Chapter Four

'An Example to the World!': Multiculturalism in the Creation of a Gibraltarian Identity

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Ethnicity is an essential concept to explain how national identities are articulated in the modern world. Although all countries are ethnically diverse, nation-formation often tends to structure around discourses of a core ethnic group and a hegemonic language.[1] Nationalists invent a dominant – and usually essentialised – narrative of the nation, which often set aside the languages, ethnicities, and religious beliefs of minorities inhabiting the nation-state's territory.[2] In the last two centuries, many nation-building processes have excluded, removed or segregated ethnic groups from the national narrative and access to rights – even when they constituted the majority of the population as in Bolivia.[3] On other occasions, the hosting state assimilated immigrants and ethnic minorities, as they adopted the core-group culture and way of life. This was the case of many immigrant groups in the USA, where, in the 1910s and 1920s, assimilation policies were implemented to acculturate minorities, 'in attempting to win the immigrant to American ways'.[4]

In the 1960s, however, the model of a nation-state as being based on a single ethnic group gave way to a model that recognised cultural diversity within a national territory. The civil rights movements changed the politics of nation-formation, and many governments developed strategies to accommodate those secondary cultures in the nation-state. Multiculturalism is what many poly-ethnic communities – such as, for instance, Canada and Australia – used to redefine their national identities through the recognition of internal cultural difference. The aim was not to assimilate minorities but, rather, to integrate them into full

participation in the nation while respecting cultural differences. As such, multiculturalism appeared as a new policy to manage cultural diversity in modern societies by respecting the identities of national minorities.[5]

Despite its relatively recent provenance, scholars and policy-makers have already questioned its usefulness. In academia, many have proposed other policies – e.g. 'interculturalism' – that would secure social cohesion better than multiculturalism.[6] In addition to this, in recent years, David Cameron, Angela Merkel and other politicians have announced the end of multicultural strategies, which – they argue – have failed to facilitate immigrants' social integration in the hosting country. Although these arguments were contested,[7] many are already looking back to the old 'mono-cultural' model structured nationalistic discourses in the past. The Brexit referendum and Donald Trump's electoral victory seem to confirm the crisis of multiculturalism, the reaction of the core-group cultures to the increasing diversity of their societies, and the anticipated 'return of assimilation'.[8] Thus, multiculturalism as a nation-formation tool appears under serious threat if not downright dead in much of Europe and the world where in countries as diverse as Bolivia and Cameroon people are embracing a more exclusionary model of nationhood often based on nativist discourses.[9] This context makes the case of Gibraltar all the more striking as in the tiny enclave there is still a strong commitment to recognising cultural and religious diversity as the foundation of what it means to be Gibraltarian. On the Rock the incorporation of immigrants has played an important role in the creation of a shared national identity, as was the case with some other former British colonies such as Singapore – sometimes known as the 'Gibraltar of the East'.[10]

Whereas nations are usually based – at least discursively – on the 'illusion' of a homogenous population, empires tended to maintain 'the diversity of people they conquered'.[11] In the case of the British Empire, the masters 'exacerbated' ethnic identities in their colonies, creating 'an ethnically determined division of labour' in territories such as Malaysia and Singapore.[12] Although ethnic homogeneity and national identity are usually linked, the peculiar history of some British colonies might have led them to embrace ethnic heterogeneity during their decolonization. This is the case of Gibraltar. Unlike other nationalist movements, Gibraltarians could not draw on an historic culture or and indigenous population for two reasons: over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

Gibraltar's civilian population has been marked by a very high rate of immigration and to assert an indigenous identity would valorise the very Spanish ancestry Gibraltarians were trying to de-emphasise. As a consequence, Gibraltarian nationalism did not, as is so often the case elsewhere, prompt a discourse on ethnic purity, quite the contrary: what is celebrated is Gibraltar's cultural diversity and its tolerance of religious and ethnic minorities. What has become essentialised is not an ethnic purity but, rather, a capacity for tolerance. In line with Gibraltarian nationalist discourse, this harmony among cultures would make Gibraltar 'an example to the world' or, in other words, a model of how different religious beliefs and ethnic groups can coexist peacefully within the same territory.

This chapter analyses how a multicultural narrative helped Gibraltarians form their own unique national identity and downplay Spanish cultural influence over the territory – incorporating, at least discursively, a great variety of ethnic backgrounds that would make the nation a 'melting pot'. At the time where most European countries face problems managing cultural diversity, Gibraltar is often described as a model of peaceful coexistence among cultures. However, some ethnic minorities – particularly Moroccans, and to a lesser extent Indians – have suffered clear discrimination in recent years so the assertion that Gibraltar is a model of tolerance seems to be more a tool of nation-formation rather than an accurate description of reality. In recent years, too, the Jewish community's increasing orthodoxy has led to the widespread, and indeed pained, perception that this community is rejecting a common culture and identity. This is particularly ironic since, historically, it is Jewish Gibraltarians who have been among the clearest proponents of the multicultural and tolerant nature of Gibraltarian society. These exceptions underline the fact that tolerance is a political and nationalist discourse, which is of even greater interest than if it were merely descriptive.

