Constructivist Approach to Gambia-Senegal Relations: Analysis of the 'Two States, One People, and the 'Nearby Enemy' Discourse

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Abstract
This is a study of the foreign policy construction of Senegal by the Gambia under the presidency of Yahya A.J.J Jammeh who served as a military ruler of the Gambia from 1994-1996 and president from 1996-2016. The study relied on speeches, statements and communiqués contained in videos, audios and text as its source of data for analysis. Using Constructivism as a general theory and discourse analysis as a framework of analysis, the work argues that the Gambia's foreign policy with its neighboring country, Senegal was built upon two main social constructs, namely 'two states, one people' and 'nearby enemy'. Despite changes in the leadership in Senegal, it is argued that the Gambian leadership consistently constructed Senegal in the same way during the period under study. The paper concluded that these two constructs explained the often contradictory tense and cool relationships between the two countries. While the 'two states, one people' construct was used to argue for and build cordial relationships, 'the nearby enemy' construct was invoked to condemned Senegal and justify strained relations.

Introduction

The Gambia has a population of about 1.9 million people, and a total land area of 11000 square kilometers which makes it the smallest country on mainland Africa. The Gambia is surrounded by Senegal on all sides but the west where lies the Atlantic Ocean. The Gambia and Senegal share a border line extending to 600 kilometers (Hughes and Perfect, 2006). In his description of the Gambia's size, M'bai states "the navigable waterway is surrounded by 12-25 kilometers wide strips of territory on each bank, so that after the usual riverside marshes there are rarely more than two or three Gambian villages before entering Senegal…" (1992, p.60). Referred to as a geographic absurdity, the size, the geographic delimitations of the country is an outcome of the Anglo French rivalry which characterized colonialism in Africa and the subsequent Anglo French Convention which was meant to diffuse tensions and create permanent boundaries. "On 10 August 1889, the French and British agreed on how much of our land each owned. In 1891, the Colonial Boundaries Commission mapped out the territory" (Jawara, 2009, p.299). Its consequence is the colonial states of Gambia and Senegal. "The people and the land became divided into The Gambia and Senegal, separated from their Common history and heritage of thousands of years" (Jawara, 2009, p.299).

By 1961, the two countries had started to discuss their future relationship. PS Njie led the discussions as Chief Minister until 1962 when Jawara took over as Chief Minister. In Jawara's account (2009), both Senghore and Mamadou Dia were opposed to Gambia's independence. On Jawara's request, the UN Secretary General U. Thant sent a team of experts led by Hubertus Van Mook to study the kind of cooperation that is most feasible between the two countries. The committee recommended that a "Senegambia Federation" be established but this was rejected; Senegal had gained independence on 4th April 1960 while the Gambia waited until 1965 to have its own native prime minister (Jawara, 2009, p.299), hence it became independent in 1965 (Hughes and Perfect, 2006). The Gambia became a republic with full independence on 24th April 1970. A loose union referred to as The Senegambian Confederation was established by The Gambia and Senegal in 1982 following the 1981 insurgency in the Gambia when Senegal helped to crush the rebellion and restore Jawara's regime. The Confederation collapsed in 1989 due to disagreements about the leadership of the federation (Saine, 2009).

Jawara continued to rule the Gambia until 1994 when his government was toppled by the Junta (Jawara, 2009). The Junta established the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council which ruled the Gambia under the chairmanship of Captain Yahya Jammeh until 1996 when elections were held. Yahya Jammeh retired from the military, contested and won the 1996 elections. Jammeh won every election from 1996 to 2011 (Saine, 2009). However, he lost the 2016 presidential elections to an independent candidate, Adama Barrow. The Gambia is inhabited by 10 main different ethno-linguistic groups, the main ones being Mandinka, Fula, Wollof, Jola, Serahuli, Serere, etc. Over 90% of the population is Muslim, the remaining 5-9% is Christian and the rest hold other believes (Saine, 2009). The situation is no different in Senegal.

