

# POLITICS IN THE UNION OF THE COMOROS FROM DECOLONIZATION TO PRESENT (the 1970s to 2016): A brief check

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## ABSTRACT

*This work is based on a concise history of Comoros from decolonization to the present day. It includes a flashback to the archipelago's early history. The islands that makeup Comoros hold fascinating experiences, particularly politics, which is the focus of this paper. This work examines the various governments and their leaders at the federal level of the union, beginning with Ahmed Abdallah Abderamane, the father of independence. While examining the political situation in Comoros, the researcher does not overlook the role played by French mercenary Bob Denard in destabilizing recalcitrant regimes whenever the opportunity arose. Also, the issue of Mayotte in the Comoros archipelago could not be avoided in this work, as French influence has always been a thorn in the union's side. Note should be taken that Comoros was one of the last Francophone colonies to gain independence in Africa in the year 1975. It was not an easy task and its independence had been an issue of debate among the already independent countries making the Organization of African Unity (OAU) created in 1963.*

**Keywords:** -, Comoros, Ahmed Abdallah, Bob Denard, Mayotte, the referendum

## INTRODUCTION

Comoros, a former French colony in Africa, is an archipelago of volcanic islands located off the coasts of Mozambique and Madagascar to the east and northwest, respectively. The Islands have a political past that has not been forgotten and is still active today. It is all about the separation of Mayotte (French overseas territory) from the rest of Comoros, including the archipelago that includes the Blanc du Geyser and Glorioso Islands. Grand Comore (capital Moroni; the largest island in the union) - Anjouan - Moheli Grand-Terre (part of the French department of Mayotte; capital Mamoudzou) Petite-Terre (second-largest island of Mayotte). Before reaching its current state, Comoros, like many other African nations excluding Ethiopia, experienced colonial rule, decolonization, and independence. Let's take a look back at its past.

### 1. A SUMMARY OF THE COMOROS' HISTORY

According to some sources, the Malayo-Polynesian descendants were the first Africans to settle on the islands in the sixth century. Around the same time as the Malayo-Polynesians, the Shorazlim immigrants settled on the islands. With groups from the Gulf of Persia, Madagascar, and Southeast Asia, the processes of colonization of the islands were successful. From the 15th to the 19th centuries, numerous European explorers, including the French, the British, and the Portuguese, visited Africa.

In 1505, Portuguese explorers visited the Archipelago, followed in 1529 by the French Parmentier brothers. The Portuguese were the area's first explorers, while Britain and France became interested in the Islands in the nineteenth century. The European scramble for Africa was characterized as the survival of the fittest. In other words, it meant

that all methods and strategies for acquiring territories were legal and necessary. Some people discussed peace (bribery, trade, and gifts, etc.), while others discussed violence (bloodshed and intimidation). Regardless of the circumstances, Westerners sought complete control over Africa's vibrant and fertile soils.

By employing the 'divide-and-conquer strategy in Comoros, France was able to gain complete control over all of the affected territories. In addition to the gap-and-conquer strategy, the French were able to control the islands and put down every rebellion. It was due to the effective utilization of an affair between a French merchant and the Sultana. The islands became a protectorate of France

### **1.1 UNDER FRENCH COLONIALISM, THE ISLANDS**

During colonization, the major European powers, including Spain, Portugal, France, Great Britain, Belgium, and Italy, partitioned the entirety of Africa. The imperialists focused on their respective portions and implemented their policies in accordance with their respective objectives. Same for the islands (Comoros) and France, which began by acquiring Maore Island (later renamed Mayotte) and transforming it into a French colony, along with Anjouan, Grande Comore, and Moheli. France took another step forward in 1886 when she signed an agreement with Ali Bin Said Omar (the Sultan of Bamboa) granting her complete control over Ngazidja, which would later become Grand Comore. French protectorates were established in Mwali (Moheli) and Ndzwani (Anjouan).

Mayotte became a single French colony on April 9, 1908, and was annexed to Madagascar as a province on July 25, 1912. As a refueling and provisioning station for ships from Europe to the Indian Ocean, the island served a vital purpose for France. Africa was affected by the Second World War (1939-1945) due to the fact that those involved (Britain, France, Germany, Spain, etc.) utilized their African colonies as backups. There was no way for Africans to evade it, and its effects are unpleasant. At the conclusion of World War II, Germany was sanctioned as the aggressor and was stripped of all her colonies.

