

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: FROM COLONIES TO CLIENT-STATES: THE ORIGINS OF FRANCE'S POSTCOLONIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, 1940-1969

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This dissertation examines the transformation of French mentalities regarding France's role in Africa, beginning with World War II and continuing through the end of Charles de Gaulle's presidency in 1969. Despite the political independence of France's African colonies in 1960, many of them quickly transitioned from colonies into client-states. Since then, France's relationships with its former colonies have enabled a variety of underhanded dealings on the continent. In tracing the roots of this transformation, I focus on French politicians and colonial administrators, and their gradual ideological shift away from traditional conceptions of the French colonial mission.

I argue that the events of World War II, which split the empire and placed France in a greatly disadvantageous international position (first with respect to Nazi Germany and later vis-à-vis the Allies), led to a formidable shift in how France viewed its colonies and other Francophone territories in sub-Saharan Africa. French insecurity, precipitated by its fall as a major world power, required new ways to maintain influence

internationally and in its empire. This mentality, while shaped by the postwar environment, was not the product of any one political ideology; it was shared by colonial administrators in both the Vichy and Free French regimes, and by politicians on both the left and right of the political spectrum after the war. At the same time, French officials grew increasingly wary of British and American efforts to broaden their respective standings in Africa. This renewed concern about the “Anglo-Saxon” threat, along with the increasing need to preserve influence in Africa in a postcolonial age, were powerful undercurrents in the formation of French policy on the continent leading up to and after decolonization. The result was increasingly cynical support of despotic regimes friendly to French interests, in an effort to maintain political influence in Africa after decolonization.

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POSTCOLONIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, 1940-1969

by

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Dedication

To Stephanie and Emma

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In writing this dissertation, I have been fortunate to have the encouragement and support of valued colleagues, family, and friends. First, words cannot express my gratitude for the guidance I received from my mentor and advisor, Jeffrey Herf. From the very beginning of my graduate career, he took an active interest in my intellectual development and was vital to the evolution of this dissertation, from my initial interests in the Vichy and Free French regimes to deeper questions about postwar European history. He offered invaluable advice about every facet of the dissertation process, and his careful attention to each draft chapter helped sharpen and clarify the focus and direction of the final product. Above all, he has been an inspiration for the possibilities of an active and engaged intellectual life.

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John, who immigrated to the United States from Germany in 1923 and inspired my love of history, was not here to see this day finally arrive.

Finally, this dissertation would not have been possible without my wife Stephanie's love. Over the past seven years, she patiently endured my travails through two degrees, numerous trips to France, and countless late nights researching and writing the dissertation. In this dissertation's final months, both our dreams came true with the birth of our daughter Emma. Now that this journey has finally come to an end, I cannot imagine what it would be like without the two of them here to share it with me.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEF	Afrique Équatoriale Française
ANOM	Archives Nationales, Section Outre-Mer (Aix-en-Provence)
ANP	Archives Nationales de Paris
AOF	Afrique Occidentale Française
CCTA	Combined Commission for Technical Cooperation in Africa South of the Sahara
CFLN	Comité Française de la Libération Nationale
CUT	Comité de l'Unité Togolaise
FIDES	Fonds d'Investissement pour le Développement Economique et Social
FLN	Front de Libération National
MRP	Mouvement Républicain Populaire
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OCAM	Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache
PCF	Parti Communiste Française
RDA	Rassablement Démocratique Africain
RPF	Rassablement du Peuple Français
RFP	Rwandan Patriotic Front (only used in conclusion)
SFIO	Section Française d'Internationale Ouvrière
UAM	Union Africaine et Malgache
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UDSR	Union Démocratique et Socialiste de la Résistance

Introduction

In this dissertation, I examine the political and intellectual roots of France's postcolonial relationship with sub-Saharan Africa, beginning with World War II and continuing through the end of Charles de Gaulle's presidency in 1969. France's interests on the continent can be traced to the colonial period, when it maintained a vast empire in West, North, and Central Africa.¹ But since the independence of France's sub-Saharan African colonies in 1960, French relations with African nations have encompassed a number of underhanded dealings. These included support for dictators such as the former Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko and the Central African Republic's Jean Bédel Bokassa; meddling in civil wars, such as the aborted attempt at independence by the breakaway area of Biafra in Nigeria in the 1960s; and numerous episodes of corruption, including the bribery of African officials by state-owned oil company Elf Aquitaine, and the recent "Angolagate" arms trading affair.² Most tragically, French involvement in Africa

¹ France's North African holdings included Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, all of which held significant settler populations. In West Africa, known as Afrique Occidentale Française (AOF), French influence extended from the westernmost tip of the continent, starting with the four settler communes in Senegal and extending inward to include the present-day countries of Mauritania, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Benin. In central Africa, or Afrique Équatoriale Française (AEF), led by the late 19th century efforts of explorer Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza, France made inroads into the heart of the continent, extending from the modern day Republic of the Congo through Gabon, Chad, and the Central African Republic. At its height, the French Empire held roughly one-third of all Africa. For a survey of the French presence in Africa, see Patrick Manning, *Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa, 1880-1985* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

² For a general overview of Africa's struggles after decolonization, see Martin Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair: A History of Fifty Years of Independence* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005); Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). France's general postcolonial involvement in Africa is discussed in Bruno Charbonneau, *France and the New Imperialism: Security Policy in sub-Saharan Africa* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2008). French collaboration with the Mobutu regime is discussed in Michela Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz: Living on the Brink of Disaster in Mobutu's Congo* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001). The Bokassa regime is the subject of Brian Titley, *Dark Age: The Political Odyssey of Emperor Bokassa* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997). For more on the Elf corruption scandals, see Henri

culminated in its support for the genocidal Hutu regime in Rwanda in 1994. In the past few years, awareness of the French role in Africa has led to the coining of the term “Françafrique”, which, as argued by François-Xavier Verschave, former head of the French anticorruption group Survie, has represented “the longest scandal in the history of the Republic.”³

Of course, there is nothing inherently new about the employment of callous, cynical policies in the developing world by former colonial powers, but French dealings in Africa in the past fifty years are somewhat surprising, given the professed ideology of France’s traditional colonial project on the continent. During the Third Republic, French leaders had at least outwardly advocated for a “civilizing mission” in Africa, whereby France would help the continent develop toward greater political and economic progress. To be sure, these ideas were often misguided, and generally propagated by colonial leaders who were ignorant of the societies they sought to transform. But by the 1960s, they had been almost completely cast aside, in favor of a policy of power politics. I argue that this transformation of mentalities was largely influenced by international events, starting with France’s fall as a world power during World War II, which seriously

Astier, “Elf Was ‘Secret Arm of French Policy,’” *BBC News Online*, March 19, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2862257.stm>; John Tagliabue, “French Court Convicts and Jails Ex-Leaders of Oil Company,” *NY Times*, Nov. 13, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/13/world/french-court-convicts-and-jails-ex-leaders-of-oil-company.html>; “Elf Funds ‘Went to French Parties,’” *BBC News Online*, April 7, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2926335.stm>; John Lichfield, “French Presidents Condoned Bribery, Says Ex-Boss Of Elf,” *The Independent*, May 19, 2001, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/french-presidents-condoned-bribery-says-exboss-of-elf-685280.html>. More information on Angolagate, which involved illegal arms shipments to Angola during the Mitterrand regime, can be found in “Angolagate Trial Opens in France,” *Agence France Presse*, Oct. 5, 2008, <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5gBZpmQCVyF13IMQ5s51-ZPRKobzw>; Lizzy Davies, “French Elite on Trial in \$791 Million Angola Arms Case,” *The Guardian*, Oct. 7, 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/oct/07/france>.

³ François-Xavier Verschave, *La Françafrique: Le plus long scandale de la République* (Paris: Stock, 2003).

undermined French security and international standing. This weakened position forced immediate changes in the colonial relationship after the war, as France's African subjects demanded and won expanded political rights. Paradoxically, it also forced violent attempts to hold on to French colonies in Vietnam and Algeria. Because of their eventual loss, and the need to preserve what remained of French international power, French leaders gradually developed a vision of the future which required continued and expanded French influence in Africa. This vision cannot be primarily explained by base economic interests, although these were present in various degrees. Rather, I maintain that French involvement in Africa after the war was most profoundly influenced by a certain *idea* of France – that is, a notion of eternal and enduring French power in the world. De Gaulle famously labeled this notion *grandeur*, but it was articulated in similar ways by many others. It was this idea, and not any particular material interest, which provided the overwhelming impetus for France's continued involvement on the continent for five decades after decolonization.

In recent years, a few historians have discussed how *specific* post-1940 French regimes viewed France's relationship with Africa. However, to this point, there has been little discussion of the ideological *continuities* regarding Africa among the colonial and foreign policy establishments after the invasion of France by the Nazis. Based on evidence from both archival sources and public statements, I argue that when it came to sub-Saharan Africa, there existed a particular vision that transcended political ideology and regimes, through three decades of incredible political turmoil. Some of this evidence has been commented upon before, but a fresh approach is merited, given the consistency of mentalities it reveals. Beliefs evident in the speeches, internal memos, and personal

papers of French leaders from this period are not just representative of their respective regime's policies. They also help us understand the development of an ideology within the colonial and foreign policy establishment concerning France's role in Africa.

To be sure, this was not an ideology that pervaded throughout French society; others outside the government had very different views about what was best for *le tiers monde*. But there was general agreement among French political elites about France's future in Africa. Put simply, leaders in the colonial and foreign offices in every French regime starting with Vichy, and continuing through De Gaulle's Fifth Republic presidency, shared a core set of ideas that informed how France perceived its relationship with sub-Saharan Africa. Through the development of this ideology, the transition of France from colonial empire to client-state sponsor became integrated into the accepted view of France's rightful place in Africa. During the immediate postwar era, these ideas saw practical application through a concerted effort to strengthen ties with African political leaders, and after 1960, with newly-independent states. Eventually, even African leaders, including Senegal's Léopold Sédar Senghor and Côte d'Ivoire's Félix Houphouët-Boigny, would adopt and defend these ideas, leading to even greater support for them in the *métropole* and in Africa.

The ideas that underwrote this worldview were various, but in this dissertation I focus on three themes that were particularly vital to the development of France's postcolonial policy on the continent. The first was the notion of *territorial integrity* in the empire. Colonial administrators on both the Vichy and Free French sides, as well as during the Fourth Republic, constantly emphasized France's right to govern the colonies as they saw fit, without interference from outside powers. While this notion predated the

war, it was provided with a renewed imperative by the events of 1940 and afterwards. During the war, France found itself threatened by nations on all sides; by Germany and Italy, which sought to diminish France's standing on the European continent; by England, which opposed the Vichy regime and had longstanding ambitions in Africa; and by the United States, which under President Roosevelt had clearly articulated its opposition to the old colonial empires. In this atmosphere, the notion of "territorial integrity" grew in popularity, as it helped link the notion that France had certain rights in its colonies to internationally-accepted principles of sovereignty. While the concept would not survive decolonization, the postcolonial notion of sub-Saharan Africa as "France's backyard" drew from colonial views about territorial rights on the continent, and helps to partially explain France's later participation in power struggles in Africa, especially under François Mitterrand. The notion of territorial integrity also inspired the postcolonial concept of *Francophonie*, whereby France portrayed itself as the cultural center of French-speaking nations, including those in Africa. The latter idea was employed to great effect in influencing political and economic developments on the continent after decolonization.

The second crucial idea was the importance of Africa to French international power. To be certain, when comparing Vichy and Free France, one can see that this notion assumed divergent forms. For Vichy, France's possessions in Africa were seen as a bargaining chip that could signify her continuing relevance in world affairs, or her "best card." Vichy operated under a paradigm of a postwar world divided between the hegemony of Nazi Germany in Europe and the rising United States to the west. In this world, France could act as a mediator between old and new, thus justifying its continued

relevance on the world stage. Free France's ambitions were somewhat less cynical, but the dynamic was the same. De Gaulle and his followers correctly predicted a split between the United States and the Soviet Union after the war; once again, French influence in Africa could help prove that France had a role to play in the postwar order, both in the United Nations and in Cold War controversies. These notions survived de Gaulle's political exile 1946, and would endure throughout the Fourth Republic. With de Gaulle's return to power in 1958 and decolonization two years later, French influence in Africa would assume a different form. But Africa remained vital to French standing after independence – indeed, the continent was one of the cornerstones of French foreign policy during the De Gaulle era.

Finally, any study of France's postwar policies in Africa must address the French colonial and foreign policy establishment's deep-rooted suspicions of both Britain and the United States, disdainfully referred to as the "Anglo-Saxon" powers. Of course, these sentiments were not merely a product of the postwar atmosphere. Despite the formation of the *entente cordiale* in the early part of the twentieth century, the cross-channel rivalry was deeply rooted in centuries of conflict between the two powers, as manifested in the French notion of "perfidious Albion" and the existential threat it posed to the French nation-state.⁴ With both powers competing for territory in Africa, the rivalry was quite naturally transferred there, as evidenced by the infamous Fashoda Crisis of 1898, when

⁴ See Antoine Capet, ed., *Britain, France, and the Entente Cordiale since 1904* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006); Phillippe Chassaing and Michael Dockrill, eds., *Anglo-French Relations Since 1898: From Fashoda to Jospin* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Simon Berthon, *Allies at War: The Bitter Rivalry among Churchill, Roosevelt, and De Gaulle* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2001); P.M.H. Bell, *France and Britain 1940-1994: The Long Separation* (New York: Longman, 1997).

British and French forces almost came to hostilities in modern-day Sudan.⁵ As French academic Gerard Prunier has colorfully and sardonically noted:

Everybody in France knows that ‘les Anglais’ are among the worst enemies the French ever had: they burnt Jeanne d’Arc alive, they stole Canada and India from us in 1763, they exiled Napoleon to a ridiculous little rock in the South Atlantic, and they sank our battlefleet at Mers-el-Kebir in 1940...Nowadays they are greatly weakened and do not represent the threat they once did, but they have spawned an evil brood scattered over the four continents, the ‘Anglo-Saxons’.⁶

Considerable attention has been already been paid to the Anglo-French rivalry in the postwar period regarding Cold War issues and the development of the European community, but there was also a significant African dynamic that lead to suspicions of the “Anglo-Saxons.” Given Britain’s support for Free France’s presence in AEF, as well as continued Free French assaults on AOF, Vichy had reason to suspect Britain’s designs on France’s colonies in Africa. Similarly, on the Free French side, De Gaulle and his lieutenants grew to suspect Britain’s intentions for France’s colonial future. These sentiments were exacerbated by numerous anticolonial statements by American officials during and after the war, which made clear that the United States would not accept the status quo on the continent. With the ascendance of American power after the war, the French resentment for “Anglo-Saxon” interference in Africa was easily projected onto the United States.⁷ There is little coincidence that François Mitterrand – who started his

⁵ The incident stemmed from France’s desire to carve out a line of control across the continent stretching from AOF through East Africa. Given Britain’s possessions in Sudan and Kenya, this posed a direct threat to their empire. While the incident would be resolved diplomatically, it brought both nations to the brink of war in autumn 1898. See Darrell Bates, *The Fashoda Incident of 1898: Encounter on the Nile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

⁶ Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press 1995), 104-6.

⁷ As Prunier elaborates, the “Anglo-Saxon” concept has been quite malleable in the postwar context:

The notion of ‘Anglo-Saxon’ is hazy yet it also has a deadly clarity. Anybody who speaks English can be ‘Anglo-Saxon’ and indeed northern Europeans such as the

political career in the Vichy regime before making a quick transition to the resistance – would later justify France’s actions in Rwanda by citing the need to prevent “Anglo-Saxon” encroachment in east Africa.⁸

The development of this postcolonial mentality may be surprising to the casual observer, as the history of French involvement in Africa would seem to run counter to a variety of distinctly “French” principles. Beginning with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen in 1789, French leaders have traditionally viewed their nation as the origin of universal human values.⁹ The universal values of the Revolution would also inform the civilizing mission of France’s colonial project in the early twentieth century.¹⁰ Yet France’s policies in Africa, which included military pacification, the use of slave labor, and political inequality for Africans, often served as a direct repudiation of these values. During the time of the empire, French colonial administrators often seemed uncertain as to whether they wished to incorporate their *indigènes* into a French body politic that underwent a progressive evolution toward more rights, or exclude them entirely and focus instead on more exploitative measures.¹¹ As Frederick Cooper has

Scandinavians and the Dutch are honorary ‘Anglo-Saxons’ because they tend to speak English so well. Of course ‘Anglo-Saxons’ are usually white, but not always. President Yoweri Museveni [of Uganda, a backer of the RPF], as we shall see, was definitely an incarnation of the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ menace in its truest form: because an ‘Anglo-Saxon is an English speaker who threatens the French...

Ibid., 106.

⁸ See “Génocide rwandais: ce que savait l’Elysée,” *Le Monde*, July 7, 2007.

⁹ See François Furet, *Revolutionary France 1770-1880* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992).

¹⁰ French lawyer René Cassin, a supporter of de Gaulle’s, was instrumental in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations. See Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2001).

¹¹ The term *indigènes* was commonly employed by French colonial administrators in discussing their colonial subjects. In English, it loosely translates to “natives.” While it did not always have one clear meaning, the term was often used pejoratively. No such meaning is intended here; I use the term throughout this dissertation to capture the intended meaning of colonial administrators and for purposes of linguistic consistency.

noted, “tensions often erupted between those who wanted to save souls or civilize natives and those who saw the colonized as objects to be used or discarded at will.”¹² This tension mirrored, albeit not precisely, the debate between association and assimilation, as first described by Raymond Betts in 1961 and recently elaborated upon by Alice Conklin.¹³ Policies of assimilation generally focused upon providing western education for Africans in order to transform them into French citizens, while policies of association rejected such goals of transformation in favor of a more British-style form of indirect control over colonial territories.

Decolonization would put an end to ideas of assimilating Africans into the French body politic. No longer would the French political establishment need to make Africans French; instead they could focus on cultivating French influence on the continent through more traditional means. In contrast to the fifteen year period after the war, which had forced France to adopt more progressive policies, the de Gaulle regime would see the return to a darker era, whereby French African policy degenerated and mutated into its postcolonial form. Without the scrutiny of the United Nations and the international community, France was no longer required to reconcile the principles of its civilizing mission with the realities of failed political development. French power became an end to itself, as epitomized most tragically by France’s involvement in the Rwandan genocide in 1994.

¹² Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 24.

¹³ Raymond Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961); Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

As already noted, the deterioration and loss of the empire in sub-Saharan Africa has been the subject of considerable scholarship in recent years. Tony Chafer's work, *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France's Successful Decolonization* has been most valuable in this regard.¹⁴ Chafer's focus on the interaction between French colonial administrators and African elites has helped overturn previous notions of independence as a "gift" granted to Africans by the De Gaulle regime. As he notes, African independence was zealously fought for by vibrant political movements in West Africa throughout the 1940s and 1950s, and was only allowed as a last resort when France could not maintain control by other means. But the misconception of independence as a "gift" from France to Africa would nevertheless justify France's involvement on the continent for four decades after decolonization.

Chafer's broad view of the decolonization process in Africa from World War II to the de Gaulle presidency has been supplemented by the work of numerous historians, most of whom have focused on distinct political regimes or periods of time. Regarding the Vichy regime, Ruth Ginio and Eric Jennings have been invaluable in detailing the interaction between Vichy colonial administrators and their subjects during World War II.¹⁵ As both have argued, the contrast between Vichy's notions of racial superiority and African hopes for greater autonomy would lead to irreconcilable tensions after the war's conclusion. Not as much has been written about the encounter between Free French colonial elites and Africans, but Catherine Akpo-Vaché and Edward Bimberg have both

¹⁴ Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France's Successful Decolonization?* (New York: Berg, 2002).

¹⁵ Ruth Ginio, *French Colonialism Unmasked: The Vichy Years in French West Africa* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); Eric Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics: Pétain's National Revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Indochina, 1940-1944* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

examined the importance of sub-Saharan Africa to the broader war effort.¹⁶ From the standpoint of ideology, De Gaulle's views on Africa during the war have been addressed by Chafer and Dorothy Shipley White, although the latter's work has been dated by its romanticism of De Gaulle's contribution to African independence.¹⁷ Regarding the immediate postwar era, Frederick Cooper's work has provided even further depth to the development of African political consciousness, illustrating the evolution of the labor movement in West Africa in the immediate postwar era.¹⁸ And John Kent's examination of Anglo-French cooperation in Africa remains vital in understanding how postwar international realities shaped colonial policy.¹⁹

Despite all of this significant work, less attention has been paid to how the evolving international situation transformed broader mentalities about Africa, starting in 1940 and culminating in the de Gaulle regime. The defeat of 1940, the fall of Dien Bien Phu in Vietnam, and the outbreak of revolution in Algeria all shaped France's position in the international community, and limited its latitude in acting freely throughout the world. This diminished international status would have great influence on the relationship between France and Africa. There is no question, as Chafer demonstrates, that the role of Africans was instrumental to the drive toward independence in the 1950s.

¹⁶ Catherine Akpo-Vaché, *L'AOF et la Seconde Guerre Mondiale* (Paris: Karthala, 2000); Edward L. Bimberg, *Tricolor over the Sahara: The Desert Battles of the Free French, 1940-1942* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002).

¹⁷ White's book is representative of the Gaullist myth criticized by Chafer. In discussing the decolonization process, she argues that de Gaulle "reached Africa, gradually came to understand the situation, and began to think his way out of the old beliefs about the rightness and necessity of the domination of one people by another. His actions and those of a few others would lead to the political independence of fifteen states." Dorothy Shipley White, *Black Africa and de Gaulle: From the French Empire to Independence* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979), 8.

¹⁸ Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹⁹ John Kent, *The Internationalization of Colonialism: Britain, France, and Black Africa, 1939-1956* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

But the transformation of France's relationship with Africa, from colonial power to post-colonial supporter of client state regimes, was also influenced a great deal by international events, including World War II, the developing Cold War, and rivalries with both the United States and Great Britain on the continent. This dissertation attempts to address how these external factors interacted with France's designs for Africa in light of the postwar situation and diminishing French power.

World War II was the primary impetus for this rapid transformation. The invasion of France and subsequent fall of Paris to the Nazis in June 1940 brought about a radical shift in France's status as a world power. As Stanley Hoffman has noted, in the aftermath of the Nazi invasion, "[e]verything... was affected and thrown into question: the army and the political regime, the policies leading up to the war, also the very identity of the nation, what Montesquieu would have called the 'general spirit' of the French political community."²⁰ Almost overnight, French leaders were forced to confront France's dramatically transformed international standing, and determine new strategies to maintain French power and influence. Essentially, June 1940 represents a radical caesura in contemporary French history, the point at which France could no longer be considered one of the preeminent world powers.

This traumatic experience led to re-evaluation – both within the Vichy administration and in resistance circles – about the role France would play in a future Europe. It quickly became clear to leaders on both sides of the *guerre franco-française* that France's colonies would be of fundamental importance in regaining France's lost stature once the war was over. Only through empire could France continue to justify

²⁰ Stanley Hoffman, "The Trauma of 1940: A Disaster and Its Traces," in Joel Blatt, ed., *The French Defeat of 1940: Reassessments* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1998), 355.

anything approaching its former international position, and remain relevant in world affairs. Therefore, both the war experience and its aftermath involved an active struggle – both military and diplomatic – to defend the empire from all external threats, and to prevent significant unrest from colonial populations. Of course, this imperative was further augmented by the presence of settler populations, most notably in Algeria, and to a lesser extent in French Vietnam. In Algeria in particular, there could be no discussion of a French exodus, given that the colony was considered an integral part of the *métropole*.

But the settler imperative did not generally apply to France's holdings in sub-Saharan Africa. Here, with the exception of attempts to assimilate colonized peoples in Senegal, the French state had pursued more traditional colonial ambitions. These were limited to extracting resources, both for the government and for French companies, and to obtaining and maintaining as much colonial territory as possible, for the purposes of international prestige. Consequently, the need to preserve French control in these areas was not driven by the same internal pressures as the desire to remain in Algeria or French Vietnam. With the exception of colonial administrators and a limited business community, there was no noteworthy colonial lobby for French interests in Africa, as there was in Algeria. Therefore, the significant – albeit not exclusive – portion of political pressure to remain came from *within* the government. The necessity of maintaining France's possessions in Africa became an important part of the stated war aims of both sides of the French divide during the war.

In an essay discussing the impact of the fall of France in 1940 the Nazis, Stanley Hoffman has distinguished between two categories of fallout from the Vichy disaster –

“action effects” and “question effects”.²¹ The former were comprised of “policies that were carried out in order to repair damage, get the country back on its feet and undo in a way the defeat.”²² The latter implicated “profound uncertainties, the cracks that the trauma of May-June ’40 brought forth in the French conscience or the nation’s political culture.”²³ France’s policies in sub-Saharan Africa may be viewed through the prism of both of these categories. As Hoffman notes, “restoration of the Empire” was one means for France “to become a great power once again.”²⁴ To this end, the defeat of 1940 led to immediate “action effects” in France’s sub-Saharan colonies – on the part of both the Vichy and Free French authorities – to preserve the territorial integrity of the empire. From Vichy’s standpoint, this included zealous efforts to prevent British infringement on French African territory, and attempts to discredit the presence of Free French forces in Afrique Équatoriale Française. It also meant rolling back Third Republic notions that Africans could somehow be assimilated and integrated into the French body politic. On the Free French side, De Gaulle and his colonial specialists made the territorial integrity of the empire of prime importance in their negotiations with Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill. They also formulated ways to transform France’s colonial policy so as to mitigate rising tensions in the colonies and ensure that Africans would happily maintain their place in a postwar empire. The culmination of this was the Brazzaville Conference of 1944, which established the foundations of a more liberal policy in Africa once the war concluded.

²¹ Ibid., 364.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 367.

²⁴ Ibid., 365.

These “action effects” would continue after the war, as the importance of French influence on the continent became increasingly apparent with the rise of the United States and the discrediting of colonialism in international politics. To this end, postwar France adopted a number of policies to consolidate its control in African colonies, including domestic reforms that expanded individual rights and granted more control over policy to local governments. French leaders also fiercely defended their African possessions against perceived encroachment from the international community, including the United States and the United Nations, where anticolonial sentiments were ascendant throughout the 1940s and 1950s. As we now know, none of these actions could forestall the inevitable tide against empires. But they did succeed in delaying the end of the official French presence in Africa for roughly two decades after the fall of Paris to the Nazis.

In a way, all of the aforementioned steps were reactions to the war and the immediate postwar situation. More profound was the transformation of French mentalities about France’s long-term role in Africa. In this sense, Hoffman’s notion of “question effects” is particularly helpful. For there were profound anxieties about France’s existential situation, even after the end of the Vichy regime and the triumphant return of De Gaulle to Paris in August 1944. The trauma of 1940 had inflicted a mortal wound to the French psyche; things could no longer be as they once were. The resulting sense of insecurity may partially explain France’s actions in Vietnam and Algeria in the 1950s, when lives were needlessly wasted in quixotic attempts to maintain the empire intact. It also helps partially explain the formation within the public consciousness of a number of historical myths in the years following the war. Henry Rousso has famously described a “Vichy Syndrome” whereby painful truths about support for Vichy, as well as

the political realities of the immediate postwar period, were conveniently forgotten or manipulated by leaders in the Fourth and Fifth Republics.²⁵ And, as Tony Chafer and Todd Shepard have demonstrated, carefully constructed postwar narratives were also instrumental in avoiding painful memories from the colonial past.²⁶ The loss of the empire, like the loss to Germany in 1940, raised serious questions about the nature of the French values and France's place in the international community – many of which remain unanswered to this day.²⁷

More can also be said about the evolution of mentalities within the French state itself. Studies of France's postcolonial policies in Africa have typically viewed them as extensions of De Gaulle's notion of *grandeur*, whereby the general, and later president of the Fifth Republic, attempted to orient French foreign policy toward a notion of an "eternal France" with an indispensable position in world affairs.²⁸ There is much truth in this notion; France's uncertain postwar identity was a main impetus for de Gaulle's policies, which desperately attempted to reaffirm what had already been irrevocably lost.

²⁵ Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France Since 1944* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

²⁶ Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 3. Shepard focuses on the French exodus from Algeria, and posits that key questions about France's colonial past, as well as its future as a body politic, were avoided through the "invention of decolonization" – or a process whereby "French bureaucrats politicians, and journalists rewrote the history of imperialism and anti-imperialism so that decolonization was the predetermined endpoint." Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 4.

²⁷ The preservation of a distinctly "French" culture in the face of an increasingly multi-ethnic society has been explored by Herman Lebovics, *Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

²⁸ See Frédéric Turpin, *De Gaulle, Pompidou, et l'Afrique (1958-1974): décoloniser et coopérer* (Paris: Indes Savantes, 2010) ; Guia Migani, *La France et l'Afrique sub-saharienne, 1957-1963: Histoire d'une décolonisation entre idéaux eurafricains et politique de puissance* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2008); Dorothy Shipley White, *Black Africa and De Gaulle: from the French Empire to Independence* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979); John Chipman, *French Power in Africa* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1989); Robert Bourgi, *Le Général de Gaulle et l'Afrique noire: 1940-1969* (Paris: Librairie générale de droit de jurisprudence, 1980).

When it became clear that France could no longer be a colonial power, de Gaulle and his successors attempted to preserve French influence on the continent by other means. It was Jacques Foccart, one of de Gaulle's key functionaries, who established the Secrétariat Général pour les Affaires Africaines et Malgaches, which was placed under the direct control of the President's office and charged with the management of France's postcolonial relationships with African rulers.²⁹ Its descendant, the "Africa Cell" within the Mitterrand presidency, was most responsible for France's continued support for the Hutu regime, as well as other dictatorships throughout Africa.

But it must be remembered that De Gaulle's notion of *grandeur* was inspired by the same challenges faced by the Vichy regime, as well as the postwar Fourth Republic. A closer look at postwar French policy in Africa reveals a greater deal of continuity than has been traditionally recognized. During this period, there were essential qualities within the French state that spanned disparate political ideologies and systems. Of course, to students of French history, this is not a novel concept. Alexis de Tocqueville wrote extensively of the enduring nature of the French state, noting the continuity of bureaucratic structure and administration between the *ancien regime* and revolutionary France.³⁰ Those who led the Revolution, Tocqueville argued, "retained from the old regime most of the feelings, habits, and even ideas which helped them make the Revolution that destroyed it. Unintentionally, they used the debris of the old regime to

²⁹ As of the date of this writing, the archives for the Secrétariat Général pour les Affaires Africaines et Malgaches are still in the process of being opened to the public. A full index is expected to be completed by 2011. A description of the files may be found in Pascal Geneste, "Archives: Les papiers Foccart aux archives Nationales", *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* 2/2003 (n. 78), p. 157-162. Foccart has discussed his role in postcolonial Africa in Jacques Foccart, *Foccart Parle: Entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard*, 2 vols. (Paris: Fayard-Jeune Afrique, 1995).

³⁰ Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, trans. Alan S. Kahan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

construct the framework of their new society.”³¹ *Contra* the popularly-constructed myth of his time, Tocqueville argued that the Revolution’s purpose was not to destroy the state itself; indeed, despite the replacement of political elites, the state itself endured and flourished from the roots of administrative forms developed by the *ancien regime*.³²

Of course, neither the National Revolution, nor De Gaulle and the resistance’s revolt of 1940, had the same impact as the revolution of 1789. Yet like that earlier revolution, those within Vichy and Free France presented themselves as a fundamental break from the preceding order. For Vichy, this meant contrasting the Third Republic’s ineffectual democracy and its values of *liberté, égalité, and fraternité* with a more decisive regime espousing the more traditional values of *travail, famille, and patrie*. For De Gaulle and his followers, it meant branding Vichy and its followers as enemies of democracy who illegally usurped the legitimate French state in the wake of the invasion by Nazi Germany. But much like the popular history of the Revolution of 1789, postwar efforts to distinguish opposing regimes and ideologies also obscured what they had in common. As Julian Jackson has noted, the political and intellectual divide between supporters of Vichy and Free France is not always so easily identified. Indeed, he argues, “it is misleading to draw neat boundaries between ‘two Frances’ – between supporters and opponents of liberal democracy. Vichy also drew upon political and cultural values shared between liberals and non-liberals, Republicans and anti-Republicans.”³³ The same could be said about colonial ideology during the war and afterward, which encompassed

³¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

³² *Ibid.* 96.

³³ Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 24.

a variety of opinions, but nevertheless embraced common notions of French entitlement in its African territories, and Africa's necessary role in France's future.

I begin my study with the Vichy regime and the immediate threat posed to the French empire, both by the invasion of 1940 and the joint menace of De Gaulle's Free France and his British allies. From the beginning of the Vichy regime, it was beset on all sides by threats to both its political existence and its territory in Africa. These threats led to an increased emphasis on preservation of the empire, as it could serve as a foundation for French renewal in anticipation of a future Europe dominated by Nazi Germany. I focus particularly on the civilian and military authorities directly charged with overseeing colonial policy, most notably Pierre Boisson (High Commissioner for French Africa), General Maxime Weygand (Delegate-General to Africa), Admiral François Darlan (Prime Minister of France from 1941-1942), and General Charles Platon (Minister of Colonies). Because of Vichy's position in Europe and its rivalry with Britain in Africa, concerns about preservation of the empire were underscored by a deep resentment of the "Anglo-Saxons", most notably by Boisson, who had the greatest influence on Vichy's Africa policy. Events early in the war only exacerbated these tendencies, especially after the British attack on Mers-el-Kebir and the Gaullist-led raid on Dakar, Senegal in 1940. This hostility would later influence Vichy's ties with Britain's ally across the Atlantic, as Vichy administrators looked warily to America's idealism as a distinct threat to its colonial future.

However, suspicion of Anglo-Saxon interference was not limited to the Vichy authorities. In chapter two, I examine the Free French movement, which was based for the first half of the war in France's colonial possessions in Afrique Équatoriale Française.

Like their counterparts in Vichy, Free French colonial administrators saw the empire as one means to rejuvenate France after the war. And like Vichy, they sought to reunite all of France's African possessions under one flag before the war's conclusion. De Gaulle's followers also faced the probability that the postwar order would be determined by actors beyond France's influence. But Free France faced additional challenges. Unlike Vichy, the operative assumption was never one of a Nazi victory. Instead, Free French leaders prepared for a postwar settlement dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union, both of whom were avowedly anticolonial. Free French leaders were forced to accommodate their colonial desires to this decidedly hostile atmosphere. It should therefore come as no surprise that like Vichy, Free French colonial administrators evinced suspicion about Anglo-American conspiracies to undermine French power in Africa. The importance of the latter became more pronounced as the war concluded, given De Gaulle's constant articulation of the need to restore French independence and *grandeur* once the Nazis were defeated. In response to these threats, French colonial administrators, most notably Félix Éboué, began reconceptualizing France's relationship with Africa, so as to better bind the colonies to French control once the war ended.

These efforts intensified with the conclusion of the war and the creation of the United Nations. Chapter three addresses the Provisional Government's efforts to maintain its standing in Africa in the face of increasingly anticolonial sentiment. The immediate postwar era suggested that the notion of empire – a fundamental component of France's international influence – would eventually be relegated to the dustbin of history. Confronted with hostility from the two emerging superpowers, the French imperial project could not hope to survive in its traditional form. Heightened international

scrutiny dictated the pace of reform in the colonies, as France had to renew its imperial project so as to appear less colonial and more democratic. Consequently, the Provisional Government focused on transforming the empire into a French Union, which would allow for central representation in Paris and the devolution of some powers of government to local assemblies. But political transformation in Africa also had to walk a delicate line between satisfying the scrutiny of the international community and placating powerful European interests in the colonies.

As chapter four demonstrates, these initial efforts to consolidate French control in sub-Saharan Africa were largely successful. Despite unrest throughout its empire, the Fourth Republic managed to preserve most of its territorial integrity in Africa for several years after the conclusion of the war. But the threat posed by anticolonial sentiment remained. The United Nations would continue to be a growing concern for France's presence in Africa, as it became a forum for a growing anticolonial front against the continued influence of European nations in the developing world. For French colonial administrators, the greatest fear was an emphasis on "internationalization", or the increased scrutiny on French colonies by the international community so as to subvert French power and influence. Not surprisingly, it was during this period that French colonial administrators increased their collaborative efforts with their counterparts in Britain and Belgium, hoping to form a common cause against interference from both the United Nations and the United States. French officials also took advantage of the growing Cold War divide, portraying themselves to American officials as the logical bulwark against Soviet encroachment in Africa, thus justifying the need for a continuing French presence.

As Tony Chafer has demonstrated, French colonial authorities in the 1940s and 1950s never seriously planned for the independence of African colonies, and certainly not for a decolonization process that would take place as early as 1960.³⁴ But events elsewhere in the empire would threaten the hard-won stability in France's sub-Saharan African colonies. The disaster at Dien Bien Phu, and rising unrest in Algeria, provided a renewed imperative for France to preserve its influence in the remainder of its colonial possessions, and especially in sub-Saharan Africa. In chapter five, I discuss how French leaders reacted to events in Vietnam and Algeria, and how they reified notions that sub-Saharan Africa was of inherent importance to France's future. During the late Fourth Republic, French foreign policy underwent a "turn to Africa" whereby its former sub-Saharan colonies assumed the foremost importance to French international power. I focus primarily on the views of François Mitterrand and Pierre Mendès France, both of whom argued that France needed to find more liberal and creative ways to ensure that France's place in Africa remained secure. Consequently, the Fourth Republic would continue to relinquish power to African elites in order to placate demands for more autonomy. This chapter also examines the response to these efforts by two African leaders – Léopold Sédar Senghor and Félix Houphouët-Boigny – and explores their contributions to France's presence on the continent.

Of course, the fall of the Fourth Republic in 1958 and the granting of independence to France's colonies in Africa in 1960 would irrevocably change France's relationship with the continent. These early years of independence were vital in constructing the neocolonial affiliations that grew out of the end of France's empire. In chapter six, I examine the De Gaulle regime's response to the process of decolonization.

³⁴ Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*.

While De Gaulle initially made efforts to maintain the colonies within the French orbit, he quickly renounced this position, publically professing that France's true future lay in Europe, not in Africa. But this public renunciation of French control in Africa was accompanied by Foccart's efforts to build relationships with Africa's new leaders. While some of these relationships were relatively benign, efforts to ingratiate France into these leaders' good graces would set the stage for client-state relationships under the Pompidou, Giscard, and Mitterrand administrations. Essentially, the early Gaullist regime found a way to reinvent French power in Africa without the drawbacks of a physical presence – a form of colonialism by other means.

In commenting on the end of empires, Frederick Cooper notes that “[b]y the 1970s, colonialism had been banished from the realm of legitimate forms of political organization. What remained ‘colonial’ in world politics passed itself off as something else.”³⁵ This new form of relationship would have great impact on France's former colonies. In a brief concluding chapter, I reflect on the legacy of France's postwar experience in sub-Saharan Africa. Fifty years after decolonization, French leaders still find it difficult to disengage from a continent on which France once exercised considerable power. That process continues to unfold painfully, still greatly affected by mentalities born from the disaster of 1940 and the subsequent decline of French international power.

³⁵ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 33.

Chapter One
Facing the Anglo-Saxon Threat:
The Vichy Regime and the Future of Africa, 1940-1943

My belief is that the situation we are in is a block. Every accession we make to German requests will undermine it irrevocably... The tragedy of this debate is that the sole beneficiaries of any concessions made will be the eventual aggressors in sub-Saharan Africa – the Anglo-Saxons.

-Telegram from Pierre Boisson, Haut-commissaire de l’Afrique Noire, to Maréchal Philippe Pétain, July 13, 1942³⁶

The fall of France to the Wehrmacht on June 13, 1940 and her subsequent surrender to Germany marked the end of France’s standing as one of the preeminent world powers.³⁷ Only a few weeks earlier, France and Great Britain, the two largest imperial powers in the world, stood united against Hitler’s encroachment in Poland and the attempted Nazi domination of Europe. Now, with the defenses of the Maginot line overrun, France was subjected to the humiliation of German soldiers marching into Paris and the scene of thousands of citizens exiled from their homes in the face of the Nazi onslaught. The dramatic consequences could scarcely be understated – a parliamentary democracy was replaced by an authoritarian regime wishing to exact revenge for the humiliations of the Dreyfus Affair and the riots of 1934; a society marked by relative tolerance throughout the 19th century would collaborate with the Nazis by sending a significant part of its Jewish population to concentration camps; and harsh policies

³⁶ Rapport de P. Boisson au Marechal Pétain sur la situation de l’A.O.F, July 13, 1942, Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer (hereinafter ANOM), 30APC2, Dossier 1. “Ma conviction est que la situation qui nous est faite est un bloc. Toute concession consentie à la demande présentée par les Allemands l’entamera irrémédiablement et d’autant plus, qu’en même temps que les Allemands, les Italiens sont et resteront aussi en instance...Le tragique de ce débat est que les seuls bénéficiaires des concessions faites seront les agresseurs éventuels de l’Afrique Française, c’est-à-dire les Anglo-Saxons.”

³⁷ The best study of the Nazi invasion of France remains Julian Jackson, *The Fall of France: The Nazi Invasion of 1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). See also Ernest May, *Strange Victory: Hitler’s Conquest of France* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001).

established by Pétain's National Revolution would lead to growing support for a clandestine resistance movement and eventual civil war. Put simply, in 1939, France stood equal with Britain among the world powers. A year later, it was relegated to planning its future in the shadow of a Nazi-dominated Europe.

An interior Vichy report from November 1940 summarized the situation that France now found itself in:

France presently no longer has the moral and spiritual situation of its former position; the center of gravity of Europe, which once was French, has now passed to Germany; it has moved from the west to the center of our continent. The demographic complexion of the former world has been transformed. Once, under its kings and even up to the first Empire, France was dominant in the number of its inhabitants and births. It is now in the demographic situation of Germany after the Thirty Years' War. In 1939 it had nearly a million fewer births than the Reich. It only occupies, in its population, the fourth place in Europe.³⁸

Historian Marc Bloch provided an even bleaker short-term analysis: "the fate of France no longer depends on the French...the future of our country and of our civilization has become the stake in a struggle of which we, for the most part, are only the rather humiliated spectators."³⁹ He nevertheless remained optimistic that in the long-term France would be able to reconstruct itself – even if Germany defeated England.⁴⁰ But

³⁸ Les Puissances de l'Axe et de la France, ANOM, 1AFFPOL 2555, Dossier 9. "La France ne dispose plus à l'heure présente des conditions spirituelles et morales de son ancienne position; le centre de gravité de l'Europe qui autrefois était français passe désormais par l'Allemagne; il s'est déplacé de l'occident vers le centre de notre continent. Le visage démographique de l'ancien monde s'est transformé ; jadis, sous ses rois et jusque sous le premier Empire, la France dominait par le nombre de ses habitants et de ses berceaux ; « elle se trouve aujourd'hui démographiquement dans la situation de l'Allemagne après la guerre de 30 ans » ; en 1939, elle a eu près d'un million de naissances de moins que le Reich ; elle n'occupe, plus, par la population, que le quatrième rang en Europe."

³⁹ Marc Bloch, *Strange Defeat: A Statement of Evidence Written in 1940* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999), 174.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 174-6.

there could be no question that something had changed irrevocably. As the French poet Paul Valéry noted, “there is no more France in yesterday’s meaning of the term.”⁴¹

Like Bloch, even the most optimistic leaders in Vichy could not hope for a return to France’s prewar status in the short term. France could not compete militarily with a Nazi war machine that had swept across mainland Europe at a startling rate. Nor could she hope to be the preeminent economic power on the continent, saddled with war reparations by the Nazi regime and forced to make labor and industrial sacrifices to the German war effort.⁴² Instead, France’s hope lay in a policy of territorial integrity in the empire, which would allow for a gradual return to prominence after the war. Alluding to this future, Prime Minister Pierre Laval noted in a June 1942 speech that “from this war will inevitably arise a new Europe...I would hope then that we will come to love Europe in which France will have a place which will be sufficiently dignified for her.”⁴³ From the beginning, Vichy officials expressed strong beliefs that the British would be defeated by Germany; Laval stated as much to American ambassador Matthews in November 1940.⁴⁴ In the postwar order, with the Nazis victorious, a renewed France under Vichy could help serve as a mediating force between Germany, Britain, and the United States. Pétain outlined this strategy in an interview with the *New York Times* in January 1941:

France has lost neither her personality nor her soul. She has not gone back on her history. Situated as she is at the western end of Europe, she aspires to serve as a

⁴¹ Paul Valéry, *Cahiers* Vol. 23 (Paris, 1960), 429. This reference is contained in Robert Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order 1940-1944* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 24.

⁴² The most prominent of these contributions was the *service du travail obligatoire*, a conscripted labor program established by Pierre Laval whereby French citizens were brought to Germany to supplement the depleted labor force.

⁴³ Pierre Laval, *Les Discours de Pierre Laval 1942-1944* (Paris: Fondation Josée et René de Chambrun, 1999), 25.

⁴⁴ The chargé in France to the Secretary of State, Nov 14, 1940. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1940* Vol. II (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957), 403-406.

bridge between American currents of civilization and developments in European thought – to become the link between the two continents.

After this war there will come – unavoidably – a reorganization of the continent of Europe. In this reorganization France intends to be an associate and to collaborate loyally therein with the hope of establishing a lasting and solid peace both in Europe and the world.⁴⁵

This policy of preparing France for a new order in Europe contained shades of both realism and ambition. From a practical standpoint, Vichy clearly understood and accepted the loss of Alsace and Lorraine to Germany as a natural spoil of war. But unity of the *métropole* and the empire could not be compromised. As Pétain explained in an address to the French empire in September 1940, France could tolerate three-fifths of the mainland being occupied by Germany; she could recover from the war; she could endure the winter and the hardships to come. However, France's "unity – a unity forged by a thousand years of effort and sacrifice – must remain intact."⁴⁶ Another Pétain speech in October emphasized that Vichy "will defend, first of all, national unity – that is, the very close union of the *métropole* and overseas France."⁴⁷ As the terms of the armistice took shape, it became clear that of particular importance to this sense of national unity were France's holdings in Africa, which could help justify France's future status as a significant world power.

Given the availability of excellent scholarship on the Vichy regime, it is somewhat surprising that Vichy's project in sub-Saharan Africa went virtually ignored

⁴⁵ Jay Allen, "Pétain Sees France Part of New Order," *New York Times*, Jan. 18, 1941, 2. This was the only interview Pétain gave to an American newspaper during the war. See *Messages d'Outre-tombe du Maréchal Pétain*, eds. Monique and Jean Paillards, (Paris: Institut de Recherches Historiques sur le Maréchal Pétain, 1983), 112-115.

⁴⁶ Philippe Pétain, "Appel à l'Empire d'Outre-Mer," Sept. 6, 1940, in *Messages d'Outre-tombe du Maréchal Pétain*, 112-115.

⁴⁷ "Les raisons morales d'une guerre perdue d'avance," Oct. 11, 1940, *Ibid.*, 188-189. "Le régime nouveau défendra, tout d'abord, l'unité nationale, c'est à dire l'étroite union de la Métropole et de la France d'outre-mer."

until very recently.⁴⁸ Catherine Akpo-Vaché's work on West Africa during World War II remains a useful survey of the events of the period and the strategic importance of West Africa to the larger war effort.⁴⁹ In addition, numerous historians have examined how Vichy's racial ideology affected how it treated its African subjects.⁵⁰ More recently, Ruth Ginio's work on the Vichy regime in West Africa has enabled a fuller understanding of Vichy's goals for the future of its African colonies and how it implemented these policies in the face of actual wartime conditions.⁵¹ Ginio has provided valuable insight on how the encounter between Vichy authorities and Africans affected the eventual development of West Africa after the war. As she notes, the Vichy experience in West Africa "shattered many myths for Africans, as well as for colonial subjects in other parts of the Empire. This period paved the way for the challenging of

⁴⁸ The full range of scholarship on the Vichy regime is too extensive to discuss in the chapter, but among the more important contributions are Richard Vinen, *The Unfree French: Life under the Occupation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: Daily Life in the Heart of France During the German Occupation* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002); Robert Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944*, revised edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); Sarah Farmer, *Martyred Village: Commemorating the 1944 Massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); Philippe Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande, 1940-1944* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1993); Henry Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1990); John Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France: The French Under Nazi Occupation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). The origins of fascism have been addressed by Robert Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave, 1933-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Zeev Sternhell, *Neither Right Nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

⁴⁹ Catherine Akpo-Vaché, *L'AOF et la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Paris: Editions Karthala, 1996). See also Martin Thomas, *The French Empire at War, 1940-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

⁵⁰ See Eric T. Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics: Pétain's National Revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Indochina, 1940-1944* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Pascal Blanchard and Gilles Boetsch, "La France de Pétain et l'Afrique: Images et propagandes coloniales," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 28 (1994): 1-31.

⁵¹ Ruth Ginio, *French Colonialism Unmasked: The Vichy Years in French West Africa* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

colonial rule and the subsequent dissolution of the European empires in Africa and Asia.”⁵²

Because her work focuses mostly on Vichy policy in Africa, Ginio pays less attention to how the need to maintain France’s standing abroad affected colonial policy. To be clear, she does not ignore this point; Ginio notes that “the empire enabled France to prove to the world that it was still an independent state with resources, territory, and enormous manpower in its service.”⁵³ However, the influence of the international situation on Vichy’s Africa policymaking merits further investigation and discussion, as by all accounts, preservation of the empire was one of the fundamental goals of the Vichy regime. Maintaining the empire was not simply about consolidating France’s strength in the face of Nazi domination, although this was certainly a motivating factor. What must also be emphasized is the importance of the empire, including Africa, to France’s future. Put simply, it was inconceivable to anyone within Vichy’s ranks that France would face a future without its colonies.

These views were expressed frequently to foreign officials throughout the course of the war. According to a conversation between Laval and American representative Robert Murphy in December 1940, France was “motivated by no desire to play Germany’s game, but merely to protect French interests and to retain intact France’s colonial empire.”⁵⁴ Fortunately for Vichy, the armistice allowed her to do exactly that. By 1940, the empire had expanded to include territories in North America, Asia, the Middle East, and one third of Africa. The most significant of these were France’s

⁵² *Ibid.*, xii.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵⁴ Telegram from Robert Murphy to Secretary of State, Dec. 9, 1940. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1940, Vol. II* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957), 414.

possessions in Indochine (modern-day Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos), North Africa (including Algeria, Tunisia, and parts of Morocco), Afrique Occidentale Française (AOF, or French West Africa) and Afrique Équatoriale Française (AEF, or French Equatorial Africa).⁵⁵ Of these, Algeria had the greatest importance to Vichy, given the almost one million European settlers residing in the country's northern territories, and the fact that those territories were considered departments of France. In contrast, while Indochine also had a settler community (albeit much smaller than the one in Algeria), its distance from Vichy and the invasion by the Japanese in September 1940 made its future in the French Empire considerably more doubtful.

Given the unstable situation in North Africa, and the loss of control over Indochine to the Japanese, French sub-Saharan Africa's importance to the empire was heightened after the events of June 1940. In discussing Vichy's Africa policy, a 1942 Free French memo observed that a major priority for the regime was "to retain and keep the Empire out of the war, the only chance for the new regime to establish itself. When Marshall Pétain said that 'Africa was his best card,' he sought to make known that it would be used to limit the increasing claims of the conqueror, threatening [Germany] with the restoration of freedom of action in the Empire."⁵⁶ In actuality, Pétain's "best card" was composed of two parts. While both AOF and AEF grew largely from the

⁵⁵ Other French Empire territories included St. Pierre-et-Miquelon in the North Atlantic; Guadeloupe, Martinique, Saint-Martin, and Saint-Barthélemy in the Caribbean, French Guiana in South America; Réunion in the Indian Ocean; parts of Lebanon and Syria in the Middle East; and French Polynesia, Nouvelle Calédonie, Clipperton, and Wallis-et-Futuna in Oceania.

⁵⁶ Rapport : L'oppression Vichyste en AOF, Dec. 27, 1942, p. 1, Archives Nationales de Paris (hereinafter ANP), 3 AG I 280, Dossier 1. "Il était en premier lieu nécessaire aux hommes de Vichy de retenir et de maintenir l'Empire en dehors de la guerre, seule chance de pouvoir instaurer le nouveau régime. Quand le Maréchal Pétain disait que « l'Afrique était sa meilleure carte », il cherchait à faire entendre qu'elle lui servait à limiter les prétentions croissantes du vainqueur et le menaçant de rendre à l'Empire sa liberté d'action."

“scramble for Africa” by European powers during the second half of the twentieth century, they were administered by different governors-general and had grown from separate exploration and colonization initiatives. AOF encompassed the colonies of Senegal (itself split into the four settler communes of Dakar, Rufisque, St. Louis, and Gorée), Niger, Mauritanie, Côte d’Ivoire, Haute Volta, Dahomey, Guinée, and Soudan Française.⁵⁷ France had engaged in trading along the northwest coast of Africa going back to the seventeenth century, but during the mid-nineteenth century, the governor of Senegal Louis Faidherbe conducted a series of expeditions into the interior of West Africa, leading to a great expansion of French territory. By 1895, most of the aforementioned territories had been conquered and a French federation in West Africa had been established, with the governor-general’s office established in 1904. AEF had been acquired after the explorations of Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza, who penetrated central Africa via the Congo river from the Atlantic Ocean. In 1880, he founded Brazzaville (in modern-day Republic of the Congo), the eventual capital of AEF, on the Congo River. By 1910, France had consolidated the territories of Moyen Congo, Gabon, Oubangui-Shari and Chad into AEF.⁵⁸ After World War I, a League of Nations mandate also gave France control over Togo and Cameroon, previously German colonies.

During the war, policy in Africa was driven by a select few individuals in the government offices in Vichy and in the colonies abroad. Pétain was both head of state and symbol of national unity for the duration of the war. He also provided the

⁵⁷ These colonies are now the modern-day nations of Senegal, Niger, Mauritania, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Benin, Guinea, and Mali, respectively.

⁵⁸ With a few minor changes in borders, these colonies are now the modern-day nations of Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Central African Republic, and Chad. For a discussion of Savorgnan de Brazza’s expedition into central Africa, see Edward Berenson, *Heroes of Empire: Five Charismatic Men and the Conquest of Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 49-82.

ideological rhetoric that encouraged Frenchmen to do their part to keep the empire intact.⁵⁹ Pierre Laval served as the Vichy equivalent of Prime Minister on two occasions (Vice President of the Council of Ministers in 1940 and President of the Council from 1942-1944, after the Germans insisted upon his return), but showed little interest in the empire, instead focusing his efforts on coordinating collaboration efforts with the Nazis, overseeing the cabinet, and justifying the National Revolution through antisemitic and anti-communist propaganda.⁶⁰ Without significant interference from Laval, colonial policy was left to the civilian and military authorities directly charged with overseeing the empire. The most prominent of these were General Maxime Weygand (Delegate-General to Africa), Admiral François Darlan (Prime Minister of France from 1941-1942, and later High Commissioner of French Africa after his defection to the Allied cause), General Charles Platon (Minister of Colonies and a member of the cabinet), and Pierre Boisson (High Commissioner for French sub-Saharan Africa). Following Pétain's lead, these men, and particularly Boisson, developed France's policy in Africa in the early stages of the war, and emphasized the importance of these territories to France, given a postwar Europe presumably ruled from Berlin.

The Immediate Threat to the French Empire after the Armistice

In understanding both Vichy's policies and its future plans for Africa, one must keep in mind the sense of encirclement that pervaded France's African territories during

⁵⁹ The most recent biography of Pétain is Charles Williams, *Pétain: How the Hero of France Became a Convicted Traitor and Changed the Course of History* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

⁶⁰ Several biographies of Pierre Laval are available. See Claude Crubois, *Pierre Laval* (Paris: Geste Editions, 2010); Yves Frédéric-Jaffé, *Il y a cinquante ans, Pierre Laval* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995).

the war. As this chapter will demonstrate, Vichy Africa was subjected to a constant military siege from the Allies that resulted in a steady drumbeat of territorial loss. A Vichy political report from 1942 noted this state of fear of the British, observing that since the armistice, “our possessions in Black Africa have been living under the threat of an Anglo-Saxon attack.”⁶¹ In protecting its sub-Saharan African territories from encroachment, the Vichy regime faced a number of other challenges on several fronts. Immediately pressing was the German and Italian desire to extract territorial and military concessions. Germany eyed its former colonies Cameroon and Togo, taken after the defeat in World War I. Italy had designs on Tunisia, parts of Morocco, and French Somaliland (Djibouti). As mentioned, Japan would eventually control large parts of French Indochina. However, as the war evolved, both the authorities at Vichy and colonial administrators evinced primary concern about threats to its African possessions from Britain, and to a lesser extent, the United States.

From the beginning, Vichy was concerned about Germany’s attitude toward its colonial Empire in Africa. The Armistice Commission, which addressed issues arising out of the June 1940 agreements between France, Germany and Italy, was located at Wiesbaden, a southwestern German city. French General Charles Huntzinger’s mission to Wiesbaden endeavored to take most advantage of Franco-German collaboration in Africa, especially in the economic sphere.⁶² To this end, Huntzinger noted hopefully that the German representative Hemmen “understands the situation in our colonies and that Germany would do nothing to compromise our sovereignty or give the British new

⁶¹ Report No. 13, October 1941-April 1942, p. 55, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 895, Dossier 5.

⁶² Note sur ma mission à Wiesbaden, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2659, Dossier 7.

advantages.”⁶³ A 1942 Free France memo confirmed this policy, noting that Vichy sought to show Germany that only France was capable of maintaining order in the Empire and that Germany therefore had to help France consolidate its authority there.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, the Nazis displayed contempt for France’s colonial project. In September 1940, a report of the French delegation to the Armistice Commission summarized the state of propaganda in Germany on colonies in Africa. One brochure in particular, “Kampf un Afrika” evinced clear disdain for the colonial empires of Britain and France, noting that Germany would have only two purposes for such territories: the exploitation of raw materials and to serve as a training ground for young Germans, in order to teach them initiative and an attitude of superiority over inferior races.⁶⁵ The report further noted the brochure’s criticism of France’s use of African soldiers, saying that “France, which has already placed in danger the prestige of the white race by its inconsiderate policy of mixing the races, has not only betrayed its race, but lost the dignity of a European colonial power.”⁶⁶ A subsequent telegram in October affirmed that

⁶³ Ibid. “Il m’a assuré qu’il comprenait la situation de nos colonies et qu’il ne ferait rien pour compromettre notre souveraineté et pour donner aux Anglais de nouveaux avantages.”

⁶⁴ Rapport : L’oppression Vichyiste en AOF, Dec. 27, 1942, p. 2, ANP, 3 AG I 280, Dossier 1.

⁶⁵ Note n. 154 du 13 Septembre du Président de la Délégation à Wiesbaden au sujet de la propagande coloniale en Allemagne, ANOM, 1AFFPOL2659, Dossier 7.

⁶⁶ Ibid. “La France, qui avait déjà mis en danger le prestige de la race blanche par sa politique inconsidérée de mélange de races, a non seulement trahi la race, mais a perdu la dignité de la puissance coloniale Européenne.” The issue of the French using African soldiers in the war was also used as a propaganda point by the Germans after France’s defeat, as demonstrated in Marcel Ophuls’ film about Vichy, *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*, which shows a newsreel mocking French African soldiers. The German newsreel noted that the French had referred to the Wehrmacht as barbarians, and then ironically juxtaposed scenes of Wehrmacht troops smartly marching into Paris, followed by images of captive *tirailleurs*, dancing around and purportedly acting savage. See also Raffael Scheck, *Hitler’s African Victims: The Germany Army Massacres of Black French Soldiers in 1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) for a discussion of the treatment accorded to these soldiers after the invasion of France.

Hitler's attention was focused on conquest in Europe, but reminded Vichy of the contempt he had expressed for French civilization in *Mein Kampf*.⁶⁷

However, the bottom line was that the Third Reich "is not seeking to construct an empire in the British or French sense. It only wants to assure itself of colonial possessions so that it does not have to rely any longer on foreign nations for raw materials that it lacks."⁶⁸ An article published in several German newspapers in early 1941 confirmed this, indicating that Germany's task after the war forced it "to implement large scale colonization with minimal participation from German nationals. This is why our overseas possessions will never become territories for emigration...Germany's homeland must remain the Reich."⁶⁹ The obvious conclusion drawn by the Wiesbaden delegation was that Germany would not be interested in territorial acquisition in Africa, and that France could conceivably maintain its possessions there.⁷⁰

The same could not be said for Mussolini's Italy, which saw the Mediterranean as its sphere of influence in a postwar atmosphere. From 1911 to 1934, it gradually conquered modern-day Libya, thus establishing itself as a significant player in the region,

⁶⁷ Délégation Française auprès de la Commission d'Armistice, Oct. 9, 1940, ANP, 2 AG 446.

⁶⁸ Ibid. "Le Troisième Reich ne cherche pas à construire un Empire comme le sent l'Empire britannique ou l'Empire française. Il veut seulement s'assurer des possessions coloniales qui lui permettent de ne plus dépendre de l'étranger pour les matières premières vitales qui lui manquent..."

⁶⁹ La Future Politique Coloniale de L'Allemagne, p. 59, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2659, Dossier 7. "L'immensité des tâches que l'Allemagne aura à accomplir par ailleurs après la fin de la guerre l'oblige à réaliser une œuvre de colonisation de grande envergure avec un minimum de ressortissants allemande. C'est pourquoi jamais nos possessions d'outre-mer ne deviendront des territoires d'émigration...la patrie de tout Allemand doit rester le Reich." This document was translated from German into French.

⁷⁰ This view has recently been confirmed by Mark Mazower, although he notes that there was great interest in German-recolonization of Africa in 1940, and that the Nazis had some interest in an expansive military presence on the continent. Nevertheless, the idea of a German empire was largely euro-centric, and as Mazower notes, the Nazis "found it hard to project Hitler's will outside Europe." Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), 117.

along with France. In 1936 Italy invaded Ethiopia and annexed most of it into Italian East Africa, which included modern-day Eritrea and Somalia. The armistice between Italy and France later provided for some concessions to the Italians in Africa, most notably free use of Djibouti by the Italian navy. While France was allowed to retain the use of military power in Africa to defend the Empire, several ports had to be demilitarized, including Toulon, Bizerte, Ajaccio, and the ill-fated Mers-el-Kébir (discussed below). All French ships not directly guarding the sovereignty of the Empire were required to return to metropolitan ports, and Italy was given wide latitude in matters affecting French North Africa, Syria, and Djibouti.⁷¹ While these were necessary concessions on Vichy's part, they would hang over the prospect of stability of French rule in North and West Africa throughout the war. As General Weygand noted after a visit to North Africa in November 1940, military concessions made to both Germany and Italy undermined confidence in French rule and threatened the dissolution of the Empire.⁷²

But the Axis was only one half of the planned postwar equation in 1940. Britain had its own colonies in West Africa, including Nigeria, Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, and Gambia.⁷³ Further, Anglo-French rivalry in Africa had persisted for decades, and had manifested most notably in the 1898 Fashoda Incident, a land dispute in modern-day Sudan. Given its history of rivalry in Africa with the British, it is not surprising that

⁷¹ Armistice Accords between France and Italy, June 24, 1940, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 896, Dossier 3. For more on the Italian Empire and Italian designs in Africa, see Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller, eds., *Italian Colonialism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

⁷² Memo from Weygand to Pétain, Nov. 10, 1940, ANOM, 1AFFPOL 638, Dossier 4.

⁷³ For more on the British Empire in West Africa, see John Kent, *The Internationalization of Colonialism: Britain, France, and Black Africa 1939-1956* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race, and Resistance: Africa and Britain 1919-1945* (London: Routledge, 1999).

Vichy saw the British Empire as the greatest threat to its future role on the continent. In a meeting with American representative Robert Murphy in Paris in July 1940, Pierre Laval launched into a tirade against the British, expressing his view that “France had suffered too often as a result of British dishonesty and hypocrisy.”⁷⁴ Pétain expressed similar sentiments to Murphy a week later.⁷⁵ Indeed, as Philippe Burrin has shown, Pétain himself was expressing rabid Anglophobia three years *before* the onset of the war, in a conversation with the Italian ambassador in Paris in February 1936:

England has always been France’s most implacable enemy...I tell you that France has two hereditary enemies, the English and the Germans, but the former are older and more perfidious. That is why I should incline towards an alliance with the latter, which would guarantee absolute peace in Europe, especially if Italy joined in that alliance. Then it would be possible to solve all the problems that so far have remained insoluble, because a better distribution of the British colonies would make it possible to provide wealth and work for all.⁷⁶

Pétain and Laval’s sentiments about the British by no means predominated in France in the early months of the war, but it is telling that both the French and British governments had assembled vigorous propaganda campaigns in 1939, including a joint Bastille Day parade in Paris, to convince the French population of the loyalty of their British ally.⁷⁷ Both governments were combating the memory of 1914, when a poorly-prepared Entente Cordiale allowed Germany to invade much of northern France, leading to the trauma of trench warfare that would claim over a million French lives. Of paramount importance

⁷⁴ Telegram from Robert Murphy to the Secretary of State, July 29, 1940. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1940, Vol. II General and Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957), 379.

⁷⁵ Telegram from Robert Murphy to the Secretary of State, Aug. 7, 1940. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1940, Vol. II General and Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957), 380.

⁷⁶ Philippe Burrin, *France Under the Germans* (New York: New Press, 1993), 61. Burrin located this conversation in a document in the Italian archives.

⁷⁷ See “Paris Military Parade,” *The Times* (London), July 15, 1939, 16; see also “Le 14 Juillet,” *Le Matin*, July 14, 1939, 2.

for both Britain and France in 1939 had been undermining the conception that the British would only look after their own interests and would once again allow the French army to absorb the brunt of the casualties on the European mainland. It was precisely this concern that Vichy would exploit immediately after the surrender to Germany, with Pétain telling the French a week after the armistice that “Churchill is the judge of his country’s interests; he is not the judge of our interests and even less of French honor.”⁷⁸

Vichy’s status as a tentative ally of Germany, and combined British/Free France attacks on colonial bases and cities in Africa, only increased the feeling of enmity vis-à-vis London. The annual political report from the Haut-Commissariat de l’Afrique Française indicated that the break from Great Britain had the greatest impact on AOF of all the events of the preceding year.⁷⁹ Among Britain’s actions against France in 1940 were the loss of AEF and Cameroon and an attack on Dakar, discussed in greater detail below. British attacks were supported by constant propaganda directed at West Africa that sought to rally colonial populations to fight with Britain against the Axis, thus undermining France’s authority. As the political report noted, such propaganda could lead to “the dissolution of the French West African bloc.”⁸⁰ The result was a gradually rising antipathy for Britain throughout Vichy, and particularly among those responsible for administering the Empire in Africa. This resentment towards the British, and the belief that the colonies in Africa would be vital to France’s postwar rehabilitation as a world power, were the two central themes of Vichy colonial ideology in Africa.

⁷⁸ “Réponse à Churchill,” June 23, 1940, *Messages d’Outre-tombe du Maréchal Pétain*, 17-18. “Churchill est juge des intérêts de son pays: il ne l’est pas des intérêts de notre. Il l’est encore moins de l’honneur français.”

⁷⁹ Rapport Politique du Haut Commissariat de l’Afrique Française (Année 1940), p. 62, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 928, Dossier 2.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Also nascent was a growing uncertainty and suspicion about the rise of the United States and its eventual postwar intentions on the continent. An internal Vichy memo (most probably from late 1940) examined the probability that Britain would succumb to an invasion in some form by Germany. In this case, the world would be divided in two spheres – Europe dominated by Germany, and the Western hemisphere controlled by the United States. The memo projected that in the case of British defeat, America would use its diplomatic and military power to establish a zone of influence in the Atlantic. Such efforts would probably be successful because the United States had the financial ability to engage in an arms race with Germany, and the necessary influence in South America to apply economic pressure to Europe, which would take years to rebuild after the war.⁸¹ Given this probable postwar outcome, France had to carve out a role between the two powers. The memo notes that “without doubt, in a world where the two major centers of power would be Washington and Berlin, France would be closer to Berlin than Washington. But it will always be necessary, if our country wants to survive as an independent nation, to retain the support of the United States.”⁸² Laval himself suggested to Robert Murphy in November 1940 that France would have a postwar role in fostering collaboration between Nazi-dominated Europe and the United States.⁸³

At the outset of the war, the Americans were seen as useful partners, both in facilitating commerce to Africa and as a potential surviving power of the war, along with

⁸¹ *Les Problèmes Américains et la France* (exact date unknown, but context strongly suggests 1940), ANP, 2 AG 446.

⁸² *Ibid.* “Sans doute, dans un monde où les deux grands foyers de puissance seraient Washington et Berlin, Berlin serait pour la France plus près que Washington. Mais il sera toujours nécessaire, si notre pays veut survivre en tant que nation indépendante, de conserver l’appui des États-Unis.”

⁸³ Telegram from Matthews to the Secretary of State, Nov. 14, 1940. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1940, Vol. II General and Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957), 403-4.

Germany. America also provided food and clothing aid to France in the aftermath of the Nazi invasion, for which Pétain expressed his gratitude in a public address in August.⁸⁴ In October, Pierre Boisson invited the American consul in Dakar to consider opening an America airline terminus in Dakar.⁸⁵ But the British attacks in Africa, and concerns that America was providing tacit political support to Churchill, began to change the equation. Roosevelt and Churchill's promulgation of the Atlantic Charter in 1941, which established the ideals that would guide the postwar order, along with America's rise as a military power, presented new concerns. These developments brought an awareness of America's idealism, and its desire to have an increased commercial and military presence on the continent. By the end of the war, the United States was seen as a potential rival in Africa, both by Vichy and Free France forces.

It was in this atmosphere of a constant threat to Vichy's African territories that its policy for the continent was forged. Regardless of which country had territorial, economic, or ideological ambitions in Africa, Vichy's goals were to preserve its long-term interests and influence by keeping all foreign presence out. As Laval explained to U.S. ambassador Leahy in April 1942, the desire to maintain the Empire intact superseded any political ideology:

He felt that the present war was a 'Civil War' in the sense that it was a conflict between democratic and totalitarian ideals and that in such a conflict he was only concerned with the ultimate salvation of all of France. He was prepared to defend France and her Empire against all comers and he stated specifically that if British or the Americans were to attempt a landing either on the soil of metropolitan

⁸⁴ "Les conditions du redressement," Aug. 13, 1940, *Messages d'Outre-tombe du Maréchal Pétain*, 23-27.

⁸⁵ Consul at Dakar, Wasson, to the Secretary of State, Oct. 20, 1940. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1940, Vol. II General and Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957), 600-1.

France or on French North African territory he would resist them to the best of his ability.⁸⁶

However, it was one thing for Laval to express this policy to the Americans from Vichy, far removed from realities in the Empire. It would be left to the colonial administration to make crucial decisions and formulate policy in the territories that prevented all foreign encroachment in Africa.

Pierre Boisson, High Commissioner of French sub-Saharan Africa

Given the perception by Vichy that the postwar order threatened its empire in Africa, it sought to preserve territorial integrity in the colonies to the best possible extent. The most important figure in the development and enactment of Vichy policy in Africa was unquestionably Pierre Boisson, the *de jure* Haut-Commissaire (High Commissioner) of sub-Saharan Africa (although only the *de facto* head of AOF, not AEF, after August 1940) for the duration of the Vichy regime. Recent work by William Hitchcock and Pierre Ramognino has helped demonstrate the centrality of Boisson to Vichy policy in AOF.⁸⁷ Hitchcock's research focuses on Boisson's controversial policies as high commissioner, and how they placed him in a problematic position as a Vichy loyalist during the post war *épuration*, when the most prominent figures from the Vichy regime were placed on trial. Until his defection to the Allies in late 1942, Boisson was considered a loyal servant of Vichy, receiving favorable reviews from General Weygand

⁸⁶ Ambassador in France Leahy to Secretary of State, April 27, 1942. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1942, Vol. II General and Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957), 181.

⁸⁷ See William Hitchcock, "Pierre Boisson, French West Africa, and the Postwar Eparation: A Case from the Aix Files." *French Historical Studies* 24 (Spring 2001) : 305-341. See also Pierre Ramognino, *L'Affaire Boisson : un Proconsol de Vichy en Afrique* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2006).

on more than one occasion in reports to Pétain.⁸⁸ Boisson also remained popular with the European population for most of his tenure, mostly due to his leadership during the Dakar crisis.⁸⁹

This section focuses more closely on the ideology that underlay Boisson's policies. Julian Jackson has discussed the complexity of political ideology in France prior to and during the Vichy regime, whereby ardent defenders of Vichy could be both anti-German and pro-Pétain, while supporters of Free France could be antisemitic yet still opposed to the National Revolution and Nazi occupation.⁹⁰ Boisson is an excellent example of this seemingly conflicting ideology – a colonial administrator who despised German racist attitudes toward Africa, he nevertheless had limited faith in the capabilities of the *indigènes* who were his subjects.⁹¹ He was no more enamored with German occupation of France, but hated equally (and perhaps even more) the British, and despised de Gaulle and his followers. Yet he betrayed Vichy only two years after his promotion by Pétain, at a crucial period in the war and in a way that drastically undermined Vichy's plans for Africa. These contradictions can easily be resolved by examining the central principle of Boisson's policies during the Vichy regime: the need to maintain French territorial integrity in Africa so as to place it in a better position after the war. In this sense, he provided a significant foundation for Vichy's Africa policy.

Pierre Boisson, like many who rose through the ranks of the French colonial administration, came from a middle class upbringing. The son of two schoolteachers, he

⁸⁸ Report from Weygand to Pétain, March 5, 1941, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 638, Dossier 4.

⁸⁹ Report No. 12, May-October 1941, p. 59, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 895, Dossier 5.

