the coup

was the alleged corruption of the Jawara government, although intra-military politics also played a role (see Wiseman & Vidler 1995; Saine 1996; Hughes & Perfect 2006; Dwyer 2017). The coup makers and the leadership of the subsequently formed Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council came from different ethnic groups and religions, and a couple of them had non-Gambian ancestry (one, Edward Singhateh, had an English mother, another, Sadibou Hydara, was of Mauritanian descent) (Perfect 2016: 207, 397; Wiseman 1996: 929–31). Jammeh, a member of the Jola ethnic group, and the rest of the AFPRC government did not embark on any overt attempts to mobilise ethnic group(s) or in any way 'ethnicise' Gambian politics. In fact, section 104(4) of the *Elections Decree 1996* proclaimed by Jammeh's government explicitly prohibited the formation of political parties on 'sectional, religious, ethnic or regional lines'. This prohibition was lifted from the 1969 draft constitution and carried forward to the 1997 constitution (it was not included in the 1970 constitution, however).

The campaigns leading to the 1996 election, in which Jammeh prevailed, did not feature appeals to ethnicity, nor did the 1997 parliamentary election (Hughes 2000). Ethnicity did play more of a role in the 2001 election, although not in the form of explicit appeals for ethnic coalition building. In the lead-up to the 2001 election, as well as subsequent ones, there were frequent allegations that Jammeh encouraged Jola from Senegal's restive Casamance region to vote illegally in The Gambia, on the presumption that they would support Jammeh and the APRC. It is almost certainly the case that such ballot stuffing took place, but it is less certain that it had any noticeable impact on the results (Saine 2008; Perfect & Hughes 2013; see also Hultin 2008, on the persistent rumours of Senegalese Jola interference in The Gambia's electoral process). The worries over Jammeh using his Jola ethnicity to cement his rule were compounded by the seeming privileging of Jola in appointments to key positions in the security services (Dwyer 2017). And even if, as Ceesay notes, hard evidence of favouritism toward the Jola (or any other group) is difficult to come by, it is also the case that Jammeh's government 'did little to stifle reports of favouritism' (Ceesay 2006: 201). These reports aside, in the 2006 election Jammeh won in constituencies across the country, including areas that were largely Mandinka speaking, making an ethnic voting pattern not easily discernible and possibly suggesting that Jammeh did better among the Mandinka than in previous elections (Saine 2008).

It bears noting that Jammeh also invoked identity-politics in a way that does not fit the rubric of ethnicity but that nonetheless was reliant on tropes of 'us' versus 'them' (where the 'them' is both external and internal). Jammeh carefully cultivated an image of himself as a devout Muslim and used state resources to promote the building of mosques, facilitate Gambian participation in the *hajj*, and so on. He condemned acts deemed 'un-Islamic', ranging from immodest dress to 'baby dumping' (Saine 2002: 169). Jammeh also promoted closer ties with Saudi Arabia and the more austere Wahhabi school of Islam through educational exchanges and the appointment of the Wahhabi-trained

Imam Abdoulie Fatty as his spiritual advisor (Darboe 2004: 77). Fatty was the main critic of the Ahmadiyya, a minority Islamic group that has existed in The Gambia since the 1950s and whose leaders were expelled by Jammeh in, as Hughes (2000: 48) put it, 'the only example of a state action against religious minorities' under the first few years of Jammeh's rule. This act aside, Jammeh did resist further marginalisation of the Ahmadiyya and he dismissed Imam Fatty in 2014, and, in 2015, impounded his passport, ostensibly in part because of Fatty's attacks on the Ahmadiyya (*Rabwah Times* 3.11.2015; see also Perfect 2016: 143–4). Jammeh also made repeated calls for the introduction of Shari'a in The Gambia (presumably for criminal matters), and at the end of 2015 Jammeh unconstitutionally declared the country an Islamic republic (*BBC News* 12.12.2015). Jammeh's ad hoc approach to religion, with his appeals to more conservative strains of Islam in fits and starts, arguably sharpened religious differences (cf. Ceesay 2006: 201; Janson 2014: 49–50). These religious claims did not, however, translate into any kind of political programme or gain.

