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Ce Qui Reste: Legacies of Decolonization in Guinea and Gabon

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Research Honors

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Abstract: By most metrics, many African states underperform. Some scholars argue that neo-colonial systems established after independence are to blame, as they perpetuate dependence on former overlords. Others contend that continued failures of African leaders and political institutions prevent their countries from succeeding. I analyze two specific cases from French Africa diametrically opposed in their experiences of decolonization. In Guinea, the French left abruptly, taking everything they could carry. In Gabon, they stayed, and continued to direct the country's politics and economy. What differences does this disparity have on state success after independence? To answer this question, I assess the impacts French actions had on three aspects of the postcolonial societies: rule of law, political participation, and development strategies. Each element is critical for a successful state– institutions must be bound by rules to be trusted by citizens and enterprises, citizens must have a voice (if not necessarily a vote) in government, and people must be able to meet their basic needs. I find that the rule of law failed in both states, though for different reasons. While political participation was limited in both cases by mass arrests, it was almost mandatory in Guinea, and discouraged in Gabon. While French interests ensured Gabon maintained the economic status quo, Guinea's ambitious planned economy squandered resources on unprofitable investments. All told, the two extremes of French decolonization both resulted in the ruling party dominating, giving them complete authority to make, remake, and break the rules at their leisure.

On September 28th, 1958, all citizens of France and her colonies were asked a question: "Do you approve of the Constitution offered by the Government of the Republic?" Nineteen of the twenty territories voted *'oui'* and remained French subjects. The one territory that voted *'non'* was Guinea. France reacted quickly, dismantling the entire colonial state in two months. According to the *Washington Post*, colonial authorities removed or destroyed everything they could, including light bulbs, plans for a new sewer system, and telephone wires. They even "burned medicines rather than leave them for the Guineans" to show their other colonies the price of disloyalty (Dash, 1984). This example was thoroughly unnecessary for Gabon, where French soldiers continue to provide security and French companies continue to harvest natural resources. In Guinea, the French left; in Gabon, the French stayed. How does this difference affect the states that emerged after independence?

Introduction

The importance of this question is rooted in the landscape of post-colonial African studies. It is no secret that many African societies struggle with state repression, human rights violations, withered economic prospects, and even instances of state collapse (Herbst, 1997). Some explanations for this persistent torpor point to the residual influences that the arbitrary and absolute colonial authority had on the states which succeeded them. Scholars of this vein, including Claude Ake (1996) and Prado and Trebilcock (2009), believe colonial institutions created deterministic "path dependency" in the post-colonial states, restricting their capability for improvement. Others assign blame to many African regimes that replaced legitimate institutions with a network of hand-picked loyalists, which Eisenstadt (1973) calls "neopatrimonialism." The nature and impacts of clientelism and neopatrimonialism have been explored in the works of Bayart (1993) and Médard (1982). Yet other scholars led by Fanon (1963) have questioned the authenticity of African independence, calling it "pseudo-" or "flag independence," accusing African states of being little more than a façade behind which neo-colonial structures like multinational corporations can operate the real power (More, 2011). With so many theories of what factors are most significant for the outcomes of post-colonial states, comparing the performances of Guinea and Gabon should be informative in light of their diametrically opposed relationships with the colonizer. So, what differences are there?

The answer to that question is nuanced. Overall, there are more striking similarities than differences, though they took vastly different paths to arrive at comparable positions. This paper examines the strength of the rule of law in government, the degree of political participation in society, and the development strategies pursued for the economy in Guinea and Gabon. I find that after independence, both states were governed by unaccountable, authoritarian leaders who did not respect constraints on their power. Opposition to the regime was formally illegal in Guinea, and effectively illegal in Gabon. Notably, the ruling party in Guinea made efforts to maintain a robust connection to the citizens, while the regime in Gabon preferred to keep them silent by paying off those it could not intimidate. In both states, development centered around extractive industries, the profits from which were split between the state and foreign businesses, while many failed to meet their basic needs. Though the end results of all three fields of investigation were similar, the paths that Gabon and Guinea took to get there diverged dramatically.

Naturally, the reason for choosing Guinea as a country to focus on was its exclusive status as the one African colony from which France fully and immediately withdrew. I chose Gabon as it would provide the greatest contrast in its relationship with the French. Journalist Pierre Péan (1983) famously described Gabon as “an extreme case, verging on caricature, of neo-colonialism” (20). There were other compelling options for a country to choose beside Gabon. Côte d’Ivoire, for example, is far closer to Guinea geographically and in terms of population. However, there are two major reasons I avoided making this comparison. First, it has already been done; one must look no further than O’Connor (1972). Second, Côte D’Ivoire had a prosperous agricultural sector that made it the wealthiest colony in French Africa. Guinea and Gabon were far less prosperous at independence, and both had economies based on extraction rather than production. Médard (1982) specifically highlights the importance of differentiating between “agricultural states like the Ivory Coast and mining ones like Gabon” (185) due to differences in their political economies. Agriculture requires the compliance and support of a country’s rural peasantry, whereas mineral extraction relies on a much smaller fraction of society. Guinea and Gabon both rely on extractive industries to underpin their economies and have diametrically opposed histories of French political involvement.

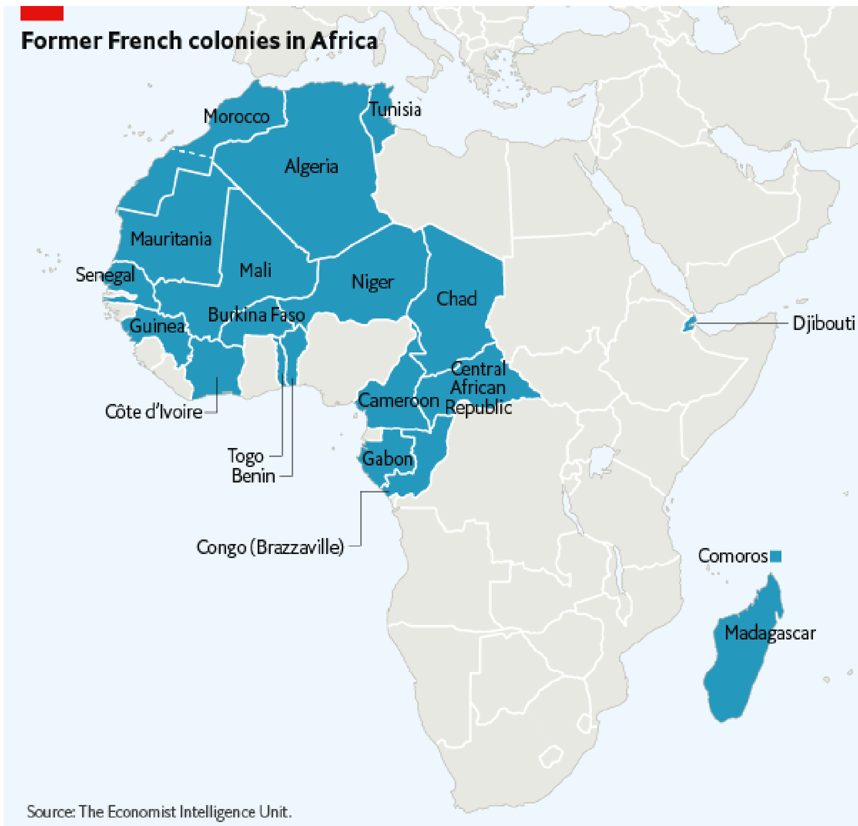
A number of scholars have explored the relationship between a state and its citizens. Migdal (1988) argues that the success of states depends on their ability to exert social control. As the title of his book suggests, he finds African states to be generally weak in comparison to the strong societies they attempt to manage. Rothchild and Chazan (1988) find the balance of power to be more even, but “precarious.” They describe African states as “straddling” society, harvesting the necessary economic and political goods to sustain themselves without becoming meaningfully embedded. Munro (1998) details three “logics” of a modern state’s behavior towards its citizens: “the generation of revenue, the management of society, and the accomplishment of allegiance” (Munro, 4). To properly gauge the success of Guinea and Gabon, I need a method to evaluate how they fare in terms of these logics.

Towards that end, I choose three factors to examine in detail: rule of law, political participation, and strategies for economic development. A state’s ability to generate revenue in the long term hinges on the success of its approach to developing the economy. The state manages society through the laws it creates, assuming both respect the rule of law and adhere to its prescriptions. For allegiance to be lasting, meaningful, and constructive for the state, it has to be freely given through political activity, rather than coerced. By charting the trajectory of these three factors in Guinea and Gabon, I can illuminate the impacts that two distinct styles of French policy had on the states that emerged.

This paper focuses on the decades before and after the referendum in 1958 and the extension of independence to members of the French Community in 1960. I do outline the colonial history of the two countries to provide context on some important policies, such as the *indigénat* system and the birth of domestic political parties. The bulk of the analysis will begin in 1958 with the successful Guinean independence vote, as it marks the formation of the new state. This investigation ends in the mid 1970's. This window allows clear trends to emerge, but stays focused on the first generation after independence, when the imprint of decolonization was the strongest. By 1973, both regimes had experienced a political crisis, and the first presidential succession had been completed in Gabon. It is in times of crisis when the rule of law is tested the most. I believe the direct effects of decolonization will be felt most strongly within this time period. As time went on, more variables made their marks on the politics of the two states– there was even a rapprochement between Guinea and France led by the regime of President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in the late 1970's, allowing limited French influence back into the picture.

Of all that has been written about Françafrique, most of it is in French. The works of many prominent French authors in colonial and decolonization literature have been translated, but some important works have not. In 1983, Péan caused a diplomatic incident between Gabon and France when his exposé on neo-colonial corruption, "Affaires Africaines," was released uncensored. The book has not been translated into English, but its description of Gabon as a near caricature of neo-colonialism is quoted in much of the literature on Gabon. Péan's work follows in the footsteps of another French journalist, Jean Suret-Canale, who wrote multiple works on life under the French colonial regime.

My writing on the history of French colonization relies on Aldrich's (1996) expansive work on Greater France. Zolberg (1966) and Schmidt (2007) both provide useful accounts of the political dynamics of the PDG and the early Guinean state. There is less literature on Gabon, but Reed (1987) gives a detailed outline of the neo-colonial situation, and Gardinier's (1994) "Historical Dictionary of Gabon" is a comprehensive account of the country's past. The US Bureau of Mines Yearbook is an indispensable source of information regarding the levels and nature of mineral production in both countries, providing a variety of statistics as well as analysis. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization maintains data on agricultural outputs, though not in as great of detail as the Mines Yearbook.



