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SENEGAL

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JOHN DARWIN USEFULLY reminds us (chapter 2 here) that the "exit strategies" of the colonial powers were not in many cases strategies for withdrawal; on the contrary, they were the consequence of the search for ways to continue to exercise influence, but more cheaply. Moreover, these decisions were not taken freely. The colonial powers did not suddenly decide willingly to give up their overseas possessions. The decisions were the product of a specific historical context in which colonialism as a form of rule was increasingly unacceptable to the international community. The colonial powers were therefore under growing pressure to bring an end to colonial rule and needed to find other more acceptable—and more sustainable—ways to maintain their influence. This analysis is particularly relevant to understanding the pattern and nature of the French withdrawal from Senegal. Indeed, until 1959 France did not have an exit strategy for its African empire. In 1938 the British colonial secretary, Malcolm MacDonald, had stated that Britain's ultimate aim was to bring the colonies to self-government, albeit at some unspecified, and no doubt remote, date. In contrast, France's 1944 Brazzaville African Conference categorically rejected "any possibility of a future outside the French empire" and stated that "the introduction of self-government in the colonies, even in the distant future, must be ruled out."[1] Each of the major colonial reform projects after 1944—reconfiguring the empire and renaming it the French Union (Union Française) in 1945; the Framework Law (Loi-cadre) of 1956, which devolved certain powers to the government councils that were established in the individual colonial territories; the creation of the Community (La Communauté) in 1958—was seen not as a series of stages on the road to self-government and eventual independence but rather as a means of maintaining

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the French presence and influence. Only in 1959, after de Gaulle returned to power, did the government finally abandon its Canute-like efforts to hold back the rising tide of anticolonialism and announce that it would grant independence to any colonial territories that requested it. Within little more than twelve months, the process was complete, and all the territories of former French West and French Equatorial Africa had achieved political independence or, to use the term de Gaulle preferred, "international sovereignty."

From the French point of view, France's exit from sub-Saharan Africa was successful, as the transfer of power passed off smoothly and without any significant bloodshed. This was crucial for French interests, since a conflictual decolonization process would have undermined efforts to maintain influence in the region after independence, as had happened in Indochina and was about to happen in Algeria. Moreover, Senegal did not suffer from military coups or political instability after independence, unlike a number of other former French colonies in sub-Saharan Africa. In the context of this book, the following questions therefore arise: how was France able to manage the process so successfully? And can its apparently successful exit provide any useful lessons for those charged with designing contemporary exit strategies? In response, I will argue that the notion of a "successfully managed transition" is, in the case of Senegal, essentially a post hoc reconstruction of events that bears little relation to what actually happened on the ground. There was no carefully designed exit strategy for the decolonization of Senegal. Rather, France was "on the back foot" throughout the period 1945–60, constantly forced to rework colonial policy in response to the rapid unfurling of events over which it had little or no control. Only when the government finally faced up to the inevitability of independence in 1959 did it seek to develop an exit strategy. However, by this time it was more a question of trying to dress up the scuttle out of Africa as a managed transition, when in fact the process had generated a momentum of its own that none of the key actors on either the French or the African side could any longer do much to alter. In order to understand the apparent success of the French exit from Senegal, we therefore need to look elsewhere. If there was no carefully elaborated French, or for that matter African, strategy behind the smooth transition, we need to ask instead what specific set of historical circumstances made it possible. We also need to take into account the continuing political commitment to the French presence in Senegal postindependence, which played a key role in ensuring a relatively smooth transition.[2]

This chapter will seek to explain French success by reference to three factors. First, the length of the French presence in Senegal, dating back to the foundation of Saint-Louis in 1659, made it possible for France to develop an exceptional range and depth of links with Senegalese society. In particular, it will be argued that this enabled

France to establish good links with both "traditional" elites in Senegalese society, for example religious leaders, chiefs, traders, and peanut producers, and the westernized, French-educated "modern" elites. Crucially, both had a stake, and a common interest, in the maintenance of good links with France. Second, and related, thanks to their long history of interaction, French and Senegalese political leaders shared certain values and sufficient elements of a common "language" of development and modernization to make successful cooperation over the nature of the transition possible. The shared political culture of French republicanism played a key role here. Moreover, within the context of the French Union, both gave priority to stability over state-building, both attached overriding importance to social and economic modernization over political independence, and both identified with the discourse of "cooperation" that was now used in place of "colonialism" to describe their (shortly to become postcolonial) collaboration. Finally, the benign international context was vital. There was a broad international consensus about the need for, and desirability of, decolonization that ran across the spectrum from the new postwar superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, to the newly independent states, many of which had joined the nonaligned movement within the UN. No external intervention, therefore, seemed likely to destabilize the process once it was under way.

Decolonization as Exit Strategy?

