

**MIGRATION, BOUNDARIES AND AFRICAN INTEGRATION: PERSPECTIVES
WITH RESPECT TO SENEGAMBIAN GEOGRAPHICAL AND ETHNO-
LINGUISTIC IDENTITIES**

Malang Fanneh PhD

Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Faraba Campus, University of The Gambia

and

Gold Sunday Chukwuemeka PhD

Department of History, Strategic and International Studies, DOU, Asaba

Abstract

The issue of migration, boundaries and African integration is a complex phenomenon and has attracted a lot of attention from scholars on Africa for a considerable period of time. This paper, seeks to examine the issue of migration and integration in Africa especially in the Senegambia region. It attempts to underscore how the colonial period brought about a functional shift in the issues that are related to the migration patterns of people in the Senegambia region. The paper argues that before colonialism, Senegambians were not restricted by any notion of defined boundaries because groups related with one another on the basis of needs and long-standing relationships were established through trade, intermarriages and other forms of intergroup relations. The study reveals that the concepts of migration and boundaries evolved over time in post-colonial Senegambia. Using the contemporary African context as a prism, this paper offers a new interpretation on African integration with a focus on Senegambian geographical and ethno linguistic identities. The paper argues that in postcolonial Senegambia, boundary issues continue to be a challenge and hindrance to closer political and economic integration in the Senegambia region. A myriad of sources have been utilized using the historical and interpretive methods.

Key words: Borders, African Integration, Senegambian states, Ethnicity, Identity

Introduction

The issue of migration and integration in both the pre-colonial and post-colonial periods are complex issues that need to be addressed if we are to understand the challenges to African integration today within the context of the Senegambian geographical realities. In this paper, Senegambia as a region would be used to refer to Senegal and the Gambia. Even though these two countries experienced different colonial experiences, their peoples were united by linguistic and cultural identities. Therefore, there were unique ethno-linguistic similarities that defined the ties

that bound the Senegambian people for several centuries. What European colonialism did was to divide the people without any regard for their cultural identities. However, despite the colonial manipulations, what has been interesting is the refusal of the Senegambian people to respect the colonially imposed notions of boundaries in their efforts to interact with one another through trade, intermarriages and other modes of intergroup relations on mutual grounds. Despite their different colonial experiences, they continued to see themselves as one people with common historical connections and identity.

Historicising migration

Migrations shaped human societies in Africa and the world at large for several years. It is believed that the human race originated from the Great Lakes Region of Africa and spread to the rest of the world through migration. In pre-colonial Africa, people migrated from one place to another to open up new lands, to escape wars, repression and persecution, for hunting, trade, agriculture, or to spread a religion. Put differently, movements related to trade and conquests significantly led to population movements within and outside Africa. The Bantu and Mande expansions were key examples of migratory movements that transformed several societies in Africa. Bantu speakers moved from West Africa into the area of the continent south of the equator in one of the largest migrations in human history, ca 2000 BC-AD 1000.¹ Mande speakers are dispersed from the "...the margins of the Sahara to the Guinea and Senegambia and the Upper Guinea coast to Nigeria" owing to Mande expansion. This massive population movement took two phases; the traders and smiths pioneered the route. In the second phase, the Mande warriors followed the caravan routes to plunder and conquer.² However, for Donald Wright, cultural transferral rather than conquest explains links between most societies in Africa, especially of the Mande civilization of Upper Niger to the indigenous acephalous societies of Senegambia. He argues that cultural assimilation and inter-ethnic transferral are noticeable in Senegambia, and patronyms among today's Senegambian population cannot draw any line between ethnic groups. He believes "...Mandinka population may well be groups of lineages with ancestral roots in a variety of ethnic groups, a number of which were autochthonous in or near their present location." He however, concludes that either by waves or mass migration took place.³ In addition, Chiekh Anta Diop asserts that most parts of Africa were peopled by migrants from the Nile Valley. He argues that legends of black people from every part of Africa cite the "Great Water" meaning "the Nile" as their origin. Depending on their locations to the Nile, the Dogon and Yoruba cite the east as their provenance, the Fang indicate the northeast, Bakuba lists the north and Batutsi of Rwanda-Urundi point to the south. He argues that the Nubian and the Ethiopian legends never claim their ancestry somewhere

¹ Bilger and Kraler, *African Migrations. Historical Perspectives And Contemporary Dynamics*, 2005;8

² Barry, B., 1998. *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*. 1 ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

³ Donald R. Wright, "Beyond Migration and Conquest: Oral Traditions and Mandinka Ethnicity in Senegambia," *History in Africa*, Vol. 12, (1985), pp. 335-348; s

because they remained in the Nile Valley.⁴ This evidence corroborates the view that migration has been part and parcel of African life for centuries.