Towards the end of Jammeh's rule, and especially in the lead-up to the 2016 election, Jammeh invoked ethnicity in a more frequent and direct way (Sommerfelt 2016). It took the form of accusations of tribalism that now pinned Mandinka against Jola, as opposed to the colonial and immediate post-colonial periods, when accusations were primarily exchanged between Mandinka, aligned with Jola, and urban Wolof (cf. Hughes 1982: 67–68; Hughes & Perfect 2006). During a political rally in June 2016, Jammeh sought to disqualify the political opposition by describing it in ethnic terms, and said that he would have these opponents killed: 'I will wipe you out and nothing will come out of it. The first demonstration; they were all Mandinkas. The second demonstration were Mandinkas and two Fullas [sic]. The Fullas have joined the bad guys; welcome to hell' (quoted in *Freedom Newspaper* 4.6.2016). In the same speech, Mandinka were described as foreigners: 'In 1864, there were no Mandinkas in this country. You came from Mali. I will not allow foreigners to destroy this country.' Adama Jeng, The United Nations Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide, condemned the statements a few days later, expressing profound alarm (United Nations Secretary-General 2016).

Jammeh's attempts to ferment anti-Mandinka sentiment may indeed have backfired as a contributing factor to his surprise loss in the 2016 presidential election (Hultin *et al.* 2017). In the final result, Barrow received 43% of the national vote, compared with 40% for Jammeh and 17% for Kandeh (leader of the GDC, Gambia Democratic Congress). Barrow won 27 out of 53 constituencies, with Jammeh winning 21 and Kandeh five (results are available from Independent Electoral Commission 2016). Jammeh scored runaway victories in the Foni constituencies, the traditional Jola heartland (the average margin of victory for Jammeh in these five constituencies was 68%). Other areas of Jammeh success included one of three constituencies comprising Banjul (Barrow won the other two Banjul constituencies with more than 10%), parts

of the area surrounding Kerewan (a major population centre on the north bank of the Gambia River), around Janjanbureh (a large town in the centre of the country) and around Basse, in the eastern extremity of The Gambia. Barrow for his part, had his most sizable victories in the coastal city of Bakau as well as in the area around Mansakonko. In short, with the partial exception of Jammeh's success in the Jola heartland, the electoral map is so scrambled that it seems unlikely that Jammeh's anti-Mandinka ploy was successful and that different ethnic groups gravitated to different parties based on ethnic appeals.[9]

ETHNIC RHETORIC AND TRIBALISM IN THE NEW GAMBIA

Even if Jammeh's tribalist rhetoric was unsuccessful, it was nonetheless part of a strategy of delegitimising political interest groups in a way that must be understood against the background of the earlier efforts and relative success of The Gambia's first post-colonial leadership in downplaying ethnicity in politics. After the 2016 presidential election and change in government, ethnicity seems to have become a recurrent theme in public debate and politics, notable as much in the consistent downplaying of it and in the allegation of others using it. The Barrow government has, on the whole, sought to minimise the saliency of ethnicity while blaming Jammeh's regime (and by implication, current Jammeh loyalists) for drumming up ethnic animosity. An example of this is the statement delivered by the Attorney General, Abubacarr Tambadou, at the inauguration of the country's Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission (TRRC). According to Tambadou, Jammeh had bequeathed to the new government a 'deeply polarized society based on ethnic and political considerations', which had 'simmered beneath the façade of peaceful co-existence' (quoted in *The Fatu Network* 15.10.2018). The solution to this ethnic tension, Tambadou further suggested, was simply to reassure all Gambians of the reliability of the rule of law.

The asserted irrelevance of ethnicity is also seen in some of the landmark legal developments under Barrow. In the *Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission Act 2017,* ethnicity is not considered a variable in the transitional justice calculations in that there are no allowances for ensuring ethnically equitable representation beyond a rather anodyne statement in paragraph 4(2) that the president 'shall have regard to the geographical, religious, cultural and gender diversity of The Gambia'. The other two major laws that, together with the TRRC Act, arguably constitute the legal foundation of the New Gambia, use even weaker language: the *Constitutional Review Commission Act 2017* simply calls for regard to the 'geographical, professional, age and gender diversity of The Gambia' (para. 5(2)), while the *National Human Rights Commission Act 2017* has no such language at all. These documents follow a long tradition of Gambian law to be virtually silent on matters of ethnicity beyond a minimalist interpretation of non-discrimination (and the aforementioned ban on ethnically based political parties). Other notable examples

