

Black politicians and the Arab Syrian minority of the Caribbean: the case of Antigua and Trinidad and Tobago

© Daurius Figueira
March 2016

The Antigua Daily observer online dated December 30, 2015 in an article titled: "Government to clampdown on Syrian dominance" reported on the statement made in the Senate of the Parliament of Antigua & Barbuda (A&B) by Senator Lennox Weston Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance in the Antigua Barbuda Labour Party (ABLP) government. Senator Weston stated: "If you have the old style of tendering the Syrians will win every time. They have the bank financing, they have professional engineers and then what they do during work order changes, is they pump the price up. I have no apologies to say it is Black man redemption. I am not going to sit down there and 95% of government financing is being paid to Syrians who turn contractors and they can't even cut cloth." Minister Weston in speaking of the government's tendering process is insisting that the Arab Syrians of A&B enjoy and exploit an unfair advantage over Africans of A&B. This small visible minority has according to Weston literally captured the state's purchases of goods and services in A&B. Minister Weston in his statement frames his presentation in terms of race power and powerlessness with a non-African minority enjoying wealth generating activities rooted in state contracts that exclude African competitors because of the rules of tendering established by the government past and present. The state dominated by black politicians elected by a black majority is then rewarding a minority to the detriment of the majority. Weston insists that it is now time for change for black man redemption a message clearly sent to the Arab Syrian minority.

Weston in his statement in the Senate continues: "Public works is a den of corruption they have corruption from top to bottom. Everybody knows that in Antigua, is not me saying so. They give contracts to their friends, with a Syrian connection. We are killing that. Black man redemption that's my motto." Weston is stating that the Arab Syrian contractors are dominant not only because of the resources they command but also as a result of the influence they wield in the office of Public Works. The minority is then involved in corrupt practices according to the Minister. According to the news report the Minister also dealt with the government's rental of space, the cost of rental and the identity of the landlords. The Senator states: "Because 90% of the rent in this country, \$40 million every year, you know who we pay? You know how they look? Do they look like me? Every year \$40 million of our money, you going to continue that? Is that what I am here for? I don't have any inferiority complex, I am about empowerment of Antiguan, I make no apologies for that." The Minister is insisting that he is not in government to serve the interests of the Arab Syrian minority he is then not a servile black politician intent on serving the minority and their agenda. The Minister has stated that \$40 million EC per year is paid by the government to Arab Syrian landlords for the rental of properties. Weston rejects this commercial reality as persons who look like him are locked out of the commercial rental market. Weston then changes his political discourse to a defensive mode by stating he has no inferiority complex, is no angry black man consumed with hate and jealousy of the Arab Syrian minority. His is not then a racist attack as all he wants is empowerment of Antiguan. By extension powerless Antiguan who are in fact the majority and African.

What is Weston's solution to the dominance of state contracts let by Public Works in Antigua? Weston states: "We are going to use public works cost centre to cost jobs and we are going to have contractors who look like me not like you who come from poor areas who want to lift themselves up in this country who can earn money to. We are going to make sure that they have a right round the table to get those jobs once we get value for money." Weston posits that a re-structured tendering process will create the opportunity for Antiguan African contractors to now win state contracts as they will be afforded space at the table. The benefits derived from this space at the table will not only benefit the African race in Antigua but also Antigua as a nation. Is Weston proposing then affirmative action or positive discrimination? Affirmative action or positive discrimination applies to a besieged minority faced with discrimination that transcends time. But in Antigua why does a majority race that dominates the political structure need affirmative action or positive discrimination to remedy a power relation

of exclusion suffered by a majority in favour of a minority? This situation of exclusion can exist because of the complicity of the black politicians in control of the state. Why does Minister Weston in December 2015 make his black man redemption speech in the Senate? Clearly it is a message to the Arab Syrian minority from the ABLP government and an attempt to mobilise support among the African majority indicating a difference of opinion with the Arab Syrian minority that the government considers a threat to its political sustainability. It is then a conflict by its very nature that can impact power relations in the social order changing their nature dramatically as the government and the Arab Syrian minority can lose control of the engagements that arise from the conflict giving space to extremism.