In two sections, this chapter explores how political actors built a multicultural narrative of the Gibraltarian nation, and the reception of this ideological discourse. This research is based on both archival material and semi-structured oral history interviews with over 300 people in Gibraltar. We reviewed nationalist literature to study how the Gibraltarian nation was imagined. By giving voice to locals from diverse ethnic, religious, and national backgrounds, this chapter also explores the ways in which the inhabitants of the British colony have embraced

this discourse to define their identity, adapting and reshaping the official national narrative. We hope to demonstrate that peculiar political conditions could make some territories base their nation-building processes on their populations' ethnic diversity rather than looking for an illusion of homogeneity.

The Making of a Multicultural Nation

The narrative that describes Gibraltar as a multicultural place was built after World War II, when the threat of Franco's Spain encouraged the British government and local politicians to create a nationalistic discourse that would make Gibraltarians different from Spaniards. Until then Westminster had paid much more attention to the military needs of the fortress than the civil population of the Rock. There was nothing like a national feeling in this British colony, where Spanish culture dominated much more than British culture among locals. Even though there was substantial immigration from Genoa, as well as Jews from Morocco and Maltese who had arrived in previous centuries, from a cultural perspective Gibraltarians before World War II were not easily distinguished from Spaniards who lived across the border. Apart from the fact that Spaniards were generally poorer and thus distinguished by their dress, our older interviewees tended to underline the commonalities rather than differences with Spaniards. Other mentioned things such as Spaniards smoking different (i.e. cheaper) brands of cigarettes, or that Gibraltarians wore better boots (see Introduction, this volume). These are rather masculine examples but such differentiation becomes even more difficult for women when we consider the marriage pattern in Gibraltar. In the nineteenth century, Genoese and Maltese immigrants tended to marry Spanish women, and by the early 1900s 'one out of every five marriages' was between a Spanish bride and a Gibraltarian man.[13]

Although ethnic diversity and religious tolerance were already features of Gibraltar in the nineteenth century, only a few authors highlighted these aspects. In those days, for instance, James Bell wrote a travel guide which explained that Gibraltar's population was composed of natives, Genoese, Portuguese, Spanish and Jews. In his book, special attention was given to Gibraltar's Jews, who considered the Rock as 'another land of promise' because they enjoyed 'equal rights, privileges, and protection'.[14] This reference to civilian rights sounded almost para-

doxical in a period when Gibraltarians were subordinated to the military needs of the Garrison and regarded 'as second-class citizens' by the colonisers.[15] Nevertheless, Bell's remarks suggest that various ethnic groups coexisted peacefully on the Rock because – as was pointed out in the first history of Gibraltar written in Spanish – the military authorities ruled the colonial territory with a firm hand and preventing any acts of violence that the diversity of religious interests and customs might have caused.[16] It is not that the authorities were tolerant of religious expression but, rather, had a very low tolerance of any kind of disturbance in which they had no interest.

At the turn of the century, the Rock became a point of emigration for many Andalusians and Gibraltarians who chose its port to cross the Atlantic.[17] However, Gibraltar was still a destination for immigrants, particularly Indians who arrived from 1870 onwards as well as Maltese who also arrived around the same time to build the Dockyard.[18] According to the 1901 census of the civilian population, the number of foreigners was superior to the figure of British subjects.[19] Although in the early twentieth-century writers barely addressed the topic of Gibraltar's civilian population, a few of them were aware of its diverse ethnic composition. Allister Macmillan, for example, pointed out that 'the main street of Gibraltar' was 'full of intense ethnological interest, for types of all races may be seen there'.[20] Although he recognised problems in combining the needs of a fortress and the rights of civilians, Macmillan thought that the civil population increased in Gibraltar due to a period of peace which was secured by the Garrison.

In 1933, A. B. M. Serfaty, a prominent member of Gibraltar's Jewish community,[21] published the first work on religious observance on the Rock: *The Jews of Gibraltar Under British Rule*. The book went largely unnoticed, but it was reprinted when, after World War II, Gibraltarian political leaders started to build Gibraltar's national narrative based on the enclave's cultural diversity. In fact, the text describes the Rock as an idyllic multicultural community:

> One of the most remarkable traits of Gibraltar which speaks very highly of this town is the fact that people of different denominations live in so small a city in great harmony and that it is a common thing for men holding the most antagonistical (sic.) views in matters of religion to be good friends.[22]

Although Sefarty states that 'the Jews lived in peace with their fellow townsmen', he also recognises that a few events disturbed that harmony in the nineteenth century, such as the custom of throwing a burning top hatted effigy into the patio of the Shaar Ashamayim Synagogue on Easter Saturdays, as well as the Governor's ban to erect Tabernacle booths.[23] Nowadays, some Gibraltarians still recall these acts of anti-Semitism, but, as it is the case of one of our interviewees, they attribute them to the Spanish influence over the Rock:

> The rise of anti-Semitism in Gibraltar [came from the Spaniards]. They had customs. The famous case was the Spanish custom of burning the effigy of Judas on Good Saturday. And that was unknown in Gibraltar until the Spaniards came in. Because we know it was celebrated in San Roque and around there at the time [the nineteenth century]. And that continued until the 1950s. Unbelievable! The police prohibited it but up at the *Escalera del Monte* people did it privately. There was a case when the burning effigy was taken down at Castle Street and thrown into the patio of the synagogue. And it burned a child. All sorts of things were prohibited by the police went on the upper part of town.[24]

Despite these acts of anti-Semitism, the Jews of Gibraltar did not do 'anything to dissimulate their identity', and 'the good harmony' prevailed among all religious beliefs.[25] It is worth putting this in the context of the rest of Europe during the 1930s when anti-Semitism was rife. One of our interviewees remembers his childhood in Lisbon where he was beaten up regularly by the boys in his school for being Jewish. His summers in Gibraltar were idyllic for many reasons not least because non-Jews were simply uninterested in his Jewishness and he has retained friendships with Jews and non-Jews alike from his youth.[26]

Until well into the twentieth century, however, religious tolerance and cultural diversity were not associated with any national feeling. In the 1930s, British politicians thought that Gibraltar was 'so small, so cosmopolitan, so parasitic that it [could] not develop a real nationalist movement'.[27] When serious demands for independence arose in Egypt and other territories of the British Empire, the Rock continued being purely a military garrison. In those days, nationality was not an issue in Gibraltar, as one interviewee recognises: 'You lived here [Gibraltar] and the other lived there [La Línea]. Everyone belonged to his village. In that

period, nobody thought about anything like that. There was no need to express sovereignty or anything like that'.[28] Another interviewee, in his nineties, added another perspective to the issue of identity. In response to a question about ethnic differentiation between Gibraltarians and Spaniards he replied, 'Look, in those days we didn't have time for those things. We were too busy getting by'.[29] Herein lies an insight into Gibraltarian tolerance during the 1930s. At a time of extreme poverty in Spain, Gibraltar provided employment and a better living for its residents, although nevertheless large numbers of people struggled economically. There was, however, no space for a building of resentment against ethnic others – other than the British who were easily able neutralise any conflict – where the colonial powers controlled the territory but also offered considerable employment. For their part, the British government was uninterested in Gibraltar's ethnic and religious diversity and made few efforts to anglicise Gibraltarians, who were mainly Spanish-speaking and shared many cultural traits with Spaniards, as well as significant kinship ties.

The situation changed with the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). This conflict marked the end of an open border, and, more importantly, it also showed Gibraltarians how potentially significant the national differences were. Although the war caused many problems for Gibraltar, Britain remained officially neutral, and Gibraltarians stressed their belongingness to the British Empire to escape the horrors of the war. One of our interviewees explains how her mother hung a Union Jack flag on the window of their property in Spain in order to avoid looting by Franco's African troops.[30] Being Gibraltarian and being British served to protect people from this war, at least.

In 1940, war came to Gibraltar itself. The Rock became an important military base for the Allies during the Second World War and the British Government did not hesitate to evacuate the civilian population, showing once again that the fortress came first.[31] Around 13,000 Gibraltarians, mostly women and children, were evacuated to Jamaica, Madeira, England and Ireland. The Hindu population of the Rock, however, was sent to India and one of these ships was captured by the Germans and sent back to Europe, only to be torpedoed by a British submarine just off the coast of France.[32] The evacuation allowed many Gibraltarians to know Britain – where most of them went – directly for the first time. Although Gibraltarians were generally grouped together, they had the opportunity to meet other British people. The evacuation

had a significant impact on Gibraltarian society. In 1942, a group of Gibraltarians founded the Association for the Advancement of Civil Rights to support the evacuees. This institution became the first political organization on the Rock, demanding attention to Gibraltar's civil population from British colonial authorities.

By then, Franco had established a military dictatorship in Spain. From the end of 1940 onwards, the Spanish government decided to recover its claim on Gibraltar as an important component of its diplomatic strategy.[33] By this point, and partly due to the experience of the evacuation of Gibraltarians in the UK, the UK government had come to the view that the task of making Gibraltarians more British must be undertaken.

With this in mind, Miles Clifford, Colonial Secretary in Gibraltar from 1942 to 1944, chaired a committee 'to consider various aspects of post-war reconstruction and development' for this colony. Their target was to promote the learning of English in Gibraltar to strengthen the 'imperial connection' with the UK.[34] The person in charge of this mission was Dr Henry William Howes, who was appointed Gibraltar's first Director of Education, and held the position from 1945 to 1951. During this period, he wrote two books, which formed the beginnings of a Gibraltarian national narrative. The first book – *The Story of Gibraltar* – was published in 1946, when British authorities were recognising how important Gibraltar had been to the Allies' cause. In line with the ideas of the Association for the Advancement of Civil Rights led, since 1948, by the Jewish lawyer Salvador (later Joshua) Hassan, Howes highlighted that civilians played 'an important part in the life of the Western Gate to the Mediterranean'. He stated that there was 'a local emphasis on membership of a city and a desire to avoid as much as possible a fortress mentality'. Howes was aware of the Rock's close relation to Southern Spain 'by marriages and through other causes', but he considered that Gibraltarians were 'one hundred per cent loyal citizens of the British Empire'.[35] With the aim of ensuring their loyalty, Howes promoted Gibraltarians' own identity at both local and imperial levels:

> More English is being spoken than was the case before the war, and the more the schools can develop English speech, the quicker will spread an interest in British institutions and cultural heritage. Perhaps the best sign of the times, is the frequent use of the words "at home"

> when referring to the United Kingdom, and this by people who are immensely proud of being known as Gibraltarians.[36]

The English language was an important tool to develop the Britishness of Gibraltarians' identity, so that the British government promoted its teaching in Gibraltar. In spite of these efforts, Howes admitted that Spanish was still 'completely dominant' on the Rock. If the inhabitants were Spanish-speaking, he pointed out that the population was not 'entirely Spanish in origin', stressing Gibraltarians' diverse ethnic backgrounds: 'A careful study of surnames shows that the majority of them are derived from Italian sources, and a much smaller number from Maltese. Gibraltar is unique in this and in so many other ways'.[37]

It was certainly the case that Gibraltarians' ethnic backgrounds were varied, but Howes was the first one in using this evidence to distinguish the Rock's inhabitants from Spaniards. Many Gibraltarians had at least one immediate ancestor who was born outside the Rock. This kind of diversity of descent is still very common in Gibraltar. It is very striking to observe how Gibraltarians can so easily reconstruct their family trees, going many generations back to origins in Genoa, Malta, the UK or elsewhere. We collected many such accounts and in the majority, there was a stress on the non-Spanish genealogy over the Spanish one. It is probably no coincidence that a 'growing interest in family history and family trees' started in Gibraltar precisely after World War II,[38] when Howes was describing Gibraltar as a melting pot. Many of our older interviewees reported that as children and youths they were unaware of the national origins of their names, that is there was no distinction, or even awareness, that one's surnames was Genoese or Maltese. Consciousness of ancestry was, at best, vague and unimportant but this changed after the war and it is unimaginable today for even a very young Gibraltarian to be unaware of her heritage.

In 1951, Howes carried on his mission publishing *The Gibraltarian*. As his previous book, this work aspired to demonstrate that the fortress' civilians were not Spaniards in a period in which Spain had a strong influence on the Rock. In the Foreword, the Governor of Gibraltar, Kenneth Arthur Noel Anderson, confirmed this idea: 'Although the ties with Spain are close and Spanish is spoken by everyone today, with English as a second language to a wide and increasing extent, it is very clear that the Gibraltarian is certainly not Spanish'. Language, however,

could not be used to distinguish Gibraltarians from Spaniards and so, when seeking to stress differentiation, the tendency was to focus on the multi-ethnic composition of the population of the Rock so as to highlight the uniqueness of the 'Gibraltarian race'. The idea of a 'melting pot' appeared as an identity marker in Anderson's Foreword: 'The synthesis of blood is still going on'.[39] Gibraltar's 'Spanishness' would be erased in the mixture of cultures that formed the Rock's local identity. In line with Anderson, Howes carried out a 'scientific approach' to demonstrate that this mixture was what made Gibraltarians a unique people:

> It would be correct to say that the fusion of races which has made the Gibraltarian of to-day, includes apart from Jews, Genoese, men of Savoy, Spaniards, men of the United Kingdom, Portuguese, Minorcans, Sardinians, Sicilians, Maltese, French, Austrians, and Italians.[40]

Although Howes recognised that these ethnic backgrounds were essentially Latin, it 'does not make the Gibraltarian a Spaniard'. The differences between both peoples were emphasised, despite Howes understood that the Rock was 'inevitably' influenced by Spain – in particular, by Andalusia. Therefore, he stressed those Gibraltarians' features that could not be found on the other side of the border. Among them, bilingualism and tolerance were considered as the Rock's peculiarities. The Gibraltarian is 'a tolerant man, while holding fast to his religious principles, he lives in harmony with those not of his faith'. In contrast, Howes would not "claim tolerance as an essentially Spanish trait".[41] He thought that tolerance was the most important gap between Spaniards and Gibraltarians, but there were many other differences:

> The Gibraltarian is more ambitious, more businesslike, more commercially-minded, and more industrious than the Andalusian, and also has a greater sense of personal responsibility. Thus, it will be seen that to imagine the people of Gibraltar and the people of Andalusia are nearly the same is a fallacy.[42]

In this description – which echoes 'Victorian values' clearly – Gibraltarian identity is clearly inflected with Britishness. Undoubtedly,

Howes wanted to create a new British subject: The Gibraltarian. As one of our interviewees tells us, 'the term Gibraltarian [. . .] wasn't used a lot' in those days.[43] Many of our interviewees expressed similar views. One elderly Gibraltarian went as far as to say that if Gibraltar had become Spanish in the 1950s 'we would hardly have known the difference', making reference here to language and culture rather than political framework.[44]

