ETHNICITY, IDENTITY AND STRATEGIES OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN A BRITISH SCHOOL. TURKISH PUPILS IN A COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC SCHOOL *

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Cet article cherche à éclairer comment des conflits, disputes et désaccords émergent dans un collège londonien, où de nombreuses communautés ethniques minoritaires coexistent. L'auteur étudie des stratégies de "gestion du conflit", les paroles et le langage employés par les élèves et les enseignants, ainsi que les mécanismes mis en oeuvre, afin de contenir et résoudre le conflit. Dans une première partie, il montre que la Grande Bretagne est un pays multiracial, multiculturel et multiethnique: la britannité y est une identité globale fondée sur la citoyenneté, incluant à la fois les communautés nationales anglaise, écossaise, galloise et irlandaise et immigrées (blacks, ressortissants d'Asie du Sud, Cypriotes, Turcs..), qui s'y sont installées et font partie intégrante de la société. Dans la seconde partie, l'auteur tire partie d'une recherche ethnographique conduite dans ce collège: il montre que la composition multiethnique et l'hétérogénéité raciale et culturelle constituent un terrain fertile pour développer des arguments basés sur la différence, telle qu'elle est perçue par des acteurs pris dans une situation conflictuelle. C'est-à-dire que le conflit, la dispute et le désaccord peuvent être ethnicisés et mener à des solidarités de groupe, suivant des lignes ethniques spécifiques.

Questo articolo cerca di approfondire come conflitti, dispute e disaccordi possano emergere in un collegio di Stato a Londra, dove coesistono numerose comunità etniche minoritarie. Per cogliere i problemi più importanti, nel momento in cui dovesse verificarsi un conflitto, l'autore studia delle strategie di conflict management, *le parole ed il linguaggio utilizzato dagli alunni e dagli insegnanti, come anche i meccanismi messi in opera per contenere e risolvere il conflitto. Nella prima parte, l'autore dimostra che la Gran Bretagna è un paese multirazziale, multiculturale e multietnico. La* britannicità *è un'identità globale basata sulla cittadinanza, che include contemporaneamente le comunità nazionali inglese, scozzese, gallese ed iralandese e gli immigrati (blacks, immigrati dell'Asia del Sud, ciprioti, turchi..) che si sono inseriti e fanno parte integrante della società. Eppure, in questo studio fondato sulla sua ricerca etnografica in una scuola, l'autore dimostra che la composizione multietnica e l'eterogeneità razziale e culturale costituiscono un terreno fertile per sviluppare delle controversie basate sulla differenza, come viene percepita dagli attori in una situazione conflittuale. Ciò per affermare che il conflitto, la disputa ed il disaccordo possono essere "etnicizzati" e condurre ad una solidarietà di gruppo, seguendo delle linee etniche specifiche.*

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IDENTITIES IN MULTICULTURAL BRITAIN

Britain was one of the first countries to accommodate a large number of immigrant workers. In the 19th century, the industrial revolution easily absorbed the surplus of unemployed labour from the countryside. Rapidly expanding industry required more manpower. British employers turned their attention towards Ireland to satisfy the demand. By 1851, there were 727,326 Irish immigrants, who made up 2.9% of the total population of England and Wales. The next immigrant group to arrive in Britain was very different in terms of migration motivation. About 120,000 Jews settled in Britain between 1875 and 1914, as refugees who had to leave Russia to escape religious and political persecution (Castles and Kosack, 1973).

During the inter-war period, migration to Britain, like other West European countries, slowed down in comparison to the scale of migration before the First World War. The reasons were, firstly, the difficulty to find employment for returning servicemen in the immediate post-war era and secondly, the depressed state of the economy from 1929 onwards. Like France, Britain had also repatriated almost all the immigrant workers recruited in the colonies during the war. Coleman (1994) points out that migration to Britain contrasts with the experience of most other West European countries because most of the immigrants did not come from mainland Europe, but from Ireland and even more from colonies or former colonies, i.e. from the New Commonwealth.