⁹⁰ Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁹¹ The French term "indigènes" is loosely translated into English as "natives." Like its English counterpart, *indigènes* has a pejorative connotation. No such connotation is meant to be conveyed here; I merely employ the term to capture the meaning of French officials.

was born in 1894, placing him squarely in the generation of Frenchman that volunteered *en masse* to fight in World War I. After graduating in 1913 from the Ecole Normale de St-Brieux, Boisson volunteered for the military and received his commission in 1914, serving in the 48th infantry division. In February 1915, he volunteered to go to the front, and received the first of four wounds a few days later. After a recovery of two months, Boisson insisted on a return to the front. He was promoted to *sous-lieutenant* and acquitted himself well in the French offensive on Artois in May 1915. He saw additional action in Argonne in 1916, and in June of that year at Verdun, Boisson was wounded both in his hand and his chest during an attack. Despite being severely weakened from a loss of blood, he bravely led a counterattack against the Germans, this time unfortunately suffering another wound in his leg from a grenade. The leg was eventually amputated.⁹²

Taken captive by the Germans, he found his way to a Swiss military hospital, where he convalesced from December 1916 through July 1917. Despite his wounds, his stay in hospital proved to be the turning point in Boisson's life. It was during this time that he met several officers from the French colonial forces, many of whom told him about France's prestigious *Ecole Coloniale*, a training ground for future colonial administrators. With little future in the military, Boisson was intrigued by the same ideas of advancement and adventure that had lured many other promising men into the colonial service. He wrote to the *école*'s director, inquiring about admission. He was finally admitted in February 1918 and concluded the program in June.⁹³ This colonial education

⁹² Une Politique se Juge à Ses Résultats, ANOM, 30APC1, Dossier 1, document 60.

⁹³ This biographical sketch is similar to one presented in Hitchcock's article on Boisson, presumably because both he and I rely on "Un Politique Se Juge à ses Résultats", ANOM, 30 APC 1, Document 60, which contains Boisson's dossier from his postwar trial. Any similarities with Hitchcock's account are unintentional.

distinguished him from Weygand, Platon, Darlan, and Laval, and perhaps explains his later interest in “civilizing” the *indigènes* under his charge.

After working his way through the colonial ranks, Boisson served in several prominent positions in French Africa during the 1930s, including Secretary-General of AOF, High Commissioner of Cameroon, and Governor-General of AOF, where he served for almost a year starting in August 1938. The following August, he was transferred to the same position in AEF, where he participated with his British counterparts in a conference in May 1940 designed to improve collaboration between the two imperial powers in West Africa.⁹⁴ His duties as Governor-General of AEF would officially overlap with his appointment as High Commissioner of all of French sub-Saharan Africa on June 25, 1940, just days after the fall of Paris (Louis Husson would serve as acting Governor-General of AEF until its defection to Free France that August). Boisson’s appointment by Vichy placed him in control of AOF, AEF, Cameroon and Togo.

Alice Conklin has provided a valuable study on the French *mission civilisatrice*, or civilizing mission, in West Africa in the early 20th century – an ideology both idealistic and racist in nature by which French colonial administrators were to “improve their subjects’ standard of living through the rational development, or what the French call the *mise en valeur*, of the colonies’ natural and human resources.”⁹⁵ This civilizing mission manifested in a number of ways, and had been pursued through policies of assimilation (put simply, impressing upon Africans western means of education and labor, and transforming them into French citizens) and association (rejecting such transformation in favor of a more British-style form of indirect control over colonial territories). Boisson

⁹⁴ Memo from the Office of the Minister of Colonies, May 18, 1940, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2536.

⁹⁵ Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 6.

was a believer in the French civilizing mission in Africa, but only to a certain point. He viewed the African as primarily a farmer, and not suited to industrialization anytime in the near future. In a talk given to the Academy of Colonial Sciences in February 1938, he set forth his views on the place of *indigène* workers in African society:

A farmer in every fiber of his being, he wants increasingly to cultivate the soil for himself and exploit its possibilities for his own benefit. We can be assured that if the choice were offered to him to satisfy his essential needs by working on a plantation or on his own lands, he would not hesitate, and there would be no doubt where his preferences would lie...⁹⁶

This view of his subjects would inform Boisson's dealings with them, as well as his plans for France's future in Africa, throughout the duration of his tenure as high commissioner.⁹⁷

Boisson was Governor-General of AEF when Paris fell to the Nazis in June. It must be remembered that between June 22, when Pétain signed the armistice with Germany, and July 10, when it was ratified by the hastily-convened rump National Assembly, a state of great uncertainty existed throughout the French empire.⁹⁸ During these early days, Boisson demonstrated some interest in continuing the fight in Africa. On June 27, he telegraphed Léon Cayla, then governor-general of AOF, asking for his position on whether he would support a continued battle against Germany. Boisson noted

⁹⁶ ANOM, 30 APC 6, Dossier 4, document 1516. "Paysan des toutes ses fibres, il veut, et de plus en plus, cultiver son sol pour son propre compte, en exploitant à son profit les possibilités. On peut tenir pour assuré qui, si le choix s'offre pour lui de satisfaire à ses besoins essentiels, en s'engageant sur une plantation ou en travaillant son fonds, il n'hésitera pas et on ne saurait douter de parti auquel vont le ranger ses préférences..."

⁹⁷ The issue of proper labor for Africans, as well as fears of the rise of industrialization and trade unions on the continent, would continue after the war. For more on this topic, see Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: the Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁹⁸ It remains controversial as to whether Pétain was voted full powers legally or whether his assumption of "full powers" was an unconstitutional act. It was treated as the latter by de Gaulle and the Provisional Government after the war.

that North Africa, AOF, Cameroon, AEF and Madagascar could represent an important asset for the Allies.⁹⁹ The same day, he telegraphed Richard Brunot, the high commissioner of Cameroon, suggesting that an “African bloc” could be assembled to continue the fight.¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, these communications actually postdated Boisson’s appointment as high commissioner of AOF, which Pétain and Laval made official on June 25. Boisson would not announce the official rallying of AOF to Vichy until July 6.¹⁰¹

It is not entirely clear what changed his mind, but his learning of his appointment as high commissioner, along with the British attack on Mers-el-Kébir on July 3, most likely reoriented his views on the war. Mers el-Kébir, a port town in Algeria, housed the bulk of the French Mediterranean fleet. Concerned about the possibility that it might fall into Nazi hands, Churchill ordered a bombing of the French naval forces. From a military standpoint, the operation was largely successful, resulting in destruction or significant damage to three battleships and four destroyer-class ships. It also sent a message both to Britain’s prospective allies and Germany that Britain did not intend to give up the fight against the Nazis. However, it effectively ended any significant sympathy for Britain for many in France leaning toward Vichy, as the deaths of over

⁹⁹ Telegram, Pierre Boisson to Léon Cayla, June 27, 1940, ANOM, 5D290.

¹⁰⁰ Telegram, Pierre Boisson to Richard Brunot, June 27, 1940, ANOM, 5D290.

¹⁰¹ William Hitchcock’s article on Boisson continues a useful summary of all of the telegram traffic between Boisson, other colonial administrators, and France during this two-week period. His general conclusion is that Boisson delayed his decision as long as possible to obtain more information about military conditions and other declarations of loyalty. See Hitchcock, “Pierre Boisson, French West Africa, and the Postwar Epuration: A Case from the Aix Files,” 311-315. For another useful summary, see Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France’s Successful Decolonization?* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 38-41.

1,200 French sailors were seen as a terrible betrayal on the part of the former ally.¹⁰²

Noting that “nothing foreshadowed this aggression, and nothing justifies it,” Pétain used the attack to rally the Empire behind the Vichy regime.¹⁰³

Mers-el-Kébir was not the only place where the French found themselves under British siege. At the same time as the attack on the fleet, Britain was sending agents from its Gold Coast colony (present-day Ghana) over its western border to Ivory Coast, attempting to incite the local population to rebel against French colonial administration.¹⁰⁴ According to Boisson, the British were also using it as an armory for their efforts in West Africa, and saw it as a fertile area for recruitment of troops to be sent to the Ethiopian campaign.¹⁰⁵ By July 9, the governor of Ivory Coast had declared a state of siege in the colony.¹⁰⁶ Gold Coast, Boisson noted in a later report, represented “a certain menace for neighboring French colonies,” and British authorities were preparing the locals for an inevitable conflict with the French Empire.¹⁰⁷ They were joined by de Gaulle’s sympathizers, formed by troops from Cameroon and AEF, who sought to detach AOF from Vichy West Africa. At the same time, the British seriously damaged the *Richelieu*, part of a new class of French battleships, in harbor at Dakar.

On July 24, having arrived in Dakar to assume his duties, Boisson cabled Vichy to warn of the two threats to French sub-Saharan Africa – British propaganda and local

¹⁰² There are several useful narratives of the bombing of Mers-el-Kébir. Among them is Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order*, 55-63.

¹⁰³ “La massacre de Mers-el-Kébir.” July 11, 1940, *Messages d’Outre-tombe du Maréchal Pétain*, 20-22

¹⁰⁴ For more on this, see Wendell P. Holbrook, “British Propaganda and the Mobilization of the Gold Coast War Effort, 1939-1945,” *Journal of African History* 26 (1985): 347-61.

¹⁰⁵ Rapport Politique du Haut Commissariat de l’Afrique Française (Année 1940), p. 66, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 928, Dossier 2.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3-4

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

dissidence, both of which threatened French solidarity and cohesion. Despite his wish a month earlier to continue supporting the British effort, his views had by now changed radically. He observed that “it is equally certain that all aggression on the part of England places French sovereignty in peril in some portion of the colonial empire.”¹⁰⁸ Mers-el-Kébir had shown that no part of the empire was safe. At the end of July, governor Richard Brunot of Cameroon telegraphed Boisson indicating his intent to continue the war in West Africa in cooperation with British Nigeria.¹⁰⁹ Although Brunot was convinced not to break from Vichy Africa, Cameroon would eventually declare its allegiance to Free France in late August, having been convinced to do so by Gaullist captain Jacques-Philippe Leclerc. By the end of July, the borders between all French and British colonies had been officially sealed by Vichy.¹¹⁰

The Loss of AEF and the Attack on Dakar

Vichy’s already tenuous grip on its territories in Africa was further weakened on August 26, when Félix Éboué and Colonel Marchand, military commander of Chad, declared that AEF would rally to de Gaulle’s Free France cause. Éboué, a descendant of African slaves, will be discussed further in chapter two, but the importance of the defection of AEF must be emphasized here. Through Éboué’s defection, almost half of France’s sub-Saharan African empire was lost to the Allies. Vichy would never regain an intact empire in Africa. It would not be until 1944 that all of France’s African territories

¹⁰⁸ Telegram from Boisson to Vichy, July 24, 1940, ANOM, 5D290. “Il est certain également que toute agression de la part Angleterre visant à mettre en péril souveraineté française pour portion quelconque empire colonial rencontrerait opposition déterminée ce qui aurait pas été le cas toutes circonstances au cours premières semaines après armistice.”

¹⁰⁹ Telegram from Boisson to Vichy, July 29, 1940, ANOM, 5D290.

¹¹⁰ Rapport Politique du Haut Commissariat de l’Afrique Française (Année 1940), p. 8-9, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 928, Dossier 2.

were officially reintegrated into the French empire, and only then under the Free France flag. On August 27, Éboué wired Boisson, indicating that in accord with both military and popular sentiment, he and Marchand were declaring AEF's allegiance to Free France. In his sternly-worded response, Boisson made clear his view that through his actions, Éboué had greatly undermined France's international position and prestige:

By your decision you have betrayed the duties of your post. By taking the initiative to hand over to England the territory that was entrusted to you, you have, *by a deliberate act, broken the cohesion of the Empire and also undermined France's grand position.* You have betrayed those you have had the task of guiding. Your arguments are specious because you know all the measures agreed to in principle and still in development that will allow colonies to endure in a time when our Motherland suffers through such cruel tests. You have assumed the responsibility for making a gesture that could add to these French hardships; you have forgotten your duty to the French.¹¹¹ [emphasis added]

Brazzaville would fall to de Gaulle's forces on August 28, with governor-general Husson arrested by Free France. By the end of the month, Gabon was the only territory remaining in AEF still loyal to Vichy. To make matters worse, Éboué had begun to make personal appeals to leaders in AOF to rally to Free France, most notably the governor of Niger.¹¹² AEF's defection also presented a potential postwar threat to Vichy, as detailed in a September 1941 study by the Secrétariat d'Etat de la Marine. The study noted the increased cooperation during the war between Belgian Congo (which under Pierre Ryckmans was now assisting the Allied effort in Africa), AEF, and Cameroon, and

¹¹¹ Telegram from Boisson to Éboué, Aug. 28, 1940, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 928, Dossier 7. "Par votre décision vous avez trahi les devoirs de votre charge. En prenant l'initiative de remettre à l'Angleterre le territoire qui vous avait été confié vous avez, par une acte délibéré et machiné, rompu la cohésion de l'Empire et ainsi affaibli une grande position française. Vous avez entraîné hors du devoir ceux que vous aviez pour mission de guider. Vos arguments sont spécieux car vous n'ignorez pas toutes les mesures décidées dans leurs principes et en cours d'aménagement qui permettront aux Colonies de vivre dans le temps où la Mère Patrie traverse de si cruelles épreuves. Vous avez pris la responsabilité de faire une geste susceptible d'ajouter à ces épreuves françaises, vous avez oublié votre devoir de Français."

¹¹² Telegram from Boisson, Aug. 30, 1940, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 928, Dossier 7.

warned that such cooperation during the war could lead to a naturally unified postwar “bloc” that would greatly benefit the British presence in Africa.¹¹³ The fear was palpable throughout AOF in 1940 that the British would undermine France’s empire in Africa during the war, and press their advantage to expand British influence on the continent in the postwar order.

Vichy attempted to use the loss of AEF as a means to better its position vis-à-vis Germany. Just days after Éboué’s defection, Huntzinger warned the Armistice Commission in Wiesbaden that without better coordination between the *métropole* and the empire, and an improvement in economic conditions, the situation ran the risk of rallying the French colonies to the British flag.¹¹⁴ Without quick measures, such as providing for better maritime commercial traffic between Africa and the occupied zone, as well as allowing Vichy military flexibility in the colonies, the uprising in AEF would spread, causing a dissolution of the French Empire. As Huntzinger noted, “this situation presents an immediate danger not only for French interests, but also for those of Germany and Italy.”¹¹⁵ The loss of the colonies would have an effect on relations between France and Germany after the war; Huntzinger emphasized that “a France diminished in its colonial power would only see its ability to cooperate in the European continental bloc quite reduced.”¹¹⁶ If Germany wanted to keep France as a strong and faithful ally, and preserve the stability of Pétain’s government, it needed to work with the Italian government to strengthen France’s military position in Africa.

¹¹³ La Vie Économique du Bloc Équatoriale, Secrétariat d’État à la Marine, Section d’Études Économiques, Sept. 25, 1941, ANP, F60/3116.

¹¹⁴ Note sur la situation actuelle des colonies françaises, Aug. 31, 1940, ANP, F60/311.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. “Cette situation présente des maintenant, une danger immédiat non seulement pour les intérêts français, mais même pour ceux de l’Allemagne et de l’Italie.”

¹¹⁶ Ibid. “Dans tous les cas, la France ainsi diminuée dans sa puissance coloniale, ne présenterait pour l’avenir qu’un élément de coopération bien amoindri dans le bloc de l’Europe Continentale.”

Having already witnessed the attack on Mers-el-Kébir, and increasingly aware of British intrigues in West Africa, Boisson was further alienated from the British and de Gaulle by the events of September. Throughout the month, Boisson had indicated to Vichy his concern about Britain's increased propaganda efforts in AOF. In the beginning of the month, representatives of de Gaulle had been sent to Gambia, a thin horizontal strip of land cutting across Senegal from the Atlantic that had been a British colony since the late nineteenth century. According to Boisson, their mission was to use Gambia as a base to gauge the possibility of dissent against Vichy in West Africa.¹¹⁷ On September 14, Boisson notified Platon about a conversation he had with members of the French African Chamber of Commerce, who had raised a number of economic issues with Boisson, including the impediment of the flow of goods and products throughout the colonies by both British blockades and conditions of the armistice with Germany.¹¹⁸ On September 21, he warned Platon that British propaganda threatened to throw all of Africa into dissidence unless sharp measures were taken.¹¹⁹ Boisson warned that the disparity between the economic situations of British West Africa and AOF was being used as a propaganda point by the Allies. British propaganda was also directed against Boisson himself. Prior to and during the assault on Dakar, they had painted Boisson and the Vichy-loyal regime as supporting Nazi aims in Africa, and portrayed Boisson himself as a mere puppet of the Germans, despite his assertions that there were no Germans in Africa.

The joint British/Free French attack on Dakar took place from September 23-25 and was a bold attempt by the British and de Gaulle to seize the remainder of sub-

¹¹⁷ Mission Française en Gambie, Sept. 4, 1940, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 357, Dossier 3.

¹¹⁸ Telegram from Boisson to Platon, Sept. 14, 1940, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 357, Dossier 3.

¹¹⁹ Telegram from Boisson to Platon, Sept. 21, 1940, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 357, Dossier 3.

Saharan Africa from Vichy.¹²⁰ It would turn out to be both a miscalculation and a setback for the Free France cause. While they sent a significant force, including numerous heavy warships and over 8,000 troops, it seems the joint British-Gaullist military leadership underestimated the resolve of the pro-Vichy forces to hold the port city. On the first night, British aircraft dropped propaganda leaflets on the city as representatives of de Gaulle attempted to land and present terms, but were turned back. That same night, Boisson addressed West Africa by radio and took pains to emphasize the independence of AOF from German control:

This morning, a horrible attack was perpetrated on peaceful and hard-working Dakar. In an attempt to convince us to join his movement, de Gaulle supported the lies and the cannons of the English fleet. It began with them saying that Dakar was or would be in the hands of the Germans, that Dakar was starving. I oppose these miserable deceptions with the most formal denial. You know that no German is in Dakar and there has never been any question of German occupation of Dakar.¹²¹

Over the next two days, the Free French/British force conducted bombing raids and shelling of coastal positions, but never seriously weakened them or penetrated Dakar's inner defenses. To make matters worse, British bombs fell somewhat clumsily on civilian areas, causing casualties that Vichy was quick to exploit. Seeing the death toll rise, and understanding that Dakar would not fall easily, de Gaulle ended the attack on September 25. The Vichy presence in Africa, besieged since the early days of July, had won a reprieve.

¹²⁰ For more on the September 1940 attack on Dakar, see Patrick Girard, *De Gaulle, le mystère de Dakar* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2010).

¹²¹ ANOM, 30 APC 2, Dossier 4, document 369. "Ce matin, un abominable attentat a été perpétré sur Dakar paisible et laborieuse. Pour nous convaincre de se joindre à son mouvement, de Gaulle a appuyé ses prétextes mensongers des coups des canons de la flotte anglaise. On a commencé par dire que Dakar était ou allait être aux mains des allemands, que Dakar était affamée. J'ai opposé à ces misérables tromperies le démenti le plus formel. Vous savez qu'il n'y a pas d'allemande à Dakar et qu'il n'a jamais été question d'occupation allemande à Dakar."

In Boisson's estimation, the attack on Dakar radically turned around Vichy's prospects in Africa. Prior to the attack, the morale of the European population had been low, with much uncertainty about the future of the war and economic prospects in the colony.¹²² After the defection of AEF, the situation had been exacerbated by British radio propaganda suggesting that Germany had long-term interests in French Africa, and calling on the French to rise against the Vichy sympathetic regime for patriotic reasons. Boisson also noted the great fears of the *indigènes* about being subjected to "domination" by Germany.¹²³ However, according to Boisson, the situation had been clarified by the British attack. Most notably, he observed that "the rigorous and precise conduct of bombings through the use of large mortar shells provoked an intense nervous shock, especially among the female population, the children, as well as among the Syrian population and the *indigènes*."¹²⁴ Vichy took advantage of this sentiment and distributed brochures that exaggerated civilian casualties resulting from the British "aggression."¹²⁵ According to Vichy, the attack had largely discredited the Gaullist movement among the population of Senegal, and they had proven through their fierce resistance to the British that they would remain loyal to Vichy. Consequently, the end of the year political report noted that the repelling of the joint British-Gaullist force "marked the end of uncertainty and puts a stop to the massive rallying to the Gaullist cause."¹²⁶

¹²² *Morals des populations de l'Afrique Française*, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 928, Dossier 2.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6. "La conduite rigoureuse et comme mathématique des bombardements par gros obus a provoqué d'autre part un ébranlement nerveux incontestable, principalement parmi l'élément féminin, les enfants, ainsi que chez la population syrienne et dans la masse indigène."

¹²⁵ *L'agression de Dakar*, ANOM, 30 APC 2, Dossier 3, document 367.

¹²⁶ *Rapport Politique du Haut Commissariat de l'Afrique Française (Année 1940)*, p. 6, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 928, Dossier 2.

The combined attack on Dakar also provided fertile ground for a counterattack of anti-British propaganda from Vichy. On September 24, Minister of Colonies Charles Platon, who was viscerally anti-British and passed much of his time as colonial minister plotting ways to re-conquer AEF from de Gaulle, addressed AOF in a speech wherein he labeled the attacks as “treason” and “odious aggression.” He further emphasized that the only purpose they served was to threaten the ruin of the French empire.¹²⁷ One piece of Vichy propaganda stressed that the armistice had not infringed upon French sovereignty; instead, it was the Gaullists who had “broken the unity of the Empire.”¹²⁸ Almost immediately after the attack, the film *Dakar, après l’attaque des 23, 24, et 25 Septembre 1940*, was produced and distributed to cinemas throughout both the occupied and unoccupied zones, AOF, and North Africa. *Dakar*, 15 minutes in length, largely glorified the efforts of the colonial administration and France’s courageous African subjects who defended the port against assault. It also showed images of the damage caused to civilian areas by British and Gaullist forces.¹²⁹ Essentially, the British assault was used by Vichy as an effective means to highlight de Gaulle’s treachery – not only had he attacked France, but he had done so in collusion with the perfidious British. The two now presented the greatest threat to the sovereignty and integrity of the Empire.

¹²⁷ Message à l’Afrique Noire, Sept. 24, 1940, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 357. As an ardent collaborator and anti-Gaullist, Platon would later be summarily executed during the nationwide purge that followed the triumph of de Gaulle’s forces in August 1944. For more on Platon, see Jean-Marc Van Hille, *Le Vice-Amiral Platon ou les Risques d’un Mauvais Choix* (Paris, Pyregraph, 2003).

¹²⁸ Message aux français de l’Afrique Noire, Sept. 1940 (author unknown), ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 392.

¹²⁹ For an excellent discussion of *Dakar*, as well as a comprehensive examination of Vichy film propaganda, see Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, *Les Documenteurs des Années Noires* (Paris: Nouveau Monde Editions, 2004), esp. 121-125.

A letter written from an unknown author (“X”) in Avignon to his brother “Henri” on October 9, 1940, is illustrative of the message emanating from Vichy immediately after the Dakar attack. “Henri” was stationed at Fort Lamy, Chad, which had defected to Free France over a month earlier. In the letter, “X” attempts to convince Henri of the folly of supporting Britain. After blaming the war on the Jewish population of Europe and emphasizing the atrocities of the British bombing campaign, the author emphasized that France must maintain the Empire because it had a role to play in the postwar order. De Gaulle and the British were threatening that future:

In France we cannot accept working with the English, who seek only to dissolve our Colonial Empire. The case of Dakar...has clearly proved that you are obeying a street performer in the person of de Gaulle. Certainly we understand that [you are] far from the *métropole* and ill-informed...But our specific role is to bring you up to speed and to take stock of the situation. So I beg you to stop your propaganda efforts in favor of the Anglo-Gaullist movement, a movement which is clearly anti-French.¹³⁰

The letter added that France only had one choice that could save the Empire – to maintain unity under the leadership of Pétain.

However, as French citizens began to accept the new paradigm in which Britain was again a bitter enemy, there were still concerns about morale in the empire. Despite Boisson’s earlier assurances about AOF opinion rallying to Vichy, on October 20 Platon warned the colonies about British propaganda that focused on the uncertain future of the

¹³⁰ Copie d’une lettre adressée par X-Avignon à M. Henri – Fort Lamy Tchad AEF, Oct. 9, 1940, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 897, Dossier 5. “Par conséquent, nous ne pouvons accepter en France que l’on travaille avec les anglais, qui ne cherchent qu’à dissocier notre Empire Colonial, l’affaire de Dakar, celle de Madagascar et celle de Noumé, l’ont nettement prouvé, et qu’on obéisse à un saltimbanque comme de Gaulle. Assurément nous comprenons fort bien que loin de la Métropole, mal renseignés et même trompés, vous n’agissiez pas ainsi. Mais notre rôle est justement de venir vous mettre au courant et faire le point. Je viens donc te supplier de cesser la propagande que tu fais en faveur de mouvement anglo-gaulliste, mouvement nettement anti-française.”

French Empire.¹³¹ Boisson also noted the harmful effect of propaganda on colonies proximate to British Empire territories, especially Niger, Dahomey, and Ivory Coast. By November, Gabon had rallied to Free France, thus placing all of AEF under Allied control. Even worse, there was increased concern about America's position regarding the attacks. On October 7, the Foreign Minister wrote to the Secretary of War, noting that France's ambassador to the United States Gaston Henry Haye had indicated that the U.S. largely approved Britain's actions in Senegal.¹³² The U.S. firmly believed that there were German agents in Dakar, a charge that Henry Haye vigorously denied.¹³³

The British/Free France campaign was also instigating internal problems. The demobilization and return to Africa of the *tirailleurs* (African soldiers) who had served in Europe provided opportunity for unrest.¹³⁴ Britain had already begun a propaganda campaign aimed at convincing the *tirailleurs* to defect to Free France – a campaign that continued through 1941.¹³⁵ Another concern was the uprisings among the *hamalliste* movement, followers of the deceased Sufi Muslim leader Hamahullah bin Muhammad bin Umar.¹³⁶ These uprisings had plagued the French in West Africa throughout the 1920s and early 1930s. Now, Boisson claimed, the *hamallistes* were “convinced of our impotence, not only to maintain order but also to continue to assure the effective

¹³¹ Telegram from Charles Platon, Oct. 20, 1940, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 392.

¹³² Telegram, Oct. 7, 1940, ANOM, 1AFFPOL 357.

¹³³ Memo of Conversation by Under-Secretary of State Welles, Oct. 7, 1940. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1940, Vol. II General and Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957), 384.

¹³⁴ For more on the *tirailleurs sénégalais*, who fought in the imperial army starting in the 19th century, see Myron Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Sénégalais in French West Africa, 1857-1960* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1991).

¹³⁵ Telegram from Boisson to Platon, Jan. 29, 1941, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 357.

¹³⁶ For more on this, see David Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880-1920* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000); Robinson, *The Holy War of Umar Tal: the Western Sudan in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

occupation of the territory. They believe the moment has come to impose their beliefs on the Sahel by force.” They conducted attacks throughout French Soudan (present-day Mali) in August 1940, killing dozens. The spread of Islam was also a concern in Senegal, Ivory Coast, Niger, and Mauritania.¹³⁷ In response to these concerns and others, Boisson proposed a more centralized economic policy, the restoration of maritime shipping and commerce, and a stepped-up propaganda campaign to improve morale.¹³⁸

Boisson also felt pressed to take more repressive measures in the face of potential encirclement by the British. Almost immediately after Mers-el-Kébir, a campaign of surveillance was initiated throughout AOF and AEF, and was even more vigorously pursued after the defection of AEF and the attack on Dakar. AOF also suspended the elected Municipal Council and replaced it with a “special municipal delegation”, hand-picked by the office of the high commissioner. Shortly after the attack on Dakar, Boisson had many prominent citizens arrested for suspected Gaullist leanings, including the mayor of Dakar, the president of the chamber of commerce, and the president of the local chapter of the League of Human Rights.¹³⁹ He continued this harsh repression of dissidents throughout his tenure as high commissioner.¹⁴⁰ In December he recommended either interning or expelling any British citizens that could be found on French African soil; these recommendations were disapproved by both Weygand and Platon because they

¹³⁷ Rapport Politique du Haut Commissariat de l’Afrique Française (Année 1940), p. 21-26, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 928, Dossier 2.

¹³⁸ Morals des populations de l’Afrique Française, p. 8-12, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 928, Dossier 2.

¹³⁹ ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 357.

¹⁴⁰ See Hitchcock, “Pierre Boisson, French West Africa, and the Postwar Epuration : A Case from the Aix Files,” 325-6.

would needlessly deliver propaganda points to the British.¹⁴¹ But by that point, Pétain had already decided that Boisson needed more help in Africa.

Weygand's Appointment and the Murphy-Weygand Accords

General Maxime Weygand, who had served as the Supreme Commander of French forces after the replacement of General Gamelin in May 1940, and as Minister of Defense in the first three months of the Vichy regime, was appointed as Pétain's delegate-general to Africa in October 1940, primarily to quell the aforementioned fear of dissidence in French Africa. An internal Vichy memo had indicated that such dissidence in the empire threatened the loss of territories, noting that ““it is clear, moreover, that a France without an empire... would in the immediate future fall into the worst material hardships and would in its own eyes, as in those of the world powers, be no more than a simple province of continental Europe.”¹⁴² Weygand was a strong believer in the inviolability of the Empire and a fierce disciple of Pétain and the National Revolution.¹⁴³ He also strongly distrusted the British, in part because of disagreements over military policy in the days leading to the fall of France to the Nazis.¹⁴⁴ In December 1940, shortly after his appointment as delegate-general, Weygand granted an interview to Jay Allen of

¹⁴¹ Weygand and Platon sent memos to Vichy recommending against the mass expulsion on November 24 and December 3, respectively. ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 357.

¹⁴² Untitled Vichy memo, ANP, F60/774. “Il est clair, par ailleurs, qu'une France sans Empire, privée de l'exercice de sa vénération l'maritime et colonisatrice, tombe, par l'immédiat, dans les pires difficultés matérielles et ne sera plus demain, à ses propres yeux comme à ceux des puissances qu'une simple province de l'Europe continentale.”

¹⁴³ A useful study of Weygand and other high-ranking Vichy officers can be found in Robert Paxton, *Parades and Politics at Vichy: The French Officer Corps under Marshall Pétain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966). See also Bernard Destremau, *Weygand* (Paris: Perrin, 1989).

¹⁴⁴ See Julian Jackson, *The Fall of France: The Nazi Invasion of 1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 88-92.

the New York Times, who would also later be the first American to interview Pétain.

During the short interview, Weygand provided insight into his views on the importance of Africa to France:

I am here to serve my country. That country is Marshall Pétain incarnated. There is not any second France. There is only one. I have been delegated to command all French Africa. My mission is to maintain the unity of French Africa in itself and the unity of French Africa with the metropolis of France. Africa is one with France and General Weygand is one with Marshall Pétain.¹⁴⁵

His interview with Allen was similar to views he expressed just before his removal from the position of delegate-general in 1941, when he noted that, through the Armistice's provisions allowing France to retain control of the empire, "France again became master of an important factor in the outcome of the war, and the strategic position in its control became a trump essential in the general diplomatic situation."¹⁴⁶

Upon his appointment, he was given detailed instructions from Pétain regarding his mission. Noting that large parts of the empire were in disagreement with the *métropole*, Pétain indicated that Weygand's three most important objectives were to ensure the security of the three territories most threatened by military action – Tunisia, Morocco, and Senegal; "maintain without fissure the bloc of our African possessions that remain loyal"; and attempt to rally to Vichy pockets of dissidence in the territories.¹⁴⁷ To this end, Weygand was given extensive responsibilities in Africa – commander in chief of all military forces in Africa, coordinator of all matters that affected military security (including some economic issues), coordinator of the efforts of the governors-general, in

¹⁴⁵ Jay Allen, "Weygand Denies Rift with Pétain, Holds There is 'Only One' France," *New York Times*, Dec. 12, 1941.

¹⁴⁶ Memorandum by General Weygand, relayed by Robert Murphy to Cordell Hull, Nov. 18, 1941. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1941*, Vol. II (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), 461-3.

¹⁴⁷ Instruction de Mission pour Monsieur le Général Weygand, Oct. 5, 1940, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 638 Dossier 4.

charge of strategy to retake lost colonial possessions, and head of all propaganda efforts in French Africa.¹⁴⁸ He was also granted extraordinary emergency powers.¹⁴⁹

As one of his first responsibilities, Weygand was sent on the first of three visits to French Africa in November 1940, during which he conducted inspections of Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Senegal, French Soudan, Ivory Coast, Togo, Dahomey, and Niger. The primary goal of his mission was to better coordinate relations and commerce between North Africa and AOF.¹⁵⁰ In his report to Pétain, he emphasized the outpouring of support and loyalty for Vichy that he had personally witnessed. He also noted that in most of West Africa, Germany remained the enemy, but England had fallen in disfavor due to the attacks on Mers-el-Kébir and Dakar.¹⁵¹ Nevertheless, there were still many who openly advocated for British victory. Weygand encouraged Pétain to increase anti-British propaganda efforts throughout the territories, and appoint only loyal Vichyites to key positions. He also asked Pétain to take measures to improve economic conditions in the territories, especially by allowing for better flow of goods and transit. Above all, Pétain had to do his best to avoid providing concessions to Germany and Italy in French Africa, as it could upset the delicate balance of sympathy among the population. The central principle remained the unity and integrity of French territories in Africa. Weygand concluded his report by noting that “the situation in sub-Saharan Africa is far from definitively settled...consolidating this union through all the means in their power is

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ ANP, F60/774.

¹⁵⁰ Memo from Weygand to Pétain, Nov. 20, 1940, ANP, F60/774

¹⁵¹ Memo from Weygand to Pétain, Nov. 10, 1940, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 638, Dossier 4.

the sole objective of all representatives of the French state in all of the African territories.”¹⁵²

An internal Vichy memo from November 23, 1940 corroborates some of the threats to the French African Empire discussed by Weygand. The loss of AEF and the propaganda threat it posed to Vichy’s territories in North Africa, the desire for Italy to increase its influence in the Mediterranean, a “profound malaise” throughout AOF, ongoing British blockades of parts of West Africa, and the threat of direct German or Italian intervention in sub-Saharan Africa, were all contributing to an atmosphere which dictated that Vichy had to take “measures to maintain our sovereignty in French Africa.”¹⁵³ But the memo argued that attempts to restore control could not be too heavy-handed, as it could lead to an atmosphere of civil war, “whose sole beneficiaries would clearly be either Great Britain or Germany.”¹⁵⁴ The memo further suggested a policy of absolute neutrality regarding the war. What was needed was better administrative and economic coordination between Vichy and the colonies, and stronger diplomatic efforts.

Dealing with these problems without upsetting the delicate balance in Africa was a difficult proposition. Given France’s precarious position between Germany and Great Britain, one solution proposed by the memorandum was better relations with the United States. America held the key to French Africa because of its relationship with Great Britain and its ability to provide fuels to the colonies. If the United States decided to follow Britain’s lead and cut off credit or goods to Africa, “all of our African territories

¹⁵² Ibid. “La situation en Afrique Française est loin d’être définitivement assise... Consolider cette union par tous les moyens en leur pouvoir est l’unique objet des représentants de l’État Français dans tous les territoires Africaines.”

¹⁵³ Note sur l’orientation à donner à notre politique coloniale, Nov. 23, 1940, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2555, Dossier 9.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. “...un climat de guerre civile dont les seuls bénéficiaires seraient, en définitif, ou la Grande Bretagne ou l’Allemagne.”

will fall like a ripe fruit into the hands of Great Britain or the dissidents.”¹⁵⁵ Therefore, negotiations with Washington were necessary in order to give the State Department “the sense that it is in the interest of the United States that France maintain its sovereignty over its territories.”¹⁵⁶ During his time as delegate-general, Weygand vigorously pursued this policy, recognizing the importance of the United States to maintaining France’s presence in Africa.

The United States was also eager to conduct negotiations with Vichy, if only to get a better sense of its war intentions. In January 1941, the State Department sent Robert Murphy to visit both North and West Africa. During the trip, which included stops in Algiers, Dakar, and Tunis, Murphy met with Weygand to discuss the war and France’s need for assistance from the United States to obtain a better flow of goods for the colonies. As a whole, the meeting is exemplary of Vichy’s flexibility, whereby it played both sides so as to secure better conditions in the empire. In order to put Murphy at ease, Weygand insisted that he wanted the British to win the war, a sentiment with which many in his group agreed.¹⁵⁷ Whether he meant it or not, Weygand qualified his statement by noting that “my primary job, however, is to keep France intact – for France. It is a situation in which the greatest discretion must be exercised.”¹⁵⁸ Both Weygand and Boisson, who also attended the meeting, were particularly concerned about British designs in French Africa. For his part, Murphy assured Weygand that President

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. “...toute notre Afrique tombera comme un fruit mur entre les mains de la Grande Bretagne ou de la dissidence.”

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. “...il est indispensable de lui rendre sensible qu’il est d’intérêt des États-Unis eux-mêmes que la France maintienne sa souveraineté sur ses territoires.”

¹⁵⁷ Minister in Portugal to Secretary of State (relaying message from Robert Murphy), Jan. 14, 1941. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1941, Vol. II Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), 206-7.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

Roosevelt understood France's desire to maintain the integrity of the empire and protect it from all forms of aggression. America was willing to help Vichy in these aims, but only to the extent that it did not detract from Britain's war effort.¹⁵⁹

Weygand countered by saying that the United States could best remedy the situation in Africa by helping clear the way for a better flow of goods and products to the colonies, currently hindered by British blockades.¹⁶⁰ He suggested that such American help could strengthen French Africa so that it might be used militarily against Germany, or at the very least, as a bargaining chip with Hitler in Europe.¹⁶¹ According to Weygand, the French considered the empire in Africa as "France's last trump card which must be cautiously and skillfully played."¹⁶² Murphy assured him that the United States would help, but he was particularly concerned about the presence of Germans in French Africa, to which Weygand insisted there were none. However, pressing a separate point, Weygand noted the danger of British propaganda directed at the colonies, "that aims to weaken our influence and rattle our foundation in sub-Saharan Africa, which could give the Germans an excuse to intervene."¹⁶³ The meeting concluded with Weygand having a sense that Murphy and the Americans genuinely wanted to provide help to France.

These initial talks led to the Murphy-Weygand accords of February 26, 1941, whereby the United States agreed to provide economic aid to North and West Africa in spite of the British blockade, in exchange for assurances that the French fleet would not be turned over to Germany and that none of the aid would leave its place of import or be

¹⁵⁹ Telegram from Weygand to Pétain, Jan. 5, 1941, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 636, Dossier 8.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Minister in Portugal to Secretary of State (relaying message from Robert Murphy), Jan. 14, 1941. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1941, Vol. II Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), 206-7.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Telegram from Weygand to Pétain, Jan. 5, 1941, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 636, Dossier 8.

transferred to the Axis.¹⁶⁴ Concerns about a possible German presence in French North Africa delayed implementation of the economic aid program, but in April Secretary of State Hull approved the first shipment of purchases.¹⁶⁵ Although the program would be largely suspended in late 1941 after Pétain's recall of Weygand from his role as delegate-general to Africa, in the short term it enabled a greater optimism for Vichy in AOF, despite the setbacks of the previous year.

For his part, Boisson remained positive about France's position in Africa at the beginning of 1941. While there were still concerns about Muslim uprisings and potential population shifts throughout the territories, it seemed that Britain's assault had been significantly repelled, and the potential unrest caused by the return of the demobilized *tirailleurs* had begun to be allayed by their reintegration into society.¹⁶⁶ As Vichy consolidated its control over West Africa, Boisson had two priorities. First, it was important not to abandon the colonial project in Africa. Boisson's report notes that "there is no advantage...in abandoning our traditionally humane policy, for policies that would not be our way."¹⁶⁷ More importantly, France had to recognize the vitality of its African territories to the future of the Empire:

The year 1941, one can already predict, will mark the end of internal divisions and hesitations. The Anglo-Saxon policy will finally throw off its mask and the

¹⁶⁴ Ambassador in France Leahy to the Secretary of State, March 1, 1941. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1941, Volume II Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), 229-31.

¹⁶⁵ Secretary of State to Consul General at Algiers (Cole), April 24, 1941, *Ibid.*, 308-9.

¹⁶⁶ Rapport Politique du Haut Commissariat de l'Afrique Française (Année 1940), p. 84, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 928, Dossier 2.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 85. "Il n'est point avantage question de laisser accrediter, comme certaines rumeurs l'insinuent, que nous abandonnons notre politique traditionnellement humaine, pour des doctrines qui ne sont point de chez nous."

French of Black Africa will come together to make, along with the loyal natives, a new France in which the Empire is the principal asset.¹⁶⁸ [emphasis added]

Boisson had reason for optimism. The events of the second half of 1940 had ensured that preservation of the sovereignty of France's African territories was one of Vichy's most important policies.

Propaganda to Maintain the Sovereignty of the Empire

Having fought off the British at Dakar and consolidated its position in North Africa and AOF through the Murphy-Weygand accords, Vichy initiated a series of propaganda efforts to support its imperial project and combat Britain's supposedly malevolent designs on French territory. This propaganda, according to a December 1942 Free France report, had two goals – to maintain the cohesion of the Empire, and to defend it against all aggression.¹⁶⁹ Pétain continued to provide the rhetorical foundation for this message. On April 9, 1941, he gave a speech to the empire in which he noted that “the pride of France is not only the integrity of her territory, but also the cohesion of her Empire....One cannot serve France by being against French unity, against the unity of the fatherland and the Empire.”¹⁷⁰ He also oversaw other efforts to enhance France's

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. “Mais des espoirs sérieux de rétablissement nous sont, d'ores et déjà, permis. L'année 1941, on peut déjà le prévoir, marquera l'effacement des dissensions et des hésitations intérieures. La politique anglo-saxonne aura définitivement jeté la masque et les Français d'Afrique Noire se retrouveront pour faire, avec la collaboration loyale des indigènes, une France nouvelle dont l'Empire est le principal atout.”

¹⁶⁹ Rapport – Oppression Vichyste en AOF, Dec. 27, 1942, p. 3, ANP, 3AG I 280, Dossier 3. See also Ruth Ginio's examination of Vichy propaganda in AOF in Ruth Ginio, *French Colonialism Unmasked: The Vichy Years in French West Africa* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 33-45.

¹⁷⁰ Text of speech by Marshall Pétain, sent by Minister of Colonies Platon, April 9, 1941, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 884, Dossier 5.

colonial stance and self-awareness. These efforts included significant propaganda campaigns throughout the *métropole* and empire, spanning a diverse range of media.

The most prominent of these was the *semaine impériale* of July 1941.

Recognizing the importance of the colonies to both French unity and France's postwar prestige, in spring of 1941 Vichy began planning a weeklong celebration that would commemorate the empire and emphasize its integral place in France's future. The committee charged with its planning contained prominent officials from several ministries, including the colonial administration, the navy, information, and the interior. General Weygand sent a personal representative to observe. The notes of the meeting emphasized that "France must demonstrate that it is able, better than anyone else to defend, administer, and develop its overseas territories."¹⁷¹ Consequently, a commemorative week was necessary in order to revitalize imperial consciousness in the *métropole*, strengthen the attachment of colonial populations to France, remind foreign nations about French imperial power, facilitate the return of territories lost to Free France, and prepare the French people for the future Empire.¹⁷² A significant propaganda campaign was planned, to include radio, newspapers, brochures and posters, cinema, and expositions, and a budget of 10 million francs was set aside. The central message was that France had to maintain its colonial empire for a variety of reasons, but most importantly for influence, international prestige, economic importance, and resources.¹⁷³

The campaign took place from July 15-21, 1941, and was launched by an address from Pétain on July 15, in which he saluted the loyalty of the entire Empire, and

¹⁷¹ Réunion préparatoire à la semaine impériale, May 1941, ANP, 2 AG 442. "La France doit montrer que elle est en mesure, mieux que n'importe qui, de défendre, d'administrer, et de mettre en valeur ses territoires d'outre-mer."

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

especially the *indigènes* “who, during this misfortune of our fatherland, have retained their love and trust for this to the great nation that has always loved and protected them.”¹⁷⁴ Platon provided a similar message, indicating that the Gaullists underestimated the loyalty of the native populations of French colonies.¹⁷⁵ On July 19, *Le Temps* echoed this theme of colonial loyalty in an editorial, and noted that despite its diversity, the empire was absolutely unified: “with each part of greater France keeping its originality, a common union that will increase the moral power of the French bloc will be established under the influence of feeling, reflection, and experience.”¹⁷⁶ The week was also an opportunity for colonial governors to reaffirm both their loyalty to the empire, and that of their subjects, which the governor of Djibouti did when he sent a personal message to Platon.¹⁷⁷ Réunion, French Guyane, and AOF provided similar messages later in the week.¹⁷⁸

Demonstrations were staged throughout the empire and the unoccupied zone. The first ceremony took place in Lyon, where a large parade including Vietnamese workers, French youth, and the *Legion Française de Combattants* was held.¹⁷⁹ The latter was a veterans’ group devoted to implementing the principles of the National Revolution.¹⁸⁰ Clermont-Ferrand and Chatel-Guyon both hosted a series of demonstrations and

¹⁷⁴ “Sur la France d’Outre-Mer,” July 13, 1941, *Messages d’Outre-tombe du Maréchal Pétain*, 147. “...populations indigènes qui, dans le malheur de la Patrie, ont conservé leur amour et leur confiance à la grande nation qui les a toujours aimés et protégés.”

¹⁷⁵ *Action Française*, July 18, 1941.

¹⁷⁶ *Le Temps*, June 19, 1941. “Chaque partie de la grande France gardent son originalité, sous l’influence du sentiment, de la réflexion, de l’expérience, une unité générale s’est établie qui accroît la puissance morale de ce “bloc” française.”

¹⁷⁷ *Action Française*, July 19, 1941.

¹⁷⁸ *Le Temps*, July 24, 1941.

¹⁷⁹ *Action Française*, July 18, 1941.

¹⁸⁰ Significant research on the Legion can be found in John Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France: the French Under Nazi Occupation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

conferences that lasted through July 20. At Vichy, a two-day colonial exhibition was set up in the train station.¹⁸¹ On July 17, Pétain attended a conference on the explorer Ferdinand Savorgnon de Brazza and discussed the ongoing dissident movement in Gabon.¹⁸² On July 20, Platon presided over a parade in St. Raphael (Dordogne) orchestrated to show the unity of the Empire that included Vietnamese, Senegalese, and Malagasy subjects.¹⁸³ At the conclusion of the week, Boisson emphasized this message of unity in a radio message on the contributions of Africa to the empire:

From Dakar inviolate I send France an expression of the commitment and dedication of Black Africa. In fighting fiercely for our French loyalty, we have known and still know that, if it was necessary, we would never allow a separation from France. The fate of France and that of Africa is closely intertwined, and that solidarity is forever etched in every African heart. French West Africa is completely dedicated to its work to come to France's assistance when needed.¹⁸⁴

Another goal of Vichy's propaganda in the empire was to foster a culture of obedience its subjects. Upon taking his post as governor of Senegal in January 1941, Georges Pierre Rey emphasized that "work, discipline, and union" were the most important values in Senegal, because the new order installed by Vichy was working together for the recovery of France.¹⁸⁵ That February, Boisson gave a speech before the Council of Notables of St. Louis (Senegal), which represented the African population. Acknowledging that it was not possible for him to speak to all of the *indigènes*, Boisson

¹⁸¹ Laurent Gervereau and Denis Peschanski, *La Propagande Sous Vichy, 1940-1944* (Paris: Musées Histoire, 1990).

¹⁸² *Action Française*, July 18, 1941.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Action Française*, July 22, 1941. "De Dakar inviolé j'adresse à la France l'expression de l'attachement et du dévouement de l'Afrique Noire. En lutte à l'agression pour notre fidélité française, nous avons su et nous saurions encore, s'il le fallait, ne pas nous laisser séparer de la France. Le destin de la France et le destin de l'Afrique sont étroitement solidaires, et cette solidarité est pour toujours gravée dans tous les cœurs africains. Pour venir en aide à la France dans le besoin, l'Afrique Occidentale Française est tout entière au travail."

¹⁸⁵ Prise de Commandement de la Colonie du Sénégal par M. le Gouverneur Rey, Feb. 6, 1941, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 635, Dossier 11.

asked the notables to take his message back to the population. After emphasizing his faith in the “fidelity and loyalty” of the Senegalese people, he noted that the duty of the *indigènes* was to work hard and tend to their own place. Marshall Pétain’s message, he insisted, was a simple one:

What does the Marshall still tell us?
That we must obey.
That we must take up again the habit of obedience.
...
What I am telling you is a simple thing:
Obey. Work.
These are the only remedies to heal Senegal, and France.¹⁸⁶

Boisson emphasized not only obedience to French authorities, but also a renewed devotion to tribal hierarchies, with chiefs answering to Boisson himself. This was reminiscent of the policy of association, followed in the late Third Republic, and to which Vichy had returned.

Anti-British themes also remained a staple of Vichy propaganda, both in the *métropole* and the colonies. One pamphlet, sarcastically titled “Nos Amis les Anglais” (“our friends the English”) was distributed by the *Légion Françaises des Combattants de l’Afrique Noire*, an offshoot of the larger quasi-fascist *Légion Françaises des Combattants* organization. The branch of the Africa Legion had elevated Boisson as its honorary leader.¹⁸⁷ The pamphlet, disseminated in August 1942, introduced the reader to the long history of enmity between England and France, going back to Louis VI’s resistance against Henry I of Britain in 1119. It also reminded readers that France had borne the brunt of misery during World War I. To these more understandable concerns,

¹⁸⁶ Speech Pronounced before Council of Notables of St. Louis, Feb. 12, 1941, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 635, Dossier 11. “Qu’a dit encore le Maréchal PÉTAIN? Qu’il faut obéir. Qu’il faut reprendre l’habitude d’obéir...Ce que je vous dis sont des choses simples: Obéir-Travailler. Seuls remèdes pour guérir le Sénégal, la France.”

¹⁸⁷ Rapport: L’oppression Vichyiste en AOF, Dec. 27, 1942, p. 4-5, ANP, 3 AG I 280, Dossier 1.

the pamphlet claimed that France's decision to go to war in 1939 had been misguided, as it served the purpose of the British and the "Jewish Empire." However, after a series of British betrayals, France was no longer under any illusions. The pamphlet noted that "the mask has come off. The horrible conjunction of the Jew, England, and the unfortunate American, under which the government responded "at your service" to the orders of the Sanhedrin, declared war in Europe. France is in Europe, and it took a disaster to remind her of this."¹⁸⁸ It added that "no word, no statistic, can convey the amount of harm that these powers have caused the French community."¹⁸⁹ Given the alleged designs of European Jews to take over Europe, and the pain inflicted upon France by the war, the pamphlet concluded by saying that "whoever is for the Jew is for the British, and whoever is for the British is against the French."¹⁹⁰

The Legion would continue to support Vichy's propaganda efforts in Africa, which included a conference in August 1942 that examined ways to more effectively aim propaganda at both Europeans and colonial subjects in the territories.¹⁹¹ The Legion's propaganda spanned brochures, film, radio, and newspapers and was targeted at a wide variety of audiences, including European settlers, *evolués*, former *tirailleurs*, and schoolchildren from all levels of education.¹⁹² The Legion also made use of the daily newspaper *Paris-Dakar*, which provided it a weekly page to publish anti-Gaullist and

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. "Le masque est tombé. L'horrible conjunction de juif, de l'Anglais et de malheureux Américain, dont le Gouvernement a répondu « A vos ordres » aux injonctions du Sanhedrin, a déclaré la guerre de l'Europe. La France est en Europe, il a fallu le désastre pour le lui rappeler."

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 27. "Aucun mot, aucun chiffre, ne peut donner la valeur du mal que ces puissances ont causé à la communauté française."

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. "Qui est pour le Juif et pour l'Anglais. Qui est pour l'Anglais est contre la France."

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p. 28-32.

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 30.

anti-British propaganda.¹⁹³ Beginning in August 1942, the Legion started its own publication *Le Légionnaire*, in Dakar. Branches in Senegal and Mauritania had their own publications as well.¹⁹⁴

Vichy also made efforts to target printed material to its subjects by translating it into local dialects. One such pamphlet was distributed throughout Dahomey in 1942. Titled “Pourquoi?” it was a direct response to British propaganda efforts in West Africa to undermine support for Vichy:

Why do the English authorities say terrible things about the French? Why do they set the Nigerians against the Dahomeans, who are their brothers? These are the questions we must ask the English. Don't the English say that the French were their old friends and allies? They never gave them any help during the battle, and after the battle they stole the boats of their former friends and allies; they fired cannons and bombed their cities; they have gone to war with the French. There is no person in the world not familiar with their atrocities... Why do the English seek to attack us as enemies? Are there not other enemies to fight in the world?¹⁹⁵

Another pamphlet, “The Free Consciousness of France” favorably compared the state of happiness and satisfaction in France’s colonies to those of Britain. Yet another, “The Agreement with France” emphasized that the *indigènes* in the empire remained faithful to France because “they know the truth” that living under French rule was more peaceful and beneficial than British rule. Consequently, French subjects “direct all their efforts so that the French government can regain the power it has lost, and above all, they do not

¹⁹³ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Free France Bulletin of Information, Oct. 23, 1942 (reported by Free France post in Lagos, Nigeria), ANP, 3 AG I 280, Dossier 1. “Pourquoi les autorités anglaises disent-elles du mal des Français ? Pourquoi veulent-elles faire battre les Nigériens contre les Dahoméens qui sont leurs frères ? Ce sont les questions qu’il nous faut poser aux Anglais. Les Anglais ne disent-ils pas que les Français étaient leurs anciens amis et alliés ? Ils ne leur ont donné aucune aide pendant la bataille et après la bataille ils ont volé les bateaux des leurs anciens amis et alliés, ils ont tiré des coups de canon et bombardé leurs villes, ils ont fait la guerre à des Français ; il n’y a personne au monde qui ne se rende compte de ses atrocités. Les Français eux, n’ont pas cherché à attaquer les Anglais. Ils ne veulent rien prendre de ce qui leur appartient. Pourquoi les Anglais cherchent-ils à nous attaquer comme des ennemis, n’ont-ils pas partout dans le monde d’autres ennemis à combattre ?”

want to follow the British path.”¹⁹⁶ In reality, these brochures were mere rhetoric. Vichy had already made significant efforts to roll back rights granted by the Third Republic to Africans, and was contemplating a new constitution that would disenfranchise its subjects even further.

Vichy’s Conflicting Plans for the Future of the *Indigènes*

While Vichy focused on augmenting imperial consciousness in the *métropole*, Boisson was concerned about the morale of his subjects and their treatment by the French administration. Despite the ongoing war, Boisson continued to believe in France’s duties to its African subjects and the civilizing mission. In May 1941, he vigorously opposed a plan by Platon to severely reduce the number of *originaires* (Africans from the four communes of Senegal, discussed below) fighting in the French army; Platon’s justification was the “mediocre military valor of the *originaires*.”¹⁹⁷ Noting that it was very difficult to roll back rights acquired by certain groups over the years, and that stripping the *originaires* of military service would serve a useful propaganda point for the British, Boisson recommended maintaining the status quo.¹⁹⁸ On June 26, he sent a memo to the colonial governors in Africa and warned them against ill treatment of the *indigènes*:

Various sources have informed me of the tendency of governmental officials, other agents of the colonial administration, and private organizations to be less hospitable to the *indigènes*, and in all cases to show them a less than benevolent concern or even remote coldness. This trend, to the extent it exists, is an offense against the heart and the spirit that we should not commit and that I will not

¹⁹⁶ Free France Bulletin of Information No. 443, Sept. 20, 1942, ANP, 3 AG I 280, Dossier 1. “Elles savent la vérité. Elles font tous leurs efforts pour que le gouvernement français reprenne le pouvoir qu’il a perdu et surtout elles ne veulent pas suivre la trace des Britanniques.”

¹⁹⁷ Telegram from Platon to Boisson, March 27, 1941, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 636, Dossier 4.

¹⁹⁸ Telegram from Boisson to Platon, May 5, 1941, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 636, Dossier 4.

tolerate in any of its manifestations. We have just obtained, in a time of indescribable national distress, very reassuring proof of the deep, and I would say, even the sincere affection of our *indigène* nationals. We should not today, through an absolutely inconsistent attitude contrary to French tradition, reward this fidelity and loyalty with unacceptable and unjustified detachment.¹⁹⁹

Instead, Boisson recommended even more interaction between the French and their subjects, including further education. In closing, he reminded the governors that “every *indigène* is the beneficiary of a French colonial system that is the most humane and the most generous in the world” and that “the destiny of Africa and metropolitan France is tightly knit.”²⁰⁰

During his tenure as high commissioner of sub-Saharan Africa, Boisson also drafted several reports and policy papers concerning the future of the continent. However, unlike some of the earlier Third Republic colonial administrators discussed by Alice Conklin, Boisson was not interested *per se* in the evolution of the local population.²⁰¹ In August 1941, he drafted “Trois Directives de Colonisation Africaine”, which set forth a general outline for France’s future colonial policy.²⁰² In it, he called for better collaboration with and supervision of the *indigènes*, noting that “[t]o colonize is essentially to cause indigenous societies to advance in ways that we have chosen for them

¹⁹⁹ Telegram from Pierre Boisson, June 26, 1941, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 636, Dossier 5 “De diverses sources on me signale de la part des fonctionnaires d’autorité comme des autres agents de l’administration coloniale et aussi dans les organismes privés, une tendance à se montrer moins accueillants à l’égard des indigènes et à leur manifester dans toute les cas moins de bienveillant intérêt ou plus de distante froideur. Cette tendance dans toute la mesure où elle existe est une faute contre le cœur et contre l’esprit qu’il ne faut pas commettre et que je ne saurais tolérer dans aucune de ses manifestations. Nous venons d’acquérir, dans un moment de détresse nationale indicible la preuve hautement réconfortante de l’attachement profond, je dirai même de l’affection sincère, de nos ressortissants indigènes. Il ne faudrait pas aujourd’hui par une attitude inconséquente absolument contraire à la tradition française, offrir à cette fidélité et à ce loyalisme l’inadmissible contre partie d’un éloignement injustifié.”

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Most notable were governors-general Ernst Roume and William Ponty, who ruled West Africa consecutively from 1902-1915. For a definitive discussion of this period, see Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 38-141.

²⁰² Trois directives de Colonisation Africaine, ANOM, 30 APC 6, Dossier 4, document 1575.

and in which they must, under our supervision, find the improvement of their living conditions, both physical and moral.”²⁰³ Of particular importance for Boisson was the need to improve discipline in all areas of the everyday life of the *indigène* – discipline in housing, diet, clothing, and agricultural life – in order to break “old habits.” Nothing less than a complete control over indigenous society was required; Boisson noted that “we must show, prove, advise, decree, control, and constantly return to the task irrespective of the area in which the colonizer is exerting himself.”²⁰⁴ In order to properly guide the *indigènes* to accept these new ways of life, France had to “anchor” in them a sense of professional conscience, a work ethic that paid attention to detail, and a greater devotion to honest dealing.²⁰⁵

Boisson’s plans to improve Africa were also reactive to the ongoing struggle with Britain. In January 1942, he drafted a program for administrative and economic reforms in AOF, in part geared to combat British propaganda efforts to portray the failure of *mise en valeur* in Africa under Vichy.²⁰⁶ Among the needs identified by Boisson in Africa were more specialists and technicians, an overhaul of schools for colonial administrators in France, and improved training of a bureaucracy within the colonial population so as to foster better collaboration. These reforms were necessary because, in Boisson’s estimation, many aspects of the French colonial mission were failing – commerce was inefficient, health and hygiene issues abounded, and despite French efforts, much of the

²⁰³ Trois Directions de Colonisation Française, ANOM, 17G395. “Coloniser c’est essentiellement faire avancer les sociétés indigènes dans les voies que nous avons choisies pour elles et dans lesquelles elles doivent, sous notre tutelle, trouver l’amélioration de leurs conditions de vie matérielle et morale.”

²⁰⁴ Ibid. “Il faut montrer et démontrer, conseiller, ordonner, contrôler et sans cesse revenir à la charge quel que soit le domaine d’activité où le Colonisateur se dépense.”

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Directives pour un programme d’équipement administrative et économique de l’Afrique Occidentale Française, p. 4, ANOM, 1AFFPOL982, Dossier 6.

colonial population still had a provincial mentality. Yet Boisson did not necessarily want to follow a policy of assimilation. He contrasted a policy of “European colonization” with “indigenous colonization” – the latter was preferable because it was more realistic and took into account the aptitudes of the *indigènes*. Returning to a theme from his 1938 speech before the Academy of Colonial Sciences, he observed that, “the African is a farmer, and for political stability and the tranquility of our occupation, he must remain a farmer, and it would be an error to create a proletariat through industrialization.”²⁰⁷ Essentially, the solution for Africa was to train better colonial administrators to better understand their subjects, so as to enable more efficient French exploitation of natural resources on the continent and preserve French influence.

However, Boisson’s views differed from his colleagues in the Vichy regime. He represented a middle ground between the early 20th century assimilationist policies of the Third Republic and Vichy’s plans for the colonies. Using case studies of Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Indochina, Eric Jennings has shown how the debate between association and assimilation essentially ended when Vichy came to power. Vichy used the virtues of the “National Revolution” in a cynical fashion, as a means to inspire in local populations notions of cultural or biological distinction. As Jennings argues, this new awareness led to the rejection of assimilation and the democratic values of the Third Republic, thus removing the burden of Vichy having to offer colonial population the rights of French citizenship.²⁰⁸ Vichy’s true attitude toward its subjects is also revealed by actions taken to repeal the rights earned by French citizens in the four communes of Senegal, as well as

²⁰⁷ Ibid. “L’Afrique est paysanne, pour sa stabilité politique et la quiétude de notre occupation elle doit rester et ce serait une erreur de la prolétarianiser en l’industrialisant.”

²⁰⁸ Eric T. Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics: Pétain's National Revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Indochina, 1940-1944* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

debates on the constitution of 1944. While the Third Republic had taken several (admittedly flawed) measures to integrate Africans into the republic, the Vichy regime never saw them as anything more than subjects. This attitude also indirectly sheds light on why Africa was so vital to Vichy. The regime's policy was certainly not focused upon maintaining the participation of the *indigènes* in the body politic of the Empire. Instead, in the end, French sub-Saharan was nothing more than a bargaining chip for the revival of French prestige in the postwar order – or in Pétain's words, his best playing card.

Although Pétain had been voted full powers by representatives of the Third Republic, he did not wish to exercise power through the parliamentary system. Throughout the Vichy regime, governmental committees worked on a new constitution in line with the principles of the National Revolution and capable of providing the government the powers it needed to reshape French society. This would eventually result in the Project of the Constitution of 1944, which was signed by Pétain but never put into effect. Even before this effort was underway, Pétain and his followers had taken significant steps to curtail or completely remove political rights for the *indigènes*. Vichy also underwent administrative reorganization during this period, with a Permanent Secretary General position (answering directly to the Prime Minister) created in November 1941 to coordinate economic issues in Africa.²⁰⁹ The position served as proof that Vichy understood the effect of ongoing economic hardship in the political sphere.

Under the Third Republic, French subjects in the four communes of Senegal (Dakar, Rufisque, Gorée, and St. Louis, all on the western end of the colony) had been given the opportunity to attain French citizenship. By 1914, these citizens, known as the

²⁰⁹ Note sur les attributions de Secrétaire Général Permanent en Afrique Française, Nov. 29, 1941, ANP, F60/774.

originaires, had earned a representative in the National Assembly, Blaise Diagne. The granting of political representation was partially meant to help recruitment of African soldiers for World War I. Such military service also provided the opportunity for French citizenship. The *originaires* were also able to vote for their representative in the national assembly and were immune from conscription into forced labor programs. They were given access to the colonial bureaucracy and were allowed to form municipal councils (one for each of the four communes) through which they could exercise limited authority over local matters and provide advice to the governor-general of Senegal. In essence, Senegal was the most direct beneficiary of the *mission civilisatrice*'s aim to assimilate select subjects into the French body politic.

From the outset, Vichy sought to roll back the Third Republic's policies of assimilation and some of the rights granted to the *originaires*. In September 1940, Vichy dissolved the municipal council of Senegal, in large part due to the fear of dissidence after the Dakar attack.²¹⁰ The following year, Pétain suspended the *circonscription de Dakar*, a 1924 statute that allowed for elections of administrators to address limited local matters. Now, these administrators would be subject to the approval of the governor-general, and he would have greater oversight of local policy. Boisson protested against this reorganization in early 1942, largely for reasons of efficiency.²¹¹ Also in 1941, the governor was given the power to appoint representatives to municipal councils.²¹² That same year, other municipal bodies in AOF were substantially overhauled, now providing

²¹⁰ Décret, Sept. 24, 1940, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 635, Dossier 1; Décret, Sept. 28, 1941, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 635, Dossier 6.

²¹¹ Telegram, Boisson to Platon, Feb. 25, 1942, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 635, Dossier 1.

²¹² Decree of Pétain, Sept. 25, 1941, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 635, Dossier 6.

the governor-general with the ability to suspend the powers of mayors and the councils.²¹³

As mentioned, Vichy was also considering the outlines of a new constitution. To this end, in 1941, the Director of Political Affairs in the Ministry of Colonies prepared a report for Platon discussing the need for constitutional reforms in the Empire.²¹⁴ The memo noted that despite France's long involvement in the imperial project, there had never been an Imperial Charter.²¹⁵ Instead, the dominance of the National Assembly during the Third Republic had led to a system of laws that contradicted local policy followed in the colonies.²¹⁶ The result was a state of confusion with local conditions having to default and adapt to national law. Further, the report noted that the power of the National Assembly to make laws affecting the colonies, along with the Third Republic's policy of assimilation in Senegal, were mutually reinforcing, as the ability of the *originaires* to elect a member to the National Assembly gave the lawmaking body greater legitimacy over colonial policy.

These assimilationist policies of the Third Republic were directly counter to Vichy's plans for the Empire. Assimilation had been a failure because it was not well-adopted to the local populations it sought to integrate into France. In justifying this belief, the memo indicated that "it is true that the Declaration of the Rights of Man states that men are born and remain free and equal in rights, but this equality does not

²¹³ Décret, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 635, Dossier 6.

²¹⁴ Mémoire présenté par le Directeur des Affaires Politiques au Secrétariat d'État aux Colonies pour servir à l'élaboration des dispositions d'ordre constitutionnel concernant l'Empire et à la réforme du régime législative des territoires d'outre-mer, 1941, ANP, 2 AG 646.

²¹⁵ Ibid., p. 26.

²¹⁶ Ibid., p. 28-33.

necessarily mean assimilation.”²¹⁷ Instead, the memo recommended a hard policy of association, whereby Africans would have a measure of self-government but would not be accorded full rights as French citizens. Despite Third Republic efforts to assimilate its subjects, the *indigènes* were not like the French:

...in this sense, equality is pure nonsense. Are the *indigènes* more or less [human] than us? Put this way, the question has no answer. What is certain is that the *indigènes* are “others”. This idea of fundamental difference between the colonies and the *métropole*, and also between the colonies themselves, is important. One can say that this idea is now universally understood. Every foreign colonial organization that we have seen, as well as previous systems in France, have assumed this even when they do not proclaim it.²¹⁸

Rather than equality before the law, the memo argued, there should be systems of separate laws governing the *métropole* and the Empire – essentially, separate but equal.

The memo also reveals the reality behind Vichy’s rhetoric of unity. It further argued that the idea of assimilation and unity of a French body politic actually derived from the constitution of the Year III of the Revolution, which had contained the language “the Republic is one and indivisible.” From this notion was born the illusion of the unity of the people of the *métropole* and the Empire. In contrast, the memo argued that there was no such territorial unity in France, and it was foolish to suggest otherwise. The legitimate power of the sovereign should not flow from the concept of the indivisible republic, but rather from the person of the strong executive. Instead of providing representation for *indigènes* in the National Assembly, their interests would be

²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 35.

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 36. “Or, ainsi entendue, l’égalité est un pur non-sens. Les indigènes sont-ils plus ou moins que nous ? La question ne se pose ou plutôt ainsi posée elle ne comporte aucune réponse. Ce qui est certain c’est que les indigènes sont « autres ». Cette idée de la différence fondamentale non seulement des Colonies avec la Métropole mais des Colonies entre elles est capitale. On peut dire qu’elle est aujourd’hui universellement admise. Toutes les organisations coloniales étrangères que nous avons vues, de même que les systèmes qui se sont succédé en France en supposent quand ils ne la proclament pas.”

represented at the local level. The governors-general would have central power in the colonies and answer to the national government in Paris. In turn, the governors-general personified the “*autonomie locale*” of each colony, and would be the representative of local legislative, administrative, and financial power. At the national level, the chief of state would be the head of all colonial policy, with a Minister of the Empire in charge of administering it. All union-wide matters would be dealt with in the President’s circle, out of the hands of the *indigènes*.²¹⁹

Of course, this policy meant moving away from granting the *indigènes* French citizenship, as had been the policy of the Third Republic with the *évolués* and the *tirailleurs*. The memo justified this radical shift by aligning the concept of citizenship with an essential state of being that the *indigènes* simply could not fulfill, no matter what service they might perform for the *métropole*:

The right to French citizenship must not be seen as a way for well-deserving slaves to freedom, both because there are no slaves to free and because it is not a liberation. *A fortiori*, we must not consider military cooperation provided by the colonies to the *métropole* as providing a right to assimilation because assimilation is not a reward but the recognition of a finding of fact – a finding of a fact that, in these circumstances, does not exist and that we cannot create by judicial decision.²²⁰

The end result would be a highly regressive policy that rejected the fundamental tenets of the Third Republic’s colonial policy. It sought only to maintain the colonies within the French orbit, but not to incorporate them. This policy of “local autonomy” would divorce the *indigènes* from any input to the policies of the national state and the chief executive,

²¹⁹ Ibid., p. 133-144.

²²⁰ Ibid., p. 56. “Le droit de citoyenneté française ne doit pas être considéré comme une manière d’affranchissement pour esclaves ayant bien mérité, à la fois parce qu’il n’y a pas d’esclaves à affranchir et parce que ça n’est pas un affranchissement. *A fortiori*, ne doit-on pas considérer la collaboration militaire apportés par les Colonies à la Métropole comme un droit à l’assimilation car l’assimilation n’est pas une récompense mais la constatation d’un état de fait, état de fait qui, en la circonstance, n’existe pas et que nous ne pouvons pas créer par décision de justice.”

to which they were subordinated. Consequently, it represents a prime example of Vichy's mentality regarding the colonies in planning for the postwar atmosphere. In a way, it also foreshadowed the eventual policy briefly followed by the Fifth Republic during decolonization, whereby France sought to maintain its influence in Africa by keeping its former colonies federated within a French Union, but without territorially integrating them into the *métropole*.

These debates culminated in the drafting of a new French constitution in 1944. Several drafts of the Project of the Constitution of 1944 are extant today. Many of these drafts underwent scrutiny from both Pétain's office and the German embassy in Paris. The final draft of the constitution from July 25, 1944 said very little about the Empire. But it did incorporate many of the ideas set forth in the memo circulated by the Minister of Colonies three years earlier. Title IV of the text dealt with the government of the colonies. All territories upon which the French state exercised its sovereignty were considered part of the Empire. Control over these territories by a strong executive (elected for a period of ten years) would be exercised by "high functionaries" (essentially the governors and governors-general) who would attend to the internal and external security of their respective territories.²²¹

Article 47, section 3 noted that the empire would be controlled by "legislations particulières" – presumably local councils with limited control over matters not affecting the Empire as a whole. Although it did hint at some form of representation in the national legislature for those who had traditionally had such rights, no particular provision in the constitution guaranteed such representation or provided any other

²²¹ *Projet de Constitution de la République française, July 25, 1944, in Messages d'Outre-tombe du Maréchal Pétain, 268.*

specific details. In contrast, most matters affecting the colonies would be dealt with by the governors, answering directly to the executive. If these issues involved social matters or local security, the functionary was permitted to rely upon a “consultative council.” In addition, the executive had his own Imperial Council, which would provide advice as to matters affecting the entire Empire.²²² In effect, Vichy’s overall goal was to remove any significant decision-making power from its colonial subjects, and place it firmly in the hands of the executive. This was very much in line with the principles of the National Revolution, which sought to purify the French body politic from foreign influence.

Vichy’s Growing Suspicion of the United States

As it planned the postwar future of its African empire, Vichy was losing ground with the United States, which had become increasingly favorable to Free France and was running out of patience with Pétain. In late 1941, the United States sent an observer to AEF to determine the strength of de Gaulle’s partisans. The following April, the United States essentially gave diplomatic recognition to Free France by opening a post in Brazzaville, a move which drew a vehement protest from France’s ambassador to the United States, Gaston Henry-Haye.²²³ By August 1942, Vichy was actively worried that the Brazzaville post was being used as a propaganda center in West Africa.²²⁴ The United States had also expressed to Vichy its approval of the British attack on Madagascar (discussed below), explaining that the island was a threat due to its military

²²² *Projet de Constitution de la République française*, July 25, 1944, *Messages d’Outre-tombe du Maréchal Pétain*, 268-9.

²²³ Memorandum of conversation by acting Secretary of State, April 8, 1942. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1942, Vol. II: Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 558.