In the meantime, the United States and the Soviet Union assumed global leadership and demanded that all imperialists decolonize their territories in Asia, Latin America, and Asia. In Africa, the birth of nationalism occurred in the early 1940s as a result of the political consciousness developed by certain African elites. They advocated for decolonization and independence because they desired to manage their nations' affairs. Consequently, African countries gained independence from their colonial masters, beginning with the Maghreb in the early 1950s (Libya-1951, Egypt-1952, Morocco-1956, Tunisia-1956, and Algeria-1962)

### **1.2 DECOLONIZATION OF THE TERRITORIES**

The quest for independence by African territories, including Comoros, began in the middle of the 20th century. The colonizers required an order to grant the Colon's request. Two of the imperialists, France and Portugal in particular, became reluctant to do so. Britain carried out effective decolonization in its territories, despite the constant conflict between the British and natives under Jomo Kenyatta over the expropriation of their land in certain instances (Kenya in particular).

In the meantime, France had no choice but to decolonize her territories due to mounting pressure from international observers and the territories in question. Nonetheless, some regions, including Gabon, desired to be French departments, just like Mayotte. But for those who chose independence, France took precautions to ensure that the future (on paper) independent territories would remain dependent on them. Returning to decolonization in Comoros, the French reluctantly initiated steps to determine how the islands would achieve independence.

By 1946, the islands were administered separately from Madagascar. Significant changes in the status of the islands began in 1961 when they were granted internal political autonomy, and France agreed that Comoros would attain independence in 1978. The Comorian Parliament, under the influence of Ahmed Abdallah, declared the islands' independence in 1975, before the agreed-upon date of 1978. Except for Mayotte, which favored staying with France, all islands supported the resolution passed by the parliament.

### **1.3 THE 1974 REFERENDUM**

Under French supervision, on January 15, 1973, a treaty was signed allowing the islands to attain independence within five years. In response, the French government demanded a referendum applicable to all islands. Wikipedia cites opposition to the concept in Mayotte "The method that was criticized in Mayotte. Marcel Henry, the leader of the anti-independence Mahoré People's Movement, asserted that Mayotte residents had the right to self-determination under article 53 of the French Constitution, which states that secession cannot occur without the approval of voters ". Wikipedia-Comorian Independence Referendum of 1974 is the source.

The national assembly accepted the treaty in 1973, and through an amendment proposed by her, Mayotte would be granted regional autonomy if granted independence in the future. In November 1974, the parliament passed Law 74-965, which required a referendum to be held in Comoros within six months, with an additional six months for reflection and decision-making following the results. The poll question was as follows: Do you favor the independence of Comoros' territory? Wikipedia: 1974 Comorian Independence Referendum

Next is the outcome of the referendum presented through a table by WIKIPEDIA from the African Elections Database

**Table -1: African Elections Database**

Island	For		Against		Invalid votes	Total votes	Registered voters	Voter Turnout %
	Votes	%	Votes	%				
<a href="#">Anjouan</a>	58,897	99.93	44	0.07	4	58,945	61,406	95.99
<a href="#">Grande Comore</a>	84,123	99.98	21	0.02	39	84,183	89,215	94.36
<a href="#">Mayotte</a>	5,110	36.78	8,783	63.22	84	13,977	17,946	77.88
<a href="#">Mohéli</a>	6,054	99.92	5	0.08	3	6,062	6,351	95.45
<b>Total</b>	<b>154,184</b>	<b>94.57</b>	<b>8,853</b>	<b>5.43</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>163,167</b>	<b>174,918</b>	<b>93.28</b>
Source: <a href="#">African Elections Database</a>								

It was evident from the results of the referendum that Mayotte was not prepared to form a state with the three other islands (Grand Comore, Anjouan, and Moheli) and preferred to remain with France. President Ahmed Abdallah has taken a side action by instituting a new constitution through the Comoros Parliament. France and the islands would agree to their independence. President Ahmed Abdallah opposed France's plan to grant Mayotte autonomy distinct from the other islands. The Comorians adopted a new law for their independence on July 3, 1975, according to