IMMIGRATION OF NON-WHITE PEOPLE TO BRITAIN

The immigration of coloured people has also been an important feature of immigration to Britain, with implications for race and racism. Although small black minority communities existed in Britain prior to the 1950s, the overwhelming majority of the current black population owe their residency to the migration which took place after the Second World War. The post-war wave of black and Asian migration to Britain started in the late 1940s, and gathered momentum in the 1950s and 1960s. Coleman (1994) notes that the first significant group of foreigners to arrive after the war were the West Indians, who came to Britain in 1948 and added their numbers to the small black population comprising West Indians and West Africans. Economic development and industrial expansion in Britain during the post-war period caused a labour shortage, which compelled employers to seek foreign workers. Accordingly, this period was marked by an influx of people from the Irish Republic, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and

the New Commonwealth countries.

Migration to Britain is seen as a response to various factors, such as economic and demographic conditions in the countries involved, which might be called push factors, and economic incentives and advantages in Britain, which might be called pull factors. Economic factors dominated other factors in the decision to migrate (Booth, 1992). Since 1945, thousands of people have come to Britain for work. The numbers of immigrants in Britain doubled between 1951 and 1961, from 250,000 to 541,000. The total number of immigrants from India, Pakistan and the West Indies reached 669,640 between 1955 and 1968 (Castle and Kosack, 1973). As Table 1 shows, the number of those with non-white ethnic backgrounds steadily increased over the years, to reach three million, which represents 5.5% of the total population.

It should be pointed out that the figures in the table (p. 66) are derived from the 1991 Census data, which means that the current number of residents with "ethnic" backgrounds must have increased since. Before moving on to the second part, I would like to conclude this section by a quotation from Byrant (1997), who describes how British citizenship considers other ethnic groups. He observes that 'Britishness' has always been a composite identity and that it has never been difficult to extend it to cover citizens of other origins.

REAL-LIFE SCENARIO IN THE FIELD

A Strong Ethnic Presence: Description of the school and the neighbourhood

The fieldwork took place in a comprehensive public school in Haringey, Northeast London. The school is situated near Wood Green, where a sizeable number of Turkish-speaking immigrant communities live (mainland Turks, Turkish-Cypriots and Kurds). This area is referred to as the Turk mahallesi (Turkish quarter), due to the high concentration of people from the Turkish community in this part of London (Kucukcan, 1996). Based on talks with the Headteacher, the school has around 1,100 pupils of mixed ethnic backgrounds. The estimated number of Turkish speaking pupils is over 300. Over the years, the distribution of pupils with different (non-English) backgrounds has changed. Until recently, pupils of Afro-Caribbean and Greek-Cypriot parental origins were the dominant ethnic groups in the school. This pattern changed during recent years as a result of the arrival of Turkish-speaking people in the area. Currently, pupils of Turkish or Kurdish origin

are the dominant ethnic groups. This brief introduction on the intensity of a strong ethnic presence should be kept in mind when looking at how networks and cliques are formed and how ethnicity is mobilised to develop strategies to negotiate with the school. The ethnographic description which follows will enable us to understand the scene, particular characteristics of the actors involved and the culmination of the conflict, which ended up in the 'ethnicisation of conflict' through a strategy of group mobilisation and collective action.

Ethnographic description of the Conflict

It is uncommon that an ethnographer-anthropologist finds him/herself in the middle of such a complex situation on the first day of fieldwork. My first day in the school at the beginning of the fieldwork, was marked by a violent clash. A Turkish pupil was badly beaten and injured by an English boy who hit him on the head with a bottle. This was the beginning of the worst conflict in the school that year, which was ethnicised and thus mobilised Turkish pupils for common action irrespective of their Turkish Kurdish or Cypriot origins.

The day I arrived at the school three police cars showed up in front of the main entrance while the Headteacher and some other teachers were trying to convince pupils to go inside the school building. Seeing my bewilderment one teacher told me there was an incident earlier. As soon as some teachers started mentioning the name of a pupil and talking about him, such as 'X is seen in the school', 'X may be arrested this time', 'X is here with his sister and brother-in-law' and so on, I realised that the police were called in to intervene and prevent a clash between pupils. It was also interesting to see that one teacher was recording the incident with a video camera. There was a large group of pupils at the gate exchanging words with others who were standing on the other side of the road. Upon the arrival of the police the crowd slowly dispersed and entered the school premises. Meanwhile, one boy ran away from the group standing outside. I followed the subsequent developments closely because this event led to a unified protest by Turkish pupils against the school administration, accused of being partial to the English pupil. This was an excellent case study to observe how strategies are developed to deal with conflict situations and to understand the role played by pupils, teachers and administration.