Before the nineteenth century, Africans had no interference with their sovereignty, and they were very much in control of their affairs and destinies. Chaloka Beyani contends that pre-colonial migration within and outside had positive effects on Africa. He says that this helps to populate most of the continent and more importantly, in resolving protracted conflicts as defeated communities migrated elsewhere in search of peaceful environments. It reduces pressure on livelihoods, water and resources. However, this considerably changed within a short period of time between 1880 and 1900; the entire continent except Liberia and Ethiopia was subdued and occupied by the European imperial powers of Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, Spain and Italy. This marked the transformation of sovereign and royal citizens of Africa into colonial and dependent subjects. In place of numerous African independent polities, a completely new set of colonies was carved and administered by officials selected by the European powers.⁵ The European partition of Africa and the pattern of boundaries are senseless in terms of ethnic groups, politics and economies.⁶ The magnitude, duration and process of boundary-making in Africa make it more different from Europe, where the evolution of boundaries was gradual over centuries. The delimitation of boundaries in Africa was completed within a decade.⁷ Bascom argues that almost all the colonial boundaries in Africa divide ethnolinguistic groups into two or more parts, administered under different colonial principles, and taught in different European languages.⁸ He further contends that some territories carved out could barely support themselves economically.

The balkanization of Africa constrained migration in both time and space by destroying the existing economic, social and political ties, denying communities ownership of resources and access to them. According to Beyani, the structure of the colonial state in Africa was built on a repressive state apparatus to serve colonial economic interests.⁹

Boundaries and the challenges of identity formation in Senegambia

The borders between Senegambian nations have always been porous, and even the efforts of the colonial masters to delineate them had not been that successful in alienating the people of the region from interacting with one another on their own terms and conditions. What became a complex issue was the division and definition of the Senegambian people through the colonial lens. The people started to see each other as British and French Senegambians because of the

⁴ Diop, C. A. *The African Origin of Civilization, Myth or Reality*. In T. b. Cook. Chicago, Illinois: Lawrence Hill Books 1974;179

⁵ Boahen, Boahen, A. *A African Perspective on Colonialism*. Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press 1987;27

⁶ Bascom, 1956;64-65

⁷ Kehinde, 2010;19

⁸ Bascom (1956)

⁹ Beyani, C. (n.d). *Migration in Africa: An Unending Phenomenon? The Nansen Lecture*. Oslo: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/law/news/Nansen%20Lecture%20Joburg.pdf>.

different colonial experiences that they went through. The different colonial systems of administration played a crucial role in the way the people of the Senegambian states eventually related with one another and created the notion of us and them in the psyche of the leadership that eventually emerged. However, such a divisive sentiment seems to be the inverse of what obtains among ordinary people who are not bothered by any restrictive notions of territorial limitations whatsoever. The notion of 'us' and 'others' developed as divisive notions and created a new perception of identity based on what David Newman refers to a 'collective construction of differences.'¹⁰

A better understanding of the fluidity of identity is enough for us to understand that ethnicity has always been a complex variable in creating stumbling blocks in any integrative attempts on the part of Africans.¹¹ This paper seeks to argue that migration in the Senegambia region¹² before the European colonialism of the region was not restricted and that those who migrated from one region to another were not restricted by any notion of formal boundaries whatsoever. Linares observes that prior to the advent of colonialism in the latter parts of the 19th Century, the migratory patterns of the indigenous people of the Senegambia region for example, were not hindered by restricted boundaries that were created by the colonial powers.¹³ His assertion is evident in the case of Musa Molloh who saw the region of Fulladu as one geographical entity even though the region was divided into the British and French spheres of influence. Despite the colonial imposition of boundaries, people of the region had intergroup relations through marriage and trade. The people had unity in diversity and they related with one another based on their needs and comparative advantage concerning production and consumption capabilities and patterns. Musa's establishment of his administrative centers in Kesserkunda, Ndorna and Hamdallah was symptomatic of the reality that the present-day notion of identity concerning the present-day Senegambian states was fluid.¹⁴ From a historical perspective, pre-colonial Senegambian people related with one another based on needs, and their leaders could have control over lands and peoples through the allegiance they got from them. Even after European penetration into the geopolitics of the region in the early nineteenth century, the people had little or no regard for the colonially imposed boundaries and continued to operate based on their age-old relationships and withheld their own notions of primordial identity formations that they inherited from their forbearers.