Hughes and Perfect (2006) argued that Gambia's foreign policy has been a reflection of the presidents'

personality, however how such a personality was developed and its impact on foreign policy making has not been researched. Saine (2009) on the other hand did argue that economic factors were the primary drivers of Jammeh's foreign policy although he recognized the role played by ideas in a summative statement. Therefore, the role of ideas and identity in constructing the foreign policy of the Gambia has been neglected. This paper seeks to fill that gap by focusing on two identities, ethnicity and regime type and how this led to a discourse on 'two states, one people' and the 'nearby enemy'. It is also argued that the differences in regime types have contributed to the construction of a foreign policy of Senegal as the 'nearby enemy'.

Theoretical Framework

This research focuses on the words and statements spoken and/or written by key actors in foreign policy construction. This is informed by the Constructivist paradigm as an epistemological and ontological point of view. Differentiating Constructivism from other paradigms, A.B Philips gives three ontological differences: "First, constructivists are philosophical idealists rather than materialists…Second, constructivists posit mutually constitutive relationship between agents and structure…Finally, behavior…is seen as essentially norm driven…" (Phillips, 2007, p.8). In International relations and its subfield of foreign policy, Constructivism denotes the role of ideas, beliefs, personalities, culture and ideology in foreign policy decision making. This is a fundamental departure from the assumptions of Realism and Liberalism.

Although Constructivism does not dismiss the existence and role of human nature and the structure of the system as well as international organisation and law, it argues that ideas, beliefs, culture, personality and their ideation define rationality and institutionalism (Hurd, 2008). Therefore, Constructivism requires the interpretation of foreign policy in their socio-political setting. One of the tools used in interpreting foreign policy is Discourse Analysis. Discourse focuses on the "patterns of language across texts and considers the relationship between language and the social and cultural contexts in which it is used" (Paltridge, B. 2006, p.2). Discourse Analysis in Michael Foucault's words, is not a linguistic concept alone but practice (Hall, 2001). In other words, it is about language. Language and reality are mutually constitutive; while reality is accessed through language, language too creates meaning for action and reality. Whereas physical objects do exist, without language we do not know what to call them or what meaning we attach to them (Fairclough, 2003).

For Wodak "[A]ll actors display their individuality, their self –otherwise, every professional in a specific field would have to act in the same way due to their position in the field and their acquired symbolic capital. Hence, the identity, the self of the actor influences the performance as well" (Wodak, 2011, p.11) Similarly, James Gee also stated that 'we use language to get recognized as taking on a certain identity or role, that is, to build an identity here and now (2011, p.11)." With language, people and institutions make an identity of themselves. Through the medium of language, ideas are expressed, beliefs are espoused and actions understood. The study of that language is called discourse analysis (Wodak, 2011).

Using discourse analysis in foreign policy helps in understanding words, sentences, paragraphs, their contextual meaning and the portrayal of action and actor. Therefore, when discourse analysis is employed, words and the context in which they were uttered, its portrayal of action and the distinctiveness of the beholder becomes the subject of study (Wodak, 2011). The use of discourse analysis is important and appropriate for policy analysis because foreign policy is best understood through the "structures of meaning" (Wæver, 2001, p.26). Furthermore, foreign policy goals and interests are determined by the framework of meaning (Larsen, 1999). Therefore, using discourse analysis will help to establish the role of nonmaterial factors, especially identity in the Gambia's foreign policy.

Discourse Analysis does not have a single framework for analysis. Parker argued that the philosophy of Discourse Analysis discourages the 'systematization' of a single approach. In this paper, Gee's analytical questions are adopted. Gee argued that "…discourse analyst can ask seven different questions about any piece of language-in-use" (Gee, 2010, p.18) They are:

1. How is this piece of language being used is used to make certain things significant or not and in what ways?

2. What activity or activities is this piece of language being used to enact (i.e., get others to recognize as going on)?

3. What identity or identities is this piece of language used to enact (i.e. to get others to recognize as operative)?

4. What sort of relationship or relationships is this piece of language seeking to enact with others (present or not)?

5. What perspective on social goods is this piece of language communicating?

6. How does this piece of language connect or disconnect things; how does it make one thing relevant or irrelevant to another?

7. How does this piece of language privilege or disprivilege specific sign systems…or different ways of knowing and believing or claims to knowledge and beliefs?