Colonial History

The history of French presence in Sub-Saharan Africa has always been driven by the desire for wealth. The first French settlements in Africa, trade outposts in Senegal, mainly dealt in slaves to work the profitable West Indies sugar plantations (Aldrich, 15). From the mid-1600s until roughly 200 years later, the French did not greatly expand their claimed territory. According to Newbury and Kanya-

Forstner (1969), it was the proliferation of French naval bases in the Gulf of Guinea in the late 1800's and the establishment of a protectorate over the Batéké people in Gabon and the Congo that "sparked off the 'Scramble' for West Africa" (253) between Britain and France. While French maneuvering may have been the proximate cause for the race to expand into the interior of the continent, such expeditions were made possible by the changes of the industrial revolution. First, the development of medicines such as the antimalarial Quinine reduced the risk of voyages in the interior, and the steamboat allowed for far faster, safer, and cheaper exploration and administration of otherwise impassable terrain. The term "Gunboat Diplomacy" is aptly named-- the use of armed steamboats to subjugate populations upriver was a staple tactic used on the Casamance in Senegal (Aldrich, 37) and the Niger (Newbury and Kanya-Forstner, 256) through Guinea, Mali, and Niger.

Perhaps most importantly, the industrial revolution greatly increased European demand for raw materials. Rubber, cocoa, palm oil, coffee, sugar, and especially coal, iron, and cotton were all required in greater amounts than before due to the vastly increased volumes of production that industrial processes yielded. African colonies were not only a convenient location for the inputs of manufactured goods, but they also represented massive untapped markets. The colonies had little ability to produce their own finished goods, they had no choice but to get them from French factories. The economic demands for raw materials and markets for finished goods coupled with the technological advancements of the Industrial Revolution made the expansion of colonies from trading ports to vast empires safer, easier, and far more profitable.

The economic role of France's colonies developed in response to the metropole's repeated failures during the colonial period. Successive defeats in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and both World Wars meant that three generations of French regimes had to rebuild their economies after expensive conflicts. In the First World War, extreme French conscription practices in West Africa led to "depopulation, large-scale emigrations and the ruination of agriculture which was deprived of much-needed manpower." At the same time, the colonies were called upon to provide more raw materials for the war effort, and more food to feed the French people (Ọlọruntimẹhin, 462). Humiliating defeats also meant the French regimes had to find other means of regaining their pride. French desire to prove they were still a great power after their defeats in the Second World War contributed to their brutal responses to uprisings in Algeria and Indochina; neither case gave France much to be proud of (Katz, 142).

There were established kingdoms in Guinea before the French arrived, such as the Fouta-Djallon. The French pressured the chiefs of Fouta-Djallon to sign treaty after treaty restricting their freedom, until the French decided to invade them outright in 1894 (Aldrich 38). Additionally, the French had to contend with Samori Touré, *mansa* of the ethnically Malinké Wassoulou Empire. After a series of conflicts known as the Mandingo Wars (1883-1898), Touré was imprisoned in Gabon and the Wassoulou Empire was dismantled (Aldrich 42). Local tribal leaders were forced to either submit to French demands and integrate themselves into the new colonial regime, or resist and be destroyed. The former Empire's territory was split between the colonial regions of Guinea, Mali, and Côte d'Ivoire. The consequences of this decision continue to play out today. After agreeing on the border between the new French colony in Guinea and the British colony in Sierra Leone, France solidified its control over the coast of West Africa. Eventually, Guinea was incorporated as a territory into French West Africa (*Afrique-Occidentale française,* or *AOF)*.

For Guinea, the French colonizers lifted them up with one hand, and broke them apart with the other. As Ahmed Sékou Touré, descendent of Samori Touré and President of Guinea from 1958-1984, wrote in 1960, "ethnic, language, and tribal divisions gave way to divisions on a territorial basis" (Touré, 168). Touré's writing should be understood as an expression of his specific ideology of African socialism and Pan-Africanism. He views the construction of boundaries as an inherently harmful act, but he takes a more nuanced view of the integration of colonies to the global economic system. Touré admits that while there was material improvement over the course of French colonial rule, those very improvements broke Guinean societies apart. For example, the French brought education of a higher quality than would have been possible in Guinea before. However, the children who were educated by the French became culturally separated from those who were not. "Colonization meant that opportunities of advancement were open to a small African elite, but the cost was the creation of deep divisions between us" (Touré

169). Touré himself belonged to this new class of French-trained young men employed by the colonial regime. Unlike the British, who practiced a strategy of indirect rule which did not challenge the authority of local leaders, the new “Black Frenchmen” would find themselves in competition with tribal leaders towards the end of colonization.

The French presence in Gabon began in 1839 when they established a port settlement on the banks of the Gabon estuary. When France abolished slavery for good in 1848, the town was named “Libreville” as it became the primary site for settling freed slaves (Aldrich 51). Libreville became the base from which French explorers, most notably Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza, explored further inland. On their expeditions, the French made contact with another ethnic group of the region, the Fang. They had only recently arrived in Gabon after being forced from their homeland further north by the Fulani (Chamberlin, 78). The French subjugation of Gabon was conducted entirely through treaties and protectorates rather than conquest.

The lands that became the French Equatorial Africa colonies (Gabon, the French Congo, the Central African Republic, and Chad) were less populous, productive, and valuable than French West Africa. In an effort to reduce the costs of administering territory that it was unable to make profitable, the French government eagerly exchanged direct control over the territories for increased profits by granting contracts to concessionary companies (van der Linde, 2016). The concessionary companies were empowered to effectively act as the state in the territory given to them, maintaining a monopoly over it and exercising the right to tax the locals in money or in goods. This process, which started in the 1890s, continues to direct the economy and politics of Gabon.

The circumstances surrounding de Brazza’s death offered an early sign of the power concessionary companies could wield. In the years after his explorations of the country, de Brazza was appointed Commissioner-General in Gabon and the French Congo. He was recalled due to, as Aldrich puts it, “conflicts with French businessmen” (55). Compared to many other explorers and colonizers of the era, de Brazza had a much more charitable (if still deeply racist) view of the Africans. It was for this reason that de Brazza was dispatched once more to Equatorial Africa in 1905 to investigate reports of flagrant abuse by the concession companies of their African workers. On his return trip to Paris, de Brazza suddenly fell ill and died. All copies of his report went missing. When some of his notes resurfaced, it became clear that his report "attacked the system of native taxation in the Congo and the collaboration between the colonial administration and concession companies… it revealed that the companies had not abided by their *cahiers des charges*, that they had maltreated the natives, and that, in spite of the privileges accorded to them, the colony had not derived any benefit from the system." (Cookey, 276). de Brazza's wife insisted that he had been assassinated, but the French government denied that foul play was involved.

The granting of concessions to companies in colonial territories is by no means unique to Equatorial Africa. In Guinea, 1,793 mining concession contracts were signed with companies from 1895 to 1914 (McLane, 3). That number dropped to zero upon independence; French companies either left Guinea or were nationalized. In Gabon, some of the concession companies that performed mining and lumber operations continue to operate to this day, such as lumber company Rougier SA.

Throughout France's colonial history, profit was the number one priority, and maintaining control was a necessary prerequisite. The industrial revolution increased both demand for raw materials and supplies of finished goods, while simultaneously providing France with the new machinery and medicine that would be essential to colonize Africa. The colonial regimes they established were designed to maximize profits; the people living under them were means to that end.

Rule of Law

To discern the effects of French presence on the post-colonial states of Guinea and Gabon, I will start by comparing the strength of the rule of law. Tamanaha (2012) provides a simple, agreeable definition as "government officials and citizens are bound by and abide by the law." To supplement this barebones formulation, he provides three themes; that government power is constrained by the laws, that laws are created and upheld through a formal legal system, and that there is "rule of law, not rule of man" (Tamanaha, 236). In a state with close adherence to the rule of law, there will be some sort of constitution which protects the fundamental rights of citizens, limits the powers of the authorities, and, crucially, provides an independent mechanism to hear the accusations of the powerless against the powerful. To borrow an expression from Chanock (2001), the laws should be a defense against the state, not a weapon in its hands. A critical challenge for maintaining the rule of law is how to ensure the most powerful figures are not above the reach of the law, a challenge which neither Guinea nor Gabon succeeded in.

The rule of law matters for states primarily as a source of legitimacy. Mann and Roberts write that adherence to laws "powerfully legitimized colonial rule," and it was certainly no less important upon independence. Citizens and businesses are far more willing to cooperate with the state if they know that officials are held to a fair standard. If a local tax collector frequently steals from the citizens of a village, the locals will soon learn to hide their valuable possessions, declare less, and pay less in taxes than they would if they could trust the system. According to Fuller (1964), rule of law also provides a state with moral principles including consistency, stability, and congruence. Generally, these principles set the collective minds of the people at ease when they interact with the state, make businesses more likely to invest, and promote trust on the international stage. Overall, Guinea and Gabon did not respect the rule of law enough to reap these rewards, although Gabon's violations were frequently to the benefit of French companies.

Colonial Era

As millions of Africans and Asians became new French subjects, the metropole needed a new legal system to administer them; more importantly, to profit from them. The French colonial regime granted very few rights to Africans, and it certainly did not make itself accountable to them. The political experience of France's African colonies was directed by the *indigénat*, the brutal, arbitrary legal code which afforded extraordinary latitude to whites and imposed oppressive requirements for forced labor and taxes on the native populations. The *indigénat* was not a single law, but a patchwork of regulations first introduced in Algeria after the 1831 invasion. In the following decades, it was exported to the rest of the quickly expanding second French colonial empire.

The colonial legal regime had three levels. There were French Civil Statute courts to hear cases amongst Europeans and the *assimilé*, the class of assimilated, French-educated Africans, who became more prominent as time went on. Native courts held among the local villages heard cases brought against Africans by Africans, but those cases could be decided by French colonial administrators if customary law was insufficient to deliver a ruling, or if the French did not approve of the outcome. Finally, the *indigénat* allowed Europeans to sentence Africans for perceived infractions at any place or time. If there were any contradictions between the levels, the decision of the Civil Statute courts would win out (Asiwaju in Mann and Roberts, 230).

Included in the *indigénat* codes were a wide variety of infractions, including speaking out against France, refusing to work, helping "vagabonds," failing to provide supplies to colonial officers, traveling, meeting, and teaching without a permit, and disrespecting a colonial officer. "Almost all the whites in West Africa" were considered "colonial officers" (Suret-Canale, 331). When such an officer felt one of these open-ended laws had been violated, they were given legal authority to summarily impose a variety of punishments "on individuals and, collectively, on villages or other communities" (Aldrich 213). These included imprisonment, fines in francs or goods, forced labor, conscription into the French military native auxiliary units, or, in some cases, execution. Corporal punishment was officially banned, and yet each colonial agent was "provided with a stick" (Suret-Canale, 332). Slavery was re-abolished in 1848, but a colonial officer could demand that a native provide them with food and water, and if they refused, send them to a forced labor camp. The *indigénat* was the French government's attempt to design a system of colonial administration that was cheap, efficient, and productive. The conditions of life under them rarely entered the consideration.