The term "end of empire" appears to suggest that an event took place that marked the end of an era and that following the withdrawal of the former colonial power, the age of empire drew to a close. This is misleading in its representation of decolonization in at least two important respects that are especially pertinent to French decolonization in sub-Saharan Africa. First, decolonization is not an event but a prolonged process, with political independence just one of the way markers—albeit symbolically a very significant one—on a journey that starts some time before independence and continues for many years afterward. Political independence is a highly charged symbolic event, as it is the moment when the flag is lowered and the colonial power apparently "exits." However, if we take the longer view of decolonization as a prolonged process, then it is clear that in the case of Senegal, none of the key actors conceived of decolonization as leading to the withdrawal of the colonial power. On the contrary, for de Gaulle as for Léopold Sédar Senghor, the leader of Senegal's main political party from 1947 who became its first president at independence in 1960, the granting of "international sovereignty" was not intended to mean secession from France but rather a renegotiation of the

colonial settlement. Wolfgang Mommsen's analysis can help us here. He conceptualizes colonial rule as a series of constantly renegotiated "unequal bargains" between the European imperialist groups and various indigenous groups on the local level, which varied greatly in character according to circumstances and time.[3] From this perspective, decolonization should be seen as the process of renegotiation of the bargains that underpinned colonial rule. It does not mark the end of imperialism but simply meant that the "bargains" to be struck were no longer as one-sided as they had been.[4]

In the case of France's African empire, this process of renegotiation had in effect started at the Brazzaville Conference. De Gaulle and his soon-to-be provisional government acknowledged that the old colonial regime could not be sustained after the war and that reforms would be needed in recognition of the loyalty of the empire to France and the sacrifices made by Africans during the war. The conference itself could not enact reform; it could only make recommendations, but the spirit of its recommendations was enshrined in the constitution of the Fourth Republic. The notion of a "blood debt" to Africans in recognition of the contribution they made to the war effort gave sustenance to the arguments of French and African colonial reformers, who used the opportunity to renegotiate the "colonial bargain."[5] Thus, in 1946 the new constitution established the French Union, uniting metropolitan France and the overseas territories, as the colonies were now called, into a "republic" both "one and indivisible," and the former subjects of the empire became citizens of the French Union. In a similar vein, the Loi-cadre of 1956 was intended not to prepare the colonies for independence but to bind them more closely to metropolitan France. It devolved certain powers—over economic development, education, and health for example—to the government councils that were created in each colonial territory, while at the same time "repatriating" certain key powers from the governments-general in Dakar and Brazzaville back to Paris, for example over defense, security, the financial and monetary regime, the media, and higher education. The Community, which emerged from the 1958 referendum establishing the Fifth Republic, was similarly conceived. Its member states were granted internal autonomy, but defense, security, the currency, financial and economic affairs, and strategically important raw materials were to be Community—in effect French government—competences.

Moreover, the term "decolonization" suggests a level of organization and control that is rarely present; in practice, decolonization is a process that none of the key actors is fully in a position to control. This is especially true with respect to timing. Even as late as 1958, the architects of the Community were establishing an institutional structure that was intended to maintain formal and highly centralized links between France and its African empire. None foresaw that less than two years later,

all the French colonial territories in Africa would have gained their independence. Moreover, decolonization is a process in which the ultimate outcome is indeterminate. It may have a range of different meanings for the political actors involved, none of whom is in a position at the time to foresee with any certainty where the process will lead and what its ultimate outcome might be. This is, as we shall see, significant in the case of Senegal because it was initially granted independence, along with French Soudan, as part of the Federation of Mali in June 1960.[6] The Federation split just two months later; had the split not occurred, it is very likely that independence would have led to a much more definitive French "exit" from Senegal, given the different meanings the political leaderships of the two countries attached to the process of decolonization. Thus, for the Senegalese leadership, independence was not in itself a political priority.[7] Rather, decolonization was conceived of as a process of emancipation that would result from economic and social development. In this sense, decolonization was presented by Senegal's political leaders as indissociable from development, which meant giving priority to maintaining the link with France, since French financial and technical assistance would be needed in order to accelerate the process. For the Soudanese leadership, in contrast, the priority was to gain independence from France as a first step on the road to pan-African unity. A free, strong, and united Africa would then be in a position to promote economic and social development for the benefit of all the continent's peoples.

The Role of Indigenous Elites

Indigenous elites played a key role in determining the pattern, timing, and nature of decolonization. France's colonial presence depended on collaboration with the leaders of a range of powerful vested interests in Senegalese society. Donal Cruise O'Brien, in his classic study *Saints and Politicians*, identifies five different elite types who acted as intermediaries between the colonial state and rural Senegalese society: the politician-saint ("saint *as* politician"), the chief, the colonial civil servant ("bureaucrat"), the trader, and the elected candidates of the main Senegalese political parties.[8] "Saint" is the term Cruise O'Brien uses to describe the leaders of the three Sufi Muslim orders in Senegal: the Tijaniyya, the Quadiriyya, and the Mourides. The colonial regime introduced by the French lacked moral authority and was thus forced to come to an arrangement with the Sufi saints in order to function effectively. France's key allies among these saints were the Mourides, who controlled groundnut production. They were vital intermediaries for French rule, first because the revenues from groundnut exports paid for the colonial government, and second

because of the mass support they enjoyed across a vast area of central Senegal: "The state must provide material rewards to win their [the saints'] compliance."[9] The saints then used these resources to reinforce their authority over their followers (*talibé*) by passing on a share of these rewards. Moreover, their role as saints and politicians meant that they were in a position to promise their followers both spiritual and material benefits. In return for their obedience and for the tribute they paid him by working on his land, the saint promised his followers otherworldly rewards, as well as, ultimately, access to owning their own land. Since many of the followers were landless and from the poorest sections of society, such promises provided a powerful incentive for them to work for, and demonstrate allegiance to, the saint. The resulting expansion of agrarian settlement also suited the colonial government, who saw it as an opportunity to expand further the colony's tax base and export revenues.