Using the above as a guide, this paper asked what is being made significant factors in Senegambian relationship. What kind of relationship do these factors portray through language? What actions and identities are profound in the discourse and the politics being portrayed? What is made relevant and irrelevant? What or who is being made 'good' and bad? All the above questions taken from Gee's work (2010), serve as the analytical questions for analyzing the construction of Gambia's foreign policy of Senegal.

Analysis
Senegal being the only country that shares borders with the Gambia on three sides except the West makes it the Gambia's primary neighbor. The relationship between the two countries from 1964/5 to 1989 has received a lot of attention from researchers and academics. This includes attempts for integration and the confederation established by the two countries in 1982. Although the confederation collapsed in 1989, the two countries continued to cooperate on many sectors. However, 1990-2016 has not been largely studied. In the analysis we start with the kind of identity being portrayed in the language under analysis.

The 'Two States, One People' Construct
Senegal and the Gambia have been referred to as 'two states, one people' by politicians and locals. This is because the populations of the two countries share the same historical and cultural background except that they were colonized by two colonial powers which led to the development of two different political and legal systems. Their peoples belong to the same ethno-linguistic groupings such as the Mandinka, Fula, Wollof, Serer, Jola. The people share the same names and surnames except that their spellings are variants reflecting the influence of colonial lingua even in local names. For example two people born to a man whose surname is 'Jobe' will have their surname spelt as 'Jobe' in the Gambia and 'Diop' in Senegal. Despite the difference in spelling, the two know that they are the same and are seen as the same people will a common ancestor.

The beliefs held by people as being one are further reinforced by social linkages and bonds. For instance intermarriages from families in Senegal and the Gambia are a common occurrence. Many big families are sparse between the two countries. The marriage and other ceremonies are held in the same manner across the two borders. Therefore, culturally the two countries are one. There is no Senegalese or Gambian politician who has not acknowledged that the countries are destined together as one people. How was this constructed in Gambia's foreign policy construction of Senegal?

As early as 1965, Jawara told the United Nations that due to the cultural affinity between the two countries and the small size of the Gambia, "the future of the Gambia lies in a close and friendly relationship with Senegal". Jawara further told the General Assembly that the two countries had studied the UN report for cooperation and have agreed to form a 'looser union'. He further stated that the two countries would cooperate on foreign policy, security and defense matters (Jawara, 1965). In fact, Jawara re-echoed this in his autobiography when he wrote about the effects of the Colonial Boundaries Commission: "The people and the land became divided into The Gambia and Senegal separated from their common history and heritage of thousands of years into colonial British and French entities. From then on relations between the two colonies became the business of London and Paris" (Jawara, 2000, p.299).

After their independence, "peaceful co-existence between the two neighbours henceforth would depend on negotiation and collaboration" (Jawara, 2009, p.299). Mr. Diop (French spelling of the Surname Jobe) of the Senegalese Government on his part congratulated the Gambia on her attainment of independence adding that "…our two countries are inhabited by peoples of the same ethnic groups: chiefly Malinkes, Volofs and Diolas. On either side of the official frontier live populations which are very closely related" (Diop, 1965). This was not only pronounced in Communiqués or statements but was also codified in Treaties. On April 19th 1967, the Treaty of Association was signed in consideration of the 'close historical, economic and social ties between the two countries; wishing to consolidate those bonds of friendship and fraternity…" (Treaty of Association, 1967).

Thus in the early days of independence, one can see a clear construction of 'two states, one people' in Gambia's discourse of Senegal. The construction of the 'two states, one people' was also made a significant discourse and an activity of cordial existence was constructed. Not only was it an important partner through the discourse but one that ought to be. Such statements recognizing the affinity of the two countries further continued in the 1990s and 2000s.

A day after the July 22nd Coup in 1994, the Junta in its statement said that the coup "is taken to rescue the motherland and not against any foreign country…To our sister republics in our sub region especially Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry…and others, a new era of strong fraternity and cordial brotherly ties mutually beneficial to all will be maintained" (AFPRC Statement, 1994).[1] Again, one can see the importance attached to Senegal. It was the first country mentioned as deserving a "brotherly and fraternal ties" in 1994. The use of

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[1] The Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council. *Statement after 1994 Coup - The Gambia.* Banjul: Petergrimes33 Youtube Channel, July 1994.

sisterly republic and brotherly relations shows a combination of warmth and genuine relations. In other words as sisters, the states would live as siblings with love and support to one another.