This incident showed that the school has been suffering from

repeated cases of violence among pupils both in and outside the school. It became a prominent topic of discussion in the staff room. When I asked if this was a sudden explosion or if there was a background to this clash, one teacher said:

> 'This is a long story. Turkish pupil (A) is not the first victim of pupil B. Pupil B has a history of violent behaviour but he succeeded to stay on in the school. Before him we had his sister as a pupil. She was also very violent and disruptive. Many times she was excluded from the school but never got expelled. This incident started as bullying case. Pupil B bullied Turkish pupil many times. Pupil B is well known for his notorious code of conduct and though in my opinion deserved permanent expulsion from the school, the administration was very soft to do that.'

The same teacher held the opinion that the school was not implementing the necessary disciplinary policy, thus such incidents were repeated frequently. She made reference to the recent killing of a schoolmaster in London. She said that he was killed by a gang while trying to protect his pupils from attackers coming from outside. She added that, had those problems been tackled in time, the schoolmaster would still be alive. Another teacher of Sri Lankan origin commented that school is tougher on pupils of other ethnic background in times of conflict and that they get suspended faster. Turkish pupils and teachers also expressed such feelings at a later stage, when I talked to them about this conflict.

Actors: Forming groups and protection

This incident gives us a significant clue as to the formation of at least one type of network or group and the way in which this conflict was resolved. This will become clear when we disclose the ethnic identity of the actors involved in the incident, which had its origins in earlier confrontations. I was told that this incident was not a new phenomenon. One teacher briefly told me of the developments that led to calling the police.

An English boy in the Sixth form attacked a Turkish pupil outside the school premises and beat the boy, who was two years younger. The Turkish boy has an older brother in the same school and reported the incident to him. This was the starting point to form a group to 'protect' Turkish kids in junior classes. What happened next was that the older brother found the English boy and challenged him over the incident. Until this stage, the school administration did not get involved in solving the conflict. As I gathered from the information given, the English boy did not

have a good record in the school and had been involved in similar incidents before The challenge of the Turkish boy upset the English pupil and he called his sister in to 'punish' his rival.
The sister of the English boy comes to the school and starts shouting at the staff, asking the whereabouts of the Turkish boy who 'dared' to challenge her brother by asking why he beat the younger one. Interestingly enough, the sister comes to the school with her male friends armed with golf clubs. She demands the Headteacher to hand over the Turkish boy for 'punishment'. As many teachers recalled, she even used swear words. She shouted for example 'I will kill that f .. Turk' The Turkish boy, threatened by an English group, seeks refuge among Turkish friends. Danger, threat and words of abuse pushed him to extend his network of friends among his 'own folk' When he leaves the school, his Turkish friends accompany him It is clear that friendship based on national/cultural origins leads to the formation of ethnic cliques in a setting where that particular group feels threatened This development shows us that situational and contextual factors play an important role in the ethnicisation of conflicts and the reactions they inspire
Although the Turkish boy in this case got home safely that day, thanks to his friends, he was supposed to come back to school the next day It is obvious that he was not in a position to ask for police protection against the 'nasty' threats of the English group Nor could he expect help from his network of friends, as they may not be available all the time, he thus resorts to finding his own means of protection a knife for self defence .. He carries a knife in case he is attacked by the English group who threatened to kill him. Somehow, he gets caught with a big knife. This results in his being removed from the school
His dismissal was announced in the weekly published by the school, though there was no mention of the reasons for his dismissal. The English boy strikes again with a bottle This time another Turkish pupil is the victim This incident seems to have caused a great deal of concern among Turkish pupils in the school. When the police arrived at the school, those who gathered in the front door of the school (teachers told me) were mostly Turkish pupils protesting as a gesture to support their friends

Victimisation

One can argue that the victimisation of a Turkish pupil by 'others' evokes a feeling that generates an atmosphere propitious for the

development of 'ethnic networks' based on friendship, solidarity and ethnic origin. This observation is supported by a teacher who told me that 'not only English pupils are against Turks but also blacks. Blacks also create trouble for Turkish pupils and sometimes beat them'. These remarks imply that several networks or groups are formed in the school. Recruitment in these groups seems to be based on the ethnic origins of the pupils.
When the Turkish pupil was expelled from the school, his friends continued to put pressure on the school administration for fair and equal treatment. If their friend was expelled, so must the English pupil be. Interestingly, they did not demand the reinstatement of their friend in the school. Exclusion of the other pupil was seen as just and equal. Turkish pupils used an effective mechanism to achieve their demand for justice.