The present boundaries in the region are a European-constructed phenomenon that was inherited by the modern states in the region. It is therefore an irony that even after independence

¹⁰ Newman, D. 2003. On borders and power: a theoretical framework. *Journal of Borderline Studies* 18. 1: 13-25

¹¹ Aboubacarr Tandia: *Borders and Borderlands Identities: A Comparative Perspective of Cross-border Governance in the Neighbourhoods of Senegal, the Gambia and Guinea Bissau*, Saint-Louis: Gaston Berger.

¹² Senegambia in this paper is looked at as was viewed by: Boubacarr Barry: *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*. 1 ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹³ Olga F. Linares, "Going to the City . . . and Coming Back? For more information, see: *Olga Turnaround Migration among the Jola of Senegal*", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (2003), pp. 113-132

¹⁴ John M. Gray, *A History of the Gambia* (London, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1966)

was attained, the post-colonial Senegambian states could not dismantle the inherited colonial boundaries that constrained them in their interactions with one another based on their primordial relations. As such, the boundaries act as what David Newman refers to as obstacles through which people see others as different from them and further view them as outsiders.¹⁵

In this paper, it is argued that even after inheriting the colonial boundaries, the present-day leaderships of Senegambian states continue to grapple with ideological differences and which became vital in creating obstacles to economic and political integration in the postcolonial Senegambian states. From a social perspective, integration in pre-colonial Senegambia was not restrictive, but was not easy during the postcolonial period because of the inherent differences among the different linguistic and social units. The colonially imposed languages of French and English further complicated identity formation because Gambians and Senegalese started seeing one another differently through the linguistic lens of the colonial masters. Put differently, the point being made is that the imposition of the colonial languages further made identity fluid because people who were hitherto culturally homogenous became strange bedfellows who were linguistically divided, thereby making any efforts to bring them together an uphill task.

Identity as an obstacle to integration

The present-day African countries continue to grapple with the same trends as they attempt to integrate and form stronger and more viable political and economic blocs for more sustainable relationships. It affirms that the integration of people and communities has never been an easy process in the African context, based on some inherent socio-cultural differences.¹⁶ The different colonial experiences also created obstacles for political unity to be forged at the state level between the Senegambian countries. This is because while the Senegalese see themselves as French, the Gambians view themselves as British, and none of the people of these countries are willing to forgo their colonially induced identities and embrace another identity for the sake of integration. Pride becomes the inhibiting factor for the realization of closer sociopolitical integration between Senegal and the Gambia.

Tandia Aboubakr argues that ‘cross-cutting socio-cultural dynamics’ play a crucial role in defining the national boundaries and other territorial issues in Western Senegambia, which, according to him, includes Senegal, The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau.¹⁷ His assessment is apt because it brings to light how the dynamics of borders and their regulations make national identities difficult to construct and further create obstacles to integration for the postcolonial Senegambian states. The dichotomy of ‘us’ and ‘them’ creates the notion of belonging or not

¹⁵ Newman, D. 2003. On borders and power: a theoretical framework. *Journal of Borderline Studies* 18. 1: 13-25

¹⁶ Philip D Curtin, 1975. *Economic change in Pre-colonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of Atlantic slave Trade*. 1 ed. Madison : University of Wisconsin Press.

¹⁷ Aboubakr Tandia: *Borders and Borderlands Identities: A Comparative Perspective of Cross-border Governance in the Neighbourhoods of Senegal, the Gambia and Guinea Bissau*, Saint-Louis: Gaston Berger.

among the masses on the basis of the colonially imposed languages that are used as the official languages of the different countries.