On December 31, 2015 the Antigua Observer online in an article titled: "Syrians object to Weston" reported the responses of specific Arab Syrian business people interviewed on Minister Weston's black man redemption speech. The article indicated the problem the business people interviewed had with the ABLP government changing the present tendering rules and the common discourse of the minority being immigrants who chose to come to Antigua and by their activities are building Antigua. One business person is quoted as follows: "Good luck with that. Antigua people are lazy and many of them would not keep their business open long enough until it becomes (established). Before they stick with it they prefer to lock down and look work where the pay cheque is certain. People don't like to hear the truth." The responses of Arab Syrian business people as reported by the Observer indicate the use of the discourse of race struggle/war where the African race is the inferior race and has to be subjected to the will of the minority superrace for the good of Antigua. The African majority is incapable of building Antigua's economy therefore the immigrants who can and are building the economy must be afforded the means to accomplish their historical destiny and all the elitist principles and mechanisms that are necessary to accomplish this task. The African is described and dismissed in keeping with the colonial discourse of race struggle/war but the paradox of this reality is that the Arab using racist white discourse against Africans is in no way embraced and exalted by this discourse utilised. Walk the streets of Paris and experience the racism against Arabs before the extremist attacks on France and learn your place in the white world in living abuse. But in the power struggles of black on black racism the Arab Syrians are now honorary white, massa by denial. Such is the nature of the power struggles spawned by the discourse of race struggle/war. The reported common reaction in the news report is then justification of elite race privilege to the detriment of the majority African race. But the minority race is a visible minority that cannot control the state personally as dictated by the demographic reality and herein lies their grave weakness and any strategy for race hegemony can backfire badly to the detriment of the minority as it intensifies this weakness. The wealth and success of the minority is waved as proof of its superiority, its fitness to rule and dominate. But this is right demanded without might a most dangerous strategy for a visible minority to pursue. Since January 6, 2016 there have been to-date no more reports on this issue in the Antigua Observer online. As Sir Vivian Richards was reported as stating in an article January 5, 2016 titled: "Sir Viv goes to bat for Senator Weston" the issue now is implementation as failure to do is business as usual in Antigua. Richards states: "Having now made the statement, we look now in the future to see the implementation of such and the benefits.." The question then is the power wielded by the powered minority to end the life of the Minister's attempt at black man redemption.

In the Senate of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) on January 15, 2016 in the debate on the Finance Bill 2016 UNC opposition Senator Wayne Sturge in his contribution made reference to businesses owned by the Arab Syrian minority of T&T. A news report in the Sunday Express newspaper dated January 17, 2016 titled: "Sturge: crying assassin minister killing used car industry" reporting on Sturge's contribution to the debate evoked several letters to the editor of the Express by persons identifying themselves as Syrian/Lebanese citizens of T&T. They don't describe

themselves as Arab.

In his contribution Senator Sturge states: “So that there's no quota with big business, big financiers ANSA Mc Al, Southern Sales, and the list goes on, but what is quite clear from what we are seeing the policy of the Government is simply to help rich financiers and to wage, or to declare a declaration of war on the poor.” (Hansard 2016 Pg 183). The PNM is waging war on its supporters for the benefit of its financiers. Sturge names two financiers of the PNM one being ANSA Mc Al owned by the Arab Syrian Sabga family. Sturge continues: “So let me tell you who would benefit: those persons who buy luxury cars from ANSA Mc Al.” Sturge is then painting a scenario which can be interpreted as the PNM is punishing its African base whilst it rewards its Arab Syrian financier. Then Sturge gets specific when he states as follows: “Now, the businessmen will always tell you 'If yuh raise corporation tax I go ha to close down', and all that. Any of them close down? No. You feel the Syrian community, the 'little gunta', going to close down and run back Syria?” (Hansard 2016 Pg 187). The Sunday Express reports this statement of Senator Sturge as follows: “Yuh feel the Syrian community, the Syrian junta, ready to close down and run back to Syria?” Junta evokes the image of a minority exerting power over the social order that is illicit whilst gunta remains an undetermined entity. But junta remains the word that evoked the Arab Syrian letters to the editor. Senator Sturge completes his statements of relevance to this study when he states: “This is the neo-colonials, the Afro-Saxons playing chimpanzee tea party, dress up nice, we in charge deal with it. And then you are assaulting your own supporters, and making sure you keep them in bondage to make sure they vote for you,”. The PNM is assaulted with the language of the 1970 Black Power Revolution of T&T. The neo-colonials, the Afro-Saxons or black skin, blue eyed boys and black skin, white masks of the PNM are assaulting their African supporters for the benefit of the PNM's Arab Syrian financiers. These PNM neo-colonials, Afro-Saxons are then less than human as they imitate human behaviour in their play acting a chimpanzee tea party is not a human party and can never be. A message is then clear a vote for the PNM is a vote for the Arab Syrian junta/gunta, victory at the polls for the PNM is power for the junta/gunta as they smile all the way to the bank and the reward of grinding poverty for the African voter who supported the PNM. Placed in context Senator Sturge is a UNC opposition Senator a party whose support base is the Indian Trinbagonian voter and as part of the Peoples Partnership lost the 2015 general elections after its sweeping victory in the 2010 general elections. A case of sour grapes?