When Howes' work was re-published in 1982, Joseph Garcia, the publisher, pointed out that: 'There is today much wider interest in the civilian concept of Gibraltar: in the 30 years since the book was conceived, the identity of the Gibraltarian has consolidated and crystallised in a dramatic fashion'.[45] The Rock's collective identity was still under construction in the 1950s. Even at what appeared to be the height of British identity with the Queen's visit in 1954, Gibraltar remained culturally much more Spanish in its orientation than English, according to our interviewees.[46] Nevertheless, Howes' ideas became relevant arguments to distinguish Gibraltarians from Spaniards in the subsequent years. When Howes passed away in 1978, Joshua Hassan wrote an obituary, saying that *The Gibraltarian* was 'the first ever attempt at analysing the origins of the Gibraltar population', and that he had 'used some of its material' for his 'speeches at the United Nations'.[47] In fact, he did so often in the propaganda struggle with Spain. In 1956, for example, Hassan described the Rock as the melting pot in an interviewed for the *New York Times*:

> The last thing we Gibraltans (sic.) think is that we are in any way Spanish or of Spanish nationality. My ancestors came from Morocco in 1729. There was a mixture of races here when the British seized Gibraltar in 1704. We have evolved a language that is part Andalusian Spanish and part English, with a sprinkling of words from other languages. We admire and love Spain, but we are not Spanish.[48]

This emphasis on Gibraltar's cultural diversity was the way to counteract Franco, who, in 1959, had stated that the inhabitants of Gibraltar were basically Spanish subjects:

> There are no English people in the place except the families of the garrison and the employees of the administration and the warehouses. The *Llanitos* [as Gibraltarians are also known] are entirely Spanish,

> though they take advantage of their British citizenship, and the rest, the Jews and aliens, can live as well under one flag as another.[49]

In this context of ideological struggle, Serfaty's book, *The Jews of Gibraltar Under British Rule*, was reprinted. In the introduction to the second edition, the author's son defended that life in Gibraltar continued 'to be a model of how a mixed community can live in peace and friendship', despite the book giving accounts of Gibraltar's religious conflicts in the nineteenth century. In the Foreword, the then Mayor of Gibraltar Joshua Hassan remembered that Serfaty had asked him to 'continue' and 'to amplify' this history.[50] In 1963, Hassan did so, delivering a lecture to the Jewish Historical Society of England in London. The topic he covered, *The Treaty of Utrecht 1713 and the Jews of Gibraltar*, perfectly suited the political situation that the Rock faced at the time. First of all, he approached the history of Jews in Gibraltar which, in his own words, was 'very much linked up with the development and growth of the civilian population of that city'. Secondly, Hassan would demonstrate historically Spain's religious intolerance through his analysis on the Article X of the Treaty of Utrecht, which established the Spanish King requested to the British monarch 'that no leave shall be given under any pretence whatsoever, either to Jews or Moors, to reside or have their dwellings' on the Rock. Hassan's account focused on explaining why this requirement was 'consistently disregarded and disregarded', despite Spanish insistence on prohibiting Jews and Moors from residing in Gibraltar.[51] With this historical account, Hassan would draw the outline of the present dispute with Spain taking it into the past. Spain was described as a hostile place for Jews and Moors, who could seek refuge in a Gibraltar under British rule. In contrast to Spanish intolerance, Hassan described Gibraltar as a multicultural place where religions had always been in peace:

> Gibraltar has always been notable for the internal peace and friendliness in which people of different religions, customs, and interests exit. This has continued and improved and both Christians and Jews in Gibraltar are proud of the harmony and amity in which all live, each maintaining their own religious observances. It can certainly stand as an example of tolerance and partnership to communities which claim to be more enlightened.[52]

Curiously, in contrast to the expressed opinion of General Franco, Spanish diplomatic efforts to undermine the status of Gibraltarians concentrated on the argument that Gibraltarians were not autochthonous and, rather, made up of various migrants from Europe and the British Empire and, as such, alien colonisers of a Spanish territory.[53] This approach is most clearly articulated in the Spanish *Red Book* on Gibraltar (1965), published by the Spanish Foreign Ministry. Gibraltarians, however, responded by embracing multiculturalism even more closely because is it through this discourse, and by stressing Gibraltarians' tolerance, that they could most clearly be differentiated from an intolerant fascist Spain.

The closure of the border with Spain (1969–1982) strengthened Gibraltar's ethnic diversity, but it challenged the multicultural discourse. Gibraltarians imported labour from Morocco to replace those Spaniards who had to leave Gibraltar in 1969. Although there is no doubt that Gibraltar, whose name derives from the Arabic *Jebel Tariq* – the Mountain of Tariq – possess a relevant Muslim heritage, these new workers – mainly Muslim Moroccans – found many problems integrating into a community where the vast majority were Roman Catholic. First of all, language barriers were important, even though many came from what had been hitherto Spanish Morocco. A Gibraltarian businessman who recruited some of them recognised that 'they spoke no English. So, it was a nightmare!'[54] Secondly, many could not get proper accommodation, and consequently often lived in cramped conditions. Thirdly, Gibraltar often denied them citizenship or permanent residence. As far as they could not get naturalisation, they did not get access to social housing, or welfare benefits. There was also a ban on women giving birth in Gibraltar. One of our respondents reported being stopped by a policeman in the street for being pregnant, ordered to have a medical exam, and was then deported before she gave birth. Many others told of similar stories, including of having to bring their babies back to Gibraltar hidden in a shopping bag. Some of these problems have persisted until the beginning of the twentieth-first century, as a Human Rights Annual Report denounced.[55] Nevertheless, some politicians and community leaders did not hesitate to downplay these issues with an emphasis on the multi-ethnic harmony that prevailed on the Rock.