Strategies

The school administration tried to play down the incident and initially did not punish the English boy, except suspending him for a few days. Turkish pupils started talking to year heads (Y10 and Head of Sixth form) to express their disappointment at the way in which this case was handled. Talking to year heads is the expected norm in the school if/when pupils have problems and seek solutions Turkish pupils wanted to negotiate through recognised procedures, to convey their views and proposals for a permanent solution to the conflict. Salih, a Sixth form pupil, had a leading role in the whole affair after the expelling of the Turkish pupil by the school. I met Salih in the Sixth form common room with other 'senior' member of their negotiating team.
Salih was described by his tutors as an articulate, well-informed and 'nice' pupil. When I met Salih and his group, they told me that they were discussing the steps to take to influence the school administration. He said that they had already spoken to year heads and asked them for an explanation of the whole case. Salih and his friends were disappointed by the year heads, because they did not take Salih's attempt seriously They therefore decided to take further steps.
The next step was to bypass the year heads and to reach the senior administration. They wanted to talk to the head and deputy headteachers, to argue that as long as the English boy remained in the school, there would be a feeling of injustice among Turkish pupils. Salih and his team tried to make an

appointment with the head and deputy headteachers but they were refused. As mentioned earlier, the school administration seems to have played down the incident, as they did many times before despite the notoriety of the English pupil among teachers and his personal history of violent behaviour in the school.

However, this time, Turkish pupils did not remain silent. When they failed to get a 'just' solution they decided to organise in collective action. Salih, leader of the group, explained that they were determined to get results. He said:

> 'We tried everything in our capacity so far but nobody listened to us. This is not fair. We do not want any trouble. What we want is that our friend should not be the only victim if there is a lack of discipline. Attitude of the school administration makes us believe that they are favourable to the English student. We tried all the channels by talking to year heads and trying to make appointment with senior teachers. But they were not interested in what we were saying.'

Some other Turkish pupils expressed similar arguments. They were convinced that they had resorted to all the legitimate means and exhausted the recognised strategies and mechanisms within the school to resolve the conflict. Feelings of injustice and discrimination ran high among Turkish pupils who acted collectively to influence the decision of the school.

Although the English pupil was suspended for some time, the feeling of justice was not re-established. Turkish pupils, headed by Salih and his friends in Sixth form, organised a sit-in protest in the staff corridor one morning. Almost fifty pupils occupied the corridor where senior teachers and the headteacher have their rooms. The school administration was not expecting such collective action. Teachers could not convince the pupils to disperse and go to their classrooms.

Salih was the delegate, who explained why they started this demonstration and asked to see the headteacher. The headteacher finally appeared in front of the Turkish pupils. When she asked what they wanted, Salih presented her a list of demands and copies of letters to be sent to local newspapers, education authorities and the Secretary of Education. The list included the following points: first of all, the English pupil who attacked the Turkish boy should be permanently expelled. (Again they did not ask for the reinstatement of Turkish pupil). The second item was the removal of two year heads who were favourable to the English pupil and had blocked their attempts because they did not act as

channels to the senior administration. When they were assured that their demand would be examined, the Turkish pupils dispersed after a half-hour protest, which did not involve any violence or disrespectful behaviour such as insulting teachers. Composition of the protest group was ethnically characterised: Turks, Kurds and Turkish-Cypriots were present.