The letters to the editor of the Daily Express by writers who identified themselves as members of the Syrian/Lebanese minority commenced with a letter by one Joe Esau published on January 18, 2016 titled: “Some advice for Mr Sturge” Esau refers to the Sunday Express published Syrian junta and wants to know from Sturge its identity and asks if he Esau is in the junta. Esau resorts to semantics by giving the definition of junta as a military group controlling a government after taking it by force. Given Esau's definition the Syrian/Lebanese minority cannot then be a junta that is why he asks if he as a member of the minority is included. Esau then presents the oft used discourse of the immigrant: my ancestors chose T&T for a home seeking a better life for themselves and their progeny. I have served T&T faithfully for 45 years “abiding by the laws and paying my taxes diligently and on time”. There are three living generations of his family living in T&T with no intention to pack up and leave T&T. Finally does “Sturge and his colleagues” have a right to T&T and the Syrian /Lebanese minority do not. Do the African and Indian Trinbagonians belong to and are the rightful owners of T&T whilst the minority Syrian/Lebanese minority is condemned to be perpetual immigrants, visitors, outsiders and tolerated guests at best? Esau ends with insisting that Sturge and the UNC are involved in “divisive and destructive politics.” The discourse of the letter fails to deal with the spear point of Sturge's discourse leaving it to pursue its objective as it wasn't disarmed. This failure also conjures up the position that there is a reality that has to be hidden, masked and denied.

The second letter published in the Daily Express of January 19, 2016 titled: “Senator our

country needs real options now, not vulgarity” was written by one Gregory Aboud. Aboud states that Sturge's contribution in the Senate was an “attempt by Mr Sturge to sully the name of the Syrian community; a community of which I am proud to be a descendant.” For Aboud Sturge's contribution was naked vulgarity that was in fact bordering on incitement. Who then was Sturge inciting in his contribution? Aboud wrote that Sturge was foisting shamelessly class warfare. Aboud states: “Instead, he is baiting a vulnerable section of the society to participate in the strategy of 'us versus them' that has never failed to deliver the less fortunate from difficulty.” Is Aboud positing that Sturge is seeking to bait the African and Indian underclass of T&T to launch a race war against the Syrian minority of T&T? Aboud's position is that Sturge protected by parliamentary privilege abused the immunity provided by this privilege by his incitement of the vulnerable to participate in a failed strategy which Aboud never defines nor explain its nature. This stated position of Aboud leads one to the conclusion that in the absence of parliamentary privilege Sturge's statement would have been pursued in the courts this opinion is bolstered by Aboud's call in the letter to remove parliamentary privilege and the immunity it grants to parliamentarians. The question for Aboud that arises is: do you consider Sturge and the UNC as a clear and present danger to yourself and the Syrian minority today? And: is this threat so grave that you believe that the public statements of all non-Syrian citizens of T&T must be policed by the minority to which you belong and action taken against such errant persons? Aboud in his letter utilises the discourse of the minority as victim when he wrote: “It seems rather ironic that after more than 125 years of presence in Trinidad and Tobago members of our minority community have to still defend out citizenship against cheap insults that defy the valuable contribution that we have made and continue to try to make to the upliftment of our country, Trinidad and Tobago.” This appeal to national pride and patriotism fails to disarm the spear point of Sturge's discourse of an African dominated party and government serving the interests of a non-African minority to the detriment of the African voter base of the said party. Sturge insists in this discourse that the African politicians serving the interests of this minority are neo-colonials, Afro-Saxons and chimpanzees as they are serving a new massa who unlike our ancestral massa is non-white. These African politicians can then only be chimpanzees to surrender to a non-white massa that is in the geopolitics of the world today still subservient to our ancestral massa. Sturge's message is that in an Indian dominated party there is an Afrocentric voice that has no space in the African dominated ruling party. Aboud makes no attempt to grapple with this spear point. The line of assault adopted by Aboud gives rise to specific questions. The assault on Sturge and his colleagues of the UNC is it an attempt to brand Indian Trinbagonians as the enemy with the PNM and the African as the ally? But whilst the PP was in power elements of the minority danced with the PP government without public expressions of alarm over any threat posed. Why the change now? This leads to the question if this is an attempt to divide further the two black races in the aftermath of a general election noted for its racist rants? The abiding reality is Aboud's failure to disarm the spear point of Sturge's discourse what he did was to increase its striking power.