Chiefs and colonial civil servants both relied directly on French support. There were different types of chiefs in colonial Senegal. Village chiefs usually enjoyed some claim to "customary" authority, whereas canton chiefs were French appointees. The latter were nominated either in place of village chiefs whom the colonial administration found to be insufficiently cooperative or in areas where there was no recognizable tradition of chiefly authority. In this case, the colonial administration appointed canton chiefs, as they needed intermediaries with whom they could work. In both cases, the chiefs were not independent agents, as their authority was conditional on French approval. Similarly, the colonial civil servant—whether clerk, interpreter, or primary school teacher—was ultimately dependent on French support. He (the vast majority were men) was immediately answerable to his direct superior, but the ladder of hierarchy led back to the main urban centers and the colonial government. As decolonization approached, more and more of these superiors would come from the French-educated African elite, thus increasing exponentially the number of Senegalese with a stake in the system.

The trader was a significant figure for two reasons. To be a successful trader you needed good political alliances, as it was the government that allocated import-export licenses and organized the marketing of export produce. This meant maintaining good contacts with the colonial government, and as decolonization approached, these allegiances transferred from the French administration to the new African-led government council created by the Loi-cadre.

Finally, there were the elected candidates of the main Senegalese political parties. Senegal has a long tradition of competitive elections going back to the nineteenth century. In 1848, the Second French Republic awarded its Senegalese colonies the right to send an elected representative to Paris. By the 1880s, residents of the Four Communes of Senegal were electing their own municipal councils, and in 1914 they

elected the first African deputy, Blaise Diagne, to the Chamber of Deputies in Paris.[10] After World War II, the right to elect deputies to Paris was gradually extended to voters throughout Senegal, and universal suffrage was introduced in 1956, so that successful politicians now needed to cultivate their connections with rural Senegalese society in order to extend their support base beyond the Four Communes. Senghor was the first Senegalese political leader to realize the political significance of this extension of the suffrage. In 1948 he resigned from the French Socialist Party, which at the time dominated Four Communes politics under its leader, Lamine Guèye, and created his own party, the Bloc Démocratique Sénégalais (BDS), so as to develop and consolidate his electoral support base in the towns and villages of rural Senegal beyond the Four Communes.[11] As this happened, the BDS, as the dominant party, steadily increased the patronage resources at its disposal. By the time it won the 1957 Territorial Assembly elections, taking forty-seven of the sixty seats, the Bloc Populaire Sénégalais (BPS), as it was now called, had patronage networks that extended throughout Senegal. Thanks to the internal autonomy introduced by the Loi-cadre, the BPS-led government council also now had substantial patronage resources, both economic and political, at its disposal. In the 1958 constitutional referendum organized by de Gaulle, this system of patronage delivered a huge yes vote in favor of the Community and against immediate independence from France.

Each of these elites derived material and political benefits from the French colonial presence and thus had a stake in its perpetuation. Their participation in the market economy and collaboration with the colonial government were vital to the stability of colonial rule. It was a system from which all the participants benefited, albeit to varying degrees. Crucially, it also ensured that members of the small, French-educated elite who dominated party politics in Senegal had close links with elites in rural society. Moreover, as Cruise O'Brien points out, these indigenous elite types were in practice less clearly distinguishable than the foregoing categorization might appear to suggest. For example, the same individual might at different times, or simultaneously but in different contexts, be saint, chief, colonial civil servant, trader, or party politician.[12] In addition, the extension of electoral politics to the whole of Senegal after World War II ensured that Senegalese political leaders developed solid alliances with leaders from all the key sectors of Senegalese society. Thus, a complex web of interlocking, and sometimes overlapping, networks linked the late colonial state solidly, via a range of indigenous intermediary elites, to Senegalese society. It is not surprising, therefore, that as decolonization progressed and political independence became inevitable, the priority of the different elite actors involved was to keep as much of this system in place as possible.

A Common "Language"

The fact that French and Senegalese political elites, on the basis of their long history of interaction, shared certain values and spoke sufficient elements of a common "language" was crucial to the smooth transfer of power at independence. By this I do not mean simply the fact that Senegal's political leaders spoke French, although clearly the fact that they had been educated in French schools and imbued with French culture played a significant part in establishing an "emotional bond" between them and the colonial power.[13] Just as important in this context are the normative and ideational structures that social and political actors assimilate during their political socialization and that play a key role in shaping their political behavior. J. A. Mangan defines political socialization as follows: "Narrowly conceived [it is the] deliberate inculcation of political knowledge, values and practices by agents and agencies formally charged with the responsibility. Broadly conceived, it may be considered to encompass not only political but also apparently non-political learning, formal and informal, calculated and uncalculated, which affects the learning of politically relevant individual and group behavior."[14] The political socialization of Senegal's political leaders took place in French schools, through their interactions over many years with the French colonial government and French politicians and through their experience as deputies elected to the National Assembly in Paris. As a result, they shared with France's governing elites a set of ideas, norms, values, and implicit rules—which Lynn Hunt calls "political culture"—that both informed and shaped the political choices they made.[15] I was this shared framework, this common political culture, that helped to determine the collective intentions and actions of Senegal's political leaders and provided the foundation for a smooth, relatively seamless transfer of power.