Writing a letter to the local or national press is usually punished by the schools, which do not want to get a bad reputation. To protect the reputation of the school, pupils are discouraged from contacting the media. In one case prior to the sit-in protest of Turkish pupils, one pupil wrote a letter to the press complaining about her school elsewhere. The school administration had expelled her for her behaviour. However, her dismissal from the school attracted more media attention and criticism from the public, forcing the administration to reinstate the girl in the school. In another case, two pupils went further and took their school to court, arguing that the school environment was unsafe and hazardous for pupils, as some electrical wires are exposed, the rool leaks, etc. This incident also attracted large media attention and even national TV channels covered the issue. These incidents indicate that some pupils have strong civic courage and consciousness, even if it is against their own school. One can further argue that some Turkish pupils are also internalising the growing trend to have civic courage and develop readiness to express it.

Teachers

In conflict situations, teachers seem to have a passive role if the conflict is among pupils. In several instances, most of the teachers remained in the staff room while the headteacher was trying to convince pupils not to involve themselves in fights or persuade pupils to keep away from outsiders who frequently wander around the school, forcing the school administration to call the police to prevent violent clashes.

Turkish teachers avoid taking part in resolving the conflict between Turkish pupils and others because they do not want to get involved in a situation that may jeopardise their position. They are worried that other teachers may accuse them of being partial to Turkish-speaking pupils. Turkish teachers usually act as interpreters when needed and sometimes call parents to explain, if requested to do so by the school. One Turkish teacher told me, for example:

> The school approaches us whenever there is a problem. They never ask us our view before they go ahead with something that ends up wrong. They are usually unaware of special needs of Turkish-speaking pupils. I tried to help the school administration that they should understand cultural specilities of Turkish pupils. Other teachers always complain about the lack of discipline among Turkish pupils and their violent behaviour I spe no such things in my classroom. Personally, I did not have any problem such as violence, abusive language and disrespectful behaviour Yet, when I have to call parents of some Turkish pupils, I find myself in a difficult situation because whenever I call they will know that there is something wrong with their child in the school. If school develops a culture-specific strategy, the number of conflicts would be much less'

The Head of Sixth form in the school sums up a general feeling among English teachers with regard to conflict among pupils This may be summed up as 'indifference' as long as it is outside the school. When he was asked about his strategy to deal with conflict among pupils he said:

> 'I do not care as long as it is outside the school There, it is their problem They can fight outside the premises and in the neighbourhood My job is concerned with here, in the school'

This statement reflects that the school is not willing to take an active role in the resolution of conflict among pupils, as a broker or institutional player They leave the solution to the pupils concerned, if the clash occurs outside the school. If it takes place inside the school, the common mechanism is disciplinary punishment, by excluding the pupil from the school. It seems that the school does not spend the time and effort needed to tackle the 'root' of the problem.

When a member of the staff is involved in a dispute with a pupil, teachers take a tougher stance against the pupil concerned. In one case, for example, a female teacher heard one of the pupils whispering to his friend 'Let's rape that teacher'. She took this extremely seriously and reported it to the relevant year head. She told the other teachers that she would no longer teach this pupil Other female teachers supported her and all together they started a campaign not to teach that pupil in their classroom. The teacher's union also sided with them. This event clearly shows that teachers may utilise effective methods to reach a solution favourable to themselves, whereas they avoid involvement in conflict resolution among the student community

CONCLUSIONS

Drawing upon an ethnographic study in a Northeast London secondary school where there is sizeable number of pupils from various ethnic communities, this paper addressed ethnicity and shared identity, showing how they can be important factors in the emergence of conflicts and in designing strategies for negotiation within a school context.

Through ethnographic observations, I show in this analysis that conflicts, if they take place between different ethnic groups, may generate a network support based on common ethnicity and identity, leading to ethnicisation. But this article also shows that Turkish pupils were able to internalise the existing norms of conflict resolution as far as the school where the fieldwork was carried out is concerned. They followed the expected procedures and showed civic courage. They did not sit back or withdraw. They went to year heads first and raised concern and requested specific actions When they failed to get results, they wanted to talk to the Headteacher. The indifference and incompetence of senior teachers and the administration brought the 'ethnic card' to the stage where Turkish pupils successfully manipulated and managed to mobilise their fellow pupils for a more effective strategy of negotiation This required a significant degree of civic courage and initiative, which enabled them to achieve 'equal treatment' in the case described

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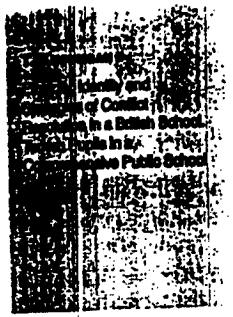

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N.B. *Education et Sociétés Plurilingues* has published two other articles based on the project "State, School and Ethnicity. The relationship between national civic culture and minority identifications, compared among Turkish youth in France, Britain, the Netherlands and Germany". See ESP n° 3 (Dec. 1997) for the article by Beate Collet on France and ESP n° 5 (Dec. 1998) for the article by Sabine Mannitz on Germany.