Wikipedia: the French National Assembly approved a new bill on Comorian autonomy, with the second article stating that each island must adopt its own constitution. If an island rejected the new legislation, it would be replaced within three months. If any island rejected the second version, it would not apply to them. Despite some agreement reached between the government of Ahmed Abdallah and the French government, the Comorians on numerous occasions never failed to express their displeasure with French imperialism due to the French government's involvement in Comoran internal affairs aimed at securing their future. In addition, they disapproved of the provisional act of 30 June 1975 and criticized France for dividing Comoros. On July 6, 1975, the Comorian House of Parliament proclaimed the independence of Comoros (Grande Comore, Anjouan, and Moheli), which was recognized by France on December 31, 1975. France did not bring up Mayotte's case until February 1976, when a referendum to join the rest of Comoros was held and was rejected by 99 percent of voters.

#### **1.4 AHMED ABDALLAH ABDERAMANE IS THE LEADER OF THE INDEPENDENT COMOROS.**

Ahmed Abdallah, a Comoran, was born in Domoni (West coast of Anjouan Island) to a noble and thriving family. In his youth, with the assistance of his older brother Said Ali Abdallah Abderamane, he became a merchant. Ahmed Abdallah's interest in politics began in 1946 when he joined the general counsel for Comoros, of which he would become president in 1950. After serving in the French National Assembly as a deputy alongside Said Mohammed Cheikh, he moved to the French Senate in 1959.

In 1961, France granted the Comoros internal autonomy, and Abdallah continued his business activities of importing rice and other essential goods at low prices and reselling them for a profit. In 1968, Ahmed Abdallah was re-elected to the Senate. However, in 1970, he lost his friend Said Mohammed Cheikh and decided to join the RDPC in order to expedite the Comorian independence process and establish a democratic union. Ahmed Abdallah became the Prime Minister of Comoros in December 1972 and resigned from the Senate on January 9, 1973. Abdallah was involved in the future of his country and was the mastermind behind the 15 June 1973 Paris accord. Following the negotiation, the islands held a referendum for independence in 1974, with the exception of Mayotte. Ahmed Abdallah Abderamane accused Jacques Chirac's government of violating international law by accepting Mayotte's decision to become a French department. As a result, Ahmed Abdallah declared the independence of Comoros on July 6, 1975, becoming its first president. Due to a mercenary coup plotted by Col. Bob Denard on July 6, 1975, on the island of Grande Comore, Abdallah did not deserve to be in power.

On July 24, 1975, newly independent President Abdallah established his first government. In the absence of the Prime Minister in this government, Abdallah assumed the position of Justice Minister. Instead of taking precautions and establishing a stable government to meet the new challenges, he elected to continue his stewardship with ten members of his government. According to some, it was Abdallah's first error in the new Comoros, of which he was the creator. President Abdallah, cognizant of the significance of soliciting diverse viewpoints for the good of the state, enacted a series of reforms with the house of assembly and the government by reflecting on the constitution of the new republic and the presidential and legislative, etc. Concerning independence, numerous questions and obstacles revolve around it. But Ahmed Abdallah was pleased to be referred to as the father of Comorian independence, and he disregarded the views of the French government and the Comorian opposition. He pointed the finger at France, accusing her of mismanagement of Comoros' internal affairs. Some opposition members never wanted a situation in which freedom would be granted to a person (Ahmed Abdallah) who would destroy democracy and prolong his stay in power, and thus a controversy arose concerning Abdallah and his quest for independence. Ahmed Abdallah was deposed and replaced by Said Ibrahim-Ali Soilihi. His overthrow was precipitated by his dispute with France, which provided fertile ground for the opposition.

#### **2. ALI SOIHILI IS IN CHARGE OF COMOROS.**

Ali Soihili opposed Ahmed Abdallah's Comoros-related viewpoints, arguing that his so-called patriotism was phony and motivated by ulterior motives. He sought to depose Abdallah and his dynasty (UDZIMA party). While in France, he started making preparations for Abdallah's downfall. Ali Soilihi told his collaborators, upon his return to the country, that he had placed some militants as indicators at specific posts to provide information about the Comorian Guards, or Comorian Army if you prefer. I also collected data for one week. I determined that the operation would take place during the day, specifically between 1 and 2 p.m. Equally, I attempted to ascertain the date that President Abdallah would be absent from Moroni, despite the fact that it will not affect the outcome of the operation. Still, I was concerned about the potential for conflict if I witnessed a crowd surrounding the president. I



was somewhat concerned for President Abdalla's life, knowing that he was so despised. And I thought that perhaps we would not have complete control over the masses. If something were to happen to Ahmed Abdallah's physical life, it would cause problems from island to island. On the other hand, the problem exists between political parties. Source: Ahmed Wadaane Mahamoud. Autopsie Des Comore: Coups d'etat, mercenaries, assassinate. A French translation of Soilihi's original words.