Language is an expression of reality but reality too is expressed through language. Often the construction of a discourse requires or regulates the behavior of a state. Therefore in September 1994, Jammeh, the coup leader visited Senegal. In January 1996, President Abdou Diouf of Senegal made a returned visit to Banjul. Both visits by the two leaders signaled their conformity to the discourse they constructed. Abdou Diouf lost the 2000 elections to long time opposition leader, Abdoulie Wade. However, the change of leadership in Senegal did not affect the discourse on the 'two states, one people' especially from the Gambian side.

Although, relations were often interrupted by ideation of one another as enemies, the 'two state, one people' ideation and identity was strong enough to serve as a coolant to tensions. In 2010, President Wade accompanied by 8 of his ministers made a 2 days official visit to the Gambia. In the Communiqué issued at the end of the visit was thus constructed: "The two Heads of State expressed the need to consolidate friendship and cooperation between the two countries". To further show that the two states share the same people and to conform to the constructed identity, "The Gambian side decided to waive the requirement of Alien Cards for Senegalese nationals resident in The Gambia" (Joint Communiqué of The Government of The Gambia and The Republic of Senegal, 6th day of January 2010).

Since the two people are the same according to the discourse, treating them different would contradict the construction. Therefore conforming to the constructed identity required a similar treatment. President Wade of Senegal had echoed this in the meeting: "there is no difference between The Gambia and Senegal since we are the countries that share the border and The Gambia and Senegal have a good relationship which will be nurtured and continued" (The Point Newspaper, 7th January 2010). Since Senegal held the same ideation, it became easy to construct and conform to this discourse. In 2011, during Prime Minister Madicke Niang of Senegal's visit, president Jammeh stated that "any tribe you see in The Gambia is in Senegal, so we are one but two countries" (The Point Newspaper, May 20, 2011). The discourse continued into the entire presidency of Wade. In fact, in a 2012 visit by Senegalese president Wade, the two presidents expressed similar views about the close ties between the peoples of the two countries (The Point Newspaper, 2012).

In 2012, Wade lost the presidential election to Macky Sall. Despite this change, the discourse of 'two states, one people' continued. In fact, Macky Sall made his first official visit to the Gambia. In that visit, the identity of 'two states, one people' was reiterated when the two leaders met. President Jammeh told the newly elected president of Senega, Macky Sall that "we are one people divided by colonialism. We are brothers, and I don't want any diplomacy between me and you. Tell me the truth and I will tell you the truth; so that we can understand each other and trust each other" (The Point Newspaper, April 16, 2012). A year later, the Senegalese Foreign Minister was dispatched to Gambia by president Sall for bilateral talks. Speaking to journalist, he too stated "Gambia and Senegal is one population with two governments" (The Point News Paper, 16 May 2013).

Similarly in 2015, Jammeh stated that any problem with the government of Senegal or the Senegalese president was not directed towards the population. "The Gambia and Senegal is like one man with two houses…is one family…There is nothing spoken in Senegal which is not here…there is no culture in Senegal which is not in Gambia" (Jammeh, 2017).[1] This statement made when Jammeh was increasingly being critical to the Senegalese government, shows the role that the ethno-linguistic and cultural affinity served in the discourse. Similarly, Macky Sall in his response stated "…We found Senegal and Gambia here…we will leave it here...It is an entrenched relationship…we are relatives...we are a blood…its neighborhood...our role is to strengthen those ties" (Sall, 2015).[2] Although Jammeh publicly criticized Sall and his government for supporting Gambian dissidents, Sall retorted the 'two states, one people' argument.

From the above statements cited, it is clear that the Gambia constructed Senegal as the house of its brother. The cultural affinity between the two countries continues to be a determining factor in the construction of relationship. Even when relationships soured, both sides have referred to their people as one. This is a social reality that has been entrenched over generations and there is no evidence that actors would likely seek to replace this discourse in the near feature. However, it must be recognized that their colonial history has made them to adopt a different administrative system yet while there have been difficult times between the two countries, the cultural affinity has been a "cooling effect" whenever relations appeared to be sour. Despite this warm relations and the significance of the brotherly ties, there were times when the Gambia sometimes simultaneously constructed Senegal as an 'enemy'.