The core values of French republicanism—the ideals of liberty, equality, fraternity, and progress that, in principle at least, provide its ideological underpinning—were central to this common political culture and provided the basis for a shared understanding of the key challenges facing Senegal after World War II.[16] These may be summarized as follows: to improve living conditions; to put an end to the colonial system and its racist structures; and to restore African dignity and cultural identity.[17] In other colonial contexts, demands for improved living conditions, an end to the colonial system, and the restoration of African dignity would represent not only a challenge to the "universal values" of French republicanism but would also provide the foundation for a nationalist campaign for independence. However, in Senegal this form of nationalism was associated with a small French-educated elite who had limited support outside Senegal's main towns. This radical minority, led by the student and youth movements and subsequently joined by some trade union leaders,

was the only group to demand independence before 1959.[18] For the majority of Senegal's political and community leaders on the other hand, these challenges could be addressed *within* "the great 'diverse and indivisible' Republic" through a process of reform.[19] Immediate political independence, therefore, was not a priority.

Thus, following the reestablishment of republican government after the collapse of the Vichy regime and the creation of the French Union in 1946, French and most Senegalese political leaders shared a belief that overhauling the colonial system could best be achieved through closer integration with the Republic and the full application of its core values, rather than through secession from it. For most Senegalese the priority was to improve their living standards and put an end to the racism of the colonial regime, while for much of the French-educated elite and most trade unionists it was to win for Africans the same economic and social rights as metropolitan French people.[20] Logically, therefore, the watchword of political campaigns in the 1940s and 1950s was not independence but equality, which meant not only equal political rights but also equal social and economic rights and equal educational opportunities. The rationale for this was that emancipation would be achieved through the application of the principle of equality concurrently with the modernization of the economy. In this respect, the Economic and Social Development Fund (Fonds d'Investissement pour le Développement Economique et Social; FIDES), created by the government in 1946, played a crucial role, as it spent considerable sums of money on infrastructure and economic development projects throughout French sub-Saharan Africa by the 1950s.[21] Senegal's political leaders were keen to retain this investment, as they shared the view that economic and social modernization was a precondition for liberty and real independence, rather than the other way around.[22] Thus, Senegal's political leaders linked, in their discourse, the achievement of liberty to economic and social development, not to political independence, and this was to take place within the context of the French Union, through the adoption and application of the core modernizing and progressive values of the "one and indivisible" republic, not by secession from it.

Three linked concepts were central to this discourse: *coopération* (untranslatable into English simply as "cooperation"), "development," and "international sovereignty." *Coopération* meant much more than simply "working together toward a common end." Following independence, a range of bilateral accords were signed with the new governments of almost all the former French colonies in sub-Saharan Africa, covering economic, political, military, technical, and cultural cooperation. *Coopération* also referred to the new Ministry of Cooperation, which was established in 1961 to replace the Ministry for Overseas France (former Colonial Ministry) in carrying out the job of managing the French aid missions in France's former colonies in sub-Saharan Africa; but perhaps *coopération*'s greatest novelty was that

"it involved a systematic transfer of expertise via technical aid experts and teachers living in the assisted countries."[23] Indeed, French experts and teachers went to the former colonies of French-speaking Africa in large numbers in the 1960s and 1970s to assist in the development of the newly independent countries: there were forty-five thousand of them in 1960 and still almost forty thousand in 1969.[24] Moreover, the budget devoted to *coopération* was huge in comparison with present-day aid budgets: 1.41 percent of GNP in 1960, declining to 0.9 percent in 1964, which is still well above the current UN development aid target for industrialized countries of 0.7 percent.

For France the stakes were high, and the size of the *coopération* budget reflected this: the aim was, quite simply, successful decolonization.[25] As Gérard Bossuat aptly puts it, *coopération* was "the ultimate adaptation of a European country, anxious to capitalize on its past, to the new international scene. In other words it was another manifestation of France's traditional role as a world power—the pursuit of power politics by other means."[26]

However, had it been only this, *coopération* would have been unlikely to obtain the support of African political leaders such as Senghor, who were under pressure from an increasingly vocal nationalist movement. *Coopération* was also portrayed as representing a new type of partnership between the developed and developing world that was not based on exploitation, the aim of which was to promote the development of France's former colonies. In a 1964 speech to the National Assembly, de Gaulle's prime minister, Georges Pompidou, expressed the ideal underlying the policy of *coopération* as follows: "in the context of a policy of *coopération* with developing countries, those who give and those who receive must make exchanges in which each brings something to the other. Similarly, the term 'developing' signifies that the aim of *coopération* is to push the countries being assisted along the road to development and not simply to keep them, if I may put it this way, with their heads above water."[27] This discourse of *coopération* to promote economic and social development was echoed by the developmentalist discourse of Senegal's main political leaders in the run-up to independence and the immediate postcolonial period.[28]