Due to the involvement of Chief of the Comorian guard Commander Moiline, Ahmed Abdallah was unable to escape the coup. Commander Moiline made all the necessary moves to facilitate the operation. He permitted the soldiers to reside in the villages' capitals. Ali Soilihi and his group of military personnel and civilians seized power and severed telephone lines in Moroni on Sunday, August 3, 1975, at approximately 1:00 p.m., while in the Comorian guard headquarters. Ali Soilihi's next move was to go on the air at "Radio Comore" with a few companions and announce the overthrow of President Ahmed Abdallah's government in a forceful manner. He stated that he had no intention of remaining in power and that his objective was to unite all existing political parties in Comoros, including Abdullah's. Ahmed Abdallah established a national council for the revolution with fifteen members. The members of the board of Ali Soilihi were all natives of Grand Comore (particularly Moroni), which was a failure from the start given that the leaders of Mayotte were required to sit on the council in accordance with the agreements made in Paris. Significant national and international challenges faced by Ali Soilihi are outlined below by Ahmed Waden Mahamoud.

The first obstacle was located on the island of Anjouan, where Ahmed Abdallah's presence and authority were formidable.

The second obstacle was Grand Comore (in the Hamahemef region), where the island was prepared to declare its independence under Mohammed Taki.

Thirdly, the leader of Mayotte, Marcel Henry, who had long opposed Abdallah Abderamane's independence, became more adamant in his refusal to collaborate with the new regime.

Fourthly, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) condemned "coup d'états," deeming them illegal and harmful to the Comorian and Comoros as a whole. Faced with these obstacles, Ali Soihili and Ali Toibir traveled to Mayotte on August 6, 1975, to discuss the delicate issues that could become problematic if no progress was made. It was all about meeting with the leaders of Mayotte and reassuring them that they had nothing to worry about because the revolutionary council had no intention of cooperating with France. The constitution would be responsible for providing each island with adequate funds to manage its resources, he added. Each island would receive benefits from the federal taxes collected. The distribution of the inheritance among the islands after the establishment of the institution is not forgotten. The political leaders of Mayotte were so convinced by these proposals that they accepted Soilihi's membership in the national executive council.

Now it was time for diplomacy, and on August 9, 1975, Salim Himdi took the initiative to travel to West Africa (specifically Kenya and Tanzania) and explain why the coup occurred. At the same time, two leaders from Mayotte, Christian Novou and Abdoul Wassou, joined the newly established national governing council. Their presence on the board emboldened Salim Himdi to approach the authorities of the OAU Liberation Committee in an effort to draw their attention to the new beginning for the Comoros Islands, which included: - Unity and the protection of the territorial integrity of the four islands by their new leaders.

- To increase the islands' visibility beyond the national level. Salim Himdi met with Salim Ahmed Salim (Tanzanian Permanent Representative at the UNO and President of the Decolonization Committee) in London to discuss the process of the admission of Comoros into the UNO in order for this mega-organization to be involved in the promotion of peace and stability in the event of a conflict.

On September 7, 1975, however, the Ali Soilihi regime encountered opposition from Mbeni residents (capital of Hamahemef region). It informed the people of Hamahemef that regardless of their efforts, their actions would have no effect outside of Hamahemef. Despite the influential words of the revolutionary council, some villagers continued to resist. It led to a clash between civilians and the military, resulting in five deaths and numerous injuries.

Ali Soilihi, along with Comorian soldiers and mercenaries, surrounded the Mbeni village on the first day of the Ramadam fast, September 7, to the point of ensuring that its inhabitants starved. No way to go in search of food, as

the mercenary Bob Denard (the commander) was armed with more advanced weapons this time. Bob Denard and his group moved from Mbeni to Anjouan for a similar operation in a spirit of terror. In Anjouan, Ahmed Abdallah was discovered living with the majority of his family in Domoni. Abdallah took the initiative to control airline passengers in order to identify terrorist suspects.