As the *indigénat* was in effect for decades, it dealt severe damage to African societies and cultures. Another punishable offense, beyond teaching without a French permit, unauthorized gatherings, and disrespecting France and her officers, was "failing to follow French standards of hygiene and dress" (ibid). Through these offenses prohibited by the *indigénat*, the French colonial authorities outlawed unapproved expressions of culture. In Guinea, Gabon, and all of the other French possessions, the act of being African was a criminal offense. Some expressions of traditional culture were allowed to continue, but only when beneficial to the French.

The *indigénat* did not apply to French citizens, and colonized peoples could theoretically gain citizenship. Of course, the requirements were out of reach for the vast majority of Africans. One route was to marry and have a child with a French woman (Suret-Canale, 333). It is no coincidence that having a child with a French man was insufficient to qualify for citizenship, since colonial officers forced that reality upon untold numbers of African women. Since there were vastly fewer unmarried French women in Africa than unmarried French men, very few *indigènes* became *citoyens* through this route. Another way to gain citizenship was to earn an advanced degree. However, opportunities for Africans to gain higher education in the colonies were simply nonexistent for much of the *indigénat* era.

Still, there is much significance to the fact that Africans could graduate from *indigène* to *assimilé,* precisely because the paths were entirely controlled by the colonizers. Recognition of certain Africans was a tool to divide the population and to secure the loyalty of the chosen few. The colonial system set up collaborationist chiefs as assessors of the Native Courts, which had the power to enact severe punishments for a wide range of offenses (Asiwaju, 99). Incorporating local elites into the regime by including them in the benefits of forced labor co-opted the traditional legitimacy of the tribes and left the colonial subjects without any organization to operate on their behalf.

The *indigénat* codes faced greater and greater criticism in the 20th century and underwent several reforms before being repealed. The Decree of 1917 aimed to establish more oversight from the senior colonial administration on the punishments meted out by junior officers and gave Lieutenant-Governors the right to overturn punishments they decided were unjust (ibid). In 1924, the formal legal right for white civilians to judge an African guilty and sentence them to punishment on the spot was brought to an end. Additionally, exemptions from the arbitrary judgment of the code were expanded to include all women and children. More men became exempt as well, such as the many thousands of African men who served in the Great War and those who worked in the colonial administration. After twenty years of further revisions, the *indigénat* code was finally repealed in 1946, in a bid to quiet the calls for independence.

Though the worst injustices of the French colonial regime had been halted, they would not be forgotten. The oppressive structure of the colonial legal system was the subject of fear and hatred from citizens of French Africa, to whom it was never a system of justice, but of punishment (Mann and Roberts, 17).

There was one last attempt to rescue the French Colonial Empire from dissolution— the *Loi Cadre,* or Reform Act. Upon its passage by the National Assembly in 1956, it ushered in several changes to the nature of France's relationship with its colonies. For one, it ended the massively skewed distribution of seats in each colony's Territorial Assembly that ensured white citizens retained an outsized influence on colonial politics. The *Loi Cadre* extended universal suffrage to France's colonized populations and expanded the authority of their elected officials. Under the *Loi Cadre*, for example, assemblies would name members to a "governing council," which would act as a cabinet for the colonial governor (Cooper, 226). Some African leaders such as Léopold Sédar Senghor opposed the move, as the delegation of power to the territories rather than the federal structures of the AOF and AEF diminished the chance of forming a unified, independent West African Federation. Perhaps the most important consequence of the *Loi Cadre* was the end of the push for assimilation. In the four years between the passage of the *Loi Cadre* and the wave of independence, the emphasis of colonial policy shifted from preaching the superiority of French civilization to raising the standard of living (Cooper, 232).

The value of these changes was somewhat diminished by how late they arrived in the colonial era. By the time the law was passed, France had suffered humiliating defeats in Indochina, had become locked in another brutal war for independence in Algeria, and had peacefully granted independence to Morocco and Tunisia. However, according to Cooper, the impetus for France's about-face on granting independence between 1958 and 1960 did not come from the colonies demanding freedom, but "equal wages, equality in labor legislation, in social security benefits, equality in family allocations, in short, equality of living standards." Needless to say, taxpayers in metropolitan France were not interested in paying for these benefits. By granting its colonies independence, France sidestepped the financial burden of raising the Françafrique to a French standard of living, as was the new goal set by the *loi cadre*.

Independence

When Guinea and Gabon gained their independence, their constitutions set up new systems of justice. Nevertheless, institutions are sticky. They can continue to shape how society operates long after they are repealed or removed. While structures of the French colonial regime remained in operation in Gabon, Guinea replaced the colonial government with a similarly authoritarian PDG one. Neither country saw a change in the constraint of government authority, though only one even tried.

Guinea

For Guinea in the post-independence period, “rule of law” meant nothing more than “rule of Sékou Touré” -- a clear repudiation of Tamanaha’s third theme. Justice became personalized in the President due to the overt desire to create an authoritarian state and the political dominance of the PDG at independence, resulting in a constitution that left little room for judicial oversight. Political imprisonment quickly returned to prominence, especially when the regime came under threat. Even though the *indigénat* was long gone, arbitrary punishments continued unabated, and the people remained unable to directly hold members of the ruling regime to account.

It is important to recognize that the PDG never intended to create a liberal, Western democracy. Sékou Touré candidly referred to his regime as a “popular” or “democratic dictatorship” (Rivière, 99). One reason for the rejection of democracy was the simultaneous need to construct a Guinean national identity around the ruling party, which will be further explained as it relates to political participation. Other motivations for the creation of a one-party state included the belief that the severity of the crises facing Guinea necessitated a powerful, decisive national government.

The French certainly did not want Guinea to flourish. They removed all of the personnel and capital they could from the country on departure, including food shipments. The Guinean government even received reports of a French-backed counter-revolutionary plot (Marcum, 6). Since the PDG won its popular mandate on a platform of anticolonial revolution, their political existence in the post-colonial state depended on them making that revolution perpetual. The PDG also had to implement a new social and economic system that could lift the nation out of poverty, and provide education, food, and healthcare to the population. With so many demands made of the state, it claimed it could not allow there to be opposition either in the legislature or the courts. As former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere said, "the two-party system 'is an over- sophisticated pastime which we in Africa cannot afford to indulge in; our time is too short and there is too much serious work to be done.'" (Rothchild, 32). This is not to say that one-party states are actually more effective than democracies, but simply that the prospective autocrats decided they needed the latitude to operate without restriction.

The PDG's desire for an extreme degree of political control is certainly not uncommon among political parties, but they had to be able to bring their vision to reality. The political triumph of the PDG, holding 56 of 60 seats in the Guinean Territorial Assembly at the time of independence, meant that the party had complete control over the process of drafting a constitution for the fledgling state. After ten days of writing, PDG legislators developed a constitution that invested massive power in the president and party officials (Rivière, 96). While the constitution included such protections as the right to run for office, vote, personal privacy, be free of arbitrary punishment and racial or religious discrimination, there was no institutional structure to punish the government for violations of these rights. Instead, the President is the "guarantor of the independence of the judicial authority" (Title IX, Article 35). That the constitution declares "the president shall name ministers by decree. No member of the government may be arrested or prosecuted without the prior authorization of the President" (Title VI, Article 23) demonstrates the law's main goal. Just as it was under the French, the rules were made to provide political stability for the state, not justice for the people.

Predictably, many of the President's trusted relatives and allies were named as ministers. His half-brother, Ismaël Touré, served as Minister of Economy and Finance, alongside his brothers-in-law Mamadi Keita, Minister of Culture and Education, and Moussa Diakité, Minister-Governor of Guinea's central bank. As will be explained in greater detail, the selection of Sékou Touré's cronies to steer the economy, rather than economists, had pronounced consequences.

Of course, democracy and rule of law are not synonymous; plenty of countries have had one and not the other. However, the degree of political imprisonment observed in Sékou Touré’s Guinea is rarely seen in a democracy. The PDG government operated a prison camp for opposition figures in downtown Conakry. Once a barracks for the French Republican Guard, Camp Boiro became, in the words of Human Rights Watch, “Guinea’s Gulag.” No court would hear the cases of those jailed in Camp Boiro-- their sentences were set by the Revolutionary Committee, a panel handpicked by Sékou Touré himself (*Dying for Change*, 8).

The camp held dozens of political prisoners in the early years of the regime, mostly figures related to dubious plots “discovered” by the government (Arieff and McGovern, 201). The camp also imprisoned Portuguese colonial officers captured by the PAIGC, an independence movement in the neighboring colony of Guinea-Bissau. The anticolonial revolutionaries found an eager ally in Sékou Touré, for whom the anti-imperialist struggle was a central ideological tenet. Then, in 1970, between three and four hundred Portuguese-backed fighters from Guinea-Bissau entered the city in a naval invasion with the goal of freeing prisoners held in Camp Boiro, capturing PAIGC leaders who were headquartered in the city, and overthrowing the Guinean government. While the commandos successfully stormed Camp Boiro, they failed to capture the PDG’s Voice of the Revolution radio station, and the coup fell apart. According to Macdonald (2012), this incident sparked the mass political imprisonment that became commonplace for the rest of Sékou Touré’s reign. All of the 150 captured attackers were immediately detained and interrogated in Camp Boiro.

Soon after, the government announced that the Portuguese-aligned forces were working with a “fifth column” faction in the PDG. The statement precipitated the arrest of 162 alleged conspirators, including cabinet-level members of the Guinean government and some European nationals. Their crimes were judged not by any judicial institution, but by a political one. Instead of going before a judge in a court, the case was heard by the “Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal,” headed by Ismaël Touré and Mamadi Keita. Ninety-four were sentenced to death, and the rest were given life in prison (MacDonald, 894). This was only the first wave of mass arrests.

A year later, Sékou Touré announced without evidence that Portugal was plotting against Guinea once more. The PDG created a popular militia with the intent of purging the country of imperialist sympathizers. This time, the number arrested was estimated to be in the thousands. Just as before, high-ranking PDG officials were among those found guilty without trial. Four such officials were publicly hanged from a Conakry bridge, including Minister of Economy and Finance Diawallou Barry, and Minister of State and the former leader of the DSG opposition party Ibrahima Barry (Arieff and McGovern, 206). Others succumbed to the "black diet," a tactic whereby guards would stop feeding a prisoner until they either confessed or died. When one prisoner insisted he was telling the truth when he said he was innocent, his guard allegedly responded that he did not need the truth, he needed "the minister's truth" (MacDonald, 911).