Although Gibraltar's multicultural narrative was the reaction to the Spanish campaign, this discourse persisted even after Franco died in

1975. In 1981, for instance, Solomon Levy – a nephew of Joshua Hassan and an influential member of the Jewish Community in Gibraltar – told the correspondent of the *New York Times* that the Rock was more tolerant than Spain in terms of religious belief: 'I myself am a Jew, and here in Gibraltar we have four synagogues, and they are out in the open, not hidden away like the one in Madrid'. He also added that this freedom of belief was the main Gibraltar's identity marker: 'The unique thing about Gib [. . .] is that, no matter what religion you are – Protestant, Catholic, Hindu, Jew – we are one big happy family'.[56]

This multicultural discourse was neatly illustrated by a photo which is widely reproduced in Gibraltar and often used to illustrate the essence of being Gibraltarian. In fact, when asked what it means to be Gibraltarian, many people make explicit reference to this photo. In 2008, Solomon Levy was appointed the first civic Mayor of Gibraltar. On the day of his investiture, 'Momy', as he was affectionately known, gathered the representatives of all religions in Gibraltar and signalled 'his commitment to Gibraltar's historic multi-faith society'.[57] The day after, local newspapers included a photo of the Rabbi, the Vicar, the Imam, the Bishop and the new Mayor putting their hands together. This photo today is widely distributed in Gibraltar as a testimony of the Rock's religious harmony.

Embracing Multiculturalism

We have seen how politicians and community leaders built Gibraltar's national discourse around multiculturalism, now we move to explore how Gibraltarians have embraced this official narrative. Our data suggest that this way of thinking has spread successfully among the Rock's population even though there have been adaptations and critiques. When Western countries are discussing the negative effects of immigration, Gibraltarians celebrate the cultural diversity that migrants cause. Today, many defend Gibraltar as a melting pot of cultures because there is, historically, no language that was distinct from either the colonial masters or their Spanish neighbours:

> And the point is that we do not have a native language because we are not natives to the Rock or rather we are not indigenes to the Rock. So, therefore, we don't have a language of our own. And you think of the

> cocktail of people that were here: Greeks, Maltese, Jewish, Italians . . . Everybody was sort of thrown into one melting pot and most of these people were single.[58]

In Gibraltar, the idea of 'melting pot' has been revealed as a useful discursive tool to highlight the singularity of this community. In contrast to many nationalist discourses then, the essence of the Gibraltarian resides in a lack of rootedness in the place. Many interviewees recognise the Spanish cultural influence over Gibraltar, but this recognition usually comes together with a claim of the Rock's varied ethnic backgrounds. One of interviewees explains that being Gibraltarian means to be part of different cultures at the same time. After stressing his varied backgrounds, he recognised the Spanish influence as another component of his identity, but he thinks that many Gibraltarians prefer to ignore it:

> Part of being Gibraltarian is being Italian, Norwegian and English and Spanish you know. There's Spanish heritage there as well and I'm proud of it all. Wherever you're from there is this strength there, there is this beauty and everything. And not think oh ok . . . I've got a bit of Spanish in my ancestry . . . I'll ignore it, which people do, and I'm proud.[59]

Another interviewee suggests that the mixture of Spanish and British cultures makes the Rock a unique place, but he suggests that Gibraltarians have inherited their inclination to tolerance from the UK:

> We have a unique situation where we have the influence of Spain, the influence of England, and both cultures are probably the great cultures of the modern world [. . .]. We have absorbed the best of both worlds really, in a way. And it has made us very tolerant because of the English side of it, but very cultural because of the Spanish side of it.[60]

Apart from being a useful discursive tool to express a singular identity, the official discourse is broadly accepted because many Gibraltarians understand their cultural diversity as a positive feature. A local teacher points out that this variety has improved the mentality on the Rock:

> We are very rich in a sense, culturally speaking because we have many different types of people with many different types of cultures. And Gibraltar has become like a melting pot. So, we actually know a lot about many cultures and that has been very enriching for the Gibraltarian mentality. And it's shown in our cooking. Many Gibraltarians have come over from Morocco to live here, other from Italian people, from Spanish, from Maltese, so that has enriched our culture.[61]