include the *Local Government Act 2002*, a sweeping act that significantly reconfigured how The Gambia is administered. It simply prohibits (a) discrimination on ethnic grounds in the election of local government officials and (b) tasks the country's Independent Electoral Commission not to take ethnic status into account when delineating constituencies (part III, para. 17(5) and part II, para. 6(1), respectively). While, like many other African countries, The Gambia recognises customary and religiously based law as valid in a limited range of circumstances, the net result is that ethnicity (or 'tribe') is not considered a significant, nor legitimate, constituent element in the Gambian body-politic.[10] This approach is in contrast to other African countries that have given a more robust expression to their pluri-ethnic composition in law and policy. In Nigeria, for example, the federal character principle has been 'translated into a constitutional commitment, formulated primarily in ethnic and regionalist terms' (Kendhammer 2014: 11). Burundi's 2005 constitution sets forth ethnic quotas for its legislative body (Gilbert 2013: 423). Even Rwanda, which has effectively banned the rhetoric of ethnicity in public life since the genocide, acknowledges in its constitution that there are 'historically marginalized communities' (quoted in Gilbert 2013: 419).

The legal silence on ethnicity at first seems partly contradicted by The Gambia's electoral experience since Jammeh's departure. As mentioned in the Introduction, the EU Election Observation Commission commented on the appearance of 'political tribalism' in connection with the 2017 parliamentary elections, and highlighted 'UDP appeals for the support of the Mandinka and the Manjago communities in Kanifing, in West Coast Region and in Lower River Region. The EU EOM also observed efforts by the GDC to call for the votes of the Fula community in the Lower River Region' (European Union Election Observation Mission 2017: 20). These observations are consistent with the surge in ethnic references ahead of and following the 2017 election, though, as before, the vociferousness of the ethnic discourse outpaces actual mobilisation.

What is frequently occurring is that public accusations of tribalism appear in allegations of attempts to monopolise power. In turn, responses to these accusations take the form of public outcries against the persons making them, in which the accusations are conceptualised as tribal insults. In the main, accusations continue to be directed at the Jola and the APRC (the party of former President Jammeh) by opponents to the APRC, on the one hand, and at the UDP and the Mandinka by opponents to the UDP, on the other. The other Gambian political parties and ethnic groups, including large proportions of Mandinka and UDP members, remain mostly above the fray (but see below). What is further striking is that even though this public rhetoric does occasionally translate into episodes of violence or unruliness, it is swiftly and roundly condemned and, furthermore, these condemnations escalate in a sort of one-upmanship based on disavowals of tribalism. In particular, a group of young UDP followers are regularly held to be promoting Mandinka as saviours of the nation (that is, saviours from Jammeh). Clashes between what is referred to as youth 'militants'

of the UDP and APRC supporters have occurred in both 2017 and 2018 (see, for example, *Freedom Newspaper* 3.4.2017; *The Point* 10.4.2017). Criticism has been directed at the founder and current leader of the UDP, Ousainou Darboe, for not condemning more explicitly these party elements, and he is regularly referred to as a Mandinka tribalist in social media (*The Point* 16.5.2018).[11] Also, tensions within the UDP party between Darboe and President Adama Barrow (who technically left the UDP in the lead-up to the 2016 elections because of electoral requirements, but remained closely associated with the UDP until the split with Darboe and the launch of the Barrow-centric National People's Party at the end of 2019; see, e.g. *Africanews* 3.1.2020) are veiled in ethnic rhetoric. Darboe was until recently the vice president under Barrow but was replaced in what seems to be a power struggle between Barrow and Darboe (*Freedom Newspaper* 7.12.2018).[12] A popular understanding (shared separately with both authors), is that Ousainou Darboe was promoting fellow Mandinka to important posts, for example to The Gambia's embassies, during his time as foreign minister (see also *Jollof News* 15.3.2019). Barrow, in contrast, is said to attempt to build a broader coalition across ethnic lines, appealing to former members of the APRC and nurturing a profile as a national bridge builder. During 2019, much political discussion in the country has focused on the possibility of introducing a presidential run-off system akin to what is practiced in France. One underlying assumption, shared with Hultin by a political activist, is that such a system would allow the smaller non-Barrow parties (i.e. not Darboe's UDP) to team up to exclude the UDP from the run-off, thereby minimising the risk of a Mandinka hold on the presidency.

These assumptions echo both the notion of sembocracy earlier voiced against Dawda Jawara's PPP-government, and the suspicions, expressed by Jammeh against his opponents, of a drive toward ethnically based government. Conversely, the Jola ethnic identity is often equated with loyalty to the APRC – the party of the former President (see Hultin 2020). In a 2017 shooting incident at Jammeh's hometown of Kanilai (*The Daily Observer* 5.6.2017), protesters demonstrated against what they saw as a singling out of the Foni area, and against the way that the ECOWAS forces (ECOMIG) related to the local population – especially regarding the holding of cattle entering the ECOMIG camp area and arrests of locals reclaiming the cattle. Rumours held that the reason why ECOMIG forces opened fire with live ammunition was fear of the presence of rebels from Casamance among the demonstrators – fellow Jola or Foni residents – but the rumours were never substantiated.