There are notable commonalities between the three systems of law under the French colonial regime and the two postcolonial ones. The French and the PDG both had a system of courts to handle the day-to-day arbitration of justice. In the colonies, Native Courts settled disputes between natives based on the precedents of customary law, and citizen's courts ruled on cases between French citizens in accordance with French law. Upon independence, Guinea "copied over French law virtually verbatim" (Manby, 68). The transition meant that, in effect, all cases were decided by French legal precedent, and the Native Courts were removed. Crucially, both versions of Guinea also included a separate legal channel for the state to directly punish or eliminate certain subjects, regardless of their status under French or customary law. Though the version of French law the PDG copied did not include the *indigénat*, the Revolutionary Committees were added in to make up for their absence. The two systems were both tools for the ruling party to eliminate potential threats without needing evidence, due process, or even specific charges (Macdonald, 904).

Additionally, the constitutional provision of immunity for government officials from everyone except Sékou Touré ensured the regime remained judicially unaccountable to the people. The colonial state derived legitimacy not from the approval of its subjects but from the continued support of the metropole. If a colonial official was excessively violent in their treatment of the native population, there was no way for the victims to directly hold the perpetrator to account. They could not vote the abuser out of office or challenge them in court. The only way they could get justice was to appeal to the colonial administrator's mercy or best interests. After all, the French Foreign Office would prefer to hear that one of its agents had been reassigned than that there were demonstrations, strikes, or riots. If the egregious behavior was done at the behest of the colonial administration, then any such pleas would fall on deaf ears. The same dynamic existed after independence. Officials had nothing to fear except losing favor with Sékou Touré, a potentially fatal error. So, for someone such as Siaka Touré, the commandant of Camp Boiro and another relative of the President, nothing was forbidden except refusing an order, no matter how violent.

Even though the French completely dismantled their legal institutions when they left Guinea, important aspects of the colonial rule of law were left behind. The through lines which are most apparent are the similarities between the *indigénat* and the Revolutionary Committees, as well as the nature of legal accountability for government officials as exclusively directed toward the chief executive, without means for the citizens to directly demand redress from their government officials.

Gabon

Gabon also came under the power of an overpowered executive after independence. Unlike Guinea, independence did not fully change who was benefitting from the arrangement. While power ostensibly transferred from the colonial administration to the M'ba regime, Paris was permanently able to bend the rules when its interests were at stake. Thus, the rule of law also remained very weak in Gabon. Rather than being a cost of protecting the country from imperialist interference, the frailty of institutional constraints was a byproduct of French influence.

Leon M'ba set himself apart from Sékou Touré in that he clung to the illusion of democracy in his regime, rather than rejecting it. M'ba "wanted to be and believed himself to be a democrat, to the point that no accusation irritated him more than that he was a dictator, even though he would not cease until he had created a constitution that practically made him all-powerful" (Keese, 2004). Gabon continued to nominally have institutional checks and balances throughout the entire post-independence period, but they could never actually restrict the regime. The National Assembly was “an expensive decoration that he could bypass when needed” (ibid). The Supreme Court was just as powerless to object to what the President did. In fact, a position on the Supreme Court was so meaningless that M'ba used it as a place to send his major rival Aubame and remove him from parliament (Reed, 296). While M'ba had almost unlimited power, it appears that violating the legal immunity of parliament members was untenable. When Aubame resigned from the Presidency of the Supreme Court to return to the legislature in January of 1964, M'ba dissolved the body, and decreed that all former members of parliament were banned from running again. Any party that wished to compete for any seat had to compete for all of the seats, with entry into each race involving a substantial fee. The BDG’s successor, the National Union, was the only party with enough money to run. This way, M'ba’s party gained complete control over the government and his most popular rivals were stripped of office, all without officially creating a one-party state.

While the opposition leaders became unable to effect change on the government, the military was not as limited. Less than a month after the parliament was dissolved, four army lieutenants led 150 of Gabon’s 600 soldiers in a coup attempt. They captured the Presidential Palace and placed M'ba, his cabinet ministers, and the President of the National Assembly under arrest. The coup leaders forced M'ba to apologize for his transgressions and resign on national radio, canceled the upcoming one-party election, and promised that Gabon would continue to uphold all of its agreements with France. They also announced an immediate transition to civilian rule, installing Aubame as President. There were no demonstrations against the takeover, which the military interpreted as a sign of approval (Gardinier, 49).

It was not the backing of the Gabonese people that the coup needed to succeed, but the approval of the French government. The usurpers made efforts to avoid provoking the French, such as keeping away from French soldiers garrisoned at the airport and French barracks, vowing to respect all obligations, placing a pro-French president in office, and declaring intervention a violation of Gabon’s sovereignty. Since the President was captured and the location of the Vice President was unknown, there was no executive to request French action. If the French military entered the country without permission, it would be the equivalent of an invasion. De Gaulle and his trusted advisor for African affairs, Jacques Foccart, decided to step in “almost certainly without an official Gabonese request for aid” (Reed, 297). In less than a day, French soldiers had arrived in the country, killed or captured the rebels, and restored M'ba to the presidential palace. In the years after the coup, M'ba stayed largely within the safety of the palace, thereafter secured by the French-- not Gabonese-- Republican Guard. The government cracked down on prominent opposition figures, with Aubame sentenced to ten years of hard labor and ten years of exile. Protests ignited in cities across the country, but harsh repression paired with a lack of leadership broke them apart (Reed, 298).

M'ba was the man France wanted in power, so he stayed in power. He had a tight relationship with Foccart, who in turn had a close friendship with the president of Elf Aquitaine, the dominant petroleum company in Gabon. Elf was formed after the era of concession companies, but the French government did own a majority stake in it until 1993. There is no question that a major cause of the intervention was the protection of French investments in key strategic resources including uranium and oil, as well as other profitable ventures in iron, manganese, and timber (Gardinier, 49). The French trusted M'ba as the source of stability for these industries and equipped him with strong-arm tactics for that purpose. Foccart directed a clandestine network made up of members of France’s foreign intelligence services, key figures in the commercial operations, and mercenaries. The ‘Foccart Network’ was designed to detect threats to French interests, and the Republican Guard quickly became “an instrument of retail terror” against opponents of the regime (Gardinier, 68). The French wanted to leave nothing to chance when it came to Gabon’s domestic politics.

Even while the French stayed committed to the illusion of democracy in Gabon by forcing M'ba to allow opposition candidates to run, they made the choice on who would succeed him. As he became ill in 1967, the French hand-picked his successor. Foccart and De Gaulle met with M'ba’s Chief of Staff, Omar Bongo, to vet him. Shortly after, Foccart personally visited a dying M’ba and pressured him to accept their preferred successor (Yates, 22). M'ba replaced his vice president with Bongo, won another election, and died months later, giving Bongo an almost complete term without being elected. It was not the Gabonese that chose the man who would lead the country for the next four decades, but the French.

The rule of law in Gabon was weak not because the president needed to protect his country from the French, but because he needed to protect French investments from his country. There was nothing in Gabon capable of constraining the President's actions; the Supreme Court did not have the power of judicial review, opposition leaders who tried were jailed, citizens who sought to make their voices heard were silenced, even military leaders who tried to wrest control of the government were shut down. The only body capable of holding the president to account was the French foreign service, and they certainly were not placing the interests of the Gabonese people above their own. However, the preference to at least *appear* democratic meant that M'ba could not be as overt in his use of power as Sékou Touré was, even if he did not have significant institutionalized constraints on his authority. Despite their inclination toward political repression, their overthrow of Emperor Jean-Bédel Bokassa in the Central African Empire shows French intolerance of self-proclaimed dictators.

In effect, both regimes failed to develop any meaningful rule of law in their countries. The PDG crafted their constitution with as much latitude as possible given to Sékou Touré, which he used to try many thousands of so-called dissidents and alleged plotters in sham PDG-run tribunals. He attempted to justify such a stark abrogation of personal freedom on the grounds of security from imperialist forces, a clear reference to the hostile split between his country and the France of De Gaulle and Foccart. Meanwhile, in Gabon, those same agents of neocolonialism played a direct role in keeping the regime above the law. So long as M'ba protected Rougier SA's timber warehouses, Elf Aquitaine's oil fields, and the *Bureau Minier de la France d'Outre-Mer*'s manganese mines, he was immune to any form of recourse. While the courts in both countries were hardly legitimate, Guinea's Revolutionary Tribunals strayed even farther away from being a formal legal channel. Finally, the rules were largely dictated by the man at the top, but Sékou Touré's rule was far more naked than that of his counterparts in Gabon. Both countries failed to meet Tamanaha's themes of the rule of law, but Guinea was noticeably farther off.

Political Participation

As the rule of law shapes how states interact with their citizens, it follows to examine how citizens interact with their state– how they participate in politics. There is no one agreed upon definition of political participation. Conge (1988) outlines six major points of debate, such as the requirement for participation to be active rather than passive. The definition he settles on is "individual or collective action at the national or local level that supports or opposes state structures, authorities, and/or decisions" (247). Collective action means far more than just voting or membership in political parties. It also involves activity in social organizations like labor unions, women's groups, student movements, etc. Additionally, action that supports or opposes the regime can involve seeking office for oneself. There is perhaps no greater participation than winning access to the levers of political power. It took an exceedingly long time for the French to permit individual or collective political action in their African colonies.

Colonial Era

The Second World War forced a long-overdue re-examination of the political status of France's colonies. During the humiliating occupation of France, the metropole was saved by its colonies. While the collaborationist government ruled from Vichy, the Free French Government was able to relocate to its African colonies, many of which refused to cooperate with Petain's government. From then on, the fate of France's colonial empire was largely sealed. There are many reasons why France had no choice but to restructure its empire after 1945. For one, the traditional power dynamics that underpinned the colonial system no longer worked in France's favor. When it negotiated the future of the colonial relationship at the Brazzaville Conference in 1944, France was doing so out of desperation. It was not strong enough to back up the promises and threats that underpinned the colonial system.

After the war, France needed to rebuild. It could not afford to maintain such an active role across the world. The new superpowers, the United States and Soviet Union, were generally proponents of self-determination for colonies. Scholars dispute whether this was due to sincerely held ideology or the desire to expand their spheres of influence into the global south. Regardless of the reason, American diplomatic opposition to French military efforts in the Suez Crisis of 1956 and the Algerian War from 1954-1962 noticeably hampered French efforts to project might on the African continent (Metz, 523). Additionally, the increase in education and the establishment of local elites in colonial capitals meant that calls for independence were growing more unified and organized. Finally, the moral hypocrisy of demanding its colonies fight the forces of authoritarianism on behalf of democracy while simultaneously ruling them with the *indigénat* codes and refusing their independence was readily apparent in the colonies and abroad.