Many consider that Gibraltar's cultural diversity blesses them. One interviewee introduces herself as follows: 'I was born in Gibraltar, very blessed to be born in Gibraltar, a lovely multicultural place which has a lot of history'.[62] Here the Rock becomes the best place to live because multiculturalism ensured social harmony. Although certain ethnic groups – e.g. Moroccans – were severely discriminated against in the past and continue to be so today, a young Gibraltarian says that they are 'united in their "differences"' and that this kind unity would avoid other problems: 'You look at all the conflicts happening in the world today and you just think: I'm so lucky to come from a place like that'.[63]

Today Gibraltarian Moroccans suffer much less discrimination and have access to schooling and university grants to study in the UK. Many Gibraltarians point to the selection of a recent Miss Gibraltar who reached the Miss World final and is of Moroccan origin as an example of Gibraltarian diversity and tolerance. We observed that many Gibraltarians are uneasy with Moroccans speaking fluent English as many now do, having been schooled in Gibraltar and some have studied in the UK. One of our interviewees who worked in the Health Service commented that he always made the point of replying to Moroccan patients in Spanish even when they spoke in English. He couldn't explain why, and rather surprised himself but being unable to do so, but speaking English and speaking it well is a marker of class and social differentiation.[64] Older people, the less well educated, Moroccan immigrants and, of course, Spaniards tend not to speak English but there are many who do. One Moroccan domestic worker who has spent 40 years working in Gibraltar said that her (English dominant) employees insisted on speaking to her in Spanish rather than English even though she spoke not a word of either. She expressed some regret in not learning English as this would have been of greater use to her but in the way language is coded in Gibraltar, Spanish is the language one has always

used for servants.[65] These fissures and tensions are, however, hidden behind an overwhelmingly strong public discourse of tolerance and acceptance of diversity.

Many accounts tell us how Gibraltarians got used to cultural diversity, which would make the Rock an exceptional community. An interviewee explains that they 'grew up in a very cosmopolitan place' because 'it was normal to see people with their kippahs and their vests hanging out'.[66] In line with this, a Gibraltarian man in his 40s says that cultural diversity 'is for the better' because it makes the Rock 'a bit more interesting'.[67] Another Gibraltarian explains that globalisation and the internet are making the world smaller, so he wonders if 'the world itself is becoming more *Llanito*'. Accordingly, he concludes that the Rock's multiculturalism is a progressive idea that grants them a privileged situation:

> I feel like we're very privileged to have like so many cultures living in one space [. . .] It's all about being multicultural [. . .] If we were to further progress into the years the world becomes inevitably more multicultural, more families being of different ethnicities and progressively becoming more *Llanito*.68

Finally, he adds that multiculturalism 'is such an advanced idea' that other communities have not embraced yet: 'the rest of the world will be becoming more Gibraltarian multiculturally (sic.)'.[69] This description is in line with the official narrative describing the Rock as an example to the world in terms of ethnic and religious tolerance. Officially, in the sense of it being widely referenced by politicians in public discourse but also in the sense of enjoying very wide currency among the population. If multiculturalism is an advanced idea, the defence of this way of thinking would make Gibraltarians more progressive than other communities.

In contrast to these idyllic descriptions, some Gibraltarians see a gap between this multicultural discourse and their life experiences. A young student who is descended from Gibraltarians on both sides tells us that: 'The standard thing they say is [that Gibraltar is] a melting pot and everyone gets along. It's not true. Not everyone gets along. No one will always get along with everyone'. He thinks that people are classified in Gibraltar on the basis of their linguistic skills: 'If you can't speak *Llanito* [a local dialect] very well you very quickly fall into one part of the

spectrum'.[70] Therefore, language is a way to check who is 'a true Gibraltarian'. A few interviewees suggest that there is a core group which would be formed by those who are 100% Gibraltarians. Many interviewees talk about the authentic Gibraltarian:

> I think to be a true Gibraltarian, you need to be born here and perhaps it takes even a bit more of a generation. I can give you lots of people I know who have married into a family. And I don't think in that first generation they feel that sense of belongingness but their children do. So, it's quite quick, isn't it? Because it's such a melting pot. And I've met lots of people and I thought that they were dyed-in-the-wool Gibraltarians from generations back and they're not. [. . .] Of course, this is what Spain has helped to create. They've helped to create that, Gibraltarian identity.[71]

There are interviewees who see contradictions between Gibraltar's multiculturalism and this idea of the authentic Gibraltarian. Although this discourse would appear to make Gibraltarians welcome immigrants, it is, in fact, very difficult to acquire Gibraltarian citizenship today. A young Gibraltarian tells us that they 'want to keep [the] place limited, exclusively for us'. It is 'very strange' that immigrants have problems to settle down on the Rock – which is defined as a multicultural place – but our interviewee finds it understandable because 'Gibraltar is only three miles [long]'.[72]