Moreover, for the sake of security, he erected military structures comprised of former Anjouan Gendarmes and established a radio station. Soilihi, aware of Abdallah's growing influence, began searching for a way to prevent the formation of an independent Anjouan Republic. Keeping in mind that Mayotte belonged to France, Soilihi feared that another dissolution of the union by Anjouan would be a major setback for his regime.

The fact that the entire council of Ali Soilihi was comprised of Grand Comore natives was a significant obstacle (particularly from Moroni). It was the beginning of the end for Soilihi, as the Mayottean leaders were required to take their seats in accordance with the Paris agreement. In the following, Ahmed Wadane Mahamoud (Autopsie Des Comore: Coup's d'état, mercenaries, assassinat.) discusses four significant obstacles faced by Ali Soilihi:

- The first obstacle was on the island of Anjouan, where Ahmed Abdallah had a strong presence and authority. - The second obstacle was on the island of Grand Comore (in the region of Hamahemef), where Mohammed Taki was prepared to establish an independent republic.
- The third obstacle was Marcel Henry, the leader of Mayotte, who had long opposed Ahmed Abdallah's proclamation of Comoros' independence. This time, his organization became more steadfast in its refusal to collaborate with the new regime.
- The fourth obstacle arose from the Organization for African Unity (OAU), which condemned coups as illegal and harmful to the Comorian leaders and the country as a whole.

Ali Soilihi and Ali Toibir relocated to Mayotte on August 6, 1975, in response to these challenges, in order to discuss these delicate, potentially unpleasant issues if nothing was prepared. It was all about meeting the leaders of Mayotte and reassuring them that they had nothing to fear, as the revolutionary council had no intention of worsening connections and cooperation with France. He added that the constitution of the Federal government would be responsible for providing each island with sufficient funds to manage its resources. And each island would benefit from the federal government's tax collection, not to mention the sharing of the islands' heritage once the institutions are in place. Ali Soilihi, accompanied by mercenaries, took action in Mutsamudu (the capital of Anjouan) by engaging the Anjouan forces. As a result, nine Anjouan soldiers were killed and many more were wounded. Ali Soilihi's aggression began to disturb the Comorians, particularly the Mayotte leaders. Christian Novou withdrew from the revolutionary council on the advice of Marcel Henry, who had warned his people to avoid the revolutionary committee.

Soihili, while in power, implemented a series of revolutionary reforms aimed at boosting the economy of the country. He discussed the extravagances of the traditional island culture, including "Anda," "grand marriage," and funeral ceremonies. However, his reforms contained a number of irrational measures, such as lowering the voting age to 14, encouraging adolescents to assume responsibilities, and legalizing the use of cannabis. As a socialist similar to Mao Tse Tung, Soilihi established a youth-led militia called "Moissy" with the mission of terrorizing villages and all forms of opposition. The commander of the "moissy" was a 15-year-old boy who was extremely loyal to Soilihi and, with his friends, wreaked havoc across the islands. He committed rapes on women and murdered those who attempted to resist his authority. They had the right arms and were so arrogant toward everyone. His regime survived four unsuccessful coup attempts, but on May 13, 1978, he was ousted from power in Comoros. Before the 1978 coup, all aid to Comoros was suspended, and President Abdallah in exile hired former French mercenaries led by Colonel Denard, who neutralized the militia within a few hours. Hundreds perished in the "Moissy" militia, but no French Mercenary was injured. Wikipedia claims that during the French mercenary intervention, Bob Denard discovered Soilihi in his bedroom watching a pornographic film with three naked teenage schoolgirls while under the influence of marijuana. Abdallah regained his position as Comoros' president. The government stated that Solihi was arrested and placed under house arrest, but on May 29, 1978, he was shot and killed while attempting to escape. SOURCE WIKIPEDIA ALI SOILIH

Back to power Ahmed Abdallah was accompanied by 600 men led by Bob Denard. He assumed responsibility for the President's security with the help of European officers who frequently clashed with Comorian soldiers. In 1982,