The Brazzaville Conference was the first step toward independence for France's colonies, despite France's insistence to the contrary. Representatives at the conference came from the "pre-war coalition in colonial affairs - colonial administrators, interest-group spokesmen, veteran politicians from the Third Republic" so radical reforms were entirely off the table (Smith 157). French President Charles de Gaulle was adamant that the French empire would remain intact. Even still, he recognized the need for a change in how the system worked. In his opening remarks, he said "we must put the development of Africa, the human progress of its inhabitants and the exercise of French sovereignty on a new footing." When the conference concluded, that new footing was revealed. The *indigénat* codes were dismantled, forced labor abolished, and colonial subjects recognized as French citizens, though they still did not have all the same rights as white French citizens. Furthermore, the *Fonds d'Investissements pour le Développement Économique et Social* (FIDES) was established as a development agency for the colonies.

While these were all meaningful improvements, there was another change which sped up the movement toward independence. The French Union, created by the Fourth Republic in 1946, set up territorial assemblies, legislative bodies that would represent colonial populations. There was a distinction made between the seats that the colonial subjects would vote for, and the ones the few French citizens who lived in the colonies would elect. The distribution was grossly biased in favor of the white colonizers, but even so, the foundation of the territorial assemblies spurred the development of local political parties in France's colonial possessions. These parties, and the leaders who emerged from them, would play a vital role in the decolonization process. Then, in 1958, the French Fourth Republic's paralysis during the crisis in Algeria exposed the need for a new constitution. The Constitution of the French Fifth Republic included provisions for a "French Community," a new structure of relationships between the colonies and the metropole that granted more autonomy, but was intended to be a "substitute for, if not a barrier to, outright independence" (Irvine, 143). Unlike the Union, to which all colonies were automatically added, France's territories were given a choice. They could join the Community and remain within the French sphere, enjoying French military protection, French currency, FIDES money, and technical support for growing industry and expanding agriculture. Or, they could refuse, forgoing any relationship with France, and gaining independence. All but Guinea chose to stay (Berinzon and Briggs, 346).

Guinea

To learn why Guinea alone chose to leave the Community, one must delve into the early political history of the country. The *Rassemblement Democratique Africain* (RDA) was one of the first parties to emerge in West Africa and had franchise branches in each of the French African territories. In Guinea, the RDA-sponsored party was the *Parti Democratique de Guinée* (PDG), made up of the young, French-educated Conakry elite. In general, the RDA was a leftist, Pan-Africanist party, and counted Felix Houphouët-Boigny as its founder and chairman (Morgenthau and Behrman, 611). It had ties to the powerful French left-wing coalition, which proved to be somewhat controversial. When the conservative colonial authorities began to crack down on the RDA, party leaders suspected it was to force them to break with the Communists. In 1950, they cut ties with the Parti Communiste, and aligned themselves with the center-left Democratic and Socialist Union of the Resistance. This move was deeply unpopular with some local RDA parties, including the PDG (Schmidt 108). This did not end the suppression, ensuring major election losses for the RDA in the 1951 elections. The RDA lost all but three colonial seats in the French National Assembly. For the next few years, the RDA worked to expand their support at home (Mortimer, 198).

In Guinea, this period saw Ahmed Sékou Touré rise to prominence within the PDG. Sékou Touré found his start working in the colonial administration, then for Guinean labor organizations. He benefited from the interest the French Communists took in developing ties with Africa through training he received from the *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT), France's main labor union organization. Sékou Touré emerged as a leader in the newly formed labor organizations of Guinea, converting his union support into political office after becoming chair of the PDG in 1952. He won elections to become Guinea's representative in the National Assembly, as well as Mayor of Conakry. Under Sékou Touré, the PDG's momentum secured them 77% of the vote in the 1957 Guinean Territorial Assembly election, or 56 of 60 seats ("Elections in Guinea").

The PDG was the primary force in Guinean politics. What truly set them apart from their domestic rivals, as well as the other RDA-sponsored parties throughout the colonies, was that they openly supported independence. It was due to the PDG openly campaigning for independence that Guinea voted "no" in the 1958 referendum. However, it was not the PDG that led the Guinean people to reject continued French domination. Instead, it was the Guinean people that pushed the PDG to a more radical position. The other two major parties were the *Democratie Socialiste de Guinee* (DSG), a more orthodox socialist movement with closer French ties, largely restricted to Fouta Djallon, or the *Bloc Africain Guineen* (BAG), a coalition of French-backed chiefs, religious leaders, and anti-PDG parties who would lose power if independence succeeded. The BAG and DSG eventually combined to present a unified front in favor of adopting the new constitution, but independence was simply too popular in Guinea. In the end, 95% voted for independence. No other state in the Françafrique even came close to rejecting the referendum (Schmidt, 119).

The reason for Guinea's lone opposition to the referendum was the unique qualities of the PDG. It did not start out as a pro-independence party. In fact, the PDG did not openly endorse a "no" vote until two weeks before the ballots were cast (Schmidt, 119). The decision was made at a party congress with representatives from trade unions, women's groups, student organizations, and village councils. These groups were not unique to Guinea, of course. What was unique about the PDG was "the class base of its leadership, the strength of its organization at the grassroots, the degree of popular participation in party decisions and the party's relationship to the colonial chieftaincy. While the dominant parties in some territories possessed some of the Guinean RDA's strengths, none had Guinea's winning combination" (ibid).

Sékou Touré was the son of subsistence farmers, received his secondary education from correspondence courses, and worked for the postal service (Marcum, 5), while Houphouët-Boigny was born to a local chief, brought up in a boarding school in Dakar, inherited his family's plantation, and was given a position as *chef du canton* (Schmidt 104). It was Houphouët-Boigny who initiated the break with the French communists, a move which Sékou Touré and the PDG opposed. In an effort to maintain the support of those who disagreed with the RDA's more conservative choices, the PDG redoubled its efforts to build local power bases. The grassroots support the PDG built through its structure of village and canton committees put it in direct conflict with the local chiefs. Village councils would then report to canton committees, formed of representatives from each village in the canton. This structure allowed for local concerns to be transmitted up the chain of leadership quickly. The PDG village committees "focused primarily on issues of grassroots concern - the building and maintenance of roads, schools and clinics; and opposition to forced labor and crop requisitions, abuses by the chiefs and excessive taxation" (ibid) and in doing so, reduced the legitimacy of the French-backed chiefs. Since it was those very same chiefs who were leaders within the RDA parties of other French African states, it should be clear why the Guinean branch was uniquely pro-independence.

Political participation in Guinea reached the grassroots level by the PDG through their efforts to build village committees. This effort set them apart from their rival parties, the DSG and the BAG, which sought their support primarily from the French and restricted portions of the Guinean population. In addition to the village committees, the PDG was closely linked with all sorts of social organizations. Women, students, and trade unionists provided a major source of the pro-independence push that resulted in Guinea’s referendum result. If a Guinean in 1956 was trying to decide where to place their loyalty, the PDG provided a far more equal, democratic, and inclusive system of political linkage than the other parties, and especially when compared to the colonial state and the local chiefs it employed. Thus, at independence, the desires of the state changed, but not the penalties.

Independence

While both states under consideration had harsh, authoritarian tendencies, it was actually the dictatorship that afforded greater political participation to the average citizen. The PDG structure not only allowed citizens to be involved in the dialogue, but it also encouraged them to be active with the party to promote social cohesion. By listening to its members at the grassroots level, the PDG was able to take quick action– often, by imprisoning those who spoke out. Nevertheless, the PDG relied on popular support for its status as the “party of the People’s Revolution,” so it worked to foster the type of participation it wanted.

The integration of the PDG within local communities that was so essential to its support for independence continued on during the Sékou Touré regime. The PDG was, more than any other RDA-backed party in Africa, open to the input of student groups, labor unions, and women’s organizations. After independence, the leadership of Guinea was faced with a problem of national identity. There was nothing that joined the Guinean people together as one people that neighboring countries did not also have. Guinea was mostly Muslim, for example, but it was no more Muslim than Mali or Senegal. Language had a similar issue, since the only language spoken throughout the country was French. Ethnicity was more divisive than it was unifying, as the population was split between the Fulani in the north, Malinké in the east, Susu along the coast, and many others. Not even the name of the country was unique-- Guinea comes from a Portuguese word to refer to the lands of people of color, which is why there are three Guineas in Africa and one in Oceania. The only unique aspect of Guinea was its political history, and the PDG was perfectly positioned to take advantage of that.

By constructing Guinean identity around the "no" vote to the 1958 referendum, the PDG cemented itself as the soul of the nation. From early on, Sékou Touré equated support for the PDG as support for Guinea. Opposition parties were thus not made up of "individuals who disagree with the party" on political issues, but "morally defective" agents who threatened the nation (Zolberg, 46). They were all given a choice between joining the PDG or facing punishment, but disloyalty within the party was just as offensive as opposition from outside.

Though the fusion of party, nation, and people violently excluded resistance to the regime, it also made popular participation in politics the source of legitimacy for the regime. Instead of restricting access to the party, the PDG announced that membership had doubled between 1959 and 1961, with a corresponding increase in the number of local committees. Women, who had been a significant driving force in the push for independence, continued to be represented at all levels of government. Only a few years after independence the number of administrative regions had increased from 43 to 163, accommodating the increase in membership while also dividing each section into smaller units (Zolberg, 103). Positions in these regional offices required either 3 or 5 years of service to the party-- they were not handed out as bribes. The same pyramid structure of local, regional, and national committees that allowed the PDG to quickly hear and respond to the desires of its base was maintained and expanded after 1958.

The government quickly hearing and responding to the people is usually a positive for participation. If the government did not approve of what it heard from the grassroots, though, the response could be brutal. The students' and teachers' unions that had been so active during the revolution soon lost favor due to perceptions of anti-revolutionary intellectualism. Professors and students were more willing to quote foreign thinkers than Sékou Touré when giving public speeches (Kaba, 32). The alleged discovery of an anti-regime plot in 1961, and subsequent closures of schools and arrests of students and teachers, came shortly after the "open discussion of educational problems at the union conference" (ibid).

In short, political participation is encouraged and fostered by the structure of the regime, up until it describes problems or criticizes the regime. The PDG constructed Guinean identity around their party, so it was essential for all Guineans to be card-carrying members. The party's organizational structure served them well during the struggle for independence and afterward, as it allowed clear communication up and down the ranks. If this communication involved questioning Sékou Touré’s leadership, the response would be severe.