The 'Neighbouring Enemy' Construct

In the last 10 years of Jammeh's rule, one can see Senegal being constantly constructed as a 'nearby enemy' in the foreign policy discourse. The main cause for this has been the use of Senegal as residence by Gambian

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[1] "Yahya Jammeh Speaks About Senegalese Presidents." *Ex Pre. Yaya Jammeh now a refugee Bashing Former And Current Senegalese Presidents.* Banjul: One Gambia Youtube Channel, March 16, 2017.
[2] *President Macky Sall responds to Jammeh.* Dakar: Fatou Network Youtube Channel, April 16, 2015.

dissidents. During a 2012 visit by then Senegalese president Wade to the Gambia, Jammeh said "…anyone who commits a crime in Senegal would not have the guts to come here…If my enemy seeks asylum with you, every day he tells you something bad about me…I want anyone who does bad here and runs there [Senegal] to be handed back…"[1] Most of the Gambians in Senegal whom Jammeh wanted to be extradited were mainly political asylum seekers like those accused of plotting to overthrow the government of The Gambia, those accused of "lying against and tarnishing the image" of the government of the Gambia. For Jammeh, he expected Senegal not to harbor his enemies. Otherwise they will keep tarnishing his image in Senegal. If Senegal fails to do this, he would equate them with his enemies. In Jammeh's discourse, one can easily see how Jammeh blamed trouble as a result of the presence of his 'enemies' in Senegal.

It must be stated that this construction was understandable because in 1996, some former military men who were seeking refuge in Senegal's Cassamance region, launched an attack on Kartong Military Barracks in the Gambia. This was aimed at overthrowing the Jammeh-led government. Therefore Jammeh had a reasonable belief that Senegal was the enemies' Launchpad against his government. Although the Senegalese government was not officially providing support to such and similar individuals, its refusal to extradite political asylum seekers if they do not attempt to destabilize the government in Banjul, the porous borders and proximity of Senegalese villages and the fact that almost every Gambian has relatives in Senegal ensured that most Gambians see Senegal as their first point of refuge.

In response to Jammeh's demand for extradition of his 'enemies, President Wade stated that:

> You said Senegalese opposition cannot come here and do anything, right!…Senegal has a special regime…a free and developed press with radios, televisions and journals and I cannot do anything about it…even MFDC rebels fighting against the government are interviewed…but the state media would not do such [grant interviews to those who want to tarnish your image]…I told you. I cannot extradite but I will expel anyone who plans to destabilize your regime from Senegal…my regime is one…the press insults the president…There [Senegal], if you arrest a journalist, the whole world will rise.[2]

This sums the discourse between the Gambia and Senegal during the Wade regime. The Gambia wanted Senegal to handover political asylum seekers but the Senegalese regime argued that it would not extradite asylum seekers but would expel anyone willing to destabilize the Gambia. The Gambia was of the view that Senegal was harboring enemies. Senegal on the other hand responded that as a democratic country it could not just extradite people or ask the independent media to stop granting interviews to Gambian opposition figures. This established a discourse of two regime types.

Although it is true that Jammeh was concern about the growing number of Gambian dissidents in Senegal and a probable destabilization of his regime, this happened because of a difference in identity. Senegal was a democracy which tolerated dissent and the Gambia was not a democracy that tolerated dissent or criticism. Because Jammeh thought that freedom of expression should not be granted to opposition figures at home, he wanted to extend the same policy in Senegal. If the Senegalese government had been a dictatorship, it would have been difficult for any Gambian to run there. The Senegalese press was also critical of Jammeh and any agreement giving him the assurance to handover dissident would have had a backlash on the regime in Dakar. Also, Gambian dissident were not running to Senegal because of the Senegalese government policies alone, they were going there because they could easily integrate as food, religion, language and culture were the same. Guinea and Mali had different languages and relatively different cultures.