Finally, *coopération* chimed with de Gaulle's vision of international relations in the postcolonial world. He envisaged France playing a leading role in creating a new multipolar world order in which the old divisions between colonial power and colony would diminish and Cold War rivalries would abate. Moreover, the two processes were linked, as he saw the extension of French influence in the Third World as a means of breaking down Cold War divisions. The bedrock of this new world order was the nation-state, in which individual sovereign states would cooperate with each other on the basis of bilateral alliances.[29] Never an unqualified supporter of

colonialism as a form of government, de Gaulle was by 1959 convinced that colonialism had had its day and that a new means of projecting French power beyond metropolitan France was required. The aspiration of all peoples to govern their own affairs was natural and universal; it could not therefore be denied to the peoples of France's colonies.[30] Hence his advocacy of granting international sovereignty to France's former colonies in Africa. However, this did not mean that France should withdraw from these countries. On the contrary, he believed that France would be in a position to develop a real partnership with them only once they had achieved international sovereignty, based on bilateral agreements and grounded in French humanism and the universal values of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Working together with France, these countries would form a grouping with the potential to have real influence in the global arena. It was a vision from which all the partners, French and African, stood to benefit.

To be sure, there was an element of the conjuring trick to all of this, since—the discourse of *coopération* and international sovereignty notwithstanding—the partnership was clearly never an equal one.[31] Yet Senghor and other African political leaders bought into it. The role of de Gaulle was crucial here. To many Africans of Senghor's generation, de Gaulle was the "man of Brazzaville" and, as the leader of Free France, was seen as the liberator of Africa. Senghor's poem "Guelowar" (The Noble One), written to de Gaulle from a prison camp in 1940, expresses his admiration for the man: "Your voice speaks honour and hope and war, the fierce beating wings of our breast; / Your voice cries out for the republic—let us raise up that City in a blue day / Of equality for brotherly peoples. So we sing in our hearts. 'We are here, Guelowar!'"[32] His reputation as a decolonizer, as some have suggested, may have been scarcely deserved, but it was nonetheless how many Senegalese perceived de Gaulle at the time.[33]

The Mechanics of Transition

In the constitutional referendum of September 28, 1958, that brought both the French Fifth Republic and the Community into being, the constituent territories of what had been the federation of French West Africa voted yes to membership of the Community; only Guinea voted no and chose immediate independence. Those who voted yes, including Senegal, in so doing opted for internal political autonomy within a federation dominated by France, in which France continued to control the key policy areas of foreign affairs, defense, the currency, economic and financial policy, justice, strategic raw materials, higher education, and transport.[34] Within the Community, the French president played the central role: "the current head of state

[General de Gaulle] has every intention of exercising the functions of president of the community . . . gradually removing from the government of the Republic the *determining* power of decision in Community affairs."[35] This remodeling of the French Union to create the Community was intended by its architects to provide a durable foundation for continuing close relations between France and its African colonies. However, African political leaders rapidly perceived it as an inadequate response to their demands and too restrictive in terms of the powers it transferred to them. As early as January 1959, the Senegalese prime minister, Mamadou Dia, declared to the press: "Our objective is full independence in association with France, with a status similar to that enjoyed by Ghana within the Commonwealth. . . . The Executive Council must be progressively transformed into a conference of prime ministers of independent states."[36] On March 24, 1959, the Parti de la Fédération Africaine, with which Senegal's main political party was affiliated, committed itself to "the progressive evolution of the Community into a multinational confederation," and in September the leaders of Soudan and Senegal jointly announced their intention to exercise their right to independence, although no firm timescale was established, and France held separate negotiations for the transfer of powers with the political leaders of the two territories.[37]

From the outset and throughout the process of transition, the watchword—on both the Senegalese and French side—was "evolution." Both sides were at pains to underline the "evolutionary" and negotiated nature of the process and to emphasize that independence did not in any way mean a break from France. Indeed, it was for this reason that the mechanism of a negotiated "transfer of powers" was chosen, rather than a referendum, as the means to achieving independence, because it was feared that a referendum would provide a platform for radical nationalists to campaign for a more complete independence and this would lead to a distancing from France.[38] Moreover, negotiations for the transfer of powers were accompanied, as we have seen, by the parallel negotiation of bilateral association agreements. In essence, the French approach was thus to help the new African governments build their states by reproducing French administrative, legal, and educational systems in the newly independent countries, with large numbers of French civil servants, teachers, lecturers, and military advisers to be seconded to, and embedded within, the new African administrations.[39] The actual process of transferring powers was launched by the president of the Mali Federation, Léopold Sédar Senghor, in Dakar, in the presence of General de Gaulle, on December 13, 1959. Expressing his gratitude to, and confidence in, "the man of the 18th of June" ("l'homme du 18 juin"), who had launched the struggle for the liberation of France in 1940, he declared: "You are, Mr President, the inheritor of the French Revolution, which for the first time in the world dared to proclaim the rights of man and of the citizen. . . . We trust in you to