Ahmed Abdallah dissolved all political parties, established the Comorian Union for Progress, and established a dictatorship in the country. His dictatorial regime, led by Bob Denard, became terrifying as opposition members were murdered or vanished. He was the sole candidate in the 1984 election, and he was re-elected on September 30, 1984. On May 20, 1987, his party won every seat in the general assembly. He granted access to foreign investors, particularly South Africans, in the fishing and tourism industries. In the presence of Bob Denard, President Abdallah was shot and killed in his office on November 28, 1989. It was prior to his decision to disarm the presidential guard led by Bob Denard following an alleged plot to overthrow his government. Regarding Abdallah's death, there appears to be no definitive account of who the author was. Through the article of Pierre Houpert, *JEUNE AFRIQUE* provides additional information about Abdallah's demise. President Abdallah received Chief of the Presidential Guard Bob Denard in his office in Moroni on the day of his assassination (described in the article as having a warm look face). Two additional mercenaries, Dominique Malacrino and Jean-Paul Guerrier were concealed within their mist. In the presence of Bob Denard and his men, the president of Abdallah and his bodyguard were killed by a sudden explosion of gunfire. The article by Pierre Houpoert posed the following questions regarding Abdallah's demise:

- Who murdered them? Who among the Comorian Army accused Abdallah of attempting to disarm them for the benefit of the Presidential Guard? Bob Denard himself? Was it an accident, as Jacque Foccart, Mr. Africa at the Elysée, would claim? Source: Pierre Houpert. A translated version of the French questions asked.

All of these questions were asked to determine who was responsible for Abdallah's death. However, somewhere in Pierre Houpert's work, it was made clear that Bob Denard and his men fabricated their version of the story. Denard testified during his trial that the chief of staff of the Comorian Army, Ahmed Mohammed, planned a lethal operation against him and President Abdallah. Denard, Jaffar (an associate of Ahmed Mohammed) accidentally shot President Ahmed Abdallah while attempting to shoot Ahmed Mohammed. However, the version appeared fabricated and false to many. In 1999, Bob Denard and Marques discussed the accident while on trial for the same case. Both were released due to their innocence in the death of Abdallah. Another source presented by Pierre Houpert was Salim Abdallah, the son of the late president, who stated in an interview for the 2012 documentary "Bob Denard, le Sultan blanc des Comores" by Laurent Boullard that there were two Comorians and three French in the room. The French survived, while the two Comorians perished. Source: Salim Abdallah

The death of President Ahmed Abdallah alarmed the beginning of the fall of the Denards in Comoros. As a sign of respect for the deceased Abdallah, he overthrew the regime of Said Mohamed Djohar in 1995 but was arrested by French soldiers on the orders of French President Jacques Chirac that same year.

### 3. SAID MOHAMMED DJOHAR

In 1990, Said Mohamed Djohar, also known as "Papa Djo," was elected President of Comoros through general elections held during the multiparty era. Son of Grand Comore, he taught in Sima town and was elected to the general council. Djohar held ministerial positions in the local governments of Said Mohamed Cheick and his successors, notably in the Civil Service. In June 1972, he was elected president of the house of deputies, and from 1973 to 1975 (after independence) he served as the Comorian Representative to Madagascar. After several years of separation from his half-brother Ali Soilihi's regime, he served as president of the Supreme Court in 1978.

In 1989, Djohar ascended to the supreme magistracy (President of the Republic) by assuming interim power after the coup of that year. On March 11, 1990, he was elected president despite Mohamed Taki Abdoukarim and his collaborators' opposition. His 55,1 percent vote total was deemed fraudulent by the opposition. In April 1990, however, a delegation of OAU observers confirmed the legitimacy of the outcome. Djohar was in power for five years before Bob Denard staged a coup d'état. Through "operation Azalée," President Djohar was captured, and Bob Denard and his men were also taken, prisoner. relating to "operation Azalée According to the WIKIPEDIA HISTORY OF THE COMOROS, the French deployed 600 men against a force of mercenaries and 300 men dissidents on October 3, 1995, at 11 p.m. Denard ordered his men, however, not to fight. The airports at Iconi and Hahaya, as well as the French Embassy in Moroni, were secured within seven hours. The next day at 3:00 pm, Bob Denard and his Mercenaries surrendered. Its (response) operation, Azalée, was remarkable due to the absence of casualties and the rapid development of plans and deployment of soldiers within seven days. Denard was arrested and imprisoned in France.