Thus, the French and English languages became identity markers and, to some extent, influenced how people see themselves and define others on linguistic grounds. However, the artificially created colonial borders in the region that this paper considers do not alter the cultural identities of the people to a very large extent. This is because, with the borders as political territories, the citizens continue to relate with one another without many problems. The homogeneity of the communities along the Senegal and The Gambia borders is a clear indication that Senegambian people could socially and economically integrate at their own levels without any governmental interference.¹⁸

Both Donald Wright and Philip Curtin¹⁹ have examined the roles played by long-distance trade in the Senegambia region, and they reveal that it plays a crucial role in integrating people from different backgrounds. Both Wright and Curtin are of the view that the roles played by long-distance traders made them a dominant group in the exchange of goods, which included slaves, cloth, iron, salt, European manufactured goods and so on. The fact that Mandinka Julas²⁰ obtained slaves and other goods from vast areas ranging from the River Gambia's eastern hinterland to its upper reaches and Upper Niger made their spheres of influence very great. This indicates that the pre-colonial African boundaries were porous, and people and goods could be transported over vast areas without much hindrance.²¹ Thus, economic integration during the pre-colonial period was not characterized by unnecessarily strict and formal border regulations.²² Instead, people and goods could be transported over vast areas without many official restriction that serves as impediments to trade and other commercial activities.

The settlement patterns of the Jula traders show that they were able to form economic and social ties with their host societies, whom they met during their trips. Both Wright and Curtin buttressed this point, and to a large extent, one could understand that social and economic integration through trade was an essential element of the pre-colonial geopolitical spectrum. The Mandinka Julas' strategic socioeconomic alliances with ruling dynasties enabled the long-distance

¹⁸ Aboubacarr Tandia: *Borders and Borderlands Identities: A Comparative Perspective of Cross-border Governance in the Neighbourhoods of Senegal, the Gambia and Guinea Bissau*, Saint-Louis: Gaston Berger.

¹⁹ Donald R. Wright, "Beyond Migration and Conquest: Oral Traditions and Mandinka Ethnicity in Senegambia," *History in Africa*, Vol. 12, (1985), pp. 335-348; Philip D Curtin, 1975. *Economic change in Pre-colonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of Atlantic slave Trade*. 1 ed. Madison : University of Wisconsin Press.

²⁰ Donald R. Wright, "Beyond Migration and Conquest: Oral Traditions and Mandinka Ethnicity in Senegambia," *History in Africa*, Vol. 12, (1985), pp. 335-348

²¹ For more information on long distance trade in pre-colonial Senegambia, see: Donald R Wright D, " *Beyond Migration and Conquest: Oral Traditions and Mandinka Ethnicity in Senegambia*", African Studies Association, Vol. 12, (2003), pp.335-348

²² Donald R. Wright, "Beyond Migration and Conquest: Oral Traditions and Mandinka Ethnicity in Senegambia," *History in Africa*, Vol. 12, (1985), pp. 335-348; Philip D Curtin, 1975. *Economic change in Pre-colonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of Atlantic slave Trade*. 1 ed. Madison : University of Wisconsin Press.

traders to have a local influence which they used to effectively carry out their long distance trade.
23

Donald Wright explicitly outlines the “landlord-stranger” relationship that existed in Senegambian communities. Intergroup relations were established through trade and other social interactions between and among the different people who come together to exchange their goods and services. The “suruga”, “samalan”, and “jatigi” relationship show that socioeconomic networks were formed between these migrant farmers and their landlords or hosts.²⁴ The “samalan” paying a fee for the land he uses means that there were clear-cut rules that governed the land tenure system in the region. It also means that this system was institutionalized in the Senegambian states. It also demonstrates that access to land was necessary to promote peasant commodity production necessary for both consumption and trade.

Another scholar who examines the role played by “culture contact and change” is Philip Curtin. He opines that the trades were well organized as the traders came into contact with people in different communities, and his argument seems to support what Donald Wright suggests concerning the “suruga”, “samalan”, and “jatigi” relationships. Curtin further clearly coins the term “trade diaspora” who, according to him, deal with political authorities for them to trade well without much hindrance. The role played by Curtin’s “trade diaspora” is synonymous with that played by the Jula mentioned by Wright. However, Curtin’s view on the relationship that existed between the traders and their host communities is parallel to the one expressed by Wright. This is because while Curtin opines that the host community dominates the people of the diaspora²⁵ completely and keeps them in dependent positions in order to economically exploit them, Wright on the other hand views that the host community accommodates the visitors as were in the case of the ‘samalan’ and ‘suruga’²⁶ and even help some to settle down. The argument presented here could help one in subjectively understanding the fact that integration at personal and community levels has been going on in Africa without any major problems prior to the European domination of the continent. It therefore seems clear that social and economic integration was not restricted by artificial colonial boundaries that were created after 1884.