'do the rest' with us. . . . You have understood us: you have understood the History of this Century"; and he finished: "we aim to achieve our national independence, not against France, but with France, in a great Franco-African grouping, by friendly and constitutional means. . . . Beyond constitutional independence, we aim to achieve 'real independence and guaranteed cooperation,' which is what you are offering." De Gaulle's response was similarly gracious and eloquent. He pointed to France and Africa's shared language and ideas and acknowledged the legitimacy of their claim to "international sovereignty," recognizing that without a state, you "do not exist in the international order." He stated his preference for the term "international sovereignty" rather than "independence," as it accorded better with the spirit of the age, and he went on: "No one in truth enjoys total independence. . . . But international sovereignty means . . . a lot. It means that a people takes responsibility for managing its affairs itself. . . . There is no international existence that is not first of all a national reality." He finished by saying that the Mali Federation and its member states would achieve this objective "with the agreement, the support, the help of France."[40]

The following six months were taken up with detailed negotiations over arrangements for the transfer of powers, the allocation of public property, and the apportioning of responsibility for interest and capital payments on debts contracted by the territories during the colonial period; the government of the Mali Federation agreed to pay a substantial proportion of these.[41] Discussion of the "association agreements" that the French and the new African governments would sign once independence had been granted took place in parallel with these negotiations. Perhaps the most difficult area was defense, where the desire of the Federation's leaders to assume responsibility had to be reconciled both with the need to defend the Community as a whole and with the French government's requirement to maintain exclusive control of its armed forces and decisions about their deployment. Ultimately, it was agreed that France would help the Mali Federation develop and train its armed forces, and in return the Federation would seek military assistance exclusively from France. Once these negotiations were completed, the two territories gained their independence from France as the Mali Federation on June 20, 1960, and the Franco-Malian *coopération* accords were signed two days later.

It is worth reiterating that the image of General de Gaulle played a key role in this smooth transition. Whereas he was seen by many in France at this time as "the man of the 13th of May," who had acted unconstitutionally in 1958 to bring down the Fourth Republic, for most Africans he was still "the man of the 18th of June," the first French leader who had dared to take a stand against Hitler, the leader of Free France, and the liberator of Africa from the racist Vichy regime. Senegal's political leaders thus saw de Gaulle as a leader whom they could trust.

The evolutionary approach to the transition reflected the fact that neither party actually wanted "exit" to mean effective French withdrawal. On the contrary, once decolonization became inevitable, the priority was to retain as much as possible of the Franco-Senegalese partnership into the postcolonial era. However, with the tide of anticolonial nationalism rising in Senegal, as in the rest of Africa, this was a strategy that could easily have been knocked off course by mass anticolonial mobilization, at which point Senegal's political leaders would have been obliged to choose between their preferred strategy of partnership with France or support for the radical nationalists who demanded immediate independence. This is where the notion of a common language was so important. It was not enough for Senegal's political leaders to know that, in choosing the partnership option, they would not be abandoned by France. They also needed a shared understanding of the challenges facing the country and a common language in which to express it. In addition, they needed a discourse to justify and legitimize their strategy of partnership, which they could then use to "sell" it to their people. Otherwise, the clarion call of the radical nationalists for immediate independence would have become irresistible, leaving those advocating partnership politically isolated.[42]

A Benign International Environment

The alliances with indigenous elites cultivated over many years, the elements of a common political culture, a shared "language," and the role played by de Gaulle at the center of the decolonization process would not in themselves have been sufficient to ensure success for France's chosen "exit" strategy without the presence of a benign international environment. In the mid-1950s, the colonial government and the indigenous elites with which it collaborated in francophone Africa were, as we have seen, coming under pressure from a new generation of anticolonial activists who were often better educated and more in touch with the world beyond France—through their university education or their contacts with the international trade union movement or other anticolonial movements—than their elders. They were impatient with their political leaders' strategy. Imbued with the "spirit of Bandung," they did not believe that working with France for the economic and social development of Africa as a precondition for real independence would deliver rapid improvements in the standard of living of the majority of Africans, or that it would lead to an end to discrimination and cultural humiliation.[43] Moreover, in the context of the growing international rejection of colonial rule, the structures of the French Union appeared increasingly obsolete. By the end of 1957, this new generation of activists was demanding immediate independence. It was shortly after this

that de Gaulle returned to power in France. He soon understood that France needed to adjust to the new international climate if it was to retain influence in the postcolonial era.[44] An "exit" that did not mean imperial withdrawal thus had to be rapidly engineered.[45]

For this to be successful in the context of the Cold War, there needed to be no likelihood of intervention by the superpowers or their proxies, and U.S. support or, at the very least, acquiescence was vital, as the Suez debacle demonstrated. In fact, U.S. policy on decolonization in the 1950s was somewhat ambiguous. It was more supportive of the colonial powers in Asia, for example, where the United States perceived the communist "threat" as real.[46] In West Africa, where the United States did not perceive any immediate communist danger, it favored decolonization.[47]