However, rather than the promotion of political claims based on arguments about ethnic or other discrimination, the most salient feature of invocations of ethnicity in public debate is the articulation of fears of the monopolisation of political power. In the case of moral outrage over accusations of ethnic political agendas voiced against Mandinka, however, an added dimension links the slur to implicit defence of former violence: 'To offend Mandinko is to repeat Jammeh's words', one former senior civil servant told Sommerfelt in January

2019, before continuing that it demonstrates 'lack of repent' over atrocities of the Jammeh era: 'They dance on the graves of our loved ones who died.' This was particularly acute in January and February 2019, when the TRRC process was instigated. Moreover, accusations of tribalism trigger counter-accusations, all of which are accompanied by competitive claims that disqualify particular persons and groups as legitimate political beings. In this discourse, ethnic relations constitute immoral relations, similar to Werbner's portrayal of permeable ethnicities constituting moral relations (Werbner 2004: 69).

An attempt to disqualify political and moral being through an accusation of tribalism permeated the case of The Gambia's first arrest for hate speech. In September 2018, Lie Saine, a former member of the National Assembly for APRC, was held and charged for incitement to violence and seditious intention. The arrest followed the circulation through WhatsApp of a 21 minutes long recording in Wolof, in which Saine spoke his mind on the state of the nation. Most media outlets summarise the statements as depictions of Mandinka as 'selfish, hypocritical and wicked' (*The Point* 11.9.2018). The recording, though, follows the same pattern of anticipatory tribalism pointed out above: during the first five minutes of the WhatsApp recording, Saine ascribes to Mandinka people a future objective to monopolise power, in spite of The Gambia belonging to all Gambians. He describes Mandinka as immoral, shameless, as dogs, and predicts Mandinka violence (or 'fighting') in what he anticipates to be future attempts to seize control of the country. Mandinka will lead the country into chaos, according to Saine. Capping his diatribe, Saine calls for the return of Jammeh as president and explicitly states that he prefers 'dictatorship' to the chaos and troubles of 'democracy'. The recording does not contain promotion of any particular ethnicities but is rich in derogatory statements about Senegalese, Europeans, and others whose ambitions, once again, he ties to self-serving 'interest'.

In conversations in both urban and rural areas in January and February 2019, most people we spoke with condemned Lie Saine's statements, but some, at the same time, claimed that Saine put into words the fears prompted by the UDP's alleged political ambitions to dominate the country, partly with reference to UDP youth. They accused the state of selective justice, a grievance that is also expressed in some local media (see, for example, *Foroyaa* 10.9.2018; *Unifying Radio* 3.9.2018). Moreover, competitive accusations of tribalism foreground notions of moral and immoral government – selflessness and selfishness – that entangle ethnicity with the political and the moral in a way that questions the ability to rule legitimately. Accusations are forward looking, warning against persons, ethnic groups, or political parties being tribalists at heart.

Although the fulcrums of this anticipatory moral politics of ethnicity is to a significant extent the APRC/Jola and UDP/Mandinka, it is important to note that other groups participate in accusations and condemnation. While fears over, say, a Fula or Serahuli hegemony are rarer – as are worries that one of the smaller political parties will somehow take over – that does not prevent members of those groups from tut-tutting the allegedly tribalist machinations

of others. An illustrative example is the interview with a former PDOIS candidate for a municipal seat published by *The Standard* newspaper (13.4.2017). In the interview, the politician-cum-teacher named Kebba Drammeh responded directly to the previously mentioned allegation in the EU report that the GDC and UDP had canvassed along ethnic lines. According to the article, Drammeh had expressed the view that 'tribal politics is only used by backward politicians whose ideas are primitive [and] dangerous to society'. The article quotes Kebba Drammeh as saying, 'What sould (sic) be our focus is Gambianess as there no is (sic) Mandinka passport, Fula passport, Jola passport or Wollof passport. It is only a Gambian passport meaning that Gambia comes first.'