The last letter to the editor under review was published on February 8, 2016 titled: “Unfair attack on a Trini minority” in the hand of one George Elias who indicates that he is of Lebanese ancestry. Elias states: “I make no apologies for having said in the past that the Syrian/Lebanese in Trinidad and Tobago were one vague circumstance away from becoming this country's Jews.” What does the Arab minority of T&T being the Jews of T&T translate to on the ground? Which one of the two majority black races is the master race intent on genocide against the Arabs? Elias does not say. It is inconceivable to have two master races intent on Arab genocide in T&T especially given the nature of power relations between both races. A discourse of minority victim hood has now evolved into a discourse of Arab genocide. This discourse is crafted to be unleashed upon those deemed a threat to the Arab minority in an attempt to silence and demonise the persons deemed posing the threat. A discursive strategy crafted by Zionists to silence Arabs opposed to Israel is crafted by Arabs to be unleashed upon

other black races but in its original incarnation the Arab is the primary enemy the personification of evil. But this minority in T&T say they are of Syrian or Lebanese ancestry never Arabs where Syrian and Lebanese are nationalities within the Arab ethnicity so an Arab born in T&T can't be a Syrian or a Lebanese but wherever you are born you are Arab. With this mutated Zionist discourse to criticise the Arabs of T&T makes you a genocidal racist. Elias states: "the presence of the community is still under threat from ignorance and envy" and again: "I am obviously concerned for people who look like me who sound like me. Who have names like my own." Which group, race group in the social order is posing this threat that has Elias concerned about his group's safety and well being? Elias states: "Senator Sturge's remarks have given birth to a wave of sentiment in seeming support, at least when one examines the social media pages aligned with the party of which he is part." Is the UNC and its supporters posing this grave threat to the Arab minority of T&T for Elias? But the UNC is presently in opposition and has no control of the state how can this threat be realised? Genocide demands control and utilisation of state power to accomplish the task. Elias states that the threat will be "an economic power grab not witnessed on our shores since the arrival of Columbus in 1498." Will a majority race exterminate the Arab minority appropriating their wealth and property as the Nazis did to the Jews in Nazi Germany? According to Elias yes but he does not name the race threat. One is left to wonder if when the PNM is ruling the threat emanates from the Indian Trinbagonians and when the UNC is in power the race threat is the African Trinbagonian? How can an opposition Senator then set in train the demonisation of the Arab minority that is necessary to dispossess and exterminate the minority when the PNM is in power? Is Elias lobbying for the state to police any and all statements made that are deemed racist assaults on the minority by members of the minority are they calling for censorship for their benefit as defined by them? Elias invokes a plethora of questions that hang in the air but such is the strategy of discursive agents. The common streams of discourse in the three letters are obvious with the only difference being the willingness to express extremist positions vary according to the individual making the statement.

The Arab minority in T&T is not homogeneous or monolithic. Those who trace their presence in T&T in excess of 100 years are not the only Arabs in T&T. There are Arabs who have sired only a single generation born in T&T and there are those yet to sire a generation born in T&T and these Arabs are mainly from Syria. These comparatively recent arrivals say nothing in public and pursue no public agenda yet they are here living and working on a daily basis. They are seeking to better themselves and their families and they have enriched the already rich tapestry of T&T's diversity as they are mainly involved in exposing the people of T&T to the rich and long standing culture they carry by offering for sale their specific Arab ethnic products. There are those who struggle to build sustainable enterprises and those who work for them dreaming of the day when they will establish their own enterprises. The letter writers reviewed have made it clear that they don't speak for these Arabs otherwise called on the streets the "gyro boys". Questions then arise for those who trace the presence of their lineage in T&T in excess of 100 years: what is the nature of your relationship with the Arabs who have recently arrived especially those from Syria? What is the nature of the relationship with recent arrivals who cling tenaciously to their Islamic worldview refusing to walk away from Islam as others before them did? Finally what is the nature of the relationship of the Arabs who have maintained the genetic code of their ancestors over 100 years in T&T with those Arabs who have chosen to miscegenate, to marry and procreate outside of their genetic code? What is the nature of the relationship between the half breed, half Arab offspring and you? Questions of salient sociological importance that speaks to the nature of power in the social order of T&T.

The letter writers to the newspaper who identify themselves as members of the Arab Syrian minority of T&T have articulated a discourse in public that has its origins in European Zionism. A besieged race minority faced with a potent threat, a clear and present danger to their existence and their

power position in the social order of T&T a threat with the propensity to escalate to genocide. But where is their ancestral homeland they desire to migrate to? There is none. This is not a T&T Arab variant of the colonial discourse of race struggle/war as the colonial minority was the state and the state was them. Those of the minority who articulate their discourse in public does not command the state and has no chance of doing so democratically especially given the politics of race in T&T. What then is their strategy to defuse this threat of imminent genocide they see to Arabs in T&T at the hands of the black races of T&T? This is a question that can only be answered by the discursive agents of the minority who articulate in public. But are they the accepted and acclaimed agents of the minority in T&T?