Even a few of those who have mixed ethnic backgrounds think that the official multicultural discourse does not fit with the reality. A woman in her 60s with a Gibraltarian father and Belgian-Gibraltarian mother born in Morocco, for instance, points out that 'when you start digging over the surface' you find that this melting pot of cultures and this narrative of religious tolerance are 'just a myth'. She also explains that multiculturalism is undermining social cohesion. There are new boundaries within the ethnic and religious groups that coexist in Gibraltar. As is the case with many other Gibraltarians, she thinks that there was more integration because, for example, Jews in the past 'didn't have separate Jewish schools'.[73] Two Gibraltarian Jews we interviewed also recognised that 'Gibraltar tolerance is not entirely a myth, but it's fairly skin deep'. Their accounts suggest that the official multicultural narrative would downplay ethnic conflicts in the heart of the community. These two Gibraltarians tell us that it is very difficult

to find 'overt anti-Semitism' on the Rock nowadays, but there are social tensions 'below the surface'. The 'Jewish community has become more distinct' from other Gibraltarians. Older interviewees remember how Catholic children used to go to the Hebrew school, and all Jews went to the state secondary school, but they regret that it is not like that anymore and, consequently, it is rare that Jewish children play with those from other religious backgrounds.[74] According to a local historian, the Jews of Gibraltar started this process of self-marginalisation in the second half of the twentieth century, when the multicultural discourse was developed. He argues that it was a 'reaction against all the mixed marriages' that took place before World War II.[75] In the late 1950s, a new Rabbi, Joseph Pacifici, promoted 'a rigid "right wing" brand of Ashkenazi orthodoxy'[76] in Gibraltar's Jewish community, which became ultra-religious. One interviewee remembers discussing this trend with Joshua Hassan, who 'thought it was a bad thing' because it was 'separating the community' and taking 'the Jews out of the common run'.[77]

All these accounts suggest that multiculturalism has stressed differences within the society, but tolerance remains a sacred value. There have been just a few isolated incidents in which anti-Semitism has appeared. An interviewee points out that 'the youth of the Moroccan community' offended the Rabbi on the street a few years ago.[78] This incident is very unusual, but many believe that Jews' self-marginalisation makes Gibraltar a less cohesive community. There are internal boundaries, but the majority still think that the Rock is an example to the world in terms of religious tolerance:

> It's just like the whole idea of being multicultural and being a multicultural community and living harmoniously together and comfortable, you know? Although I do feel that we're sort of like disconnected between the Hebrew community and Muslim, I still do believe that as a whole, as a collective, we do live together in peace and in contrast with other countries and places, I feel quite fortunate that we can and are able to do that because . . . within the spectrum we don't have like extreme Christians going and terrorising and disturbing the peace of the Muslims or the Hebrew and vice versa . . . So, in that sense, I think that's really good and it should be like an example which should be set amongst the world.[79]

Even though locals witnessed or experienced discrimination first-hand, they still consider that the Rock is an example to the world. This is the case of a woman who was born in the 1980s. Although her parents were living in Gibraltar, as they only held Indian passports, she had to be born in Spain. Later, during her school years in Gibraltar, she was often bullied because of her ethnic background. However, despite all these negative experiences, she keeps thinking that Gibraltar is a multicultural and tolerant community:

> Although, yes, I must admit there were occasions that I was quite bullied in school, [. . .] I think that the great thing about growing up here [Gibraltar] is that we had such a multicultural society that we never questioned . . . Who was from where, who had what, the financial background, the ethnic background . . . for me was never an issue.[80]

In spite of these doubts and critiques, the vast majority of our interviewees have embraced the official multicultural discourse, to a certain extent by adapting this narrative to their life experiences and the current political situation.

Conclusions

This chapter has analysed the political functionality of the discourses on both ethnic diversity and religious tolerance in Gibraltar. As demonstrated here, colonial authorities and local leaders built a narrative of the nation based on multicultural values. Amongst the possible aims of such a policy was the elision of Gibraltar's Spanish cultural heritage to create a British Gibraltarian identity in the shadows of a diplomatic dispute with Spain – rather than accommodating minorities within the colony. This relation between national identity and cultural diversity explains why Gibraltarians still defend multiculturalism, which is seriously questioned in other Western countries. Furthermore, nation-formation process in Gibraltar exemplifies how nationalist movements in former British colonies have defended the heterogeneity of their societies, rather than claiming for the ethnic homogeneity of the population – as it is the case of well-established nations.

We have also demonstrated that many Gibraltarians have embraced the official multicultural discourse as a useful tool to define themselves

and to express their singularity in opposition to other nations – particularly Spain. Nevertheless, not everyone embraces the discourses as reflecting their lived realities. Although the official narrative stresses how harmony prevails among various religious groups and ethnicities on the Rock, our interviewees suggest that the nationalistic discourse on multiculturalism also undermines social cohesion as it implicitly obscures existing conflicts within the different ethnic groups forming the Gibraltarian society. Minorities such as Moroccans and Indians have suffered discrimination or segregation in Gibraltar when this multicultural discourse was already operating. However, the intimate relation between national feelings and tolerance lead Gibraltarians to downplay these internal problems, as they question the dominant narrative of the nation. The assertion that Gibraltar is a model of tolerance is more a tool of nation building rather than an accurate description of reality.

Acknowledgements

Luis G. Martínez thanks the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) for granting him a Postdoctoral Fellowship in 2017 to complete this research. Andrew Canessa and Giacomo Orsini's participation was funded by the ESRC project, Bordering on Britishness.

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