CONCLUSION

Examples across the continent demonstrate that discourses on 'tribalism' that entail derogatory labels and convey resentment of particular ethnicities may encompass ideas of ethnic superiority. In the Gambian case, however, such ideas rarely surface in the public sphere. Quite to the contrary, claims of superiority or claims to resources with reference to ethnic belonging currently define the political fringes, those largely dismissed as morally unfit for public office. In The Gambia, the volume of 'tribalism' in public debate is increased by its anticipatory dimension: repeated accusations of hidden agendas of political take-over that are feared will materialise in systems of ethnic privilege in the future. Moreover, upsurges in ethnic references in electoral politics do not necessarily evidence political mobilisation within distinct and all-encompassing groups. While, to an extent, features of The Gambia's independence history – the strong individual efforts of Jawara to sideline ethnic politics, the invisibility of ethnicity in the country's constitutional arrangement, and so on – explains this difference, research on other African countries (e.g. Jackson 2006), suggests that the processes we have identified are more widely applicable.

It is to address this seeming disconnect between the volume of tribalism talk and the extent of existing mobilisations that we propose to think of Gambian ethnic politics in terms of anticipatory moral politics. This has the benefit of offering an exploration of these dynamics that captures the political effects of moral accusation, without taking identitarian frameworks for granted. In the same way, it does not preclude that political mobilisation within pockets of ethnic groups (or ethnic mobilisation within wings of political parties) can also happen – indeed, recent developments in The Gambia suggest that at least some of the worries of an emergent Mandinka youth bloc are credible. A focus on accusatory and anticipatory politics rather than political mobilisation of ethnicity in The Gambia highlights a continuously on-going process of negotiation and redrawing of boundaries of moral politics and decency, in a manner not possible during the era of the former president. What has bubbled to the surface when an autocrat has left political power, then, is an ethnic discourse that foregrounds moral and immoral relations in the body politic – present and in a potential future – as much as primordial identities.

NOTES

1. Some of the online newspaper articles we refer to have been removed from the home pages of the papers by 2020. Dates of last access of the articles are included in the reference list.

2. In extremis, such anti-tribalism can be essentially conservative as it seeks to disqualify political criticism based on identity-based grievances, no matter how real. See, for instance, Paul's (2018) discussion of the 'all lives matter' rejoinder to the Black Lives Matter movement.

3. For an early analytical framework that distinguishes between different dimensions of ethnic organisation and emphasises that ethnicity can take other forms than reified groups, see Handelman (1977). See also Banks (1996).

4. According to the 2013 census, 57.7% of the population is classified as urban; most of this population live in Kanifing and Brikama, the Local Government Areas adjacent to Banjul proper (Gambia Bureau of Statistics n.d.: 10). In the 2003 census this figure was 41% (Perfect 2016: 433).

5. We would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for bringing this point to our attention.

6. Jawara was a Mandinka-speaker from a largely Mandinka rural community but he married across ethnic boundaries.

7. Bella Jeng refused to apologise in public. He was fired from his post in Radio Gambia soon after this incident, but the reason for his dismissal remains unclear. Sommerfelt interviewed Bella Jeng in 1996, in part about his time in Radio Gambia. During the interview, he reiterated the view that Mandinka people were the cause of all of Gambia's 'troubles'. Lamin Saho, who reportedly sacked Jeng, was Minister of Tourism and Information from 1987 to May 1990 (Perfect 2016: 370).

8. Scholars have employed the concept of 'Mandingization' to characterise Mandinka ethnic influence in other arenas. In this usage, it refers to a trend and a model of ethnic change, which 'entails changes in agricultural practices, local political systems, gender relations, and kinship systems that are seen by Jolas as well as by scholars who study this region as flowing from the process of conversion to Islam and progressive adoption of "Mandinka ways of living"' (Thomson 2011: 96).

9. Unpublished research by Sait Matty Jaw of the University of The Gambia suggests a relationship between Mandinka ethnicity and the UDP vote – though it is not entirely clear if that is due to ethnic loyalty, region of country, the UDP's legacy as the main opposition party or other factors. We do not believe this changes our overall argument that the accusatory politics of ethnicity outstrip actual mobilisation.

10. Gambian law occasionally recognises the motive force of ethnic considerations in daily life. For example, the *Gambia Armed Forces Act 1985*, para 100 s. 2(e), specifies 'disputes or fights between ethnic groups' as something that needs to be reported.

11. American diplomats commented on what they saw as Darboe's tribalist leanings during the 2006 presidential election campaign (WikiLeaks 2006).

12. Ousainou Darboe was imprisoned ahead of the Presidential elections in 2016. Adama Barrow, a relative newcomer in Gambian politics, became the candidate for the opposition coalition. Barrow had to withdraw his membership from the UDP in order to stand as candidate for the coalition as the constitution prohibits candidates from representing two political parties simultaneously.

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