The Antigua Power Company (APC), the Hadeed family and the black politicians of Antigua's

The installed electricity generating capacity of Antigua in 2015 was as follows: 40 Mega Watts (MW) owned by the state entity Antigua Public Utilities Authority (APUA), 51 MW owned by a joint venture between APC who is the majority shareholder and APUA and 27 MW owned by APC. APC owned by the Hadeed family of Antigua is the largest single supplier of electricity to APUA which APUA purchases then re-sells to consumers in Antigua. This monopoly enjoyed by the Hadeed family and the dependence of the Antiguan economy on it is heightened by the condition APUA's generation plants are in. Whenever APUA is able to generate electricity its cost is above that of the cost of electricity supplied by APC. In an economy where over half of its GDP is contributed by the tourism industry failure to procure a sustainable supply of electricity can negatively impact the international competitiveness of this strategic industry. In 2012 APC shut down its generating plants in response to the failure of APUA to pay outstanding bills plunging Antigua into darkness. Agreements made in 1996 and 2003 contracted APC to supply 27MW of electricity to APUA by the then Antigua Labour Party (ALP) government ending APUA's monopoly of electricity generation in Antigua and this was the economic reason for the creation of APC by the Hadeed family. This decision in 1996 by the ALP effectively set in train the opening up of the electricity generation and supply business to the private sector. Whilst this liberalisation was in train the politicians of the day did nothing to address the non-sustainable condition APUA's generation capacity was in. With the coming of the ICC world Cup to Antigua in 2007 and the projected steep climb in demand for electricity in the 21st century which outstripped all existing generating capacity it became apparent to the politicians that the supply crisis must be given utmost priority.

In the general elections of March 23, 2004 the ALP lost to the United Progressive Party (UPP) led by Baldwin Spencer. The problem of supply was now inherited by the Spencer government which included Aziz Hadeed a dominant figure within the Hadeed family in the cabinet. On December 31, 2006 Spencer removed Hadeed from his cabinet and the Senate appointing him an ambassador. On May 16, 2006 the Spencer cabinet approved a joint venture (JV) agreement to create 51 MW of electricity generating capacity in two phases with APC but on November 11, 2006 the Spencer cabinet approved a memorandum of agreement with Beijing Construction Engineering Group (BCEG) to create a generation plant for APUA with some 30MW of capacity which is the Wadadli plant. In the aftermath of the agreement with BCEG the Spencer government then moved to utilise the police to prevent APC from completing phase two of the JV insisting that the cabinet never approved phase two of the JV agreement which led to lengthy litigation between APC and the government. This legal battle ended at the Privy Council where judgment for APC was delivered in 2013. The Wadadli plant supplied and erected by BCEG when commissioned in 2012 proved to be unreliable as it is subject to regular equipment failure and the present Prime Minister (PM) of Antigua & Barbuda Gaston Browne has publicly stated that APUA cannot source spare parts for the equipment supplied by BCEG. There is a persistent allegation in Antigua that the BCEG supplied plant is used equipment supplied at a cost to taxpayers of some USD 47 million. In keeping with the supply agreements of 1996 and 2003 with APC

and APUA in 2018 the 27 MW plant owned by APC will pass into the hands of APUA a plant with at minimum 20 years in operational mode. All existing generating plants in Antigua burn diesel fuel which raises the question of the choices made in the acquisition of generating technology, its energy efficiency and flexibility. In 2015 the cost of 0.37 US cents per kilowatt hour was the electricity cost in Antigua whilst the average Caribbean cost was 0.33 US cents per kilowatt hour. The legacy of the choices made by the politicians is an electricity cost per unit higher than the Caribbean average.

The structure of the JV agreement for the 50 MW facility between APC and APUA that was affirmed by the Privy Council in 2013 is most instructive of the political games played between the black politicians, APC and the Hadeed family. The JV for the 50.9 MW turnkey project comprised two phases: phase 1 comprised the construction of a power generation unit with a capacity of 17 MW and necessary infrastructure by January 31, 2007. APC agreed to reduce the cost of electricity supplied to APUA as at June 1, 2006 by 7%. Phase 2 comprised the erection of a generation plant with necessary infrastructure with a capacity of 33.9 MW by December 2007 with the cost of electricity from this plant being 14.1 US cents per unit as at February 1, 2007. All costs associated with sourcing, erecting and commissioning both plants will be borne by APC and its shareholders.