Gabon

Political activity in Gabon has always been dominated by a handful of powerful men. Around the time of the referendum, the big men in competition were Leon M'ba and Jean-Hilaire Aubame. M'ba was the son of a Fang chief and found his start as a *chef du canton* in Libreville. His support for the new *bwiti* syncretic movement spreading among the Fang and his ties to suspected communists played a part in his 13-year exile to the Central African Republic (Reed, 293). Upon his return in 1946, he founded the *Comité mixte gabonais* (CMG), the RDA affiliate for Gabon. Given the RDA’s ties to the French Communist Party at the time, this heightened the suspicion with which the colonial administration regarded M'ba. Instead, they preferred Aubame. Aubame was an orphan in Libreville, who was taken in by M'ba’s brother, the first Gabonese Catholic priest (ibid). He also found work in the colonial administration as a customs agent in Libreville before taking an interest in politics. While M'ba was in exile, Aubame was elected to Gabon’s seat in the French National Assembly.

In the first elections of the 1950’s, Aubame’s *Union Démocratique et Sociale Gabonaise* (UDSG) easily defeated M'ba’s CMG. In an effort to correct his electoral woes, M'ba broke ties with the communists, proved to the French administration that he was not a threat to their interests, and ultimately, left the CMG to join the *Bloc Democratique Gabonais* (BDG). These changes allowed him to finally find success in the Libreville mayoral elections of 1956. Leading up to the 1958 referendum, the party balance in Gabon was precarious; while the UDSG had the plurality of seats in the Territorial Assembly, it was the BDG that succeeded in forming a ruling coalition with the help of smaller parties (Reed, 295). Despite the rivalry between the two, both Aubame and M'ba were staunchly pro-French. Neither of them considered supporting a “no” vote on the referendum. There was a small independence movement in

Gabon, formed of the same radical trade unionists and students as the Guinean movement. With only a few months to organize, active opposition from the French colonial administration, and lacking the support of any entrenched political party, the effort was a failure. Ninety-two percent of Gabonese voted to enter the French Community in an overwhelming display of colonial loyalty. Gabon gained its independence two years later, even though M'ba would have preferred to see the country permanently incorporated into France (Keese, 2004). While Gabon never became a *département*, the continued presence of French troops and companies ensured it did not stray too far from the metropole.

Independence

For the purpose of discussing political participation in Gabon, it is more helpful to consider the state a neopatrimonial rentier state than a democracy. Most countries are sustained primarily by tax revenue that comes from a broad social base. In turn, these tax contributions provide a firm basis for the political obligation a state has to its citizens. A rentier state distinguishes itself in that the predominant source of wealth for the regime are external rents, revenues gained from outside sources due to control of resources, rather than productive enterprises (Beblawi, 383). Rentier states rely on only the individuals and organizations involved in the rent-generating activity, instead of their population as a whole. Reliance on industrial or agricultural exports generally do not qualify a country as a rentier state, because the revenue must be generated by a “small fraction of the society” (ibid). The classic example of a resource that sustains a rentier state is oil, though other forms of mineral wealth are common drivers of rentierism.

There are serious problems with rentier states due to their reliance on markets rather than their citizens. First, overreliance on one sector of the economy can reduce the productivity of others in a phenomenon called ‘the Dutch Disease,’ as the government prioritizes the expansion of exports while ignoring domestic industries. Second, sudden changes in the prices of the commodities they rely upon can have dramatic impacts on the budgets of rentier states. Finally, since the government’s major funding comes from a small portion of the country, it is incentivized to prioritize the interests of the rent producers over the needs of their citizens. As long as the mines or oilfields generate wealth and the soldiers are paid on time, the agreement of the people is optional. Overall, rentier states are less interested in growing their economies than they are in profiting from their natural endowment.

Gabon unquestionably qualifies as a rentier state. Initially, the major export was tropical wood, but soon oil, uranium, and manganese production quickly expanded. According to a contemporary review of the economy, the production of petroleum more than quadrupled from 1957 to 1960 (Hilling, 159). Due to "the transfer of male labour to non-agricultural pursuits, especially forestry and more recently the petroleum industry and mining," Gabon has always had to import most of its food from its neighbors (ibid). Eventually, oil revenues alone would provide 60% of the government's revenue, and 2% of the population enjoyed an estimated 80% of the wealth (Tordoff and Young, 272). The small portion of society that provides these rents are French companies, some directly descended from the concession companies that operated under the colonial regime, largely closed off from the rest of the Gabonese economy.

With the vast amount of money concentrated in the hands of the ruling elite, it should not be surprising that money came to dominate politics. The structure of Gabonese politics is one of neopatrimonialism, "a system whereby rulers use state resources for personal benefit and to secure the loyalty of clients in the general population" (Yates, 484). Bongo re-routed the costly Trans-Gabonais Railroad project away from the resource-rich north, toward his hometown in the south. There is no doubt that he used state resources for his personal benefit. After being installed by Foccart, Bongo made extensive use of bribes and co-optation to secure loyalty. "On numerous occasions he has invited opponents in exile to return to Gabon, and has then neutralized them with wealth and position" (Yates, 496). Bongo belonged to a much smaller ethnic group, but he was able to secure the loyalty of the Fang by co-opting their leaders with government salaries (Reed, 287). Bongo's administration employed fifty thousand, and his party employed even more. Unlike in Guinea, there was no requirement of previous service within the party. Positions at all levels of government were awarded based on expedience, not experience (Ngolet, 57).

Of course, keeping these people on payroll was expensive, and oil revenues were not unlimited. Thus, his regime also made use of the secret intelligence networks and security forces maintained by Foccart. In combination, they ensured that the Gabonese had leaders in their religion, ethnicity, and industry telling them to support the President, and the careful eye of French agents watching them if they spoke out. Despite how many Gabonese were employed in the government or party, their ability to meaningfully participate in politics was nonexistent. The French chose the presidents, and the presidents chose the officials. As for labor unions, their leadership was either brought into the party or jailed by 1973 (Gardinier, 83). Any women's organizations that existed before independence were assimilated into the party apparatus as well. Instead of giving these organizations a clear channel to communicate with the regime, these moves simply co-opted them.

Independence did not have a strong impact on the Gabonese citizens' ability to participate in politics. The rentierist structure of the Gabonese political economy, and many of the companies that operated it, were direct holdovers from the colonial era. In fact, the Gabonese had little influence on who became their president-- M'ba, and his successor Bongo, were handpicked by the French elite. As a substitute for popular support, the Bongo regime created a vast neopatrimonial network to ensure supporting the regime was far more profitable than dissenting. There were only limited protests against the M'ba regime after his restoration in 1964, and the French-built, oil-funded security apparatus was swift in putting them down.

In both instances, the scope of meaningful participation in politics was heavily limited by harsh crackdowns on opposition figures. However, given the varying sources of political strength for the two regimes, they interacted with their citizens in diverse ways. The PDG positioned itself as the centerpiece of Guinean identity and ruled through the mass mobilization of the people. The Sékou Touré regime needed a permanent revolution to maintain itself, and it sought to incorporate its citizens in that vision with or without their consent. Political participation was widespread on account of it being mandatory. In Gabon, M'ba and Bongo would have preferred their citizens stay out of politics entirely. Since continued French support insulated them from the will of the people, they did not need displays of popular support.

Bongo's regime in particular sought to purchase legitimacy by buying off anyone who was in a position to speak out against the regime, and threatening others who might have wanted to. In total, while neither form of political participation was authentic, Guinea's method of decolonization meant it was necessary for the regime, while neo-colonial structures made popular activity unneeded in Gabon.

Development Strategies

Naturally, the degree of political participation allowed and the strength of constraints of executive power may be less important to some citizens than having enough food to eat and water to drink. Therefore, it is important to evaluate how decolonization affected the development of Guinea and Gabon. Currently, Gabon is the richer of the two by a wide margin. A cursory glance at GDP per capita (purchasing power parity) shows Gabon at over $15,000, while Guinea languishes far below at $2,800 (World Bank). A look at Human Development Index scores confirms that Gabon is better off, with a score of 0.7033 to Guinea's 0.477. In this section, I will examine the development strategies the two countries pursued domestically as well as their approaches to foreign aid. I find that while both countries relied on foreign mining companies for income and did little to improve the livelihoods of peasant agriculturalists (the majority of the population in both countries), Guinea's disastrous planned economy actively made the situation worse.

The concept of 'development' is a somewhat contentious one, and it's meaning today has shifted far from what it was understood to be in the 1950's. During the time of Touré and M'ba, increasing a country's development meant building factories, growing exports, and adding another figure to the gross national income number. Over the decades, attention shifted from the national level to the individual. In the 1970's the goal of development became poverty reduction. Later, other basic needs like education, healthcare, and a clean environment were added into what we now call "human development." According to Finnemore (1996), while states were once supposed to be "engines of growth," they are now expected to pursue growth as a means toward human ends (Finnemore, 96). While I place the highest importance upon the conditions of citizens, it is important to evaluate economic development strategies based on their intended goals– in these cases, increasing outputs and national incomes.

Colonial Era

As exploitative and kleptocratic as Africa's colonial experience was, the French did eventually undertake some investment projects to develop its colonies. The primary mechanism through which French development aid flowed was FIDES. According to a report put out by the French Embassy, FIDES' guiding investing goals were to develop the colonies' economies at the same pace as their politics, and to lay the groundwork for subsequent private investment. They point to the development of infrastructure and human capital as a prerequisite for much of the economic interest the private sector may have in the colonies. For example, they claim that cargo traffic through Conakry harbor increased from 100,000 tons in 1946 to 1,600,000 tons in 1956 thanks to FIDES expansion projects. FIDES also took credit for the expansion of roads and railroads, the construction of dams and power plants, the implementation of smallpox and sleeping sickness vaccination campaigns, and the provision of education to a much higher percentage of the population ("French Africa: A Decade of Progress").

All of these moves were intended to bring their colonies into more profitable positions in the global market. Roads and railroads were much more useful to foreign companies looking to move products through Conakry's new and improved port than they were to the average Guinean. It was no accident that Guinea's trade balance was positive to the dollar and sterling zones, and deeply negative to France. As had been France's goal, FIDES investment attracted mostly French companies to do business in the colonies, providing France with natural resources and a market for the finished products. In Guinea, bauxite and iron ore were the most important resources, with additional exports in coffee, bananas, and palm kernels. In Gabon, coffee and lumber were significant, but oil would quickly surpass both.

Guinea

After the departure of the French, Guinea needed to reassemble an economy as well as a state. Domestically, French companies had either left or been nationalized, and the country needed a new monetary system after being kicked off of the CFA Franc. They looked to new partners in the East and the West for development aid, succeeding in playing one against the other without falling into a sphere of influence. On the home front, Guinea implemented a planned economy. To put it simply, this was a mistake. Industry and agriculture both struggled to grow under the economic regime. Throughout the entire period of state control, however, the mining sector was operated by foreign companies. It was also the only sector that succeeded.