Similarly, the foreign policy of the Gambia after Abdoulie Wade lost the elections to Macky Sall in Senegal in 2012 followed a similar pattern. In a 2015 speech Jammeh stated that "if he [Macky Sall] has hosted my enemies, he cannot host me…you cannot put a cat and dog in one place…if those people leave…that would show that he is ready to be my real friend…" Here again one sees that Jammeh constructed the Senegalese government as an enemy because it was hosting Gambian dissidents. Although the leadership in Senegal had changed, the government of Senegal was not extraditing Gambian dissidents; hence the government of the Gambia continued its construction of Senegal as a neighboring enemy. The response of Macky was no less different from that of Wade in 2012. Macky stated:

> he thinks that there are Gambians in Senegal…to destroy his regime. I told him if we see that, we will stop it. But Senegal is an open society…As long as they respect the laws of the land, their country and its government, they can stay here. But Senegal cannot support anyone to destabilize his/her country, we would not allow that…We have expelled a Gambian from here because they were effectively aimed at destabilizing their government…But we cannot deny Gambians here…who mind their business the right to stay… they are ECOWAS citizens.[3]

While Jammeh constructed Senegal as host to his enemies, like Wade, Sall responded that Senegal is an 'open society' which adheres to national and regional laws. Was Jammeh's fear founded? Despite Jammeh's fear,

[1]"Yahya Jammeh and Abdoulaye Wade Speaks infront of the Press."
[2] Ibid
[3]*President Macky Sall responds to Jammeh.* Dakar: Fatou Network Youtube Channel, April 16, 2015.

only two attacks were launched from Senegal by Gambian dissidents: the Farafeni Attack and the Kartong Attack. The 1995 counter coup, 2006 coup attempt, the 2013 coup attempt except the 2014 coup attempt which was planned in the United States, were all planned and launched within the Gambia by closed aides of Jammeh. Therefore, the portrayal of Senegal as an enemy took place through ideation and construction and the beliefs that Jammeh has about Senegal.

Conclusions

This analysis has revealed that the 'two states, one people' and the 'nearby enemy' discourse was constructed and relied upon by the Gambia in its foreign policy with Senegal. Even when the 'nearby enemy' discourse constructed by the Gambia seemed to lead to strained relations, the 'two states, one people' construct was invoked to smoothen the ties. Although Senegal and the Gambia accepted the 'two states, one people' construct, as may be expected, the 'nearby enemy' was not accepted by Senegal. Therefore, a counter discourse ensued from the Senegalese side largely focusing on the difference between regime types in the two countries. The paper upholds that the 'nearby enemy' construct largely resulted from the two types of regimes in Dakar and Banjul.

Clearly, it is seen that the Gambia government and its leader had constructed double identities in its relationship with Senegal. This is not against the Constructivist paradigm; it is within the assumptions of Constructivism. States like individuals can adopt and attain multiple identities as relations are dictated by various factors. Being brothers does not prevent enmity but it may help to ease tensions. This reminds one about Wendt's postulation that "anarchy is what states make of it" (1994). For the Gambia, in its relationship with Senegal, there was order ordained by blood ties yet there was anarchy dictated by the existence of a nearby enemy. It seems that the 'two states, one people' was strong enough to serve as coolant to tensions.

It is noteworthy that small states just like great and middle powers are capable of creating their foreign policy through constructing a discourse. If a good construct is made, a norm develops over time. Therefore, the respect of norms acceptable by states in international society resulting from international organisations (Finnermore, 1996) can happen at interstate level. As in the case of the Gambia, the construct of a 'two states, one people' can be regarded as a producer of a norm forbidding trouble between the two countries so much that it became a mediating factor in cooling tensions. In the discourse, hard do the Gambia or Senegal relies on the ECOWAS Protocol and other international laws to argue for peaceful existence.

Preliminary observations seem to suggests that the 'two states, one people' construct has effaced the 'nearby enemy' discourse within official cycles. However, a full study of the factors influencing or determining this is beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, further research is needed to analyse how the collapse of the Jammeh-led government in 2016 has led to a strengthening of the 'two states, one people' discourse and the adoption of policies in line with it while abandoning the 'nearby enemy' discourse. Such a research must answer questions on the factors determining such a change, its durability and significance on future relevance.

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