The clauses of interest in the overarching structure of the JV agreement governing both phases are as follows: a JV company to be established with 55% of the shareholding held by APC and 45% by APUA. The PPP agreement of the JV extends from January 2007 to January 2029 and APC manages both plants on a daily basis for the life of the JV. The interest rate applicable to the financing of this project undertaken by APC as the sole shareholder financier shall not exceed 9% per annum. The mechanism to limit the interest rate to 9% was not included in the JV document. Parties to the JV cannot sell or assign their shares without the written consent of the other party, public participation is permissible at a later date in the life of the JV, anytime during the life of the JV any party has the right to purchase the shares of the other at an agreed price and the JV can be terminated before its expiry date based on mutual agreement. These clauses indicate APC is calling the shots on the two generation plants for some 22 years and any government of Antigua wanting to extricate itself from this JV is faced with the reality that the Hadeed family is holding them by the short and curly. Any attempt by the state to divest its 45% stake in the JV company has to be approved by APC and there is no stipulation in the JV to prevent APC or its proxies buying blocks of divested shares in addition there is no stipulation that APC must divest part of its shareholding. Divestment of the state's shareholdings will then place APC in an impregnable power position in the company. Any move by the state to end the JV or acquire the shares held by APC triggers the mechanism whereby the state is bound by the agreement to have a mutually agreed on price to end the JV before its expiry date. One expects that this process will end in international arbitration whilst APC controls the supply of electricity to Antigua. The JV does not say what obtains with the expiry of the JV in 2029. The shareholders of APC have made it clear as indicated by the strategy they pursued in the dispute with the then UPP government the willingness to bury the state in a barrage of litigation that the Board of the Privy Council commented on as follows: "From its inception, the case has been rendered far more complex than it should have been by the inappropriate procedure adopted by APCL and by the over elaboration of the points at issue." (2013 UKPC 23 Pg 1). In addition in 2015 the strategy to drag the international relations of A&B into the dispute between the Hadeed family and the state regardless of the possible damage that can be visited upon the state and people of A&B by this strategy was unfurled. The monopoly of electricity supply enjoyed by the Hadeed family combined with the Privy Council appeal in their favour have now become the basis of action taken by the Hadeed family that has spawned a game of chicken with the present ABLP government of Antigua. A standoff enhanced by a monopoly of supply created by black politicians first the monopoly then the botched illicit action taken by the UPP government to deny the JV and prevent the completion of phase 2 of the project.

An article dated February 11, 2015 titled: “Antigua lawsuit could threaten Chinese \$\$” in the Stabroek news online reported that APC had filed a lawsuit naming the EXIM Bank of China and members of the former UPP government including Baldwin Spencer for damages with the creation of the Wadadli plant. In the general elections held in A&B on June 12, 2014 the Antigua Barbuda Labour Party (ABLP) won 14 of the 17 seats in the House of Representatives. The APC lawsuit was filed after the UPP exited office and by naming the EXIM Bank of China in its lawsuit it dragged the current ABLP government into the dispute. On February 10, 2015 the Office of the Prime Minister (PM) issued a release on the APC lawsuit calling on the Hadeed family to do the “patriotic thing” and remove the EXIM Bank of China from its lawsuit as this is threatening the future livelihood of the people of A&B as the lawsuit will end any future investment by the Chinese bank in A&B. The PM's statement expressed the position that all members of the Hadeed family made their wealth in A&B and continue to do so through many businesses supported by the people and government of A&B. A clear message sent to the Hadeed family that speaks to the demographic reality underpinning this power game. An article dated February 11, 2015 titled: “Gov't and Hadeed wrangle” in the Antigua Observer online reported that the public appeal of the PM to the Hadeed family is viewed by the family as interference with the court process. In the article the PM is reported as saying that he was informed by the Chinese Embassy of the potential damage the APC lawsuit can have on A&B's relationship with China. The PM indicated that there was no response from the Hadeed family to-date to his plea of February 10, 2015. a game of chicken between a government and a visible family belonging to a visible minority that can have grave repercussions. An article dated March 11, 2015 titled: “Government and Antigua Power Company headed to court” in the antiguaobserver.com reported that the APC and Aziz Hadeed in negotiations held with the government on removing the EXIM Bank of China from APC's lawsuit were now demanding the following: a settlement for damages in the sum of USD 228 million arising from the ruling of the Privy Council in 2013. The PM indicated that he has been advised by legal counsel to allow the courts to settle this claim as the amount demanded is way too high and he has accepted this advice. Aziz Hadeed has also demanded that the contract between APC and APUA governing the 27 MW plant owned by APC be changed extending the expiry of the contract from 2018 to 2029. Under the original contract the 27 MW plant is to be handed over to APUA in 2018 with the expiry of the contract. The PM indicated that he has reservations about any private entity controlling A&B's power production as this should be in the hands of government but if he has no other alternative he will comply.