For papa "Djo," he was unable to return to his homeland. Cambi el-Yachroutou proclaimed himself interim President. President Siad Mohamed Djohar was released in February 1996 with the assistance of the French Christian Azais. Christian persuaded the Comorian authorities to directly address French Prime Minister Alain Juppé, resulting in his immediate release to participate in the new elections.

#### **4. TAKI MOHAMMED ABDOULKARIM (PRESIDENT 1996-1998)**

He became the new president after winning the 1996 presidential election. Taki Abdoukarim, who was born in Mbeni Grand Comore on February 20, 1936, attended school in Madagascar and then France. In Comoros, he had a substantial political career. In his country under the leadership of Said Mohamed Cheick, he was appointed Minister of Public Works. He became a close friend of Ahmed Abdallah while serving in that capacity. He served as Minister of Development, Minister of Education, and Minister of Long-Term Development from 1971 to 1974. In the newly independent Comoros in 1975, under Ahmed Abdallah, Taki Abdoukarim became the Minister of the Interior before going into exile during the Soilihi regime from 1975 to 1978. In 1978, after the fall of Soilihi and Abdallah's return to power, Taki Abdoukarim served as the Secretary of the directory council led by Abdallah. Abdoukarim served as President of the Federal Assembly from 1978 to 1984. In 1984, his relationship with President Ahmed Abdallah deteriorated, and Abdoukarim left his regime for France. In 1996, upon his return, he was elected President of the Federal Islamic Republic of Comoros. During his time in office, Taki Abdoukarim ratified a new constitution designed to reduce government spending and increase revenue. In August 1997, however, the Federal government of Abdoukarim was confronted with a serious issue: the threat of secession by the leaders of Anjouan and Mohéli. The federal government, fearful of losing the islands and being left with only Grand Comore, attempted to suppress the secessionists, but notably failed in Anjouan. The independence of both islands was illegal and rejected by all nations. Abdoukarim passed away in November 1998, after unsuccessful mediation. Col. Azali Assoumani's Initial Step Towards Power

#### **5. COL. AZIZ A. ASSOUMANI**

Tadjiddine Ben Said Massoude assumed the interim role and organized elections that were never held due to Col Assoumani's (Army Chief of Staff) takeover of the government. His government was rejected at the international level, and Assoumani, fearing the worst, met with Anjouan secessionists in July 1999 to negotiate an accord. It resulted in an agreement between the secessionists and the Assoumani federal government. The accord established a rotating presidency among the four islands. The islands ratified the agreement in December 2001. Local presidential and legislative elections are held in each semi-autonomous region. In 2002, Assoumani won the April 14 presidential election with 75 percent of the vote. He was president between 2002 and 2006. During his first presidency, the transfer of competence from the federal government to the local governments of the islands was fraught with conflict. Ahmed Abdallah Sambi was elected as President in 2006.

#### **6. THE ISLANDS UNDER THE RULE OF AHMED ABDUL LAHI SAMBI**

Abdallah Sambi, a native of Anjouan, completed his education in Sudan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia and was highly esteemed by his supporters. During his tenure, the islands experienced a number of extraordinary events, including the Anjouan presidential crisis and the Mayotte referendum.

##### **6.1 COLONEL MOHAMED BACAR ON ANJOUAN ISLAND.**

In 1999, Anjouan was engulfed in an internal conflict that led to the resignation of the 80-year-old president, Foundi Abdallah Ibrahim. He transferred power to Said Abeld, who was forcibly removed from office on August 9, 2001, by officers from the Army and Navy. Nonetheless, Mohamed Bacar became the leader of the junta in August. He had three unsuccessful coup attempts. During local presidential elections in Anjouan in 2002, Col Mohamed Bacar was elected president. In 2007, his term of office concluded. It was time to vote again. Nonetheless, the island was experiencing fear and unrest, and the federal government demanded that the Anjouan local government reschedule the elections and that Col. Mohamed Bacar step down from his position as leader. Col Bacar ignored the call from the federal government and continued with the election, which he ultimately won. The Comoros federal government and the African Union rejected the election results and demanded a new vote. Bacar rejected any other election and faced sanctions from the African Union as a result. Observing that the AU's sanctions against Bacar's administration



in Anjouan had little effect, Comorian and AU troops invaded Anjouan and seized control of the islands on March 25, 2008. After his defeat, Col Bacar went into exile.