William Boscom observes that nationalism and national pride are major obstacles to African integration and unity.²⁷ This observation, when put into perspective, will help one in understanding the balkanization of Africa by the different colonial powers. Since independence, the African countries could not restructure the colonial boundaries they had inherited from their

²³For more information on long distance trade in pre-colonial Senegambia, see: Donald R Wright D, “ *Beyond Migration and Conquest: Oral Traditions and Mandinka Ethnicity in Senegambia*”, African Studies Association, Vol. 12, (2003), pp.335-348

²⁴ Donald R Wright D, “ *Beyond Migration and Conquest: Oral Traditions and Mandinka Ethnicity in Senegambia*”, African Studies Association, Vol. 12, (2003), pp.335-348

²⁵The people of the diaspora refer to those who leave their places and migrate to work or settle in other places. They were normally not restricted in their movements from one place to another by any notion of borders.

²⁶ Samalan and suruga are migrant farmers who normally come from other places to farm or trade in goods.

²⁷ William R. Bascom . 1962. Tribalism, Nationalism, and Pan-Africanism. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 342: pp. 21-29

colonial masters. The colonial artificial boundaries are so complex that they later became major sources of conflict in many parts of the continent.²⁸ The volatile political situations in some Senegambian African states speak volumes about the division of the people along boundary lines that had no consideration for the tribal and cultural identities of the affected peoples.²⁹ The net effects of these divisions of the people are the outcome of the orientations of the different linguistic groups along ethnic lines. In the recent past, these divisions have become sources of conflict. The fact that colonialism created African nations out of the multiple tribal units has today made integration efforts very difficult, even though the different regional blocs have been in place. Closer collaborations among African states at national and regional levels are desirable, but so far, there are still obstacles to a more sustainable integration among states. Olga F. Linares clearly argues that migration at national and regional levels is crucial because different people migrate within their national boundaries and outside their national boundaries for various reasons.³⁰ His study focuses on the Jola of lower Cassamance and observes striking disparities in the migration patterns of the region studied. Even though Linares's study is limited in scope, it offers a vital understanding of the demographic factors that serve as the pull and push factors responsible for migration in the Senegambia region and beyond.³¹ One of the factors responsible for the migration of people within the Senegambia region is the search for better agricultural lands. However, landlessness or the search for better agricultural lands may not be enough index to understand the factors that push some people to migrate to other areas both within and outside their countries. The search for job opportunities and access to better infrastructural facilities by many, particularly the youth, is a vital factor that should be noted in the migration patterns of many people in Africa. In this regard, Senegambians are no exception since there are huge disparities between rural and urban areas in terms of facilities that enhance the quality of life of the people.

In an attempt to assess the impact of migration on rural communities in Senegal, Linares further notes that 'urban migration ... had a significant negative impact on food production.'³² This observation is apt because it demonstrates that the impact of urban migration on his case study area is a universal trend that all African societies encounter. This is because most regions and communities that are hard hit by the rural-urban drift have their youth more involved in the migration, and thus food production and other agricultural activities are greatly neglected. Put differently, the most productive labour force is required to till the land in rural communities, move to the urban centers and such labour is redirected to other productive sectors of the economy. The

²⁸William R. Bascom . 1962.Tribalism, Nationalism, and Pan-Africanism. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 342: pp. 21-29

²⁹The volatile political situation includes the crises in Cassamance and Guinea Bissau

³⁰Olga F. Linares, "Going to the City . . . and Coming Back? For more information, see: *Olga Turnaround Migration among the Jola of Senegal*", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (2003), pp. 113-132

³¹Olga F. Linares, "Going to the City . . . and Coming Back? For more information, see: *Olga Turnaround Migration among the Jola of Senegal*", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (2003), pp. 113-132

³²Olga F. Linares. 2003. "Going to the City . . . and Coming Back? ; Olga F. Linares. 303. *Turnaround Migration among the Jola of Senegal. Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 73.1: 113-132

net effect is that peasant commodity production became the ultimate opportunity cost. This could explain why food security continues to be a major development challenge in most African countries today, particularly in the Senegambian states.³³

Within the framework of supranational bodies like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU), the protocols that are agreed upon by member states are not usually fully implemented by member countries in reality and their non-implementation continues to hinder the integration of the countries economically and politically at national level. However, their citizens have no problems integrating at individual and family levels. The people have social and economic interactions at their own levels and are not usually constrained by rigid governmental laws and procedures that are operational at national level. Put differently, the relationships that are forged among the citizenry are not usually premised on political grounds.