The government's strategy is then clear as it stares down Aziz Hadeed and APC. The issue of damages can be tied up in the courts for some time as it goes all the way to the Privy Council whilst the contract governing the 27 MW plant remains in force with the state soon to acquire 27 MW of generating capacity in 2018. The strategy of the Hadeed family is to use the lawsuit of APC against the EXIM bank of China to extend the contract on the 27 MW plant thereby maintaining their monopoly on the supply of electricity in Antigua. To-date the brinkmanship continues creating the impression that the Hadeed family expects the government to bend to its will which in the demography of Antigua is an impression with potential negative political impact. Then there is the issue of the out of court settlement for damages and the negotiations to remove the Chinese bank from the APC lawsuit and the deal reached between the government and the Hadeed family, the abrogation of the deal and the government's decision to fore go any settlement and resort to the courts. An article dated February 13, 2015 titled: “APC blinks” in the antiguaobserver.com reported on the cabinet meeting with a delegation led by members of the Hadeed family to discuss the removal of the EXIM Bank of China from APC's lawsuit. One member of the Hadeed family present at the meeting stated: “an amicable settlement reached” but details of the settlement were not made available to the public. An article dated March 12, 2015 titled: “PM rules out APC settlement, prepares for court battle” in antiguaobserver.com reported

that the PM had indicated his decision to resort to the courts to settle the issue of damages to APC and stated "I have declined signing the agreement." The question is was this the said agreement agreed to in February 2015 with the Hadeed family and why did he refuse to sign the agreement when the PM indicated that he was successful in the getting the Chinese bank removed from the lawsuit last month? What the PM did indicate is that the lawsuit is the handiwork of Aziz Hadeed. The news report quotes the PM as follows: "It's pointless for me to negotiate a \$100 million settlement when our lawyers are suggesting it may be 20 (million); it may be minimal." Was the PM willing to settle with the Hadeed family for USD 100 million in damages and the extension of the contract to 2029 in exchange for removing the Chinese bank from the APC lawsuit? If yes why then the sudden change in attitude and the adoption in public of a no surrender stance towards the Hadeed family? The Baldwin Spencer government created and ratified the JV with APC then signed an agreement with BCEG and moved to prevent APC from completing phase 2 of the project why the sudden change of heart? Two successive governments dealing with the Hadeed family have exhibited the same behaviour pattern. Why then first seek to accommodate the demands of the family placing the state of A&B in a less than advantageous position versus the strategic agenda of a minority family then involve the state in an engagement with the family that further compromises the interests of the state, its hegemony over A & B and the interests of the majority of citizens for the benefit of a visible minority? The orthodox explanations given to explain this behaviour by black politicians such as the minority being party financiers for general elections etc cannot explain the willingness to bend this has to be the product of a worldview and the sudden dramatic turn of events can be explained by the intervention of agents of imperial capital expressing their objection to the compromise. Because the nature of the engagement arising from the sudden turns point to the intervention of an overlord that dwarfs the influence of the Arabs.

The PM of A&B spoke in public in February 2015 by calling for a patriotic compromise with the Hadeed family, members of the family then visited the cabinet and an agreement was agreed on in February 2015. But in March 2015 the agreement was in tatters and the language of the PM was now one of public engagement with the Hadeed family a part of a discourse being crafted for the black majority. The discourse insisted that the resort to the courts to settle the claim of the Hadeed family even though it meant losing Chinese finance especially for the re-development of the port of St Johns was the sacrifice the PM was willing to make to stand up to the Hadeed family sending the message to the black majority that he was not a servile black politician. Simultaneously Aziz Hadeed former member of the UPP cabinet, reputed personal friend of Baldwin Spence in 2004 and reputed major financier of the UPP campaign in 2004 is fingered as the member of the Hadeed family that was leading the assault on the government and by extension the black majority. But a clear indication of intervention into the reality on the ground from the PM and his government was necessary to be sent to the black majority. In December 2015 it was the task of Senator Weston, Minister in the Ministry of Finance, an unelected member of Parliament to deliver the message of the intervention with his black man redemption speech. To-date the impasse with the Hadeed family and further information on Weston's black man redemption in action are no longer published news. The evolution of the power struggle will be impacted by the government's willingness to implement Weston's proposals and the willingness of the Arab minority to use its power to stymie the government's intervention. Government failure to effect change reinforces the perception of the servility of the black politicians and the majority as a victim trapped by a system hijacked by a minority. The perception that the political process does not afford space to the victim as majority to change their life chances inevitably leads to extremism and this clinging to extremism becomes extremist action when the leadership appears that is willing to pursue extremist violence. This is the lesson of Bosnia and Rwanda. Failure to act politically to change the reality hence the perception and the minority utilising its power to stymie any efforts to change it as they view change as an attack on their privileged position and justify this privilege with

discourse that posits we versus them is a formula for extremist violence. The minority must never forget that they are a very small minority and as the Eastern Caribbean becomes even more integrated into the Caribbean illicit drug trade the level of gun violence will escalate in the social order as A&B are inundated by the illicit gun trade. The means for extremist violence will then be affordable and available and criminal action can be also an insurgency.