²²⁴ ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 883, Dossier 1

usefulness to Japan. Through the American ambassador in Vichy, Roosevelt assured Pétain and Laval that the Allies planned to return Madagascar to France after the war.²²⁵

There was also a growing awareness that in the postwar atmosphere, the United States would have an increased interest in Africa. This interest included military and economic concerns, but was also spurred by American ideals, as embodied by the Atlantic Charter of August 1941. Through its eight points, the Charter established the conditions for a postwar order. On its face, the text contained provisions that were reassuring to the French government. Most notably, points one and two indicated that the United States and Britain “seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other” and that the Allies did not wish “to see territorial challenges.”²²⁶ Other provisions calling for lowered trade barriers and better economic cooperation were relatively harmless. Yet the Charter’s third point promised “the right of all people to choose the form of government under which they will live” – a direct threat to the prospect of empire after the war.²²⁷

The Charter immediately led to debate about the postwar future. In 1942, the Phelps Stokes Fund, an American nonprofit group established in 1911 after a bequest from the estate of philanthropist Caroline Phelps Stokes, held a conference in New York which applied the principles of the Atlantic Charter to the postwar situation in Africa. Comprised of four groups – missionaries, educators and anthropologists, foundations focusing on international problems, and other persons with a specific expertise in Africa – the Fund’s Committee on Africa, the War, and Peace Aims convened the proceedings

²²⁵ Télégramme adressée par le Gouvernement Américain à l’ambassade des États-Unis à Vichy, ANP, 2 AG 448. See also Secretary of State to the Chargé in France (Tuck), May 4, 1942. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1942, Vol. II Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 698-9.

²²⁶ *The Atlantic Declaration* (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1941), 595-6.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 596.

with the firm belief that the United States “can approach its [Africa’s] problems with more detachment, if with less first-hand knowledge and experience, than can European powers directly concerned with its government.”²²⁸

The final report of the conference, while presenting some favorable comments about the French policy of assimilation in Africa, also noted some of the problems that had arisen from European colonialism over the years, most notably rampant violence and cultural clashes between European colonial authorities and populations. Consequently, its general recommendations included more United States involvement in the continent (given its large “missionary, financial, educational and scientific” interests), and international oversight of development plans by European powers and the treatment of subject populations. The latter would best be achieved by an extension of the mandate system first established after World War I by the League of Nations to address the development of former German and Turkish territories, including Rwanda, Tanzania, Cameroon, Togo, and Namibia. Even if European colonial powers did not include their territories in the mandate system, they “should be willing...to submit to international inspection and report.”²²⁹ Finally, better accountability in Africa could best be promoted by an international collective security arrangement that would implement the provisions of the Atlantic Charter and best represent the interest of African populations.²³⁰

Vichy’s representative in Washington, Gaston Henry Haye, took great interest in the proceedings of the Phelps Stokes Fund conference, and provided a report to Pétain and Laval in November 1942. While Henry Haye noted the relative moderation of the

²²⁸ *The Atlantic Charter and Africa from an American Standpoint: A Study by the Committee on Africa, the War, and Peace Aims* (New York City: Phelps Stokes Fund, 1942), vii.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 105.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 107-8.

report, especially the United States' professed desire not to have direct political control over African territories, he nevertheless warned that the committee's recommendation on the extension of the mandate system throughout sub-Saharan Africa "risks modifying the existing order."²³¹ He pointed to the committee's emphasis on increased property rights for Africans, the end of slave labor, and the end of military conscription of Africans into European armies. Taken in conjunction with other recommendations coming out of the United States regarding the future of Africa, there could be no doubt of the United States' desire to become more influential on the continent:

One thing is certain in any case... America – which, if victorious, will emerge from this fight with an increased industrial potential, but perhaps without access to its sources of supply of raw materials in the Far East – will take an increased interest in Africa and claim the right to participate in its operations on a footing of complete economic equality, if not also political, with the colonizing nations of Europe.²³²

This increased concern about the prospect of American meddling in Africa was accompanied by a significantly more tense war atmosphere. Throughout 1942, friction between Vichy and the United States gradually increased over the issue of France providing shipping and material aid to Nazi Germany. Just days after Henry Hays's telegram to Laval and Pétain, Vichy broke off diplomatic relations with the United States due to its decision to invade North Africa in Operation Torch (discussed below).²³³

²³¹ Telegram from Henry Hays to Pétain and Laval, November 4, 1942, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 883, Dossier 16.

²³² Ibid. "Une chose est certaine, en tout cas... l'Amérique, qui, si elle est victorieuse, sortira de cette lutte avec un potentiel industriel accru, mais peut-être sans accès à ses sources habituelles de ravitaillement en matières premières en Extrême-Orient, refuse de se désintéresser de l'Afrique et réclame le droit de participer à son exploitation sur un pied de parfaite égalité économique, sinon politique, avec les nations colonisatrices de l'Europe."

²³³ Chargé in France (Tuck) to the Secretary of State, Nov. 8, 1942. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1942, Vol. II Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 201-2.

Nevertheless, Vichy continued to monitor America's disposition toward the French empire in Africa. A report drafted in October 1943 examined American colonial policy and its possible ramifications in the postwar world. While noting that America's overseas interests had traditionally been of the commercial nature, the report warned that President Roosevelt had repeatedly expressed that the United States must take its place among the world powers and have a more interventionist foreign policy.²³⁴ "There exists in America," the report noted, "a vigorous missionary spirit and a sense of profound moral obligation...which form today the dynamic force of a great power."²³⁵ This break with isolationism could also be seen in America's desire to add military bases in Africa, most notably in Dakar and Cap Vert, Senegal.²³⁶ The report also reflected on the possibility of America constructing military bases throughout the world, including in Gibraltar, Alexandria, and Malta. These policies would represent a clear threat to the empire:

It goes without saying that the achievement of such a plan would not go forward without leading to a serious diminution of sovereignty for powers that fall within the areas where these points would be established, and both France and England would be justified in fearing the consequences of such a policy. We would also find our American possessions, colonies in the Pacific, the west coast of Africa, and Morocco endangered.²³⁷

²³⁴ La Politique Coloniale des États Unis, October 1943, p. 41, 48, ANOM, 1AFFPOL 2661, Dossier 3.

²³⁵ Ibid., p. 107. "Il existe en Amérique un vigoureux esprit missionnaire et un sens profond des obligations morales...qui constituent aujourd'hui des forces dynamiques d'une grande puissance."

²³⁶ Ibid., p. 110-1.

²³⁷ Ibid., p. 111. "Il va de soi que la réalisation d'un tel plan n'irait pas sans entraîner une sérieuse diminution de la souveraineté des puissances dont relèvent les territoires où seraient établis les points d'appui et la France tout comme l'Angleterre, serait en droit de redouter les conséquences d'une telle politique. Se trouveraient ainsi menacées les possessions américaines, nos colonies du Pacifique, la côte occidentale e l'Afrique et le Maroc."

While the report did note that America had repeatedly professed to keep the French empire intact after the war, it warned that France had to prepare itself for “a highly flexible colonial policy that allows the inevitable concessions in the economic order to safeguard the integrity of the Empire.”²³⁸ The report went on to predict that in such an atmosphere, Great Britain might even be a potential ally, given the common interest of preserving its Empire – a prediction that would foreshadow France’s policy during the early years of the United Nations.

Perhaps of most interest in the report is its conclusion, which refers to the possibility of “la victoire anglo-saxonne.” In the context of the report, the term is used in discussing the potential *joint* victory of Britain and the United States. “Anglo-Saxon” had an historically pejorative meaning, and as such encompassed the entire history of France’s relationship with “perfidious Albion.” At the beginning of the war, Vichy had pursued a policy designed to limit British influence in Africa, while seeking to bolster relations with the United States. Through the events of the war and its clearly articulated postwar policy that called for more autonomy in Africa, America now posed a clear threat to the French Empire in Africa. In this sense, it had earned its place with Britain in Vichy’s contempt as part of the “Anglo-Saxon” threat.

The Fall of Vichy Africa

In 1942, the last dominoes of Vichy’s African Empire fell to the Allies. At the start of the year, Free France held all of AEF, while the United States and Britain had already begun planning Operation Gymnast (later known as Operation Torch), which

²³⁸ Ibid., p. 143. “...une politique coloniale éminemment souple qui permette au prix d’inévitables concessions dans l’ordre économique de sauvegarder cependant l’intégrité de l’Empire.”

would liberate North Africa from Vichy/Axis control. In the spring, Britain and Free France focused on an invasion of the island of Madagascar, once considered (albeit not very seriously) as a location to which the Jews of Europe could be expelled.²³⁹ Given the events of the war, a British attack on Madagascar was inevitable. Boisson himself had predicted one in April 1942, claiming that there had been some indication from U.S. representatives that the British were planning it.²⁴⁰ The battle for Madagascar took place in two phases. The first was a landing at the northern port of Diego Suarez in May 1942. Heavy fighting quickly led to a cease-fire between French and British forces, but it would not last long.²⁴¹

On September 10, the British launched a multi-pronged second attack on the island, this time focusing on Majunga and Morondava and moving on to other ports in the days following. On September 16, governor-general Armand Léon Annet petitioned the British forces for a cease-fire; he had noted the previous day that he would try his best to maintain French sovereignty to the utmost.²⁴² But on the same day he was soliciting offers from the British, Annet received a telegram from Minister of Colonies Jules Brévié, who had replaced Platon in April. In his message, Brévié noted that he had full confidence in Annet to resist the British with honor to the very end.²⁴³ The British presented their terms of surrender the following day, which Annet rejected as too harsh.²⁴⁴ Fighting continued until early November, when Annet finally surrendered the

²³⁹ See Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1941).

²⁴⁰ ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 928, Dossier 4

²⁴¹ Secrétariat d'État aux Colonies, Note sur l'agression Britannique contre Madagascar, March 1943, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 895, Dossier 3.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 25-6.

island. Both American and British representatives made sure to tell French authorities that Madagascar would be returned to France after the war.²⁴⁵

The gradual encirclement of Vichy by British and Free French forces in Africa triggered German concern that the regime was unable to maintain a stable hold on the continent. As a condition of rearming the colonies against an attack by Allied forces, Germany insisted that Pétain accept German and Italian intelligence officials in AOF to observe whatever measures Vichy took. The issue of German influence in Africa had been a controversial one for over a year. In a March 1941 report from Weygand to Pétain that discussed the overall situation in Africa, Weygand had emphasized the importance of keeping the Nazis out of French Africa:

It is my duty, in closing this optimistic account, to remind you that the sentiments of West Africa are, like the rest of French Africa, clearly inclined towards England, which it hopes will be victorious. It is important, I apologize to repeat, to fiercely prevent any German presence that would make it difficult, to say the least, for the task of the High Commissioner to the Federation, and would risk taking away in a very short period of time the benefits of our efforts in recent months.²⁴⁶

At his trial in 1945, Boisson repeatedly emphasized his own efforts to keep Germany out of sub-Saharan Africa during the war. While it is possible that in his attempt to exculpate himself he exaggerated his resistance to Germany and downplayed his hatred for the British, there is no question that Boisson saw the German presence in Africa as a threat to French sovereignty. In documents he prepared for his defense, he noted his desire to

²⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 36.

²⁴⁶ Memo from Weygand to Pétain, March 5 1941, ANOM, 30 APC 2, Dossier 6, document 422. “Il est mon devoir, en terminant ce compte-rendu optimiste, de rappeler que l’Afrique Occidentale est, comme la reste de l’Afrique Française, sensible et ombrageuse, que ses sentiments l’inclinent nettement vers l’Angleterre dont elle souhaite la victoire, qu’il importe, je m’excuse de le répéter, de la préserver jalousement de toute présence allemande qui rendrait difficile pour ne pas dire plus, la tâche du Haut-commissaire de la Fédération et risquerait de faire perdre en peu de temps le bénéfice des efforts de ces derniers mois.”

prevent German control of French Africa and the humiliation that would have followed from it. Probably more accurate was the reason Boisson gave in 1945 for keeping the Germans out, entirely consistent with his motives during the war. Noting the “desire to maintain French prestige in the eyes of the *indigènes*,” Boisson indicated that in 1940, while France’s colonial subjects knew she had been beaten by Germany, their everyday life had not changed. It was possible to cause the memory of the defeat to fade away, but “the German presence would serve as a reminder. And of course, the German presence would be accompanied by German propaganda... I wanted France to find her *indigènes* as she had always known them.”²⁴⁷

In what would become known as the Martin-Moellhausen Affair, Pétain ordered Boisson to accept a German military observer (code named René Martin; in actuality Eitel Moellhausen) in Dakar, at the behest of the Reich.²⁴⁸ In a vigorously argued memo to Vichy in July 1942, Boisson adamantly protested the policy of allowing German military observers entry into AOF, viewing it as undermining promises made to the population to keep the empire neutral in the struggle between Britain and Germany. Allowing German or Italian agents into Dakar would create ambiguity within AOF as to Vichy’s intentions, an ambiguity that would be easily exploited by the British. Once this ambiguity was created, he noted, “[a]s the Empire moves forward, France will no longer have the same West Africa. It will have only a West Africa uncertain in the face of possible aggression, a West Africa with a new susceptibility to the effects of Anglo-

²⁴⁷ La Politique Suivie en AOF, March 1945, ANOM, 30 APC 2, Dossier 3, Document 355. “Cette défaite s’était passée loin d’eux ; la présence allemande l’aurait rendue sensible, matérialisée. Et bien entendu, la présence allemande se serait accompagnée de propagande allemande qui aurait, comme partout, trouvé des complicités. Je voulais que la France retrouve ses indigènes telle qu’elle les avait toujours connus.”

²⁴⁸ For more on the Martin-Moellhausen affair, see Hitchcock, pp. 327-30; Ramognino, pp. 127-131.

Gaullist propaganda, which has certainly never relented but which I can say had become impotent.”²⁴⁹ Boisson’s recommendation was to keep the Germans out, in line with his overall policy of maintaining the sovereignty of the French empire. But in arguing this point, his words to Pétain reveal his preferences in the war. While he opposed German involvement in Africa, it was largely to keep the real enemy - the *British* - out of AOF:

My belief is that the situation we are in is a block. Every accession we make to German requests will undermine it irrevocably, and further, at the same time as the Germans, the Italians are still waiting. The tragedy of this debate is that the sole beneficiaries of any concessions made will be the eventual aggressor in Sub-Saharan Africa – the Anglo-Saxons.²⁵⁰

However, Pétain overrode Boisson’s concerns. On August 7, he ordered Boisson to accept the German agent, noting that “in the wake of the attacks that our former ally has directed against us, the political conditions which justified these commitments are totally outdated. The only thing that remains is the task of arming the colony against threats that continue to assert themselves.”²⁵¹ But as late as August 25, Boisson was still protesting Axis supervision of rearmament in West Africa, noting that he would not remain in Dakar if the Germans or Italians were allowed in.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ Rapport de P. Boisson au Marechal Pétain sur la situation de l’A.O.F, Dakar, July 13, 1942, ANOM, 30 APC 2, Dossier 10, Document 491. “Ma conviction, que je dois au Gouvernement d’exprimer, est qu’à partir du moment où elle sera créé, la France n’aura plus aux avancées de l’Empire la même Afrique Occidentale. Elle n’aura plus qu’une Afrique Occidentale incertaine devant l’agression possible, une Afrique Occidentale a nouveau sensibilisée pour les effets d’une propagande anglo-gaulliste, qui n’a certes jamais désarmé, mais dont je puis dire qu’elle était devenue impuissante.”

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ ANOM, 30 APC 2, Dossier 10, document 492. “A la suite des attaques que notre ex-alliée a dirigées contre nous, les conditions politiques qui justifiaient ces engagements sont totalement périmées. Seul subsiste le devoir d’armer la colonie contre des menaces qui ne cessent de s’affirmer...”

²⁵² Extrait du journal de général Bridoux, Aug. 25, 1942, ANOM, 30 APC 2, Dossier 10, document 496.

Pétain's decision to allow German observers into West Africa was critical to Boisson's eventual decision to rally to the Allies and Admiral Darlan.²⁵³ By the fall of 1942, it was clear the tide of the war was turning against pro-Pétainist forces in what was left of Vichy Africa. A successful attack on Algiers in early November by a small resistance force presented Admiral Darlan (who had been stripped of much of his power in the cabinet after Laval's return as Prime Minister) with a *fait accompli* that was made official by a full scale British invasion of the city the following day. Faced with the possibility of irrelevance in North Africa, Darlan decided to cut a deal with Dwight Eisenhower and shift his allegiance to the Allies. Darlan's decision would prove to be one of the most significant of the war, because not only did it end Vichy's control of North Africa, but also led Hitler to invade the unoccupied zone of France. Vichy had now lost control over all of France and most of the Empire.

As Boisson struggled with the decision whether to maintain loyalty to Vichy or join forces with Darlan and the Americans, he was guided by his own rubric of maintaining the sovereignty of the empire and preserving French influence to the greatest extent possible in a postwar environment. His eventual decision to follow Darlan would be facilitated by several statements made by President Roosevelt, who emphasized the importance of keeping the French empire intact after the war. Roosevelt's communications with Vichy included a letter sent to Pétain on November 8 as the Allies prepared to send forces to North Africa. In it, he emphasized the threat to the French Empire posed by the Axis:

Germany has neglected no opportunity to demoralize and degrade your great Nation. Today, with greedy eyes on the Empire which France so laboriously

²⁵³ La Présence d'Allemands à Dakar (General Barrau), ANOM, 30 APC 2, Dossier 10, document 498.

constructed, Germany and Italy are proposing to invade and occupy French North Africa in order that they may execute their schemes of domination and conquest over the whole of that continent.

I know you will realize that such a conquest of Africa would not stop there...It is evident, of course, that an invasion and occupation of French North and West Africa would constitute for the United States and all of the American Republics the gravest kind of menace to their security – just as it would sound the death knell of the French Empire...I need not again affirm to you that the United States of America seeks no territories and remembers always the historic friendship and mutual aid which we have so greatly given to each other.²⁵⁴

In addition to Roosevelt's statements, American representatives sought to assure the leaders of French Africa about the United States' postwar intentions on the continent. On November 2, 1942, Robert Murphy wrote to Boisson. Referring to numerous declarations by both Britain and the United States, Murphy assured Boisson that "the restoration of France to full independence, in all the grandeur and expanse that it possessed before the war, both in Europe and overseas, is one of the war aims of the United Nations...U.S. authorities will not intervene in any way in matters solely the responsibility of the national administration, or which relate to the exercise of French sovereignty."²⁵⁵ The letter went on to assure that the U.S. would only place military forces in French territory to the extent it was necessary.

Pétain sensed Boisson's indecision. On both November 16 and 17, Vichy sent telegrams to Boisson, asking for updates on the situation in West Africa, with no response. On November 21, Pétain wrote him directly, ordering him not to negotiate and

²⁵⁴ Letter from President Roosevelt to Marechal Pétain, November 8, 1942, *Messages d'Outre-tombe du Maréchal Pétain*, 56-8.

²⁵⁵ Letter from Robert Murphy to Pierre Boisson, Nov. 2, 1942, ANOM, 30 APC 2, Dossier 11, document 524. "... la restauration de la France en pleine indépendance, dans toute la grandeur et toute l'entendue qu'elle possédait avant la guerre, aussi bien en Europe qu'outre-mer, est l'un des buts de guerre des Nations Unies.....les autorités américaines n'interviendront en rien dans toutes les affaires qui sont uniquement du ressort de l'administration nationale, ou qui relèvent de l'exercice de la souveraineté française."

to resist all American or “Anglo-Saxon” aggression in Africa.²⁵⁶ Boisson responded on November 23, noting the deteriorating military situation and the rising dissidence against Vichy in AOF:

In this situation, my mission to maintain French sovereignty can only be fulfilled by seeking a full agreement, under the auspices of Admiral Darlan, with U.S. authorities. It is because I and the military leaders have seen the inevitable outcome of military events and political developments in North Africa, that we have asked ourselves under what conditions would the day come when a choice was imposed upon us as a result of internal circumstances. That day has come. Therefore, with the unanimous agreement of all military officials I have decided to place myself under the command of Admiral Darlan (under certain accepted reservations), which will *ensure preservation of absolute French sovereignty in the territories of Federation*, which remain free of foreign occupation and Gaullist interference. It was a painful decision for us. We have absolute confidence that we are serving the destiny of the *Patrie* that you embody.²⁵⁷ [emphasis added]

Pétain could hardly contain his anger at Boisson, replying to him the same day that he had “seriously failed France,” and demanding that he cease taking orders from Darlan and avoid cooperating with “Anglo-American” military officials.²⁵⁸ For his part, Boisson could only try to reassure Pétain that AOF remained faithful to Pétain, and that the terms of the agreement excluded foreign or Gaullist intervention in West Africa.²⁵⁹ He made

²⁵⁶ ANOM, 30 APC 2, Dossier 11, document 533.

²⁵⁷ Ibid. “Bien plus il sera rapidement impossible de les garder dans la fidélité française et la discipline à l’encontre des tentatives de la dissidence et des incitations de désagrégation morale. Dans cette situation la mission qui m’incombe qui est de maintenir la souveraineté française ne pouvait plus être remplie qu’un recherchant un accord sous l’égide de l’amiral DARLAN, avec autorités américaines. C’est pourquoi les Chefs militaires et moi-même avons vu aboutissement inévitable des événements militaires et politiques survenus en Afrique du Nord, que nous nous sommes renseignés sur les conditions qui nous seraient éventuellement faites, le jour, ou choix s’imposerait sous pression des circonstances intérieures. Ce jour est venu. En conséquence avec l’accord unanimement médité de tous chefs militaires responsables j’ai décidé de me mettre aux ordres de l’Amiral DARLAN, sous ces réserves qui ont été acceptées, qui assurent sauvegarde de la souveraineté française absolue dans les territoires de la Fédération, qui resteront libres de toute occupation étrangère et de toute immixtion gaulliste. En nous le débat a été douloureux. Nous avons absolue conscience de servir dans son inéluctable dénouement la Patrie que vous incarnez.”

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

similar assurances to the population of AOF in a speech on November 23, justifying his decision to follow Darlan:

Since I assumed command of French West Africa, my constant concern was the *maintenance of French sovereignty in the territories entrusted to me*. It is the same concern that prompts my decision, with the agreement of the military authorities, to place West Africa under the command of Admiral Darlan. We would not have come to this decision unless we were certain that we are maintaining faithfulness to the oath we took to the Marshall... West Africa...will remain totally and absolutely free of foreign occupation whatsoever...Now that the decision is made, accept it solemnly. Think of France.²⁶⁰ [emphasis added]

Like Robert Murphy, Eisenhower recognized the importance of assuaging any qualms Boisson may have had about his betrayal of Pétain. The Eisenhower-Murphy/Darlan-Boisson accords of December 7 made a number of promises to French authorities in Africa, including the maintenance of French sovereignty, free passage of commercial ships, and guarantees that the French would give and carry out military orders to French troops, and that French troops would not be used in battles against other French (Vichy) forces. In return, American and British forces were free to use AOF and North African ports, and could transport troops across AOF's land, water, or airspace.²⁶¹ Perhaps most importantly, the parties made a commitment "to restore integrally the

²⁶⁰ ANOM, 30 APC 1, document 284. "Depuis que j'ai pris le commandement de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, mon souci constant a été le maintien de la souveraineté française dans les Territoires qui m'ont été confiés.

C'est ce même souci qui m'a inspiré dans la décision prise en plein accord avec les autorités militaires responsables de ranger l'Afrique Occidentale aux ordres de l'amiral DARLAN. Cette considération pourtant éminente n'aurait pas à elle seule suffi pour nous amener à cette détermination si nous n'avions la certitude qu'en la prenant nous restons fidèles au serment que nous avons prêté au Marechal.

...

L'Afrique Occidentale va désormais concourir à la réalisation de ses desseins. Elle le fera en restant totalement et absolument libre de toute occupation étrangère quelle qu'elle soit... Maintenant que la décision est acquise, accueillez-la gravement. Pensez à la France."

²⁶¹ ANOM, 30 APC 2, Dossier 11, document 554.

French Empire.”²⁶² In thanking him for his cooperation, Eisenhower personally assured Boisson that the Allies would not seek to undermine his authority in Africa, and that America was interested mainly in a unified France fighting against the Axis.²⁶³ Days later, the Vichy France enclave in Djibouti fell to British forces. By the end of 1942, Vichy was irrelevant in Africa.

Boisson meant every word of both his telegram to Pétain and his speech to AOF. For as long as he maintained control in AOF, he proclaimed loyalty to Pétain and continued to criticize and suppress Gaullist followers. This situation was facilitated in the month after the accords by Darlan himself, who maintained many of the harsh Vichy policies in North and West Africa, including the enforcement of antisemitic laws. After an attack by de Gaulle’s followers on the island of Réunion, a French colony east of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean in late November 1942, Boisson telegraphed all colonies under his control, calling for an increased crackdown on Gaullist sympathizers and the need for further surveillance.²⁶⁴ He noted that “by attacking Réunion, the Gaullist leaders have reaffirmed the true character of their movement... Do not tolerate any propaganda or gesture that risks being seen by outsiders as serving a cause that is not ours, I repeat, that is not ours.”²⁶⁵ In March, Boisson gave a speech in Bouake, Ivory Coast where he

²⁶² Clark-Darlan Agreement, Nov. 22, 1942. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1942*, Vol. II (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 453-457.

²⁶³ ANOM, 30 APC 2, Dossier 11, document 555.

²⁶⁴ ANOM, 30 APC 1, document 289.

²⁶⁵ Ibid. “En attaquant la REUNION les chefs du Gaullisme ont réaffirmé le vrai caractère de leur mouvement. Il est nécessaire de redoubler de surveillance à l’égard de leurs sympathisants et de faire apparaître aux yeux des hésitants l’aspect antinational de leur action. Ne tolérez aucune propagande ni aucun geste qui risqueraient, étant connu à l’extérieur, de servir une cause qui n’est pas la nôtre, je répète qui n’est pas la nôtre.”

emphasized that AOF, now collaborating with the allies, had to maintain loyalty to Pétain.²⁶⁶

Boisson's tenure as head of a liberated West Africa would not last long. On Christmas Eve 1942, Darlan was assassinated by a Gaullist sympathizer in Algiers.²⁶⁷ Although Roosevelt and Churchill favored Henri Giraud (a member of Free France installed as Darlan's second in command after the Eisenhower accords) to take over French Africa, it would be only a matter of months before de Gaulle would become the officially recognized head of Free France. There was no possibility that Boisson would maintain power in AOF after de Gaulle's consolidation of the resistance movement. Free French authorities loathed Boisson; a December 1942 report by Free France's military mission to West Africa claimed that Boisson had imposed on AOF "a political system directly inspired by fascist and Nazi doctrines."²⁶⁸ He had instituted "a regime of repression and absolute terror without precedent in the history of our African empire."²⁶⁹ Among his repressive measures were the purging and reorganization of police forces and the civil service, the establishment of military tribunals, and the banning of dissident parties and organizations.²⁷⁰ De Gaulle had no intention of leaving Boisson in power, and he expressed as much to American representatives in early 1943. Both Eisenhower and Robert Murphy saw Boisson as one of America's better assets in the region, but to no avail. By July 1943, Boisson had resigned as head of AOF, no longer having the sympathies of the European community in Dakar. Despite volunteering for Free French

²⁶⁶ ANOM, 30 APC 2, Dossier 11, document 543.

²⁶⁷ See Anthony Verrier, *Assassination in Algiers: Churchill, Roosevelt, de Gaulle, and the Murder of Admiral Darlan* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990).

²⁶⁸ Rapport – Oppression Vichyiste en AOF, Dec. 27, 1942, p. 1, ANP, 3 AG I 280, Dossier 3.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7-16.

forces against Italy shortly thereafter, he was arrested in late 1943, largely due to his repressive policies against Gaullists in the early months of the war. He dies in 1948, before a full proceeding could be brought before France's postwar *Haute Cour de Justice*, which conducted the purge trials.²⁷¹ It would be left to colonial administrators free of the taint of Vichy to plan French policy for Africa going forward.

Conclusion

With the fall of Madagascar and AOF to pro-Allied forces, Vichy's direct influence in Africa had essentially ended by the close of 1942. However, despite the loss of virtually all of its African territories to the Allies, pro-Vichyites continued to scheme about Africa's postwar future. To provide one example, in 1943 the Société de Géographie Commerciale and the Comité d'Etudes de l'Economie Impériale de Grande France published "Revue économique française" which surveyed the current state of the war and the colonies, and included several speeches from prominent Vichy officials. While unreliable as a realistic assessment of Vichy's economic standing at this stage of the war, the publication provides insight as to Vichy's mentality toward Africa, regardless of the ultimate victor. Noting that "l'Afrique Noire" was an important source of resources for Europe, the publication emphasized France's importance to the international community in securing these vast resources after the war. It favorably contrasted France's system of colonialism, which purportedly did not consider Africans as slaves or inferiors and allowed for the cultivation of an elite class, with Britain's,

²⁷¹ Hitchcock provides the best account of Boisson's purge process, 334-339.

whose system of colonial education could not match France's.²⁷² This emphasis on Britain suggests that Vichy may have begun to more seriously consider the possibility of a British victory and a continued British threat in Africa. However, regardless of the outcome, the study observed that:

Europe will need France as a bridge to a moral union between Europe and Africa, because only France is capable through its colonial methods to obtain from the African people a collaboration without coercion... Whatever happens, only France can provide the essential moral and intellectual link between Africa, Europe and other parts of the world, and this moral and intellectual link is essential for the proper balance of future economic agreements.²⁷³

While France's relationship with Africa was portrayed as beneficial to Europe in a postwar environment, another article in the same publication noted the benefit to France in remaining involved in Africa. Noting that "imperial mystique" could help provide postwar unity in France, it suggested that France's future lay in a federated empire. Such an arrangement was now necessary because of France's diminished status in the world: "France, whose interests and prestige will in all ways in the future be quite limited in Europe, can do nothing in peacetime but continually move towards an Empire that should bring it consolations and reasons to hope, live, and increase its stature."²⁷⁴ The publication concluded with several declarations from prominent Vichy ministers,

²⁷² This was of course a misrepresentation. As Ruth Ginio has indicated, the use of forced labor in AOF was not abolished until 1946. During the war, over 200,000 Africans were swept up in Vichy's system of forced labor. Ruth Ginio, *French Colonialism Unmasked*, 76-85.

²⁷³ *Revue Économique Française (Métropole et Provinces d'Outre-Mer)*, p. 82-3, ANP, 2 AG 442. "L'Europe aura besoin de la France comme trait d'union moral entre elle et l'Afrique car seule elle est capable par ses méthodes de colonisation d'obtenir des peuples africains noirs une collaboration sans contrainte... Quoi qu'il arrive, ce sera la France seule qui pourra constituer le lien moral et intellectuel indispensable entre l'Afrique, l'Europe, et les autres parties du monde, et ce lien moral et intellectuel est indispensable au bon équilibre des accords économiques futurs."

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 90. "Résultat inévitable, au surplus, d'une longue évolution nous menant directement au fédéralisme impériale, comme nous l'avons développé dans un précédent article. Une France dont les intérêts et le prestige seront, à l'avenir et de toute manière, assez limites en Europe, ne peut que s'orienter, à la Paix, sans cesse davantage vers un Empire qui doit lui apporter consolations et raisons d'espérer, de vivre, de grandir."

including Pétain and Laval, promising that France would regain its place in Europe and the world after the war was over.²⁷⁵

In many ways, their predictions were correct. Maintaining the empire was indeed important to France's stature after the war, as de Gaulle and his followers also realized. What Vichy never really anticipated, possibly due to its deep resentment of communism, was a divided balance of power in which the Soviet Union, not Nazi Germany, would act as the counterbalancing force to the United States. Regardless of this lack of foresight, there could be no question that in the face of France's humiliation, the nation required a revival of its national prestige after the war. The colonies in west and central Africa could play a crucial role in that revival. Vichy recognized this fact from the moment it surrendered to Hitler, and endeavored to protect its colonies in Africa from all foreign encroachment, and especially from the British.

Vichy's legacy in Africa – namely, fear of the Anglo-American threat to French power on the continent, as well as the fierce desire to maintain sovereignty and influence in Africa – would endure long beyond the fall of the regime. Although the rivalry with Britain in Africa had predated World War II, the battle for France's territories during the war further antagonized Vichy functionaries charged with protecting French imperial interests. It is certainly true that as a political system, Vichy was diametrically opposed both to the resistance movements and the Fourth Republic that succeeded it. The policies of collaboration with Germany, oppression of Jews, jailing of political dissidents, and irrational hatred of democracy would not have been carried out under an accountable government in the model of the republics that both preceded and succeeded Vichy. Yet, as the following chapters will demonstrate, parts of Vichy's ideology vis-à-vis Africa is

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 93-6.

readily identified in the policies of both the Fourth and Fifth Republics. The consideration of Francophone Africa as “France’s best card”, which would enable the preservation of French international influence, was shared throughout the political spectrum during the latter half of the twentieth century. Fifty years after Vichy’s fall, one of its former low-level functionaries would cite the dual principles of maintaining French power in Africa at all costs and resisting “Anglo-Saxon” aggression, while supporting a genocidal regime in Rwanda. His name was François Mitterrand.

Chapter Two

Restoring *Grandeur*: De Gaulle, Free France, and Africa, 1940-1944

...We must, with precision and dignity, form a close-knit front against the foreign interference that compromises not only the current unity among the French, but also the future independence of our country... We shall show the Anglo-Saxons that we are able to maintain our *sang-froid* and clarity, and that we have enough courage and tenacity to prevent this strangulation.²⁷⁶

-Telegram from Félix Éboué, governor-general of Afrique Équatoriale Française, to Gabriel Fortune, governor of Moyen-Congo, regarding American and British efforts to prevent Charles de Gaulle from asserting Free French authority in North Africa, April 8, 1943.

...France cannot be France without greatness.²⁷⁷

-Charles de Gaulle

As discussed in the previous chapter, the main themes of Vichy's experience in Africa were loss and insecurity, starting with the defection of Afrique Équatoriale Française (AEF) to the Allies in August 1940 and culminating with Darlan and Boisson's betrayal of Pétain in late 1942. The tenuous situation in Africa was Vichy's own responsibility; the moment it signed the armistice with Germany in June 1940, it agreed to have its empire diminished in some form. The events of the war would determine exactly what shape Vichy's postwar empire would take. Given Japan's seizure of Vietnam and Italy's designs in the Mediterranean, the notion of a postwar Vichy France preserving its entire empire was nothing short of fantasy. Essentially, despite its

²⁷⁶ Telegram from Félix Éboué to the governor of French Moyen-Congo, April 8 1942, Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer (hereinafter ANOM), 5D292. "Mais devons former avec précision et dignité un front serré contre ingérence étrangère qui compromet non seulement union actuelle entre français mais même indépendance future notre pays telle que la concevons et devons la concevoir. Stop. Nous montrerons aux Anglo-Saxons que savons conserver sang-froid et lucidité mais que avons aussi assez de courage et ténacité pour empêcher cet étranglement."

²⁷⁷ Charles de Gaulle, *The Complete War Memoirs of Charles de Gaulle*, trans. Jonathan Griffin (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955), 3.

collaboration with Germany, there was no possibility of Vichy France emerging from the war as one of the “winning” powers in Europe, regardless of what the outcome might be.

In this sense, the experience of Charles de Gaulle’s Free France movement in Africa was vastly different from that of its counterpart in Vichy. De Gaulle’s unequivocal stance against both Vichy and the Nazis, embodied in his famous radio address from London on June 18, 1940, enabled him to align himself and his followers with an ally that would help restore the French empire after the war.²⁷⁸ Indeed, it was precisely this possibility that helped legitimize Free France in the eyes of the French public. De Gaulle made certain to emphasize it in his speeches; for example, on August 16 he attacked Vichy by stating that “the restoration of the country is totally impossible under the armistice regime.”²⁷⁹ There could be no hope, de Gaulle and his followers would argue, of France preserving its entire empire if it had to rely on Hitler’s whims.

Free France also enjoyed considerably greater military success in Africa than Vichy. The defection of most of AEF to de Gaulle in August 1940 presented him with a stable base of operations on the continent from which he could win back the remainder of the empire. There were clear setbacks early on – the failed offensive on Dakar in September 1940 being the most obvious. But unlike Vichy, which struggled to prevent losses in Africa on two fronts – from both British/Gaullist forces and the Axis – de Gaulle’s Free French movement began the war on the offensive in Africa and gradually reunited almost all of France’s prewar African territories under one flag. This

²⁷⁸ On June 18, 1940, with Churchill’s support, de Gaulle went on BBC radio to encourage France to resist both the Nazis and the Pétain regime, and to continue supporting its British ally. For a history of the speech, see François Delpla, *L’appel de 18 juin 1940* (Paris: Grasset, 2000).

²⁷⁹ Speech, Aug. 16, 1940. Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et Messages 1940-1946 Pendant la Guerre* (Paris: Plon, 1946), 28. “...la restauration du pays est totalement impossible sous le régime des armistices.”

progressive reunification of the empire culminated in its ultimate symbolic triumph – the marching of de Gaulle and Free French forces through the Arc de Triomphe and down the Champs-Élysées on August 25, 1944, almost four years to the day when Félix Éboué and AEF swung their allegiance to the general.²⁸⁰

Despite this profound difference between Free France and Vichy's war experiences in Africa, de Gaulle's sentiments about his allies are not so readily contrasted with those of Vichy. de Gaulle benefitted greatly by allying himself with Britain and the United States, but his relationships with them were not always harmonious. Much has been written about the political disagreements between de Gaulle and Roosevelt, and to a lesser extent Churchill.²⁸¹ These disagreements were generally limited to political matters, and de Gaulle exhibited a measure of cooperation with Allied military authorities, albeit with a few notable exceptions discussed below. In terms of the war, their interests were the same – defeat Nazi Germany and restore France as an independent democratic entity. Postwar plans certainly differed, but this did not necessarily threaten cooperation – the wartime relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union was the most obvious example of this principle. Nevertheless, even with these common aims in mind, de Gaulle and his Free French followers chafed under British and American control of the war effort, and they exerted an inordinate amount of energy fixated on France's disagreements with her allies.

²⁸⁰ Of course, the symbolism of this moment was drastically manipulated by the *blanchissement* of French forces, by which colonial forces from Africa, despite having fought to liberate northern France, were not allowed to participate in the final march through Paris.

²⁸¹ See Simon Berthon, *Allies at War: the Bitter Rivalry among Churchill, Roosevelt, and de Gaulle* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2001); G.E. Maguire, *Anglo-American Policy towards the Free French* (Oxford: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1995); Charles G. Cogan, *Oldest Allies, Guarded Friends: The United States and France Since 1940* (London: Praeger, 1994); Robert O. Paxton and Nicholas Wall, eds., *De Gaulle and the United States: A Centennial Reappraisal* (Oxford: Berg, 1994).

To be fair, some legitimate disagreements existed. Throughout the war, tensions between de Gaulle and the allies arose over a variety of issues. De Gaulle's frustration with the British grew mainly from management of French colonial territory during the war, most notably during the invasion of Madagascar in 1942 and Britain's opposition to the French crackdown on the Lebanese independence movement in 1942-1943. At times, only Britain's steadfast patience and its gratitude to de Gaulle for his June 1940 stance against Nazi Germany prevented a full deterioration of Anglo-French relations. Of course, de Gaulle's relationship with Franklin Roosevelt was notoriously volatile, mostly due to Roosevelt's refusal to recognize him as the rightful head of the resistance movement for most of the war. Consequently, the two leaders sharply disagreed on much of America's policy in Africa, and especially regarding U.S. cooperation with the Darlan-Boisson regime in North and West Africa in late 1942. Finally, as liberation neared, de Gaulle and his followers also evinced strong concerns about the potential influence the United States would have over France's colonial possessions. These aggregate factors were sufficient to foster de Gaulle's long-standing suspicion of Anglo-American intentions in Africa.

To be sure, one must be careful not to *overstate* either the rivalry that existed between de Gaulle and his British and American allies during the war, or the long-term effects of that rivalry. Unlike Pétain and Laval, there is no indication that de Gaulle or his top lieutenants viewed Britain as France's existential enemy. Nevertheless, similarities existed between Vichy's and Free France's views concerning the Allies. First, both recognized that the war experience had changed France's role in the world. While leaders in the Vichy and Free French regimes debated how to maximize French

influence in the postwar atmosphere, there was a clear realization by both that France's stature would be diminished after the final peace settlements. More specifically, both Vichy and Free France recognized that France would be drawn between two poles after the war – in Vichy's case, between Germany and the United States, and in Free France's, between the United States and the Soviet Union. Consequently, both planned for a postwar situation in which American power threatened to have significant influence over France's future. Additionally, members of de Gaulle's regime tried to make sense of America's professed anticolonial ideals, and how they would affect the French empire when the war concluded. Finally, both Vichy and Free France worried about the threat that Britain posed to French interests in Africa, albeit with different degrees of virulence.

Tracing these contours is important because they suggest deeper-rooted French mentalities about the role of the empire and the impact that the war had on France's place in the world. Ultimately, both Vichy and Free France were deeply traumatized by the invasion of 1940. The heightened importance of the empire was one of the critical outgrowths of that sense of loss. Of course, there are fundamental reasons why France's postwar policy toward Africa, which culminated in the Fifth Republic's coddling of dictators on the continent, has generally been viewed as an outgrowth of Gaullism.²⁸² But Vichy and Free France's similar outlooks about the Allies' intentions and the future of the continent suggest a more distinct French component. The comparison becomes

²⁸² See Frédéric Turpin, *De Gaulle, Pompidou, et l'Afrique (1958-1974): décoloniser et coopérer* (Paris: Indes Savantes, 2010); John Chipman, *French Power in Africa* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1989); Philip G. Cerny, *The Politics of Grandeur: Ideological Aspects of de Gaulle's Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). As Chipman notes, "France had accepted the claims for independence from imperial masters, and struck a new bargain with the peoples of Africa who were still to a large extent sympathetic to the French position. For de Gaulle, as for subsequent French leaders, France's natural sphere of influence included Africa and the Middle East no less than Europe." Chipman, 8.

more appropriate when considering both sides' views on their African subjects. While Vichy's overall attitude about the *indigènes* was marked by a degree of racism generally not evident in the colonial administrators who followed Free France, both treated Africans with condescension and incredible skepticism about their aptitude for self-government. As just one example, there are remarkable similarities between Pierre Boisson's ideas about France's role in civilizing Africans and those put forth by Félix Éboué and other colonial administrators at the 1944 Brazzaville Conference, which established the guidelines for France's colonial future in Africa.

Nevertheless, de Gaulle and Free France's particular role in shaping the future of French policy in Africa should not be understated. Vichy's colonial officers had been limited both by their racial outlook – which ultimately prevented any real consideration of decentralized administration or political reforms in the colonies – and by their weakened position vis-à-vis the Axis. In contrast, de Gaulle and his followers were afforded significantly more flexibility in planning the postwar French presence on the continent. They were certainly not free from racial prejudice; the condescending attitudes exhibited toward their African subjects at the Brazzaville Conference stand as the clearest example of this. Nor were they immune from the potential for postwar interference by the Allies; try as he may, de Gaulle could not seriously hope to restore France's status on par with that of the United States. But France's postwar position under a restored republic was markedly different than it would have been under a defeated Vichy. In short, Free France had more latitude to consider more progressive reforms, and was pressed to do so by the western allies.

Remarkably, very little has been written about the de Gaulle regime in sub-Saharan Africa. Tony Chafer has examined the Free French regime and the Brazzaville Conference as preludes to postwar policy in Africa.²⁸³ And Catherine Akpo-Vaché and Martin Thomas have detailed the course of the war throughout Africa.²⁸⁴ This chapter goes beyond the existing scholarship through a more comprehensive examination of Free French colonial mentalities. Like Vichy's Africa policy, Free France's would be influenced by the contributions of a few select individuals. At the forefront was de Gaulle, who rose from obscurity as a relatively unknown military officer before the war to become the heroic embodiment of the nation by the war's conclusion. Prior to the Brazzaville Conference, he took no great interest in the future of France's African subjects. He rarely engaged in debates about the some key issues of colonial policy, such as the benefits or implementation of the French civilizing mission. Nevertheless, from the moment he gave his speech in London in June 1940, de Gaulle's articulation of the need to restore French power and influence – or *grandeur* – underscored every debate on the future of Africa. For Pétain, Africa had always been a mere card to play in a zero-sum game of *realpolitik*. But for de Gaulle and Free France, Africa was not a mere chip to be sacrificed for a better standing in Europe. Rather, Africa *represented* French power; it was a manifestation of the projection of French *grandeur* throughout the world. Its presence in the French orbit also complimented de Gaulle's view of France as an indispensable nation – in his words, “eternal France.”

²⁸³ Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France's Successful Decolonization?* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 43-50, 55-61.

²⁸⁴ Catherine Akpo-Vaché, *L'AOF et la Seconde Guerre Mondiale* (Paris: Karthala, 2000); Martin Thomas, *The French Empire at War, 1940-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007). See also Edward L. Bimberg, *Tricolor over the Sahara: The Desert Battles of the Free French, 1940-1942* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002).

It would be left to his followers to articulate exactly what that sense of French identity would mean for French colonial policy. This was somewhat unclear in the first two years of the war, as de Gaulle's Free France movement was limited by the need to consolidate its power and influence vis-à-vis the other liberation movements. In these early months, Africa held primarily military interest as the territorial center of the movement. Prior to 1943, less attention was paid to the problems of colonial policy, although AEF enjoyed certain advantages, as Free France's base in Africa, in establishing the terms of the debate. Led by its governor-general, the fervent Gaullist Félix Éboué, AEF served as both the colonial rallying point for those who opposed Vichy and a positive example of the role Africans could play in the postwar order. During these early years, Éboué played an important part in discussing this role for the continent in France's future.

The defection of North Africa to the Allied cause and the subsequent consolidation of the liberation movements under de Gaulle provided the increased confidence that Free France could expand its influence beyond military matters and into the realm of policy. As it became clear in 1943 that the direction of the war was turning in the Allies' favor, Free France's colonial administrators turned toward planning for the postwar order in Africa, culminating in the Brazzaville Conference of early 1944. The conference would provide the foundation for French policy on the continent through decolonization. René Pleven, de Gaulle's Minister of Colonies, was the most important figure in developing a clear direction for postwar policy in Africa, but Henri Laurentie, his secretary of political affairs, also made significant contributions. They were faced with the challenging task of both consolidating French power in the postwar order and

maintaining control over France's possessions of Africa – all in light of the loss and humiliation that the *métropole* had been subjected to by the war experience.

In retrospect, it was a futile effort. The war had provided the death knell for the imperial age, and Free France's colonial reforms could only represent a delaying action. By 1960, most of France's African empire had achieved its independence. But the views of these administrators would serve as a rough outline for the postcolonial affiliations with African rulers that would later mark de Gaulle's presidency in the 1960s.

Grandeur and De Gaulle's Vision of France in Africa

There is no indication that Charles de Gaulle had any significant interest in Africa prior to his courageous stand against Nazi Germany in June 1940. His biography has been well covered by numerous historians and will not be repeated in any great length here.²⁸⁵ Nevertheless, de Gaulle's roots are important in evaluating the vast influence that his policies – and his legacy – would have on sub-Saharan Africa in the twentieth century. By all accounts, de Gaulle's interests were almost purely military prior to 1940, and specifically rooted in the European war experience. He completed several tours in both Poland and Russia after World War I, and his writings on military tactics and strategy, prescient in hindsight for their promotion of offensive tank warfare and rejection of the Maginot Line, were exclusively focused on fighting wars on the continent.²⁸⁶

Unlike the numerous Vichy and Free French politicians and bureaucrats who would play

²⁸⁵ See Eric Roussel. *Charles de Gaulle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 2007); Andrew Shennan, *De Gaulle* (London; Longman, 1993); Jean Lacouture, *Charles de Gaulle* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1986); Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*, 3 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1970); Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre*, 3 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1954)

²⁸⁶ See Charles de Gaulle, *Vers l'armée de Métier* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1934); Charles de Gaulle, *La France et son armée* (Paris: Plon. 1938).

an active role in determining Africa's future, he never attended the *école coloniale*, nor did he travel extensively in Africa prior to the war. In summary, it is fair to say that prior to 1940, Africa was very much on the periphery of de Gaulle's experience – acknowledged as part of the empire, but of uncertain importance to the destiny of the nation itself.

The war would force him to reconsider this perspective. With the defection of AEF in August 1940, Free France gained its first significant base of operations on French territory. During these early months, de Gaulle gained a newfound knowledge of the African empire, as he shuttled between London and Brazzaville. As de Gaulle's reference point was his military background, an appreciation for the complexities of colonial policy would take some time to develop. He initially saw Africa as a typical French officer in wartime would – namely, as having only military significance in the ongoing struggle against Germany. To this end, in his initial speeches urging his countrymen to rally to the resistance, he cited the empire's military assets, including bases in North Africa, a navy, and France's vast imperial holdings. For de Gaulle, these belied Pétain's claims of France's military exhaustion, which had been used to justify the decision to capitulate to Germany.²⁸⁷

Indeed, Pétain's decision to demilitarize the empire was incomprehensible to de Gaulle, as it sharply contrasted decades of military and colonial tradition and policy. It also threatened upheaval and revolt in the colonies, as France's subjects could not possibly respect Pétain's cowardly decision to collaborate.²⁸⁸ On July 2, 1940 de Gaulle invoked the memory of historical military figures Thomas-Robert Bugeaud and Louis-

²⁸⁷ Speeches of June 22, 1940 and June 24, 1940. Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et Messages 1940-1946*, 5-8.

²⁸⁸ Speech, July 30, 1940. *Ibid.*, 18.

Joseph de Montcalm, and colonial administrators Hubert Lyautey and Joseph François Dupleix, and asked whether they “would have ever consented to evacuate, without a fight, the strategic points of the Empire; would they ever have supported, again without any combat, the control of the empire by the enemy?”²⁸⁹ This empire, he said on August 29, contained a “bundle of capital” – namely, its population and resources – that remained “of great importance to France as trump cards in this struggle where her destiny will be played out.”²⁹⁰ The greatest crime of the armistice, he noted, “was to have capitulated as if France did not have an Empire.”²⁹¹ Put simply, for de Gaulle, the colonies were a means for France to get back into the war. He did little in these early months to indicate that he saw in them any other inherent value.

He had a somewhat firmer grasp on his views of France’s rightful place in the world. For de Gaulle, resistance against Vichy and the Nazis provided a critical opportunity for France to regain its international standing, or *grandeur*. This notion had many implications, spanning military, cultural, and colonial influence, and would continue to develop over the next 30 years of de Gaulle’s life in French politics. The opening paragraph of his *War Memoirs*, written in 1954 before he returned to French political life, provides a useful summary of his feelings about the role of his country:

All my life I have thought of France in a certain way. This is inspired by sentiment as much as by reason. The emotional side of me tends to imagine France, like the princess in the fairy stories or the Madonna in the frescoes, as dedicated to an exalted and exceptional destiny. Instinctively I have the feeling

²⁸⁹ Speech of July 2, 1940. Ibid., 12. “Dupleix, Montcalm, Bugeaud, le maréchal Lyautey, auraient-ils jamais consenti à évacuer, sans combattre, les points stratégiques de l’Empire, auraient-ils jamais supporté, sans même avoir livré combat, le contrôle de l’ennemi sur l’Empire?” .

²⁹⁰ Speech, Aug. 29, 1940. Ibid., 32. “...l’Empire français est un faisceau de forces capital...il reste à la France des très importants atouts dans cette lutte où se joue son destin.”

²⁹¹ Ibid. “Le crime de l’Armistice, c’est d’avoir capitulé comme si la France n’avait pas d’Empire.”

that Providence has created her either for complete success or for exemplary misfortunes... But the positive side of my mind also assures me that France is not really herself unless in the front rank; that only vast enterprises are capable of counterbalancing the ferments of dispersal which are inherent in her people; that our country, as it is, surrounded by the others, as they are, must aim high and hold itself straight, on pain of mortal danger. In short, to my mind, France cannot be France without greatness.²⁹²

The notion of France returning to greatness was so fundamental to de Gaulle's ideology that *grandeur* became one of his central war aims. On August 7, 1940, he made an explicit agreement with Churchill concerning Free France's ongoing participation in the war effort, by which the resistance movement pledged its ground, naval, and air forces to support Britain against Germany. De Gaulle announced this policy on August 12, and he proudly noted that in return for military support, "the British government has taken on the responsibility to integrally restore, after victory, the independence and *grandeur* of France."²⁹³ This British promise would become a constant refrain in de Gaulle's speeches, as he sought to bolster French support for the British war effort.²⁹⁴

At first, de Gaulle's efforts to reassert French power were limited to the war. On November 15, 1941, he noted that "the first article of our policy consists of... giving the greatest extension and the greatest power possible to the French effort in the conflict."²⁹⁵ But as the war progressed, he gradually came to consider France's status in the postwar order. In November 1942, he noted in a speech at the Royal Albert Hall in London that France "intends to play a role that reflects her effort and her genius in a world system that has been defined by the Atlantic Charter and which will place the progress and security

²⁹² Charles de Gaulle, *The Complete War Memoirs of Charles de Gaulle*, 3.

²⁹³ Speech, Aug. 12, 1940. Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et Messages 1940-1946*, 26. "De son côté, le Gouvernement Britannique s'engage à restaurer intégralement, après la victoire, l'indépendance et la grandeur de la France."

²⁹⁴ Speech, May 10, 1942. *Ibid.*, 184-5. Speech, June 18, 1942. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

²⁹⁵ Speech, Nov. 15, 1941. *Ibid.*, 135 "L'article 1er de notre politique consiste...à donner la plus grande extension et la plus grande puissance possible à l'effort français dans la conflit."

of all on an international basis.”²⁹⁶ And as the allied victory approached, he more clearly articulated his notion of French *grandeur*. In November 1943, he emphasized that France’s goal was “a return by a great power to its place as a great power through the war and her efforts.”²⁹⁷ De Gaulle ultimately saw France as indispensable in the coming world order:

...present events have confirmed the belief that France must reassume, to the benefit of all, its great international role. France believes that any European and important world affair that might be resolved without her would not be good business. She believes this for reasons inscribed on the map and in history and the universal consciousness. She believes this, too, because such resolutions will be found to be inadequate at the time when, sooner or later, [France] rediscovers those elements essential to the overall balance – France’s power and influence.²⁹⁸ To be sure, de Gaulle had few illusions about France’s status vis-à-vis the allies

during the war. While he zealously asserted French interests in his dealings with Churchill and Roosevelt, he privately understood France’s actual position. This was the theme of a speech he gave in liberated Algiers to the provisional Constituent Assembly in March 1944, when he noted “difficulties in France’s external relations in the present conditions.” These conditions left France with diminished power that was out of proportion to her rightful place in the world:

While the Government must assert the rights and interests of the country – that is to say, the rights and interests that extend to all parts of the world and persist into a vast future, the conditions in which [the government] finds itself does not

²⁹⁶ Speech, Nov. 11, 1942. Ibid., 239. “...elle entend jouer le rôle qui revient à son effort et à son génie dans un système mondial tel que celui qu’a défini la Charte d’Atlantique et qui tendrait à placer le progrès et la sécurité des tous sur une base internationale.”

²⁹⁷ Speech, Nov. 25, 1943. Ibid., 349. “Ce but, c’est le retour d’une grande puissance à sa place de grande puissance par le chemin de la guerre et de l’effort.”

²⁹⁸ Speech, Nov. 3, 1943. Ibid., 340. “En outre les événements présents l’ont confirmé dans le sentiment qu’il devait reprendre, à l’avantage de tous, son grand rôle international. La France croit que toute affaire européenne et toute grande affaire mondiale, qui seraient réglées sans elle, ne seraient pas de bonnes affaires. Elle le croit pour les raisons qui sont inscrites sur la carte, dans l’Histoire et la conscience universelle. Elle le croit, aussi, parce que de tels règlements se trouveraient inadéquats au moment où, tôt au tard, elle aura retrouvé ces éléments indispensables à l’équilibre général sont sa puissance et son influence.”

provide for it, vis-à-vis the other major powers, an audience commensurate with its sacred obligations. There results, in some major policy and strategic issues posed by the war and its consequences, a kind of relative absence of France which is felt profoundly by the nation herself and by many of her friends.²⁹⁹

De Gaulle astutely tied France's diminished role and her need to regain international stature to his calls for his countrymen to rally to the resistance. Only through significant sacrifice to the Allied effort could France regain the leverage to assert herself in the postwar atmosphere. It was for precisely this reason that he deeply resented not only British and American attempts to limit Free French political control over sovereign French territories, but also any slight that prevented his followers from cooperating militarily with the allies. This would ultimately lead to virulent disagreements with the British over operations in Madagascar and with the Americans on Operation Torch in North Africa in November 1942.

Because of his focus on the larger question of France's postwar standing, he engaged very little with the problems of France's African subjects. Nevertheless, it should come as no surprise that as a military man, de Gaulle came to appreciate Africans through the sacrifices they were making on the battlefield.³⁰⁰ Of course, as Gregory Mann has demonstrated, rhetorical appreciation had very little bearing on the horrible conditions endured by African soldiers after demobilization.³⁰¹ But for de Gaulle, their

²⁹⁹ Speech, March 18, 1944. Ibid., 386. "Tandis que le Gouvernement doit faire valoir au-dehors les droits et les intérêts du pays, c'est-à-dire des droits et des intérêts qui s'étendent à toutes les parties du monde et se prolongent dans un vaste avenir, les conditions dans lesquelles il se trouve placé ne lui procurent pas, vis-à-vis des autres grandes puissances, une audience proportionnée à ses obligations sacrées. Il en résulte, dans certains des grands problèmes politiques ou stratégiques posés par la guerre ou par ses conséquences, une sorte d'absence relative de la France qui ressentent profondément la nation elle-même et beaucoup de ses amis."

³⁰⁰ For more on France's African soldiers, see Myron Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts: the Tirailleurs Senegalais in French West Africa, 1857-1960* (London: Currey, 1991).

³⁰¹ See Gregory Mann, *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

contributions to the defense of the empire nevertheless became a powerful theme in his speeches. These sacrifices had shown how indispensable the empire was to France; de Gaulle noted on June 18, 1942 that “there is an element that, in these terrible trials, reveals itself to the nation as essential to its future and necessary to its *grandeur*. That element is the Empire.”³⁰² Further, these sacrifices by France’s African subjects demonstrated the united and resolute qualities of the empire; in an August 1943 speech in Casablanca he noted the “exceptional cohesion of eternal France” and further emphasized the strength that diversity brought to the empire.³⁰³ De Gaulle was convinced that France, thus unified, would recover its former *grandeur*; he noted in his Casablanca speech that “the *grandeur* of a people can only proceed from the people.”³⁰⁴

But if his war speeches reveal de Gaulle’s gradual realization of the vital contributions of Africans to the military effort and the importance of Africa to the future of the empire, there is little to be found regarding his views on how France’s subjects should be governed or what rewards they should reap from their sacrifice. In this sense, he acted as a head of state, concerning himself only with the military situation and management of Free France’s relationship with the Allies. What mattered was that the empire would be retained intact and that the winning powers would accord France the measure of respect she deserved as a colonial power. He certainly knew the *status quo* on the continent could not continue; France could not return to a traditional colonial policy that excluded Africans from virtually all forms of self-governance. But the nature and form of postwar African society were details of little interest to the general. It would

³⁰² Speech, June 18, 1942. Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et Messages 1940-1946*, 201.

“Cependant, il est un élément qui, dans ces terribles épreuves, s’est révélé à la nation comme essentiel à son avenir et nécessaire à sa grandeur. Cet élément, c’est l’Empire.”

³⁰³ Speech, Aug. 8, 1943. *Ibid.*, 316.

³⁰⁴ Speech, Aug. 8, 1943. *Ibid.*, 318. “La grandeur d’un peuple ne procède que de ce peuple.”

be left to his lieutenants to define the contours of the debate about postwar African policy.

Félix Éboué and Free French Policy in Africa

De Gaulle had little knowledge of Chad's governor when the colony rallied to the general in August 1940. But Félix Éboué's heroic action represented a crucial break for Free France; it provided de Gaulle his first foothold on sovereign French territory. It would also ensure de Gaulle's gratitude to Éboué for the rest of the governor's life. This led to Éboué's appointment as high commissioner/governor-general of Free French Africa in November 1941. By all accounts, de Gaulle deeply respected and trusted Éboué, and the feeling was reciprocated, as Éboué gave de Gaulle his undivided loyalty. On the surface, Éboué was a powerful symbol to rally the empire to France. His status as a governor-general with African heritage served as testament to the success of the French civilizing mission. But his impact far outweighed this symbolic value. Over the next four years, he capitalized upon his standing in Free France to help establish the foundation for France's postwar policy in Africa.

Éboué was born in 1884 in French Guiana, located on the northern coast of South America. Originally colonized in the eighteenth century, it remains one of France's *départements* today. The colony prospered economically through the nineteenth century, in part because of slave labor imported from West Africa. Éboué's roots derived from this African heritage. His father was involved in gold prospecting and gradually rose to a high management position at one of the colony's mines, while Éboué's mother was left to care for Éboué and his siblings. By all indications, she encouraged young Félix's studies,

and he proved himself capable enough to earn a scholarship to a *lycée* in Bordeaux in 1898. Éboué's academic achievement was a testament to the French establishment's appreciation for merit, which was unusually progressive for the time. Over the next decade, he studied throughout Europe, and gradually developed a desire to serve the French colonial service. Through connections in Paris, he eventually earned a place in the prestigious *école coloniale*, from which he graduated in 1908 with a specialty in law.³⁰⁵ His French education, coupled with his birth in French Guiana, made him a complex figure, for he was an outsider both to the Africans he would eventually govern and to the colonial administrators whose respect he sought. But as his tenure as governor-general reveals, he unquestionably considered himself a French citizen.

Nevertheless, his African heritage may have hindered his career path. Over the next thirty years, he advanced through a number of positions in the colonial service, taking posts in Oubangui-Shari (modern day Central African Republic), Madagascar, Martinique, and eventually Guadeloupe. However, Europeans with less intelligence and ability than Éboué had risen through the ranks more quickly. Despite this, Éboué remained a fervent believer in the French civilizing mission and an admirer of the colonial system – most notably the work of administrator *par excellence* Hubert Lyautey, the military governor and resident-general of French Morocco from 1907-1925.³⁰⁶ Lyautey had encouraged colonial administrators to better understand and respect the traditions of peoples over whom they exercised authority; this message resonated with Éboué, whose African heritage provided him with a unique perspective. For Éboué, the

³⁰⁵ The only English language biography of Éboué is Brian Weinstein, *Éboué* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972). See also Albert M'Paka, *Félix Éboué 1884-1944, gouverneur général de l'Afrique équatoriale française* (Paris: Harmattan, 2008).

³⁰⁶ For more on Lyautey, see William A. Hoisington, Jr., *Lyautey and the Conquest of French Morocco* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

French mission was not an abstract policy to be implemented on faceless individuals; it had real impact on Africans, to whom French administrators had to develop stronger ties based on mutual respect and affection. “We must come to love the blacks of our Afrique Équatoriale Française,” he noted in 1941. “We have been entrusted by them with an investment.”³⁰⁷

The breakthrough in his career would come in Guadeloupe, where he was appointed in 1936 by the Popular Front’s Minister of Colonies Marius Moutet as interim governor to soothe rising labor unrest in the colony. He quickly earned the good faith of France’s subjects in the colony, but bureaucratic infighting at the colonial ministry and the fall of the Popular Front ultimately signaled Éboué’s demise. He was removed in 1938 and eventually assigned as governor of Chad – essentially a demotion, and given Chad’s remote location, it was taken as a humiliation by Éboué. This reassignment helps puts Éboué career on the eve of World War II in perspective. In one sense, Éboué’s prewar rise through the colonial ranks had prepared him for the responsibilities he would assume in 1940. But when considering the 1938 demotion to his post in Chad, one must also honestly say that the mark he made on the French empire would not have been possible without the war.

Éboué remained governor of Chad when France fell in June 1940. During that month, as Vichy engaged in armistice talks with Germany, Éboué initially declared his intention to follow de Gaulle after the latter’s speech in London. The June 22 armistice and subsequent orders from Vichy seem to have brought him marginally in line with collaboration; in July, he adopted a “wait-and-see” approach after Boisson’s appointment

³⁰⁷ Politique indigène de l’Afrique Équatoriale Française, November 1941, ANOM, 5D202. “Ainsi aimerons-nous les noirs de notre Afrique Équatoriale Française. Nous les avons reçus en dépôt.”

as head of French Africa. But as Vichy's position vis-à-vis Germany became clear, Éboué had second thoughts. On August 26, Éboué and Colonel Marchand, the military commander for Chad, issued a joint proclamation to de Gaulle in the name of both the colony and France's military forces there. Echoing de Gaulle's arguments concerning Vichy's betrayal of the empire, they first noted the colony's discontent with the armistice. Over the previous two months, they had observed that it not only "oblige France to abandon the battle, but also, under the obvious constraint of the enemy, the [Vichy] government is forced to take hostile measures toward Great Britain and to impose on French Africa a policy of economic isolation which is leading both the *indigènes* and the Europeans to ruin."³⁰⁸ Under these circumstances, it was clear to both of them that Vichy was both incapable and unwilling to restore the stature France had lost in June. Indeed, the loss of French prestige was the fundamental reason why the two decided to rally to de Gaulle:

The Governor of Chad and the military commander of the territory, observing that every type of interest entrusted to their care was placed in peril by a policy that ignores the necessities of the wellbeing of the territory, and *convinced that the restoration of grandeur and French independence* requires that overseas France continues to fight at the side of Great Britain, decides to proclaim the union of the territory and troops that they protect with the Free French forces of General de Gaulle.³⁰⁹ (emphasis added)

³⁰⁸ Proclamation of Félix Éboué and Colonel Marchand, Aug. 26, 1940, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2557, Dossier 5. "Au cours des deux derniers mois les Français d'Afrique ont constaté que l'Armistice ne se borne pas à obliger la France à abandonner la lutte, mais que, sous la contrainte évidente de l'ennemi, le gouvernement métropolitain est obligé d'accumuler les mesures d'hostilité envers la Grande-Bretagne et d'imposer à l'Afrique Française une politique d'isolement économique qui mène les populations indigènes aussi bien que les Européens à la ruine."

³⁰⁹ Ibid. "Le Gouverneur du Tchad et le Commandant Militaire du territoire, constatant que les intérêts de toute nature confiés à leur garde sont mis en péril par une politique qui ignore les nécessités de la vie du territoire, convaincus que la restauration de la grandeur et de l'indépendance française exige que la France d'outremer continue à se battre aux côtés de la Grande Bretagne, décident de proclamer l'Union du territoire et des troupes qui le protègent aux Forces Françaises Libres du Général de Gaulle..."

On August 27, the die was cast; Éboué telegraphed Boisson, indicating that he was allying himself with de Gaulle “in the interests of France and the Empire.”³¹⁰

Éboué’s decision to rally to Free France marked a significant turning point for the resistance. However, he would make his greatest impact by establishing the foundation for France’s postwar policies for governing her African subjects. Scholarship examining Free France’s plans for a postwar Africa has rightfully focused on the Brazzaville Conference of January 1944.³¹¹ But three years earlier, Éboué had already begun to advocate for some of the principles later adopted by the conference. In January 1941, he distributed a circular concerning Free France’s presence and role in AEF. The purpose of the circular was twofold: to inspire those in AEF to continue fighting the war, and improve living conditions for France’s colonial subjects. Éboué’s circular provides a clear indication that he did not consider himself an outsider in the French colonial mission. He readily adopted the same language used by the colonial administration, and focused on France’s “special mission” in Africa. Noting that French citizens and subjects in Africa had a “common destiny to reconquer France and save the Empire,” Éboué emphasized that France had the advantage of particular virtues in both its colonial efforts and the fight against Germany, namely a “deep spiritual strength” and “absolute moral precept.”³¹² Such sentiments were well in line with the Gaullist notion of an “eternal

³¹⁰ Telegram from Félix Éboué to Pierre Boisson, Aug. 27, 1940, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 928, Dossier 7

³¹¹ See Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*. An alternate view has been offered by Charles-Robert Ageron, “Aperçus historiques sur la Conférence de Brazzaville” in Institut Charles de Gaulle / Institut d’Histoire du Temps Présent, *Brazzaville, Janvier-Fevrier 1944: Aux sources de la décolonisation* (Paris: Plon, 1988). In his own work Chafer noted his disagreement with Ageron on this point.

³¹² Félix Éboué, *Politique générale de l’Afrique Équatoriale Française, Circulaire du 19 janvier 1941 et Textes d’Application* (Brazzaville: Imprimerie officielle, 1941), 7. “Si nous y songeons, nous découvrons que c’est une force spirituelle profonde qui nous a conduit individuellement à

France” whose innate qualities marked it as exceptional in the community of nations. Éboué later noted in a December 1943 speech that it was not proper to speak of a “new France” because “France is always France.”³¹³ De Gaulle approved of Éboué’s ideas; after reading the January 1941 circular, he wrote to Éboué indicating that “the spirit that appears in these directives is the same and only one that will permit the French Empire to survive the war and to revive itself during the peace.”³¹⁴

Éboué also saw a vital opportunity for Africa – like de Gaulle, he believed that the example provided by AEF during the war would be recognized as the basis for renewal of the entire empire. This recognition could galvanize France to reform the colonial system. Éboué blamed the June 1940 capitulation to Germany not just on the failure of the military, but also on a “polluted” colonial bureaucracy that had squelched independent thinking and initiative.³¹⁵ In French Africa, this had led to “chains of paper that retard its progress.”³¹⁶ Essentially, while the goals of the French civilizing mission were sound, both the colonial administration and the implementation of policy had to be overhauled. This would commence with decentralization of the colonial bureaucracy and the devolution of powers to local officials. Éboué saw this as a process of “spiritual renovation” that could lead to a renewal of France and her empire in the postwar atmosphere. He noted that AEF “has to be the place from where the example and proper

agir, un précepte moral absolu qui nous a interdit de capituler et commandé de reprendre, chacun à notre compte, le destin de la Patrie.”

³¹³ Félix Éboué, *L’AEF et la Guerre: Discours prononcé devant le Conseil d’Administration de la Colonie le 1er Décembre 1943* (Brazzaville: Editions du Baobab, 1944), 49.

³¹⁴ Telegram from Charles de Gaulle to Félix Éboué, May 20, 1941, ANOM, 5D202. “L’esprit qui paraît dans ses directives est celui-là même et celui-là seul qui permet de l’Empire Français de survivre à la guerre et de revivre dans la paix.”

³¹⁵ Félix Éboué, *Politique générale de l’Afrique Équatoriale Française*, 3.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2

thinking originate, which, spreading out little by little to all of the empire, will finally win back France and assure its renaissance after the victory.”³¹⁷

The January circular, focused mainly on winning the war, contained only broad prescriptions for the improvement of colonial policy. However, in May of that year, Éboué distributed a memo to all of Free France’s colonial heads, establishing his vision of France’s role in Africa after the war. The memo clarified a number of issues, including the need for administrative decentralization, and reforms in medicine and education, public works, and industry.³¹⁸ This would lead to Éboué’s establishment of an advisory commission to discuss general French policy in AEF that autumn. The commission met from November 6-8 of that year in Brazzaville, and included numerous representatives from throughout AEF, including governors Pierre Lapie (Chad), Gabriel Fortune (Moyen-Congo), and André Latrille (Oubangui-Chari); Catholic bishops from Loango, Libreville, Bangui, Brazzaville, and Berberati; presidents of various chambers of commerce, and leaders from the forestry and mining industries. At the heart of their concerns was the relatively slow rate of “progress” in the colonies, and what could be done to remedy the situation after the war. To this end, the commission had as its mission to “take notice of the situation of the native population, the troubles that menace it and that threaten all productive works in the country, and finally, the proposed remedies.”³¹⁹ While the commission concerned itself with the impact of the political

³¹⁷ Ibid. “Il s’agit aujourd’hui d’extirper d’ici, non seulement pour le bien propre de l’Afrique Équatoriale, première terre française libre, doit être le lieu d’où sortiront l’exemple et la pensée efficaces qui, s’étendant peu à peu à tout l’Empire, gagneront enfin la France et assureront sa renaissance intérieure après la reconquête.”

³¹⁸ Circulaire à Messieurs les Gouverneurs, May 21, 1941, ANOM, 5D202.

³¹⁹ Politique Indigène de l’Afrique Équatoriale Française, ANOM, 5D202. “Cette commission...avait pour mission de prendre connaissance de la situation de la population

situation on living conditions, it was most interested in the productivity of African labor. The final report noted France's dedication to "a new work law tending to protect no longer just the individual, but also the collective; to reconstitute the life and fertility of villages in the zones of production and to establish a program in which all the energies of the colony will be called to collaborate."³²⁰

The commission's final work product was a circular that would serve as a starting point for discussions about the future of French Africa throughout the remainder of the war. Like Vichy's administrators, the commission realized that the war had changed everything. Noting that "French Africa has arrived at a defining moment in its existence," the document acknowledged that France would now have to rededicate itself to renewing African society; the task was to "establish native society on foundations such that the colony will have entered upon the path to prosperity."³²¹ Essentially, France would have to serve its colonies just as expected its subjects to serve France. This required France to first acknowledge her own errors in Africa. These errors had destroyed African communities and produced a disoriented colonial population that was not able to organize or provide for itself:

The colony is threatened, threatened from within, like a granary that is being emptied. As we seek the cause in the extensive system of large concessions, chaotic economic exploitation, a sometimes awkward proselytizing, postponement of education, and, finally and especially, the neglect, and one might say contempt, in which the native political and social cadres are held, we find the effect and put our finger on it – it is a population that does not increase here and

indigène, des maux qui la menacent et menacent avec elle toute œuvre productrice dans le pays, et enfin des remèdes proposés..."

³²⁰ Ibid. "...de se prononcer sur ces remèdes, et notamment sur un nouveau statut du travail tendant à protéger, non plus seulement l'individu, mais la collectivité, à reconstituer la vie et la fécondité du village dans les zones de production et à établir dans ce dessein un programme auquel toutes les énergies de la Colonie fussent appelées à collaborer."