## 6.2 THE AMAZING FRENCH REFERENDUM OF 2009 IN MAYOTTE

In 2009, the question of Mayotte's status reemerged. Since France has claimed the island since the mid-1970s, it was time to revisit the subject. In 1975, when Ahmed Abdallah Abderamane unanimously declared the independence of Comoros, the island of Mayotte voted against independence from France in a referendum held on December 22, 1974. It was shortly before the independence declaration. As it was insufficient, a poll was conducted only in Mayotte to determine whether they desired to be a part of Comoros. According to Wikipedia, the outcome was a 99.99 percent rejection of the proposal and an 83.34 percent voter turnout. In 2009, the French government announced its intention to organize a referendum in Mayotte. According to the international community, France had violated the UN resolution. It was a violation because the poll offered only one answer, "integration with France." How could such a referendum be credible when it offered only one option and was conducted by an imperial power (France) and not the African Union, the United Nations, or any other international organization?

The status of Mayotte among the islands has been in question at the United Nations for a long time, with no clear resolution. Even at the July 1976 OAU Summit in Port Louis, Mauritius, the heads of state were required by resolution (497XXVII) to address the status of Mayotte. The African member states (Algeria, Cameroon, Tanzania, Gabon, Mauritius, Mozambique, and Comoros) comprising the Ad-hoc Committee responsible for handling the matter have been unable to meet and discuss the matter for decades. Since the 1970s, the United Nations has remained steadfast in its decision to condemn, via resolution 31/4 of October 21, the 1976 referendum held in Mayotte, and has opposed any future referendums of the same nature that France may organize on the island. The various Comoran governments desired to discuss with French authorities but were unable to do so due to France's implementation of French laws in practice, which discriminated against the culture and religion of the Comorans. France's only option in 2009 was to announce a referendum to change Mayotte's political status. The Mayotte electorate voted 95% in favor of changing the island's status from a French territorial collectivity to an overseas department. In 2010, President Sambi's term expired, and the presidency was up for grabs through the traditional election process. On November 7, 2010, the first round of voting took place, and Vice President Ikililou Dhoinine won the majority. On December 26, of that same year, he won 61 percent of the vote in a subsequent election. On May 26, 2011, he became President of the Comoro Islands.

Dhoinine was born in Mohéli on August 14, 1962. After receiving his Baccalaureate in 1986, he attended both Djoiezi and "Lycée Fomboni" for his primary and secondary education. He was accepted into the Department of Mathematics and Sciences at Mbeni Grand Comore's ENS (Ecole Normale d'Enseignement Supérieure). In 1994, he earned a doctorate in pharmaceutical studies from the Gamal Abdel Nasser University of Conakry's faculty of medicine and pharmacy (Guinea). He is the patron of the Fomboni Mohelian pharmacy. He served as the Vice President of the federal government of Abdallah Sambi from 2006 to 2010. In April 2013, a failed coup attempt occurred in Dhoinine due to the efforts of the security forces. Some of the alleged conspirators relocated to Mayotte, while others were apprehended.

## 6.3 RETURN OF AZALI ASOUMANI TO POWER IN 2016

Col. Azali Asoumani returned to power in the Comoros in 2016 via the presidential election. In the first round of voting (February 21, 2016), Grand Comore's Mohamed Ali Soilihi received more than 17% of the vote. In the second round of voting, Azali Assoumani won with nearly 41% of the vote. His victory was not immediately accepted. After a rerun election, however, Assoumani's victory was confirmed, and he was sworn into office on May 26, 2016.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research focused on the political realm of Comoros. It was all about highlighting some significant political events for the nation and its citizens. As the country's first president, the father of its independence (Ahmed Abdallah) was not only the political but also the socio-economic cornerstone of its early years of independence. France's heavy intervention in the country's affairs through their mercenary Bod Denard did not ease his rule. The topic of referendums was the focus of this study. The question was whether Anjouan would join the other islands or

become a separate French colony with its own independence. Abdallah was finally assassinated in a very comical manner, and other leaders emerged to guide the small nation's destiny. Throughout this narrative, a significant number of these leaders were examined briefly.

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