The decision to file a lawsuit for damages on a bi-lateral lending agency for a loan made with the duly elected government of the day of A&B sent messages to the agents of imperial capital. The monopoly of the supply of electricity and the action to switch off the supply to the consumers of Antigua also sent messages to imperial capital. Any threat to the interests of capital will be neutralised and opinions on such threats will be delivered to the ruling politicians of the day with the expectation that they will be ameliorated. The fact that the Arab minority of A&B are in no way part of imperial capital nor do they belong to a state where imperial capital is headquartered speaks to their powerlessness in the world of imperial capital and this reality demands a strategy cognisant of it.

The lawsuit against the EXIM Bank of China is a message sent to the Communist Party of China as a private sector entity of A&B is attempting to determine Chinese foreign policy for A&B with possible impact on its foreign policy implemented through the Bank in the world. This entity in Antigua is calling out the Communist Party of China. What if China responds by offering the government of A&B the facility whereby the Wadadli plant will be completely refurbished and recommissioned by China with no cost to A&B? Can the government of the day refuse especially after its commitment to black man redemption? The 30 MW capacity of the Wadadli plant plus the 27 MW capacity of the APC plant to be placed in APUA's hands in 2018 is 57 MW of capacity in state hands effectively blunting the monopoly of APC over supply. The present strategy pursued by the Hadeed family of Antigua is then fraught with danger both for itself, the minority it belongs to and the social order of Antigua. To pursue a strategy for hegemony over a majority race with the complicity of the politicians of that majority race erodes the legitimacy of those politicians and of the state opening the way for extremism. Then to combine this agenda with an assault on the international order is the action of a minority that has lost touch with reality as it has overreached its power and ability and is now tilting at windmills. It has to learn that there are limits to power as no power is absolute and for the sake of viability and sustainability a minority has to be ever mindful of the constraints it must live with on a daily basis. Entitlement is a myth Zionism insists is real and attainable.

References

January 10, 2007 “Antigua and Barbuda cabinet changes” Wikileaks

https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07BRIDGETOWN51_a.html

July 10, 2012 “Chinese offers no guarantee for US\$47M Antigua power plant” Kaieteur News

<http://www.kaieteurnewsonline.com/2012/07/10/chinese-offers-no-guarantee-for-us47m-antigua-power-plant/>

July 23, 2013 Privy Council Appeal No. 0063 of 2012 (2013 UKPC 23)

<https://www.jcpc.uk/cases/jcpc-2012-0063.html>

December 12, 2013 Malte Humpert “Antigua and Barbuda's energy market” IADB

<http://blogs.iadb.org/caribbean-dev-trends/2013/12/12/antigua-and-barbudas-energy-market/>

February 11, 2015 “Antigua lawsuit could threaten Chinese \$\$” Stabroek News

<http://www.stabroeknews.com/2015/news/regional/02/11/antigua-lawsuit-threaten-chinese/>

February 11, 2015 “Gov't and Hadeed wrangle” Antigua Observer <http://antiguaobserver.com/govt-and-hadeed-wrangle/>

February 13, 2015 “APC blinks” Antigua Observer <http://antiguaobserver.com/apc-blinks/>
March 11, 2015 “Government and Antigua Power Company headed to court” Antigua Observer <http://antiguaobserver.com/government-and-antigua-power-company-headed-to-court/>
March 12, 2015 “PM rules out APC settlement, prepares for court battle” Antigua Observer <http://antiguaobserver.com/pm-rules-out-apc-settlement-prepares-for-court-battle/>
May 2015 “Energy Snapshot Antigua and Barbuda” Energy Transition Initiative Islands <http://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy15osti/64115.pdf>
December 30, 2015 “Government to clamp down on Syrian dominance” Antigua Observer <http://antiguaobserver.com/government-to-clamp-down-on-syrian-dominance/>
December 31, 2015 “Syrians object to Weston” Antigua Observer <http://antiguaobserver.com/syrians-object-to-weston/>
January 5, 2016 “Sir Viv goes to bat for Senator Weston” Antigua Observer <http://antiguaobserver.com/sir-viv-goes-to-bat-for-senator-weston/>
January 6, 2016 “Opposition blames ABLP for Syrian control of economy” Antigua Observer <http://antiguaobserver.com/opposition-blames-ablp-for-syrian-control-of-economy/>
January 15, 2016 “Contribution of Senator Wayne Sturge to the debate on the Finance Bill 2016” Hansard of the Senate of Trinidad and Tobago Pg 182 <http://www.ttparliament.org/publications.php?mid=30>
January 17, 2016 “Sturge 'crying assassin' minister killing used car industry” Sunday Express
January 18, 2016 “Some advice for Mr Sturge” Daily Express
January 19, 2016 “Senator, our country needs real options now, not vulgarity” Daily Express
February 8, 2016 “Unfair attack on a Trini minority” Daily Express
March 7, 2016 “Government investigates Wadadli power plant” Abstvradio <http://abstvradio.com/government-investigates-wadadli-power-plant/>