With the flight of French aid money, technical assistance, infrastructure, and food, Guinea found plenty of new potential partners. Guinea soon hosted American Peace Corps volunteers, Chinese rice cultivation specialists, Czech and German (both East and West) radio technicians and engineers, among others. For the first few years, the power most interested in providing aid to Guinea was the Soviet Union. Supporting Guinea would not only furnish good evidence of the Soviet Union's commitment to resist imperialism and colonialism around the world, but also provide a communist beachhead in West Africa. Indeed, new facilities constructed with Soviet aid in Conakry harbor allowed their ships easy access to the Atlantic. The USSR also built a massive stadium in the capital (a popular venue for hosting political rallies) and a canning factory we will revisit shortly. However, after a Soviet ambassador was expelled by Sékou Touré in 1961 for supporting non-Touré politicians, Guinea's refusal to host Soviet aircraft during the Cuban Missile Crisis, and mounting signs that the planned economy was failing, Conakry began looking toward the West (Nelson et al, 195).

Though Sékou Touré was a fierce anti-colonialist, he was not too ideological to accept the benefits the West was willing to provide. Foremost among these benefits were food shipments and private investments in the development of Guinea's mines. USAID grain would continue to be a crucial source of food for Sékou Touré's Guinea throughout the post-independence period. In 1975, Guinea received almost $40 million in American food aid, representing 43% of the total USAID money given to West Africa ("Aid (ODA) disbursements"). Furthermore, Guinea became reliant on a consortium of Western aluminum companies for a sizable portion of its revenue. Bauxite mining is handled by the *Compagnie des Bauxites de Guiné*e, split 51%-49% between Halco, a consortium of 7 major western mining companies, and the Guinean state. Thus, the mining companies handled the operations, and gave a generous 65% of the profits to the treasury. This arrangement led to massive increases in bauxite production. In 1962, after the government nationalized the previous mining company, the country produced 1,440,000 metric tons of the ore, a 22% decrease from the year before. In 1975, with Western help, that figure had grown to 8,406,000 metric tons (Stipp, 976). Sékou Touré looked to foreign-run bauxite mines to "provide the underpinning for the entire Guinean economy and most of its foreign exchange" (Nelson et al, 195).

No other sector of the Guinean economy saw anything resembling such an increase. There are many reasons for this, and most relate to the dismal results of Guinea's currency controls and economic planning. The CFA franc was replaced by the Guinean franc, which was managed by Guinea's central bank. Though the country experienced high inflation in its early years, the government refused to revalue the currency, keeping it pegged three to four times its actual value. Such an artificially strong currency made it tremendously hard for exports to be competitive on the global market, while simultaneously making imports highly attractive. Rather than revalue the currency, the government tried to solve the problem by capping imports (O'Connor, 422). They also maintained a policy of mandatory conversion, confiscating any foreign currency earned by Guinean citizens and issuing them the equivalent amount of Guinean currency. Due to the vast gulf between the government rate and the market rate, this meant that the citizens ended up with only a fraction of the value of their confiscated foreign currency. The damage these monetary policies inflicted on the industrial and agricultural sectors was immense.

After independence, Guinea embarked on several large industrial projects, often with support from the Eastern Bloc. The most publicized of these failures was the canning factory, built with a loan from the USSR. The plant had the capacity to produce massive amounts of tomato concentrate, but never produced more than a fraction of what it could. There were not enough tomatoes grown domestically, and importing foreign tomatoes would make the process more expensive. The greater problem, perhaps, was that there was no demand. Due to Guinea's inane handling of exports, there was no chance that Guinea's canned tomatoes could compete on the global market, and domestic demand for tomato concentrate was meager. The plant could also can other fruits and vegetables, but the costs of production meant that cans of local produce were more expensive than the same produce at a market. Most Guineans would not buy canned meat, as they could not be certain it was halal. Needless to say, the canning factory never turned a profit.

Guinea also had a textile factory, which enjoyed a much stronger domestic demand. It was intended to be supplied by domestic cotton production, but local growth proved insufficient. A lack of foreign reserves made importing cotton difficult, and delays in the government planning agency meant a selling price had not been established for the cotton. What was produced piled up for months before it finally reached the market. There were also problems with other large industrial projects like a sawmill, particleboard factory, furniture factory, printing plant, and slaughterhouse, which mostly failed to recoup their construction costs. The one project that did succeed was a tobacco product factory, for better or for worse. (Nelson et al, 221) While the Guinean government was quick to take out loans to develop its industrial output, basic issues with supply and demand, compounded by ill-considered currency controls, doomed many of the factories to anemic production figures.

Since 90% of Guineans worked in agriculture at the time of independence, it was essential that the government improved the livelihoods of small farmers. Price controls aimed to benefit urban populations made staple crops an unreliable way to make a living, and even more factors made it difficult for Guinean agricultural exports to succeed. Though the country signed tropical fruit export contracts with the Eastern Bloc, mismanagement of the port and railroad infrastructure meant that "bananas and pineapples rotted before they could be loaded for export" (Hapgood, 357). Despite the impediments, Guinea's agriculture marketing board *Guinexport* sought to boost exports by subsidizing them. The subsidy figures for 1967 ranged from 31% on bananas to 147% on pineapples. The funding required for such extreme price support was supposed to come from taxes on imports, but the scheme came billions of francs short (O'Connor, 424). Of course, the mandatory currency conversion meant that even with the massive subsidies, farmers earned less than they would if they sold their products on foreign markets themselves. Of course, those who lived near the borders or who could afford to transport products seized this opportunity. Smuggling into neighboring countries swelled; one-third of the country's entire coffee crop was estimated to have been moved across the border illegally.

Efforts to collectivize agriculture promised to increase production of both food crops and industrial crops but failed at both. Initial efforts collectivization schemes allowed peasants to maintain their own subsistence plots, and asked them to perform voluntary labor on the collective fields. When this appeal failed, the government rounded up the urban unemployed, most of whom migrated in from the countryside, and forced them onto the collective plantations. These farms experienced no shortage of problems, including the inability to repair government-provided machinery. Peasants are left out of the decision-making process as much as possible, since the farms are managed by young agriculture graduates from the capital. Much like the factories, almost all of the collective farms ran at deficits (Dash, 1983).

Throughout Sékou Touré's regime, agriculture and industrial outputs left much to be desired. Data from the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization show that from 1961-1976, the global average food production per capita increased by 8.8%. In Guinea, food production per capita saw a 2.46% decrease. ("Production Indices") While mining encountered tremendous success, they employed a fraction of the number of Guineans that the farms and the factories did. The major bauxite mines at Fria employed around 1,000 Guineans, almost entirely for low-wage manual labor. The textile factory alone employed almost as many (Swidell, 457). Thus, the Guinean people did not directly benefit from their country's one successful sector. Government involvement in the economy caused massive mismanagement and misallocation of resources, more often to the detriment of the people than to their benefit. Much of the blame falls squarely upon the Ministry of Economy and Finance and the central bank. Of course, given that both of these positions were held by Sékou Touré's relatives for much of the 60's and 70's, their ineptitude should not be particularly surprising.

Gabon

The Gabonese government was just as focused on mineral extraction as Guinea's but did not involve itself anywhere near as deeply in the economy. Given that Gabon remained on the CFA franc, they did not have the chance to direct their own monetary policy. Much like in Guinea, Gabon's oil operations were led by foreign companies, which split profits between themselves and the state treasury. In Gabon, however, the government was largely content to leave the peasants alone.

Cloistered within the French sphere of influence, Gabon did not receive nearly as much attention from foreign aid sources as Guinea did. From 1960 to 1970, non-French sources granted Guinea an average of $88 million a year, while Gabon was only given $40 million ("Aid (ODA) disbursements"). However, France made up the difference. Over the same time period, France gave Gabon $66 million a year, and collected almost $11 million annually from Guinea in loans. When other countries sought to get involved in Gabon, France did anything it could to shut them out. After the 1964 coup attempt, white men shot and hurled a grenade at the American embassy in Libreville. American press, such as *Times* magazine and the *New York Times*, reported that the Quai d'Orsay had pushed the rumor that the US was behind the coup. The message was clear– only France should consider intervening in Gabon.

In running the economy, as in running the state, France gave Gabon a short leash. As Omar Bongo once reportedly said, "Gabon without France is like a car with no driver. France without Gabon is like a car with no fuel" (Howden). One of the ways in which France "drove" Gabon's economy was through the CFA franc. Questions have been swirling for decades regarding the Franc zone, primarily about who stands to benefit the most, or if the economies of French Africa would be better off directing the monetary union for themselves. Regardless, even the most ardent anti-neo-colonialist would admit that staying on the CFA franc would be preferable to the inflationary disaster that Guinea experienced. It certainly may be possible that having control over their own monetary policy could lead to better outcomes for Gabon than using a currency managed in Paris. Given that M'ba and Bongo appointed ministers based on neopatrimonial political convenience rather than merit, though, there is little reason to believe they would have greatly outperformed their counterparts in Guinea. Among the greatest benefits of the CFA franc was that it facilitated trade with neighboring countries as well as France, avoiding all of the difficulty with currency conversion and smuggling experienced in Guinea. While French control of Gabon's currency reduced their economic autonomy, it also protected against potential disasters.

While French currency drives Gabon's markets, French companies are behind much of its most important industries. French timber companies kept their concessions during the shift to independence and faced little interference from the new Gabonese state. After all, it was these French timber executives who provided M'ba with crucial support in the pre-independence years, so maintaining profitable relationships with them was very important to him. During the colonial era, much of the government revenue derived from Gabon's logging was used to develop other regions of French Equatorial Africa. After 1960, all of it went to M'ba's regime (Gardinier, 65). As time went on, the increasing demand of Gabon's native okoumé wood spurred mechanization, and French companies brought in new logging equipment and heavy tractors that local foresters could not afford (Hilling, 157).

As the 1960's progressed, a new product dominated Gabon's exports. In 1957, Gabon produced 173,000 tons of oil a year, in 1965, that figure had increased to 1,265,000 (Bouquerel, 194). The development of Gabonese oil was handled by a French company, *Société des Pétroles d'Afrique Équatoriale Française*, which eventually became Elf Gabon, then TotalEnergies Gabon. While French oil companies dominated terrestrial oil production, foreign companies including Royal Dutch Shell were given rights to some offshore fields. Foreign companies were only allowed in when the French authorized it, and some of the deals, like the one negotiated with Socony Mobil, involved joint financing with French firms (Marcus, 67). With oil fields, just like logging, the extent of the state's involvement was selling a concession, and then collecting revenue. In order to attract more private investment in developing extractive resources, Gabon enacted a business-friendly Investment Code in 1961 and signed an Investment Guarantee Agreement with the United States two years later to increase the confidence of American companies.