Resident population by ethnic group in Great Britain, 1991

Ethnic group	Numbers (thousands)	% of Total Population
All groups	54,889	100.0
White	51,874	94.5
Other groups	3,015	5.5
Black Caribbean	500	0.9
Black African	212	0.4
Black other	178	0.3
Black Total	891	1.6
Indian	840	1.5
Pakistani	477	0.9
Bangladeshi	163	0.3
Chinese	157	0.3
Other Groups		
-Asian	198	0.4
-Other (non Asian)	290	0.5

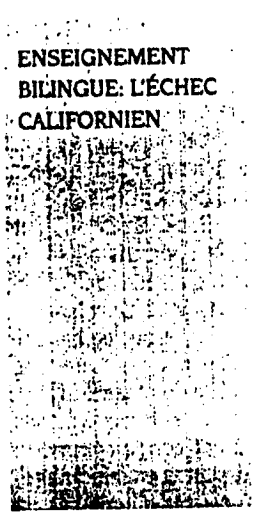
Source: 1991 Census figures *in* Teague, 1993, pp. 12-17

EDUCATION BILINGUE: L'ÉCHEC CALIFORNIEN

Pascale DORENLOT

Nel giugno del 1998, gli elettori dello stato della California si pronunciavano, all'occasione di un vasto referendum, per l'abbandono dell'insegnamento bilingue ispano-americano nella scuola pubblica. Alla luce delle due posizioni opposte, l'una promotrice dell'insegnamento bilingue in California, che denunciava la volontà politica di sopprimere le classi bilingui, l'altra, difesa da un giornalista e basata su un'inchiesta, che criticava i principi pedagogici dei programmi bilingui proposti, questo articolo cerca di ricostituire le vicende di una sconfitta, che non può lasciarci indifferenti. Gradiremo conoscere commenti e informazioni complementari su questo soggetto.

Juni 1998 stimmte die Bevölkerung Kaliforniens im Rahmen eines regionalen Referendums gegen eine Weiterführung des bilingualen spanisch-amerikanischen Unterrichts an öffentlichen Grundschulen. Auf der Grundlage zweier unterschiedlicher Stellungnahmen zu dieser Entscheidung, die eines Befürworters des bilingualen Unterrichts in Kalifornien und die eines Journalisten, der sich kritisch über die pedagogischen Fundamente der eingeführten bilingualen Programme aüßert, versucht dieser Artikel die wesentlichen Etappen dieser pedagogischen und politischen Niederlage zu rekonstruieren. Kommentare und zusätzliche Informationen zu diesem Thema sind willkommen.



ENSEIGNEMENT BILINGUE: L'ÉCHEC CALIFORNIEN

Il y a un peu plus d'un an, en juin 1998, les citoyens de Californie sont appelés aux urnes pour se prononcer sur l'enseignement bilingue. La population est hispanophone à 30% avec l'espagnol pour langue maternelle, voire unique langue parlée; parmi les élèves de primaire, 20% d'enfants ne parlant que l'espagnol. Dès les années soixante, puis massivement au cours des années soixante-dix, des programmes d'éducation bilingue furent introduits dans les écoles publiques. Pourtant, lors du référendum de l'an dernier, la très grande majorité des électeurs a voté contre une poursuite des programmes bilingues. Ultime paradoxe: avec 84% de voix s'étant exprimées pour un arrêt définitif de l'enseignement bilingue, la communauté hispanophone a voté encore plus massivement contre l'enseignement scolaire bilingue que la population californienne dans son ensemble, qui s'est prononcée contre à 80% (voir *Education et Sociétés Plurilingues*, n° 4, "Editorial. Politiques linguistiques et enseignement des langues", p. 2).

Que s'est-il passé? Comment expliquer un tel raz de marée anti-