³²¹ Ibid. "Voici donc la besogne préalable et urgente qui nous est dictée: établir la société indigène sur des bases telles que la colonie entre enfin dans la voie de la prospérité."

that declines there; it is a country unable to provide for the commerce, construction sites, administration, auxiliary staff and experienced personnel that are absolutely indispensable. It is a mass that disintegrates and disperses; it is a voluntary failure and syphilis that spreads in a budding proletariat. All of these are the evils of an absurd individualism inflicted on the colony.³²²

Éboué and his committee linked French colonial failure to some of the same reasons that Vichy had identified – most importantly, a naïve belief in the prospect of assimilation. In tracing a future policy for French Africa, administrators had to understand that African societies were different than the European society that hoped to administer them:

To make or remake a society, if not in our own image, then at least according to our own mentalities, is to ask for certain failure. The *indigène* has a way of behaving, a set of laws, and a country which are not the same as ours. We do nothing for their happiness through the principles of the French Revolution, which is our revolution; nor by applying to them the Napoleonic code, which is our code, nor by substituting our functionaries to think for them, but not about them. We will instead assure his equilibrium by dealing with him on his terms, that is to say, not as an isolated, interchangeable individual, but as a human person, charged with traditions, a member of a family, of a village, and a tribe, capable of progress in his own community, and very likely lost if he is removed from it.³²³

³²² Ibid., p. 2-3. “La colonie est menacée, menacée par l’intérieur, comme un grenier qui se vide. Qu’on en cherche la cause dans le système prolongé des grandes concessions, dans une exploitation économique désordonnée, dans un prosélytisme parfois maladroit, dans la mise en sommeil de l’enseignement, enfin et surtout dans l’oubli, on pourrait dire le mépris, où l’on a tenu les cadres politiques et sociaux indigènes, la conséquence est là, et nous la touchons du doigt: c’est une population qui ici n’augmente pas et qui là diminue, c’est un pays incapable de fournir au commerce, aux chantiers, à l’Administration, le personnel auxiliaire et le personnel de maîtrise strictement indispensables, c’est une masse qui se désagrège et se disperse, c’est l’avortement volontaire et le syphilis qui se répandent dans un prolétariat naissant, ce sont tous les maux d’un individualisme absurde infligés ensemble à la colonie.”

³²³ Ibid., p. 3. “Faire ou refaire une société, sinon à notre image, du moins selon nos habitudes mentales, c’est aller à un échec certain. L’indigène a un comportement, des lois, une patrie qui ne sont pas les nôtres. Nous ne ferons son bonheur, ni selon les principes de la Révolution Française, qui est notre Révolution, ni en lui appliquant le code Napoléon, qui est notre code, ni en substituant nos fonctionnaires penseront pour lui, mais non en lui. Nous assurerons au contraire son équilibre en le traitant à partir de lui-même, c’est-à-dire non pas comme individu isolé et interchangeable, mais comme personnage humain, chargé de traditions, membre d’une famille, d’un village et d’une tribu, capable de progrès dans son milieu et très probablement perdu s’il en est extrait.”

Here, then, was a hard turn against a previously assimilationist colonial policy that sought to make the *indigènes* more French. It was not incompatible with the civilizing mission *per se* – Éboué still emphasized the importance of progress in African societies – but it certainly articulated a new way for France to further the cause of progress on the continent.³²⁴ The foundation for this new policy would no longer be top-down colonial administration. Instead of imposing French education and culture on African society, the circular encouraged colonial administrators to identify leaders from within those societies with whom the French government could collaborate. Fittingly, Éboué invoked the words of Lyautey, who had noted that “in every country, there are cadres. The great error, for the European powers that come to conquer, is to destroy these cadres. The country, deprived of its framework, then falls into anarchy. One must govern with the mandarin, not against the mandarin.”³²⁵

France, therefore, had to take African leaders as she found them. There was no use in wishing for better or more enlightened chiefs; power was a fact unto itself. “There is no best chief,” the circular noted, “there is one chief, and we do not have a choice.”³²⁶ Chiefs were not akin to functionaries or interchangeable bureaucrats trained to manage colonial affairs. They were “aristocrats” who were not bound by the regulations that

³²⁴ Tony Chafer has made a similar observation in discussing the Brazzaville Conference, which was partially influenced by Éboué’s contributions. As Chafer has noted, association and assimilation “co-existed and the conference recommendations represented an uneasy balancing act between the two. Thus, the ‘universalism’ of assimilation, with its underlying assumption that everyone, African, Asian and European, could ultimately, through education and cultural assimilation, be brought up to the same level, accorded the same rights and governed within the same institutional framework, was tempered by the ‘pragmatic’ acceptance of the ‘particularism’ of different peoples that made it difficult, if not impossible, for them to follow the same path of development as Europeans.” Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 57.

³²⁵ *Politique Indigène de l’Afrique Équatoriale Française*, p. 4, ANOM, 5D202. “Dans tout pays, il y a des cadres. La grande erreur, pour le peuple Européen, qui vient là en conquérant, c’est de détruire ces cadres. Le pays, privé de son armature, tombe alors dans l’anarchie. Il faut gouverner avec le mandarin, et non contre le mandarin.”

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5. “Il n’y a pas de meilleur chef, il ya un chef, et nous n’avons pas le choix.”

France placed on its own officials. This power structure existed before France's involvement on the continent, and local custom dictated who these figures were. It was only left to France to "recognize them" in a manner akin to a diplomatic relationship. Failing to do so would create confusion in the colonies and would lead to a situation where authority and legitimacy would be divided between France's "official" leader and the "true" one. By recognizing the latter group, France would be better positioned to affect the lives of their subjects. "We no longer seek to move the masses ourselves," Éboué's report noted. "Having discerned who the legitimate chiefs are, we will give to them all our effort, and it is through those who have become able to lead their subjects, that we will reach and elevate the masses."³²⁷ Essentially, the circular espoused a dynamic of *influence*, rather than direct control over France's subjects – a dynamic that would be facilitated by France's relationships with local chiefs.

In advocating for this new dynamic, Éboué acknowledged the fundamental concern that by relinquishing control over the appointment of Africa's leaders, France had less ability to prevent abuses of power committed by those leaders, such as corruption and continuation of the slave trade. But Éboué viewed many of these abuses as having been exaggerated, and compared them to the abuses committed by French colonial administrators in the past. However, even granting that abuses had been committed, Éboué noted that it was not up to France to punish local chiefs. They should not have to answer to French law; rather "a chief...is restrained by custom, by certain invisible sanctions and by the sentiment that he is the master, I would say the proprietor, of his people. If it happened that a chief poorly administered his house, it is rare that it

³²⁷ Ibid., p. 7. "Nous ne chercherons plus à mouvoir de nous-mêmes la masse, mais, ayant distingué les chefs légitimes, nous porterons sur eux tout notre effort, et c'est par eux, devenus aptes à diriger leurs sujets, que nous atteindrons la masse et que nous l'élèverons."

would turn a blind eye to its own destruction.”³²⁸ The solution was not to censure or remove these leaders from power; rather, France should attempt to educate them to follow better practices. And even if this effort failed, pragmatic concerns still had to be paramount. What mattered was French *influence* over African leaders, not their everyday practices in the colonies. “Respecting chiefs does not signify an approval of all their ways of acting,” Éboué noted. If a chief himself did not deserve France’s regards, then “it is his standing that merits it.”³²⁹ Essentially, power mattered more to Éboué than any concerns about the abuses of France’s subjects by African chiefs.

Éboué’s emphasis on direct relationships between the colonial administration and organically rooted African leaders was not a radical turn. It clearly reflected the practice of association, already widely implemented in parts of west and central Africa that were far removed from Dakar and other urban centers. This already-existing practice did not necessarily conflict with the more ideological policy of assimilation; as Alice Conklin has demonstrated, the two could broadly co-exist, and the use of one or the other often depended on conditions in a particular colony.³³⁰ Put differently, the pre-war coexistence of assimilationist policy in the four communes of Senegal with associationist policies followed in French Soudan, Niger, and Oubangui-Shari can be reconciled by acknowledging the simple reality of resources: France did not have the necessary colonial and military personnel to effect a top-down conversion of all of its African subjects to

³²⁸ Ibid., p. 9-10. “Le chef, au contraire, est retenu par la coutume, par certaines sanctions invisibles et par le sentiment qu’il est le maître, j’allais dire le propriétaire, de son peuple. S’il arrive qu’un chef de famille administre mal sa maison, il est rare qu’il s’aveugle jusqu’à la détruire.”

³²⁹ Ibid., p. 8. “...je répète que des égards sont dus au chef: s’il ne les mérite pas lui-même, c’est son rang qui les mérite...Respecter les chefs ne signifie pas approuver toutes leurs façons d’agir.”

³³⁰ See Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in French West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

French culture and civilization, and especially not in more remote areas. But Éboué's argument abandoned the pragmatism of this divided policy to argue that association was the better policy to implement across the board.

In addition to his proposals about French treatment of African chiefs, Éboué was greatly concerned about the state of the general population in French Africa, and especially in the cities. Although there existed a stable element in Africa's urban areas, composed of functionaries, veterans, artisans, and commercial employees, the colonies were also plagued by an "unstable element" which Éboué referred to as a "floating population."³³¹ This population represented a growing discontented proletariat that posed a threat to stability in French sub-Saharan Africa:

These built-up areas, born of our presence and our needs at all levels, pose a serious problem: they have cleared out the bush, without giving us a collaboration proportionate to the damage they cause to the indigenous society: alongside the useful inhabitants of the cities, a band of half-unemployed and half-vagrants live there at the expense of Europeans and *indigènes*; the former are lost for the villages and crops they have abandoned, lost from repopulating for want of a household, lost physically due to sexually transmitted diseases, and lost morally due to managing for themselves and neglecting all social discipline.³³²

As Frederick Cooper has also argued, Éboué's solution to this problem was strikingly similar to recommendations that his counterpart Pierre Boisson was making at the same time for Vichy West Africa – namely, the need for a renewed emphasis on discipline

³³¹ *Politique Indigène de l'Afrique Équatoriale Française*, p. 18, ANOM, 5D202.

³³² *Ibid.* "Ces agglomérations, nées de notre présence et de nos besoins de tous ordres, posent un problème grave: elles vident la brousse, sans nous donner une collaboration proportionnée aux dommages qu'elles causent à la société indigène: à côté des habitantes utiles, une bande de demi-chômeurs et demi-vagabonds y vit aux dépens des Européens et des indigènes, perdus pour les villages et les cultures qu'ils ont abandonnées, perdus pour la repopulation faute d'un ménage, perdus physiquement par les maladies vénériennes et moralement par la pratique du débrouillage et l'oubli de toute discipline sociale."

among *indigène* populations and a return to manual labor.³³³ Éboué further noted that “discipline, and only discipline, will be the great remedy for this social plague.”³³⁴

France had to “return to their villages those unoccupied individuals” so that they could participate in society through manual labor.³³⁵ And like Boisson, Éboué emphasized that this manual labor involved a “return to the soil” for France’s African subjects:

The *indigène* masses, as a whole, are and will remain predominantly agricultural. Every policy that we have outlined depends on the rooting of the *indigène* in the soil, and his development within traditional community institutions. Working the soil is the most proper and most probably the only proper way to ensure this progress, this social enrichment of the village and the tribe, this fertile stability of the *indigène* population.³³⁶

Although Éboué had placed some of the blame on Europeans for the existence of Africa’s disaffected masses, he nevertheless foresaw a significant role for westerners in the new colonial order. European corporations were needed in Africa to invest their capital and provide as many opportunities for manual labor as possible.³³⁷ They could also provide technical expertise and planning in a number of specialized areas, such as forestry, mining, and public works projects.³³⁸ But the most important role for westerners, both in business and the colonial administration, was to demonstrate to the *indigènes* the value of

³³³ See Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: the Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³³⁴ Politique Indigène de l’Afrique Équatoriale Française, p. 18. ANOM, 5D202.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid., p. 29. “La masse indigène, dans son ensemble, est et restera essentiellement agricole. Toute la politique que nous avons exposée suppose la fixation de l’indigène au sol, son développement au sein des institutions collectives traditionnelles: le travail de la terre est le plus propre et sans doute le seul propre à assurer ce progrès sur place, cet enrichissement social du village et de la tribu, cette stabilité féconde de la population indigène.”

³³⁷ Ibid., p. 19.

³³⁸ Ibid., p. 32.

manual labor; it was their duty “to make known to the *indigène* that labor is the basic element of his progress.”³³⁹

It should be noted that Éboué’s circular, written in 1941, was focused mainly on the future of AEF, and did not specifically apply to France’s territories in West Africa, which were still under Vichy control. But in the short term, it certainly influenced the mentality of other governors in AEF regarding policy in their colonies. In February 1942, Gabriel Fortune, governor of French Moyen-Congo, published a circular citing Éboué’s November 1941 suggestions and incorporating his recommendations. Like Éboué, Fortune argued for recognizing the importance of local rule and cooperating with chiefs. He noted that “any action will be ineffective that neglects the existence of two stable elements in the colony: French sovereignty and the authority of the *indigène*, which each have the right of respect and obedience.”³⁴⁰ Working with local authority, inculcating a labor ethic by enabling rural agriculture, and educating the *indigènes* were all keys to stabilizing African society, and by extension, solidifying French control over Moyen-Congo.

So long as Free France only controlled AEF, the reach of Éboué’s ideas was limited. But as de Gaulle’s movement began to reunify France’s African empire, Éboué’s November 1941 circular had significant influence on planning France’s postwar policy on the continent as a whole. De Gaulle had already approved of many of Éboué’s initial ideas for the colonies, including administrative decentralization, in a note to Éboué

³³⁹ Ibid., p. 36. “Il est d’ailleurs de notre devoir de faire comprendre à l’indigène que le travail est l’élément primordial de son progrès.”

³⁴⁰ Gabriel Fortune, *La Politique Indigène au Moyen Congo*, Feb. 11, 1942, p. 2, ANOM, 5D202. “Toute action serait donc stérile, qui négligerait l’existence des deux éléments stables de la colonie: la souveraineté française et l’autorité indigène, qui, chacune, ont droit au respect comme à l’obéissance.”

in May of 1941.³⁴¹ While it would be unrealistic to apply the policies Éboué advocated for AEF to the entire empire, they could nevertheless serve as a framework for France's colonial future. Numerous colonial administrators would pay tribute to Éboué's ideas upon the opening of the Brazzaville Conference in January 1944, and the conference's final recommendations acknowledged Éboué's pivotal contribution, albeit in a more restrained form that will be discussed below.³⁴² These tributes to Éboué demonstrate that through his rallying to de Gaulle and his subsequent articulation of the need for realignment of French colonial policy, the governor-general had made a significant impact on the future of France's empire in Africa.

Tensions with Britain and America

Of course, underlying Éboué's plans was the assumption that France would regain its rightful place as an international power and retain its colonies intact. Throughout the war, Britain had made numerous promises to this effect. The United States made similar verbal commitments to both Vichy and Free France, albeit somewhat more vaguely. But from de Gaulle's viewpoint, these assurances did not necessarily manifest in the Allies' plans for the administration of the war and the postwar order. The Allies disagreed on a variety of issues that affected the French empire, and the result was escalating tension between Free France and its principal allies for most of the duration of the war. To be

³⁴¹ Note from Charles de Gaulle to Félix Éboué, May 20, 1941, ANOM, 5D202.

³⁴² Recommandations adoptées par la Conférence Africaine Française, Jan 30 – Feb. 8, 1944, ANOM, 17G130. Noting that "traditional political institutions must be maintained, not as an end for themselves, but as a means permitting municipal and regional society to express itself with maximum vigor," the report noted the principles of Éboué's circular as a means to achieve this result. "Les institutions politiques traditionnelles doivent être maintenues, non comme fin en soi, mais en tant que mode permettant à la vie municipale et régionale de s'exprimer dès à présent, avec le maximum de vigueur."

sure, de Gaulle remained indebted to Great Britain for supporting Free France. But the relationship between the two nevertheless existed against the same ideological backdrop that motivated Vichy's hatred of Great Britain – namely, the Anglo-French rivalry in Africa and France's need to maintain sovereignty and territorial integrity of its colonies. These tensions culminated in 1942, when Britain decided to invade and later administer Madagascar without Free French participation.

But de Gaulle had already expressed significant reservations about his British ally significantly earlier in the war. France had been given a mandate over the former Ottoman territories of Lebanon and Syria by the League of Nations in 1923.³⁴³ After the June 1940 armistice, Vichy retained the territories until the Syria-Lebanon campaign of June-July 1941, a joint British/Free France operation through which the two allies captured the mandated territories from Vichy. Tensions were already high given the significant deployment of Free France forces against their Vichy countrymen during the campaign. But the operation also began to strain the relationship between de Gaulle and Britain. As joint allied forces were advancing into eastern Syria from British Iraq on July 3rd, de Gaulle evinced concern about potential British designs on France's mandates in a letter to Éboué. He believed that Britain and Belgium were genuinely trying to help France in Africa, if for no other reason than “if we were to lose our position [on the continent], the position of the English and the Belgians on the African continent would be gravely compromised.”³⁴⁴ Nevertheless, de Gaulle made clear that “... I do not place my

³⁴³ For more on French colonial interests in the Middle East after World War I, see the discussion in Stuart Michael Persell, *The French Colonial Lobby, 1899-1938* (Stanford: Hoover University Press, 1983).

³⁴⁴ Telegram from Charles de Gaulle to Félix Éboué, July 3, 1941, Archives Nationales de Paris (hereinafter ANP), 3 AG I 280. “...si nous perdions notre position, toute la position des Anglais et des Belges dans le continent Africain serait gravement compromise.”

trust in the current British command. What I see in Syria gives me the conviction that their command is unfit for modern warfare. I have decided therefore not to risk our major interests and our modest means under the command of the English.”³⁴⁵ Accordingly, Éboué was ordered not to allow his troops to fall under British control, and especially not in French territory. Nor was he allowed to commit French troops to engagements on British territory.

However, the entry of the United States into the war in December 1941 presented a more significant problem for de Gaulle. A victorious United States, professing staunch anticolonial views, could potentially influence the shape of France’s empire after the war. A more immediate concern was American reaction to de Gaulle himself. U.S. officials remained suspicious of the general throughout the war, and were particularly worried about his commitment to democratic ideals. They kept him at arm’s length through 1942, and during that period he was not treated by Roosevelt or the State Department as if he had any legitimate political authority. It was not until his consolidation of all of the resistance movements under one banner in mid-1943 that the relationship would change in his favor.

For his part, de Gaulle seems to have tried early on to establish good ties with American authorities. In October 1940, he offered the use of French colonies in the western hemisphere to the United States as air or naval bases.³⁴⁶ He spoke favorably of the United States and its commitment to freedom on many occasions, and was grateful to

³⁴⁵ Ibid. “...je ne suis pas s’accorder ma confiance au commandement britannique actuel. Ce que je vois en Syrie me donne la conviction que ce commandement est inapte à la guerre moderne. J’ai décidé, en conséquence, de ne plus risquer nos grands intérêts et nos modestes moyens sous les ordres des Anglais.”

³⁴⁶ Telegram from American consul Mallon at Leopoldville to the Secretary of State, Oct. 27, 1940. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1940, Vol. II, General and Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957), 504-5.

the U.S. contribution to the war effort via the Lend-Lease Act. In July 1941 he directed René Pleven to send a memo to the United States to ask for help in Africa. Noting that “the hopes of the French colonial population are turned toward the United States,” Pleven petitioned the State Department for medical and food supplies, and measures to protect Free French shipping.³⁴⁷ De Gaulle also made repeated efforts to obtain Free France’s diplomatic recognition as a political entity by the United States.

These early efforts had decidedly mixed results. As early as May 1941, Secretary of State Cordell Hull expressed to British Ambassador Lord Halifax that the United States would rather not deal with de Gaulle, and was instead hoping for Vichy’s General Maxime Weygand to “stand up” in Africa and oppose Germany, thus providing an alternative to de Gaulle’s movement.³⁴⁸ That July, upon receiving Pleven’s request for aid from the British ambassador, Assistant Secretary Sumner Welles cautioned that “it would be difficult for the United States to maintain diplomatic relations with Vichy” should the U.S. grant Pleven’s request.³⁴⁹ While the U.S. did extend some lend-lease aid to Free France, this was most likely due to a perception that Britain would benefit from the arrangement. As the Allies began to discuss a joint declaration of war aims in late 1941, Roosevelt expressed his opinion to Hull that Free France should not be included in the document – an opinion that he would not change for three months, and only after de Gaulle protested and Churchill wrote to FDR to persuade him otherwise.³⁵⁰ At the same

³⁴⁷ Memorandum submitted by M. Pleven on behalf of General de Gaulle, July 1941. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1941, Vol. II, Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), 574-5

³⁴⁸ Memorandum of conversation by the Secretary of State, May 21, 1941. *Ibid.*, 180.

³⁴⁹ Memorandum of conversation by the Acting Secretary of State, July 8, 1941. *Ibid.*, 573-4.

³⁵⁰ President Roosevelt to the Secretary of State, Dec. 27, 1941. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1942, Vol. II, Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 13.

time, Welles expressed deep skepticism about de Gaulle to Lord Halifax, the British ambassador to the United States, noting that “there were no outstanding men with qualities of leadership and initiative directing the Free French movement” and that he “could not see that either General de Gaulle or his associates provided any rallying point for French patriotism.”³⁵¹

It was one thing for U.S. officials to express these views before its direct involvement in the war. But with the attack on Pearl Harbor and subsequent U.S. entry into the war, Roosevelt could now have legitimate influence over the military and political situation in Free France’s territories. To be sure, the State Department had tried to reassure Free France that it would not interfere with the empire in Africa. On January 12, 1942, it sent word to Free France in London that “the policy of this Government as regards France is based upon the maintenance of the integrity of France and of the French Empire and of the eventual restoration of the complete independence of all French territories.”³⁵² Nevertheless, both Roosevelt and the State Department remained suspicious of de Gaulle and Free France’s motives for most of the war. As late as 1942, the State Department still doubted whether de Gaulle would restore democracy in France,

Memorandum by Samuel Reber of the Division of European Affairs, Jan. 12, 1942. *Ibid.*, 33. Winston Churchill to Franklin Roosevelt, February 27, 1942. *Ibid.*, 37-8.

³⁵¹ Memorandum of Conversation by the Under Secretary of State, Dec. 27, 1941. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1941, Vol. II, Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), 205.

³⁵² Memorandum by Samuel Reber of the Division of European Affairs, Jan. 12, 1942. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1942, Vol. II, Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 503.

and many officials hoped to attenuate de Gaulle's influence over the Free French movement.³⁵³

Conflicts also developed pertaining to American actions on French territory. At first, these conflicts were limited to territories in the Americas and the Pacific Ocean – the Antilles, French Guiana, and Saint Pierre and Miquelon in particular, with Hull expressing extreme displeasure about de Gaulle's forces seizing the latter islands in December 1941.³⁵⁴ But by May 1942, the United States had begun to involve itself in Martinique and New Caledonia in the South Pacific, the latter in contravention of the authority of Thierry d'Argenlieu, Free France's military representative.³⁵⁵ Free French officials viewed America's actions as aiming to "neutralize" Vichy-held territory so as to keep it out of the war. Thus neutralized, it would not be able to re-enter the war under the Free French banner. Of course, this directly undermined de Gaulle's policy of using the war to regain France's *grandeur*. Consequently, Free France sent a memo to the State Department whereby it reminded the United States of recent Allied agreements (such as the one on Madagascar), by which they had agreed to restore France's territories.³⁵⁶ The memo stressed that "the occupation and administration of French territories by foreign forces or authorities... can only discourage the spirit of resistance in France and delay the time when all French territories, both Metropolitan France and the Empire, may take part

³⁵³ Cordell Hull and Sumner Welles both doubted de Gaulle's ability to rally the French as well as his democratic motives. See Memorandum of Conversation by the Under Secretary of State (Welles), May 8, 1942. *Ibid.*, 511-513.

³⁵⁴ Memorandum of conversation by the Secretary of State, Dec. 29, 1941. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1941, Vol. II, Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), 562-3.

³⁵⁵ See Kim J. Mulholland, *Rock of Contention: Free French and Americans at War in New Caledonia, 1940-1945* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005).

³⁵⁶ Delegation of the French National Committee in the United States to the State Department, May 18, 1942. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1942, Vol. II, Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 701.

with the maximum effectiveness in the fight against the Axis powers.”³⁵⁷ It asked the U.S. government to coordinate operations on Vichy territories with Free France forces, and in particular when dealing with territories in the western hemisphere.³⁵⁸

America’s actions also provoked suspicion about plans for the future of the French empire. On May 17, de Gaulle wrote to Éboué, noting conflicts with the British in Syria and Madagascar, and with the Americans in New Caledonia in Martinique. These conflicts sapped the morale of the Free French movement – a phenomenon, de Gaulle claimed, that the Allies were well aware of. This suggested that “their instincts might lead them to wish for a more malleable France.”³⁵⁹ He wrote Éboué again on May 25, noting that the situation “forces on us a great caution concerning the presence of Americans in our Free French Africa. Naturally, you must refuse on your soil the arrival of any foreign naval or air military element without the formal authorization of the National Committee.”³⁶⁰ Most likely in response to similar sentiments expressed by de Gaulle in other circles, Anthony Eden met with the general in June, during which the latter noted “his deep suspicions with regard to British and American intentions” concerning territories in France’s empire, and in particular about American plans.³⁶¹ Free French officials would make clear the following month that U.S. policy represented a

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Telegram, Charles de Gaulle to Félix Éboué, May 17, 1942, ANP, 3 AG I 280, Dossier 3. “Nos Alliés sont au courant de cet état d’esprit en France, ils le notent souvent sans bonne grâce parce que leur instinct pourrait les conduire à désirer une France plus malléable que ne seraient deux Frances rassemblées autour de nous.”

³⁶⁰ Telegram from Charles de Gaulle to Félix Éboué, May 25, 1942, ANOM, 2Y13. “Cette situation nous oblige à une très grande circonspection en ce qui concerne la présence des Américains dans notre Afrique Française Libre. Naturellement vous devez refuser chez vous l’arrivée chez vous tout élément militaire naval ou aérien étranger sans autorisation formelle du Comité National.”

³⁶¹ Reported by Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant) to the Secretary of State, June 16, 1942. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1942, Vol. II, Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 528.

threat to France's standing in the world. Noting that "the future of France will depend in a very large measure on the active part she will have taken in the war and the victory," the Free French delegation in the U.S. emphasized that neutralization of French territories "deprives France practically of the last elements of force which remain with her to win back her place in the world."³⁶²

These tensions resulted in a sternly written letter from de Gaulle to Roosevelt in late October 1942. Noting that "only Frenchmen can be the judge of their national interests," de Gaulle cautioned Roosevelt against interfering in the French empire, because "the French people have become extremely sensitive to the fate of their empire, and any appearance of abuse of these interests on the part of any ally is exploited by the enemy and by Vichy in a manner dangerous to the national sensibilities."³⁶³ The remainder of de Gaulle's letter illustrates his refusal to openly acknowledge France's changed position vis-à-vis the U.S. and Britain. He insisted that Free France be consulted "each time there is question either of the general interests of France, or of French participation in the war, or of the administration of those French territories which the

³⁶² Delegation of the French National Committee in the United States to the Department of State, June 11, 1942. *Ibid.*, 525. This suspicion affected the shape of the agreement between Free France and the United States on the use of the port city of Point Noire, on the South Atlantic in Moyen-Congo. The U.S. had requested its use earlier that year as an airbase for use as a stopping point to Australia. Memorandum of conversation by the Assistant Secretary of State (Berle), Feb. 26, 1942. *Ibid.*, 564. This would eventually expand to the use of the base to move American troops to other theaters of operation. Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the United Kingdom, Aug. 3, 1942. *Ibid.*, 578. By August, Adrien Tixier, the head of the Free French delegation in Washington, had written to the assistant secretary of state for assurances that the base and any improvements made by the U.S. would remain Free French property after the war. Acting Secretary of State to Mr. Adrien Tixier, Head of the Free French Delegation, Aug. 27, 1942. *Ibid.*, 586. Assistant Secretary of State Berle agreed to this request, but there would be later disagreement on whether the installations constructed by the United States would be left behind for France after the war. Memorandum by Mr. Perry N. Jester of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, Dec. 4, 1942. *Ibid.*, 595.

³⁶³ Charles de Gaulle to President Roosevelt, late Oct. 1942. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1942, Vol. II, Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 542.

developments of the war may gradually place in a position where they can again take part in it.”³⁶⁴ He closed his letter by chastising Roosevelt for his failure to include Free France in his considerations, insisting that “France still represents a power in the world which must not be ignored.”³⁶⁵ The letter seems to have been so off point as to have caused the chief of the State Department’s European Affairs division to note de Gaulle’s “blindness” about U.S. intentions and the relationship with Vichy in a note to Welles.³⁶⁶

Madagascar and the Middle East

As tensions mounted with the United States, Free France also found itself at odds with Britain in Madagascar and the Middle East. Tensions over Madagascar had existed starting in late 1941, when de Gaulle and Free French officials began insisting that they play a substantial military role in any British invasion of the Vichy-controlled territory. By April, De Gaulle raised the issue directly with Anthony Eden, but to no avail.³⁶⁷ Not surprisingly, Britain’s landing on May 5, 1942 – without consulting de Gaulle or including his forces – provoked a lengthy memo from Free France to the British government. By going it alone in Madagascar, it argued, Britain had undermined the movement’s legitimacy and had denied France the opportunity to fight, upon which the future of France’s standing in the world depended. More importantly, Britain’s attack on Madagascar without French help or advice threatened “the breakup of the French

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 542-3.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 543.

³⁶⁶ Memorandum by the Acting Chief of the Division of European Affairs (Atherton) to the Under Secretary of State (Welles), Oct. 26, 1942. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1942, Vol. II, Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 544.

³⁶⁷ Charles de Gaulle to Anthony Eden, April 9, 1942, ANP, 3 AG I 280, Dossier 4.

empire.”³⁶⁸ Consequently, Britain’s actions damaged the future relationship between the two powers. The memo noted that “the occupation, even temporary, of a French territory by Allied troops, without the participation of the National Committee, provides an easy argument to the enemy and its accomplices, who are always inclined to denounce Anglo-Saxon imperialism.”³⁶⁹ Of course, the subtext of the memo implied that Free France, not the Axis, was accusing its ally of imperial designs on French territory.

Britain’s initial failure to take the island in the May offensive temporarily allayed the question of French military participation and political administration. During the summer, Britain continually reassured its ally that a French administration would be quickly established once British forces managed to drive Vichy out.³⁷⁰ Anglo-French tensions might have dissipated on their own in advance of the September campaign. But events in Lebanon and Syria reminded both allies of the traditional Anglo-French colonial rivalry. After the campaign in summer 1941, Free French administration in the territories had promised independence to both territories. However, the timing of that independence became a subject of dispute between Free France and the British. The disagreement was exacerbated by the volatile relationship between General Georges Catroux, De Gaulle’s High Commissioner to the Levant territories, and British General Edward Spears, the latter of whom wanted France to move much more quickly in granting independence to her mandates. By July, the situation had deteriorated so badly that the American consul at Beirut noted that Spears was actively working against French

³⁶⁸ Memo, May 6, 1942, ANP, 3 AG I 280, Dossier 4.

³⁶⁹ Ibid. “...l’occupation, même temporaire, d’un territoire français par les troupes alliées, en dehors du Comité National, fournit un argument facile à l’ennemi et à ses complices toujours enclins à dénoncer l’impérialisme anglo-saxon.”

³⁷⁰ The British embassy informed the U.S. State Department of this intention on August 24. British Embassy to the Department of State, Aug. 24, 1942. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1942, Vol. II, Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 702.

interests and even perhaps hoped for the British to carve out a sphere of influence in the Levant after the French departure.³⁷¹

For his part, de Gaulle had no trust in Spears; he blamed him for the failure of the aborted Dakar offensive of September 1940. As tensions rose in 1942, de Gaulle directly petitioned Churchill to remove him, or risk ending collaboration between Britain and Free France.³⁷² By mid-August, convinced that Great Britain intended to supplant France's influence in the region, de Gaulle even raised the prospect of the use of force by Free France to protect its Levant states against the British, telling the American representative in Beirut that the situation there "might lead to conflict and that the Fighting French might be beaten but they preferred that rather than to cede without being defeated in an open fight."³⁷³ Despite an assurance from Churchill on August 22 that Britain had no such designs on French territory, De Gaulle continued to view British actions in the region as an affront to both France's interest and his own personal pride. This culminated in his speech of September 8, in which he delivered a veiled attack at the United States and Britain. Without naming the allies, De Gaulle implied that they were "false friends...who are pleased with [France's] defeat and cultivate those who betray her; who instead should be shouting to her the only thing which might save her: Rise up, here are arms!"³⁷⁴

The events in Syria, and De Gaulle's reaction, had a significant effect on the British disposition toward French administration of Madagascar. In September, Viscount

³⁷¹ The Consul at Beirut (Gwynn) to the Secretary of State, July 13, 1942. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1942, Vol. IV, the Near East and Africa* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), 598-9.

³⁷² The Consul at Beirut (Gwynn) to the Secretary of State, Aug. 12, 1942. *Ibid.*, 610-1.

³⁷³ The Consul at Beirut (Gwynn) to the Secretary of State, Aug. 16, 1942. *Ibid.*, 615.

³⁷⁴ The Consul at Beirut (Gwynn) to the Secretary of State, Sept. 12, 1942. *Ibid.*, 632. The full text of the speech can be in Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et Messages 1940-1946*, 221-2.

Halifax, the British ambassador to the United States, complained to the State Department about de Gaulle's "recent embarrassing behavior in Syria."³⁷⁵ Just before the renewed offensive in Madagascar, the Foreign Office notified Free France that "it had been [our] intention to invite the National Committee to assume the administration of the occupied territory... In view however of General de Gaulle's present attitude about the Levantine States and of his unqualified suspicions of the good faith of His Majesty's government, [we] cannot at present proceed on lines proposed."³⁷⁶ Britain re-launched its Madagascar offensive in early September; by early October, the British controlled the island. But it would not be until December that administration would be turned over to Free France.

This delay in the handover of Madagascar provoked sharply-worded letters to the British Consul in Brazzaville from both Éboué and General Philippe LeClerc that October. Both men saw the situation in Madagascar as a direct threat to the sovereignty of the French empire. LeClerc, who had served in several military expeditions in Africa and would later participate in the liberation of Paris, reminded the Consul General that French resistance had been "founded on the promises made by the British government two years ago to restore France in its integrity," and he indicated his concern that Britain was going back on that promise.³⁷⁷ Although Free France still generally trusted the British, there had been several troublesome incidents over the past few months, including the situation in Syria and uncertainty about Britain's intentions in Djibouti and West

³⁷⁵ British Ambassador to the Secretary of State, Sept. 4, 1942. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1942, Vol. II, Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 705.

³⁷⁶ Communication with CFLN reported by Halifax in British Ambassador to the Secretary of State, Sept. 9, 1942. *Ibid.*, 706-7.

³⁷⁷ LeClerc to British Consul-General, Oct. 13 1942, ANP, 3 AG I 280, Dossier 4. "Ce Mouvement de la France Combattante est fondé sur les promesses faites par le Gouvernement Britannique, il y a deux ans, de restaurer la France dans son intégrité."

Africa.³⁷⁸ But Madagascar posed the greatest problem, as the British had repeatedly promised that administration of the island would be turned over the De Gaulle's followers after Vichy had been evicted. The British failure to do so promptly had led Free France to question Britain's intentions for the continent:

This raises for us the tragic question: What does Great Britain seek? Why is it, that when once it seemed ready to help us with all of its resources, it apparently wants to stop now when our movement is everywhere identified with the will of national resistance to the invader? Does [Great Britain] seek to divide the French who want to fight against German hegemony? For what purpose? For two years, and especially during the rallying [to Britain], how many times have we answered with conviction the questions that have worried many French: "Are you certain that Great Britain will restore France's integrity?"³⁷⁹

In his own correspondence with the British consul-general, Éboué articulated many of the issues raised by LeClerc, but with an even more forceful approach.

Complaining of alleged British interference with telegrams between London and

Brazzaville, Éboué noted that a "profound malaise" marked Anglo-French relations.³⁸⁰

This malaise had only been exacerbated by the situations in Madagascar and Lebanon,

where Éboué accused the British of ignoring the French mandate. Éboué noted that the

two incidents would threaten long-term friendship between the two nations. More

startlingly, he indicated that Britain was threatening France's cooperation during the war itself:

I am obliged to tell you that such a situation cannot last without preparing as a single body and soul all who bear the French name and who can speak freely. I

³⁷⁸ LeClerc to British Consul-General, Oct. 13 1942, ANP, 3 AG I 280, Dossier 4.

³⁷⁹ Ibid. "Alors se pose pour nous la tragique question: Que cherche la Grande Bretagne? Pourquoi, a parés nous avoir aidés par tous ses moyens, semble-t-elle vouloir aujourd'hui nous arrêter au moment où notre Mouvement s'identifie dans tous les milieux avec la volonté de résistance nationale à l'envahisseur? Cherche-t-elle à diviser les Français qui veulent lutter contre l'hégémonie allemande? Dans quels buts? Depuis deux ans, et en particulier au moment du ralliement, combien de fois n'avons-nous pas répondu avec conviction aux questions inquiètes de nombreux Français: "Êtes-vous certains que la Grande Bretagne rétablira la France dans son intégrité?"

³⁸⁰ Félix Éboué to British Consul General in Brazzaville, Oct. 13, 1942, ANOM, 5D289.

am obliged to reiterate that to my deep regret the delay of the British Government in meeting its commitments has made it necessary for us to cease cooperation between our two countries in Equatorial Africa.³⁸¹

Neither LeClerc's appeal nor Éboué's threats had any immediate effect on the political situation in Madagascar; it would not be turned over to Free French administration until December of that year. But De Gaulle and Éboué continued to proclaim Free France's authority over the territory during this interim period. The same day that he wrote to the British consul-general, Éboué instructed Free France's chief of information services to assert French rights over Madagascar. Absent British recognition of these rights, soldiers should refuse to take orders from the British. Éboué told him to remind French citizens and subjects that "French laws prohibit all French functionaries or military members from serving under the orders of any foreign authority. The French National Committee is the only qualified authority to lead and control the administration of French forces."³⁸² In essence, British defiance in Madagascar represented a clear threat to the exercise of French sovereignty.

North Africa and Growing French Concerns about American Intentions

Free France's discontent over the situation in Madagascar would pale in comparison to its reaction to developments in North Africa. The November 1942 deal with Admiral Darlan and Pierre Boisson, under which the United States allowed French

³⁸¹ Ibid. "Je suis bien obligé de vous dire qu'une telle situation ne saurait durer sans dresser d'un seul corps et d'une seule âme tout ce qui porte le nom Français et qui peut s'exprimer librement. Je suis obligé de réaffirmer qu'à mon extrême regret, le retard que met le Gouvernement Britannique à exécuter ses engagements, nous placerait dans la nécessité de cesser la coopération entre nos deux pays en Afrique Équatoriale."

³⁸² Instructions pour M. le Chef du Service de l'Information, Oct. 13, 1942, ANOM, 5D289. "Les lois Françaises interdisent à tout fonctionnaire ou militaire Français de prendre du service sous les ordres de quelque autorité étrangère que ce soit. Le Comité National Français est seul qualifié pour diriger et contrôler une administration ou des forces Françaises."

authorities to keep North and West Africa under their control in exchange for their rallying to the Allied cause, was discussed in the previous chapter. Roosevelt and Eisenhower's decision to back an alternate French political movement in Africa enraged de Gaulle and his followers. Taken in conjunction with Great Britain's alleged undermining of French sovereignty in Madagascar and Syria, the U.S. action in North Africa presented a clear threat to de Gaulle's legitimacy as political leader of the resistance movements. Not surprisingly, having opposed Vichy and the Nazis from the moment of the armistice, de Gaulle saw himself as the only legitimate leader of the resistance – a belief that loyal lieutenants like Éboué made sure to emphasize in communications with the British and the Americans. De Gaulle had taken great care to establish a measure of control over the clandestine resistance movements on the mainland throughout 1942, having dispatched Jean Moulin on his infamous parachute mission in January of that year.³⁸³ This process was delicate enough without the prospect of de Gaulle and his followers having to cede authority to men it considered fascist criminals – an understandable sentiment given the previous repression of Free French sympathizers by both Boisson and Darlan.³⁸⁴ By recognizing Darlan, the United States had greatly undermined the vast political capital that de Gaulle and Free France had rightly earned.

³⁸³ De Gaulle sent Moulin to France to make contact with the resistance and to establish a foundation for Gaullist military and political control. Moulin was later captured by the Nazis in July 1943 and tortured to death by Gestapo agent Klaus Barbie in Lyon. For more on Moulin, see Alan Clinton, *Jean Moulin 1899-1943: the French Resistance and the Republic* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

³⁸⁴ Éboué expressed these views in a memo to all Free France African governors on June 17, 1941, in which he noted that Vichy was committing “a crime without precedent in history” by subordinating itself to Hitler. Of Darlan, he said that he was “leading France towards total enslavement – that is to say, towards a dishonorable extinction, and all for his own purely personal ambition.” Félix Éboué to Governors of Territories, June 17, 1941, ANOM, 5D289. Regarding Boisson, an internal Free France memo from Dec. 27, 1942 noted that the governor general had installed in AOF “a political system directly inspired by fascist and Nazi doctrines.” Rapport à l’oppression Vichyste en AOF, Dec. 27, 1942, ANP, 3 AG I 280.

The American recognition of Darlan would have repercussions even after Darlan's death that December. After the latter's assassination in Algiers at the hands of a Gaullist sympathizer, the Allies turned to General Henri Giraud to assume Darlan's duties. Giraud was a significantly more heroic and respectable figure than Darlan; like de Gaulle, he played a crucial role in the defense of France during the Nazi assault in May 1940. He managed to escape Nazi captivity two years later, and tried (albeit unsuccessfully) to persuade Pétain to cease collaboration with Germany. His installation as Darlan's successor in early 1943 threatened a schism in the external resistance movement, and de Gaulle was initially forced to defer to Giraud's more exalted military reputation. The split between de Gaulle and Giraud, with the latter favored by the Americans, would not be resolved for several months.³⁸⁵

De Gaulle's followers made their feelings clear about American support for Darlan, and later Giraud. As previously discussed, de Gaulle's October letter protesting American policy had already irked both Roosevelt and top officials at the State Department. A meeting between Roosevelt, Sumner Welles, and French representatives Adrien Tixier and André Philip that November only exacerbated the problem. Roosevelt was firm in his dealings with the two men; he was open to meeting with de Gaulle personally, but was determined to maintain American control over the situation in North Africa. After Tixier reasserted Free France's concerns about the U.S. recognition of Darlan, Roosevelt emphasized that the question of who administered North Africa after the Allied invasion would be one for the United States to decide. Tixier and Philip were visibly outraged, stating that this was categorically unacceptable to Free France, and that they "would never 'permit' any liberated French town, village, or farmhouse to be

³⁸⁵ See Michèle Cointet, *De Gaulle et Giraud: l'affrontement, 1942-1944* (Paris: Perrin, 2005).

administered by foreign powers.”³⁸⁶ The American reception of these comments was summarized by Welles, who noted in a memorandum that “[i]t is noteworthy that throughout the entire conversation which lasted some fifty minutes, neither one of them expressed the slightest gratitude or recognition of the liberation of North Africa by American forces...”³⁸⁷

Nor did de Gaulle express any gratitude to the United States the following day. In a speech broadcast on Radio Brazzaville, he emphasized that despite the Allied success in North Africa, the Vichy regime still remained intact in Algiers. He then openly questioned American commitment to eject Darlan and his fellow Nazi collaborators from North Africa:

A large area of France is occupied by an Allied army with the consent of the people. The nation wonders whether or not the regime and the spirit of Vichy will remain there in force; whether or not the Vichy traitors will remain in power; whether or not that part of the French Empire will be able to reunite with the part that is already at war under a badge of honor; whether or not the national liberation of the free Empire will become dishonored by a handful of guilty men, disguised by the occasion under an additional lie?³⁸⁸

Free French officials also made their feelings clear about the American recognition of Darlan through unofficial channels. Éboué had cultivated a friendship with a Colonel Merrick, an American Air Corps military representative in Brazzaville

³⁸⁶ Memorandum of Conversation by the Under Secretary of State (Welles), Nov. 20, 1942. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1942, Vol. II, Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 546-7.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 547.

³⁸⁸ Speech Nov. 22, 1942. Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et Messages, 1940-1946*, 242. “Un grand territoire français est occupé par les armées alliées avec le consentement des populations. La nation se demande si oui, ou si non, le régime et l’esprit de Vichy y demeureront en vigueur, si oui, ou si non, les traîtres de Vichy y seront maintenus en place, si oui, ou si non, cette partie de l’Empire français pourra s’unir à celle qui avait déjà la guerre sous le signe de l’honneur, si oui, ou si non, la libération nationale à partir de l’Empire libéré devra être déshonorée par un quarteron de coupables, camouflés pour la circonstance sous un parjure supplémentaire? Il serait grave et dangereux qu’en posant seulement ces questions on ne puisse en même temps les résoudre.”

who had helped negotiate the agreements between the United States and Free France regarding the use of a base at Point-Noire in French Congo earlier that year.³⁸⁹ After a visit by Merrick in December 1942, Éboué wrote him to explain his sentiments about the recent U.S. action in North Africa. Although he claimed to understand why the United States had decided to strategically ally itself with Darlan, Éboué nevertheless labeled the recent action as an “immense deception.” Consequently, the recognition of Darlan was viewed as a personal affront to Free France:

And we think at the same time that France does not merit this treatment. Having paid in 1940 and since then for [Vichy’s] shortcomings... France has the right to respect just as she has the right to victory. It is contrary to her national dignity for one to impose upon her today the same masters that were imposed upon her by Germany, and it is France which is unduly prohibited from participating in the common victory, only to preserve a regime which made surrender, inaction and submission the central principles of its government... In a word, we maintain that France has the right to honor.³⁹⁰

For his part, de Gaulle now expressed openly his resentment for American interference in Africa. On January 2, he blasted the situation in Algiers, which had created “confusion” about French authority in the colony and had separated France from its empire.³⁹¹ On January 19, he complained to a member of the British foreign service that the Americans had plotted to prevent him from communicating with Giraud and were

³⁸⁹ Memo on Conférence du Octobre 1942, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 875.

³⁹⁰ Letter from Félix Éboué to Colonel Merrick, Dec. 12, 1942, ANOM, 5D 292. “Et nous penserons en même temps que ce traitement, la France ne le mérite pas. Ayant payé en 1940 et depuis lors ses fautes propres et, avec les siennes, celles de toutes les démocraties, la France qui répare ses fautes pendant que les démocraties réparent les leurs, la France a droit au respect comme elle aura droit à la victoire. Il est contraire à sa dignité nationale qu’on lui impose aujourd’hui les mêmes maîtres que lui imposait l’Allemagne et c’est lui interdire indument de participer à la victoire commune que de la maintenir sous ce régime qui a fait la capitulation, l’inaction et de la soumission ses préceptes de gouvernement... En un mot... nous prétendons que la France a droit à l’honneur.”

³⁹¹ Speech, Jan. 2, 1943. Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et Messages, 1940-1946*, 255.

manipulating events in North Africa.³⁹² A meeting between de Gaulle and Roosevelt in Casablanca at the height of the controversy only exacerbated the problem. Much to de Gaulle's dismay, Roosevelt was unwilling to recognize his political authority in French Africa, noting that "the sovereignty of France... rested with the people, but that unfortunately the people of France were not now in a position to exercise that sovereignty."³⁹³ The clear implication was that de Gaulle, as a military leader, had no democratic legitimacy that the United States was willing to recognize. The meeting did not leave a good impression with de Gaulle; a month later, he indicated to an American representative that he believed that the United States "favors the establishment of fascist regimes in all European countries."³⁹⁴

A note written by Félix Éboué on April 8, 1943 to Gabriel Fortune, governor of French Congo at Brazzaville, is revealing as to Free France's mentality regarding the U.S. actions in North and West Africa. Noting that de Gaulle's recent voyage to North Africa had been "the object of a systematic obstruction by the American government, and to a certain extent, the British government", Éboué suggested that the French needed to shift their disposition regarding the Allies.³⁹⁵ Although outright hostility was to be avoided, Éboué indicated that French dealings with the British and Americans should be

³⁹² The Chargé in the United Kingdom to the Secretary of State, Jan. 20, 1943. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1943, Vol. II Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), 43.

³⁹³ Roosevelt-de Gaulle Conversation, Jan. 22, 1943. *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences at Washington, 1941-1942, and Casablanca, 1943* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), 695.

³⁹⁴ Secretary of State to the Ambassador for the United Kingdom, Feb. 19, 1943. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1943, Vol. II Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), 59.

³⁹⁵ Telegram from Félix Éboué to the governor of French Moyen-Congo, April 8, 1942, ANOM, 5D292. "Général de Gaulle confirme ce que nous supposions. Stop. Son voyage en Afrique du Nord est l'objet d'une obstruction systématique du Gouvernement Américain et dans une certaine mesure du Gouvernement Britannique."

marked with a degree of defiance. Taken in isolation, his words could have been mistaken with any of Pierre Boisson's speeches prior to the Eisenhower-Darlan accords:

... We must, with precision and dignity, form a close-knit front against the foreign interference that compromises not only the current unity among the French, but also the future independence of our country... We shall show the Anglo-Saxons that we are able to maintain our *sang-froid* and clarity, and that we have enough courage and tenacity to prevent this strangulation.³⁹⁶

In closing, Éboué noted that Allied interference with de Gaulle in North Africa was "the greatest crisis since 1940."³⁹⁷

Éboué also wrote the following day to both the British and American consulates in Brazzaville. Noting the difficulties between the Allies and de Gaulle, he emphasized that the relationship was leaving a terrible impression with French authorities. "We are sad," he indicated, "to realize that the two great allied peoples cannot show the respect owed to the dignity and the independence of France."³⁹⁸ Given the recent actions of the two governments, Éboué could only assume that the Allies did not really want to install a government that could truly represent French interests. He contrasted the Allies' seemingly unclear intentions with the principles of their previous statements – notably the Atlantic Charter and "repeated declarations of the British and American governments, according to which France will be restored in its integrity and in its grandeur."³⁹⁹ These declarations, he emphasized, required the recognition of a Gaullist government in

³⁹⁶ Ibid. "Mais devons former avec précision et dignité un front serré contre ingérence étrangère qui compromet non seulement union actuelle entre français mais même indépendance future notre pays telle que la concevons et devons la concevoir. Stop. Nous montrerons aux Anglo-Saxons que savons conserver sang-froid et lucidité mais que avons aussi assez de courage et ténacité pour empêcher cet étranglement."

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Telegram from Félix Éboué to British Consul-General in Brazzaville, April 9, 1943, ANOM, 5D 292. "Nous avons peine, en effet, à supposer que les deux grands peuples alliés puissent contredire jamais le respect qu'ils doivent à la dignité et à l'indépendance de la France."

³⁹⁹ Of course, Éboué made no mention of whether the principles of the Atlantic Charter should also apply to France's colonies.

Algiers.⁴⁰⁰ For his part, the American consul wrote back to Éboué on April 13, noting that the United States was still dedicated to the reconstruction of France and that Éboué was reading too much into the situation. He closed by noting that “the apprehension and the lack of confidence mentioned in your letter are regrettable, and there is no foundation for them.”⁴⁰¹

This response did nothing to assure de Gaulle or Free France about American intentions, nor did Roosevelt’s continued refusal to accord de Gaulle political recognition. On May 3, de Gaulle wrote to General Catroux, and suggested that the United States might eventually be the power against which the French needed to focus their forces.⁴⁰² Later that month, he expressed his fears to Catroux that the United States would attempt to buy off Italy with French territory.⁴⁰³ Relations between the two powers became so strained that Hull expressed to Roosevelt on May 10 that “de Gaulle’s political propaganda... immediately threatens the military success against the Axis powers to which we have dedicated every effort.”⁴⁰⁴ For his part, Roosevelt noted to Churchill that month that de Gaulle’s “course and attitude is well nigh intolerable.”⁴⁰⁵

Indeed, Free French propaganda during this period attempted to sow suspicion of the United States in order to bolster general opposition to American-backed authorities in

⁴⁰⁰ Telegram from Félix Éboué to British Consul-General in Brazzaville, April 9, 1943, ANOM, 5D 292. “Je ne doute pas d’ailleurs qu’elle ne soit clairement et résolument favorable; la Charte d’Atlantique, les déclarations répétées des gouvernements britannique et américain selon lesquelles la France sera restituée dans son intégrité et dans sa grandeur...”

⁴⁰¹ Letter from Laurence Taylor, American Consul-General in Brazzaville, April 13, 1942, ANOM, 5D292. “L’appréhension et la besoin de confiance mentionnés dans votre lettre sont regrettables, et ne sont certainement pas fondés.”

⁴⁰² Consul General at Algiers to the Secretary of State, May 6, 1943. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1943, Vol. II Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), 109-110.

⁴⁰³ Consul General at Algiers to the Secretary of State, May 18, 1943. *Ibid.*, 121.

⁴⁰⁴ Memorandum by the Secretary of State to President Roosevelt, May 10, 1943. *Ibid.*, 113.

⁴⁰⁵ Memorandum by President Roosevelt to Prime Minister Churchill, May 8, 1943. *Ibid.*, 111.

Africa. Pierre Boisson was particularly useful for anti-American propaganda, as Gaullists spread rumors that he had “sold Dakar” to American interests.⁴⁰⁶ In June, de Gaulle and Giraud agreed to officially unify their respective movements into the Comité Française de la Libération Nationale (CFLN). But the intrigues against Giraud continued; de Gaulle considered him a puppet of the American authorities, and Free French rhetoric reflected this belief. The rumors would prove overwhelming to Giraud. Once the CFLN had been established, he was quickly out-manuevered from his position by de Gaulle. On June 9, de Gaulle, citing a lack of unity in the CFLN, resigned his post as president; the result was an expansion of the CFLN’s executive committee to include more Gaullist supporters, with de Gaulle quickly returning to the top spot.⁴⁰⁷ A key defection during de Gaulle’s gambit was Jean Monnet, who would later become famous for the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community. Monnet had previously been a staunch supporter of Giraud, but his change in allegiance was the catalyst in shifting the balance of power between the two generals. The American consul general at Algiers had already warned Hull about this in a telegram that May, indicating that Monnet “feels as strongly as possible like de Gaulle that French rights and sovereignty must be more aggressively asserted in respect of the Allies.”⁴⁰⁸

De Gaulle’s heavy-handedness in pushing out Giraud and criticizing the Americans only furthered U.S. reluctance to recognize de Gaulle’s movement as legitimately speaking for French interests. After being notified of the power struggle within the CFLN, Roosevelt wrote Churchill, indicating that “[w]e must divorce

⁴⁰⁶ Personal Representative of President Roosevelt in French West Africa to the Secretary of State, June 23, 1943. *Ibid.*, 162.

⁴⁰⁷ Consul General at Algiers (Wiley) to the Secretary of State, June 13, 1943. *Ibid.*, 151. Consul General at Algiers (Wiley) to the Secretary of State, June 16, 1943. *Ibid.*, 152.

⁴⁰⁸ Consul General at Algiers (Wiley) to the Secretary of State, June 16, 1943. *Ibid.*, 152.

ourselves from de Gaulle...”⁴⁰⁹ By this point, such a course of action was not possible; de Gaulle and his followers were too well-entrenched. But the United States could still limit the legitimacy it accorded to the general. Therefore, in recognizing the CFLN in August 1943, the U.S. took care to emphasize the CFLN “as functioning within specific limitations during the war” and further noted that “this statement does not constitute recognition of a government of France or of the French Empire...”⁴¹⁰ It would not be until July of the following year that Roosevelt was willing to consider recognizing the CFLN as the legitimate political head of France, and it would take until October for the United States to actually do so.⁴¹¹

Free French concerns about American power were not limited to the war. An internal Free France memo from January 1944, written by Renée Stricker, and sent to de Gaulle, Plevin, and other prominent members of the CFLN cabinet, summarized the anxiety that Free France felt regarding the United States’ postwar interest in France’s empire. “The United States is not a colonial power,” it noted, “but this war has forced it to turn its eyes toward the colonial problem. The peace will force it to take a position on this problem, according to its interests and according to its conception of the world.”⁴¹² This conception, the memo argued, was based on a particular mentality that France would

⁴⁰⁹ President Roosevelt to the British Prime Minister (Churchill), June 17, 1943. *Ibid.*, 155.

⁴¹⁰ Statements on Relations with the French Committee of National Liberation, Aug. 22, 1943. *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences at Washington, 1941-1942, and Casablanca, 1943* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), 1170.

⁴¹¹ President Roosevelt to the British Prime Minister (Churchill), July 10, 1944. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1944, Vol. III, the British Commonwealth and Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 723. The Secretary of State to the American Representative to the French Committee of National Liberation at Paris, Oct. 19, 1944. *Ibid.*, 741.

⁴¹² Les États-Unis et le Problème Colonial, Jan. 15, 1944, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 880. “Les États-Unis ne sont pas une puissance coloniale; mais cette guerre les a forcés à tourner les yeux vers le problème des colonies, la paix les forcera à prendre position sur ce problème, à la fois selon leurs intérêts et selon leur conception du monde.”

have to understand if she hoped to “defend her vital interests” to her American ally.⁴¹³ America had been born out of an anticolonial struggle against Great Britain; its colonial holdings were limited, and those that it did possess, like Cuba and the Philippines, had been granted a measure of autonomy and were economically successful. What infused the American colonial mentality was a particular form of idealism of economic and political liberty, for which America’s soldiers were currently fighting.⁴¹⁴ The memo further noted that American officials had made numerous, and sometimes conflicting, statements on colonialism. These ranged from Cordell Hull’s seeming acknowledgement of a role for the colonial powers in preparing the colonies for self-government, to Sumner Welles, who while acknowledging that some societies may not be ready for self-government, nevertheless had asked “how can we hope for the coming of a free and stable world, if half the population remains in slavery?”⁴¹⁵ Therefore, the United States’ disposition toward empires after the war remained an open issue. Essentially, American ideals could pose a threat to French interests; the memo questioned whether, in deciding the role of other nations in the postwar order, “will the United States push them to apply, more or less faithfully, the principles that follow from its own tendencies?”⁴¹⁶

⁴¹³ Ibid., p. 1.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., p. 5. “Comment pouvons-nous espérer l’avènement d’un monde libre et stable, si la moitié de sa population demeure en esclavage?”

⁴¹⁶ Ibid. “Une seule question cependant reste en suspens: par une participation active à la reconstruction et à l’organisation du monde d’après-guerre, les États-Unis entraineront-ils les autres Nations-Unies à appliquer, plus ou moins fidèlement, les principes issus de ses tendances...?”

Planning for a Postwar Empire in Africa

Free France's squabbles with the United States and Britain did not prevent it from planning for its postwar empire in Africa. But the split between de Gaulle and Giraud in North Africa had hindered the movement's ability to announce a clear policy for the continent. Until June 1943, the empire was unclear as to which leader would win the power struggle. Only after de Gaulle had established himself as the unquestioned head of the resistance and earned a measure of U.S. recognition for the CFLN in August 1943 could Free France's colonial leaders turn their attention toward developing a direction for all of France's colonies in Africa. Of these leaders, the most significant contributions came from Éboué, Minister of Colonies René Pleven, and Henri Laurentie, his secretary of political affairs.

Prior to the war, there was very little in René Pleven's background to suggest his rise to leadership in de Gaulle's Free French regime.⁴¹⁷ Born in 1901, he had no military training and little experience in politics. He passed the "hollow years" of the 1930s in North America in a variety of business pursuits. This experience led Third Republic leaders to ask him to coordinate production and purchase of aircraft for the coming war from the United States in 1939. In 1940, he rallied to de Gaulle in London, and immediately began trying to persuade France's African colonies to follow the general's lead. His successes in these efforts, along with his loyalty to de Gaulle, were rewarded with a series of cabinet-equivalent Free French posts throughout the war. From 1941-1942, he held the dual portfolios of finances and the colonies; he would exchange the former in 1942 for foreign affairs, which he held for a year. With two brief breaks in

⁴¹⁷ The authoritative biography of Pleven remains Christian Bougeard, *René Pleven: un Français libre en politique* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 1993).

service, he served as the equivalent of Free France's Minister of Colonies from 1941 to 1944. By 1943, the empire was his sole responsibility, most likely because of the necessity of planning a new colonial policy for the postwar atmosphere.

He made a series of visits that year in his capacity as Minister of Colonies, highlighted by a sixteen-day tour in October that took him to a series of brief stops throughout the French Empire in Africa, spanning North Africa, AOF, and AEF. In all of these visits, Pleven was charged with encouraging continuing support for the war effort and articulating France's colonial policy in Africa going forward. With Giraud's faction subordinated, Pleven's October trip was his first opportunity to travel extensively through a reunited French Africa now completely under Gaullist control. The centerpiece of the trip was his stop in Brazzaville from October 6-10, during which he addressed the city's *cercle civil*. After discussing the war effort, Pleven turned his attention to France's future. He acknowledged that France had been crippled by the war, noting that she would need "two or three years to recuperate, to recharge, as it were, the number of red blood cells in our arteries in order to be sufficient...to begin the role, the grand role of France."⁴¹⁸ Nevertheless, Pleven emphasized that France's role in the postwar order would be significant. This was because France had certain exceptional qualities that suited her to address the problems that the postwar atmosphere would present:

Throughout the world, and in the heart of each of us there is, gentlemen, a certitude that the world is in a transitional period...What will be the destiny of our civilization, what will be the destiny of mankind? Mankind has always been at the foundation of our French happiness and our French humanity, and if I may say so, of the religion of the vast majority of our fathers. Great, powerful and, we must not deny, fertile ideologies are preparing to fight over the possession of the

⁴¹⁸ Conférence de Pleven au Cercle Civil à Brazzaville, Oct. 6, 1943, ANP, 560 AP 28. "Il nous faudra deux ou trois ans sans doute pour réparer, soit pour faire que dans nos artères le nombre des globules rouges, comme on dit ici sera redevenu suffisant, et alors, à ce moment-là, devra commencer le rôle, le grand rôle de la France."

world. But we French, who remain a civilization where beauty is the measure of man, know that we have a role to play...⁴¹⁹

This special role in the world would be vital to France's postwar rebirth. Pleven emphasized that France's African colonies were pivotal to this process. Africa served as an embodiment of French unity during the war, and was a clear example of France's ongoing contribution to mankind. This was the theme of Pleven's speech in Cameroon on October 13, when he promised that France would not repeat the mistakes of the past. After thanking Cameroonians for their contributions to the war effort, Pleven noted that "the role of the colonies in the reconstruction of our country and the renovation of France will be equally crucial."⁴²⁰ Pleven added that "unity" of the colonies and the *métropole* had been a central principle of Free France since the consolidation of the resistance movements under de Gaulle in 1943. This unity, he noted, "should be our ultimate goal, our only goal when we liberate France. I am confident that the colonies will know how, as in 1940, to give the world a great example, and that, contributing to make France great and strong, they will remain for the entire country, living witnesses of what the French can do when they are resolute and united."⁴²¹

⁴¹⁹ Ibid. "Dans le monde entier, et dans le cœur de chacun de nous, il y a, Messieurs, une certitude, vous le savez bien, c'est que le monde est dans une période de transition...Quelle va être la destinée de notre civilisation, quelle va être la destinée de l'homme. L'homme, cet élément qui a toujours été à la base et de notre félicité française et de notre humanité française, et même, je puis le dire, de la religion qui est celle de l'immense majorité de nos pères. De grandes, de puissantes et, de n'en disconviens pas, de fécondes idéologies se préparent à se disputer la possession du monde. Mais nous Français, nous qui sommes sortis d'une civilisation dont la beauté c'est d'être à la mesure de l'homme, nous savons bien que nous avons un rôle à jouer..."

⁴²⁰ Speech of René Pleven in Cameroon, Oct. 13, 1943, ANP, 560 AP 27. "le rôle des colonies, dans la reconstitution de notre pays et la rénovation de la France, sera également capital."

⁴²¹ Ibid. "Camerounais, c'est cette union de tous les Français qui doit être notre but final, notre seul but quand nous libérerons la France. Je suis persuadé que les coloniaux sauront, comme en 1940, donner à tous un grand exemple et que, contribuent à faire la France grande et forte, ils resteront pour le pays tout entier, les témoins vivants de ce que peuvent faire des Français, quand ils sont résolus et unis."

But Plevin also made clear that the terms of this relationship would be defined by the *métropole*, not by France's colonies. When France's African subjects wrote Plevin with suggestions about the continent's future, he simply ignored them. An earlier trip to Dakar in August 1943 had been publicized throughout Senegal; consequently, Plevin received several letters from Senegalese French wishing to air their grievances about French administration or the state of the colony. One of these, Amadou Cisse, president of the Association Professionnelle des Fonctionnaires des Cadres Supérieurs Originaires de l'AOF, wrote to Plevin on August 10 to seek an audience with him when he arrived in Dakar on the 14th. In the letter, he emphasized a growing discrepancy in salaries between European and African workers and the need for greater assimilation of Africans into French social and political life. Plevin wrote back on August 25, vaguely promising to look into the matter, but he never met with Cisse.⁴²² Another letter, also written on August 10, came from the Union Républicaine Sénégalaise, and emphasized the increasing tension between Africans and colonial administrators. The letter suggested a series of steps that could alleviate this situation:

Equality between all French citizens without distinction of color, in the army as well as in other branches such as administration and commerce, because if the native is to remain French he must be so totally.
Genuine development in our country with well-defined interests for the *métropole* and the Africans;
General elevation and continued development of the intellectual, moral, and spiritual levels of the indigène;
...
The native should have free choice of his leaders and representatives.⁴²³

⁴²² Correspondence of René Plevin, ANP, 560 AP27.

⁴²³ Ibid. "Nous avons l'honneur de vous signaler ci-après les seuls moyens qui, selon notre point de vue pourrait dissiper la malaise existant :
Égalité de fait entre tous les citoyens français sans distinctions de couleur, dans l'armée aussi bien que dans les autres branches de l'activité humaine. (Administration – Commerce) car si l'indigène veut rester français il entend l'être totalement.
Mise en valeur réelle de notre pays dans l'intérêt bien entendu de la métropole et de ce dernier.

The letter concluded by noting that “equal responsibilities must engender equal rights” and reaffirmed the organization’s dedication to France. Despite this impassioned plea for equality, Pleven virtually ignored the demands made by the Union; his response on August 25 only acknowledged the Union’s profession of loyalty to France at the end of the letter.⁴²⁴

The Brazzaville Conference

Pleven’s dismissal of African suggestions for reform would foreshadow practices followed at the Brazzaville Conference of January 1944. The conference, organized in late 1943, brought together France’s top colonial leaders (most notably the governors of all African territories and major colonial administrators) to discuss France’s future role on the continent. It has since been rightfully criticized for not providing a voice to Africans – Éboué and Raphael Saller (governor of Côte Française des Somalis) were the only ones there who had any significant role.⁴²⁵ And as Tony Chafer has noted, there were no attendees who proposed anything as radical as independence; the conference program clearly noted that it had rejected “the idea of ‘self-government’ and we have considered the exercise of internal political rights in the colonies as a still-evolving

Élévation générale et continue du niveau intellectuel moral et spirituel de l’indigène.

...

L’indigène veut avoir le libre choix de ses dirigeants et ses représentants.

En conclusion : L’égalité des devoirs doit engendrer l’égalité des droits.”

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ In writing this section, I drew from materials in the Archives Nationales, Section d’Outre-Mer in Aix-en-Provence, as well as some general information about the Brazzaville Conference found in Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*: (Oxford: Berg, 2002), esp. 56-61. I have taken care to credit Professor Chafer where appropriate. See also Raymond Lemesle, *La Conférence de Brazzaville de 1944: contexte et repères : cinquantenaire des prémices de la décolonisation* (Paris : C.H.E.A.M., 1994).

question.”⁴²⁶ Africa would maintain its place in the French empire, and Free French leaders firmly believed that a reinvigorated and victorious France was best positioned to plan that future. But given the participation of colonial subjects in the war, reforms were clearly needed to maintain French influence. As the program noted, “the Empire, which has played a decisive role in the resurrection of France, must officially continue to play a role in the country’s new life.”⁴²⁷ Planning and hosting a conference before the conclusion of the war gave Free France the freedom and initiative to assert what shape those reforms would take.

There was another reason for arranging the conference before the conclusion of the war. The Free French movement had largely been shut out of the discussions among the “big three” regarding the postwar order, and had not yet been accorded full political recognition by the United States. De Gaulle’s followers evinced concern that this would prevent France from having significant input into the shape of its empire. In late 1943, the Tehran Conference had brought together Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin to discuss the last phases of the war. Although little, if any, discussion focused on the future of the French empire (the only item on the agenda dealing with France concerned the coming Allied invasion of western Europe), Plevin worried that France needed to establish a policy for the future of the colonies before the Allies did it for them. In December 1943, Pierre Cournarie, Boisson’s successor in AOF, wrote to Plevin, expressing his view that there had not been sufficient time to prepare for a colonial conference of Brazzaville’s magnitude. On January 4, Plevin responded, noting that the recent discussions at Tehran required urgency on Free France’s part:

⁴²⁶ Programme Général de la Conférence de Brazzaville, p. 15, ANOM, 5D293.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., p. 14.

I realize that the date for the Brazzaville Conference does not allow you as much time for preparation as you would hope for...All the information I have received from Great Britain and the United States indicates to me that we cannot wait for any advantage in clarifying the orientation of our colonial policy, and the rumors circulating about the discussions at Tehran confirm this.⁴²⁸

Pleven was not the only one who expressed concern about the effects of an Anglo-American postwar policy on France's colonies. An internal Free France report, drafted by Henri Laurentie two weeks before the opening of the Brazzaville Conference, addressed the same concerns. Laurentie emphasized that once France was liberated, "the situation also will not depend on us alone; in the colonial order, postwar international treaties will certainly be invoked and have profound repercussions on relations between the *métropole* and the colonies."⁴²⁹ Consequently, one of the goals of France's policy in the colonies should be its "contribution to the maintaining of France among the great powers."⁴³⁰

As the conference approached, Pleven also sought to convince France's subjects of the organizers' good intentions. Echoing his comments to the Brazzaville *cercle civil* (as well as Éboué's earlier suggestions on cultivating closer ties with African subjects), Pleven emphasized France's particular concern for humanity. It was this quality that best

⁴²⁸ Letter from René Pleven to Pierre Cournarie, Jan. 4, 1944, ANP, 560 AP 27. "Je sais que la date de la Conférence de BRAZZAVILLE ne vous permet pas une préparation aussi longue que vous auriez pu le souhaiter...Tous les renseignements que j'ai reçus de Grande Bretagne et des États-Unis me montrent que nous ne pouvons pas attendre d'avantage pour préciser l'orientation de notre politique coloniale et les rumeurs qui circulent au sujet des discussions de TEHERAN le confirment."

⁴²⁹ Relations Métropole-Colonies, Jan. 17, 1944, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2201. "Mais, une fois le territoire libéré, la situation ne dépendra pas encore de nous seuls: dans l'ordre colonial, les tractations internationales, d'après-guerre, seront certainement appelées à avoir de profonde répercussions sur les relations métropole-colonies."

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3. It should be noted that these concerns came at the same time that France had agreed to cooperate with Britain on a number of issues in West Africa, a policy which emerged from the Accra Conference of December 1943. The conference assembled high profile colonial representatives (Cournarie and Lord Swinton were the most prominent) to discuss a wide range of issues including agriculture, the war effort, and repatriation of subjects from British and French colonies. Note Relative à la Conférence tenue à Accra, Dec. 1, 1943, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 406.

qualified France to plan a future for Africa – a point he made in a radio address in Brazzaville on January 22:

The Brazzaville conference will demonstrate our commitment to continue France's African mission after the war with faith and a renewed energy. This is not because of the labor and capital we have invested in Africa, nor even because of the dreams of our explorers, our military, or our missionaries...but because we feel in ourselves a vocation to be guardians of a humanity that loves our flag as much as we love it ourselves. It is because we are men convinced twenty centuries of Christianity and humanity, during which we were instructed in a faith founded on equality among men, have historically and naturally prepared us to love and understand the needs and aspirations of our African subjects..⁴³¹

Pleven would echo these comments in his speech opening the conference on January 30, noting that “it is the African, it is his aspirations, his needs, and we do not hesitate to recognize, his faults...that will be the constant preoccupation of this conference.”⁴³² De Gaulle's opening remarks also focused on the needs of Africa, but were more blatantly paternalistic; he compared France's special role in the development of the colonies to the relationship between parents and children. De Gaulle noted that “If there is one colonial power that has been inspired in its lessons by events and that has chosen nobly and

⁴³¹ Speech by René Pleven on Brazzaville Radio, Jan. 22, 1944, ANP, 560 AP 27. “La Conférence de Brazzaville témoignera de notre volonté de poursuivre, après la guerre, avec une foi et une énergie redoublées, la mission africaine de la France. Ce n'est pas à cause du travail et des capitaux que nous avons investis en Afrique, ni même vertu du songe de nos explorateurs, de notre armée, de nos missionnaires – nos colonies y sont généralement répondu – que nous sentons en nous la vocation d'être les moniteurs d'une humanité qui aime, autant que nous l'aimons nous-mêmes, notre drapeau. C'est parce que nous sommes des hommes convaincus que vingt siècles de chrétienté et d'humanité, pendant lesquels nous avons été instruits dans la foi en fondant l'égalité parmi les hommes, nous ont historiquement et comme naturellement préparés à aimer et à comprendre les besoins et les aspirations de nos sujets africains.”