There also needed to be no risk of intervention by a neighboring country. This was where the alliance between Senegal and Soudan to form the Federation of Mali was problematic. Soudan's political leader, Modibo Keita, had served his political apprenticeship in the Groupes d'Etudes Communistes after the war, and his political party, the Union Soudanaise, was the territorial branch of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, which had been affiliated with the Communist Party in Paris from 1946 to 1950. By 1958, Soudan was dominated by a single party, the Union Soudanaise, which was seen by the French government as Marxist, subversive, separatist, and anti-French.[48] The political culture of Soudan's political leaders was thus quite different from that of Senegal's political leaders. Although both had roots in the French Republican tradition,[49] the former were strongly influenced by the language and praxis of the French Communist Party, in particular the notion of the revolutionary single party, whereas the latter, rooted in Senegal's long tradition of competitive electoral politics, were more attuned to notions of political pluralism. These differences came to a head in August 1960, when Keita sought to transform the federation into a unitary state by means of a military coup while Senghor was out of the country. Senghor immediately returned to Senegal, Keita was arrested, and he and his associates were sent back to Soudan by sealed train. Senghor decided that the price of remaining part of the federation was too high, that it threatened his strategy of a smooth and negotiated process of transition, and that Senegal should therefore leave the federation.[50] Senegal and Soudan—now renamed Mali—subsequently joined the UN as separate states on September 27, 1960.

Thus, while the transfer of powers went relatively smoothly, the creation of the Mali Federation did not. In the end, Senghor achieved his objective of independence for Senegal in friendship with France, but this very nearly was not the outcome, despite the broadly favorable international environment.

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Conclusion

So what can those charged with responsibility for designing modern exit strategies learn from the experience of France's colonial "exit" from Senegal? As this chapter has shown, the circumstances in which the decolonization of Senegal took place were very specific, and it is therefore difficult to identify parallels with modern situations. Moreover, and it is important to underline this, when in 1959 the government did finally acknowledge that the transfer of power was inevitable, this was not at any time conceived as a withdrawal, but rather as a reconfiguration of the long-standing Franco-Senegalese relationship. Finally, as we have seen, the term "strategy" is hardly an adequate description of the hastily engineered transition that took place over the following twelve months. That said, the fact that the transfer of power passed off so smoothly despite the improvised circumstances can tell us something about the necessary preconditions for a successful transition.

First, indigenous elites who are prepared to collaborate with the occupying power play an essential role. The plural is also important here: a small indigenous elite that is marginal or unrepresentative will almost certainly not be in a position to deliver a smooth transition. Furthermore, these elites must have genuine popular support. The fact that the elites with whom France collaborated in Senegal had real and deep roots in indigenous society meant that these elites were able both to carry the majority of the population with them in their chosen strategy of decolonization in partnership with France and to isolate politically those radical nationalists who were arguing for a different approach. Second, the fact that they shared a common political culture with France played a key role in facilitating this collaboration. This was especially significant because of the way France's exit had to be improvised at the last minute. The fact that France's governing elites shared the discourse of *coopération* and development with Senegal's political leaders was also important in terms of smoothing the road to decolonization, although of course its limits rapidly became apparent and the demands for development and socioeconomic equality were the ones that were least satisfied by political independence.[51] Third, the trust that existed between the political leaders of France and Senegal was key to the success of the process. They knew each other well, having rubbed shoulders as elected members of the French National Assembly under the Fourth Republic, and the sense of a shared history, particularly during World War II, was cultivated by the political leaders of both countries. The role of de Gaulle and Senghor was crucial in this respect. Nonetheless, once the decision to "exit" was made, the process developed a momentum of its own, and within twelve months France had formally "left" Senegal. Fourth, distant from the main theatres of East-West rivalry, the international context for decolonization in West Africa was favorable and supportive. Despite this, the smooth

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transfer of power to a pro-French government came close to being knocked off course. Even in a benign environment, the planned transition runs the risk of being derailed by the unpredictability of events.

Notes

1. Laurent Gbagbo, *Réflexions sur la conférence de Brazzaville* (Yaoundé, Cameroon: Editions Clé, 1978), 70.

2. For example, France continued to send large numbers of *coopérants* to Senegal, including French teachers and presidential and ministerial advisers. The governments of newly independent Senegal always contained at least one French national as a minister, and a significant French military presence has been maintained in Dakar to this day.

3. Wolfgang J. Mommsen, "The End of Empire and the Continuity of Imperialism," in *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities*, ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986), 335.

4. Ibid., 341.

5. Gregory Mann, *Native Son: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006).

6. The leaders of Soudan and Senegal formed the Federation of Mali in an effort to maintain the unity of the French West African federation and avoid the "balkanization" of French-speaking Africa into its constituent territories. The original intention was that it would include more territories, but the withdrawal of the other territories reduced the federation to just two members, Soudan (later Mali) and Senegal. It came into being in January 1959.

7. Kathrin Heitz, "Décolonisation et construction nationale au Sénégal," *Relations Internationales* 133:1 (2008), 41–52.

8. Donal Cruise O'Brien, *Saints and Politicians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 11–12.

9. Ibid., 11.

10. The Four Communes of Senegal were the four coastal towns with the longest history of French settlement: Saint-Louis, Gorée, Dakar, and Rufisque. They were the only places during the colonial period where Africans were granted the same rights as French citizens and elected deputies to the French National Assembly.

11. Janet G. Vaillant, *Black, French and African: A Life of Léopold Sédar Senghor* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 221–230.