This move was not just intended to draw American oil companies, but mineral companies as well. Gabon has a vast array of other natural resources including manganese, uranium, gold, and iron ore. While French companies had special rights to the resources enshrined in the cooperation agreements signed immediately after independence, there was simply too much for French companies to develop on their own. Much like the Socony-Mobil contract, US Steel Company and French-Gabonese interests created a joint-venture company to run a manganese mine. These arrangements were highly successful, as manganese production increased from 203,244 metric tons in 1962 to 1,466,890 metric tons in 1974 (Stevens, 413). France retained tighter control over Gabon's uranium, concluding a "special agreement" that ensured all of Gabon's uranium production would be exported to France. The French steered Gabon's mineral development, but the arrangement produced huge increases in output.

While foreign mines and oil wells enriched Gabon's treasury, they employed few indigenous Gabonese. Oil production, especially offshore operations, do not rely heavily on unskilled labor. Jobs in that sector require significant technical expertise, meaning specialists must be brought in from developed countries. Mines have a larger requirement for local labor, but even then, Gabon's mines represented a far higher portion of the country's GDP than its workforce. In 1967, it was estimated that the country's mines employed 4,000 citizens (Lewis, 271). Since extractive industries employ such a small sector of the population, and since the extracted resources are immediately exported, they do not greatly contribute to developing the country. However, the healthy foreign exchange reserves these exports provided the government gave them the opportunity to reinvest in agriculture, industry, and public services.

Despite the importance of agriculture in employing most Gabonese, the state largely ignored it. The major cash crops, cocoa and coffee, have never represented more than a small percentage of the country's exports. Agriculture products were imported to Gabon much more than they were exported. At the time of independence, food made up 19% of the total imports (Hilling, 159). The focus of Gabon's loose agriculture policy was to increase staple crop production as a method of feeding the growing urban populations of Libreville and Port-Gentil. City residents enjoyed much more attention (and funding) from the government. In 1975, the average income of a citizen of the capital was twenty-two times that of a rural farmer (Reed, 284). In terms of infrastructure, the few highways and railroads the government did build ran from the mines to the coast to ease the process of exporting ore. The BDG was content to let isolated rural smallholders operate independently from the state, and did not invest in the roads needed to market their products. This lack of investment or engagement led to the stagnation of agriculture in Gabon, with the share of the GDP represented by agriculture falling from 32.2% at independence to 6.5% in 1980 (Wunder, 20). However, this is mostly due to the relative expansion of other sectors, rather than the decline in agriculture outputs. Gabon's food production per capita increased by a mild 3.70% from 1961 to 1976, roughly 5 percentage points less than the global average ("Production Indices").

Gabon took a keener interest in developing its industry than its agriculture, but still did not mobilize its economic windfall from its natural resources to any great extent. The industrialization strategy they employed focused on refining the primary products it was exporting. This strategy ensured that inputs were readily available and increased the value of the country's exports. Gabon's industrial areas are largely inhabited by sawmills, plywood factories, veneering plants, and furniture assemblers, most owned by French companies (Hilling, 164).

The most coveted industry among Gabon's cities, and the destination of massive amounts of government revenue, is the public sector. The reasons behind this are political, rather than economic. Normally, government overspending on personnel still has a positive impact on the economy, as the subjects of government patronage spend that money on products and services. In this case, government wages tended to stimulate the French economy, rather than the Gabonese. The villas, yachts, and fleets of luxury cars owned by President Bongo in the French Riviera are obvious examples, but even those in lower positions preferred to consume foreign goods. Even as food production per capita was increasing in Gabon, the increase in public sector wages during the oil boom of the 1970's saw food imports increase from $12 million to $102 million. After all, who would want to eat plantains and cassava if they could afford *foie gras?*

In comparing the two cases, it becomes obvious that Guinea's attempts to manage the economy resulted in worse outcomes than Gabon's policy of neglecting all industries except mineral extraction.

Some of this discrepancy may be due to the greater source of wealth available to Gabon through its abundant natural resources. However, given Guinea's propensity to incur massive deficits on projects that confer little benefit to its citizens, more government revenue would have expanded rather than solved Guinea's structural economic malaise. Neoliberalism has many faults, but the success of Guinea's privately-operated mining industry relative to the failures in manufacturing and collectivized agriculture plainly demonstrate the worst-case scenario alternative. Ironically, while Gabon's strategy of economic development primarily enriched the domestic elite and the French, Guinea's strategy failed to enrich anyone but the aluminum corporations.

Conclusion

Despite the fundamental difference in how the French decolonized Guinea and Gabon, the strength of the rule of law and the prevalence of political participation were weak in both states. For rule of law, the reason behind the weakness relates to the dominance of one party in the early independence era. For political participation, the causes of the poor results are more diverse. Their approaches toward economic development were vastly different, though both relied on mineral extraction.

In Guinea, the threats posed by former colonizers and the need to create a national identity provided a convenient excuse for the PDG legislature to grant President Ahmed Sékou Touré unchecked power in the constitution. The law only punished members of the government if Sékou Touré wanted it to, whether or not they had committed a crime. He used his powers of arbitrary punishment as his personal *indigénat*, without need for official charges or proceedings. Participation in party politics was ubiquitous, owing to the deep integration of the PDG structure among the masses that caused its success in the first place. In a clear break from the colonial period, the state did not hover over society. Instead, it had a firm grounding in villages and neighborhoods in all regions of the country. Of course, the actual value of such participation was thoroughly hampered by the complete prohibition of opposition to the regime. As opposed to the colonial era, citizens were easily able to make their voices heard. Much like the colonial era, if the state did not approve of what was being said, there would be swift punishment. While

Guinea found plenty of patrons to replace its lost French aid, the country's removal from the CFA Franc and the implementation of a planned economy spectacularly failed at increasing development. In the end, it seems France intentionally left Guinea in a very precarious situation, which the PDG failed to meaningfully improve.

Gabon's continued marriage to France ensured a stable status quo after independence. President Leon M'ba was not as overt in his subversion of the rule of law as his counterpart in Guinea, but he still did not allow any institutions to constrain him. When opposition parties were effectively disallowed, French intervention ensured that not even the military was able to check presidential overreach. Paris would suffer no disruption to lucrative investments in oil, uranium, manganese, and timber that date back to colonial concession companies. Given that it was the De Gaulle administration-- not the Gabonese voters-- who chose the president, there was never any doubt that the system would continue to operate for the benefit of the colonizers. The presidents of Gabon minimized threats to their regimes by strategically sharing their oil wealth with certain potentially troubling figures, keeping their distance from neglected rural agriculturalists, and using the tools of repression handed to them by the French to silence the rest. Beyond expanding to give more Africans a cut of the profits, independence did not seriously alter the nature of political activity in Gabon.

In the economic vacuum left by French withdrawal, Guinea courted foreign aid and mining investments, while simultaneously imposing an over-ambitious planned economy and an ill-considered currency control strategy that made it almost impossible for farmers to make money selling their crops. While the bauxite industry flourished, the government wasted its revenue on expensive failures in massive manufacturing plants and collective farms. Its citizens, especially its peasant farmers, turned to the underground economy and smuggling to meet their needs. In Gabon, French companies carried on their operations from the colonial period. The Bongo regime in particular used expansive rents from ore and oil to fund a massive urban bureaucracy and interacted with rural peasants as little as possible. While neither government meaningfully improved the standard of living of their population, Guinea actively made it worse for many due to their failed policies.

During the campaign for independence, Sékou Touré argued “Guinea prefers poverty in freedom to riches in chains.” It seemed as though this was the bargain Guinea was striking– they would forego French development aid in exchange for national self-determination. Gabon appears to be a poster child for riches in chains, as oil companies brought in increasing revenues and Gabonese politics were decided from Paris. For Guinea, the poverty part of the deal definitely came true. Of course, due to the clientelism of Gabonese politics and the use of French companies, a relatively small portion of the Gabonese people were given a share of the riches. Similarly, one should also question how much the average Guinean was able to enjoy “freedom” under Sékou Touré. They freely chose the PDG in 1958, but from then until 1984, they could not vote for anyone else. Opposition to the regime was treated similarly by the Guinean authorities and the French colonial ones.

Since the strength of the rule of law and political participation were almost equally poor in both countries, it seems that continued French presence in itself does not make a decisive difference between failure and success for post-colonial states. Instead, it was the domination of the ruling party at independence that prevented strong institutions from emerging. These parties engineered constitutions and legal systems to legitimize their power, rather than limit it. Despite the different stances the two countries had toward political participation, neither one was willing to allow criticism. French presence did ensure that its former colonies followed an expert-oriented development strategy. The system was absolutely not designed to benefit the people of Gabon, but it did not inflict the same damage to them that the planned economy and currency controls of PDG visited upon Guinea’s people.

These conclusions should not be taken as absolving the French of responsibility for the negative outcomes. French interests were intimately connected with the one-party regime in Gabon, and thwarted efforts to preserve competition in the democracy. President M’ba certainly deserves a great deal of blame for eroding rule of law and political participation, but without his French connections, he would have been removed before he could inflict the worst of the damage. In Guinea, the role of the French is less clear-cut. De Gaulle and Foccart actively conspired against the success of Guinea when they dismantled the colonial state. While what they took with them hurt the new Guinean regime, the things they left behind did far more lasting damage. The institutional memory of the arbitrary, autocratic colonial state remained. Still Sékou Touré could very well have jailed and executed fewer of his countrymen. While the French were responsible for putting Guinea on the path to unrestricted executive reach and illegal opposition, Sékou Touré and the PDG proudly marched along it.

There are other questions raised by these answers. Further research into the provision of public goods like education, healthcare, and sanitation could either reveal hidden successes of Guinea's African socialism or show more mismanagement and inefficiency. Another important question is to what extent Guinea represents other countries that encountered a rapid decolonization. My findings on economic development are grounded in the abject failure of economic planning in Guinea, but that outcome was not inevitable. Furthermore, the Guinean state moved away from heavy economic involvement after Sékou Touré's death, and the malaise has largely continued since. It would take a much wider study to deliver concrete claims regarding which development strategy works the best in Africa. Many authors have attempted to answer this question, such as Babatunde (2012), but the debate continues.

While the influence of the French diminishes in Guinea as years go by, the same French institutions still profit off of and protect the regime in Gabon. Recently, they have been gaining competition. China increasingly makes overtures to African states, and already has strong economic ties with Guinea. China is a major customer in the bauxite market, and its construction companies have been active in developing infrastructure and dams in the country. This arrangement bears a strong resemblance to the FIDES projects of the late colonial period in Guinea. Chinese trade has also increased sharply with Gabon in recent decades. Signs of a political break may be brewing– Gabon sided with China over France in supporting the Hong Kong National Security Law. French courts have become increasingly aggressive in investigating corruption and bribery in Gabon, reaching all the way up to President Ali Bongo. While the French military still maintains nine hundred troops in the country, the coming decades may see Gabon's subservience to France severed. Only time will tell if this change would give the people of Gabon true independence at last, or simply new colonizers.

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