⁴³² Speech given by René Pleven at the opening of the Brazzaville Conference, Jan. 30, 1944, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 392. “C'est l'homme, c'est l'Africain, ce sont ses aspirations, ses besoins et, n'hésitons pas à la reconnaître, ses faiblesses... qui seront la préoccupation constants de cette conférence...”

liberally the route of a new era in which she intends to lead sixty million people who find themselves associated with the fate of 42 million children, that power is France.”⁴³³

These comments reveal the paternalistic attitude that France had vis-à-vis its African colonies, but there was a more pragmatic reason for maintaining influence on the continent. Pleven’s opening speech to the conference on January 30 is illustrative of the growing realization within the resistance concerning the importance of Africa to the nation’s future. After recognizing de Gaulle for his efforts in bringing France’s overseas territories together, Pleven turned his attention to the future of the empire. He noted that Africa could play a particularly important role in re-establishing French power:

This gathering indicates that a new phase is beginning in the reorganization of France. It reveals that, having already cleared itself of the debris of the past and the ruins of the present, France is turning its attention toward the future. It underscores the determination of men who want the liberation of the country and who also hope for its renaissance. It demonstrates that we understand that, just as they endured their misfortunes together, the people of France and the subjects of our Empire are full partners in the benefits that we hope for from our renewal.⁴³⁴

Éboué had already spoken of this dynamic of renewal in a speech to the conseil d’administration of AEF the previous December. He indicated that France would embark

⁴³³ Speech, Jan. 30, 1944. Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et Messages 1940-1946*, 372. “S’il est une puissance impériale que les événements conduisent à s’inspirer des leurs leçons et à choisir noblement, libéralement, la route des temps nouveaux où elle entend diriger les soixante millions d’hommes qui se trouvent associés au sort de ses quarante-deux millions d’enfants, cette puissance c’est la France.”

⁴³⁴ Speech given by René Pleven at the opening of the Brazzaville Conference, Jan. 30, 1944, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 392. “Sa convocation est l’indice que commence une phase nouvelle du redressement français. Elle révèle que, se dégageant déjà des débris du passé, des ruines du présent, la France lève les yeux vers son avenir. Elle souligne la détermination des hommes qui voulerent la libération du pays de vouloir aussi sa renaissance. Elle démontre que nous entendons que, de même qu’elles prirent leur part à nos malheurs, les populations françaises ou autochtones de notre Empire soient pleinement associés sur bienfaits que nous espérons de notre renouveau.”

upon a new colonial policy that would be more humane and would conform to France's political traditions, and through which "the honor of France will endure."⁴³⁵

The conference's direction illustrates the priority placed by Free French colonial authorities on the importance of the empire to renewing France's international standing. Henri Laurentie, Pleven's secretary of political affairs, drafted the agenda for the Brazzaville Conference.⁴³⁶ He divided the main themes of the conference into four general areas: first, the immediate needs of the war, such as recruitment efforts in France and in the colonies; second, the need for administrative reforms within the colonial bureaucracy; third, internal policy for the colonies; and finally, the political structure of the French empire and relationship between the *métropole* and the colonies.⁴³⁷ In considering the last two areas, Laurentie had been greatly influenced by Éboué's earlier recommendations on increased autonomy for African leaders and respect for African traditions. The program noted that "the role of the *métropole* must be reduced to a minimum" and that France "must be the inspirer, not the administrator" of the colonies.⁴³⁸ Laurentie would later echo Éboué in an essay published immediately after the Brazzaville Conference, where he noted the tension between France's traditional assimilationist mission and its actual results in the colonies. For Laurentie, France needed to contemplate "how to undo the intimate contradiction of an action that seeks to safeguard human principles, but at the same time threatens the destruction of the expression of traditional customs – an expression that is beloved by those same

⁴³⁵ Félix Éboué, *L'AEF et la Guerre: Discours prononcé devant le Conseil d'Administration de la Colonie le 1er Décembre 1943* (Brazzaville: Éditions du Baobab, 1944), 49.

⁴³⁶ Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 56.

⁴³⁷ Programme de la Conférence Impériale de Brazzaville, p. 1, ANOM, 5D293.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

principles?”⁴³⁹ In Laurentie’s view, the assimilationist policies followed by France before the war had been driven by a notion that France represented the height of human civilization. The postwar situation, Laurentie suggested, would require considerably more humility:

The human quality is *contingent*. There is no such thing as the best man in the absolute. The soil of France, the life of France will form in France, an authentic human life; the soil and the life of Madagascar will form, in Madagascar, another human life, no less authentic.⁴⁴⁰

Reflecting this view, Laurentie would recommend that Africa be given more political autonomy in the postwar order, with a federal legislature governing the entire empire and assemblies within the colonies managing local affairs.⁴⁴¹

However, despite Laurentie’s impassioned remarks on the merits of increased self-government for the colonies, such radical reforms were not in the cards in 1944.⁴⁴² As Tony Chafer has noted, the Brazzaville Conference would establish that “political power resided exclusively with the *métropole*, and any future possibility of the colonies governing themselves was emphatically ruled out.”⁴⁴³ The old imperial structure would be retained, and questions as to specific political rights for France’s subjects would be deferred until a later date. Debates at the conference about the relative values of

⁴³⁹ Henri Laurentie, “Notes sur une philosophie de la politique colonial française” in *Renaissances: Revue Politique* (Paris: Renaissances, 1944), 12. “Comment annuler la contradiction intime d’une action qui tend à sauvegarder les principes humains d’une société tout en menaçant de destruction l’expression coutumière, l’expression aimée de ces mêmes principes?”

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 14. “La qualité humaine est *contingente*. Il n’y a pas un meilleur homme dans l’absolu. Le sol de France, la vie de France formeront, en France, une authentique qualité humaine; la vie et la sol de Madagascar formeront, à Madagascar, une autre qualité humaine, non moins authentique.”

⁴⁴¹ Brazzaville Conférence, Procès-verbal de la séance du 6 Février 1944, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 392.

⁴⁴² Brazzaville Conférence, Procès-verbal de la séance du 4 Février 1944, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 392.

⁴⁴³ Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 56-7.

assimilation, versus Éboué's thoughts on respecting African traditions, most likely played a role in the conference's ultimate disposition on such reforms. It would probably be an overstatement to say that the traditional policy of assimilation was victorious at the conference, but there was certainly a measure of skepticism concerning some of Éboué's ideas.

A crucial turning point in the debate over Africa's cultural and political autonomy came on February 3, when Pleven invited opinions on Éboué's views concerning recognition of traditional African political institutions.⁴⁴⁴ Raphael Saller in particular objected to Éboué's recommendation of increased respect for customs and recognition of the powers of local chiefs. To do so, he argued, would undercut France's civilizing mission; after all, how could France allow its subjects to be governed by leaders who she considered to be of inferior political and cultural evolution? Those gathered at Brazzaville had to remember that the colonial subject "places his hopes in us, because he is still persuaded that certain abuses, certain ideas do not represent France, as our country has a reputation for generosity and justice... he hopes for a prompt change in his condition and... he instinctively relies on us to obtain it."⁴⁴⁵ In response, Laurentie recommended a more moderate interpretation of Éboué's ideas about African institutions – they could be viewed by colonial administrators as not "an end to themselves" but rather as interim structures that would allow the *indigènes* to learn a "sense of

⁴⁴⁴ Brazzaville Conférence, Procès-verbal de la séance du 3 Février 1944, p. 7, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 392

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 10. "Il espère en nous, parce qu'il est encore persuadé que certains abus, certaines idées ne représentent pas la France, tellement notre Patrie a réputation de générosité et de justice... il souhaite un prompt changement de sa condition et s'il compte instinctivement sur nous pour l'obtenir..."

responsibility.”⁴⁴⁶ The session attendees unanimously adopted Laurentie’s compromise, and the conference’s final report indicated that traditional political institutions would be carefully managed by the colonial administration in order to lead the *indigènes* toward a higher stage of political evolution whereby they could exercise political authority.⁴⁴⁷

With this distinction made, the conference’s ultimate recommendations concerning Africa’s immediate political future followed naturally. If African institutions were not to be accorded the level of respect that Éboué had seemingly advocated in his 1941 circulars, then how could France’s African subjects be expected to assume substantial control over their day-to-day interests, regardless of how provincial those interests might be? There would be no question of an immediate transition to the federal system that Laurentie had advocated prior to the conference; instead, the unity and structure of the French empire were reaffirmed, and the final report of the conference promised an increased role for Africans in advising the colonial administration about internal policy.⁴⁴⁸ To be clear, these were not mere token reforms; as Chafer has also noted, forced labor was to be gradually eliminated, and France’s dealings with African society were to be marked by heightened respect for African culture and traditions.⁴⁴⁹ The colonial administration also dedicated itself to increased education for its subjects, more legal protections for workers, economic progress in the colonies, and evolution toward political consciousness and responsibility.⁴⁵⁰ But these were reforms that would be strictly overseen by French administration, with political power remaining in Paris.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

⁴⁴⁷ Recommandations adoptées par la Conférence Africaine Française, p. 8, ANOM, 17G 130.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 2-4.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 9-10; see also Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 56-7.

⁴⁵⁰ Recommandations adoptées par la Conférence Africaine Française, p. 11, 12, 17, ANOM, 17G 130.

As the final recommendations of the conference noted, “we want the political power of France to be exercised with precision and rigor on every territory of her Empire.”⁴⁵¹ Of course, without such strict control over her colonies, it would be a more difficult task for France to re-establish its standing in the world after the war had concluded.

Selling French Colonialism after Brazzaville

Free French colonial administrators immediately set about convincing the empire of the necessity of the Brazzaville reforms. This message was often carefully tailored to particular audiences. When discussing the Brazzaville recommendations with Europeans, a major emphasis of de Gaulle’s colonial administrators was that the new colonial policy would help maintain France’s status after the war. This was the theme of Pleven’s speech to the Free France provisional constituent assembly on March 15. He noted that the war had entered its final stages, during which France had to assemble “the elements of a program of action that clearly marks France’s resolution to continue to fulfill her mission as a great colonial nation and consequently to remain a great power in world affairs.”⁴⁵² The reforms at Brazzaville represented a significant step in this direction; they would solidify the ties between the *métropole* and the colonies and help preserve France’s colonial empire.

But the importance of the colonies to France’s future prestige was not the only selling point for the Brazzaville reforms. Pleven also focused on the importance of France’s civilizing mission for her African subjects. French Africa, he noted, could be

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., p. 1.

⁴⁵² Discours de René Pleven à l’Assemblée Consultative Provisoire, March 15, 1944, ANOM, 17G130. “...les éléments d’un programme d’action qui marque clairement la résolution de la France de continuer à remplir sa mission de grande nation colonisatrice et par conséquent de rester une grande puissance aux intérêts mondiaux.”

divided into two categories – elites who had previously benefitted from the colonial project, and the African masses, who had been mildly influenced by French culture, but were largely shaped by local customs. The French mission was to enable the former group to assume leadership roles in the colonies, and to lead the latter group toward modern ways and material prosperity.⁴⁵³ Plevén argued that France’s subjects were dependent on her for advancement in the modern world:

Western civilization has an intense attraction for people who have not experienced it. The appeal of material goods, respect for individuals, their participation in the management of public affairs ... Like all men, the African feels this longing for renewal that characterizes the present era, and he relies on France, in which he has immense confidence and which he does not confuse with the abuses which he can suffer here or there, to give him more freedom after the war, more justice, more well-being.⁴⁵⁴

His description of the relationship of Africans to her French colonizers reflected both de Gaulle’s paternalistic views as well as traditional colonial ideology, both of which viewed Africans as unable to “evolve” without western assistance.

Plevén and his followers also appealed directly to France’s African subjects. The benefits of the French civilizing mission were a particular point of emphasis. In this regard, Éboué was the most useful example, as he was the living embodiment of France’s commitment to the education and integration of Africans into French society. Colonial administrators missed no opportunities to point to Éboué’s example when addressing their subjects, and Éboué did not hesitate to use his position to argue that France offered a future of racial harmony and political evolution via the colonial system. In his December

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid. “Le civilisation occidentale exerce une attraction intense sur les peuples qui ne l’ont point pratiquée. L’attrait du bien-être matériel, le respect de l’individu, sa participation à la gestion de la chose publique... Comme tous les hommes, l’Africain éprouve cette aspiration de renouveau qui caractérise l’époque actuelle, et il compte sur la France, en qui il a une immense confiance et qu’il ne confond pas avec les abus dont il peut souffrir ici où là, pour lui donner après cette guerre plus de liberté, plus de justice, plus de bien être.”

1943 speech to the conseil d'administration of AEF, he marveled at the continued loyalty of Africa's *indigènes* to France during the course of the war, noting that "in the saddest hours, the solidarity of our *indigènes* has spontaneously manifested, as they have loyally declared their fidelity."⁴⁵⁵ This loyalty, Éboué noted, could be traced in part to their belief in the French system:

Gentlemen, in the coming judgment that men here and there will want to bring upon the methods of French colonialism, it will be right, it will be honest, to guard these sentiments, these simple and moving tributes made spontaneously to a country which has always seen past and will always see past racial discrimination, to this country that did not simply content itself with proclaiming the equality of men in order to make it a simple position of the general spirit, but who also made the equality of men into a concrete reality.⁴⁵⁶

Éboué's example provided France's best positive message about the benefits of its presence in Africa. But without question, her most powerful argument lay in the contrast between France's colonial ideals and the racist ideology of the Nazi regime. Of course, the evils of Nazism could also be used to illustrate the hypocrisy of those who fought against it but still maintained an empire – a tension that would be exploited by anticolonial movements in Algeria and Vietnam in the 1950s. But Nazism also presented the perfect foil to France's civilizing mission – one devoted to a racist ideology that saw non-Aryans, and certainly all Africans, as inherently subhuman; the other professing its devotion to assimilating Africans into citizenship and the body politic. The stakes were clear: if the Germans won the war, Africa's fate would be considerably more dire than the

⁴⁵⁵ Félix Éboué, *L'AEF et la Guerre: Discours prononcé devant le Conseil d'Administration de la Colonie le 1er Décembre 1943*, 37. "Pendant les heures les plus sombres la solidarité de nos indigènes s'est spontanément manifestée, comme s'est loyalement déclarée leur fidélité."

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid. "Messieurs, dans le jugement que les uns et les autres voudront porter sur les méthodes de colonisation française, il sera juste, il sera honnête, de retenir ces sentiments, hommages simples et émouvants rendus spontanément au Pays qui a toujours ignoré et ignorera toujours les discriminations raciales, à ce pays qui ne s'est pas simplement contenté de proclamer l'égalité des hommes pour en faire une simple position de l'esprit, mais qui en a fait une réalité concrète."

one planned by Free France at the Brazzaville Conference. Pleven noted this in his March 1944 speech to the Free France constituent assembly:

The black man, although primitive, resembles the white man in many ways. We have explained to him that in this war Hitlerism and German methods, of which he has preserved an astonishingly vivid memory in the areas where he experienced them, threatened him more than we did. He knows that France, which has brought to him above all internal peace and protection against the gravest abuses, is a great nation for which colonizing means civilizing, that is to say, the spread of freedom. When he knows that in Brazzaville we have worked to improve his lot, provide the means to grow up, be educated, and to become a person, he is more ready than ever to respond to our call and produce more for France.⁴⁵⁷

The contrast between France and the Nazis was also the theme of a speech given by Paul Vuillaume, governor of Gabon, in June 1944, upon his dedication of a monument in Libreville to Charles Tchorere, a Gabonese captain who had served in the colonial infantry in France during the Nazi invasion of 1940. Tchorere had been summarily executed by the Nazis after he refused to separate himself from French officers and join other disarmed African soldiers. This Nazi crime helped crystallize the benefits of the French mission in Africa and the evils of Nazism. For Vuillaume, Tchorere, who had worked his way through the ranks of the colonial army, had been a symbol of “the magnificent success of the colonizing genius of our country” in the same vein as Félix Éboué.⁴⁵⁸ This stood in stark contrast to Nazi ideology:

⁴⁵⁷ Discours de René Pleven à l’Assemblée Consultative Provisoire, March 15, 1944, ANOM, 17G130. “L’homme noir, même primitif, ressemble bien des points à l’homme blanc. Nous lui avons expliqué que dans cette guerre l’hitlerisme et les méthodes allemandes dont, dans les régions où il les a connues, il a conservé étonnamment vivace le souvenir le menaçaient plus encore que nous. Il sait que la France qui lui a apporté d’abord la paix intérieure, la protection contre les abus les plus graves, est une grande nation pour qui coloniser signifie civiliser, c’est-à-dire propager les libertés. Quand il sait qu’à Brazzaville on travaille à améliorer son sort, à lui donner les moyens de s’élever, de s’instruire, à faire de lui une personne, il est prêt plus que jamais à répondre à notre appel et à produire davantage pour la France.”

⁴⁵⁸ Speech, June 5, 1942, ANOM, 5D 290. “...une magnifique réussite de Génie colonisateur de notre pays.”

Our enemies are also the enemies of humanity – that is, humanity as we understand it... When Hitler treated the African races like races of half-bred monkeys, he was thinking of French colonialism primarily, and it was France that he insulted, or at least that he believed he insulted. Hitler understood very well that the day when millions of Africans still immersed in the darkness, would be removed to see the light of civilization would be the day when so many millions of men would be opposed to intolerant and cruel pan-Germanism. And Hitler knew well that to hasten that dawn of liberation, France had labored quickly and well.⁴⁵⁹

In closing, Vuillaume emphasized that the recent Brazzaville Conference would provide the basis for a vast revision of French colonial practice for the benefit of her African subjects.⁴⁶⁰ Two months later, de Gaulle's forces entered Paris, giving his followers the opportunity to implement the reforms that Vuillaume and other Free French leaders had promised.

Conclusion

De Gaulle and his Free France followers had reason for optimism in surveying the state of the empire in the fall of 1944. France had been liberated by the Allies, who had accorded to Free France some of the prestige and credit for the victory. The empire, and particular the colonies in Africa, had played a central role in liberation; indeed, one has a hard time conceiving of de Gaulle becoming the unquestioned leader of the resistance movement without Éboué's rallying to him in August 1940. Further, the CFLN had been able to reunite virtually all of France's colonies under the Free French flag during the

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid. "Nos ennemis qui sont aussi les ennemis de l'humanité – de l'humanité telle que nous la concevons – ne s'y sont jamais trompés. Lorsque Hitler traitait les races africaines de races de demi-singes, il pensait à la colonisation française tout d'abord et c'est la France qu'il insultait ou croyait insulter. Hitler comprenait fort bien que le jour où les millions d'Africains encore plongés dans la nuit, en seront sortis pour accéder à la lumière de la Civilisation cela fera autant de millions d'hommes de plus qui s'opposeront au pangermanisme intolérant et cruel. Et Hitler n'ignorait pas que pour hâter cette aube libératrice, la France besognait vite et bien."

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

war, and it had notably won back all of its African territory. Perhaps most importantly, the movement's ability to maintain control over French African territory gave it the flexibility to plan postwar domestic policy for the territories. Positioned against a racist Nazi regime, and supported by a relatively loyal African population, Free France rightly saw the opportunity for colonial renewal that could legitimize France's presence on the continent for the foreseeable future. In this sense, the desire to maintain French influence in Africa, which culminated in the disastrous policies of the postcolonial period, was the natural outgrowth of France's wartime experience.

To be clear, that future was not preordained by the events of the war. While de Gaulle would oversee both decolonization in the 1960s and the subsequent transition of some of France's former colonies into client-states, Africa's destiny was very much an open question after the liberation of Paris. But notable themes had begun to emerge in France's thinking about its future on the continent. Éboué's notion of abandoning the assimilationist civilizing mission in favor of recognizing and dealing with local power structures was perhaps the most important. These sentiments had inspired some of the reform proposals at the Brazzaville conference. They would later inform de Gaulle's decision to relinquish direct control over Africa after his election as president in 1958. Also significant were rising concerns about British and American involvement on the continent, based upon clear conflicts – both personal and political – between de Gaulle and the Allies.

None of this could sway France's belief that her role on the continent was stable and would continue for as long as anyone could foresee. France's presence in Africa, colonial administrators argued, was based on the nation's special qualities and her role in

the world, which the war had only made more necessary. As Éboué explained in his seminal pamphlet from November 1941, despite her past errors, only France was equipped to enable progress in Africa, and history would eventually acknowledge that vital contribution:

French Equatorial Africa, as a whole, will have its own indigenous policy, this policy, an expression of the thought and efforts of all – industrialists, settlers, missionaries, traders and officials, which will survive from regime to regime. French Equatorial Africa, as a whole, will have its own indigenous policy, this policy, an expression of the thought and desire of all – industrialists, settlers, missionaries, traders and officials, which will survive from regime to regime. When one considers the results in twenty or thirty years, one will recognize that this policy was not born of an individual whim, but rather of the unanimous resolution of a team that, having been brought here to redeem and liberate France, also decided to save French Equatorial Africa.⁴⁶¹

Éboué would not live to see how his hopeful outlook for France's participation in Africa would turn out. On May 17, 1944, he succumbed to a bout of pneumonia in Cairo and passed away. France would have to plan for the postwar order in Africa without his extraordinary talents and influence. But he had already laid the foundation for France's African policy both in the immediate postwar era and in the postcolonial age. France's colonial administrators would now attempt to preserve that foundation in light of France's reduced role in the world and the realities of the coming Cold War.

⁴⁶¹ Politique Indigène de l'Afrique Équatoriale Française, p. 2, ANOM, 5D202. "L'Afrique Équatoriale, dans son ensemble, aura sa politique indigène; cette politique, expression de la pensée et de la volonté de tous, industriels, colons, missionnaires, commerçants et fonctionnaires, survivra à tel ou tel règne. Quand on en estimera, dans vingt ou trente ans, les résultats, on reconnaîtra qu'elle n'était pas née d'un caprice individuel, mais de la résolution unanime d'une équipe qui, après s'être dressée ici pour racheter et libérer la France, avait également décidé de sauver l'Afrique Équatoriale Française."

Chapter Three

Defending the Empire after the War: the French Provisional Government, 1944-1946

This transformed America, which we will encounter from now on in all parts of the world...will use its [influence] to ensure that the “colonies” achieve independence, and in the meantime, that they are controlled by an international organization in which the United States will play a vital role.

...

You can now estimate the exact position in which the French colonies, and notably your territory, are placed. The world has changed during the past four years, and our possessions, which we could [govern by ourselves] until 1939, must now face criticism and know how to respond.⁴⁶²

-Minister of Colonies Paul Giacobbi to Governor of Cameroon Henri-Pierre Nicolas, February 17, 1945.

In many respects, de Gaulle’s progressive reunification of France’s African empire from 1940 to 1944 was remarkable. By rallying the territories to resist the Vichy regime and Nazism, de Gaulle accomplished a stunning reversal of fortunes for France’s colonial prospects on the continent. Under Vichy, the future of the empire was very much in question; it remained to be seen what parts of Africa would have to be sacrificed in a prospective postwar order dominated by the Nazis. But the struggles against Vichy in North Africa, and the loyal support of colonial populations in Afrique Occidentale Française and Afrique Équatoriale Française, had demonstrated the unity of the empire

⁴⁶² Paul Giacobbi, Minister of Colonies, to Henri Pierre Nicolas, Governor of Cameroon, Feb. 17, 1945, Archives Nationales de Paris (hereinafter ANP), 3 AG 4 23. “Cette Amérique métamorphosée, et que nous rencontrerons désormais sur tous les points du monde, tendra dans ses interventions à effacer ce que l’Amérique de toujours n’a cessé de considérer comme un illogisme choquant et, sans s’inquiéter des contradictions qu’elle-même recèle (attitude à l’égard de ses nationaux du couleur), elle pèsera de toute sa force pour que les « colonies » parviennent à l’indépendance et, en attendant pour qu’elles soient contrôlées par une organisme international ou les États-Unis tiendraient une place importante.

Vous pourrez estimer désormais la situation exacte devant lesquelles les colonies françaises, et notamment votre territoire, se trouvent placés. Le monde a changé durant ces quatre dernières années et nos possessions qui pouvaient s’arranger, jusqu’en 1939, d’un régime familial et un peu fermé, doivent désormais affronter la critique et savoir y répondre.”

and the importance of the African colonies to France. Regaining a foothold in Africa had also allowed Free France's colonial administrators to plan for France's future on the continent. The Brazzaville Conference enabled colonial policymakers to chart a new course for the colonies that would grant increased rights to France's African subjects and better insure their loyalty to continued French rule. Of course, preservation of the empire could also buttress France's continued status as an international power.

But while de Gaulle's forces had been successful in preserving France's hold on sub-Saharan Africa, a series of events during the war's late stages presented significant challenges to the future of the empire. The first sign came from the riots in Setif, Algeria in May 1945, during which native Algerians rose against the colonial administration, leading to a cycle of violence that resulted in the massacre of over a hundred Europeans. French forces were able to quell the unrest, but only at the expense of hundreds more Algerian casualties, thus causing lingering resentment among the Algerian population that would explode a decade later in a painful and protracted war.⁴⁶³ In Vietnam, de Gaulle's loyalists, initially faced with an entrenched Japanese puppet regime for much of 1945, regained control of the colony by autumn of that year. But France's triumphant return was short-lived, as French administrators faced growing resistance to outside rule from Ho Chi Minh and his followers, who were inspired by communist ideology and feelings of nationalism stirred up first by Vichy, and then by Japan.⁴⁶⁴ As in Algeria, events in Vietnam would eventually explode into war, starting with the shelling of

⁴⁶³ For more on the Algerian War, see Benjamin Stora, *Algeria 1830-2000: A Short History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962* (New York: NYRB Classics, 2006); Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

⁴⁶⁴ See Eric Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics: Pétain's National Revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Madagascar* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Martin Shipway, *The Road to War: France and Vietnam 1944-1947* (London: Berghahn Books, 1996).

Haiphong by the overzealous French admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu in November 1946. Finally, as discussed in chapter two, France had gradually lost its grip over Lebanon and Syria, having been pressured by Britain and the United States to promise independence to both mandates in 1943. By 1946, France no longer had a significant presence in the Middle East.⁴⁶⁵

It is in this context that France's postwar policy in Africa must be considered. Given the importance of Africa to France during the war, surprisingly little has been said about the impact of the international situation on the continent's political development in the war's aftermath. While Tony Chafer has rightly focused on the role of Africans in fighting for greater political autonomy after the war, he does not extensively discuss the influence of external events on French colonial administrators in Africa.⁴⁶⁶ This chapter addresses some of these questions by examining the opinions of those charged with establishing the Fourth Republic. Like Vichy in 1940, the new Provisional Government in 1944 faced the victorious powers from a position of relative weakness. To be sure, matters would have been much worse for France under a Nazi-led Europe. But while de Gaulle had successfully managed to position France on the winning side, no one could argue that France emerged from the war with the same international standing it enjoyed in 1940. This had already been made abundantly clear by France's exclusion from many of the major conferences that planned for the postwar order, including the Moscow Conference of 1943, the Yalta meeting between Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill of

⁴⁶⁵ See A.B. Gaunson, *The Anglo-French Clash in Lebanon and Syria, 1940-1945* (London: Macmillan, 1987).

⁴⁶⁶ Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire in West Africa: France's Successful Decolonization?* (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

March 1945, and the Potsdam Conference in the spring and summer of that year, also held by the “Big Three”.

As foreshadowed by de Gaulle’s relations with Roosevelt and Churchill during the war, France’s newly-reduced status was also evident in France’s direct relations with Britain and the United States. While France was seen as a necessary partner in rebuilding Europe, and later, in resisting Soviet domination of the continent, she was never considered an equal one. De Gaulle was extremely sensitive to this new status, as seen in his prickly dealings with President Roosevelt. When Roosevelt offered to meet with him in Algiers in February 1945, de Gaulle pointedly refused, incensed that the American president would see fit to invite himself to a meeting with the French head of state on French soil, after having not included him with the other allies in the postwar planning process.⁴⁶⁷ Things were not much better with the Soviet Union. Although de Gaulle successfully negotiated a defensive treaty with the Soviets in December 1944, he had very little leverage with Stalin. As an internal French Provisional Government memo noted in March 1945, the general opinion among Soviet leaders was that they “do not consider France as a great power...in practice, they treat France as a great power of the

⁴⁶⁷ M. Bidault, *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, aux Représentants Diplomatiques de la France à Washington, Londres, et Moscou*, Feb. 14, 1945. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1945*, Tome I (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1998), 199-200. Ambassador in France (Caffery) to the Secretary of State, Feb. 21, 1945. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1945, Vol. IV: Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), 672-3. Needless to say, this greatly hurt de Gaulle and France in the eyes of the Americans; after the incident, American ambassador to France Jefferson Caffery noted that it revealed “the now well-known inferiority complex which often translates itself into chest-thumping and insistence that France is a great power and must be treated as such...” Ambassador in France (Caffery) to the Secretary of State, March 1, 1945. *Ibid.*, 673-4.

second rank, who cannot pretend to be in the same place as the other three great powers.”⁴⁶⁸

To make matters worse, the immediate postwar situation suggested that the notion of empire – a fundamental component of France’s international influence – would eventually be relegated to the dustbin of history. Neither the United States nor the Soviet Union favored the continuation of traditional colonial policies after the war. From a purely ideological standpoint, Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, Sumner Welles, and other significant figures in American leadership saw colonialism as inherently undemocratic – a relic of the past contrasted by the values of the Atlantic Charter. In American military and diplomatic circles, the breakup of empires was one of the long-considered consequences of the postwar order. From the Soviet perspective, colonialism represented the worst evils of bourgeois capitalism; it was Lenin’s “highest stage” that foreshadowed the collapse of exploitative regimes.⁴⁶⁹ Confronted with this hostility from the two emerging superpowers, the French imperial project could not hope to survive in the postwar order in its traditional form. Even Churchill seemed to have reconciled himself to the end of the imperial system, telling de Gaulle in November 1944 that “colonies are today no longer a gauge of fortune or a sign of power.”⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁸ Note du Nac, March 20, 1945. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1945*, Tome I (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1998), 379. “Il ressort de tous les jugements et de toutes les remarques des diplomates et des militaires soviétiques, qu’ils ne considèrent pas la France comme grande puissance et devant rester telle mais en pratique ils traitent la France comme une grande puissance de deuxième rang qui ne peut pas prétendre à la même place que les trois autres grandes puissances.”

⁴⁶⁹ V.I. Lenin, “Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism” in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Lenin Anthology* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1975), 204-274.

⁴⁷⁰ Compte rendu de l’entretien entre le Général de Gaulle à M. Churchill, Nov. 11, 1944. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1944* Tome II (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1996), 255.

Not surprisingly, it was also during this time that existing French views of the Anglo-American threat to Francophone Africa were exacerbated. As discussed in the first two chapters, France's long rivalry with England, as well her suspicion of American postwar intentions, were manifest in the opinions of officials from both Vichy and Free France throughout the war. But with the conflict approaching its conclusion and a new age of American global power and influence dawning, this perceived threat became more pronounced. Before the war, the generic term "Anglo-Saxons" had been pejoratively employed to describe France's cross-channel rivals. But by the conclusion of the war, the term was increasingly applied to the United States. With the founding of the United Nations and the beginning of the Cold War, it became apparent to those interested in France's colonial future that the "Anglo-Saxon" bloc of the United States and the United Kingdom represented the greatest threat to French power in Africa. For French colonial administrators, the greatest fear was "internationalization", or the increased scrutiny on French colonies by the international community so as to subvert French power and influence. They increasingly worried that American anti-colonial rhetoric and promises of independence were masking more nefarious intentions to destabilize French power in Africa so as to better open and establish markets for American goods abroad. In this sense, the postwar experience became a prism through which traditional – and less virulent – strains of Anglophobia were refracted and intensified.

In addition to these outside pressures, France also had to deal with the challenges of fulfilling the promises of the Brazzaville Conference, as well as drafting and ratifying a new constitution. Although de Gaulle and his followers had insisted that Vichy was an illegal regime and that the French Republic had never ceased to exist, the memory of the

Third Republic's inability to manage the early months of the war and the subsequent Nazi invasion forestalled any return to the old constitution. What was needed, both in de Gaulle's opinion as well as that of many in the Free French movement, was a constitution that could provide for a stronger executive, in the mold of the American system. Constitutional reform could also help further the proposed reforms of Brazzaville, as it was seen by many colonial administrators as a means to further ingratiate the *indigènes* into the French body politic. Therefore, the Provisional Government focused during this time on transforming the former French empire into a French Union, which would allow for central representation in Paris and the devolution of some powers of government to local assemblies. This would be accomplished first by setting aside seats for Africans in the constituent assembly of 1945-46, and once the constitution was passed, to allow them some form of representation in both the elected National Assembly and a new assembly for the broader Union. But such sweeping reforms were not widely welcomed in colonial administrative and commercial circles. Therefore, political transformation in Africa had to walk a delicate line between satisfying the scrutiny of the international community and placating powerful European interests in the colonies. Most importantly, France had to renew its imperial project so as to appear less colonial and more democratic. This new system would have to inspire loyalty in its citizens to the French union and gratitude for France's role in "civilizing" its subjects.

Planning a Future Federated Empire

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing French administrators in the final years of the war was determining how to fulfill the promises of the Brazzaville Conference while

maintaining the *métropole*'s full control over France's overseas colonies and territories. Planning for a new imperial system encompassed a variety of issues, including what form the new National Assembly would take; what type of arrangement would govern the relationship between the *métropole* and the colonies; whether colonial populations would have representation just at the local level, or in addition, in Paris as well; how representatives from colonial populations would be chosen; what citizenship status would be accorded to those in the colonies; and who would be given the right to vote. The answers to all of these questions would eventually have to be set forth in the new constitution for the Fourth Republic.

The brief period from 1944-1946 saw a remarkable structural and rhetorical shift in France's imperial project, with a transformation from an imperial nation into a federal union. What was generally agreed upon was that traditional imperial arrangements had to end, both in structure and in name. The men who planned France's future were well aware of rising discontent from colonial populations, and the threat of increased scrutiny from the international community. Not surprisingly, political and administrative changes followed. The Minister of Colonies was renamed the Ministry of Overseas Territories; governors-generals' powers were to be shared with local assemblies, and colonial populations were no longer subjects, but citizens, albeit in somewhat limited form. The governing arrangement from overseas would have to be replaced with one that could maintain a delicate balance between too much integration into an egalitarian republic, and too much autonomy vis-à-vis the *métropole*.

De Gaulle had already begun to allude to this system as early as July 1944, when he noted in a press conference in Washington that "each territory over which the French

flag flies must be represented internally by a federal system in which the *métropole* will be a part and where the interests of each [territory] can be made known.”⁴⁷¹ With the war ending, Provisional Government administrators began to conceptualize the future of the empire in terms of a loose Union between *métropole* and colonies, which would maintain both centralized authority and local flexibility in governing. As Robert Lassalle-Séré (who would later be elected as a Senator from Oceania during the Fourth Republic) noted at one gathering of experts that same month:

Between assimilation, which is unrealizable, and autonomy, which is dangerous, this new [federal] formula appears the right one in reconciling the two necessities which are imposed on us right now: permit the colonies to evolve, each on its own path, while endowing them with a political personality, but, at the same time, maintain and tighten the relationship among the French that this evolution tends to loosen.⁴⁷²

Numerous commissions were formed to discuss these issues in 1944 and 1945. While a complete study of the various commissions is beyond the scope of this dissertation, a general review of some of the proceedings is helpful in understanding some of the dilemmas faced by the Provisional Government.

Perhaps the most notable of the commissions was one assembled by René Pleven in spring 1944. Those invited were chosen as experts on policy, constitutional law, or colonial administration. Pleven’s committee included the governor of Chad, Pierre-Olivier Lapie; Free France’s jurist (and eventual drafter of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) René Cassin; director of political affairs for the colonies Henri Laurentie;

⁴⁷¹ Extrait de la Conférence de presse donnée par le Général de Gaulle, à Washington, July 10, 1944, Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer (hereinafter ANOM), 1 AFFPOL 392.

⁴⁷² Commission, July 4, 1944, p. 10, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 392. “Entre l’assimilation, irréalisable, et l’autonomie, dangereuse, cette formule nouvelle paraît propre à concilier les deux nécessités qui s’imposèrent à nous actuellement permettre aux colonies d’évoluer chacun dans sa ligne, en les dotant de la personnalité politique, mais, en même temps maintenir et resserrer le lien Français que cette évolution tendrait à relâcher.”

member of the consultative assembly Jules Moch; Parti Communiste Française (PCF) member Henri Lozeray; and several other prominent politicians and administrators.

During the first meeting, held on May 1, Pleven introduced a number of issues that the government would have to resolve after the war. The main goal, as Pleven saw it, was to “find new methods to integrate the Empire into the French constitution.”⁴⁷³ It was no longer possible to govern overseas territories in the traditional colonial manner, whereby colonial administrators in Paris would have absolute say over affairs affecting colonial populations:

Everyone is convinced by the events of 1940 and by all of the developments that have occurred since 1940, that the new constitution that must be given to the Republic must include representation from the Empire, and not simply leave, to the sole discretion of the *métropole*'s power, the livelihood and the political role of the Empire.⁴⁷⁴

Instead, Pleven insisted, colonial populations would have to be given legitimate representation in a parliamentary assembly. There were two options – either a separate colonial parliament or a “federal assembly” whereby representatives from the *métropole* would sit in common with colonial representatives to address issues that interested both sides. Pleven was staunchly against the first option; in his opinion, it was “dangerous to create institutions which could lead to antagonism between metropolitan and colonial points of view. It is preferable, in my opinion, that if there are to be divergences, that they should be in the same assembly, without a line of demarcation between

⁴⁷³ Commission d’experts réunie le Lundi 1er Mai, p. 1, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 392.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid. “Tout le monde est convaincu par les événements de 1940 et par tous les développements qui se sont produits depuis 1940, que la constitution nouvelle qu’il faudra donner à la République doit comporter une représentation de l’Empire et non pas seulement laisser, à la seule discrétion du pouvoir métropolitain, la vie et le rôle politique de l’Empire.

representatives of the *métropole* and representatives of the colonies.”⁴⁷⁵ The idea of a federal assembly would later be adopted by the constitution for the Fourth Republic.

Another important question addressed by Pleven’s commission was the nature of the relationship between the *métropole* and the colonies. Although it was imperative to promote the status of the *indigènes* in the new federated system, the commission had no desire to inaugurate a truly federal republic in the American style, where each component state or territory was equal in its sovereignty, subordinate only to the central government. Instead, this would be a federated system whereby all of the overseas territories would be subordinate not to one overarching sovereign, but to a privileged territory (the *métropole*) within the union. Pleven made it clear that the French government (presumably, the President and his cabinet of ministers) would be responsible only to the metropolitan National Assembly, not the federal assembly.⁴⁷⁶ As for France’s power vis-à-vis the territories, Pleven specified that “a federation will no longer be a federation of colonial territories. A federation is France in which France is the most meritorious member, the most loyal of the federation.”⁴⁷⁷

By early 1945, the exact structure of the new federal union had begun to take shape. That March, Laurentie established another commission under the Ministry of

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid. “J’ai le sentiment qu’il est dangereux de créer des institutions qui peuvent conduire à un antagonisme entre les points de vue métropolitaine et coloniaux. Il est préférable, à mon avis, que s’il doit y avoir des divergences, se soit à l’intérieur d’une même Assemblée, sans ligne de démarcation entre gens représentant la métropole et gens représentant la Colonie, sans conflit de point de vue entre ce qui est Métropole et d’Outre-Mer.”

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 20. “Je tiens à préciser qu’une Fédération ce n’est jamais une Fédération des territoires coloniaux. Une Fédération c’est la France dans laquelle la France est le membre le plus méritant, le plus loyal de la Fédération.”

Colonies “to study the way to install the colonies in the new constitution.”⁴⁷⁸ By this point, it was generally agreed upon that terminology which unnecessarily suggested the old colonial relationship had to be abandoned; therefore, the committee officially adopted the phrase “Union Française” to label the new federated structure.⁴⁷⁹ In addition, Laurentie’s committee agreed to divide France’s overseas territories into three distinct groups – overseas provinces/departments with significant numbers of French citizens (e.g., Algeria), “countries of the union” already endowed with their own political structure (Vietnam, Morocco, Tunisia), and other “territories of the union” (Madagascar, AOF, AEF, Djibouti).⁴⁸⁰ Representation would be provided in a new federal assembly to which residents from all territories would be elected, and additional limited representation would be granted in the *métropole*’s new National Assembly in Paris. Cognizant of the outside pressures that the Provisional Government was facing, Laurentie indicated to the committee that France had to use terminology that had “positive connotations” and that would be “well understood abroad, and notably in the Anglo-Saxon countries, who are paying close attention to our colonial policy.”⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁸ Ministère des Colonies, Bureau d’études constitutionnelles, Procès-verbal de la Séance du 2 Mars 1945, p. 1, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 392.

⁴⁷⁹ Ministère des Colonies, Bureau d’études constitutionnelles, Procès-verbal de la Séance du 16 Mars, p. 1, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 392.

⁴⁸⁰ Ministère des Colonies, Bureau d’études constitutionnelles, Procès-verbal de la Séance du 2 Mars 1945, p. 4-5, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 392.

⁴⁸¹ Ministère des Colonies, Bureau d’études constitutionnelles, Procès-verbal de la Séance du 20 Mars 1945, p. 2, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 392. “Pour que le nouvelle forme que nous entendons donner à l’Empire soit bien comprise à l’étranger, et notamment dans les Pays anglo-saxons, qui apportent une grande attention à notre politique coloniale...”

After Liberation – An Attempt to Consolidate Standing in Europe

As Laurentie's comment suggested, efforts to restructure France's relationship with her colonies must be considered in light of the international situation facing the Provisional Government. That body, formed in June 1944 from the structure of the former CFLN, would be responsible for governing France for more than two years. From the moment de Gaulle and his followers entered Paris in August 1944, they moved quickly to consolidate and improve France's standing in Europe. Their main concern was the defeat and long-term neutralization of German military power. To this end, de Gaulle immediately pursued a formal bilateral defensive arrangement with Britain against future German aggression. But by that September, French officials were already complaining that they were being excluded from allied talks on Germany's future in Europe.⁴⁸² Frustration mounted against Roosevelt, who was seen by French officials, and by de Gaulle in particular, as attempting to exclude France from key decisions and hesitant to fully recognize the Provisional Government.⁴⁸³ At first, the Provisional Government hoped that Britain would stand up for its cross-channel ally in its talks with the United States and the Soviet Union. That fall, French Ambassador to Britain René Massigli spoke with numerous British MPs and journalists, indicating that the British government had to state publicly its support for French interests in order to maintain the relationship between the two countries.⁴⁸⁴ But this hope for the intervention of the British government was short-lived, as Churchill was loathe to undermine his close ties with

⁴⁸² M. Hoppenot, Délégué du G.P.R.F. à Washington, à M. Bidault, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Sept. 28, 1944. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1944* Tome II (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1996), 38.

⁴⁸³ M. Hoppenot, Délégué du G.P.R.F. à Washington, à M. Bidault, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Oct. 16, 1944. *Ibid.*, 127-8.

⁴⁸⁴ M. Massigli, Ambassadeur de France à Londres, à M. Bidault, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Sept. 29, 1944. *Ibid.*, 43.

Roosevelt. In addition, tension still existed between the two sides concerning the Lebanon and Syria issue, with de Gaulle complaining in October of “the duplicity of London’s policy” in the region.⁴⁸⁵ By December 1944, he was explaining to Soviet representatives that it would be difficult to conclude any long-term postwar pact with Britain because of “certain serious divergences” between the two. British attitudes toward Germany’s future, he concluded, did not conform to French interests.⁴⁸⁶

Faced with the problem of trying to assure France’s security against Germany without any meaningful input into decisions being made by his British and American counterparts, de Gaulle decided to renew the traditional alliance between France and Russia. In this sense, his willingness to work both sides of the coming Cold War rift would foreshadow his later tenure as president of the Fifth Republic. For their part, the Soviets had already taken steps earlier in the war to cultivate ties with de Gaulle and his followers. In September 1941, the Soviet ambassador had written to de Gaulle, promising “the full restoration of the independence and grandeur of France” after the war.⁴⁸⁷ This assurance was repeated by Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov the following May.⁴⁸⁸ Similar representations were made at the Moscow meeting between French and Soviet advisors that December.

The centerpiece of de Gaulle’s effort was a bilateral security agreement with the Soviet Union, prepared by the respective foreign ministers, and consummated by de Gaulle in a personal visit to Stalin in Moscow in December. The pact provided for

⁴⁸⁵ Note du Général de Gaulle à M. Bidault, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, Oct. 19, 1944. Ibid., 143.

⁴⁸⁶ Entretien entre le Général de Gaulle et M. Bogomolov, Dec. 7, 1944. Ibid., 410-1.

⁴⁸⁷ Note de M. Dejean, Directeur-Général Adjoint pour les Affaires Politiques, Oct. 25, 1944. Ibid., 165.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., 166.

mutual assistance between the two sides against Germany until the end of the war, a pledge not to negotiate a separate peace, promises to take all necessary measures to disarm Germany after the war, and collective security should a resurgent Germany later attack one of the two countries.⁴⁸⁹ De Gaulle believed that the Soviets understood the German threat better than the other countries in Europe. In his view, the fact that German aggression had succeeded in 1939-1940 reflected both this lack of understanding by the British, as well as the failure of the Versailles agreement.⁴⁹⁰ In addition, de Gaulle took care to disavow any concerns Stalin may have had about a western alliance or “bloc”, insisting instead that French interests were only concerned with not being attacked by Germany again.⁴⁹¹

De Gaulle was no Russophile, and given his internal struggles with the communist resistance parties, he had no sympathy for Soviet ideology.⁴⁹² His treaty with Stalin must therefore be analyzed in the context of traditional *realpolitik*; given the new situation in Europe, he accepted that he simply had to deal with the winners. For de Gaulle in 1945, France would have had no natural ally after the war. He expressed as much in a meeting with American ambassador Jefferson Caffery in May 1945, in which he noted his alarm at the rapid pace of Soviet movement across Eastern Europe. After noting that the United States and Soviet Union would be the “only two real forces in the world” after the war, he told the ambassador that he was forced to work with whoever

⁴⁸⁹ Traite d’Alliance et d’assistance mutuelle, Dec. 6, 1944. Ibid., 384-5

⁴⁹⁰ Compte rendu de l’entretien du Général de Gaulle avec le Maréchal Staline, Dec. 2, 1944. Ibid., 350-1.

⁴⁹¹ Entretien entre le Général de Gaulle et le Maréchal Staline, Dec. 6, 1944. Ibid., 388-9.

⁴⁹² For more on de Gaulle’s political struggle with the Parti Communiste Français, see Pierre Nora, “Gaullists and Communists,” in Pierre Nora, ed., *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past – Volume I: Conflicts and Divisions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 205-240; Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

could provide France the best advantage. “I would much rather work with the USA than any other country,” he said to Caffery. “The British Empire will not be strong enough after this war to count for much. If I cannot work with you I must work with the Soviets in order to survive even if it is only for a while and even if in the long run they gobble us up too.”⁴⁹³

With the Franco-Soviet agreement concluded, de Gaulle’s colonial ministers urged him to re-focus his attention on the colonies and their importance to France. As discussed in chapter two, American attitudes about colonialism presented a significant ideological threat to France’s future involvement in Africa. There was no secret about the U.S. mentality; Roosevelt had made it quite clear in numerous statements during the war, and his advisor Harry Hopkins reaffirmed it personally in a meeting with de Gaulle in January 1945, in which he noted that Roosevelt “is convinced that colonial empires are only a terrain of exploitation that benefit businessmen from colonial powers, and that all expressions of policy supposedly in the interest of indigenous populations are nothing more than decoration.”⁴⁹⁴ For his part, the Provisional Government’s foreign minister Georges Bidault asserted in the same meeting that French public opinion “would be united in condemning any attack on the sovereignty of the empire.”⁴⁹⁵

Given America’s attitudes about imperialism, French observers of American politics began to call for greater solidarity among the colonial powers, as evidenced by a letter sent by French delegate to Washington Henri Hoppenot to Georges Bidault in

⁴⁹³ The Ambassador in France (Caffery) to the Acting Secretary of State, May 5, 1945. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1945, Vol. IV: Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), 686.

⁴⁹⁴ Compte-rendu de l’entretien Bidault-Hopkins, Jan. 27, 1945. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1945*, Tome I (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1998), 122.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

December 1944.⁴⁹⁶ Solidarity could also protect French interests in Europe; despite de Gaulle's longstanding suspicion of the British, members of his cabinet nevertheless believed that France had to draw closer to Britain while it still could. As French ambassador to Britain René Massigli noted to Bidault in January of 1945, Britain could act as a powerful counterweight to the Soviet Union in Western Europe. Further, he reminded Bidault that "if Great Britain is certain that it will be the United States at her side in Europe, she will perhaps have less interest in an alliance with France..."⁴⁹⁷ The previous December, French representatives were already laying the groundwork for a conference in Accra, Ghana with Great Britain to discuss a wide variety of issues pertaining to colonial administration.⁴⁹⁸ France also pursued cooperative arrangements with Belgium, envisioning a larger regional system in Africa whereby the colonial powers could meet to discuss common problems.⁴⁹⁹ These collaborative efforts were meant to improve efficiency of administration, but were also aimed at uniting a common front against potential American interference in Africa.

⁴⁹⁶ M. Hoppenot, Délégué du G.P.R.F. à Washington, à M. Bidault, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, Dec. 20, 1944. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1944* Tome II (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1996), 471.

⁴⁹⁷ M. Massigli, Ambassadeur de France à Londres, à M. Bidault, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, Jan. 9, 1945. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1945*, Tome I (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1998), 26. "Si la Grande-Bretagne est certain qu'elle aura l'Amérique à ses côtes en Europe, elle trouvera peut-être moins d'intérêt dans une alliance française..."

⁴⁹⁸ M. Bidault, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, à M. Massigli, Ambassadeur de France à Londres, Dec. 16, 1944. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1944* Tome II (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1996), 453-4.

⁴⁹⁹ M. Brugère, Ambassadeur de France à Bruxelles, à M. Bidault, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, Dec. 21, 1944. *Ibid.*, 482-3.

Resistance to the Brazzaville Reforms in the Colonies

The pressure of continued U.S. scrutiny also led to an increased campaign by the government to expand rights in the colonies. On December 28, shortly after de Gaulle returned from Moscow, Henri Laurentie wrote him to discuss the future of France's empire. Given the recent ratification of the Franco-Soviet pact, Laurentie noted, France had greatly alleviated some of its main concerns in Europe. Consequently, he urged that "we must pause to consider our position overseas. This position does not solely depend on our territories in North Africa or the colonies, but it depends on them in a very important part."⁵⁰⁰ Although Laurentie noted the promising development of solidarity among the colonial powers, he nevertheless emphasized the need to focus on the attitudes of the *indigènes* toward France. Because of the promised reforms at Brazzaville, they were looking to France to improve their daily situation. Laurentie noted that "native opinion, while sometimes confused...has expressed itself well enough to let us know that the *indigènes* expect us to grant the promised reforms."⁵⁰¹

But despite the importance of the Brazzaville reforms to the future of the empire, Laurentie expressed frustration that they were not being implemented quickly enough. This stemmed from a combination of bureaucratic resistance and lack of comprehension by colonial ministers as to the reforms' importance to France's future:

⁵⁰⁰ Note personnelle pour Monsieur Général de Gaulle from Laurentie, Dec. 28, 1944, ANP, 3 AG 4 22. "Il est sans doute justifié de penser après la signature du traité franco-soviétique que la plus grande préoccupation de la France en Europe se trouve fortement atténuée et que nous pouvons et par conséquent devons songer à rasseoir notre position au-delà des mers. Cette position ne dépend pas que nos territoires nord-africains ou coloniaux mais elle en dépend pour une part très importante."

⁵⁰¹ Note personnelle pour Monsieur Général de Gaulle de Laurentie, Dec. 28, 1944, ANP, 3 AG 4 22. "L'opinion indigène, si confuse et parfois si bridée soit-elle, s'exprime assez bien pour nous faire savoir qu'elle attend de nous les réformes promises. La satisfaction que nous lui donnerons ne comptera pas moins dans le succès de notre politique que l'appoint offert à la cause coloniale de nos Alliés."

...to keep our obligations, we must have the colonies active and conscious of the essential role that is expected of them in French policy. But that is not the case now. The French colonists are tired, mentally and physically, and hostile, unreceptive and indifferent to our intentions. In addition, they are not guided; our governors and even our governors-general are, without exception, good agents, conscientious and very attentive... but they are also very unsympathetic to general political problems. Brazzaville did not open their eyes; they interpret it as the caprice of a disreputable minister, and page by page, they have abandoned the [Brazzaville] charter to termites.⁵⁰²

Laurentie's recommendation to de Gaulle was for a change of colonial leadership, starting with Minister of Colonies Paul Giacobbi, who had been appointed in November 1944 after Pleven had been moved to the Ministry of Finance. Giacobbi was a relative newcomer to colonial affairs; he was a Corsican who had served in the Senate of the Third Republic and had voted against the investiture of Pétain in July 1940. Laurentie's believed that Giacobbi had not taken sufficient steps to implement the Brazzaville reforms.⁵⁰³ Giacobbi was one of several prominent colonial officials subjected to an intense lobbying campaign throughout 1944 from a variety of colonial interests. These included corporations operating in the colonies, as well as lobbying associations promoting colonial interests, most notably the reconstituted Comité de l'Empire Français.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰² Ibid. "Or, pour tenir nos obligations, il faudrait que nous eussions des colonies actives et conscientes du rôle essentiel qu'on attend d'elles dans la politique française. Ce n'est pas le cas. Les coloniaux français sont fatigués, mentalement et physiquement, et hostiles, imperméables ou indifférents à nos intentions. En outre, ils ne sont pas guidés : nos gouverneurs et même nos gouverneurs généraux sont, sauf exception, de bons agents, consciencieux et moyens, fort attentifs aux soucis d'une subdivision, fort incompréhensifs des problèmes politiques généraux. Brazzaville ne leur a pas ouvert les yeux ; ils l'interprètent comme le caprice d'un Ministre en mal de réputation et, page par page, ils en livrent la charte aux termites."

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ The Comité had consolidated the former associations L'Union Coloniale, Le Comité de l'Indochine, and L'Institut Colonial. See letter from Comité de l'Empire Français to Paul Giacobbi, Dec. 28, 1944, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2097, Dossier 1.

It is unclear whether de Gaulle agreed with Laurentie's recommendation to remove Giacobbi, but by early 1945, Giacobbi was beginning to take more aggressive steps to emphasize the Brazzaville reforms in discussions with the colonial governors. In January, he wrote to Pierre Cournarie, governor-general of AOF, to remind him that "international public opinion and internal evolution of our overseas territories are pushing us to enter without delay onto the path of realization [of the Brazzaville reforms]." ⁵⁰⁵ Cournarie had noted protests in AOF against the Brazzaville recommendations, especially from European planters and colonists. After emphasizing that de Gaulle himself had prominently supported the path of reform, Giacobbi advised Cournarie that France had to think practically about how it treated its colonies. "We are no longer in 1939," he noted. "We are obliged to think about defending the integrity of our empire." ⁵⁰⁶ In order to do so, and therefore preserve the larger French community, the Brazzaville reforms had to be implemented "without delay" in order to "warn of the American menace" and provide for the evolution of colonial populations. ⁵⁰⁷

While Giacobbi's correspondence referred to a wide range of reforms, one of the key items discussed at the Brazzaville Conference had been the eventual suppression of the *indigénat*, which had first been instituted by the French colonial administration in Africa in 1924. The *indigénat* constituted a widespread series of practices that allowed European colonists to impose a variety of summary punishments on African subjects for any number of perceived infractions. These included traditional corporal punishments,

⁵⁰⁵ Le Ministre des Colonies à Monsieur le Gouverneur-Général de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, Jan. 1945, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2201. "L'opinion publique internationale et l'évolution interne de nos Territoires d'Outre-Mer nous poussent à entrer sans délai dans la voie des réalisations."

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 2. "Nous sommes donc obligés de penser à défendre l'intégrité de notre empire."

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid. "Il faut le faire sans retard d'abord pour prévenir la menace américain et aussi pour reconnaître en toute justice l'évolution de nos populations coloniales."

arbitrary taxes, and most commonly, forced labor.⁵⁰⁸ It was the latter that had provided significant human capital for commercial projects throughout the colonies, and especially in AOF and AEF. As Tony Chafer has noted, there was strong resistance to abolishing the practice at Brazzaville.⁵⁰⁹ But the prevailing winds increasingly made clear that freedom of labor would be one of the central principles of reform after the war. And with the exigencies of the war effort dissipating, the Provisional Government could not tolerate the practice, given prevailing international sentiment.

Not surprisingly, colonial interests were staunchly opposed to any sweeping reforms that threatened the status quo. The resulting tension was evident in correspondence between Giacobbi and the newly-appointed governor of French Cameroon, Henri Pierre Nicolas, in early 1945. Cameroon was an exception within the French colonial system; having been captured from Germany after World War I, it was placed under the postwar League of Nations mandate system under France's control. As such, it was not part of France's more traditional colonial possessions in AOF and AEF, and would be subject to more international scrutiny after the war concluded. The territory rallied to de Gaulle in 1940, with Pierre Cournarie, who was eventually appointed as head of AOF, serving as governor for most of the war. Nicolas was appointed governor in November 1944 in the midst of what René Pleven (in a letter to de Gaulle two days before Nicolas' appointment) had termed "a violent campaign against the colonial policy of the government" by French residents in Cameroon.⁵¹⁰ In his letter

⁵⁰⁸ A recent study of the indigénat and its application has been provided by Olivier le Cour Grandmaison, *De l'indigénat: anatomie d'un monstre juridique: le droit colonial en Algérie et dans l'empire français* (Paris: Zones, 2010).

⁵⁰⁹ Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 59.

⁵¹⁰ Note for General de Gaulle from the Minister of Colonies (Pleven), Nov. 14, 1944, ANP, 3 AG 4 23. "Depuis la réunion de la Conférence de Brazzaville, et avant même que les résultats en

to de Gaulle, Pleven noted the dueling pressures of an intense lobbying effort by European planters in Paris, as well as intense international scrutiny about France's promised reforms in the colonies.⁵¹¹ As he indicated, "French colonial policy is closely observed and all our actions are watched... We cannot afford a failure, a deviation in our line of conduct, and especially not in Cameroon." France would eventually have to account for its actions in the colony before an international body, and Pleven noted in particular the interest that the "Anglo-Saxons" would take in this colonial accounting.⁵¹² French private interests, and most notably the planters of Cameroon, had to be convinced that "France could not permit itself, under the eyes of the world, to sacrifice 2.7 million *indigènes* to the interests of 300 planters."⁵¹³

However, it was a difficult prospect to persuade colonial governors to ignore the complaints of their European settlers. On January 30, Nicolas wrote to Giacobbi, noting that a "wave of emotion" had swept the two cities of Douala and Youandé following the recent announcement of the future abolishment of the *indigénat*. The sentiment built on already-existing reaction to the Brazzaville Conference, causing great concern among private French interests in the colony uncertain about the coming changes to the colonial *status quo*:

aient été exactement connus du public, certains milieux français du Cameroun ont entamé une violente campagne contre la politique coloniale du Gouvernement."

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² Ibid. "La politique coloniale française est étroitement observée et tous nos actes sont épiés : si nous avons tiré sur le plan international le plus grand bénéfice de la Conférence de Brazzaville, nous n'en sommes que plus étroitement surveillés et guettés aux réalisations. Nous ne pouvons pas nous permettre une défaillance, une déviation dans notre ligne de conduite, et au Cameroun moins qu'ailleurs....

Tôt ou tard, nous serons appelés à rendre nos comptes de tutelle devant un organisme international et ces comptes seront sévèrement examinés.

Des multiples indices attestent l'intérêt que les puissances anglo saxonnes portent au Cameroun, intérêt dont on ne citera ici que quelques manifestations."

⁵¹³ Ibid. "... la France ne peut se permettre aux yeux du monde de sacrifier 2,700,000 indigènes aux intérêts de trois cents planteurs."

In short, we can say that for the majority of the European traders, industrialists, and planters of Cameroon, all of the ills which white colonists are suffering, or which they imagine they are suffering, can be blamed on the Brazzaville Conference. In truth, we are not well-informed about the work of the conference, which is sharply accused of having systematically excluding the representatives of private interests, and of being directly responsible for the wave of laziness currently sweeping through all of the *indigènes*...⁵¹⁴

Nicolas added that European private interests – and in particular the local Chamber of Commerce – were primarily concerned with the effect on local manual labor that the suppression of the *indigénat* would have. Given these complaints, as well as Nicolas’ personal evaluation that the *indigènes* were not ready for an expansion of political rights, he emphasized to Giacobbi that more immediate material concerns had to take precedent over implementation of the Brazzaville conference program. Rather than sweeping reforms, he asked Giacobbi to limit French action for the time being to measures such as increased recruitment of workers for private enterprise, price controls, better health measures, and development of professional and technical education.⁵¹⁵

Giacobbi’s response to Nicolas, sent on February 17, reflects the awareness within the colonial ministry that France’s colonial and international position had changed greatly. While acknowledging some of Nicolas’ fundamental concerns, Giacobbi noted upfront that the purpose of his response was to help Nicolas understand the situation, “as

⁵¹⁴ Henri Pierre Nicolas, Governor of Cameroon, to Paul Giacobbi, Minister of Colonies, Jan. 30, 1945, ANP, 3AG 4 23. “En bref on peut dire que pour la majeure partie des commerçants, industriels et planteurs européens du Cameroun, tous les maux dont souffre actuellement la colonisation blanche, ou dont s’imagine qu’elle doit souffrir, sont imputables en bloc à la Conférence de Brazzaville. A la vérité on n’est pas très exactement renseigné sur les travaux de cette conférence, à laquelle précisément on reproche d’avoir systématiquement écarté les représentants des intérêts privés, mais on la rend quand même directement responsable de ce qu’on appelle la vague de paresse qui déferlerait actuellement à travers toutes les populations indigènes, au point qu’on devrait, d’après certains se demander si on n’assiste pas à une tentative de sabotage en règle de toute l’action colonisatrice européenne.”

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

the government sees it.”⁵¹⁶ He first noted the changed role of the United States and its impact on France’s future:

There is nothing new in saying that European “colonialism” has always been regarded with a kind of revulsion in the United States. The war has not diminished this sense – quite the contrary. But while it was once expressed in a [theoretical] form by a nation whose power only had inner application, it is now made by a country that is well-armed, on land, sea and air, and whose strength is proven.

This transformed America, which we will encounter from now on in all parts of the world...will use its [influence] to ensure that the “colonies” achieve independence, and in the meantime, that they are controlled by an international organization in which the United States will play a vital role...

You can now estimate the exact position in which the French colonies, and notably your territory, are placed. The world has changed during the past four years, and our possessions, which we could [govern by ourselves] until 1939, must now face criticism and know how to respond.⁵¹⁷

In the face of this American threat, Giacobbi insisted, the solution lay in rallying African opinion to the French colonial administration in order to inspire “a public and strong testimony of their absolute preference for France.”⁵¹⁸ This was especially true given recent unrest in Algeria and Vietnam, which demonstrated the precariousness of the

⁵¹⁶ Paul Giacobbi, Minister of Colonies, to Henri Pierre Nicolas, Governor of Cameroon, Feb. 17, 1945, ANP, 3 AG 4 23.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid. “Ce n’est pas une nouveauté de dire que le « colonialisme » européen a toujours considéré avec une sorte de répulsion aux États-Unis. La guerre n’a pas atténué ce sentiment, tout au contraire. Mais tandis qu’il était exprimé naguère sous une forme platonique par une nation dont la puissance n’avait d’autre application que le progrès intérieur, il est aujourd’hui le fait d’un pays bien armé, sur terre, sur mer et dans les airs et dont la force est éprouvée. Cette Amérique métamorphosée, et que nous rencontrerons désormais sur tous les points du monde, tendra dans ses interventions à effacer ce que l’Amérique de toujours n’a cessé de considérer comme un illogisme choquant et, sans s’inquiéter des contradictions qu’elle-même recèle (attitude à l’égard de ses nationaux du couleur), elle pèsera de toute sa force pour que les « colonies » parviennent à l’indépendance et, en attendant pour qu’elles soient contrôlées par une organisme international ou les États-Unis tiendraient une place importante. Vous pourrez estimer désormais la situation exacte devant laquelle les colonies françaises, et notamment votre territoire, se trouvent placés. Le monde a changé durant ces quatre dernières années et nos possessions qui pouvaient s’arranger, jusqu’en 1939, d’un régime familial et un peu fermé, doivent désormais affronter la critique et savoir y répondre.”

⁵¹⁸ Ibid. “Nous cherchons à assembler autour de nous toutes les masses indigènes par une politique de confiance et à recevoir d’elles, en échange de notre bonne volonté et de notre bonne foi, le témoignage public et durable de leur préférence absolue pour la France.”

French colonial position. Further, if Cameroon resisted progressive reforms given their implementation in nearby British West Africa, “the position of France will become untenable in international negotiations, where the destiny of our mandate [in Cameroon] will be inescapably discussed.”⁵¹⁹ Despite the protests of commercial interests, only through a comprehensive reform plan that abolished the worst evils of colonialism could the French position be consolidated.

The correspondence between Giacobbi and Nicolas is illustrative of the internal battle in France’s colonial administration during this time. It also reveals the complex array of factors that helped determine development of political reforms in Africa after the liberation of Paris. Tony Chafer has noted a general retreat by colonial administrators from the Brazzaville principles almost immediately after the conference concluded.⁵²⁰ These regressive tendencies were tempered by events beyond France’s control, such as the United States’ interest in the future of colonial regimes and its numerous statements in favor of independence for colonized peoples. For this reason, the French colonial administration cannot be considered as one homogenous bloc. Rather, a split developed between those in Paris, who were forced to moderate their imperialist leanings by the reality of the international situation, and those in the colonies, who were more apt to be influenced by those favoring the traditional system. As Laurentie indicated in a speech that May, there was a “difference of rhythm” between the *métropole* and colonial

⁵¹⁹Ibid. “Si le Cameroun, territoire sous mandat, restreint les chances de progrès offertes partout ailleurs, notamment dans les colonies britanniques voisines, aux indigènes, la position de la France sera proprement intenable dans les conversations internationales ou le destin du mandat sera précisément évoqué d’une manière inéluctable.”

⁵²⁰ See Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*.

administrators; as he noted, “the ideas of Paris are moving a bit quickly, and the current [colonial] administration marches perhaps a bit slowly.”⁵²¹

Colonial administrators’ recalcitrance was troubling enough because of its potential impact on international opinion pertaining to French colonialism. But reluctance to support the Brazzaville reforms also impaired the Provisional Government’s efforts to improve relations with the *indigènes*. During the height of the war, discontent had generally focused upon poor conditions for African soldiers fighting in the French Army. This was the impetus for a mutiny at the Thiaroye military camp outside Dakar, and the subsequent massacre of African troops during November-December 1944.⁵²² But as the war drew to a close, France’s African subjects began raising significant civil and political grievances against the colonial administration. As Chafer has demonstrated, this led to a rapidly expanding African political consciousness.⁵²³

This heightened political involvement was evident from correspondence between René Saller and Léopold Sédar Senghor, who had already established himself as a prominent intellectual before the war and was trusted by the colonial administration as being loyal to France. That February, Senghor, whose political career began after his imprisonment in a Nazi concentration camp and his subsequent work for the resistance, informed Saller about a number of abuses committed against Africans, some of which

⁵²¹ Chronique faite par Monsieur le Gouverneur Laurentie, directeur des affaires politiques au Ministère des Colonies, May 28, 1945, ANOM, 17G 176. “J’ai déjà expliqué qu’il n’y avait pas la véritable contradiction mais seulement différence de rythme: les idées à Paris vont un peu vite, l’administration sur place marche sans doute un peu lentement.”

⁵²² For a discussion of the Thiaroye mutiny, see Gregory Mann, *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 116-9.

⁵²³ Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 55-78.

were a holdover from the former Vichy regime.⁵²⁴ These included purges from the colonial administration, the exclusion of Africans from local *lycées*, and the wrongful imprisonment of African soldiers.⁵²⁵ The result, according to Senghor, was a deep malaise within the African population:

Black Africans believe that they are less privileged than North Africa, Indochine (which has been promised extensive autonomy), and even Madagascar – but not because of a lower degree of evolution... They think it is only because Africa is black, and after the West Indies (also black), they are the group of colonies most loyal to France.

Black Africans believe that if the Provisional Government does nothing for them, they will only have a choice between two options: either join the French communist party (the U.S.S.R. being the only European country which has given to the colonial problem a fully satisfactory solution), or instigate nationalist insurrection (the option they prefer least) and call for an international organization of colonies.

The disappointment of black Africans is therefore serious; the malaise is profound.⁵²⁶

Saller forwarded Senghor's letter to Pierre Ruais, a decorated resistance officer and one of de Gaulle's top military advisors. In his correspondence with Ruais, Saller emphasized that "the diminishing of confidence signaled by Mr. Senghor exists, and it would be imprudent to ignore its gravity."⁵²⁷

Perhaps the best example of the influence of external events on the development of France's colonial policy was the rapidly changing situation in Vietnam. On March 9, a

⁵²⁴ For more on Senghor, see Janet Vaillant, *Black, French, and African: A Life of Léopold Sédar Senghor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

⁵²⁵ Senghor to René Saller, Feb. 1945, ANP, 3 AG 4 22.

⁵²⁶ Ibid. "Les noirs d'Afrique pensent que, s'ils sont moins favorisés que l'Afrique du Nord, l'Indochine, à qui l'on promet déjà une large autonomie, ou simplement Madagascar, ce n'est pas à cause de leur moindre degré d'évolution... Ils pensent que c'est uniquement parce que l'Afrique Noire est, après les Antilles – noires, elles aussi – le groupe de colonies le plus fidèles à la France. Les Noirs d'Afrique pensent que, si le Gouvernement provisoire ne fait rien pour eux, ils n'auront plus le choix qu'entre deux solutions : ou se rallier, dans le cadre français, au communisme, l'U.R.S.S. étant le seul pays d'Europe qui ait donné au problème colonial une solution pleinement satisfaisante, ou bien faire de l'agitation nationaliste, - ce qu'ils aiment moins, et demander une organisation internationale des Colonies.

La déception des Négro-Africains est donc sérieuse, le malaise y est profonde."

⁵²⁷ René Saller to Pierre Ruais, Feb. 19, 1945, ANP, 3 AG 4 22.

Japanese force invaded the French colony, taking over complete control and inaugurating the short-lived Empire of Vietnam, which was essentially a Japanese puppet-state. The regime had little popular appeal, and by late August, it would be overthrown by the Viet Minh. In the meantime, the Japanese invasion presented the Provisional Government with two problems: first, the real problem of long-term Japanese control of the French colony; and more worrisome given the state of the war, the possibility that Japan's occupation would further galvanize nationalist forces opposed to any form of foreign control. Before the Japanese invasion, there had been widespread recalcitrance in most colonial circles about any rapid implementation of the Brazzaville reforms, but as Martin Shipway has noted, "[t]he Japanese takeover in Indochina clearly put paid to such complacency."⁵²⁸ On March 14, de Gaulle ordered the Provisional Government to move quickly to provide a public statement regarding its plans for Vietnam and its future within a larger French Union. An internal cable from the Minister of Colonies, sent to AOF six days later, emphasized "the importance which the Government attaches to this present crisis" – especially in light of the coming UN San Francisco Conference, which would undoubtedly discuss the future of colonial empires.⁵²⁹

The subsequent hand-wringing within the colonial administration resulted in the Vietnam Declaration of March 27, ostensibly meant to reassure French colonial interests (and those Vietnamese still loyal to the colonial power) that France planned for a liberal expansion of political and social rights after the war. The declaration stated that Vietnam held "a particular place in the organization of the French community" and that it would therefore enjoy a measure of liberty appropriate for its degree of evolution and its

⁵²⁸ Shipway, *The Road to War, France and Vietnam 1944-1947*, 62.

⁵²⁹ Telegram from Minister of Colonies, Paris to Dakar, March 20, 1945, ANOM, 17G 176.

capacities.⁵³⁰ Residents of Vietnam would from now on enjoy status as citizens of the territory, as well as citizenry in the French Union. Vietnam would have its own federal government, presided over by the governor-general, and its citizens would have access to jobs in both the local government and in the broader French Union – “without discrimination by race, religion, or origin.”⁵³¹ The Provisional Government also promised gains in education and more autonomy in the economic sphere. As a whole, the Declaration constituted a series of cobbled-together promises inspired by the Brazzaville Conference, infused with the urgency that the political crisis sparked by the Japanese invasion had brought.

While the obvious focus of the declaration was the crisis in Vietnam, its publication was also meant for consumption in other parts of the Empire. On March 25, just before the declaration was issued, Minister of Colonies Paul Giacobbi telegraphed Pierre Cournarie, governor-general of AOF, ordering him to emphasize to governors in Africa the importance of the coming declaration. As he noted:

The idea upon which it is essential that you insist is that the French Union, whose creation follows from this declaration, does not constitute a mere measure of expedience, but a real system that will determine the fate of all French possessions. Within the Union, French possessions will effectively have the right to orient themselves toward assimilation, in the example of the Antilles, or towards association, of which Vietnam will be the example.⁵³²

⁵³⁰ Déclaration du Gouvernement sur le futur statut de l’Indochine, March 25, 1945, ANOM, 17G 176.