12. Cruise O'Brien, *Saints and Politicians*, 13.

13. Michael Crowder and Donal Cruise O'Brien, "Politics of Decolonisation in French West Africa, 1945–1960," in *History of West Africa*, vol. 2, ed. J. F. A. Ajayi and Michael Crowder, 2nd ed. (Harlow, England: Longman, 1987), 772.

14. J. A. Mangan, introduction to *Making Imperial Mentalities: Socialisation and British Imperialism*, ed. Mangan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 1–2.

15. Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (London: Methuen, 1986), 10.

16. Tony Chafer, "Education and Political Socialisation of a National-Colonial Political Elite in French West Africa, 1936–47," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 35:3 (2007), 437–458.

17. Heitz, "Décolonisation et construction nationale," 42.

18. Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France's Successful Decolonization?* (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

19. Véronique Dimier, "For a Republic 'Diverse and Indivisible'? Experience from the Colonial Past," *Journal of Contemporary European History* 13:1 (2004), 47.

20. Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 242–248.

21. Between 1946 and 1959, FIDES invested 937 billion old francs (9.37 billion new francs), over 600 billion of which were spent on social and economic infrastructure in sub-Saharan Africa. See Gérard Bossuat, "French Development Aid and Cooperation under de Gaulle," *Contemporary European History* 12:4 (2003), 435. Moreover, according to an official government report, government expenditure represented, either directly or indirectly, two-fifths of total spending in French West Africa between 1947 and 1952. Mission d'AOF 1951–52, August 20, 1952, Archives Nationales Section Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence, AffPol. 2111/1. The maintenance of such financial support after independence was a priority for Senegalese politicians in the run-up to independence.

22. Heitz, "Décolonisation et construction nationale," 42.

23. Bossuat, "French Development Aid and Cooperation under de Gaulle," 455. When used in the French sense, "cooperation" is italicized hereafter.

24. Ibid., 447.

25. René Payot, "La France et les pays sous-développés," *Le Journal de Genève*, June 12, 1964.

26. Bossuat, "French Development Aid and Cooperation under de Gaulle," 455.

27. Quoted in Marc Michel, *Décolonisations et émergence du tiers-monde* (Paris: Hachette, 1993), 221.

28. Frederick Cooper, "Modernising Bureaucrats, Backward Africans, and the Development Concept," in *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 64–92; Mamadou Diouf, "Senegalese Development: From Mass Mobilization to Technocratic Elitism," in ibid., 291–319.

29. Martin Evans and Emmanuel Godin, *France 1815–2003* (London: Arnold, 2004), 155–156.

30. Antoine Sanguinetti, "Dans le respect et l'amitié des partenaires de la France," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, May 1974, 17.

31. Georges Lavroff, "La coopération franco-africaine: Une refonte réaliste et audacieuse," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, May 1974, 13.

32. Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Guelowar," in *Selected Poems/Poésies Choisies* (London: Rex Collings, 1976), 63.

33. Yves Person, "French West Africa and Decolonization," in *The Transfer of Power in Africa: Decolonization, 1940–1960*, ed. Prosser Gifford and William Roger Louis (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), 141–172.

34. Record of "Transfert des compétences," conference, November 29, 1958, Archives de l'AOF (AAOF), Dakar, VP00138.

35. Synthèse hebdomadaire, 1122, February 16, 1959, 4, AAOF, VP00131. Emphasis in original.

36. *Marchés tropicaux*, 690, January 31, 1959, quoted in Joseph-Roger de Benoist, *L'Afrique Occidentale Française de 1944 à 1960* (Dakar: Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1982), 479.

37. Benoist, *L'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 480.

38. Ibid.

39. Jean-François Médard, "France and Sub-Saharan Africa: A Privileged Relationship," in *Africa and the North*, ed. Ulf Engel and Gorm Rye Olsen (London: Routledge, 2005), 48–49.

40. Senghor, speech to the Federal Assembly of Mali, December 13, 1959, AAOF, FM00018.

41. The Federation of Mali took on 49.23 percent of the federal government of French West Africa's debt, Conseil des Ministres, March 31, 1960, AAOF, FM00390.

42. Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*; Michel, *Décolonisations et émergence du tiers-monde*.

43. The Bandung conference took place in 1955. Its stated aims were to promote Afro-Asian economic and cultural cooperation and to oppose all forms of colonialism and neocolonialism.

44. Phillip C. Naylor, *France and Algeria: A History of Decolonization* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2000), 25.

45. Irwin M. Wall, *France, the United States, and the Algerian War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 192, 196–197.

46. Michel, *Décolonisations et émergence du tiers-monde*, 139; John Springhall, *Decolonization since 1945* (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave, 2001), 209–210.

47. Ebere Nwaubani, *The United States and Decolonization in West Africa, 1950–1960* (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 2001).

48. A. C. Danioko, "Contribution à l'étude des partis politiques au Mali de 1945 à 1960" (thèse de 3e cycle, University of Paris VII, 1984), 12.

49. Chafer, "Education and Political Socialisation," 446–453.

50. Vaillant, *Black, French and African*, 298–299.

51. Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 44; Heitz, "Décolonisation et construction nationale," 51.