The Gambia and Senegal are two countries that were colonized by different colonial masters. Their boundaries were created without any consideration of the ethnic and cultural identities of the peoples of the two states. However, integrating the two states today seems difficult, but their respective citizens have been interacting with one another without many problems. Along the colonial boundaries between the countries, villagers and communities have co-existed without many problems.³⁴ Linares' observation that some of the Jola youth leave their homes in Jipalon to look for employment in Dakar and Banjul in The Gambia is indicative that migration was a normal trend and those colonially imposed boundaries were no restrictions for individuals who are free to move from one destination to another in search of employment opportunities whenever they feel to do so.³⁵

Senegal- Gambia relations in historical context- continuity or change?

The borders between the Gambia and Senegal are porous and therefore, Senegambian people have never been restricted by the colonially created borders from the early nineteenth century to date. Ecological factors have never been a hindrance that constrained interactions of the people since the era of the Kaabu states. Intergroup relations were forged based on common interests, and the function of Senegambian relations had always been characterized by the notion of unity in diversity. Common languages spoken by the different indigenous people in the Senegambian states have always been a catalyst for closer collaborations among the people. For example, the Mandinka, Wollof, Fula, Jola and other linguistic groups see one another as one people who should live in unison across time and space. A unique relationship characterised by

³³Olga F. Linares. 2003. "Going to the City . . . and Coming Back? ; Olga F. Linares. 303. Turnaround Migration among the Jola of Senegal. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 73.1: 113-132

³⁴Donald R. Wright, "Beyond Migration and Conquest: Oral Traditions and Mandinka Ethnicity in Senegambia," *History in Africa*, Vol. 12, (1985), pp. 335-348

³⁵ Olga F. Linares. 2003. Going to the City . . . and Coming Back? Turnaround Migration among the Jola of Senegal, *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (2003), pp. 113-132

mutual respect and interdependency has and continues to bind the Senegambian people despite the changing nature of their existence across space and time.

E.J. Okolo and Abass Bundu cite the African independent states' reluctance to sacrifice their perceived national interest for regional integration and cooperation.³⁶ Bundu strongly argues that the creation of national identity and the exercise of national sovereignty have been prominent features of the post-independence African political agenda. He argues that the legacy of national sovereignty and the jealousy with which it is guarded have become an impediment to integration, which requires the sharing of sovereignty among members. He further states that this is exacerbated by aspects of the inherited colonial heritage which continued to influence the educational system, administrative structure or the orientation of the national economies.³⁷ These issues are true when it comes to integration efforts between the Gambia and Senegal, and they continue to be impediments for more collaborations between the two countries and their peoples.

The cultural identities of the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Senegambian people have always been unique and these cultural similarities constitute a strong basis for Senegalo-Gambian relations across generations. The people have always been socialised to see one another as 'brothers' and 'sisters' and even the different colonial experiences they experienced never diluted that feeling of oneness from the collective social psyche of the people.

Conclusion

In conclusion, European colonialism of the Senegambian states has led to the fluidity of identity in these states, thus making both political and social integration an uphill task after independence from their respective colonial masters. The people who saw themselves as 'one people' who are culturally linked now see one another with suspicion and contempt in some extreme cases.³⁸ It is thus clear from the discourse that there is a functional difference in the understanding of identity and integration in the pre- and post-Senegambian societies and modern nations. The unstable political situations in most Senegambian states, coupled with internal political gimmicks in the states, continue to stifle integrative efforts among the nations and their peoples. This paper therefore, asserts that any effort that could yield any meaningful integration in the Senegambia region must take into consideration the issues of identity and bilateral ties among the states within the context of the geopolitical order and the frameworks of supra-nationalism. In recent years, political and economic conditions and realities in the states have transformed the way and manner in which the states and their citizens view one another and even relate to each other.

³⁶ Okolo, 1985;122, Bundu, 1997;38.

³⁷ (Bundu, 1997;38).

³⁸ AboubacarrTandia, A., n.d. *Borders and Borderlands Identities: A Comparative Perspective of Cross-border Governance in the Neighbourhoods of Senegal, the Gambia and Guinea Bissau*, Saint-Louis: Gaston Berger

The interstate relations are dictated by the specific interests of each state, and to some extent, each of the postcolonial states puts its strategic national interests at the core of its dealings.

It is revealed that Senegambian historiography has several accounts of migration and integration. Environmental, economic, cultural and political changes led to enormous population movements over time and space. However, the colonial encounter in the late 19th century, which resulted in the balkanization of Africa, posed new obstacles to this old trend. These are also the major impediments to integration in the Senegambian geographical space today.