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² Minister of Colonies Paul Giacobbi to Dakar, March 25, 1945, ANOM, 17 G 176. “Idée sur laquelle il importe essentiellement insister ce que union française dont la création découle de cette déclaration constitue non pas une mesure d’occasion, mais un véritable système qui, déterminera destin toutes les possessions françaises. Dans l’union possessions françaises auront en effet faculté de s’orienter ou d’être orientées soit vers une assimilation, dont les Antilles donnent exemple, soit vers une association dont Indochine sera le type.”

The telegram added that the colonial administration should work with the *indigènes* to promote a better “fusion” between the two sides. “Liberty must be the manifest goal of all your efforts in your territories,” the memo urged. “The declaration on Vietnam is the necessary conclusion of the new colonial policy inaugurated at Brazzaville.”⁵³³ On March 29, Pierre Cournarie, the governor-general of AOF, forwarded the declaration to all of the governors in his territory, along with a memo on its implications for the rest of the empire. As he noted, the new Vietnam policy represented “a decisive turn in our colonial policy.”⁵³⁴ Given this turn, he ordered the governors to undertake a widespread information campaign to Europeans, African cadres, and the general colonial population, in order to educate them about the new progressive French policy.⁵³⁵

The need for reforms in Africa became even more evident as the spring of 1945 approached. As already noted, the month of May saw the outbreak of riots in Setif, Algeria, which started as a protest against the colonial administration and devolved into ethnic violence between Algerians and European *pieds-noirs*. But signs were also pointing to further unrest in sub-Saharan Africa. In May, Pierre Ruais wrote to de Gaulle to indicate that “a heightening of aspirations toward independence, or towards greater freedom and autonomy, and in a word a surge of nationalism, has clearly manifested itself in recent months among many residents of the French Union.”⁵³⁶ This was particularly pronounced in Senegal and Cameroon, but it could also be observed to a

⁵³³ Ibid.

⁵³⁴ Pierre Cournarie aux gouverneurs des Colonies du Groupe, March 29, 1945, ANOM, 17 G 176.

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

⁵³⁶ Note pour Général de Gaulle de Pierre Ruais, May 4, 1945, ANP, 3 AG 4 22. “Une montée d’aspirations vers l’indépendance, ou vers l’autonomie, ou vers des libertés plus grandes, et un mot une poussée de nationalisme, s’est incontestablement manifestée au cours de ces derniers mois chez les ressortissants de l’union française.”

lesser extent in AEF. Later that month, Ruais followed up with de Gaulle after having spoken with Senegalese politician Lamine Gueye, who had brought to his attention various grievances from the African population. These included separate food queues for black Africans and Europeans, rollbacks in compensation and political rights for *indigène* functionaries, and a reduction in educational scholarships.⁵³⁷

That same month, René Saller wrote to de Gaulle to discuss popular demonstrations in AOF and AEF which could no longer be ignored. Much of the unrest had been inspired by the American rhetoric of freedom and independence, and exacerbated by the failure of Vichy's repressive policies. The result was a tinderbox of popular unrest. "The discontent of the *indigènes*, at first sporadic and individual, is now widespread," Saller warned. "It may be partially unjustified, and it is undoubtedly fueled by the Americans. But after having read the writing on the wall, one cannot deny that it exists, and from one end of Africa to the other, it wins over all of the indigenous populations and grows stronger each day."⁵³⁸ Given this rising nationalist sentiment, France's task was clear; it had to deliver political and economic reforms which could effectively raise the status of France's subjects in Africa. Otherwise, Saller warned, "French sovereignty will, in both fact and appearance, cease to exist in the lands of Africa."⁵³⁹

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

⁵³⁸ Note de Saller à Général de Gaulle, May 11, 1945, ANP, 3 AG 4 22. "Le mécontentement de l'indigène, d'abord sporadique, presque individuel, est aujourd'hui généralisé. Il peut être, en partie, injustifié, il est sans aucun doute attisé par les Américains ; mais après avoir lu le bulletin on ne peut pas nier qu'il existe et, que d'un bout de l'Afrique à l'autre, il gagne toutes les populations indigènes et grandit chaque jour."

⁵³⁹ Ibid. "Ils devront surtout être profondément convaincus de la nécessité absolue de cette tâche, se dire que, si elle ne réalisé point, la souveraineté de la France aura, en fait, sinon en apparence, cessé d'exister sur les terres d'Afrique."

Preparations for the San Francisco Conference

As already mentioned, the promulgation of the Atlantic Charter had put colonial powers and their territories on notice that the United States would prominently advocate for the principle of independence after the war. French colonial officials expressed frequent concern about the implications of the Charter for the future of the empire.⁵⁴⁰ American idealism was a particularly dangerous concept in the spring of 1945 given the coming San Francisco Conference, which aimed not only to establish a new international organization to keep the peace, but also implement rules of international state conduct and set forth guidelines as to how dependent territories would be governed. As the conference approached, French colonial administrators knew that colonialism would be on trial, and France would have to put on its best face. As a March 15, 1945 internal memo from the Ministry of Colonies noted, the San Francisco Conference “constitutes the first great public test of our colonial sovereignty.”⁵⁴¹

The San Francisco Conference (officially known as the United Nations Conference on International Organization) was held from April to June of 1945 and addressed many of the major issues pertaining to the founding of the United Nations. The general framework for the new organization had been established at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C. the previous August through October, with a few issues clarified by the Big Three at Yalta the following February.⁵⁴² Because of de Gaulle’s irritation at France’s exclusion from major decisions taken by the Allies, as well as American reluctance to incorporate French proposals to adopt certain amendments to the

⁵⁴⁰ See L’inspecteur général des Colonies Lassalle-Séré à Monsieur le Commissaire aux Colonies, Oct. 31, 1944, p. 3, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2201.

⁵⁴¹ Aide-mémoire pour Monsieur le Ministre, March 15, 1945, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2662.

⁵⁴² For a general history of the birth of the United Nations, see Stephen C. Schlesinger, *Act of Creation: The Founding of the United Nations* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2003).

Dumbarton Oaks proposals, France refused to sign on as an official sponsor at San Francisco.⁵⁴³ Nevertheless, given the potential impact on its international standing, France took an active role in all major talks concerning the future of the United Nations. Many of these issues – such as structure and membership of the Security Council, the role of the General Assembly, and the use of force under international law – had been addressed initially at Dumbarton Oaks, as well as the subsequent Moscow Conference that October. In addition, the Yalta Conference envisioned that a postwar international organization would deal with the issue of dependent territories in the hands of allied powers after the war. However, the specific details of the future of these dependent territories were explicitly left for the victorious powers to address at a later time. Some territories would be held in “trusteeship” and administered by an international organization after the war, but no definitive plans had been made. But it was understood, as Secretary of State Stettinius explained to Roosevelt in April 1945, that the trusteeship system involved “a special arrangement in which the title-holders, the present or prospective administering power, and the world organization would be the parties. The arrangement would specify in each case the rights and responsibilities of the administering power...”⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴³ The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in France (Caffery), Feb. 25, 1945. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1945, Vol. I: General, the United Nations* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), 91. For their part, U.S. representatives indicated their annoyance to French Ambassador Henri Bonnet about this controversial decision. Given France’s refusal to co-sponsor the conference, American Secretary of State Edward Stettinius, Jr. asked Bonnet “whether the French government was coming to San Francisco in a spirit of cooperation and helpfulness, or whether they expected to make trouble.” Memorandum of Conversation by the Assistant Secretary of State (Dunn), March 16, 1945. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1945, Vol. IV: Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), 678.

⁵⁴⁴ The Secretary of State to President Roosevelt, April 9, 1945. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1945, Vol. I: General, the United Nations* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), 213.

Various frameworks for the trusteeship negotiations were proposed before the conference commenced. Shortly after Dumbarton Oaks, an independent American group, the Commission to Study the Organization of the Peace, composed mainly of American academics, published a short pamphlet, “The United Nations and Non-Self Governing Peoples: A Plan for Trusteeship” in December 1944.⁵⁴⁵ The commission’s chairman, James Shotwell, a history professor at Columbia University, would later attend the San Francisco Conference as a paid advisor to the American delegation. The concerns raised by the pamphlet helped set the tone of the debate at the conference. From a structural standpoint, the commission recommended that regional committees be established to monitor issues relevant to trusteeship, and that the United Nations should form a Trusteeship Council to administer those territories placed in trust after the war. These would include territories already mandated under the post-World War I system, territories taken from Germany and Japan after the conclusion of the war, and “any colony or dependency of one of the United Nations which might be placed under the direction of the Trusteeship Council with the consent of such nation.”⁵⁴⁶ The American delegation would later incorporate these classifications into its proposal. As will be explained further below, it was the latter category pertaining to colonies that greatly concerned the French delegation at San Francisco.

Perhaps most importantly, the commission established a series of principles to which the victorious powers should be faithful in administering dependent territories. Although they were set forth in the context of the trusteeship system, they could also be applied to all colonial territories. The commission’s study called for the UN to embrace

⁵⁴⁵ *The United Nations and Non-Self Governing Peoples: A Plan for Trusteeship* (New York: Commission to Study the Organization of the Peace, 1944), p. 7, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 408.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

“a broad recognition of the international interest involved in the administration of dependent territories by individual nations, and acceptance by such nations of a measure of accountability to the international community for the conduct of such administration, for the wellbeing of the dependent peoples, and for the progressive development of these peoples toward self-rule...”⁵⁴⁷ The study also pointedly recommended a pledge by the UN to guard civil rights, insure economic equality, and eliminate forced labor in dependent territories – as we have already seen, the latter was an area of particular concern for French colonial administrators, in large part because of American opinion.

Despite repeated assurances from the allies that the trusteeship system would not apply to the vast majority of the colonial territories, French officials remained suspicious about the upcoming proceedings at San Francisco. De Gaulle had already been warned of the forces arraying against France in a memo sent to him that March by Gaston Palewski, the former director of political affairs for Free France and de Gaulle’s Chef du Cabinet. In Palewski’s estimation, there was now a struggle between most of the colonial powers and the forces of “internationalization” – namely, the United States, and to a lesser extent, Great Britain. As Palewski described it, the core of the “internationalist” view was that “there still exists in the world millions of human beings subjected to the exploitation by imperial powers, and that it is up to the United States to release them.”⁵⁴⁸ This belief was strongly supported by the American public, which “would never accept that [their] sacrifice would help reestablish and consolidate the privileges of the

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

⁵⁴⁸ Palewski to de Gaulle, March 12, 1945, ANP, 3 AG 4 22. “La doctrine des internationalistes repose tout d’abord sur une idéologie dont j’ai indiqué déjà le principe et les postulats, à savoir qu’il existe encore dans le monde des millions d’êtres humains soumis à l’exploitation de puissances impérialistes et qu’il appartient aux États-Unis d’Amérique de les libérer.”

imperialist powers.”⁵⁴⁹ Of course, like many other figures in the new French government, Palewski saw in these stated American intentions a more nefarious motive: the desire to open up former colonial markets for American goods.⁵⁵⁰ This was contemptuously referred to, both by Palewski and numerous colonial administrators, as America’s “open door policy.” To make matters worse, Great Britain seemed to be actively cooperating with United States ideals, with committees in the British government having already met to discuss how to raise standards of living in the British Empire and promote “self-government.”⁵⁵¹ According to Palewski, this would eventually have a great impact on French colonial practices:

There is no doubt that all the colonial powers and, in particular, France and Holland will be forced to adopt the same provisions as Great Britain and its two dominions. The time has passed when we could consider the colonies as reserved areas, which their mother country could manage and exploit at will ... We can no longer refuse to open the colonies to good-faith observers, but we cannot ignore that, in no longer being the sole guardians responsible for our possessions... we are abandoning, from this moment forward, part of our sovereign rights.⁵⁵²

Despite this, Palewski nevertheless saw a colonial role for France in the postwar order.

Although most of the benefits of the old colonial pact could be expected to disappear, he

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵⁵² Ibid. “Il n’est pas douteux que toutes les puissance coloniales et, en particulier, la France et la Hollande seront forcées d’adopter les mêmes dispositions que la Grande Bretagne et ses deux dominions. Les temps sont révolus ou l’on pouvait considérer les colonies comme des territoires réservés que leur métropole pouvait diriger et exploiter à sa guise...
...Nous ne saurions davantage refuser d’ouvrir nos colonies à des observateurs de bonne foi qui viendraient constater les résultats obtenus, mais on ne peut se dissimuler qu’en acceptant de n’être plus dans nos possessions que les mandataires responsables de la Société des Nations de demain, nous abandonnons, dès maintenant, une part de nos droits souverains...”

emphasized that “even with the reduced maintenance of our sovereignty, we will maintain a privileged position, both materially and morally.”⁵⁵³

Officials within the Ministry of Colonies were also well aware of the possibility of American interference in France’s overseas territories. An internal memo, written before the outset of the conference, noted America’s “puritan and humanitarian tendencies” which were within the “Anglo-Saxon tradition to fight against slavery.”⁵⁵⁴ To make matters worse, American public opinion was staunchly aligned against colonial interests, with American dignitaries like Wendell Willkie publicly advocating for the abolishment of the colonial system.⁵⁵⁵ Therefore, the memo suggested that France emphasize the contributions that its colonial project had made to “native” society, and warn the attending powers at San Francisco that the loss of France’s colonies could lead to general instability. “We must prove,” it noted, “that the dissolution of the French bloc will constitute a menace to the peace of the world.”⁵⁵⁶

Because of the concerns about the potential ramifications of the trusteeship talks at San Francisco, the Provisional Government took extensive steps to coordinate France’s presentation and strategy. On the surface, France was willing to pledge its support for collective security and for modest limitations on its exercise of sovereignty, provided that an international organization more effective than the failed League of Nations could be

⁵⁵³ Ibid. “Tous les vestiges de l’ancien pacte colonial, tout ce qui subsiste encore du tarif général des douanes, tous les avantages matériels que nous nous étions assurés par le seul exercice de notre autorité, sont appelés à disparaître, mais le maintien de notre souveraineté, même réduite, nous permettra de conserver, matériellement et moralement, une situation privilégiée.”

⁵⁵⁴ Essai sur la thèse coloniale française à soutenir à San Francisco, p. 1-2, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 409.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 8-9. “Il nous faut donc prouver que la dissociation du bloc français constituerait une menace pour la paix du monde.”

established.⁵⁵⁷ But this did not mean that France was willing to renounce its standing or *grandeur*. The official instructions to the French delegation to San Francisco emphasized that “France must reaffirm that it is a great power.”⁵⁵⁸ The delegation therefore formulated a series of policies for the conference, some of which directly contradicted American plans for the postwar order.

Among these was a general opposition to the principle of trusteeship, based on various reasons. First, trusteeship threatened plans for Togo and Cameroon, as France intended to incorporate these two post-World War I mandates into the larger French Union.⁵⁵⁹ Second, international control of trusteeship territories could set a precedent for greater international interference in colonial territories. France also sought to eliminate the third category of territories to be placed in trust – namely, those voluntarily handed over to the system by colonial powers – most likely out of a fear that the “voluntary” system could be used to pressure colonial powers to relinquish their empires.⁵⁶⁰ As a memo to French ambassador Paul-Emile Naggiar indicated, “France cannot accept, under either direct or indirect form, the institution of international control over all or part of her colonial empire, or over countries placed under her protection. [She should also discard] any proposal which would tend to impose an “open door” colonial regime.”⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁷ Note du Secrétariat des Conférences, Situation actuelle de la conférence de San Francisco, April 30, 1945. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1945*, Tome I (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1998), 577.

⁵⁵⁸ Instructions du Gouvernement à la Délégation à la conférence de San Francisco, April 16, 1945. *Ibid.*, 517.

⁵⁵⁹ Note du Secrétariat des Conférences, Situation actuelle de la conférence de San Francisco, April 30, 1945. *Ibid.*, 579.

⁵⁶⁰ United Nations Conférence on International Organization, Régime de Tutelle Internationale, Avant Projet Français, May 5, 1945, p. 2, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 409.

⁵⁶¹ Note du Département pour M. Naggiar, April 4, 1945. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1945*, Tome I (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1998), 460. “La France ne saurait admettre, sous une forme directe ou indirecte, l’institution d’un contrôle international sur tout ou partie de son

In addition to these issues, France went to the conference intending to pursue better coordination with other colonial powers to make sure that their interests were being represented at San Francisco. In March, Giacobbi wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Georges Bidault, indicating that he considered it “urgent and indispensable” that France enter into conversations with Britain, Holland, and Belgium in order to ascertain what positions they were taking at San Francisco, and “to obtain, as much as possible, the construction of a well-articulated colonial front in the face of the other powers.”⁵⁶² This was to include a more coordinated approach in the area of trusteeship. As Stephen Schlesinger has noted, the campaign included talks in Paris between de Gaulle and the foreign minister of the Netherlands prior to the conference.⁵⁶³

French hostility to American intentions was no secret as the San Francisco conference approached. Anti-American propaganda emanated from a variety of sources, most notably the communist newspaper *L'Humanité*. There was a distinct concern among the French public about how America's victory would impact the future of the French empire. American ambassador to France Jefferson Caffery, who assumed his post in late December 1944 after the United States had re-established diplomatic relations, wrote to Secretary of State Edward Stettinius, Jr., indicating his concerns about the state of French opinion regarding the United States:

empire colonial ou des pays places sous son protectorat. Doit également être écartée de piano toute proposition qui tendrait à imposer aux territoires coloniaux le régime de la porte ouverte.”⁵⁶² Le Ministre des Colonies à Monsieur le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, March 1945, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2662, Dossier 3. “...je considère comme urgent et indispensable d’entreprendre des conversations avec les Britanniques, les Hollandais et les Belges en vue de connaître leurs positions exactes devant les problèmes coloniaux qui nous seront soumis à San-Francisco et dans le dessein d’obtenir autant que possible la constitution d’un front colonial bien articulé en face des autres puissances.”

⁵⁶³ Schlesinger, *Act of Creation: The Founding of the United Nations*, 99.

...the population of France, however much it likes to fancy itself immune to German and Vichy propaganda, actually swallowed a great deal. One of the themes of German propaganda was “American imperialistic designs.” The French were inoculated with the idea that Americans proposed to snaffle French territory everywhere in the world. It is clear that a Fifth Column still exists in France, and the “American imperialism” motif is circulated with great craftiness.

...
[Further], the delicate state of French sensibilities is hardly to be exaggerated. Physical privations and moral humiliation have left a mark on French mentality. Nearly all Frenchmen betray their frame of mind by aggressive statements concerning France’s place in the world and by their willingness to entertain suspicions on everything and anything.⁵⁶⁴

Caffery’s analysis was well-founded. France’s participation at the conference, and its resistance to many of the proposals set forth by the American delegation, illustrated a genuine fear that the United States was determined to sink France’s imperial interests at San Francisco.

Proceedings at the San Francisco Conference

As already noted, the proposal of the Commission to Study the Organization of the Peace, as well as draft language set forth by the United States delegation, provided the rough guidelines for the talks on trusteeship held at San Francisco. In addition, each of the other four major powers provided their own draft language on a potential declaration on trusteeship.⁵⁶⁵ The issue was addressed by the four sponsoring powers (United States, Soviet Union, United Kingdom, and China), along with France, in a series of meetings beginning on April 30. This “Committee of Five” was to debate general

⁵⁶⁴ The Ambassador in France (Caffery) to the Secretary of State, Jan. 3, 1945. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1945, Vol. IV: Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), 661-2.

⁵⁶⁵ The draft trusteeship proposals for the United States, China, France, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union can be found in *Documents of the United Nations Conference on International Organization: San Francisco 1945*, Vol. III (New York: United Nations Information Organizations, 1945), 598-619.

principles and language to be adopted in the basic draft agreement on trusteeship, then pass the task of the final draft to a separate committee. This latter body was Committee Four of Commission II, which was composed of the five powers along with several other allied nations not represented in the committee of five.⁵⁶⁶

The French delegation to the preliminary talks of the five powers included René Pleven, ambassador Paul-Emile Naggiar, Thierry d'Argenlieu, and Jean de la Roche, who had been part of the French delegation at a conference in Hot Springs, Virginia in January.⁵⁶⁷ At San Francisco, the delegation pursued a series of strategies during the Committee of Five meetings, including moderating the American position on colonial territories held by France, protecting the French empire from a UN mandate, and attempting to build solidarity among the colonial powers in the face of the postwar threat from the United States and the Soviet Union. Later, during the Committee Four meetings, the delegation sought to hold France's ground in the face of more rampant anti-colonial sentiment.

A variety of concerns unfolded during the Committee of Five meetings. The French delegation zealously argued a number of seemingly marginal points, but which they nevertheless viewed as having important ramifications for the future of the empire. Nowhere was this better illustrated than during the debate about the terminology to be used when describing the political goals of the trusteeship system. The Chinese and Soviet delegations had consistently referred to the need for eventual "independence" in

⁵⁶⁶ The work of the San Francisco conference had been divided into four commissions; Commission II addressed issues pertaining to the General Assembly. Committee Four, which was chaired by Peter Fraser, Prime Minister of New Zealand, was subordinate to that more general purpose.

⁵⁶⁷ Shipway, *The Road to War: France and Vietnam 1944-1947*, 66-7.

the trusteeship territories at issue.⁵⁶⁸ However, the American and British delegations preferred a more moderate phrase – “progressive development toward self-government.”⁵⁶⁹ But even this latter proposal troubled the French delegation. With French politicians and legal experts already debating the future structure of the empire, any language that suggested broader autonomy for the colonies was viewed as dangerous. Consequently, during the Committee of Five meetings, Pleven and Naggiar noted their discomfort with the term “self-government”. During the group’s third meeting on May 5, Pleven explained that the use of the term threatened France’s ongoing work of establishing a new political order that would encompass both the *métropole* and the colonies:

...it was a phrase employed twenty-five years ago, and many new conceptions with respect to undeveloped territories have appeared since that time, and many other forms of dealing with such territories other than self-government have been devised which are more modern and practical... The French, he continued, are working on the reconstitution of the French constitution with a view to permitting each overseas territory to develop its own political constitution on a federal basis. M. Pleven stated that he was not at all sure that the world would benefit from a multiplication of small political units. For these reasons the French had considered it advisable to use a much broader formula.⁵⁷⁰

The broader formula Pleven envisioned was for powers holding territories in trust to move governed populations toward the development of “political institutions.”⁵⁷¹ Of course, this language would be less threatening to French power in her mandated territories and colonies, as it was envisioned that overseas territories would develop their

⁵⁶⁸ See discussion in Minutes of the 45th meeting of the United States Delegation, Held at San Francisco, May 18, 1945. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1945, Vol. I: General, the United Nations* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), 792-3.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁰ Approved Informal Minutes, Preliminary Consultations on Trusteeship by Representatives of the Five Powers, Third Meeting, May 5, 1945, p. 14, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 408.

⁵⁷¹ Approved Informal Minutes, Preliminary Consultations on Trusteeship by Representatives of the Five Powers, Fourth Meeting, May 8, 1945, p. 4, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 408.

own political institutions without breaking their bonds to France. This was in contrast to the American proposal, which raised the possibility that self-government could lead to eventual independence. Paul-Emile Naggiar reasserted these concerns on May 14, when he noted at the committee's fifth meeting that the final draft's statement of political objectives for trust territories "should be so worded as not to appear to be pressing for independence or self-government for any territory at the present time."⁵⁷² In the June 12 meeting, the French delegation went so far as to compare the planned future of France's colonies to the federal situations in the United States and the Soviet Union, in which all citizens would be granted the same rights.⁵⁷³

Pleven and the French delegation did not tolerate other perceived infringements on the French exercise of power in her overseas territories. In the May 5 meeting, Pleven also strongly opposed the idea that any future trusteeship council should have a robust power of investigation, noting that "power of investigation...tends to create the impression among the native people that the administering authority has precarious authority. Such procedure is not good from the standpoint of sound administration."⁵⁷⁴ Nor did the French delegation want the committee to establish standards for how occupying powers should administer their mandates or colonies. This latter idea had been put forth by the British delegation, which had noted that "[t]he fact that a particular territory is not placed under [trusteeship] does not mean that the parent State is not being guided, or that it is absolved from being guided, by the general principle of trusteeship in

⁵⁷² Approved Informal Minutes, Preliminary Consultations on Trusteeship by Representatives of the Five Powers, Fifth Meeting, May 14, 1945, p. 8, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 408.

⁵⁷³ L'administrateur des Colonies détaché au Service de Presse de New York à Monsieur le Ministre des Colonies, July 13, 1945, p. 12, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 409.

⁵⁷⁴ Approved Informal Minutes, Preliminary Consultations on Trusteeship by Representatives of the Five Powers, Third Meeting, May 5, 1945, p. 14, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 408.

the administration of territories outside the system.”⁵⁷⁵ According to one member of the French delegation, this British recommendation represented a threat to French sovereignty in Africa:

What worries me is that the English call for inclusion in the section on Trusteeship a paragraph concerning the duties of [colonial] powers in respect of backward people subject to their jurisdictions, whether these people live in Trusteeship [territories] or not. In short, this is a sort of declaration of the duties of colonial powers, obviously not having any control mechanisms or sanctions, but which in my view would likely fuel dangerous propaganda in our empire. The language the English have already offered is dangerous in that it provides for the evolution of all backward peoples into a regime of self-government.⁵⁷⁶

This logic could also be seen in France’s resistance to the inclusion of any provisions in the final draft mandating non-discrimination in trusteeship territories. Rather than being held accountable to an international standard, France wanted to be left alone to administer her territories as she saw fit – especially given what Pleven viewed as an excellent track record in the area. Noting that “non-discriminatory treatment provisions... have not worked in the interests of the people of the territory,” Pleven insisted that administered territories could be better served without them, incredibly claiming that “there had been no discrimination in French Africa with respect to anyone in the French empire.”⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁵ Territorial Trusteeship: An explanatory note on the draft Chapter submitted by the United Kingdom delegation, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 409.

⁵⁷⁶ M. Burin des Rozières, Conseiller du Cabinet du Président du G.P.R.F., à M. Palewski, Directeur de Cabinet du Président du G.P.R.F., May 15, 1945. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1945*, Tome II (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2000), 639. “Ce qui m’inquiète c’est que l’Anglais plaident pour l’insertion dans le chapitre de Trusteeship d’un paragraphe concernant les devoirs des puissances à l’égard des populations arriérées soumises à leurs administrations, que ces populations habitent ou non des territoires sous Trusteeship. C’est en somme une espèce de déclaration des devoirs des puissances coloniales, ne comportant évidemment aucun mécanisme de contrôle ou de sanctions, mais susceptibles à mon avis d’alimenter une propagande dangereuse dans notre empire. Cette déclaration, sous la forme où les Anglais la proposent, est déjà dangereuse en ce qu’elle prévoit l’évolution de toutes les populations arriérées vers un régime de self government.”

⁵⁷⁷ Approved Informal Minutes, Preliminary Consultations on Trusteeship by Representatives of the Five Powers, Fourth Meeting, May 8, 1945, p. 6, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 408.

The ongoing talks in the preliminary Committee of Five were closely followed by members of the Provisional Government in France. While the French delegation in San Francisco was careful in pushing against the anti-colonial agenda of some of the other attendees, French officials back in Paris were considerably less diplomatic. For many, the San Francisco conference was seen as an Anglo-Saxon plot against French international power and influence. On May 27, Georges Bidault appeared before the Consultative Assembly, noting that “intolerable suggestions” were being made at San Francisco concerning the Empire, and claiming that other powers were attempting to dispossess France of her territories.⁵⁷⁸ Pierre Lapie, the former governor of Chad, angrily indicated at the same session that the United States was simply trying to assure itself of having military bases around the world and was blatantly violating France’s established rights.⁵⁷⁹

These sentiments were somewhat justified in light of the steep opposition the French delegation faced in the broader Committee Four talks on final drafting. During the discussion in the Committee of Five, there had been a manifest hostility to colonial empires. But this hostility was even more evident in Committee Four. Membership in this latter body was not limited to the five members of the future Security Council. Instead, representatives from ten additional nations participated, including Belgium, South Africa, Mexico, Greece, and Haiti. Anticipating a less sympathetic atmosphere for France’s colonial project, Naggiar opened the May 11 session by noting that a trusteeship

⁵⁷⁸ African Transcripts, May 1945, p. 15-16, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 408.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 16.

system “was not the only way of promoting the development of dependent peoples.”⁵⁸⁰

He also emphasized to the committee members that they should remember the general principle of nonintervention in states’ domestic affairs.⁵⁸¹

While Belgium and the Netherlands could be counted on as French allies in the Committee Four talks, the colonial powers were largely unsuccessful in heading off the largely anti-colonial agenda of the other members. Among the draft committee’s recommendations was that countries “having responsibilities for the administration of territories whose people have not yet attained a full measure of self-government” – essentially the colonial powers – should make a declaration affirming that the interests of populations in those territories were paramount. Committee Four was careful to note that this declaration would apply to all administered territories, presumably to include both trusteeships and colonies not placed under the trusteeship system.⁵⁸² This pointedly went beyond the more limited goal of regulating a *finite* number of trust territories, essentially following the British initiative of setting standards for trust territories but having them followed for *all* dependent territories. As French representative Jean de la Roche would later complain,

We have arrived, in effect, at this paradox that 50 nations, some absolutely ignorant of colonialism, others just out of this stage, others opposed to the colonial system because of their own national interests, were induced to vote a text which only engaged in reality four or five nations, some of whom, like France and Holland, which have their future closely tied to their territories overseas. These colonial nations were at the mercy of... the American delegate, or the fantasies of the British delegate. At the head of these [colonial] nations was

⁵⁸⁰ Summary Report of the Third Meeting of Committee II/4, May 11, 1945. *United Nations Conference on International Organization Documents*, Vol. X (New York: United Nations Information Organization, 1946), 433.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸² The United Nations Conference on International Organization, Draft Report of the Rapporteur of Committee II/4, June 19, 1945, p. 2, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 408.

certainly France, which was reduced to silence by the events in Syria and Algeria, and whose good faith in colonial matters was placed openly in doubt.⁵⁸³

The French delegation was unable to stop most of Committee Four's avowed goals.

Chapters XII and XIII of the U.N. charter would contain the final language on trusteeship. Among other provisions, it established social and political guidelines for administering powers, designated three categories of territories that would be placed in trusteeship (including the "voluntary" category that the French delegation had opposed); and delegated the power of investigation to the trusteeship council, which consisted of administering nations, members of the Security Council, and a few other elected member-states.⁵⁸⁴

Given the frustration felt in the French delegation about the direction of talks at San Francisco, it is not surprising that correspondence back to Paris reveals increased

⁵⁸³ L'administrateur des Colonies détaché au Service de Presse de New York à Monsieur le Ministre des Colonies, July 13, 1945, p. 16, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 409. "On arrivait en effet à ce paradoxe que 50 nations, les unes absolument ignorantes de la colonisation, les autres à peine sorties de ce stade, d'autres opposées au système colonial par leurs propres intérêts nationaux, étaient amenées à voter un texte qui n'engageait en réalité que quelques quatre ou cinq nations dont certaines, comme la France et la Hollande, ont leur avenir intimement lié à celui de leurs territoires d'outre-mer. Ces nations coloniales étaient à la merci d'un fléchissement du délégué américain, ou d'une fantaisie du délégué anglais. A la tête de ces nations était certainement la France qui était réduite au silence par les événements de Syrie et d'Algérie, et dont la bonne foi en matière coloniale était ouvertement mise en doute."

⁵⁸⁴ See United Nations Charter, articles 76, 77, and 87, respectively. Article 76 provides that the objectives of the trusteeship system are:

- a. to further international peace and security;
- b. to promote the political, economic, social, and educational advancement of the inhabitants of the trust territories, and their progressive development towards self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of each territory and its peoples and the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned, and as may be provided by the terms of each trusteeship agreement;
- c. to encourage respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion, and to encourage recognition of the interdependence of the peoples of the world; and
- d. to ensure equal treatment in social, economic, and commercial matters for all Members of the United Nations and their nationals, and also equal treatment for the latter in the administration of justice, without prejudice to the attainment of the foregoing objectives...

cynicism – and at times antipathy – about perceived American intentions in France’s empire. On July 13, after the committee meetings on trusteeship had concluded, de la Roche sent a report on the conference to Giacobbi back in Paris. Despite the modest successes that the French delegation had achieved in pushing back some of the perceived anticolonial agenda at San Francisco, de la Roche remained overwhelmingly skeptical about French prospects going forward. The conference had taken place in a particularly hostile environment; in addition to overwhelming anticolonial sentiment among the American people and in the American press, de la Roche believed that the United States government was actively hostile toward the French empire. He noted that the direction of the trusteeship debate had been unduly influenced by the conference’s international secretariat, which “had been planned out by the United States, and which was composed of a large majority of Anglo-Saxons.”⁵⁸⁵

To make matters worse, there was no difference, de la Roche claimed, between the British and American positions. Given this united anticolonial front, along with the structural disadvantage faced by France during the committee negotiations, he warned that the proceedings at San Francisco would greatly benefit American power in the postwar order:

The Government of the United States has brilliantly made itself the champion of the independence of colonial peoples on the international plane. For its part, Britain no longer counts among the colonial powers, in the sense that it has now made itself the champion of the international exploitation of colonies. This has eliminated the causes of serious frictions between itself and the United States on one hand, and the [colonies] on the other hand. The Anglo-Saxon world is therefore united against the survival of a national type of colonial system. The

⁵⁸⁵ L’administrateur des Colonies détaché au Service de Presse de New York à Monsieur le Ministre des Colonies, July 13, 1945, p. 2, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 409. “D’une façon générale, le sens des débats n’a pas manqué d’être influence par le fait que le Secrétariat international avait été aménagé par le gouvernement des États-Unis et qu’il comprenait une large majorité d’Anglo-Saxons.”

"trusteeship" formula will make possible the moral and material undermining of this system, and also the liquidation of potentially embarrassing situations [for the United States], such as Puerto Rico, which is seeking its independence or to be the 49th state, but which will ultimately be placed under "trusteeship" so that the United States can once again give the world an example worthy of emulation.⁵⁸⁶

In de la Roche's view, it was France, both during the Committee of Five negotiations, as well as the subsequent talks of Committee Four, which was being targeted by the international community. In the international crusade against colonialism, he noted, "it is evident that France represents the principle adversary."⁵⁸⁷ While the Americans had somewhat moderated their views during the official five power talks, the subsequent direction of the conference during Committee Four showed their true nature. De la Roche noted that during the negotiations, "the American delegation has progressively returned to the ideology of President Roosevelt on colonial matters, that is to say the liquidation of the current system for the benefit of international exploitation, and most particularly Anglo-Saxon [exploitation]."⁵⁸⁸

Given this context, France was faced with difficult choices:

In summary, the goal pursued by the American policy, which has been consented to by England and the British dominions, was to open the colonies to the beginning of international control. A power like France now has the choice, under the terms of this Anglo-Saxon policy, between two solutions: consent to the common exploitation of the colonies, including North Africa, and therefore

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 21. "Le Gouvernement des États-Unis s'est fait, d'une façon éclatante et sur le plan mondial, le champion de l'indépendance des peuples coloniaux. De son côté, l'Angleterre ne compte plus parmi les puissances coloniales, en ce sens qu'elle s'est faite maintenant le champion de l'exploitation internationale des colonies, ce qui supprime des causes de frictions graves entre elle et les États-Unis d'une part, et les Dominions d'autre part. Le monde anglo-saxon est donc uni contre la survivance du système colonial du type national. Le formule du "trusteeship" va permettre d'ébranler moralement et matériellement ce système et de liquider des situations gênantes, telles que celle de Porto-Rico qui demande soit son indépendance, soit à être 49ème État et qui, en définitive, sera place sous "trusteeship" international, les États-Unis donnant une fois de plus au monde un exemple digne d'être suivi."

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 17.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid. "...la délégation américaine est revenue progressivement à l'idéologie du Président Roosevelt en matière coloniale, c'est-à-dire à la liquidation du système actuel au profit d'une exploitation internationale, et plus particulièrement anglo-saxonne."

recognize the universality of American interests; or morally resign ourselves to be relegated to banishment by civilized nations, and materially, to see ourselves gradually detached from our territorial populations, on whom it is easy to impress the varied effects of effective propaganda.⁵⁸⁹

The obvious conclusion to be drawn was that France had to adapt to the realities exposed at San Francisco. French colonial policy without radical change, de la Roche warned, “will mean the moral liquidation of France.”⁵⁹⁰

Relations with Britain and the United States after San Francisco

The summer of 1945 presented a low point for France in its dealings with the victorious powers on colonial issues. To make matters worse, France continued to be excluded from key discussions on Germany and future security in Europe. The situation was summarized by Étienne Burin des Roziers, a former functionary of General Georges Catroux, in a memo to de Gaulle that July:

To monitor the evolution of the international situation since the beginning of the year, we cannot fail to be struck by the continuing isolation of France. Having been kept away from the councils of the great powers, excluded from inter-allied war councils as well as bodies responsible for allocating essential economic resources, absent from the Reparations Commission, our presence in Germany and Austria kept to the bare minimum, France finds no recourse from any of her allies when trying to break the quarantine under which she is held. Everywhere her interests are menaced and her rights are threatened; yesterday in Syria, today in Tangiers, perhaps tomorrow in Djibouti or in Vietnam; France can only count on herself.⁵⁹¹

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 22. “En résumé, le but poursuivi par la politique américaine, à laquelle ont consenti l’Angleterre et les Dominions britanniques, était d’ouvrir les colonies à un commencement de contrôle internationale. Une puissance comme la France a maintenant le choix, aux termes de cette politique anglo-saxonne, entre deux solutions: consentir à l’exploitation en commun des colonies, Afrique de Nord comprise, en reconnaissant par conséquent l’universalité des intérêts américains, ou bien se résigner moralement à être reléguée au ban des nations civilisées, et matériellement, à voir se détacher d’elle les populations de ses territoires sur lesquelles il est facile de faire porter les effets variés d’une propagande efficace.”

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁹¹ Note de M. Burin des Roziers pour le Général de Gaulle, July 9, 1945. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1945*, Tome II (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2000), 50. “À suivre de

Unquestionably, a key part of French malaise was the state of relations with Washington. Most of de Gaulle's complaints, as well as those of key members of his administration, focused on America's treatment of France. As one French diplomat put it that summer, the idea had spread in the United States that "France is an obsolete country that, economically and politically, provides nothing new."⁵⁹² But French diplomats expressed hope that with the death of Roosevelt in April, things would change between the two countries.⁵⁹³ That August, relations began to improve when de Gaulle accepted President Truman's invitation to visit him in the White House in Washington. With the focus on United States designs for the future of Germany, no serious discussions were held during those meetings regarding the future of France's empire. But Truman did address the deteriorating relationship between the United States and France, mentioning "a number of unjustified criticisms directed against the United States which had appeared in the French press."⁵⁹⁴ Despite this and de Gaulle's deep concerns that the United States was not doing enough to prevent an eventual resurgence of Germany in Europe, the

près l'évolution de la situation internationale depuis le début de l'année, l'on ne peut manquer d'être frappé de l'isolement persistant de la France. Tenue à l'écart des conciliabules des grandes Puissances, exclue des conseils de guerre interalliés comme des organismes chargés de répartir les ressources économiques essentielles, absente de la Commission des réparations, réduite en Allemagne et en Autriche à la portion congrue, la France ne trouve de recours dans aucun de ses alliés lorsqu'elle s'efforce de rompre la quarantaine où on la tient. Partout où ses intérêts sont menacés et ses droits mis en cause, hier en Syrie, aujourd'hui à Tanger, demain peut-être à Djibouti ou en Indochine, elle ne peut compter que sur elle-même."

⁵⁹² M. Berard, Conseiller de l'Ambassade de France à Washington, à M. Chauvel, Secrétaire Général du Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, July 23, 1945. Ibid., 145. "L'idée inconsciemment se répand que la France est un pays désuet qui, économiquement et politiquement, n'apporte rien de neuf."

⁵⁹³ M. Massigli, Ambassadeur de France à Londres, à M. Bidault, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, July 30, 1945. Ibid., 161.

⁵⁹⁴ Memorandum of Conversations at the White House on Aug. 22, 1945, between President Truman and General de Gaulle. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1945, Vol. IV: Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), 708. See also *Compte Rendu des Conversations du Général de Gaulle à Washington, Aug. 22, 1945. Documents Diplomatiques Français 1945, Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2000), 319.

meeting ended relatively amiably, with both leaders pledging friendship, and Truman promising to restore France's prosperity and well-being.⁵⁹⁵ These efforts, along with increased outreach to Britain, resulted in a variety of breakthroughs that summer, including France's inclusion on both the Inter-Allied Commission of Foreign Ministers and the Reparations Commission.

Nevertheless, de Gaulle and his followers were unable to rid themselves of their suspicions of the "Anglo-Saxon" powers. In early June, France and Britain stalemated over the deteriorating situation in Syria, where anti-colonial elements had been protesting France's continued presence in the country. After a brutal crackdown by French troops, Churchill intervened, practically ordering de Gaulle to end the hostilities, and threatening to send in British reinforcements. For his part, de Gaulle referred to the incident as an "international crisis," accused the British of not living up to promises to allow France to administer her mandates in the Middle East as she saw fit, and suggested that his allies had ulterior motives – namely, taking over in Lebanon and Syria.⁵⁹⁶ By the fall, France and Britain still vehemently disagreed over the governance and political future of Lebanon. In addition, de Gaulle looked warily at Britain's military presence in Vietnam, indicating to D'Argenlieu in September that he simply did not trust British motives there.⁵⁹⁷ Nor did de Gaulle's followers appreciate American promises of independence to

⁵⁹⁵ Memorandum of Conversations at the White House on Aug. 22, 1945, between President Truman and General de Gaulle. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1945, Vol. IV: Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), 711.

⁵⁹⁶ Speech, June 2, 1945. Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et Messages, Pendant la Guerre 1940-1946* (Paris: Plon, 1946), 558-72.

⁵⁹⁷ Général de Gaulle à L'amiral d'Argenlieu, Haut-Commissaire de France pour l'Indochine, Sept. 10, 1945. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1945, Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2000), 488.

Italy's former colony in Libya within ten years – an action that was certain to reverberate in France's territories in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco.⁵⁹⁸

France also continued to search for ways to leverage its position between the Anglo-Saxon powers and the Soviet Union. That June, the French *chargé d'affaires* in Moscow, Pierre Charpentier, wrote a lengthy memo to Minister of Foreign Affairs George Bidault, explaining the contrast between Soviet and American views on colonialism. Charpentier noted that the Soviets were absolutely in favor of the idea of independence for the colonies; they considered the colonial system as “incompatible not only with its own ideology, but also with the organizations of a durable peace based of democracy.”⁵⁹⁹ Nevertheless, the Soviets were highly suspicious of America's avowed anticolonial ideology; as Charpentier noted, they saw it as a front for an “open door” colonial policy that benefitted only Wall Street.⁶⁰⁰ Nor was the Anglo-Saxon principle of “self-government” satisfactory to the Soviets; they saw it as a paternalistic system whereby the western powers would decide when colonial territories were “ready” to govern themselves.⁶⁰¹

This memo was passed on to Giacobbi, who in turn forwarded it to Cournarie three months later. In his cover letter, Giacobbi indicated to Cournarie that Charpentier's memo suggested a window for collaboration with the Soviet Union to check America's anticolonial intentions. France could find common cause with the Soviets both in its

⁵⁹⁸ Note du Général Catroux sur le problème des colonies Italiennes, Sept. 17, 1945. Ibid., 490. See also discussion on American proposal, M. Massigli, Ambassadeur de France à Londres, à M. Bidault, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, Feb. 6, 1946. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1946 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2003), 221-4.

⁵⁹⁹ M. Pierre Charpentier, Chargé d'Affaires de France à Moscou, à son Excellence Monsieur Georges Bidault, Ministres des Affaires Etrangères, June 24, 1945, ANOM, 17G 135.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 4.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid. p. 6-7.

colonial ideology and her opposition to the “open door” policy of the United States.

Surprisingly, he seemed to find more commonality with Soviet concepts of political rights than those of the United States:

The French Union wants to permit all its colonial peoples who have the vocation and the ability to freely lead a national life from now on, and to prepare those who are not yet ready. These principles of national equality and liberty are also at the base of the U.S.S.R.

That Soviet Russia is skeptical about our sincerity, and even more so our efforts to promote political and social revolution, is possible and even perhaps probable. In any case, it is only for this [reason] that the Soviets believe that the colonial policy of France, and even more so the desire to not play the game of the United States...stands against this American anti-colonialism which above all calls for an open door policy.⁶⁰²

The temptation to exploit negotiating space between the Soviet and American positions existed for the remainder of the Provisional Government. The following February, an internal memo emphasized the differences between the colonial positions of the major three powers, summarizing that the Soviets were primarily worried that American conceptions of self-government would make the former colonies “*de facto* protectorates, and not genuinely independent nations.”⁶⁰³

The American threat was very much still on the mind of Giacobbi when he wrote to all of the governors-general and colonial governors that October. In reflecting on the future of the colonies, Giacobbi noted that they had entered into a difficult period. The

⁶⁰²Le Ministre des Colonies à Monsieur le Gouverneur-Général de l’Afrique Occidentale Française, Sept. 12, 1945, p. 2-3, ANOM, 17G 135. “L’Union française veut permettre à tous les peuples coloniaux qui en ont vocation et aptitude de mener librement des maintenant une vie nationale et d’y préparer ceux qui ne le sont pas encore. Ces principes d’égalité et de liberté nationale sont à la base même de la Fédération des républiques soviétiques socialistes. Que la Russie soviétique soit sceptique sur notre sincérité et plus encore sur notre persévérance à promouvoir une telle révolution politique et sociale, c’est possible et même probable. En tous cas, c’est uniquement à cela que les Soviets jugeront de la politique coloniale de la France, quand bien même le souci de ne pas faire le jeu des États-Unis et des trusts conduirait les Soviets à nous, soutenir contre cet anticolonialisme américain qui réclame d’abord la porte ouverte.”

⁶⁰³ E.M.G.D.N. Section Afrique, 2ème Bureau, Trusteeship et Territoires Africains, February 1946, p. 3, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 408.

greatest contributor to this uncertain future was American and English imperialism. Giacobbi noted that “[t]he interest that the Anglo-Saxon world has in African affairs cannot be denied. For fairly obvious reasons, it is more vivid at present than it was before the war.”⁶⁰⁴ But Giacobbi did not want to overstate the threat posed by the Anglo-Saxons. Instead, colonial administrators had to realize that “colonialism has been condemned, and that certain forms of colonialism have perished. We must therefore substitute [in its place] a form of association.”⁶⁰⁵ This new form of colonialism could demonstrate to the world that France could play a vital role in Africa:

We thus find ourselves with a moral obligation to prove by effective economic, social and political reforms that France... understands their demands and, far from being closed to their aspirations, she intends to integrate the people whom she leads, into the nation, but an enlarged nation where all are equal under the law and all will have the freedom to give themselves the institutions that fit their personality as well as their particular needs.⁶⁰⁶

In Giacobbi’s view, the future French Union was well-equipped to accomplish these goals. Perhaps more importantly, only through the realization of a colonial union could France begin to regain its international status. “By the French Union,” Giacobbi noted, “we intend to assure the *grandeur* of our country and the influence of our civilization.”⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰⁴ Le Ministre des Colonies à MM. les gouverneurs généraux, gouverneurs des colonies, commissaires de la République, généraux commandants supérieurs, secrétaires généraux, et chefs des services judiciaires, Oct. 20, 1945, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2167, dossier 1. “L’intérêt que le monde anglo-saxon porte aux choses d’Afrique ne saurait être nié. Pour des motifs assez évidents, il est à l’heure présente plus vif qu’avant la guerre.”

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 2.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 3. “Nous nous trouvons ainsi dans l’obligation morale de prouver, par des réformes économiques, sociales et politiques effectives, que la France, s’il avec son temps, en comprend les exigences et que, loin de rester fermée à leurs aspirations, elle entend intégrer les peuples qu’elle dirige, dans la nation, mais dans une nation, élargie où, tous égaux en droit, ils auront la liberté de se donner les institutions qui conviennent à leur personnalité comme à leurs besoins particuliers.”

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 4.

The Constituent Assembly and the New Constitution

As discussions continued in San Francisco about the future of the colonial and trusteeship systems, policymakers in Paris were debating the process for a new draft constitution that would usher in the birth of the Fourth Republic. French leaders knew in 1945 that only comprehensive political reform could best ensure France's colonial future. The constitution had to restore the parliamentary republic while successfully enabling the *indigènes* to vote and take part in local elections. These reforms were presented as consistent with France's humanizing mission. Top colonial administrators conducted a high-profile campaign in late 1945 and throughout 1946 to advertise to both the world and France's subjects that significant progressive reforms were coming to the colonies. On August 21, Paul Giacobbi gave a radio address in which he highlighted the participation of the overseas territories in the Constituent Assembly and emphasized France's benevolent intentions. Referring to the coming colonial realignment as a "great democratic reform", Giacobbi added that "the colonial project of France has been humane; it has been emancipating"⁶⁰⁸

As already discussed, by early 1945 the central government in Paris had strongly signaled to colonial administrators that the *indigénat* needed to be abolished. This was complicated by resistance from the colonial bureaucracy, as well as the value of forced labor to the war effort.⁶⁰⁹ But by late summer, the campaign against the *indigénat* had intensified. That August, Giacobbi wrote to the governors-general in Africa, indicating

⁶⁰⁸ Paul Giacobbi, Participation de la France d'Outre-Mer à la Constituante, Aug. 21 1945. In *L'avenir de la colonisation: L'Union Française/Fin des Empires coloniaux* (Lille: Oct. 1945), 212, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 408.

⁶⁰⁹ Le Gouverneur Général de l'AOF à Messieurs les gouverneurs des colonies du groupe, Sept. 15, 1945, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 937.

that the *indigénat* “must completely disappear at the end of hostilities.”⁶¹⁰ However, the practice had not yet been abolished in December, when Giacobbi’s successor Jacques Soustelle recommended that something be done quickly “to clearly mark the intentions of the *métropole*, in regards to native populations.”⁶¹¹ Shortly thereafter, in a decree on December 22, de Gaulle officially ended the practice throughout AOF, AEF, Cameroon, Togo, Madagascar and New Caledonia, effective January 1.⁶¹² By 1946, one of the most reviled of France’s colonial practices had been swept away.

The year also saw another significant political breakthrough in the election of an assembly to draft the new constitution. From the very beginning, there had been overwhelming support among de Gaulle’s administrators for Africans – as well as other colonial subjects – to be represented in the Constituent Assembly. This had been the focus of a committee of experts chaired by Giacobbi in early 1945 to study representation for the colonies.⁶¹³ The committee made several recommendations, including that all French citizens and subjects would be represented on the Constituent Assembly; that the Assembly would be chosen by universal suffrage to the extent it was possible; that non-citizens would participate through an electoral college (they would designate electors, who would then elect representatives); and that all those over 25 would in theory be allowed to vote.⁶¹⁴ Most of these recommendations were implemented in the final

⁶¹⁰ Le Ministre des Colonies à (gouverners-general of AOF, AEF, and Madagascar, and governors of Cameroon, Djibouti and New Caledonia), Aug. 6, 1945, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 937.

⁶¹¹ Soustelle à gouverneurs, Dec. 10, 1945, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 937.

⁶¹² Décret no. 45-0137, portant suppression en Afrique occidentale française, en Afrique équatoriale française, au Cameroun, au Togo, à la Côte française des Somalis, à Madagascar et dépendances et en Nouvelle-Caledonie des sanctions ordinaires de l’indigénat, Dec. 22, 1945, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 937.

⁶¹³ Note sur la représentation des territoires d’outre-mer à l’assemblée constituante, ANP, 3 AG 4 22.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.

decree on the establishment of the Constituent Assembly, which was elected on October 21, 1945.⁶¹⁵

This assembly, which was comprised of 586 seats, was dominated by three parties – the PCF, the Section Française d’Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO, or socialists), and the Mouvement Républicain Populaire (MRP), a center-right Christian Democrat party led by Georges Bidault. The PCF and the SFIO gained 159 and 146 seats respectively, giving the left-wing parties a majority in the assembly. This leftward alignment had significant effects on the first constitutional draft. First, both parties were less inclined to accept de Gaulle’s suggestion of the creation of a strong executive – preferring instead that the fulcrum of governmental power should reside within the legislature. Further, confident in their ability to win parliamentary elections, the communists successfully pushed for a unicameral, rather than bicameral assembly. In addition, both parties were sympathetic to the implementation of colonial reforms. The socialists had a history of doing so during the Third Republic, and the communists (at least at this point) were inspired by the anti-colonial rhetoric coming out of Moscow.

The first draft constitution, officially completed on April 19, 1946 and submitted for referendum on May 5, contained a number of provisions that recognized the heightened role of the empire in the French Union. Articles 1 through 39 provided an extensive list of political, social and economic rights to be accorded all men and women under the law. Article 41, perhaps the most controversial of the colonial provisions, established the French Union as one “freely consented to” by the overseas territories and the associated states. Article 44 guaranteed that “all the residents of the French Union

⁶¹⁵ For a useful political narrative of this period, see Maurice Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front: Government and People 1936-1996* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 136-150. I have relied in part on Larkin for a chronology of the events in this section.

enjoy the rights and liberties of the human person guaranteed by Articles 1 through 39.”⁶¹⁶ It also provided for election of deputies from the colonies to the unicameral National Assembly, which was allocated the greatest share of power in the new republic’s governing institutions.⁶¹⁷ However, the number of deputies, along with the exact nature of voting rights to be granted to colonial populations, would be left to the legislature; the draft constitution simply stated that these issues would be decided in accord with electoral law.⁶¹⁸ Title VII provided for the election of local assemblies in the overseas territories to address purely local matters. Finally, the April 19 constitution established an advisory Council of the French Union, composed of members elected from both the *métropole* and the overseas territories. This body would meet to discuss issues referred to it by the National Assembly or the Council of Ministers (cabinet).⁶¹⁹

Those in favor of the first constitutional draft faced significant opposition. The MRP viscerally opposed the unicameral assembly, as well as many of the proposals pertaining to the empire. To make matters worse, the campaign in favor of ratification suffered a serious blow when de Gaulle left the Provisional Government in January 1946. The past year had taken its toll on de Gaulle, who grew tired of the reinvigoration of partisan politics. The general had hoped to present himself as a figure above the political fray who could unify France by mere strength of his personality and character. This formula would work 12 years later, but in 1946, he did not have sufficient political capital. When it became clear that the constitutional assembly was being dominated by traditional party politics, he resigned his duties – the operative excuse being the refusal of

⁶¹⁶ Projet de constitution du 19 Avril 1946, Art. 44, <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/histoire/constitution-projet-avril-1946.asp>.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid., Art. 48.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., Art. 73.

the SFIO to provide for necessary military funding. At the time, it seemed to most that he would return shortly, after popular appeal for a constitution with a stronger executive function. As discussed in chapter two, this gambit had worked previously, when he was challenged by Giraud for leadership of Free France. But now, liberated France's politicians took advantage of the opportunity to be rid of the general. His retirement from public life was not absolute; he gave speeches against the provisions in the first constitutional draft regarding a weak executive and devolution of autonomy to the colonies. But he would not return to the government until 1958, in the midst of a constitutional crisis and a brutal struggle in Algeria.

The referendum of May 1946 turned out to be a disaster for the first constitution. Without de Gaulle's support, and with the socialists increasingly wary of a communist takeover of a unicameral assembly, the first draft constitution of the Fourth Republic was defeated at the polls. But the first Constituent Assembly wanted to make clear that many of the reforms promised by the rejected constitution would still be upheld. As colonial minister Marius Moutet would later note, the campaign against the constitutional referendum had not really been mobilized around the issues pertaining to the French Union.⁶²⁰ Therefore, the assembly moved quickly to implement via legislation some of the provisions in the rejected constitution. On May 7, it declared all residents of the French empire citizens of France, effectively ending the subject status of 50 million Africans. The legislature then promulgated additional laws on May 9 and 10 providing

⁶²⁰ Memo from Marius Moutet to colonial governors, June 4, 1946, p. 1, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 216.

for the establishment of territorial assemblies in the colonies to address strictly local matters.⁶²¹

A new constituent assembly was elected on June 2, 1946 to draft a second constitution for eventual referendum. This time, the MRP would make the most gains, with 166 of 586 seats in the assembly. With the socialists less willing to deal with the PCF, the MRP was able to push the constitutional draft in a more centrist direction. The eventual draft, which would eventually be adopted as the constitution for the Fourth Republic in October, changed the legislature from unicameral to bicameral, with the Council of the Republic sharing power with the National Assembly. This change made the draft more palatable to some of the moderates who had rejected the first draft in May. In addition, the second draft had decidedly mixed implications for the progressive colonial reforms envisioned in the April 19 constitution. As Tony Chafer has indicated, many of these progressive reforms were rolled back, including the provisions for free consent of states to membership in the Union and comprehensive establishment of the local assemblies. As Chafer notes, the effect of this was “to restore power over the empire to the Colonial Ministry in Paris and to the overseas local colonial administrations.”⁶²²

In the second constitution, control over the French Union was essentially divided into three areas. First, the President of the Republic, who was to be elected by the National Assembly and the Council of the Republic, was also designated as President of the French Union.⁶²³ He shared power with the High Council, a collection of advisors

⁶²¹ *Projet de loi relatif aux assemblées locales dans les Territoires d’outre-mer, présenté au nom de M. Georges Bidault par M. Marius Moutet, Sept. 20, 1946, p. 1, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 212.*

⁶²² Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 66.

⁶²³ Constitution of the Fourth Republic, Art. 64.

from both the government of the *métropole* and the associated states. Finally, all citizens would be represented in the Assembly of the Union, which was evenly split between representatives from the *métropole* and representatives from the overseas territories.⁶²⁴ Representatives from the overseas territories would be elected by local assemblies. The Assembly would meet at the President's discretion, although a petition from half could force the opening of the session. It was able to discuss matters pertaining to the French Union but would have little to no impact on the domestic politics of the *métropole* itself. It did have the capacity to send matters to the National Assembly in Paris for consideration, but this latter body would have final say on such matters.⁶²⁵

In addition, the constitution also provided for representation in the National Assembly and the Council of the Republic, although in more limited scope than representation in the Assembly of the Union. A separate statute later established the precise numbers allotted to the colonies. In the National Assembly, the new system allotted 15 seats for AOF, five for AEF, five for Madagascar, three for Cameroon, and one for Togo. In the Council of the Republic, the numbers were slightly higher – 19 for AOF, eight for AEF, five for Madagascar, three for Cameroon, and two for Togo.⁶²⁶ These allotments may seem generous until one considers that in the National Assembly, citizens from sub-Saharan Africa held just over 5% of the seats; in the Council of the Republic, the figure was just over 10%. In contrast, in the Assembly of the Union, which held only advisory power, sub-Saharan Africans were allotted almost 25% of the seats.

⁶²⁴ Ibid., Art. 66.

⁶²⁵ Ibid., Art. 71.

⁶²⁶ United Nations Trusteeship Council, *Les Territoires sous Tutelle dans l'Union Française*, Feb. 8, 1949, p. 12, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 409.

Regardless of this disparity in political power, by the end of 1945, significant progress had been made in establishing social and political rights in the colonies. The inclusion of former colonial subjects in the constituent assemblies, the abolishment of the *indigénat*, and the establishment of both federal and territorial assemblies had all been transformative steps in France's colonial system. These reforms helped rally colonial populations to France and enabled the government to portray its continued possession of colonies in a more positive light. But it is important to remember that reforms would not have happened – and most certainly not so quickly – had the external factors of the war and international pressure not given the government and colonial administrators the motivation to change the colonial system.

Conclusion

With the constitution firmly in place in October 1946, the organization of the French Union was stabilized. While France could no longer stake a legitimate claim as one of the world's major powers, the previous two years had nevertheless allowed her to maintain some of her former influence. American and Soviet rhetoric about granting independence to colonial territories had been largely negated. With the notable exception of Lebanon and Syria, France had retained virtually all of the overseas territory she had held before the start of the war. Further, with the rapid deterioration of events in Eastern Europe, and the rise of the communist party in France, the provisional government finally had chips it could bargain with. American desires to end colonial empires ebbed once it became clear that French influence could be vital in areas of the world where communist movements threatened to take power. Essentially, the concept of French empire, which had briefly teetered on the edge of extinction, had been restored by the reality of the Cold

War. De Gaulle alluded to the new situation on July 28, 1946, when he noted in a speech that a restored France could serve as the leader of a unified Europe, which could “hold the moral balance” between the two superpowers.⁶²⁷

Perhaps more importantly, the two years following France’s liberation had allowed France to consolidate its position in the overseas territories. To be sure, as many of de Gaulle’s advisors had observed, the exercise of French power would never be the same. But French power and influence in Africa did continue, despite the setbacks of the war. The new constitution, along with the reorganization of the empire into a federal union, were pivotal in this regard. In Africa, this meant the beginning of the implementation of the Brazzaville reforms and the long-awaited granting of civil and political rights to subject populations. But without de Gaulle leading the government, the direction of France’s policy would have to be defined and protected by a new group of leaders, many of whom were not among the Free France partisans who had reconquered and defended the Empire.

These leaders would face challenges not imagined at the Brazzaville Conference in 1944 or during any of the postwar discussions on the nature of the French Union. Just weeks before the successful constitutional referendum, French forces led by Thierry d’Argenlieu shelled the Vietnamese port of Haiphong, thus instigating France’s eight-year war with the Viet Minh. The trauma of losing that war in 1954 was exacerbated by the beginning of yet another eight-year war in Algeria, which led to the loss of the former colony in 1962. These two wars, along with France’s increasingly diminished role on the

⁶²⁷ *Foreign Relations of the United States 1946, Vol. V: the British Commonwealth, Western and Central Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), 467. See also Speech, July 28, 1946, in Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages: dans l’attente, 1946-1958* (Paris: Plon, 1970), 12-17.

international stage, would heighten the necessity of continued French power and influence in Africa. With the empire shrinking, sub-Saharan Africa would become crucial in France's struggle to maintain international relevancy.

Chapter Four

The Threat of the International Community to the Fourth Republic, 1946-1954

In my view, it would be a serious mistake to think that it will be possible to convert Anglo-Saxon opinion to our concept of the French Union. It remains fundamentally disbelieving of what comprises our fraternal and universal political organization. We are simply not interested in the same human problems. It is disappointing to think that the generosity and enthusiasm that led to the birth and development of the French Union are still suspected by the Anglo-Saxons!

--Memo prepared for François Mitterrand, Ministre d'Outre-mer, July 1950⁶²⁸

On July 28, 1946, Charles de Gaulle gave a speech in the town of Bar-le-Duc, part of the Lorraine region in northeastern France recaptured from the Germans at the end of the war. Since his departure from the Provisional Government in January of that year, De Gaulle had toured the country and urged citizens to vote against the constitutional drafts put forth by the Constituent Assemblies. He also continued to articulate his views on the future of French foreign policy. Taking stock of the postwar situation, De Gaulle referenced a prediction made by Alexis de Tocqueville a century earlier, in which he foresaw the eventual rise of the United States and Russia to the status of world powers.⁶²⁹ Given the ideological struggle between the two, De Gaulle saw this new power dynamic as a direct threat to international peace and stability. But France could still play a role in this new world order. In his view, as a representative of “old Europe”, France could help bridge the gap between east and west:

⁶²⁸ Note pour Monsieur de la France d'Outre-Mer, July 24, 1951, p. 3, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 3416. “C’est, à mon sens, se faire une grave illusion que de penser qu’il sera possible de convertir à notre conception de l’Union Française l’opinion anglo-saxonne. Elle demeure foncièrement incrédule devant ce que comporte de fraternel et d’universel notre organisation politique. Nous n’abordons pas de la même façon les problèmes humains. Il est décevant de penser que la générosité et l’enthousiasme qui ont présidé à la naissance et au développement de l’Union Française demeurent toujours suspects aux Anglo-Saxons!”

⁶²⁹ Speech, July 28, 1946. Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et Messages: Dans l’attente 1946-1958* (Paris: Plon, 1970), 15.

What then can restore the balance, if not the Old World, between the two new [superpowers]? Old Europe, which for so many centuries was the world's guide, is able to provide, at the heart of a world that is dividing itself into two camps, the necessary element of compensation and understanding. The nations of the traditional West, which had as their vital lifelines the North Sea, the Mediterranean, and the Rhine, are geographically located between the two new superpowers and are determined to maintain an independence that would be seriously exposed in the case of a conflagration..”⁶³⁰

Of course, De Gaulle's speech was reflective of his earlier policies as head of the Provisional Government, when he cultivated the support of both the United States and the Soviet Union for France's postwar security. But signs already suggested that such double-dealing would not be tenable in the long term. With the ascension of Harry Truman to the U.S. presidency after Roosevelt's death in April 1945, the United States took a decidedly tougher stance against Soviet aggression in Eastern Europe. And in March 1946, Winston Churchill had famously warned an American audience about the descent of an “Iron Curtain” across Eastern Europe.⁶³¹ Weakened by the war, France would quickly be faced with a choice between the two superpowers.

Given his exile from government service, De Gaulle would not be the one to make that choice. Instead, his successors in the Provisional Government, and eventually the Fourth Republic, were faced with the very delicate problem of preserving France's influence in the world in the face of its rapid division into two polarized camps. By May 1947 the die was cast, when Prime Minister Paul Ramadier expelled communists from

⁶³⁰ Ibid., 15-16. “Quoi donc peut rétablir l'équilibre, sinon l'Ancien Monde entre les deux nouveaux? La vieille Europe, qui, depuis tant de siècles, fut le guide de l'univers, est en mesure de constituer, au cœur d'un monde qui tend à se couper en deux, l'élément nécessaire de compensation et de compréhension. Les nations de l'antique Occident, qui ont pour artères vitales la mer de Nord, la Méditerranée, le Rhin, géographiquement située entre les deux masses nouvelles, résolues à conserver une indépendance qui serait gravement exposée en cas de conflagration...”

⁶³¹ Winston S. Churchill, *His Complete Speeches: 1897-1963*, vol, VII, ed. Robert Rhodes James (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1974), 7285-7293.

Fourth Republic ministries in an attempt to curry favor with the United States.⁶³²

Although the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union had already begun, Ramadier's choice effectively brought that struggle to France's doorstep. Given the continued growth of international anticolonial sentiment, the future of France's empire hinged in large part on the support of the United States.

This new dependence on the United States – both political and economic, given the Marshall Plan – could not have come at a less opportune time. Postwar France now faced the same predicament that plagued its predecessor in Vichy during the war – namely, escalating threats to France's sovereign colonial territory. The fall of Dien Bien Phu and the abandonment of North Vietnam by French forces in 1954 would be the clearest example of this worrisome trend. But the story of empire during the Fourth Republic's short 12 years was rampant with such losses. Starting in 1947, when the government brutally suppressed a revolt in Madagascar (killing 90,000), and culminating in Algerian war of independence that led to the Fourth Republic's demise in 1958, France was plagued by unrest in its empire that threatened to dissolve the fragile French Union. France's colonial administrators found themselves constantly re-adjusting to the realities of this situation. The task was especially challenging given debates within the international community concerning the merits of colonialism.

In addition to these external realities, the political situation in France was not particularly suited to formulating a unified front to combat the empire's disintegration.

Throughout the Fourth Republic, the proliferation of political parties often prevented

⁶³² An account of the decision to expel the PCF from the Fourth Republic ministries can be found in John W. Young, *France, the Cold War and the Western Alliance 1944-49: French Foreign Policy and Post-War Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 134-155. See also Irwin M. Wall, *The United States and the Making of Postwar France, 1945-1954* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

general political consensus on a variety of issues. The early republic was marked by the phenomenon of “tripartisme” whereby three parties – the Parti Communiste Française (PCF), the Mouvement Républicain Populaire (MRP) – equivalent to the Christian Democrats in Germany and Italy – and the Socialists, or Section Française de l’Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO) – were forced to govern together in the National Assembly.⁶³³ These parties were joined by numerous others, most notably the Union Démocratique et Socialiste de la Résistance (UDSR), an initially center-right party that included François Mitterrand and the Gaullist René Pleven; the Parti Radical, whose leaders included Georges Bidault and Pierre Mendès France; and eventually, the Rassemblement du Peuple Français (RPF), a center-right Gaullist party formed in 1947. The development of the latter, as well as the expulsion of the PCF from government in 1947, would lead to a second phase of the republic after 1947, whereby parties of the middle – namely the SFIO and the MRP – formed a “third force” to prevent parties opposed to the constitution of the republic, notably the PCF and RPF, from gaining power. Although this aim was achieved, coalition governing did not prevent government instability. 21 different ministries served the Fourth Republic under the office of the Président du Conseil, the equivalent of Prime Minister.⁶³⁴ However, despite this

⁶³³ For a political history of the Fourth Republic, see Jean-Pierre Rioux, *La France de la Quatrième République*, 2 vols. (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1983).

⁶³⁴ In addition to the Président du Conseil, the cabinet posts relevant to colonial policy were the Ministre des Affaires Étrangères at the Quai d’Orsay, and the Ministre de la France d’Outre-mer, who directly oversaw most of the territories of the French Union. During the 12 years of the Fourth Republic, eight men served in the former post, while 13 men served in the latter. For the first several years of the Republic, the MRP dominated the Quai d’Orsay, with Georges Bidault and Robert Schuman combining for three terms and seven years there. Afterward, the office was shared among the several parties, including the SFIO (Christian Pineau), the Radicals (Pierre Mendes-France), and the UDSR (René Pleven). The full list of Ministers for Overseas France during the Fourth Republic included Marius Moutet (SFIO), Paul Coste-Floret (MRP), Jean Letourneau (MRP), François Mitterrand (UDSR), Louis Jacquinot (RI), Pierre Pflimlin (MRP),

fractured political society, Fourth Republic colonial policy in Africa remained relatively consistent and generally transcended party affiliation. As François Mitterrand, former Ministre d'Outre-Mer, noted in 1957, the constant governmental turnover “produced no significant change in France’s policy in Black Africa.”⁶³⁵

While French colonial policy during the Fourth Republic was largely defined by reaction to events beyond France’s control, there were continuities in policies previously followed by both the Vichy regime and Free France. Like De Gaulle and Vichy’s leaders before him, Fourth Republic colonial administrators relied on the notions of *grandeur* and the importance of the colonies to maintaining French international influence. Louis Jacquinot, an independent republican who served four times as the Ministre de la France d’Outre-mer (with the longest total number of years during the Fourth Republic in that post) often emphasized these ideas in his speeches on the French Union. As he noted in an address to the Journées d’Etudes du Centre des Indépendants-Paysans in 1953:

French *grandeur* is assuredly preserved by its *métropole*, a European and Atlantic nation, but also by all of its Overseas Territories which are located at all latitudes. Without them, France would be unbalanced, politically and economically. The association of the Republic and the Union guarantees their mutual strength and prestige in the world. This is why, first and foremost, the development and prosperity of this great ensemble is the object of our attention and our care.⁶³⁶

Robert Buron (MRP), Jean-Jacques Juglas (MRP), Pierre-Henri Teitgen (MRP), Gaston Deffere (SFIO), Gérard Jaquet (SFIO), André Colin (MRP), and Bernard Cornut-Gentile (UNR).

⁶³⁵ François Mitterrand, *Présence française et abandon*, (Paris: Plon, 1957), 201. “Mais l’instabilité du pouvoir exécutif n’entraîna aucun changement notable dans sa politique en Afrique Noire.”

⁶³⁶ Discours de M. Louis Jacquinot, Ministre de la France d’Outre-Mer aux Journées d’Études du Centre des Indépendants-Paysans, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 217, Dossier 4. “La grandeur française est assurément faite de sa Métropole, Nation européenne et Nation atlantique, mais aussi de tous des Territoires d’Outre-Mer qui sont situés sous toutes les latitudes. Sans eux, la France serait déséquilibrée, politiquement et économiquement. L’association de la République et de l’Union garantit leur force mutuelle et leur prestige dans le monde. C’est donc d’abord le développement et la prospérité de ce grand ensemble qui est l’objet de nos efforts et de nos soins.”

Further, as with the wartime French regimes, there was little discussion by leaders of the early Fourth Republic about the possibility of imminent colonial loss.⁶³⁷ As President du Conseil Pierre Mendès-France – no colonial hardliner himself – noted in a speech to the overseas territories in October 1954, France and its empire had a “common destiny” that would be ensured by the mutual cooperation of French citizens and subjects in the *métropole* and abroad.⁶³⁸

Despite this continuity in ideology, the Fourth Republic faced challenges that would change both colonial mentalities and eventual policy. This shift was largely driven by an already well-developed hostility to colonialism within the international community. These sentiments were evident in debates within the United Nations, which now had the power to investigate colonial policy in overseas territories and hold colonial governments accountable for their perceived failures. Adversity at the United Nations would also force cooperation among the colonial powers on an unprecedented scale. Quite naturally, this resulted in the necessary abandonment of France’s suspicions of the United Kingdom. While there was still hesitation about the motivations of the Anglo-Saxon power across the Channel when it came to Africa, French leaders initiated a policy of collaboration with Britain during this period. Growing from its initial purpose of technical coordination within the colonies, by the 1950s, French, British, and eventually Belgian cooperation would span a wide variety of areas, including methods to best defend their colonial regimes before the UN General Assembly. The hallmark of this new collaboration was a series of conferences held in the capitals of the three colonial powers,

⁶³⁷ As Tony Chafer has noted, the concept of the empire lasting indefinitely was a common assumption throughout the Fourth Republic. See Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France’s Successful Decolonization?* (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

⁶³⁸ Allocution de M. Mendès-France sur la France d’Outre-Mer, p. 2, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 217, Dossier 4

attended by the highest-ranking figures in their respective colonial administrations.

While occasional tensions with Great Britain simmered – most notably regarding the Ewé affair in Togo, and Britain’s developing relationship with the United States – the Fourth Republic presented an interlude in an otherwise tense dynamic of Anglo-French relations in Africa.

However, French suspicion lingered regarding the other Anglo-Saxon power, the United States. While the Cold War would bring the two countries much closer together, the colonial question remained a source of disagreement – and particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Although the United States frequently pledged its willingness to maintain the French empire intact, French leaders worried that American ideals about self-determination undermined the very foundation of the new overseas Union that France hoped to build. This was evident in debates about policy before the United Nations General Assembly and its subcommittees, but it would also remain a troublesome point in a variety of other negotiations, including Marshall Plan aid and American military assistance in Vietnam. French diplomats and colonial administrators skillfully reacted to these concerns by exploiting the one piece of leverage they had with the United States – the growing Cold War divide. By the late 1940s, French leaders realized that they could best firm up American support for the French Union by emphasizing the communist threat in Africa. They capitalized on the resulting American concern by presenting themselves as the natural means to preserve order and prevent communist infiltration on the continent.

Through all of this, the French administration remained confident that it would continue to play a vibrant and important role in Africa. While concessions were granted,

and adjustments were made to international realities, French colonial officials were adamant that France's presence in Africa would endure, and that it was largely welcomed by France's African subjects. As René Pleven, who held several important posts during the Fourth Republic noted in 1949:

Associated states with a long historic past tend to more and more autonomy, greater independence, and finally full independence. On the other hand, their more responsible leaders recognize that in a world like the one in which we are it is good not to be alone, and that the French family of nations is run in a democratic *bon enfant* manner inspired by a most genuine lack of racial prejudice. People in Africa who really did not belong to a nation but to a race, to a continent, find themselves at ease in a French way of life.⁶³⁹

Of course, Pleven would be proven wrong by events a decade later. But in the early Fourth Republic, France's response to numerous international challenges to its empire provided hope that the French presence in Africa would endure for the foreseeable future.

Addressing Colonial Unrest in the Early Fourth Republic

Like its predecessor regimes in Vichy and Free France, the Fourth Republic was immediately beset by colonial unrest and military threats to its overseas territories. Without question, the most significant of these was the beginning of the war in Vietnam. After the breakdown of negotiations between Ho Chi Minh and the French Provisional Government in 1946, the likelihood of a peaceful settlement in North Vietnam seemed remote. On November 23, 1946, French naval forces commanded by colonial hardliner Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu shelled Haiphong harbor, beginning the French Vietnam War.⁶⁴⁰ The following month, hostilities spread with the opening of a ground campaign

⁶³⁹ René Pleven, *The Evolution of the French Empire towards a French Union: an Address by M. René Pleven to the Annual Meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society on 21st July, 1949* (London: Bradley Brothers), 14.

⁶⁴⁰ For a history of the beginning of the French Indochina War, see Martin Shipway, *The Road to War: France and Vietnam, 1944-1947* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1947).

in Hanoi by French forces seeking to put a quick end to the war. Despite initial success, France soon faced a determined guerilla campaign to liberate the North, and potentially all of Vietnam, from colonial occupation. The war, which lasted eight years and claimed over 70,000 lives from citizens of the French Union, ensured that Fourth Republic governments would operate in an atmosphere of constant political crisis. It also served as a constant reminder of the insecurity of France's empire.

The outbreak of the Madagascar Revolt in 1947 made matters significantly worse. As previously discussed, Madagascar suffered significant devastation during World War II from battles between Vichy forces and a combined British-Free French effort to retake the island. In the process, the conflict helped foment pro-independence nationalist sentiments among the Malagasy tribes on the island. In late March 1947, they attacked French positions in eastern Madagascar, seeking to overthrow the French government and gain independence.⁶⁴¹ Given the deteriorating situation in Vietnam, French colonial leaders took this threat quite seriously. Jules Marcel de Coppet, the governor-general of Madagascar, quickly emphasized to Marius Moutet, *Ministre de la France d'Outre-Mer*, that the Malagasy Revolt constituted "a generalized enterprise coordinated against French sovereignty."⁶⁴² Over the next year, French troops brutally suppressed the rebellion, killing tens of thousands of France's Malagasy subjects.⁶⁴³ Along with Vietnam, the action signaled the increasing unwillingness of French leaders to tolerate any serious

⁶⁴¹ A chronicle of the early events of the war is supplied in *Le Conseiller d'État, Haut Commissaire de la République Française, Gouverneur-Général de Madagascar et Dépendances à Monsieur le Ministre de la France d'Outre-Mer (Direction des Affaires Politiques)*, April 8, 1947, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 3258.

⁶⁴² *Ibid.*, 5. "une entreprise généralisée et coordonnée contre la souveraineté française."

⁶⁴³ A variety of accounts have appeared in recent years concerning the Madagascar Revolt. Among them are Eugène-Jean Duval, *La révolte des sagaies: Madagascar 1947* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002); Raymond W. Rabemananjara, *Madagascar: L'affaire de mars 1947* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000).

resistance to French rule in the colonies – a policy correctly predicted by de Coppet at the very outbreak of the revolt.⁶⁴⁴

These military threats were accompanied by the rise of political consciousness throughout France's overseas territories. Independence movements had already begun to take shape and gain popularity in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, with the already-mentioned riots in Setif in 1945 serving as a clear example of the potential for the explosion of violence. The threat was somewhat less serious in French sub-Saharan Africa, although there had been sporadic outbreaks of violence in AOF immediately after the war, including riots in Ivory Coast. In addition, as Tony Chafer and Fred Cooper have demonstrated, labor unrest became a particular concern for colonial officials, in the wake of a 1947-1948 railway strike in West Africa.⁶⁴⁵ These labor concerns were amplified by the rise of nationalism throughout France's African territories. As Henri Laurentie, now France's representative to the United Nations Trusteeship Council, warned in an internal note in 1948:

Pan-Africanism, tribal nationalism, and territorial nationalism – these three forms of the same xenophobia now exist with certainty in West Africa, especially on the Gulf of Guinea, from Côte d'Ivoire to Nigeria. The contradiction that exists between these various trends will not offer – to us Europeans – any relief, as all three are in agreement upon, and coordinate themselves around an essential point: the fastest possible elimination of European sovereignty, and a united Africa, or African republics. Either outcome would be realized in the minds of African leaders at our expense.⁶⁴⁶

⁶⁴⁴ Le Conseiller d'État, Haut Commissaire de la République Française, Gouverneur-Général de Madagascar et Dépendances à Monsieur le Ministre de la France d'Outre-Mer (Direction des Affaires Politiques), April 8, 1947, p. 13, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 3258.

⁶⁴⁵ See Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 100-104; see also Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁶⁴⁶ Note pour le Ministre (from Henri Laurentie), Oct. 11, 1948, p. 1, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2166, Dossier 2. "Panafricanisme, nationalisme tribal et nationalisme territorial, ces trois formes d'une même xénophobie existent désormais d'une façon certaine en Afrique occidentale, spécialement sur la golfe de Guinée, de la Côte d'Ivoire à la Nigéria. La contradiction qui existe entre ces

There was no question that French leaders took the threat of nationalism quite seriously; Laurentie emphasized in his memo that “the situation in West Africa requires an urgent solution.”⁶⁴⁷

Perhaps more worrisome for the French authorities was the assembly of pro-autonomy political movements into the *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (RDA), which spanned most of France’s West African colonies. Led by the charismatic Félix Houphouët-Boigny, already a member of the French National Assembly, the RDA declared itself a party at the Bamako Congress, in then French Soudan (now Mali) in October 1946.⁶⁴⁸ Although the RDA’s professed goals were to work within the French Union to obtain greater political rights and local autonomy, it presented numerous problems to French administration. First, as a cross-territorial political party, it hindered French attempts to deal with pro-autonomy or independence movements on an individual, and therefore, more weakened basis. More importantly, the RDA would quickly affiliate itself with the *métropole*’s PCF, signaling its initial unwillingness to deal with the SFIO and MRP, the parties primarily running the foreign and colonial offices.

With all of these events developing rapidly, the postwar Provisional Government realized it had a problem on its hands concerning international perception of France’s empire. Given this threat, the Fourth Republic initiated a massive public relations effort to brighten France’s reputation around the world. The Quai d’Orsay, the Ministère

diverses tendances ne nous sera – à nous Européens – d’aucun secours; toutes trois se rejoignent et se coordonneront sur un point essentiel: la suppression le plus rapide possible de la souveraineté européenne; Afrique unie, ou républiques d’Afrique, l’un ou l’autre résultat s’obtiendra dans l’esprit des leaders africains, à nos dépens.”

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 3. “La situation en Afrique occidentale requiert une solution urgente.”

⁶⁴⁸ A brief discussion of the Bamako Conference can be found in Chafer, 72-3. See also Pierre Kipré, *Le Congrès de Bamako, ou, la naissance du RDA en 1946* (Paris: Chaka, 1989).

d’Outre-Mer, the high commissioners and other prominent overseas officials all played a role in disseminating positive information about the French Union. One example of this early effort by the Fourth Republic was a lengthy pamphlet published in 1947, “Critiques relatives à la politique coloniale française,” distributed by the Service d’Information Coloniale within the Quai d’Orsay.⁶⁴⁹ The pamphlet contained a thorough recounting of all criticisms of the French Union and the French civilizing mission from throughout the world, along with a list of talking points to counter these arguments. It encompassed all relevant areas of colonial policy, including political rights and reforms, administration, economic policy, social reforms, and other general issues. However, it placed its main emphasis on general criticisms of colonialism by the United States and U.S.S.R., who believed that “all colonial systems are anti-democratic in their essence, because they can only survive by force – the French empire in particular.”⁶⁵⁰ Consequently, the pamphlet highlighted the civilizing benefits of the French mission, the reforms of the Brazzaville Conference, and laws passed by the Provisional Government that expanded political rights and provided for more autonomy within the colonies.⁶⁵¹

An exchange between Marius Moutet, Ministère de la France d’Outre-Mer and several high-ranking colonial officials is instructive of the importance of both this brochure and the public relations campaign to France’s continuing presence in sub-Saharan Africa. On September 30, 1947, Moutet wrote to René Barthès, governor-general of AOF about the pamphlet. Moutet emphasized that the project would “place at the disposition of representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs throughout the world,

⁶⁴⁹ Critiques relatives à la politique coloniale française, ANOM, 17G152.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 3. “Tous les systèmes coloniaux sont anti-démocratiques par essence, car ils ne peuvent subsister que par la force, celui de la France en particulier.”

⁶⁵¹ Ibid. p. 3-4

some arguments that permit them to defend our overseas project, and at the same time when this problem has been posed with a certain clarity and has interested the United Nations.”⁶⁵² However, at the time of Moutet’s letter, the project lacked certain statistical information about AOF’s economy and political situation that could help justify the French imperial project within the international community. He therefore asked that this information be provided as quickly as possible.⁶⁵³ When several territories – including Senegal, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, French Soudan, and Guinea – refused to do so, Moutet’s successor Paul Coste-Floret made sure to write the governor-general in January 1948 to remind him of the need for information to portray France in a favorable light.⁶⁵⁴ Such information was vital to convincing the international community concerning the significant progress already being made in Africa, as well as the need for France to continue to play a role there.

⁶⁵² Le Ministre de la France d’Outre-Mer à Monsieur le Haut Commissaire de France, Gouverneur Général de l’AOF, Sept. 30, 1947, ANOM, 17G152. “Il s’agissait de mettre à la disposition des représentants du Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, dans le monde entier, des arguments leur permettant de défendre notre œuvre Outre-mer, et ce, dans le moment même où ce problème était posé avec une certaine acuité et intéressait l’ONU.”

⁶⁵³ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁴ Le Ministre de la France d’Outre-Mer à Monsieur le Haut Commissaire de France, Gouverneur Général de l’AOF, Jan. 19, 1948, ANOM, 17G152.

The Growing Threat of the United Nations

Of course, a campaign to counter anticolonial sentiments was especially important given the worsening political situation for France at the United Nations. As chapter three discussed, the creation of the new international body had profound implications for the French colonial project, as the UN stood for a principle of self-determination that threatened the end of colonial empires. Even worse for France, it enabled anticolonial-oriented nations to gather and express their resentment for the continuing imperial presence of western Europeans in the developing world. Further, working on a blank slate, the UN and its members were capable of completely transforming the international legal landscape, and redefining what constituted acceptable behavior within the community of nations. The idea of binding international law had received a fresh mandate, given the need to prevent abuses on the scale committed by Nazi Germany during the Holocaust. Consequently, the wishes of colonial powers to pursue their own interests were restrained by the need for a certain level of deference in the face of the international community.

The two most prominent codifications of international standards were passed by the General Assembly in 1948 – the Genocide Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The former, a direct response to the Holocaust, was largely uncontroversial.⁶⁵⁵ However, the latter agreement, although not considered binding in itself on member states, nevertheless caused great concern among French colonial officials for its potential impact on the French Union. Although drafted with significant contributions from Gaullist lawyer René Cassin, the ideals espoused by the UDHR had

⁶⁵⁵ An account of the drafting of the Genocide Convention can be found in Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell, America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2007), 17-59.

the potential to be used as a standard to measure colonial behavior within the General Assembly, which could accept petitions and conduct hearings on virtually any issue.⁶⁵⁶

Immediately after the passage of the UDHR in December 1948, French diplomats and colonial officials quickly realized that numerous colonial practices were not in accord with the UDHR's principles. These ranged from the availability of political freedoms to shortcomings in economic and social rights like education and labor.⁶⁵⁷ As indicated by an internal memo from the Ministère d'Outre-Mer's office of political affairs in February 1949, ratification of the UDHR could have a vast effect on colonial policy:

A frank acceptance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights raises very serious problems for political, cultural, and social plans, and, last but not most of all, on our economic and financial plans, given the weakness of our resources and the need to resort to foreign capital in order to defend French sovereignty or interests in the French overseas territories, trust territories and associated states.⁶⁵⁸

Consequently, during the ratification process, the head of the political affairs division within the Ministère d'Outre-Mer, Robert Delavignette, ordered that distribution of the text of the UDHR to the overseas territories be accompanied by a caveat that it was merely "an ideal to be attained" rather than a text immediately applicable under law.⁶⁵⁹

But the threat posed by the UDHR to French sovereignty was minimal compared to work being done by General Assembly committees. In particular, France faced

⁶⁵⁶ See Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2002).

⁶⁵⁷ Note pour Monsieur le Chef du 3^{ème} Bureau, Feb. 26, 1949, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 219, Dossier 1.

⁶⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5. "Une franche acceptation de la déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme pose donc des problèmes extrêmement graves sur les plans politiques, culturel, et social, enfin et surtout sur le plan économique et financier et compte tenu de la faiblesse de nos moyens et du recours nécessaire aux capitaux étrangers sur le plan de la défense de la souveraineté française ou des intérêts français dans les territoires d'outre-mer, les territoires sous tutelle et les états associés."

⁶⁵⁹ Note pour Monsieur le chef de la section d'études des affaires politiques, Feb. 22, 1949, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 219, Dossier 1.

hostility in both the Trusteeship Council, as well as the Special Committee on Information from Non-Self Governing Territories. The former committee had control over only those territories established as trust territories under Chapters XII and XIII of the UN Charter, such as French Togoland and the French Cameroons. The Special Committee on Information, first established by General Assembly resolution 66 in December 1946, operated under the General Assembly's Chapter XI power, which addressed those non-self-governing territories not covered by the trusteeship system. Chapter XI established duties by colonial powers to "accept as a sacred trust the obligation to promote to the utmost, within the system of international peace and security established by the present Charter, the well-being of the inhabitants of these territories."⁶⁶⁰ The Committee was charged with collecting information from non-autonomous areas for consideration by the General Assembly. Most of France's sub-Saharan African territories fell under this classification.

From France's perspective, the problem with both of these committees was that non-colonial state parties sought to constantly undermine the French colonial project and infringe on French sovereignty. By January 1947, the battle lines had already been drawn. Out of the 54 states admitted to the United Nations at the time, only eight – France, Great Britain, Belgium, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Netherlands, and Denmark – were considered reliable votes on colonial matters.⁶⁶¹ Of the remainder, 17 of 20 Latin American states, along with five Arab nations, were deemed "anticolonial" by French authorities. Seven states in particular – India, China, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Liberia, Afghanistan, and Iran – were determined to vote down French colonial interests

⁶⁶⁰ United Nations Charter, Art. 73, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/>

⁶⁶¹ Note de la Direction s'Afrique-Levant, Jan. 20, 1947. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1947, Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2007), 168.

in the General Assembly, with India in particular playing a key role in galvanizing support for anticolonial measures.⁶⁶² And of course, both the Soviet Union and the United States espoused distinctly anticolonial views. Given its ideology and newly-achieved international stature, the United States was reluctant to strongly support the colonial powers in the early years of the United Nations. With the development of the Cold War, the ongoing existence of both the French and British empires served as a powerful propaganda point to be used by the Soviets against the United States and its allies.

The UN Trusteeship Council

This anticolonial movement was active in the initial meetings of the Trusteeship Council. Comprised of both colonial and noncolonial member states, one of its fundamental goals was to “promote the political, economic, social, and educational advancement of the inhabitants of the trust territories, and their progressive development towards self-government or independence...”⁶⁶³ This was to be done in coordination with, and with a certain deference to, the colonial powers. To this end, the Council was empowered to accept petitions, visit trust territories, and send annual questionnaires to administering powers for use in the Council’s regular reports.⁶⁶⁴ Led by India and the Soviet Union, the anticolonial nations sponsored a series of unsuccessful resolutions attempting to curb the power of colonial nations over trust territories. These included preventing them from becoming part of an administrative or customs federation like the French Union, opposing the unilateral naturalization of their residents as French subjects,

⁶⁶² Ibid.

⁶⁶³ United Nations Charter, Art. 76

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid., Arts. 87-8.

and setting a date certain for independence, despite the wishes of the respective administering power.⁶⁶⁵ Of course, these proposals ran directly counter to plans France already had for Togoland and Cameroon, as the new constitution had specifically attempted to include them within the newly formed French Union.⁶⁶⁶ The anticolonial powers also attempted to extend the power of the Trusteeship Council over non-trust territories, albeit unsuccessfully.

One example of France's resentment of Trusteeship Council actions was the issue of the Ewé peoples in southern Togo, in West Africa.⁶⁶⁷ The Ewés, who numbered approximately 800,000 after the war, had been scattered across colonial boundaries since the beginning of the European presence in West Africa. The problem was exacerbated after World War I, when Togo was confiscated from Germany and placed under a joint British-French League of Nations mandate. The resulting split of Togoland between British and French zones separated the Ewés between two different colonial administrations. To make matters more complicated, a sizeable Ewé minority could be found in Britain's bordering Gold Coast colony. Before World War II, discussions had already begun about reuniting the Ewés under one colonial territory. When both British and French Togoland were named as trust territories under the United Nations Charter, the issue was bound to come up once again in the Trusteeship Council.

⁶⁶⁵ Note de la Direction d'Afrique-Levant, Jan. 20, 1947. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1947, Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2007), 172-3.

⁶⁶⁶ UN Trusteeship Council, Déclaration du représentant de la France sur les relations de la France et des territoires sous tutelle dans le cadre de l'Union Française, May 19, 1949, p. 3, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2312, Dossier 4.

⁶⁶⁷ A definitive account of many of the issues facing Britain and France in West Africa during this period is John Kent, *The Internationalization of Colonialism: Britain, France, and Black Africa, 1939-1956* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). Kent's work focuses on issues relevant to parts of this chapter. To the extent that I draw from his work, I have cited it below.

The problem came to international attention after the all-Ewé conference of June 1946 in Accra (Gold Coast), when Ewés from Gold Coast and both Togolands met to discuss their plans to unite in one territory drawn from both British and French Togo, thus forming an independent Ewé nation.⁶⁶⁸ The conference attendees agreed to “set up an organization to coordinate and direct the Ewé people towards bringing about the unification of Ewé land under a single administration.”⁶⁶⁹ The idea was immediately unacceptable to the French authorities there; they had no intentions of giving up significant parts of French territory in Africa, or of abandoning their plans to incorporate Togo into the French Union. The proximity of Gold Coast and British Togoland also raised concerns about the aggrandizement of British power in West Africa – a scenario, as John Kent notes, the British scrupulously tried to avoid so as to maintain good relations with France.⁶⁷⁰

But the Trusteeship Council was determined to resolve the Ewé question. Consequently, when the Council announced in 1947 that it would allow representatives from the Ewés to come to New York to personally petition for unification, it greatly concerned French colonial officials. While France had accepted a certain measure of control over Cameroon and Togo through the establishment of the Trusteeship Council, its leaders had not anticipated interference on this scale so quickly. Therefore, French officials moved quickly to collaborate with their British counterparts to head off any action taken by the council. As a preemptive measure, the two governments promised to take steps “calculated to resolve, and eventually to remove the difficulties created by a

⁶⁶⁸ M. Bidault, *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, à tous les postes diplomatiques*, May 13, 1947. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1947, Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2007), 819-820.

⁶⁶⁹ Memorandum on the Petition of the All-Ewé Conference to the United Nations, p. 6, 1 AFFPOL 3284, Dossier 2.

⁶⁷⁰ Kent, *The Internationalization of Colonialism*, 232-7.

frontier drawn across an area inhabited by peoples of common origin...”⁶⁷¹ The two also established a Consultative Council, which included representatives from the various Ewé factions, to discuss matters pertaining to the Ewé diaspora. Behind the scenes, Britain and France agreed to form a common front in the Trusteeship Council against any attempts to redraw the boundaries of Togo or unite the Ewés under one land.⁶⁷²

But France could not delay the work of the Trusteeship Council indefinitely. In 1949, Council representatives visited the area to assess the state of the Ewé peoples. The visit led to Trusteeship Council Resolution 250, which ordered the expansion of the Consultative Committee to make it more representative of the various Ewé political factions, and to “ascertain the real wishes of the whole population of the two Trust Territories.”⁶⁷³ The French interpreted this as significantly interfering in their own affairs, as they had attempted to prevent representatives from the Comité de l’Unité Togolaise (CUT), a pro-independence group in French Togoland, from getting access to the Consultative Committee. These actions included arrests of members of the CUT in the run-up to the elections to the committee in 1950.⁶⁷⁴ When the United States and other Trusteeship Council members proposed new elections in February 1951, French representatives indicated that any further election supervision or interference by the UN would be unacceptable.⁶⁷⁵ Later that month, French ambassador Roger Garreau strongly

⁶⁷¹ Ibid., 8.

⁶⁷² Rapport au Ministre: Problème de la pétition Ewé au Conseil de Tutelle, Sept. 19, 1947, p. 1, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 3284, Dossier 2.

⁶⁷³ Department of State Instruction for the United States Delegation to the Eighth Session of the Trusteeship Council, Jan. 12, 1951. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951, Vol. II: The United Nations, The Western Hemisphere* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 522.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid., 523.

⁶⁷⁵ Minutes of Meeting of Administering Members of the Trusteeship Council, Feb. 16, 1951. Ibid., 535.

emphasized to U.S. officials France's lack of support for the work of the Trusteeship Council, noting that it was not "competent to deal with a question involving a change of political boundaries."⁶⁷⁶

But the Trusteeship Council had other means of exerting pressure. In December 1954, through Resolutions 853 and 858, the General Assembly provided for direct representation on the Trusteeship Council of peoples governed under trust arrangements, and also allowed for hearings in the Council on petitions drawn from general public opinion.⁶⁷⁷ French officials saw these resolutions as further infringements on sovereignty, as the Trust arrangements had specifically designated the administering powers as responsible for political affairs.⁶⁷⁸ The resolutions also further inflamed sentiments in favor of autonomy for the Ewés. Trusteeship Council representatives now threatened to re-unite Togo under one flag, and possibly annex it to the Gold Coast so as to create one Ewé state.⁶⁷⁹ Given this possibility, France was forced to support a separate proposal to incorporate British Togo into Gold Coast (forming the eventual state of Ghana), thus allowing France to maintain control over a separate French Togo.⁶⁸⁰ As French officials reasoned, it was better to risk the expansion of British power in the region than to sacrifice France's presence there altogether. Of course, France's defiance of the Trusteeship Council was only a pyrrhic victory, as French Togo would soon gain

⁶⁷⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. D. Vernon McKay of the United States Delegation to the Trusteeship Council, Feb. 27, 1951. *Ibid.*, 552.

⁶⁷⁷ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 853, Dec. 14, 1954, available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/095/88/IMG/NR009588.pdf>; United Nations General Assembly 858, Dec. 14, 1954, available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/095/93/IMG/NR009593.pdf>.

⁶⁷⁸ Mémento concernant la question togolaise, situation du problème en 1955, p. 22-3, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2225, Dossier 2.

⁶⁷⁹ Kent, *The Internationalization of Colonialism*, 247-8.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 256-8.

its independence. And Togo was just one of many battles remaining to be fought in the General Assembly.

The Special Committee on Information

From France's perspective, the Trusteeship Council at least had the virtue of having its power relatively limited by the UN Charter. More problematic for France's Africa policy was the ongoing work of the Special Committee for Information from Non-Self Governing Territories. The committee was established by the General Assembly under Article 73 of the Charter, which required colonial powers to "to transmit regularly to the Secretary-General for information purposes, subject to such limitation as security and constitutional considerations may require, statistical and other information of a technical nature relating to economic, social, and educational conditions in the territories for which they are respectively responsible."⁶⁸¹ Committee membership was split between colonial (or administering) member states, and eight states elected by the General Assembly – most of which were distinctly anticolonial.

In its early meetings, the Committee claimed no additional authority over colonial matters beyond the power allotted by the Charter itself. But French officials openly worried that the Committee would eventually interfere with colonial policy. An internal memo from January 1947 noted that the Special Committee "is a threat to national sovereignty, and our adversaries in this area will not waste any opportunity to undermine our sovereignty."⁶⁸² What made the Special Committee particularly dangerous was the

⁶⁸¹ United Nations Charter, Art. 73.

⁶⁸² Note de la direction d'Afrique-Levant, Jan. 20, 1947. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1947, Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2007), 166. "...cette décision de l'Assemblée est une

imprecise language of Chapter 11 of the Charter, as Article 73 left room for debate regarding how much power the Special Committee had over colonial policy. As a January 1947 memo noted, this “permits anticolonialist delegations to interpret it liberally and also abusively, with the goal of restraining sovereign rights of colonial states, to the advantage of the United Nations.”⁶⁸³

France’s fears about the potential for interference were quickly justified. Almost immediately, three issues arose from the committee’s work – first, which territories had to supply information to the committee; second, what type of information was to be supplied; and finally, what should be done with the information, either by the UN Secretary-General or the General Assembly.⁶⁸⁴ Regarding territories affected, French officials strongly believed that despite their colonial past, overseas territories considered as departments of France (like Algeria) should not have to submit information to the Special Committee, given the extensive political reforms that had already been implemented.⁶⁸⁵ But it was quickly determined by the General Assembly that “non-autonomous territories” included former colonial territories within postwar administrative arrangements, such as the French Union. Consequently, Resolution 66, passed in 1946 by the General Assembly, took note of such territories for which information had already

menace à la souveraineté nationale et que nos adversaires sur ce terrain ne perdront aucune occasion d’ébranler cette souveraineté.”

⁶⁸³ Note de la direction d’Afrique-Levant, Jan. 20, 1947. Ibid., 180. “En ce qui concerne les territoires dépendants, le chapitre XI de la Charte... permet aux délégations anticolonialistes de l’interpréter extensivement et même abusivement, dans le but de restreindre les droits souverains des États coloniaux, au profit de l’ONU.”

⁶⁸⁴ Minutes of the Seventh Meeting of the United States Delegation, Sept. 15, 1947. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1947, Vol. I: General; The United Nations* (Washington: U.S. GPO, 1971), 288.

⁶⁸⁵ Avis du Comité Juridique relatif à la communication des renseignements prévue à l’article 73e de la Charte des Nations Unies, p. 2, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 217, Dossier 1.

been submitted by the administering powers, including AOF, AEF, and Madagascar.⁶⁸⁶ Regarding the type of information to be provided to the committee, U.S. representatives at the UN were able to prevent political information from being considered by the Special Committee. But starting in 1947, the anticolonial voting bloc attempted to provide the Special Committee with broader powers, which would have allowed it to mandate the inclusion of political information in reports and make recommendations to administering powers in order to improve conditions in their respective territories. Quite naturally, this enraged French officials, who viewed the Special Committee – and by extension the General Assembly – as trying to obtain the same authority over the colonies as the Trusteeship Council had for the Trust territories.

The discontent of France and other colonial powers with the Special Committee erupted in 1949, when the General Assembly formally proposed that its work be expanded. First, the Assembly approved a plan to extend the committee for an additional period of three years.⁶⁸⁷ In addition, the General Assembly gave the committee further power to determine which territories required the submission of information under Article 73. Until 1949, the colonial powers, including France, had maintained that they could make unilateral determinations as to whether territories had achieved self-government, and could therefore cease supplying information to the Special Committee. In France's case, this determination had already been made for nine territories, although it continued to submit information for AOF, AEF, and Madagascar.⁶⁸⁸ The justification

⁶⁸⁶ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 66, Dec. 14, 1946, available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/033/17/IMG/NR003317.pdf>.

⁶⁸⁷ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 332, Dec. 2, 1949, available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/051/51/IMG/NR005151.pdf>.

⁶⁸⁸ The territories for which France had ceased to submit information were Martinique, Guadeloupe, Reunion, French Guiana, St. Pierre and Miquelon, French Oceania, New Caledonia,

was that these nine territories had become part of France and already had political representation under the constitution of the Fourth Republic. But the General Assembly made clear that such unilateral determinations would not be accepted. Resolution 334, passed in December 1949, stated that “it is within the responsibility of the General Assembly to express its opinion on the principles which have guided or which may in the future guide the Members concerned in enumerating the territories for which the obligation exists to transmit information under Article 73.”⁶⁸⁹ More importantly, the resolution enabled the newly-extended Special Committee “to examine the factors which should be taken into account in deciding whether any territory is or is not a territory whose people have not yet attained a measure of self-government.”⁶⁹⁰ This latter provision would essentially allow the anticolonial powers, which occupied half the seats on the Special Committee, to determine whether the UN would exert political authority over colonial territories.

Not surprisingly, the colonial powers, and particularly France, perceived this as a serious infringement of their sovereignty, and especially in Africa. From France’s perspective, one of the main justifications for the new French Union was that it was no longer a traditional colonial arrangement, and instead had afforded to France’s subjects a measure of self-government that had not been granted by the other colonial powers to their own colonies. By its action, the General Assembly essentially declared that *any* decisions made by the French authorities as to the political evolution of their African

French territories in India, and Indochina. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952-1954, Volume III: United Nations Affairs* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1979), 1220.

⁶⁸⁹ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 334, Dec. 2, 1949, available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/051/53/IMG/NR005153.pdf>.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

territories were invalid. Quite naturally, this threat of further UN involvement led to increased coordination among the colonial powers regarding strategy before meetings of the Special Committee. France, Britain, and Belgium initially threatened to withdraw if the mandate exceeded a year.⁶⁹¹ They also asserted that the Special Committee had gone beyond the legal authority granted by the UN Charter.⁶⁹² While neither of these arguments would have any effect on the eventual extension of the Committee's mandate, French protests about U.S. unwillingness to strongly oppose the enlargement of the committee's power would come up frequently in discussions between the two powers, and lead to more U.S. efforts to cooperate with France in advance of Special Committee meetings.⁶⁹³

With the aforementioned resolutions passed, by 1951, the Special Committee had begun discussing the factors to determine whether previously non-autonomous territories had become self-governing. Its subsequent report led to General Assembly Resolution 567, which established a tentative list of factors and invited input from administering states by May of the following year.⁶⁹⁴ Although France was given representation on an *ad hoc* committee to further study these factors, the creeping power of the Special Committee to determine colonial questions was now greatly alarming French colonial officials. Therefore, these issues, along with various other UN-related questions, were addressed in series of talks with Britain and Belgium in 1952. First, British and French

⁶⁹¹ The Acting United States Representative to the United Nations (Ross) to the Secretary of State, Aug. 24, 1949. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1949, Vol. II, The United Nations; The Western Hemisphere* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 353.

⁶⁹² The Secretary of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, Dec. 20, 1949. *Ibid.*, 435-6.

⁶⁹³ Report of Subcommittee D to the Foreign Minister, May 9, 1950. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950, Vol. III: Western Europe* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1977), 1093.

⁶⁹⁴ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 567, Jan. 18, 1952, available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/068/22/IMG/NR006822.pdf>.

officials gathered to discuss colonial issues in March, during which both sides agreed that “a stage had now been reached in the relations of the Administering Powers with the United Nations when it was necessary to halt the growing pretensions of the United Nations to interfere in the internal affairs of non-self-governing territories.”⁶⁹⁵ The issue was also the subject of tripartite talks in Brussels that May. Although the Belgian delegation tended to be more extreme in its opposition to UN initiatives, the three did come to agreement on a variety of issues, including a general opposition to further UN control over non-autonomous territories, any extension of the mandate of the Special Committee, and the tactical use by anticolonial powers of information provided to the Special Committee.⁶⁹⁶ Specifically, the three opposed any discussion of political questions by the Committee, the possibility of the Committee hearing petitions from non-autonomous peoples, and the right of the Committee to send special missions to non-autonomous territories, as the Trusteeship Council already had a right to do under the UN Charter.⁶⁹⁷ All three agreed that “in the case that decisions in this realm would be adopted, the participation of these governments in the work of the Committee would be placed in question.”⁶⁹⁸

By the following May, when the three powers resumed talks in London on colonial cooperation at the UN, an internal memo had noted a sharp increase in anticolonial mentalities in numerous General Assembly committees, including the First, which addressed international security issues; the Third, which focused on social and

⁶⁹⁵ Anglo-French Ministerial Discussions on Colonial Policy in Africa, March 31, 1952, p. 2, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2177, Dossier 3.

⁶⁹⁶ Note pour Monsieur le Ministre, June 3, 1952, p. 2-3, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2225, Dossier 3.

⁶⁹⁷ Projet de Résolution Franco-britannique sur la participation des habitantes autochtones des territoires sous tutelle aux travaux du conseil de tutelle, p. 5, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2225, Dossier 3.

⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6. “Dans le cas où des décisions dans ce sens seraient adoptées, la participation des Gouvernements aux travaux du Comité devrait être remise en question.”

cultural issues, and the Trusteeship Council.⁶⁹⁹ More worrisome for the colonial powers, the Special Committee had been renewed once again for an additional three-year term in December 1952 by General Assembly Resolution 646.⁷⁰⁰ Even worse, the General Assembly also passed Resolution 637, declaring “the rights of peoples and nations to self-determination” as a fundamental human right.⁷⁰¹ Therefore, colonial powers were encouraged to voluntarily submit information to the Special Committee under its Article III power regarding “the extent to which the rights of peoples and nations to self-determination is exercised by the peoples of those territories...”⁷⁰² This latter resolution concerned the French and Belgian delegations, who agreed that the consideration of such political information constituted an extrajudicial extension of the Special Committee’s power. Consequently, the three powers agreed that henceforth they were willing to cooperate with the Special Committee to the extent that it was empowered by the Charter, but not with any General Assembly resolutions that further extended its mandate – especially the submission of political information encouraged by Resolution 637.⁷⁰³ Essentially, the General Assembly’s actions had convinced the colonial powers to consider a policy of noncooperation with UN institutions – a practice that would have been unthinkable immediately after the war. By 1954, Belgium had pulled its support

⁶⁹⁹ Conversations Anglo-Franco-belges: Aide-mémoire, p. 2-5, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2225, Dossier 3.

⁷⁰⁰ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 646, Dec. 10, 1952, available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/079/89/IMG/NR007989.pdf>.

⁷⁰¹ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 637, Dec. 16, 1952, available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/079/80/IMG/NR007980.pdf>.

⁷⁰² Ibid.

⁷⁰³ Conversations Anglo-Franco-Belges: Aide-mémoire, p. 6, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2225, Dossier 3.

from the Special Committee, and French officials were at least strongly considering the possibility of doing so as well.⁷⁰⁴

Cooperation with the United Kingdom and Belgium

While the actions of the General Assembly led to further cooperation among European powers in colonial matters, this collaboration had already been well underway. As previously discussed, underscoring French colonial policy during the war was a distinct suspicion of British intentions for France's African colonies. This would continue during the Fourth Republic, but in a significantly diminished form. Part of this ebb can be attributed to the end of the Vichy regime, which despised Britain for reasons that went beyond colonial rivalries. De Gaulle's exile from power also helped, as he had viewed Britain as an obstacle to France regaining her international prestige. With such ideological leaders out of the way, both sides could focus on practical issues that united the two nations. This cooperation could be traced to two areas. First, France and Britain initiated an unprecedented effort to coordinate their technical efforts in sub-Saharan Africa in a variety of areas, including education, public health, agriculture and labor. Eventually, technical cooperation facilitated awareness of the need to collaborate on political problems, both within the colonies and in the international arena. By the late 1940s, Britain and France were sharing information on independence movements and the threat of communism within their African colonies. As already seen in the case of the Special Committee, this initial cooperation would lead to a more aggressive push by France to better coordinate strategy at the United Nations.

⁷⁰⁴ Les Questions Coloniales Belges et Françaises aux Nations Unies, 1954, p. 2, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2225, Dossier 3.

Anglo-French colonial collaboration had its roots in the final stages of the war. In early 1944, Free France established a French liaison in Accra, Gold Coast to improve relations between the French Ministry of Colonies and British administration in West Africa. Upon taking his post, the liaison René Clap indicated to the resident British minister that “the cause of the African continent cannot be defended nor won by a single power,” and urged British and French solidarity.⁷⁰⁵ At the time, René Pleven had emphasized to Clap the need to better understand what influence the Americans were having over the British in Africa, and what interest the Americans had in British territories and the continent in general.⁷⁰⁶ Most importantly, Pleven hoped to forge an alliance of interests between the two powers on the African question.

Broader collaboration had been hindered by the exigencies of the war and disagreement with Free France over Lebanon and Syria.⁷⁰⁷ However, a breakthrough occurred in November 1945, when talks were held in London between representatives of the respective colonial ministries. The initial purpose of the collaboration was to “harmonize the development of diverse African regions.”⁷⁰⁸ According to an internal Provisional Government memo, these initial talks were “extremely favorable.”⁷⁰⁹ By January 1946, the relationship had developed into what the new Minister of Colonies

⁷⁰⁵ L’administrateur en Chef des Colonies, Chef de la Mission de Liaison Française à Monsieur le Ministre Résident, April 17, 1944, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 406.

⁷⁰⁶ Le Commissaire aux Colonies à Monsieur Clap, Administrateur en Chef des Colonies, March 9, 1944, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 406.

⁷⁰⁷ Note de la Directeur d’Afrique-Levant pour le Secrétaire-Général, Conversations coloniales franco-britanniques des 19-24 novembre 1945, Nov. 26, 1945. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1945, Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2000), 798-9.

⁷⁰⁸ Note pour la directeur, date unknown, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2223. See also Note pour Monsieur le Directeur des Affaires Économiques, Dec. 1, 1945, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2223.

⁷⁰⁹ Note de la Direction de l’Afrique-Levant pour le Secrétaire-Général, Nov. 26, 1945. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1945, Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2000), 799.

Jacques Soustelle indicated was a “steady and active cooperation.”⁷¹⁰ This included collaboration on public health measures, agriculture, education, implementation of a legislative regime, and labor protections.⁷¹¹ In June, the two agreed to extensive sharing of political information in West Africa.⁷¹²

But France hoped to move beyond these technical matters toward a more wide-ranging relationship, based on common *international* interests. Increased collaboration with the British could provide stability in West Africa and increased legitimacy for France’s imperial project in the international community. In his instructions to the governor-general of AOF about cooperating with the British, Soustelle emphasized that “it is ultimately the extent to which we achieve this goal that we will be successful in convincing the world that France and Britain... intend to serve the African, and not make him a plaything at the bidding of world politics.”⁷¹³ For its part, Britain was initially reluctant to extend collaboration in Africa beyond technical issues. As John Kent notes, for Britain, “cooperation in Africa was important only for its general contribution to the preservation of good Anglo-French and Anglo-Belgian relations.”⁷¹⁴ But the possibility of UN interference would lead Britain to consider a broader cooperation. To be sure, the

⁷¹⁰ M. Soustelle, Ministre des Colonies, à M. Le Gouverneur Général de L’Afrique Occidentale Française, Jan. 9, 1946. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1946, Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2003), 59.

⁷¹¹ Ibid. See also Conférence Franco-Britannique sur l’éducation aux colonies, March 12-14, 1946, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2223.

⁷¹² Memorandum regarding conversations held in Paris on the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd June 1946, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2223, Dossier 3.

⁷¹³ M. Soustelle, Ministre des Colonies, à M. Le Gouverneur Général de L’Afrique Occidentale Française, Jan. 9, 1946. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1946, Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2003), 61. “Car, c’est en définitive dans la mesure où nous atteindrons cet objectif que nous parviendrons à convaincre l’opinion mondiale que la France et la Grande Bretagne, pénétrées de leurs traditions communes du respect de la personne humaine et décidées à conjuguer leurs efforts, entendent servir l’Africain et non en faire le jouet des surenchères de la politique mondiale.”

⁷¹⁴ Kent, *The Internationalization of Colonialism*, 157.

impetus for this cooperation came largely from the French side. In January 1947, René Massigli, French ambassador to Great Britain, wrote to Georges Bidault, then foreign minister, to warn of an increasingly hostile atmosphere at the General Assembly, and that it would be prudent “to examine in advance and together the line of defense that we intend to adopt.”⁷¹⁵ By the first session of the Trusteeship Council in May 1947, a vigorous cooperation on UN policy between Britain and France was well underway, especially in light of the Council’s clear attempts to settle the question of the Ewés in Togoland, against both French and British wishes.⁷¹⁶

The expanded Anglo-French collaboration led to the inclusion of Belgium in the cooperative arrangement, as the latter still controlled the Congo in Central Africa. As Massigli noted to Bidault in February 1947, such collaboration would allow for better technical cooperation in Africa, and “will eventually permit us to respond to certain criticisms of the colonial powers.”⁷¹⁷ While collaboration would not entirely prevent continued anticolonial criticisms, it could nevertheless enable “a defense that our representatives at the United Nations will be able to present.”⁷¹⁸ A tripartite conference in Paris in May 1947 cemented the growing colonial relationship between the three, with extensive discussions held on the possibility of better technical cooperation, as well as

⁷¹⁵ M. Massigli, Ambassadeur de la France à Londres, à M. Bidault, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Jan. 30, 1947. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1947, Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2007), 241.

⁷¹⁶ M. Bidault, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères à tous les postes diplomatiques, May 13, 1947. *Ibid.*, 815-6. See also Kent, *The Internationalization of Colonialism*, 158.

⁷¹⁷ L’ambassadeur de France en Grande-Bretagne à Son Excellence Monsieur Georges Bidault, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Feb. 20, 1947, p. 2, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2225, Dossier 3.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3. “...la défense que nos représentants à l’Assemblée des Nations Unies seront appelés à présenter.”

common problems faced before the UN.⁷¹⁹ In the technical field, the three powers considered the establishment of a trilateral committee for coordination, by which each of the three colonial powers would designate a representative to liaison with their counterparts and centrally organize all technical collaboration.⁷²⁰ Regarding the United Nations, the main concerns were the encroachment by the General Assembly in the internal affairs of the colonial nations, especially regarding the work of the Special Committee and the Economic and Social Council.⁷²¹ In June of 1949, the three powers met again in Brussels, where they discussed an even greater range of colonial issues.⁷²²

This collaboration would eventually expand to a six-power effort to pool technical efforts on the continent, the Combined Commission for Technical Cooperation in Africa South of the Sahara (CCTA).⁷²³ As early as 1946, the idea of an intergovernmental coordinating body had been discussed. But the three colonial powers were especially motivated by President Harry Truman's January 1949 inaugural speech, which proposed a higher level of international aid to Africa in technical matters from both the United States and the international community.⁷²⁴ Truman's speech, discussed further below, was seen as a significant threat to France's colonial sovereignty on the continent. His suggestion of more international aid presented the possibility of foreign interference in an

⁷¹⁹ Note du Département: La conférence franco-anglo-belge concernant la coopération technique en Afrique, May 23, 1947. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1947, Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2007), 894-6. From 1946-1948, the three held conferences on a variety of subjects including education, sleeping sickness, medical cooperation, communications, and labor.

⁷²⁰ Projet d'organisation tendant à faciliter la collaboration des puissances coloniales en Afrique, 1 AFFPOL 2225, Dossier 3.

⁷²¹ Mémoire pour la conférence coloniale Franco-anglo-belge de Mai 1947, p. 7-8, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2225, Dossier 3.

⁷²² Conclusions Provisoires adoptées au cours des conversations a trois, May 30-June 1, 1949, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2225, Dossier 3.

⁷²³ See the discussion of the CCTA in Kent, *The Internationalization of Colonialism*, 263-285.

⁷²⁴ Harry S Truman, *Inaugural Address, Jan. 20, 1949* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949).

area France considered part of its exclusive purview.⁷²⁵ As noted by Ministère des Affaires Étrangères Robert Schuman in April 1949, American action also threatened the central purpose for technical collaboration on the continent – to justify the continuing presence of the colonial powers and thereby prevent international interference:

As you know, all the efforts of European colonial powers since the end of the war have tended specifically to organize technical, administrative and economic cooperation in the overseas territories. This has rendered useless the direct intervention of international organizations ... This effort is beginning to bear fruit in Africa, where it has led to a real sharing of the scientific and technical capabilities of the colonial powers. It would obviously be difficult to change this policy by accepting the direct meddling of international organizations, in which elements unfavorable to the work of the European powers in the underdeveloped territories take part..⁷²⁶

Truman's speech galvanized French efforts to harmonize technical cooperation in Africa. As Bidault emphasized to Ministre de la France d'Outre-Mer Paul Coste-Floret in February 1949, France had to expand its cooperation with Britain and Belgium so as to increase efficiency and possibly preempt a significant campaign of international

⁷²⁵ By all accounts, there was no secret in the international community as to how French leaders felt about American interference in Africa. An internal State Department paper from April 1950 noted that “[t]he European Nations administering areas in Africa are extremely sensitive to anything which might in their opinion tend to lessen their influence or weaken their positions in Africa... There have been numerous signs recently that some French Government officials and responsible opinion are not only apprehensive but also suspicious of United States intentions with regard to French North Africa and French West Africa.” *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950, Vol. V: the Near East, South Asia, and Africa* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), 1525.

⁷²⁶ Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères à Monsieur L' Ambassadeur de France à Washington, Jan. 30, 1949, p. 3, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 3416. “Comme vous le savez, tout l'effort des puissances coloniales européenne a depuis la fin de la guerre a précisément tendu à organiser une coopération technique, administrative et économique, dans les territoires d'outre-mer qui rende inutile l'intervention directe d'organismes internationaux... Cet effort commence à porter ses fruits en Afrique où il a abouti à une véritable mise en commun des moyens scientifiques et techniques de ces puissance coloniales. Il serait évidemment difficile de modifier cette politique en acceptant l'ingérence directe d'organisme auxquels participeraient nécessairement des éléments défavorables à l'œuvre des puissances européennes dans les territoires arrières.”

interference in France's colonies in Africa.⁷²⁷ British minutes of the Anglo-French colonial discussions of April 1949 noted that “[t]he French were very strongly of the opinion that the technical knowledge and experience of the principal Colonial Powers in Africa were such that if they could be pooled, or brought together in some way, it would be seen that no other body of persons or organisation could really compare with them.”⁷²⁸ That April, Schuman wrote to Coste-Floret, emphasizing that, in light of various aid projects being prepared by the UN, France had to “take measures in view of limiting to the best extent the intrusions that more and more mark our African territories, by organizations whose goals are never disinterested or limited to technical matters.”⁷²⁹ An internal memo written for Coste-Floret added that the committee's first goal was to use “all efforts that are within its power to raise up the standard of living of the people of West Africa, in a way that tends to rapidly restore the standing of Europeans.”⁷³⁰ Given Truman's speech, a separate memo from May 1949 indicated that “the urgency of establishing an organization [for technical cooperation], even if only temporary, is extreme.”⁷³¹

The idea for the CCTA grew out of joint Anglo-French colonial talks held in both June 1948 and May 1949. The Commission, which met for the first time in London in

⁷²⁷ Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères à Monsieur le Ministre de la France d'Outre-Mer, Feb. 6, 1949, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 3416.

⁷²⁸ Anglo-French Colonial Discussions, Morning Session, April 27, 1949, p. 2, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2177, Dossier 2.

⁷²⁹ Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères à Monsieur le Ministre de la France d'Outre-Mer, April 2, 1949, p. 3, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2223, Dossier 3.

⁷³⁰ Note pour le Ministre, Conversations Franco-britanniques sur l'Afrique Occidentale, April 27-30, p. 5, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2177, Dossier 2. “accomplir tous les efforts qui sont en leur pouvoir pour relever le niveau de vie des populations de l'Afrique Occidentale, ce façon que celui-ci tende rapidement à rejoindre le ‘standing’ européen.”

⁷³¹ Note pour le ministre, May 1949, p. 4, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2223, Dossier 3. “l'urgence que présente la mise en place d'une organisation, tout au moins provisoire, est extrême.”

September 1949, included France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Portugal, South Rhodesia, and South Africa. It contained technical bureaus capable of responding to regional problems; a Secretary-General to coordinate the work of the technical bureaus and serve as an intermediary between the respective governments and international organizations; and an intergovernmental committee to coordinate policy for African governments in matters of technical cooperation.⁷³² However, while the CCTA sponsored technical conferences throughout the 1950s, John Kent notes that very few reforms ultimately came out of its work. This further demonstrates its nature as an organization primarily meant to combat international interference rather than develop the continent.⁷³³ As Kent notes, “[t]he CCTA illustrated, not the virtues of meeting important African needs, but the necessity of attempting to preserve an exclusive but increasingly ineffective colonial mission in Africa.”⁷³⁴

France continued to cooperate with Britain through the CCTA and bilateral talks. For the next several years, the level of collaboration between the two in West Africa remained vibrant, including visits to each other’s respective territories, personnel exchanges, and joint research and education.⁷³⁵ Nevertheless, sources of tension remained in the relationship. Given Britain’s strong relationship with the United States,

⁷³² Ibid. p. 4.

⁷³³ Kent indicates that in 1956, the only significant contribution was in the field of geology. Regarding other fields, he notes:

In the field of health... it was noted that at the latest conference none of the representatives from the Gold Coast, Nigeria, or East Africa was impressed with the work of the CCTA, with the West African colonies much preferring to deal with the [World Health Organization], and there was no knowledge of a single coordinated plan having been implemented under the CCTA’s aegis. Very little cooperation had been achieved in forestry, and many of the reports on the work of the CCTA attempted to put on a brave face by simply recounting the recommendations of the technical conferences.

Kent, *The Internationalization of Colonialism*, 284.

⁷³⁴ Ibid., 285.

⁷³⁵ Bilan de la coopération Franco-Britannique en Afrique 1948-1951, Jan. 1, 1952, p. 1-4, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2177, Dossier 5.

French officials often wondered if they could trust that Britain would honor its commitments to France should they conflict with the wishes of American officials. These strains were often evident in the context of the NATO treaty, where French officials openly worried about whether the organization would become an “Anglo-Saxon” dominated agreement.⁷³⁶ These suspicions easily transferred to joint Anglo-French plans in Africa. As the two sides debated the establishment of the eventual CCTA in 1949, a confidential French memo warned of “the solidarity... that exists between the different parts of the Anglo-Saxon world. The British government believes it is indispensable to avoid giving America the impression that, by creating an organization for technical cooperation in Africa, that it opposes technical and economic cooperation proposed and sought by Washington.”⁷³⁷

There was also the matter of regional African politics, given the proximity of British possessions in West Africa to AOF. Political coordination was especially necessary now given the uneven pace of development between Britain and France’s colonies in West Africa. These concerns were already evident in October 1948, when Henri Laurentie warned of the rise of nationalism in West Africa, and urged for even

⁷³⁶ René Pleven, then Prime Minister of the Fourth Republic, said as much to Harry Truman in a visit to Washington in January, 1951, noting that “the Atlantic pact must not be made to appear to be run by one country or by two countries... the French did not want NATO to be an Anglo-Saxon show.” United States Minutes of the Second Meeting Between President Truman and Prime Minister Pleven, Cabinet Room of the White House, Jan. 30, 1951. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951, Vol. IV, Europe: Political and Economic Developments* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 324.

⁷³⁷ Confidentiel, June 23, 1949, p. 1-2, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2177, Dossier 2. “Il faut enfin tenir compte de la nature et du caractère des relations avec les États-Unis d’Amérique et ici apparaît la solidarité, de raison et d’intérêts, qui existe entre les différentes parties du monde anglo-saxon. Le gouvernement britannique croit donc indispensable d’éviter de donner à l’Amérique l’impression que l’on cherche, par la création d’une organisation de coopération technique interafricaine, à s’opposer à une coopération technique ou économique proposée et recherchée par Washington.”

greater cooperation with Britain on the continent.⁷³⁸ As Louis Jacquinot, *Ministre de la France d’Outre-mer* noted in 1951 to Robert Schuman, *Ministère des Affaires Étrangères*, the difference in colonial philosophies between Britain and France had potential to negatively impact France’s presence in Africa.⁷³⁹ Britain’s more rapid movement toward self-government in her West African territories stood in stark contrast to France’s efforts to reform the colonies within the context of the French Union. Of course, a significant source of tension came from the aforementioned Ewé independence movement, which threatened to expand the territory of the increasingly autonomous Gold Coast, at the expense of British and French Togoland. But more worrisome was the acceleration of political rights in Gold Coast and Nigeria which threatened to spill over to France’s territories, possibly leading to colonial instability. These tensions would plant the seed for the renewed Anglo-French rivalry in West Africa during De Gaulle’s presidency and beyond.

Relations with the United States

While France’s relationship with its neighbor across the channel had improved in the postwar era, the same could not be said for the other “Anglo-Saxon” power. Throughout the Fourth Republic, French leaders looked warily across the Atlantic at America’s intentions for France’s empire, and wondered about the implications that United States policy would have for France’s international standing and influence. These sentiments were largely responsive to American actions during the war; as René Pleven

⁷³⁸ Note pour le Ministre (from Henri Laurentie), Oct. 11, 1948, p. 4, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2166, Dossier 2. “L’entente politique sur place avec la Grande-Bretagne est la condition sine qua non du redressement nécessaire.”

⁷³⁹ Le Ministre de la France d’Outre-mer à Monsieur le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Oct. 1951, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2166, Dossier 2.

noted to a meeting of the annual meeting for the Anti-Slavery Society in July 1949, “the Atlantic Charter, its Article Three, and the widespread propaganda broadcast through so many American channels on the emancipation of colonial peoples” had played a large role in forcing the French to grant wartime colonial concessions they may not have otherwise been ready to make.⁷⁴⁰ Of course, these resentments should not be overstated; France readily participated in the Marshall Plan, and gladly accepted American military and financial aid for the war in Vietnam. But postwar leadership was well aware of the potential for American interference in Africa – stemming from both American military and economic interests there, as well as America’s general support for self-determination and autonomy throughout the world.

In terms of the diplomatic relationship between the two countries, one negative dynamic no longer existed – the prickly relationship during the war between Roosevelt and De Gaulle. With Roosevelt’s death and De Gaulle’s departure from government in January 1946, leaders from both sides could reset the relationship between the two nations. By all accounts, this was the case in many areas, especially regarding Marshall aid, and eventually (although not initially), allied cooperation in the occupied zones of Germany. U.S. leaders also repeatedly emphasized to French representatives that the United States had no intention of breaking up the French empire. But with the dawning of the Cold War, French leaders worried about whether the United States would protect the continent from the potential threat of the Soviet Union. This danger was heightened when the Fourth Republic declared its allegiance to the West by expelling the PCF from the government in May 1947. The following January, the concern was still very much present, as Georges Bidault, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, told American

⁷⁴⁰ Pleven, *The Evolution of the French Empire towards a French Union*, 6.

representatives that France worried that “in the event of a war with Soviet Russia the United States does not plan to defend Western Europe but will abandon this area to the Soviets.”⁷⁴¹ Of course, such fears may have been exaggerated by the French delegation so as to secure American aid, but there were nevertheless genuine concerns at the time concerning the possibility of American duplicity.

In addition, Roosevelt’s death did not spell the end of American idealism and its potential impact on the French empire. To be sure, Harry Truman’s main foreign policy concern was the spread of communism, and not the continued existence of European colonial regimes. French leaders found both Truman and his subordinates more pragmatic than Roosevelt when it came to colonial matters. Emile Naggiar, France’s representative to the United Nations, indicated in a 1947 memo to Léon Blum that American policy had evolved since Truman’s ascension to the presidency. Although the United States continued to support independence movements in developing nations, it was no longer “at the head of the movement” and was playing a more moderate role in colonial discussions.⁷⁴² Had Roosevelt survived the war, this would almost certainly not have been the case, as he wished to break up the French empire. In contrast, with Truman, the French colonial administration believed that they had a man they could deal with.

However, Truman was unwilling to completely ignore the inherent problems of colonialism. With the growing Cold War, American actions had to match the rhetoric of

⁷⁴¹ Memorandum of Conversation by the First Secretary of Embassy in France (MacArthur), Jan. 29, 1948. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1948, Vol. III: Western Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974), 617.

⁷⁴² Rapport de M. Naggiar, Délégué à l’Assemblée de l’ONU, à Monsieur le Président du Conseil, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Jan. 8, 1947. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1947, Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2007), 63.

American leaders. Consequently, Truman paid occasional tribute to the need for the colonial world to eventually transition to self-determination and independence. These sentiments caused great concern among French leaders and occasionally strained the relationship between the two in the years immediately after the war. As already discussed, nowhere was this fear more evident than in the French reaction to Truman's inaugural address, given on January 20, 1949. While the speech is most famous for Truman's pledge to oppose communism, it also set forth a four point program for "peace and freedom" throughout the world.⁷⁴³ The first three points – support the United Nations, continue programs for economic recovery in Europe, and establish a collective defense arrangement (the eventual NATO agreement) – were relatively uncontroversial among French officials. But the fourth point, upon which Truman focused the most time in his speech, caused significant concern within French colonial circles. Truman promised to commit the United States to "a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas."⁷⁴⁴ And, he emphasized, such a program would be coordinated at the international level for the strict benefit of those less fortunate in the underdeveloped world.

Our aim should be to help the free peoples of the world, through their own efforts, to produce more food, more clothing, more materials for housing, and more mechanical power to lighten their burdens. We invite other countries to pool their technological resources in this undertaking. Their contributions will be warmly welcomed. This should be a cooperative enterprise in which all nations work together through the United Nations and its specialized agencies whenever practicable. It must be a worldwide effort for the achievement of peace, plenty, and freedom.⁷⁴⁵

⁷⁴³ Harry S Truman, *Inaugural Address, Jan. 20, 1949* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949).

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

In introducing this program, Truman put the colonial powers on clear notice that he would not allow conceptions of entitlement or sovereignty to interfere; he emphasized that “[t]he old imperialism – exploitation for foreign profit – has no place in our plans.”⁷⁴⁶

As already noted, French leaders saw the amelioration of living conditions within their own overseas territories as the direct duty and responsibility of the French empire, and not of any foreign power or international organization. In addition to the aforementioned CCTA, France was already expending significant development funds in Africa through the Fonds d’Investissement pour le Développement Economique et Social (FIDES) project.⁷⁴⁷ Not surprisingly, French diplomats and colonial officials reacted with alarm to Truman’s address. On January 30, Robert Schuman, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, wrote to the French ambassador in Washington, noting that Truman’s speech had “considerable interest” for France.⁷⁴⁸ Although Truman’s suggestions were of a very general nature; there was nevertheless significant cause for concern, as they could have direct repercussions on France’s territories in Africa. Schuman repeated this concern in a letter to Paul Coste-Floret a few days later.⁷⁴⁹ American efforts could also inspire the United Nations to initiate its own program of development on the continent. As an internal memo from February 10 warned, “the intervention of the United Nations in an implementation of a development program concerning colonial territories will by nature facilitate certain interferences on the part of those UN members hostile to the colonial

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁷ See Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 88.

⁷⁴⁸ Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères à Monsieur l’Ambassadeur de France à Washington, Jan. 30, 1949, p. 1, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 3416.

⁷⁴⁹ Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères à Monsieur le Ministre de la France d’Outre-Mer, Feb. 6, 1949, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 3416.

powers.”⁷⁵⁰ Consequently, there had to be a coordinated response to the new American threat to France’s colonies in Africa.⁷⁵¹

To make matters worse, Truman’s speech came at a time when French diplomats and colonial officials were becoming increasingly frustrated with American actions at the United Nations – specifically within the aforementioned Trusteeship Council and Special Committee of the General Assembly. During the early years at the United Nations, the United States either sponsored or failed to defeat a number of General Assembly resolutions that were either staunchly anticolonial in nature, or threatened to undermine the control of administering states over their respective colonial territories. French leaders viewed the United States as unwilling to consistently act as a strong ally in the face of sharp anticolonial sentiment. This discontent was made clear in November 1949, when members of the U.S. and French delegations to the United Nations met in New York, with the French representative complaining that Americans “were making great efforts to strengthen France and the countries of Western Europe and at the same time pursuing these other policies in the dependent areas field which had the effect of weakening the potential of France.”⁷⁵²

These frustrations led to tripartite talks in London between France, Britain, and the United States in London in May 1950. Initiated at the behest of U.S. Secretary of

⁷⁵⁰ NEW YORK, le 10 Février 1949, p. 3, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2225, Dossier 2. “Il est évident que l’intervention des Nations Unies dans la mise en œuvre d’un programme de développement concernant les territoires coloniaux serait de nature à faciliter certaines ingérences de la part des membres hostiles aux puissances coloniales.”

⁷⁵¹ Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères à Monsieur l’Ambassadeur de France à Washington, Jan. 30, 1949, p. 1-2, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 3416.

⁷⁵² Memorandum of Conversation by Mr. G. Hayden Raynor, Advisor, United States Delegation to the Fourth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, Nov. 24, 1949. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1949, Vol. II : The United Nations, The Western Hemisphere* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), 359.

State Dean Acheson that January, the conference was seen as an opportunity to clarify the American position on colonialism, and for the other two powers to provide information on the progress they had made in their African colonies since the end of the war.⁷⁵³

French leaders went to the conference hoping to win American favor for French colonial policy and French interests at the UN. But they realized that they had a weak hand to play, given the deep anticolonial feeling within the American population, as well as the reliance on American aid by numerous countries in West Africa.⁷⁵⁴ As a preparatory internal memo noted, the difficulty lay in strongly asserting French interests without alienating the United States from France:

The problem today consists of conserving the initiative and authority in Africa for ourselves, without having to share them, in fact, with the United States. If we demonstrate to the Americans the inflexibility of the French Union, we will lose not only their support in the UN, but we will also convince them the idea of the French Union is inadequate and worthless in the current environment, which would therefore convince them to infringe upon it. It's their secret inclination; we would only increase their temptations and appeal to their enterprises.⁷⁵⁵

Consequently, France made certain concessions to the United States at the talks. French officials were willing to grant increased economic access to their territories to United States commercial interests. They were also willing to promise that no further European immigration to French African territories would be allowed. But they insisted that their sovereignty in their African territories was inviolable.⁷⁵⁶ In exchange for concessions,

⁷⁵³ Déclaration de la Délégation Française en ce qui concerne le point 7 de l'ordre du jour (questions coloniales), ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2224, Dossier 2.

⁷⁵⁴ Note Pour Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, Secrétaire Général, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2224, Dossier 3.

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 3. "Le problème, aujourd'hui, consiste à nous conserver l'initiative et l'autorité en Afrique, sans avoir à les partager, en fait, avec les États-Unis. Si nous plaçons les Américains devant le principe de l'immobilité de l'Union française, non seulement nous perdrons leur appui aux Nations Unies mais nous les persuaderons aussi que l'idée d'Union française est inadéquate et sans valeur dans la conjoncture actuelle, qu'il convient donc de l'enjamber. C'est leur penchant secret; nous n'aurions fait qu'aiguiser leurs tentations et appeler leurs entreprises."

⁷⁵⁶ Note, May 5, 1950, p. 1, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2224, Dossier 3.

French officials wanted less interference from the United States, as well as increased American support in the UN against demagogic anticolonial measures. As one French representative noted, “it was important to prevent the progress of African peoples being retarded or diverted by interference from irresponsible and possibly malevolent critics in the United Nations or elsewhere.”⁷⁵⁷ Overall, the French delegation at the London talks emphasized that French Africa had to be provided the space and time to allow for political and economic progress to develop.⁷⁵⁸ For their part, United States leaders reasserted their desire for increased economic access to Africa, and pledged support for French and British attempts to lead their territories toward a measure of self-government.⁷⁵⁹ They also promised a better coordination of Africa policy and further study of previous and current U.S. policy on colonial matters within the UN.

The May talks would lead to additional discussions between American and French officials. In July, Henri Laurentie, now a member of the French delegation on the UN Trusteeship Council, along with French ambassador Henri Bonnet and other French officials, met in Washington with George C. McGhee, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, and Secretary of State for UN Affairs John D. Hickerson. In a meeting on July 11, Laurentie reaffirmed France’s strong belief that “we do not recognize at the United Nations any right of competence in matters concerning nonautonomous territories.”⁷⁶⁰ Hickerson reiterated the American position that it would be preferable for colonial territories to gain their independence, and added

⁷⁵⁷ Report of Subcommittee D to the Foreign Ministers, May 9, 1950. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950, Vol. III: Western Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), p. 1094.

⁷⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1096.

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1098.

⁷⁶⁰ Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères à Monsieur le Ministre de la France d’Outre-Mer, July 17, 1950, p. 1, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2224, Dossier 2.

that general sentiment in the United States stood in favor of anticolonial movements. Nevertheless, he supported France's right to make decisions about its own colonial possessions, especially in the face of any potential interference by the UN.⁷⁶¹ At a meeting on July 13, sensing French concerns about the overall U.S. orientation toward Africa, McGhee assured Laurentie that the United States had no interest in breaking up the French empire, either in North Africa or anywhere else.⁷⁶² Hickerson later pledged to better support France in the General Assembly and in the Trusteeship Council.⁷⁶³

The meetings temporarily reassured French officials about future American actions at the UN. On July 18, foreign minister Robert Schuman wrote to François Mitterrand, *Ministre de la France d'Outre-Mer*, to tell him that "the Americans now realize the mistakes they made during the last session of the General Assembly, and understand the importance of our concerns, to which they will now be more attentive."⁷⁶⁴ Bonnet, who had attended the meetings, followed up in a memo to Schuman the following day, giving his impression that the United States now understood that encouraging nationalist independence movements was not the best way to maintain order in Africa.⁷⁶⁵ Although the relationship in the UN between the two powers would ebb and flow throughout the decade due to a variety of issues, the mini-crisis of 1950 would

⁷⁶¹ Ibid.

⁷⁶² Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Director of the Office of African and Near Eastern Affairs (Bourgerie), July 13, 1950. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950, Vol. V, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), p. 1548.

⁷⁶³ Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères à Monsieur le Ministre de la France d'Outre-Mer, July 18, 1950, p. 2, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2224, Dossier 3

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid. "Les Américains se rendent compte aujourd'hui des erreurs qu'ils ont commises lors de la dernière session de l'Assemblée et ont compris l'importance de nos préoccupations, auxquelles ils seront désormais plus attentifs."

⁷⁶⁵ M. Henri Bonnet, Ambassadeur de France aux États-Unis à Son Excellence Monsieur Robert Schuman, *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères*, July 19, 1950, p. 9, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2224, Dossier 3.

convince American diplomats that they were better served by attempting to coordinate UN issues with France. This coordination would continue throughout the Fourth Republic, as seen in a series of talks between the two sides in October 1951, which focused on the Trusteeship Council, the Special Committee, and evaluation of non-self-governing territories, among other key questions.⁷⁶⁶ By that point, French leaders had successfully integrated a new strategy into their dealings with the United States on colonial matters – emphasizing the threat to Africa from the Soviet Union and communism.

The United States and the Fear of Communism in Africa

In their efforts to convince American leaders to better support the French empire, French officials were also able to take advantage of growing Cold War tensions. They identified an “American paradox” whereby the United States was torn between its alliance with France and Britain and its deep-rooted anticolonial tradition. The only way to solve this paradox was to find some other impetus for a shift in American policy on the continent. As a key Cold War partner, France understood American fears about the potential for violent revolt in Africa and the possibility for the resulting spread of communism. As a July 1950 internal memo from the *Ministre de la France d’Outre-Mer* indicated, “the United States certainly understands how the religious fervor for independence expressed by certain powers, especially by those who keep fresh the

⁷⁶⁶ Monsieur Henri Bonnet, Ambassadeur de France aux États-Unis à Son Excellence Monsieur Robert Schuman, *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères*, Oct. 4, 1951, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2224, Dossier 2.

memories of the colonial era, could create an anarchic situation in Africa – a fragmentation or 'Balkinisation' – that would be extremely dangerous for world peace.”⁷⁶⁷

Consequently, French diplomats constantly emphasized the threat of the Soviet Union and local communist parties to France's hold on its empire in North and sub-Saharan Africa. France could therefore justify its continuing presence on the continent as a bulwark against the spread of communism, at a time when the United States was already deeply concerned about the threat to Western Europe. A communist takeover of French Africa could also undermine the Fourth Republic and plunge France into political chaos, paving the way for communist takeover in the *métropole*. Of course, this strategy was simultaneously used to great effect in convincing the United States to support French efforts to pacify North Vietnam – as illustrated by Prime Minister René Pleven's visit to the United States and Harry Truman in 1951, when he compared French efforts in Vietnam to the United States' ongoing struggle in Korea.⁷⁶⁸

To be sure, there were genuine reasons to fear the spread of communism in Africa. As previously discussed, the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, affiliated with the mainland communist party, had formed in 1946 and already enjoyed great support throughout West Africa.⁷⁶⁹ An internal memo from 1950 indicated great concern that the RDA was closely coordinating its policy with the PCF, and had already recruited

⁷⁶⁷ Note: Conversations franco-américaines tenues à Washington du 11 au 13 juillet 1950, July 25, 1950, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2224, Dossier 3. “Les U.S.A. ont certainement compris que la ferveur religieuse pour l'indépendance manifestée par certaines puissances, et plus particulièrement par celles qui gardent le souvenir encore frais de leur époque coloniale, était susceptible de créer en Afrique une situation anarchique, issue de morcellement, de la 'Balkanisation', extrêmement dangereuse pour la paix du monde.”

⁷⁶⁸ United States Minutes of the First Meeting between President Truman and Prime Minister Pleven, Jan. 29, 1951. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951, Vol. IV: Europe, Political and Economic Relations* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 306, 310.

⁷⁶⁹ Le Chef du 2ème Bureau des Affaires Politiques, Action Concertées du PCF et du RDA en Afrique Noire, April 6, 1950, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 3416.

hundreds of thousands of members in West Africa.⁷⁷⁰ To make matters worse, the PCF frequently attacked the government's colonial policies, with a rousing speech by PCF leader Maurice Thorez in Paris in December 1949 standing as one of the clearest examples.⁷⁷¹ And in the international realm, the Soviet Union frequently used anticolonial propaganda to great effect in the United Nations and at home against the western alliance. As the French ambassador to Moscow Yves Chataigneau reported, one such vigorous campaign was well underway in the Moscow press in March 1950, largely directed against French policy in Africa.⁷⁷² The intensity of this campaign – which attacked individual colonial administrators, accused the French of orchestrating massacres, and suggested that Africans would not obtain full rights until independence – revealed “the particular importance reserved by the Soviet press for Africa, and particularly black Africa.”⁷⁷³ Nevertheless, Chataigneau noted that this threat could be turned to France's advantage, as it could “bring the attention of the State Department to the overall manifestation of Soviet propaganda toward the French Union, thus adding to their support in our favor.”⁷⁷⁴

⁷⁷⁰ *Activité Communiste en Afrique*, p. 1-2, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2130, Dossier 2.

⁷⁷¹ The Ambassador in France (Bruce) to the Secretary of State, Dec. 22, 1949. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1949, Vol. IV: Western Europe* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), 689-90.

⁷⁷² Monsieur Yves Chataigneau, Ambassadeur de France en U.R.S.S. à son excellence Monsieur Robert Schuman, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, March 21, 1950, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 393. Monsieur Jean le Roy à son excellence Monsieur Georges Bidault, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2246, Dossier 5.

⁷⁷³ Monsieur Yves Chataigneau, Ambassadeur de France en U.R.S.S. à son excellence Monsieur Robert Schuman, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, March 21, 1950, p.13, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2246, Dossier 5. “Sur ce même plan de la stratégie, Votre Excellence n'aura pas manqué de constater l'importance toute particulière réservée par la presse soviétique à l'Afrique, et notamment à l'Afrique Noire...”

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18. “La présente campagne de presse a en tout cas déjà le mérite, si j'en juge par l'intérêt qu'y apporte l'Ambassade des États-Unis à Moscou, d'attirer l'attention au State Département sur l'aspect d'ensemble de la propagande soviétique envers l'Union Française et d'ajouter ainsi en notre faveur.”

But while American officials were periodically concerned with the possibility of communist incursion into Africa, this threat was not considered nearly as serious as the threat to Europe or Asia. Therefore, France made sure to remind the United States at every possible opportunity that its presence in Africa represented stability against the communist threat. Indicative of this was French reaction in 1950 to a speech by George McGhee, who had just completed an extensive trip to Africa that had taken him to Mozambique, Liberia, South Africa, Belgian Congo, Rhodesia, Kenya, and Ethiopia – but notably, to nowhere in the French empire.⁷⁷⁵ In his speech, given on May 8, 1950 in Oklahoma City to the Foreign Policy Association, McGhee professed the United States’ dedication to seeing countries in the developing world gain autonomy and self-government.⁷⁷⁶ While he noted that the United States needed to pay more attention to sub-Saharan Africa, he emphasized that “it is gratifying to be able to single out a region of 10 million square miles in which no significant inroads have been made by communism.”⁷⁷⁷ Indeed, in McGhee’s estimation, communist forces had met “failure” in their efforts to recruit local populations to their cause. But this lack of communist penetration did not mean that the United States could ignore Africa in the future. The U.S. had to maintain a larger presence on the continent to head off the dangers of communist aggression. Overall, McGhee argued, “[w]e must play, in cooperation with others, the part which our position in the world requires that we play.”⁷⁷⁸ This meant supporting political movements for progressive development and self-government;

⁷⁷⁵ Editorial Note. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950, Vol. V: The Near East, South Asia, and Africa* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), 1512.

⁷⁷⁶ U.S. Department of State, Address by the Honorable George C. McGhee, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, May 8, 1950, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 3416.

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid.

strengthening relationships between the colonial powers and the territories; increasing commercial trade between the United States and Africa, and facilitating the entry of African nations into the international community.⁷⁷⁹

The seeming lack of concern by the United States about the active threat of communism greatly worried French officials. At the aforementioned tripartite talks in London in May 1950, French officials made sure to highlight to U.S. officials that “our country protects all free nations [in Africa] against the expansion of communism. France’s presence in the overseas territories, is from this point of view, the best of guarantees.”⁷⁸⁰ Hindering France’s efforts in Africa could only lead to “anarchy.”⁷⁸¹ On June 7, Jean Letorneau, then Minister for Overseas Territories, wrote to Schuman to inform him of McGhee’s remarks. After emphasizing the real threat of communism to French Africa – both through the actions of local parties and through the influence of the PCF and Moscow – Letorneau petitioned Schuman to provide information to the United States government that would make the communist threat to Africa clear.⁷⁸² On June 16, Schuman responded that he had already done so; he had provided to Henri Bonnet, the French ambassador to Washington, “a voluminous dossier concerning communist penetration in Africa, urging him to use it to convince Americans of the seriousness of the situation in the dark continent which, while not as grave as the situation of territories

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁰ Note établie par le Ministre de la France d’outre-mer en vue de la présentation des conversations Franco-américaines, April 7, 1950, p. 9, 1 AFFPOL 2224, Dossier 3. “En défendant l’Union Française et us neutralisant l’action des fauteurs de troubles, notre pays protège toutes les nations libres contre l’expansion du communisme. La présence de la France dans les Territoires d’outre-mer est, à ce point de vue, le meilleurs des garanties.”

⁷⁸¹ Ibid., p. 12.

⁷⁸² Le Ministre de la France d’Outre-Mer à Monsieur le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, June 7, 1950, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 3416, Dossier 4.

in the Far East, could, if approached with too much optimism, present surprises.”⁷⁸³ The information included an overview of the development of communist movements in Africa since 1945, a description of the RDA’s loose affiliation with the communist party, and a list of African communist leaders.⁷⁸⁴ In a follow-up meeting with McGhee and numerous French officials from both the colonial and foreign offices that September, Guy de la Tournelle, director of the political affairs division of the *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères*, warned McGhee of the interest of international communism in Africa. The best way to combat it, he argued, was to “persuade the native groups (a) that their aspirations for self-government be realized within the framework of the French Union, and (b) that their best interests, materially and otherwise, lie in close cooperation with France.”⁷⁸⁵

The French effort seems to have made inroads with American diplomats. Although a December 1950 internal State Department paper dismissed the general penetration of communism in Africa, it nevertheless warned that “French West Africa is the weakest spot. Conditions exist throughout ‘Black’ Africa which would play into the hands of Communist agitators.”⁷⁸⁶ A dispatch from the U.S. consul general at Dakar the following January also alluded to the growing communist threat, and approvingly noted

⁷⁸³ Le *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères* à Monsieur le *Ministre de la France d’Outre-Mer*, June 16, 1950, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 3416, Dossier 4. “...un volumineux dossier concernant la pénétration communiste en Afrique, en priant ceux-ci de s’en servir pour convaincre les Américains du caractère sérieux de la situation dans le continent noir qui, sans présenter la gravité de celle des territoires d’Extrême-Orient, risquerait, s’il était envisagé avec trop d’optimisme, de réserver des surprises.”

⁷⁸⁴ Visite de M. McGhee, *Activités communiste*, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 3416, Dossier 4.

⁷⁸⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of African Affairs (Bourgerie) and the Second Secretary of the Embassy in France (Lloyd). *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950, Vol. V: The Near East, South Asia, and Africa* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), 1561.

⁷⁸⁶ Paper Prepared in the Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, Dec. 29, 1950. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951, Vol. V: The Near East and Africa* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982), 1199.

the efforts of French officials to contain its spread and limit the growth of the communist-supporting RDA.⁷⁸⁷ By April of that year, the State Department's Office of African Affairs seemed to have gotten the message, emphasizing the threat of the Soviet Union to the American consul general in Dakar:

No one should doubt for a moment that the Soviet directorate is unaware of the importance of Africa to the Free World. Since an aggressor usually gains advantages by initiative, we must constantly be on the lookout for the Soviets to accelerate their efforts to weaken Free World prestige and control in Africa, with the objective of ultimately including African territories and countries in the Soviet bloc. We must never forget that anti-colonial feeling in certain African territories constitutes a formidable problem for the Free World because all of the Colonial Governments are aligned on the side of the Free World. Such a condition facilitates rather than militates against Soviet encroachment.⁷⁸⁸

A speech by McGhee the following June 27 at Northwestern University illustrated the success of the French efforts. In his remarks, which contained a comprehensive examination of the problems facing Africa, McGhee now acknowledged the active threat of communism to the continent. More importantly, he modified his previous statements on the immediate importance of self-government in Africa – precisely the compromise the French were looking for. McGhee now tied the prospect of premature independence to the rising threat of communism:

Immediate independence is, however, not the cure all for colonial problems. The United States Government has always maintained that premature independence for primitive uneducated peoples can do them more harm than good and subject them to an exploitation by indigenous leaders, unrestrained by the civil standards that come with widespread education that can be just as ruthless as that of aliens. Also, giving full independence to peoples unprepared to meet aggression or subversion can endanger not only the peoples themselves but the security of the free world.⁷⁸⁹

⁷⁸⁷ The Consul General at Dakar (Plakias) to the Department of State, Jan. 19, 1951. Ibid., 1213.

⁷⁸⁸ The Director of the Office of African Affairs (Bourgerie) to William D. Moreland, Consul in the Consulate General at Dakar, April 23, 1951. Ibid., 1219.

⁷⁸⁹ Editorial Note (address delivered June 27, 1951). Ibid., 1223.

The following year, State Department officials further validated the link between premature independence and the Soviet threat to Africa. In talks between State Department officials and Quai d'Orsay representatives in October 1951, the Americans promised to combat an increasing Soviet propaganda campaign in Africa, noting that "Russian imperialism is truly more dangerous than traditional colonialism."⁷⁹⁰ This Russian threat to the continent was also the subject of a speech in New York on October 31, 1951 by McGhee's successor General Henry Byroade, who warned of the dangers of rapid decolonization. Byroade emphasized a new form of colonialism, more menacing than the traditional form that had plagued the third world – "the new Soviet colonialism" – under which millions of people around the world were already suffering.⁷⁹¹

Essentially, like the situation in Vietnam, the United States had now signaled that it was willing to compromise its principles on self-determination so long as colonial powers were able to contain the growing threat of communism. This would be encapsulated in a new U.S. policy toward Africa in 1952, which, while emphasizing America's traditional anticolonial past, nevertheless called for a more nuanced approach to independence in Africa, given "new factors" such as the rise of nationalist movements, the spread of communism on the continent, reforms by the colonial powers, and the attempts by the UN to gain further control over the colonial situation.⁷⁹² Byroade made the new position clear on October 30, 1953, in a speech before the World Affairs Council in California. Referring to the "new Soviet colonialism," Byroade indicated that Soviet

⁷⁹⁰ Compte-rendu des Conversations franco-américains des 15 et 16 Octobre 1951 relatives aux questions d'outre-mer intéressant les Nations Unies, p. 4, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2224, Dossier 2.

⁷⁹¹ M. Henri A. Byroade définit l'attitude des États-Unis devant les problèmes coloniaux, Oct. 31, 1951, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2224, Dossier 3.

⁷⁹² United States Policy toward Dependent Territories, April 26, 1950. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952-1954, Vol. III: United Nations Affairs* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 1078-1081.

support for African nationalist movements “is more subtle and more poisonous than the old [colonialism], because it often masquerades under the guise of nationalism itself...”⁷⁹³ Given this new threat, the choice was clear: it was better to support the imperfect project of the colonial powers, than to allow these nations to fall prey to communism. French ambassador to the United States Henri Bonnet was very pleased with this shift, later noting that Byroade’s statements on the French presence in Africa “allow us to take stock of the progress made in recent years” concerning the evolution of American policy.⁷⁹⁴

However, these concessions from the United States on Africa policy could not completely allay French suspicions. Even McGhee’s 1951 speech at Northwestern, which constituted a policy reversal in France’s favor, enraged French colonial officials on several fronts. First, McGhee had overstepped his bounds by presuming to speak for parts of Africa already controlled by France. An internal memo written to *Ministre de la France d’Outre-Mer* François Mitterrand that July noted that the United States seemed to have no understanding of the constitutional structure of the French Union and its sovereignty over parts of Africa.⁷⁹⁵ The memo also clearly illustrated deep French suspicion about joint American and British intentions for the continent:

In my view, it would be a serious mistake to think that it will be possible to convert Anglo-Saxon opinion to our concept of the French Union. It remains fundamentally disbelieving of what comprises our fraternal and universal political organization. We are simply not interested in the same human problems. It is disappointing to think that the generosity and enthusiasm that led to the birth and development of the French Union are still suspected by the Anglo-Saxons!⁷⁹⁶

⁷⁹³ Editorial Note. *Ibid.*, 1167.

⁷⁹⁴ “Les déclarations de M. Byroade nous permettent ainsi de faire le bilan des progrès accomplis depuis quelques années.” Monsieur Henri Bonnet, Ambassadeur de France aux États-Unis à Monsieur Georges Bidault, *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères*, Nov. 1953, 1 AFFPOL 2246, Dossier 4.

⁷⁹⁵ Note pour Monsieur de la France d’Outre-Mer, July 24, 1951, p. 3, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 3416.

⁷⁹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 3. Original language provided in note 1 of this chapter.

The memo concluded by noting that France had to be vigilant in its colonial policy, as it “is not only menaced from the outside by the hatred of its enemies, but also by the incomprehension of its friends.”⁷⁹⁷ By the following year, despite aforementioned efforts by the United States to better coordinate with France on colonial issues before the UN, French colonial officials were once again complaining about the “disappointment felt because of the America attitude” before the General Assembly of the United Nations.⁷⁹⁸ Despite their Cold War alliance, the two nations remained in fundamental disagreement when it came to colonial matters.

Conclusion

The early years of the Fourth Republic witnessed a marked change in France’s colonial policy. Largely prodded by events within the empire, France was forced to adapt its colonial policy in order to maintain control over its overseas territories. While the granting of more autonomy to the colonies was the obvious consequence of postwar developments, the period also witnessed significant developments in France’s relationships with other world powers. Most significantly, while still underscored by occasional suspicion, France’s relationship with Britain took a dramatic turn during this period, stemming from a significant increase in colonial cooperation between the two powers. With both colonial powers threatened by independence movements and active hostility within the United Nations, the colonial rivalries of the prewar era were no longer expedient. By the early 1950s, France had won something of a reversal of fortune for its

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 4. “...elle n’est pas seulement menacée de l’extérieur par la haine de ses ennemis, elle l’est aussi par l’incompréhension de ses amis.”

⁷⁹⁸ Projet de résolution Franco-Britannique sur la participation des habitants autochtones des territoires sous tutelle aux travaux du conseil de tutelle, p. 6, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2225, Dossier 3. “...déception éprouvée du fait de l’attitude américaine...”

colonial situation. Despite relentless efforts by anticolonial member states within the UN General Assembly, France and its colonial allies had managed to preserve the majority of their sovereignty and influence in their colonial territories. But this period of drawing closer to Britain would be accompanied by even greater suspicion of the United States, which now threatened French sub-Saharan Africa not only with its rhetoric, but also with active attempts to extend American influence on the continent.

But none of this could forestall the traumatic events to come. In 1954, France would witness the fall of its colony in Vietnam, and the beginning of the tragic war in Algeria. Given this disintegrating situation in Algeria, and signs of unrest in Morocco and Tunisia, it became apparent that France could not maintain all of its overseas territories. The postwar situation had already convinced French colonial administrators of the necessity of sub-Saharan Africa for France's future. But with the growing deluge in Vietnam and North Africa, France increasingly turned its eyes to Africa. At the inception of the Fourth Republic, Algeria and Vietnam had been the two most important pieces of the French empire. By its downfall in 1958, the Fourth Republic's colonies in sub-Saharan Africa would be the key to maintaining France's international standing.

Chapter Five The Fourth Republic's Decline and the Turn to Africa, 1953-1958

Paris is the authentic and necessary capital of the French Union. The African world has no center of gravity if it is confined to its geographical boundaries ... Linked to France in a political, economic and spiritual ensemble, it will surmount four centuries and fulfill entirely its modern role... From the Congo to the Rhine, one third of the nation-continent will balance itself around our *métropole*.⁷⁹⁹

--François Mitterrand, *Aux Frontières de l'Union Française*, 1953

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Fourth Republic constantly found itself fighting to preserve France's empire throughout the world, from Southeast Asia to the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa. By the 1950s, this struggle had assumed two forms. On one hand, France became embroiled in violent insurgent campaigns in its colonies in Vietnam, and later in Algeria. The level of violence employed in both colonies was indicative of their importance to the empire, with Algeria, and to a lesser extent Vietnam, containing significant settler populations that had no intention of relinquishing control over their respective territories. This dynamic was self-justifying, with the traumatic loss of Vietnam serving as a compelling reason as to why France could not abandon its departments in Algeria when violence erupted there in late 1954. France's tenuous situation in North Africa would worsen two years later, when both Morocco and Tunisia became independent, thus relegating French power in North Africa to Algeria alone. By

⁷⁹⁹ François Mitterrand, *Aux frontières de l'Union Française* (Paris: Julliard, 1953), 34. "Paris est l'authentique et nécessaire capitale de l'Union Française. Le monde africain n'aura pas de centre de gravité, s'il se borne à ses frontières géographiques... Lié à la France dans un ensemble politique, économique et spirituel, il franchira d'un coup quatre siècles et remplira pleinement son rôle moderne, à la fois original et complémentaire. Du Congo au Rhin, la troisième nation-continent s'équilibrera autour de notre métropole."

this point, it had become apparent that France could not maintain all of its overseas territories.

As dramatically punctuated by the loss at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, what the colonial campaigns of the 1950s also made starkly apparent was that French military power had declined since World War II. Prior to this, the failure of the French military in June of 1940 could easily be painted as an aberration, rather than the rule. But there could be no denying the implications for French military power in the face of ignominious defeat to a less well-equipped Viet Minh force. Throughout the final years of the Fourth Republic, the trend would continue at an alarming pace. There is little coincidence that the Algerian rebels initiated their campaign against France just months after the fall of Dien Bien Phu and the resulting peace talks in Geneva; they understood well the writing that was already on the wall for the French empire. To further exacerbate matters, just two years later, France discovered it could not count on United States backing when, in conjunction with Great Britain and Israel, it attempted to use military force to put an end to the nationalization of the Suez Canal under Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser.

The loss of colonial territory in Vietnam and North Africa, as well as France's declining military standing throughout the world, must be considered as the backdrop for the decision by French leaders to place a greater emphasis on sub-Saharan Africa's importance to France's future. Despite growing unrest – and particularly in West Africa – French leaders and officials in the Quai d'Orsay believed that sub-Saharan Africa could be kept firmly within the French orbit through a series of political and economic reforms. As already discussed, this process was already underway with the Brazzaville

Conference, and continued with the extension of political rights through the constitution of the Fourth Republic. The 1956 *loi cadre*, a statute which relinquished *métropole* control over key state functions in Afrique Occidentale Française and Afrique Équatoriale Française to local governments, would later constitute a significant step in the political evolution of France's subjects within the French Union. It would seem to make sense to claim – as French leaders did after independence in 1960 – that these reforms were planned steps on the way to further autonomy and eventual decolonization. But Tony Chafer has recently demonstrated that virtually to the end of France's presence in AOF, there were no serious plans to renounce the colonial presence in Africa anytime in the near future.⁸⁰⁰ On the contrary, the promulgation of the *loi cadre* may be interpreted in the opposite vein from the colonial myths propagated during the Fifth Republic; instead of a clear signal of coming independence, it was actually one last attempt to maintain French control over Africa.

But there was more to France's policy in Africa during the late Fourth Republic than a pragmatic adjustment. Of course, the primary goal of French African policy was to maintain the overseas territories within the French Union in the face of the turmoil spreading throughout North Africa. But as the Fourth Republic came to an end, the idea of France's future on the continent evolved from one in which France would hold sovereignty over large parts of Africa, to a more abstract notion of continued French *influence* on the continent. The work of Tony Chafer has provided invaluable insight into the development of this ideology throughout the 1950s. As he notes, “there was a clear and consistently pursued government policy, during the last years of French colonial rule

⁸⁰⁰ Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France's Successful Decolonization?* (New York: Berg, 2002).

and after, to maintain the French presence in the region.”⁸⁰¹ But Chafer’s work focuses primarily on the justification of this continued relationship to the African community. More can be said about the development of France’s new policy among French politicians and colonial administrators, as they could no longer rely on perceived traditional and legal rights over the areas they had once colonized. Instead, they were now forced to argue for the French presence on the continent in terms of the positive impact of French relations with Africa. Fourth Republic politicians would also borrow a Gaullist concept to explain France’s future there – namely, that the relationship between the two was necessary for the continuance of French *grandeur* throughout the world.

Like the defense of the empire in the international arena in the early Fourth Republic, the new recognition of Africa’s primary importance to France’s future spanned political ideologies. As discussed in the previous chapter, France’s political institutions teetered on the brink of collapse throughout the Fourth Republic. Yet when it came to the colonial field, most of the political parties were remarkably consistent. This dynamic could be seen during the 1950s, when a gradual embrace of sub-Saharan Africa could be observed throughout France’s political class. This chapter does not attempt a comprehensive survey of these ideas, but their embodiment in the speeches and beliefs of key figures during the Fourth Republic – including Pierre Mendès France, Charles De Gaulle, and François Mitterrand – reveals that, when it came to sub-Saharan Africa, a fundamental shift was occurring in the face of the disastrous setbacks taking place throughout France’s empire.

This recognition by French leaders and colonial administrators – that Africa would play an especially heightened role in international politics – was matched by the

⁸⁰¹ Ibid., 15.

dedication of African leaders to the French colonial project. Quite simply, many African leaders found it in their interest during the late Fourth Republic to link themselves to the future of the French Union, preferring to co-exist within it than risk political gains during an unpredictable and potentially destabilizing independence movement. This chapter concludes by discussing two of these men – Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal and Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Ivory Coast. Both framed their argument for greater political freedom and responsibility within a larger narrative of continued French presence on the continent. In doing so, they played a significant role in justifying France's African policy after decolonization.

France in Crisis – Vietnam, Algeria and Suez

By 1954, the French war in Vietnam had entered its eighth year. In the beginning of the year, over 50,000 soldiers from the French Union had already died in the conflict, with hundreds of thousands more from France's allies in South Vietnam also perishing during the struggle. The number of casualties and the gradually deteriorating political situation led to the increasing unpopularity of the war in the *métropole*. French military leaders knew the war would have to be won quickly if it were to be won at all; by early 1954, France had already begun to assemble a force of thousands French Union and Vietnamese troops at Dien Bien Phu in North Vietnam. The goals were to cut off Viet Minh supply lines to Laos and perhaps establish a strong foothold on Ho Chi Minh's territory. But the Viet Minh would turn the tables on their French occupiers, initiating a siege of the French base that March. Located deep in a valley, the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu found it hard to obtain supplies or add reinforcements. On May 7, after

two months of grueling trench battles and heavy shelling from Viet Minh artillery, it collapsed. The casualties were overwhelming; over two thousand French Union troops died during the battle, with thousands more wounded. More than ten thousand prisoners from the French Union army were taken by the Viet Minh; over eight thousand would later die in captivity. The debacle, which essentially ended the French presence in North Vietnam, was the biggest defeat for the French military since the fall of France to the Nazis in June 1940.⁸⁰²

Faced with disaster, the National Assembly voted for the investiture of Pierre Mendès France as President du Conseil to form a government and negotiate an end to the war. Peace was achieved during the summer of 1954 in Geneva, with Vietnam being split in two between the communist government in the north and a western-friendly government led by Bao Dai in the south. But the Geneva Accords did not signal the end of unrest within the French Union. On November 1, 1954, guerilla forces in Algeria, led by the Front de Libération National (FLN), attacked almost thirty French military and civilian targets, killing a handful of European settlers in the process. While unrest had persisted sporadically in Algeria since the Setif riots of 1945, the overwhelming and concentrated attacks by the FLN represented a particularly novel and worrisome threat to the French presence there. Intent on sending a signal that France would not tolerate any further violence within her colonies, Mendès France immediately promised a determined French response, with Interior Minister François Mitterrand sending troops to Algeria to put down the rebellion. But with Vietnam already lost, there was no turning back the anticolonial tide. By late 1954, the conflict had spread beyond the Algerian cities into the

⁸⁰² A recent examination of the battle can be found in Ted Morgan, *Valley of Death: The Tragedy at Dien Bien Phu that Led America into the Vietnam War* (New York: Random House, 2010).

countryside. Within two years, the FLN had begun to win significant support from Algerians in the urban centers, necessitating the sending of paratroopers by the *métropole* to quell the unrest. The “Battle of Algiers” – during which urban warfare and torture were successfully employed by French forces to crack the inner circles of the FLN movement – temporarily set back the cause for independence. But by 1958, the situation had once again spun overwhelmingly out of control, leading to the fall of the Fourth Republic that May.⁸⁰³

The revolt in Algeria was further polarizing because of the escalating damage it inflicted upon France’s international reputation. Opinion within the United Nations General Assembly was starkly against France and would remain that way throughout the Algerian crisis. As Bernard Cornut Gentille, France’s representative to the United Nations, remarked in 1956, “international opinion... both through selfish hostility from some directed toward us, and profound ignorance from others, remains convinced that our policy is reactionary and that we always want to do nothing in Algeria.”⁸⁰⁴ Attempts by the UN to mediate the conflict were met with indignant protest by the French delegation. Echoing French feelings about the Trusteeship Council and Special Committee for Information, one representative argued in October 1957 that the UN had

⁸⁰³ Several histories of the Algerian War of Independence have been written. Particularly useful are Benjamin Stora, *Algeria 1830-2000: A Short History*; Mary Todd, trans. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Tony Smith, *The French Stake in Algeria: 1945-1962* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978); and Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962* (new preface by author) (New York: New York Review Books, 2006).

⁸⁰⁴ M. Cornut-Gentille, Chef de la Mission Permanente de la France auprès de l’organisation des Nations Unies, à M. Pineau, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Oct. 27, 1956. *Documents Diplomatique Français 1956 Tome III* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1990), 54. “L’opinion internationale... à la fois par hostilité intéressée à notre égard chez certains et par ignorance profonde chez d’autres, demeure convaincue que notre politique est réactionnaire et que nous ne voulons toujours rien faire en Algérie.”

“neither the right nor the means” to regulate the ongoing conflict in North Africa.⁸⁰⁵ Revelations of the use of torture did not help matters; the publication of Henri Alleg’s *La Question* in early 1958, which chronicled the imprisonment and torture of the author at the hands of French paratroopers in Algeria, was received as a shock and caused severe embarrassment for France.⁸⁰⁶ Even France’s allies struggled to provide support at the UN and in the international community. While the American government under Dwight Eisenhower initially supported French policy in North Africa, opinion in the United States remained starkly divided, with then-Senator John F. Kennedy attempting to sponsor a resolution to condemn France’s actions in July 1957.⁸⁰⁷ By the end of the Fourth Republic in 1958, virtually the entire international community supported at least some form of negotiated autonomy for Algerians.

The situation in Algeria was not the only threat to France’s empire in North Africa. In Morocco, French attempts to crack down on Islamic movements and manipulate Moroccan leadership led to violent unrest throughout the mid-1950s. As in Algeria, significant attempts were made in the United Nations to restrain France’s actions and force some sort of peaceful settlement, but French leaders largely rebuffed these efforts. By 1956, the situation was no longer tenable, and the country was granted its independence.⁸⁰⁸ In Tunisia, similar unrest had led to a campaign of repression

⁸⁰⁵ Note du Secrétariat des Conférences, Question algérienne devant les Nations Unies, Oct. 22, 1957. *Documents Diplomatique Français 1957 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1991), 567.

⁸⁰⁶ Henri Alleg, *The Question* (New York: G. Braziller, 1958).

⁸⁰⁷ M. Alphand, Ambassadeur de France à Washington, à M. Pineau, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, July 1, 1957. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1957 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1991), 3, 17-19. See also Irwin Wall, *France, the United States, and the Algerian War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

⁸⁰⁸ For general histories of Morocco, see Sahar Bazzaz, *Forgotten Saints: History, Power, and Politics in the Making of Modern Morocco* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); C.R.

beginning in 1952. After the fall of Dien Bien Phu, and with the Algerian situation turning violent, the country was granted a measure of autonomy in 1954, with full independence following in 1956.⁸⁰⁹ With Tunisia and Morocco gone, and Algeria under threat from insurgents, France's presence in North Africa had been severely weakened.

The ongoing crisis in North Africa serves as the best explanation for France's actions during the Suez Crisis of 1956. After several years of escalating regional tensions between Egypt and Britain, Egypt's president Gamal Abdel Nasser announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal, a key point for commercial transit in the Middle East, on July 26, 1956.⁸¹⁰ The canal, which had been developed almost a century earlier by Frenchman Ferdinand de Lesseps, had been operated since by the *Compagnie Universelle du Canal Maritime de Suez*, an Egyptian-chartered company backed heavily by French investors. The nationalization of the canal threatened a variety of interests in the region, but most notably those of Britain, which still had an extensive presence in the Middle East; and Israel, less than a decade removed from war and still not diplomatically accepted by most of Middle Eastern states. For France's part, its leaders were greatly concerned about the link between Nasser and the existing independence movements in North Africa. The seizing of the canal, for some, represented the first step in a larger bid for dominance in the region, at the expense of the western powers.

Pennell, *Morocco Since 1830: A History* (New York: New York University Press, 2000). The definitive account of the establishment of the French colonial presence in Morocco remains William A. Hoisington, Jr., *Lyautey and the French Conquest of Morocco* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

⁸⁰⁹ See Kenneth Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁸¹⁰ Several histories of the Suez Crisis are available. See Anthony Gorst and Lewis Johnman, *The Suez Crisis* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Robert R. Bowie, *Suez 1956* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974). The British and French perspectives are represented in Anthony Eden, *The Suez Crisis of 1956* (London: Bearn Press, 1968) and Christian Pineau, *1956 Suez: Le temps des révélations* (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1976).

The problem for all three of the aforementioned countries was that their main ally, the United States, had no intention of backing any action against Egypt that had the potential to explode into a regional conflict. Throughout the summer of 1956, American officials gave clear signals to their French counterparts that the United States was reluctant to join in or support any military action against Nasser to end the stalemate.⁸¹¹ Consequently, the crisis exacerbated tensions between France and the United States, at a time when French leaders were already dissatisfied with what they perceived as an increasing American unwillingness to support them in the United Nations on the Algerian question. Christian Pineau, *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères* at the time, was particularly outspoken about his disappointment with the United States' failure to back France throughout the crisis. In a meeting with U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in New York that October, Pineau lamented the growing gulf between the two powers, indicating that

French public opinion on this subject is clear. It is noteworthy that for the first time, the President of the National Assembly referred to a difference between France and England on the one hand, and the United States on the other... We don't think the United States government realizes the importance that France and the UK attach to Suez. It is not merely the canal, but all the Middle East, Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, that are involved.⁸¹²

Two weeks later, Pineau's colleague Maurice Faure once again questioned the United States' loyalty, noting that "this was a case where the U.S. would have to decide which of

⁸¹¹ M. Couve de Murville, *Ambassadeur de France à Washington*, à M. Pineau, *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères*, July 27, 1956. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1956 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1989), 174; M. Couve de Murville, *Ambassadeur de France à Washington*, à M. Pineau, *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères*, July 28, 1956. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1956 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1989), 179-80; Visite de M. Dulles à M. Pineau, Aug. 1, 1956. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1956 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1989), 208.

⁸¹² Memorandum of Conversation, Secretary Dulles' Suite, New York, Oct. 5, 1956. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1955-1957, Volume XXI: The Suez Crisis* (Washington: U.S. GPO, 1990), 641.

her friends she preferred the most, the countries of Western Europe or the Bandung [anticolonial] powers.” Unless the United States changed its position, Faure threatened, the Atlantic alliance would be finished.⁸¹³

These threats were not enough to sway President Dwight Eisenhower, who refused to support joint Anglo-French strikes to retake the canal, and subsequently brought the matter to the UN Security Council. A UN resolution called for an immediate cease-fire; faced with overwhelming international opposition, Britain and France quickly withdrew. American action to stop France, Britain, and Israel was seen as a grave betrayal by French leaders. In January, Hervé Alphanand, the French ambassador to the United States, made clear to Pineau that the dynamic of the Franco-American relationship had changed irrevocably due to the incident at Suez. “It would be erroneous and dangerous to think that the United States is suddenly ready to repent, that it regrets its attitude during the months of October and November or that it will proceed to reestablish the compromised positions of France and Britain in the Middle East,” Alphanand warned.⁸¹⁴ He also emphasized that France’s international standing would be greatly affected by the Suez fallout, noting that “[i]t seems that the role that we have played in the Middle East, and the defense of our investments and our institutions, must now be conceived within a

⁸¹³ Telegram from the Embassy in France to the Department of State, Oct. 20, 1956. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1955-1957, Volume XXI: The Suez Crisis* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990), 761.

⁸¹⁴ M. Alphanand, Ambassadeur de France à Washington, à M. Pineau, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Jan. 4, 1957. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1957 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1990), 39. “Il serait erroné et dangereux de penser que les États-Unis sont pris soudain de repentir, qu’ils regrettent leur attitude des mois d’octobre et de novembre et qu’ils vont désormais s’efforcer de procéder au rétablissement des positions compromises de la France et de la Grande Bretagne au Moyen-Orient.”

framework different from the one that we have been accustomed to for quite a long time.”⁸¹⁵

In addition to the debacle in Vietnam and the situation in North Africa and the Middle East, France also faced intensified opposition from the anticolonial powers. In April 1955, 29 states met in Bandung, Indonesia to condemn western colonialism and discuss ways to cooperate in the future. Although the conference was composed of primarily Asian countries, and had no representatives from France’s African colonies, it concerned itself greatly with issues that had great relevance to France’s empire on the continent. Of particular importance was the conference’s focus on ongoing racism throughout the world, and especially in colonial Africa, India, Pakistan, and South Africa.⁸¹⁶ The participants also sought to further empower the UN to adjudicate colonial disputes and curb the power of the imperial nations. As the French ambassador to Indonesia – who attended the conference as a nonparticipant – observed, the attendees labeled colonialism “in all its manifestations as an evil that must end soon...”⁸¹⁷ Of course, determined opposition from the anticolonial powers was nothing new, as France had learned in its dealings in the UN General Assembly in the early years of the Fourth Republic. But the Bandung Conference had potential to initiate a new, more determined wave of anticolonialism, especially in the United States. That August, Maurice Couve de Murville, then ambassador to the United States, warned Christian Pineau, *Ministre des*

⁸¹⁵ Ibid., 39-40. “Il semble donc que le rôle que nous avons à jouer au Proche-Orient et au Moyen-Orient, la défense de nos investissements et de nos établissements doivent être conçus comme s’inscrivant dans une cadre différent de celui auquel nous sommes habitués depuis longtemps.”

⁸¹⁶ M. Sivan, *Ambassadeur de France à Djakarta*, à M. Pinay, *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères*, April 26, 1955. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1955 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1987), 511.

⁸¹⁷ Ibid. “Il qualifie le colonialisme ‘sous toutes ses manifestations’ de mal qui doit bientôt finir...”

Affaires Étrangères, that the Bandung Conference “has incited important sectors of public opinion to push for a change in mentalities in this part of the world, and to return to what they believe to be the source of their popularity: the affirmation of an active anticolonialism.”⁸¹⁸

International cooperation aimed at undermining the French Union would soon spread to the newly-independent African states. In March 1957, just days after his country had declared independence from Britain, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana (formerly Gold Coast) informed the British foreign office that he intended to call a conference of all African independent states to discuss pan-African issues.⁸¹⁹ The idea of the conference posed a threat to France; Nkrumah already had a deserved reputation as a supporter of African unity and a skeptic of western influence on the continent.⁸²⁰ That April, the French chargé d'affaires in London warned Christian Pineau that Nkrumah did not intend to limit invitations to independent countries, but instead hoped to invite representatives from dependent territories on the continent – including from the French Union.⁸²¹ By the middle of the month, Libya, Ethiopia, Tunisia, and Sudan had all accepted, and there was

⁸¹⁸ M. Couve de Murville, Ambassadeur de France à Washington, à M. Pinay, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Aug. 9, 1955. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1955 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1988), 239. “Tout d’abord, la conférence de Bandoung... a incité d’importants secteurs de l’opinion à prôner la reconquête psychologique de cette partie du monde, en retournant à ce qu’ils croient être la source de toute popularité: l’affirmation d’un anticolonialisme actif.”

⁸¹⁹ M. De Juniac, Chargé d’affaires de France à Londres, à M. Pineau, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, April 11, 1957. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1957 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1990), 594.

⁸²⁰ See Martin Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: A History of Fifty Years of Independence* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006), 17-29.

⁸²¹ M. De Juniac, Chargé d’affaires de France à Londres, à M. Pineau, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, April 11, 1957. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1957 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1990), 595.

talk of a concurrent or rival conference in Morocco.⁸²² But Nkrumah, looking to build his authority in Africa, decided to forge ahead for a conference in October. It would include discussions on the future of non-autonomous territories in Africa, strategies to preserve independence of African states, ways to develop economic and technical cooperation in Africa, and cultural exchanges.⁸²³ While the latter two topics posed little threat to France, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères Pineau made clear to his subordinates that France could not support any efforts by independent African nations to inquire into thorny issues that might impact the French Union. He instructed French diplomats to tell African leaders that “in the current state of things...the initiative of Ghana does not appear to be appealing.”⁸²⁴ While Nkrumah did not extend invitations to France’s territories, the conferences in Accra of independent African states were nevertheless highly threatening to France’s interests, with the April 1958 meeting taking on a “violently anticolonialist character.”⁸²⁵ The representatives also opposed France’s pending nuclear tests in the Sahara and all neocolonial economic exploitation.⁸²⁶

Much like the transformation of French policy in Africa after World War II, all of the aforementioned events, which took place over a period of less than four years, must be considered when evaluating the shift in mentalities that transpired in the last years of the Fourth Republic. Essentially, the fall of North Africa and the emboldening of

⁸²² M. Pineau, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, aux Représentants diplomatiques de France à Rabat, Tunis, April 20, 1957. *Ibid.*, 648

⁸²³ M. Pineau, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, aux Représentants Diplomatiques de France, July 27, 1957. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1957 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1991), 150-1.

⁸²⁴ *Ibid.*, 152. “Aussi semble-t-il, dans l’état actuel des choses, nous ne puissions qu’encourager discrètement, dans leur réservé, les états que l’initiative du Ghana ne paraît pas enchanter.”

⁸²⁵ M. De Guiringaud, Ambassadeur de France à Accra, à M. Pineau, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, April 16, 1958. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1958 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1992), 469.

⁸²⁶ *Ibid.*, 470

international anticolonial movements in the face of French weakness necessitated a new approach if France wished to maintain its presence in its remaining overseas territories in the French Union. Nowhere was this more necessary than in Africa, which, while having largely avoided the types of insurgency seen in Algeria and Vietnam, nevertheless had the potential to explode into violence. By the mid-1950s, French leaders from across the political spectrum were taking heed of the lessons of the anticolonial struggle. The contributions of two of them – François Mitterrand and Pierre Mendès France – were particularly important in reorienting French mentalities concerning the importance of sub-Saharan Africa to the future of a weakened French Union.

François Mitterrand and the Turn to Africa

Since recent revelations about France's support for the genocidal Hutu regime in Rwanda in the 1990s, there has been significant scrutiny of François Mitterrand's Africa policy during his presidency.⁸²⁷ More recently, his role in the early stages of the Algerian War has been documented by François Malye and Benjamin Stora.⁸²⁸ However, there has been a remarkable lack of attention to Mitterrand's ideology about Africa during his formative political years. Interest in these early years was originally sparked by the 1994 publication of Pierre Péan's *Une jeunesse française: François Mitterrand*, which revealed Mitterrand's role in Vichy and his subsequent – and some argue opportunistic –

⁸²⁷ See Oliver Wallis, *Silent Accomplice: The Untold Story of France's Role in the Rwandan Genocide* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008); Daniela Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2008); Gaspard-Hubert Lonsi Koko, *Mitterrand l'Africain?* (Paris: Egrégore, 2007); Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998); Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press 1995).

⁸²⁸ Mitterrand's role in the Algerian War has recently been documented in François Malye and Benjamin Stora, *François Mitterrand et la guerre d'Algérie* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2010).

political transformation.⁸²⁹ Mitterrand faced some of the political fallout about his Vichy past at the end of his life, when he was forced to address questions about his involvement in the *Légion Française des Combattants* during the war.⁸³⁰ It is unclear whether Vichy's views on sub-Saharan Africa were known to Mitterrand or even affected him, as he spent much of his time in the Vichy regime as a functionary dealing with prisoners of war issues. But it is fairly well-established that Mitterrand was a deeply ambiguous figure during this period who straddled both sides of the ideological divide during the war. As David S. Bell has noted, like many others of his generation, Mitterrand was generally for Pétain, but against the ongoing German occupation.⁸³¹ His fortune lay in moving to the Resistance at precisely the right time, when support for the Vichy regime was already on a downward trajectory. After the war, he joined the Union Démocratique et Socialiste de la Résistance (UDSR), a center-right party led by Gaullist René Pleven. As Bell notes, "Mitterrand was not, in writing or conversation, a political idealist, policy specialist or reformer with a briefcase of plans." Consequently, his flexibility and interpersonal skills "admirably suited him for the shifting, unstable alliance politics in the Assembly of the Fourth Republic."⁸³²

His flexibility also made him well-suited to steer France's policy in Africa toward a new phase. Regardless of the interpretation, it is generally agreed that Mitterrand's

⁸²⁹ Pierre Péan, *Une jeunesse française: François Mitterrand 1934-1947* (Paris: Fayard, 1994). Other useful biographies of Mitterrand include Jacques Attali, *C'était François Mitterrand* (Paris: Fayard, 2005); David S. Bell, *François Mitterrand: A Political Biography* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005); Ronald Tiersky, *François Mitterrand: The Last French President* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Jean Lacouture, *Mitterrand: une histoire de français*, 2 vols. (Paris: Seuil, 1998).

⁸³⁰ The Légion Française des Combattants was a quasi-fascist organization devoted to furthering the principles of Vichy's National Revolution. See John Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France: The French Under Nazi Occupation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

⁸³¹ David S. Bell, *François Mitterrand: A Political Biography* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), 12-13.

⁸³² *Ibid.*, 19.

transformation from a man of the right generally supportive of Vichy, to a man of the left who rose to the head of the French Socialist party, made its most significant strides during the Fourth Republic, when he held a series of cabinet posts.⁸³³ For purposes of this study, of particular significance is his time as Minister of Overseas France under Prime Ministers René Pleven and Henri Queuille, whereby Mitterrand was given administrative responsibility for much of the French Union, including sub-Saharan Africa. During his tenure from July 1950 to August 1951, he oversaw a significant transition in the *métropole*'s dealings with political organizations in Africa, most notably the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA), a left-oriented party led by Ivory Coast's Félix Houphouët-Boigny. The RDA, which had gained immense popularity with members of the expanding working class throughout West Africa, had become a particular *bête noire* of the colonial hardliners. The party had been associated with civil unrest in Africa, and had allied itself with the out-of-power communists in the French National Assembly. Starting in 1949, the French administration in Ivory Coast initiated a series of crackdowns against the RDA after riots in February and October. Mitterrand's signature achievement was to later persuade Houphouët-Boigny to reject further dealings with the PCF and enter the mainstream of French politics. While controversial at the time, there can be no question that it laid the groundwork for future affiliation between France and the nascent political movements in West Africa.

Part of the explanation for Mitterrand's breakthrough with the RDA was his faith in both the French civilizing mission, as well as the ability of Africans to incorporate the

⁸³³Mitterrand's cabinet positions during the Fourth Republic included *Ministre des Anciens Combattants et des Victimes de Guerre* (Jan. – Oct. 1947, Nov. 1947 – July 1948), *Ministre de la France d'Outre-Mer* (July 1950 – July 1951), *Ministre d'État*, without portfolio (Jan. – Feb. 1952), *Ministre d'État*, delegate to the Council of Europe (June – Sept. 1953), *Ministre de l'Intérieur* (June 1954 – Feb. 1955), and *Ministre de la Justice* (Feb. 1956 – May 1957).

lessons of their French colonizers and become productive members of the French Union. Consequently, he spoke frequently of France's "universal vocation."⁸³⁴ This notion went beyond the mere strategic implications of the Cold War. Unlike Georges Bidault and others in the Quai d'Orsay who dealt directly with the United States and the Soviet Union, Mitterrand did not view Africa as a mere pawn of Cold War policy. Therefore, linking France's future there on the ability to combat communism undermined the very nature of the French colonial project.⁸³⁵ Instead, France needed to assume its position at the head of mainland Europe; as such, it had a responsibility to emphasize its contributions to Africa and the fundamental unity between the *métropole* and the empire.⁸³⁶ Mitterrand's time in the colonial ministry, as well as his subsequent writings, would be fundamental to articulating a new relationship between France and Africa, in which a more indirect relationship between the two continents, greater autonomy by African nations, and a more liberal colonial policy would become the hallmarks of the French project in Africa.

Mitterrand left the Overseas Ministry in August 1951, but his short tenure there would have a great impact on the remainder of his political life. Mitterrand's eventual application of lessons learned in the Overseas Ministry to Africa policy during his presidency will be discussed at greater length in the conclusion of this dissertation. But in the final years of the Fourth Republic, Mitterrand wrote extensively about his tenure in the ministry and his views on Africa's importance to France's future. The most significant of these contributions were two books, *Aux frontières de l'union française*,

⁸³⁴ François Mitterrand, *Aux frontières de l'union française: Indochine, Tunisie* (Paris: R. Julliard, 1953), 207.

⁸³⁵ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁸³⁶ *Ibid.*

which discussed his time in the Overseas Ministry and included some of Mitterrand's personal journal entries on the subject; and *Présence française et abandon*, a general critique of traditional forms of colonialism and France's hardline colonial lobby. In both works, Mitterrand advocated for a new French colonial outlook, one that would turn away from Southeast Asia and other parts of the world, and focus a renewed effort on France's colonies in sub-Saharan Africa.

As already noted, Mitterrand's time in the Overseas Ministry was marked by a policy of openness to African political parties like the RDA which objected to various aspects of the French colonial system. This shift was largely inspired by Mitterrand's pragmatism; he did not wish to see Africa plunge into unrest as Vietnam already had. He addressed this problem in *Aux frontières de l'union française*, published in 1953. The book was an impassioned reminder that France had a responsibility to safeguard its territories in Africa. Like De Gaulle, Mitterrand believed that Africa ensured France's continued relevance in a world divided by the Cold War:

... France approaches the second half of the twentieth century with an intact African domain. It's almost insolent! But the victory of 1945 in fact didn't present much less danger for our overseas possessions than the remote defeat of 1940 ... While all could have predicted that the two historic conclusions of the world conflict would be the hegemony of the continental nations, America and Russia, and the fall of large colonial empires, our misfortunes during the war suspended the march of time, as if those people affiliated with us did not want to seize from our weaknesses what they waited for by our consent. Will France understand that this paradoxical moment will eventually end, and that, if it is wasted, France will lose it forever? Already the signal is being given in Indochine.⁸³⁷

⁸³⁷ Ibid., 21. "...la France aborde la seconde moitié du XXe siècle avec un domaine africain intact. C'en est presque insolent! La victoire associée de 1945 n'offrait en effet guère moins de dangers pour nos possessions d'Outre-Mer que la défaite isolée de 1940... Alors que tout laissait prévoir que les deux conclusions historiques du conflit mondial seraient l'hégémonie des nations continents, l'américaine et la russe, et la chute des vastes constructions coloniales, nos malheurs de la guerre ont suspendu la marche du temps comme si les peuples liés à nous n'avaient pas voulu arracher à nos faiblesses ce qu'ils attendent de notre consentement. La France comprendra-

Therefore, Mitterrand argued, France had to change the way it did business with its colonies. Up to this point, French colonial efforts had only served to “restore an extinct system.”⁸³⁸ Given the ongoing war in Vietnam, as well as significant colonial unrest throughout the era of the Fourth Republic, it was time to reconceptualize French colonial policy. One had to wonder, Mitterrand suggested, whether “it will be necessary to change the formulas and to annul that which we ourselves have designed in the past.”⁸³⁹ As he noted, most French people tended to identify the French empire with traditional forms of colonialism; this enduring mentality demonstrated that France was “behind the times on the continent.”⁸⁴⁰

In Mitterrand’s view, this new policy meant two things. First, the influence of the hardline colonial lobby, perhaps best epitomized by men like Thierry d’Argenlieu, who shelled Vietnam’s Haiphong Harbor in 1946 while France was trying to negotiate a settlement in Paris with Ho Chi Minh, had to be significantly curtailed. As Mitterrand pointed out, France’s ongoing war with Vietnam had already been very costly, resulting in the death of thousands of French soldiers and significant financial expenditures.⁸⁴¹ He noted that in 1946, France had invested 350 million francs for modernization projects in Africa, compared to three billion francs spent on the war in Vietnam.⁸⁴² Mitterrand had nothing but contempt for those who favored such policies, noting in his later book that “the reforms that will save France’s work overseas will never be voluntarily accepted by

t-elle que ce moment paradoxal s’achève et que, s’il est perdu, elle se perd? Déjà le signal est donné en Indochine.”

⁸³⁸ Ibid., 22.

⁸³⁹ Ibid. “On se demande s’il ne sera pas nécessaire de changer les formules et d’annuler ce que nous avons nous-mêmes conçu.”

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid., 28. “...en 1953, nous sommes en retard d’un continent.”

⁸⁴¹ Ibid., 22-24.

⁸⁴² Ibid., 24.

factions blinded by hate or anger.”⁸⁴³ Essentially, he was making an argument for a more indirect form of influence overseas, noting that sending men, capital, and technology across thousands of miles “is a mad recklessness ultimately contrary to the interests of the *Patrie*.”⁸⁴⁴

Perhaps more importantly, France had to realize that of all its colonial possessions, its holdings in Africa were the most vital to its future prestige and prosperity. For Mitterrand, France had the capacity to continue this relationship because it had already brought so much to Africans through expanded education and broader political representation. But a danger nevertheless existed, because, as he noted, “we have not tried to determine its future nor create its unity.”⁸⁴⁵ The restoration of more liberal policies, and a move away from the more repressive approach taken in Vietnam, could better secure Africans within the French orbit. “When I think of the French Union,” Mitterrand noted, “it is Africa I think of first of all, because Asia... holds only deceptions for us, and the ongoing battles there prevent any meaningful progress.”⁸⁴⁶ He added that “Africa is looking for its future... Africa loves France and places its hopes in its unity, its equilibrium, and its ideal.”⁸⁴⁷ This link between the two could also insure France’s position as a preeminent world power:

⁸⁴³ François Mitterrand, *Présence française et abandon*, (Paris: Plon, 1957), 232. “En effet, les réformes qui sauveront l’œuvre de la France outre-mer ne seront jamais acceptées de plein gré par les factions qu’aveuglent la haine ou la colère.”

⁸⁴⁴ François Mitterrand, *Aux frontières de l’union française*, 23. “d’une folle imprudence finalement contraire à l’intérêt de la Patrie.”

⁸⁴⁵ “L’Union Française est en vrac. On n’a pas essayé de déterminer son avenir ni de créer son unité.” *Ibid.*, 26.

⁸⁴⁶ “Quand j’évoque l’Union Française, c’est à l’Afrique d’abord que je pense, car l’Asie, dans le cadre des accords qui nous engagent, ne nous réserve que des déceptions, et les combats qui s’y déroulent empêchent toute construction valable.” *Ibid.*, 37.

⁸⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 29. “L’Afrique cherche son avenir...l’Afrique aime la France et espère d’elle son unité, son équilibre, son idéal.”

Paris is the authentic and necessary capital of the French Union. The African world has no center of gravity if it is confined to its geographical boundaries ... Linked to France in a political, economic and spiritual ensemble, it will surmount four centuries and fulfill entirely its modern role... From the Congo to the Rhine, one third of the nation-continent will balance itself around our *métropole*.⁸⁴⁸

Therefore, for Mitterrand, Africa was an essential part of France's future; one could easily separate Vietnam or other overseas territories from the *métropole*, but there still remained an inextricable link between France and its territories in Africa. As he noted, "the historical future of France passes even more surely through the Mediterranean than it does through the Atlantic. France of the 21st century will be African or it will not be at all."⁸⁴⁹

The loss of Vietnam in 1954 would only sharpen Mitterrand's sentiments about the pernicious role of the colonial lobby and the importance of Africa to France's future. In the wake of the military defeat at Dien Bien Phu, Mitterrand's previous predictions about the end of French influence in Vietnam, the increased importance of Africa, and the futility of heavy-handed attempts to subdue civilian populations, were all completely vindicated. These subjects were addressed in his follow-up work, *Presence français et abandon* (French Presence and Its Abandonment), published in 1957. For Mitterrand, the loss in Vietnam was a tragedy on the level with the invasion of France by Nazi Germany in 1940. Indeed, it served as a reminder of the fragility of France's security situation in the postwar order. The book opens by noting that "when the Vietnam War started, France could believe that the defeat of 1940 was only one lost battle, and that the

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid., 34. "Paris est l'authentique et nécessaire capitale de l'Union Française. Le monde africain n'aura pas de centre de gravité, s'il se borne à ses frontières géographiques... Lié à la France dans un ensemble politique, économique et spirituel, il franchira d'un coup quatre siècles et remplira pleinement son rôle moderne, à la fois original et complémentaire. Du Congo au Rhin, la troisième nation-continent s'équilibrera autour de notre métropole."

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid., 170. "l'avenir historique de la France passe plus sûrement par la Méditerranée que par l'Atlantique. La France du XXI^e siècle sera africaine ou ne sera pas."

armistice of 1945 had restored its power at the same time as its glory.”⁸⁵⁰ But Dien Bien Phu had shattered these illusions. Consequently, the book advocated France’s continuing presence in Africa and the need for less oppressive means to ensure its continued existence within the French orbit.

For Mitterrand, after the fall of Vietnam, France had to work harder to maintain its remaining overseas territories, and especially those in Africa. He lamented that “mired in the Indochine war, France hesitated to define her purpose in Tunisia and Morocco, and she completely ignored Black Africa.”⁸⁵¹ During this period of neglect, Mitterrand noted, the continent had been racked with instability, including the Suez Crisis; the rapid independence of Gold Coast, Libya, and Soudan; the Mau-Mau revolt in Kenya; and significant unrest in Nigeria. Without a change in policy, he argued, these events “undoubtedly weighed slightly in favor of those who not only swore themselves against the French presence, but were determined to destroy its reasons for existence.”⁸⁵² In order to keep French Africa and maintain French presence there, France had to give Africans confidence so that they would turn away from destructive nationalism. This would be done by expanding their political, social, and economic rights, and ensuring their equal status throughout the French Union.⁸⁵³

Therefore, Mitterrand’s vision was for a federated Africa bound to France through ties of mutual respect. While he had discussed the importance of the continent to France

⁸⁵⁰ François Mitterrand, *Présence française et abandon*, 3. “Quand la guerre d’Indochine commença, la France pouvait croire que la défaite de 1940 n’était qu’une bataille perdue et que l’armistice de 1945 allait restaurer sa puissance en même temps que sa gloire.”

⁸⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 175. “Enlisée dans la guerre d’Indochine, elle hésitait à définir ses desseins en Tunisie et au Maroc, elle ignorait l’Afrique Noire.”

⁸⁵² *Ibid.*, 177. “Cela pesait d’un poids léger sans doute dans la balance de ceux qui, ne jurant que sur la présence française, s’acharnaient inconsciemment à détruire ses raisons d’être.”

⁸⁵³ *Ibid.*

in his previous work, Mitterrand now indicated that Africa was a *necessary* part of France:

A highly structured central government in Paris, states and autonomous territories within a federated community, both egalitarian and fraternal, whose borders stretch from the plains of Flanders to the forests of the equator – this is the perspective it behooves us to clarify and to propose, because without Africa, there will be no history of France in the twenty-first century. And it's not so far away: only the length of a generation! How, indeed, will France, which borders on the Rhine [where the two great powers of France and Germany face each other] will she advance to the North?... Only the road south is available, with many people living in unoccupied space. In order to reach the banks of the Congo, it takes only as much patience as to go from Leningrad to Vladivostok . France already knows that Africa is necessary to her.⁸⁵⁴

This relationship also went both ways for Mitterrand; he emphasized “the considerable positive contribution” of France, including schools, hospitals, financial investment, and military protection.⁸⁵⁵ But from now on, these contributions were now to be “made available to our black citizens, no longer as a thinly-disguised instrument of domination, but as a supplementary means of well-being, balance, and progress.”⁸⁵⁶ Not surprisingly, he welcomed the recent *loi cadre*, which allowed for Africans to control more governmental functions at the local level. These new laws, he noted “not only have preserved the French presence, but also have better prepared the federal community,

⁸⁵⁴ Ibid., 237. “Un pouvoir central fortement structuré à Paris, des États et territoires autonomes fédérés au sein d’une communauté égalitaire et fraternelle dont les frontières iront des plaines des Flandres aux forêts de l’équateur, telle est la perspective qu’il nous appartient de préciser et de proposer, car sans l’Afrique il n’y aura pas d’Histoire de France au XXI^e siècle. Et ce n’est pas tellement loin: la durée d’une génération! Comment en effet la France butant sur ce Rhin où boivent tour à tour les chevaux de l’Europe irait-elle vers la Nord? Ou vers l’Est? Ou vers l’Ouest qui vient plutôt chez elle qu’il ne l’appelle à lui? Seule la route de Sud est disponible, large, bordée d’innombrables peuples en même temps que d’espaces inoccupés, si longue que pour atteindre le bout, aux rives du Congo, il faut presque autant de patience que pour aller de Léninegrad à Vladivostok. Déjà la France sait combien l’Afrique lui est nécessaire.”

⁸⁵⁵ Ibid., 183.

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid. “... mis à la disposition des citoyens noirs non plus comme un instrument à peine déguisé de domination mais comme un moyen complémentaire de bien-être, d’équilibre et de progrès...”

which through its association, will defeat separatism.”⁸⁵⁷ The ensuing dialogue would allow France to strengthen its friendship with Africans – the only friendship, Mitterrand argued, that now really mattered.⁸⁵⁸ The new French-African community would also enable France to move past its inherent defeatism in the wake of the disaster in Vietnam.⁸⁵⁹

Although Mitterrand was fairly progressive when it came to colonial policy, there was another aspect to his 1950s mentality on Africa that deserves mention here. In one sense, his views in *Présence français et abandon* also typified those of his counterpart colonial administrators, who were deeply suspicious of the United Nations and any other international interference with France’s empire in Africa. Views espoused in both books serve as a preview of Mitterrand’s Africa policy during his presidency. Referring to the United Nations, he emphasized that “the first concern of French policy must be to refuse interference in her own affairs by an organization as confusing as it is disturbing.”⁸⁶⁰ For Mitterrand, the aforementioned interference of the Trusteeship Council in the Ewé affair and France’s governance of Togo had been only the first step, as the situation in Togo had been used by the General Assembly to attempt further scrutiny of France’s territories in AOF and AEF. He bitterly noted that “our opponents had a field day claiming that [the settlement of the Togo issue] was made possible only under pressure from the UN and that therefore the safest way to attain a liberalized political status was to violate the

⁸⁵⁷ Ibid., 221. “En Afrique Noire, des lois heureuses et opportunes ont non seulement préservé cette présence, mais encore elles ont préparé la communauté fédérale qui, par l’association, vaincra le séparatisme.”

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid., 228.

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁰ François Mitterrand, *Aux frontières de l’union française*, 157. “Le premier soin d’une politique française doit être de refuser l’ingérence dans ses propres affaires d’une organisation aussi confuse et aussi inquiétante”

sovereignty of France and call for help and protection to the Trusteeship Council, always ready to intervene in the affairs of others.”⁸⁶¹ Like his fellow colonial administrators, he viewed the UN General Assembly as incompetent to handle such matters.

Mitterrand also evinced a suspicion of Britain and the United States in these early years. Regarding the British, he emphasized that the time had come for them to abandon “vain rivalries” so as to achieve better cooperation on the continent.⁸⁶² He was almost certainly referring to the aforementioned Ewé crisis in West Africa, which Mitterrand believed had been invented by the British in order to gain unification for Togo.⁸⁶³ By 1957, he saw the ultimate resolution of the Ewé crisis as benefiting British interests.⁸⁶⁴ And while he understood that the United States needed to act in its national interest, he firmly believed that American leaders did not understand the French colonial perspective or her long history of contribution to the civilization of the continent. Indeed, Mitterrand saw the French position in Africa as threatened on all sides; he noted that “we have no friends overseas – only subtle competitors and stubborn enemies. Both of them undermine our positions and strike at our prestige.”⁸⁶⁵ Tragically, this Manichean view of power in Africa would later inform Mitterrand’s fateful decisions on African policy almost 40 years later.

⁸⁶¹ Ibid. 209. “Nos adversaires avaient beau jeu de prétendre qu’une telle évolution n’avait été possible que sous la pression de l’ONU et que dès lors le moyen le plus sûr d’accéder à un statut politique libéral était d’échapper à la souveraineté de la France en demandant aide et protection au Conseil de tutelle, toujours prêt à s’immiscer dans les affaires d’autrui.”

⁸⁶² Ibid.

⁸⁶³ Ibid., 29.

⁸⁶⁴ François Mitterrand, *Présence française et abandon*, 202-4.

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid., 227. “Nous n’avons pas d’ami outre-mer mais des concurrents subtils et des ennemis opiniâtres. Les uns et les autres sapent nos positions, atteignent notre prestige.”

Pierre Mendès France

Mitterrand's views on France's future in Africa would have great impact on another crucial figure of France's Fourth Republic, Pierre Mendès France. Indeed, the two were such close *compagnons de route* when it came to colonial policy that Mendès France wrote a preface for *Aux Frontières de l'Union Française*, in which he congratulated Mitterrand for "the lucidity and the precision of your exposé of the great problems of the French Union...I admire the intellectual and political courage with which you have researched your solutions."⁸⁶⁶ Later, Mendès France asked Mitterrand to serve in his cabinet as Interior Minister, which gave Mitterrand vast responsibilities in putting down the first stirrings of the Algerian revolt in 1954.⁸⁶⁷

Despite their similarity in colonial mentalities, the difference between Mitterrand and Mendès France's political origins could not have been starker. Unlike Mitterrand, there could be no question about Mendès France's loyalty to republicanism during the Vichy years. After the invasion of France, along with several other politicians from the Third Republic, Mendès France, then a deputy in the National Assembly and member of the Parti Radical, had attempted to flee to North Africa to re-establish the government and continue the war against Nazi Germany. However, he and his comrades were captured by the Vichy regime and condemned to imprisonment for treason. Mendès France's daring escape in June 1941, a month after his sentencing, enabled him to join up with Free French units in London. By 1943, he had been placed in charge of financial policy for the CFLN by De Gaulle, and would remain in administration for the rest of the

⁸⁶⁶ Pierre Mendès France, "Préface à *Aux Frontières de l'Union Française*" in Pierre Mendès France, *Oeuvres Complètes, Vol II: Une Politique de l'économie 1943-1954* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), 461.

⁸⁶⁷ The Mitterrand-Mendès France collaboration has been explored in Raymond Krakovitch, *Le pouvoir et la rigueur: Pierre Mendès France – François Mitterrand* (Paris: Publisud, 1994).

war. Therefore, he emerged from the war with an impeccable public image, as well as a reputation as a model for technocratic efficiency. His participation in the Bretton Woods conference, as well as his seat in the National Assembly for the Fourth Republic, only heightened his standing as an informed, pragmatic voice capable of solving problems on a variety of levels.⁸⁶⁸

Before his investiture as President du Conseil in June 1954, there is little evidence that Mendès France gave significant thought to sub-Saharan Africa. Like many Fourth Republic politicians, he concerned himself with France's economic struggles and the stagnation of her political institutions. But there was some indication that he viewed France's presence in Africa as central to her future. On May 29, 1953, Vincent Auriol, then president, asked Mendès France to form a government. This attempt would fail after the National Assembly refused to invest him with the powers of the President du Conseil. His speech asking for investiture, which outlined his program for France, focused little on Africa. But Mendès France did note that France "does not stop at the shores of the Mediterranean."⁸⁶⁹ France was also responsible for the populations of its overseas territories, who depended on France for their evolution. Conversely, France needed to foster progress in its overseas territories in order to remain a strong presence in the world. As he argued, "their hopes, as well as their interests, are ours. If we want to maintain our

⁸⁶⁸ Among the available biographies of Mendès France, of particular value are Eric Roussel, *Pierre Mendès France* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2007); and Jean Lacouture, *Pierre Mendès France* (Paris: Seuil, 1981).

⁸⁶⁹ Pierre Mendès-France, Discours d'investiture, in Pierre Mendès-France, *Oeuvres Complètes, Vol II*, 440. "...la France ne s'arrête pas aux rivages de la Méditerranée."

standard of living, our independence, our own form of civilization, then the *métropole* alone no longer constitutes a sufficient base.”⁸⁷⁰

Although Mendès France’s first attempt to secure the *Président du Conseil* failed, events in Vietnam would rapidly change minds as to the need for his talents at the head of the government. As he had done in the year since the denial of the office to him, Mendès France continued to publish his views as to France’s future in the midst of the political crisis following the disaster at Dien Bien Phu. Just a few weeks after the fall of Vietnam, Mendès France turned his attention to the situation in the French Union. Like Mitterrand, Mendès France had been an avid critic of the hardline colonial lobby and the inflexibility of French colonial policy, both in Vietnam and throughout the French Union. That June, he published an article in the *Revue Politique et Parlementaire* about the future of the French Union. For Mendès France, France’s downfall in Vietnam had helped crystallized the larger crisis France faced, as well as the looming threat to her overseas colonies:

The events in Indochine teach us, through a very hard lesson, the inevitable consequences of the failure of insight or courage. The decisions that have been unduly delayed do not become easier, but rather more cruel. The refusal of limited concessions when they were more timely has now led to an amputation that we must submit to at considerable disadvantage. The illusions that were formerly maintained only permitted us a moment to escape the reality that now resurfaces, but in an even worse form.⁸⁷¹

Given the failure of French policy in Vietnam, it was now time to take the lessons learned there and apply them throughout the remainder of the French Union – especially Africa.

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid. “Leurs espoirs, comme leurs intérêts, sont les nôtres; si nous voulons maintenir notre niveau de vie, notre indépendance, nos formes propres de civilisation, la métropole seule ne constitue plus une base suffisante.”

⁸⁷¹ Ibid., 525. “Les événements d’Indochine instruisent, pare une dure leçon, des conséquences qu’entraîne inévitablement le défaut de lucidité ou de courage. Les décisions que l’on a indûment différées ne deviennent pas plus faciles mais plus cruelles. La concession limitée qui a été refusée en temps utile entraîne l’amputation qu’il faut ensuite subir sans aucune contrepartie avantageuse. Les illusions qui ont été entretenues ne permettent que de fuir un moment la réalité qui resurgit aggravée.” Pierre Mendès-France, “Esquisse d’une politique de l’Union Française.”

As Mendès France noted, “it is time for France to regroup in order not to lose now in Africa, through new yet similar mistakes, her interests, friendships, and influence.”⁸⁷²

What was at stake was nothing less than a “magnificent adventure” in which France had brought immense political, social and economic progress to millions of France’s African subjects. Essentially, Mendès France framed the justification for France’s continued presence on the continent in terms of the civilizing mission. France, he believed, “is strong insofar as it embodies the ideal that, for the rest of the world, remains attached to its name...”⁸⁷³ These ideals had no connection to military power, and were contrary to the defense of unjust political systems, as had been seen in Vietnam. Rather, France’s ideals were what provided the foundation for its “moral *grandeur*.”⁸⁷⁴

While the remainder of Mendès France’s article focused mostly on events in Morocco and Tunisia, he closed with a brief discussion of sub-Saharan Africa. In referring to the region, which was significantly calmer than Vietnam or North Africa, he emphasized that “we would be wrong to pay no attention to the transformations that are occurring and the impatience that is beginning to manifest itself.”⁸⁷⁵ Although the Fourth Republic constitution had assimilated France’s African subjects into the French Union, Mendès France noted that this project had its limits. Therefore, France had to “take the initiative of reforms, and take advantage, for once, of being ahead of events.”⁸⁷⁶ This would involve reforms within the existing constitutional structure to devolve power back

⁸⁷² Ibid., 526. “Il est temps pour la France de se ressaisir afin de ne pas perdre maintenant en Afrique, par des fautes nouvelles mais semblables, ses intérêts, ses amitiés, son influence.”

⁸⁷³ Ibid., 526. “...France est forte dans la mesure où elle incarne l’idéal qui, pour le monde entier, reste attaché à son nom...”

⁸⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid., 528. “...nous aurions tort de ne prêter aucune attention aux transformations qui s’opèrent et aux impatiences qui commencent à se manifester.”

⁸⁷⁶ Ibid. “...il faut prendre l’initiative des réformes en profitant pour une fois d’une légère avance sur les événements.”

to the territorial assemblies, thus further federalizing the French Union and providing more representative government. For Mendès France, the stakes were too high to ignore the inevitable; he closed by emphasizing that “the fate of the French Union includes enough perils and difficulties, but also enough duties and hopes to prevent France from neglecting it any longer.”⁸⁷⁷

With events in Vietnam now threatening to destabilize the government in Paris, the National Assembly could no longer deny Mendès France the office of the *President du Conseil*, as they had done over a year earlier. Indeed, Mendès France’s technocratic reputation now seemed best-suited to clean up the mess in which France now found itself. On June 19, 1954, after being asked to form a government by now-President René Coty, Mendès France was invested with the office by the National Assembly. At his investiture declaration two days earlier, he presented a comprehensive plan to get France out of the crisis it found itself in, including forging a permanent peace in Vietnam, addressing the growing economic troubles, and clarifying France’s foreign policy vis-à-vis other European nations.⁸⁷⁸ After his initial speech, Mendès France allowed for a number of questions and statements, including one from Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal, then a deputy in the National Assembly, who asked him to clarify his position on French sub-Saharan Africa. Noting that “I fully appreciate the importance of Africa to the French community,” Mendès France emphasized that “France will become tomorrow whatever French Africa will become.”⁸⁷⁹ When pressed by Senghor to give assurances about

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid. “Le destin de l’Union Française comporte assez de périls et de difficultés, mais aussi de devoirs et d’espoirs, pour interdire à la France de s’abandonner plus longtemps.”

⁸⁷⁸ Pierre Mendès-France, “La déclaration d’investiture” in Pierre Mendès-France, *Oeuvres Complètes Vol. III: Gouverner c’est choisir 1954-1955* (Paris: Gallimard, 1956), 55.

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid., 58. “...je mesure pleinement l’importance de l’Afrique au sein de la communauté française... la France sera demain ce que sera l’Afrique française.”

further material aid from France so as to enable prosperity and “African *grandeur*”, Mendès France responded with a heartfelt statement regarding his commitment to the continent:

Mr. Senghor has said that Africa is the continent of tomorrow. I agree with him. I also think that if we want to preserve with it in the future the relationships that we desire, it must also be the continent of today. That is why the government that I will assemble believes that France in Africa must address the great adventure of the twentieth century, to make it possible to assure full employment and prosperity in these territories that are customarily said to be underdeveloped. The realization of this immense task, linking the overseas countries and the *métropole*, within an ultimately organic French Union, will alone ensure, as part of a community based on mutual interests, the necessary decentralizations. The end of the colonial pact ... will not be to abandon the overseas countries to their own resources – that is to say to their own misery – or to grant them freedom to become subject to another guardianship, but rather to provide them, through the resources of the *métropole*, the means for personal and complementary development.⁸⁸⁰

Mendès France’s remarks on Africa were met with overwhelming applause from most of the assembled deputies.⁸⁸¹

The Geneva Conference, which had already begun in April and eventually settled the war between North Vietnam and France, would occupy most of Mendès France’s early months as Président du Conseil. With the official division of Vietnam in two, and the establishment of western-backed Bao Dai’s government in the South, Mendès France could now turn his attention to other matters, including strengthening the foundations of

⁸⁸⁰ Ibid., 58-9. “M. Senghor a dit que l’Afrique est le continent de demain. Je suis d’accord avec lui. Je pense même que, si nous voulons conserver avec elle, demain, les liens que nous souhaitons, elle doit être le continent d’aujourd’hui. C’est pourquoi le gouvernement que je constituerai a conscience que la France doit aborder en Afrique la grande aventure du XXe siècle, assurer le plein emploi et la prospérité dans ces territoires que l’on a coutume de dire sous-développés. La réalisation de cette immense tâche associant les pays d’outre-mer et la métropole au sein d’une Union française enfin organique, permettra, seule, d’assurer, dans le cadre d’une communauté fondée sur l’intérêt réciproque, les décentralisations nécessaires. La fin du pacte colonial, puisqu’on en a parlé, ce ne serait pas d’abandonner les pays d’outre-mer à leurs ressources propres, c’est-à-dire à leur misère propre, ni de leur consentir la liberté de se livrer à une autre tutelle, mais de leur donner, sur les ressources de la métropole, les moyens d’un développement personnel et complémentaire.”

⁸⁸¹ Ibid., 59.

the French Union. On October 30, 1954, he gave a radio address to all the overseas territories, in which he established France's future direction. He first emphasized the importance of the French Union to France, noting that "with its overseas territories, France is indeed a great State, by its size, its population, the extent of its resources, its variety of climates and lands, and the colossal opportunities for development."⁸⁸² What made France great, Mendès France emphasized, were the political rights granted to all subjects of the French Union; he noted that during the vote for his investiture, "the voice of a deputy from Guinea counted just as much as that of a deputy from Paris."⁸⁸³

But Mendès France also expressed his concern that the French Union not stagnate. For this reason, he announced a significant new financial initiative to improve the economic status of France's overseas territories. Alluding to investments made by the Fonds d'Investissement pour le Développement Économique et Social (FIDES) project, he emphasized the significant gains that had already been made over the past five years, which enabled the construction of roads, seaports, and airports, and had provided industrial infrastructure for urban areas.⁸⁸⁴ To add to this, Mendès France announced a second plan, which would "ameliorate the material condition of the African peasants, who constitute more than 90 percent of the population."⁸⁸⁵ This would be accompanied by a further reinvestment in industry, as well as a renewed focus on education of Africans so that they could eventually play a role in the administration of their territories. France

⁸⁸² Ibid., 419. "Avec les territoires d'outre-mer, la France est, en vérité, un très grand État, par sa superficie, sa population, l'étendue de ses ressources, la variété de ses climats et de ses terres, et des colossales possibilités de développement."

⁸⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁴ Ibid., 420.

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid. "Le second plan aura pour l'objectif d'améliorer la condition matérielle de la paysannerie d'Afrique qui représente plus de 90% de la population."

and her overseas territories, Mendès France noted, had to work together, as this common destiny “is the future of France and of liberty.”⁸⁸⁶

Unfortunately for Mendès France, his government was not immune to the instabilities and political fickleness inherent to the Fourth Republic. On November 1, 1954, members of Algeria’s Front de Liberation National launched a series of guerilla attacks throughout Algeria, thus beginning the eight year war for independence. For his part, Mendès France strongly condemned the attacks in a rousing speech before the National Assembly on November 12. Taking a decidedly different approach from his previous advocacy for more conciliation in the colonies, Mendès France now affirmed that “we do not compromise when it comes to defending the internal peace of the nation, or the unity and integrity of the Republic... Between [Algeria] and the *métropole*, there can be no conceivable secession. This must be clear once and for all, and forever – in Algeria, the *métropole*, and abroad.”⁸⁸⁷ Mendès France’s words were overwhelmingly applauded by all parties in the National Assembly, but it would not be long before his enemies on the right would take advantage of the crisis to bring down his government. Despite Mendès France’s initially tough stance, he had taken the opportunity to propose a series of reforms in Algeria, similar to reforms that were already underway in Tunisia. The unpopularity of both of these enabled his political enemies, most notably former Président du Conseil René Mayer, who accused Mendès France of sponsoring policies that enabled terrorism. By February, the situation in the National Assembly had deteriorated beyond Mendès France’s control, and his government succumbed to a no-confidence vote on February 5, 1955.

⁸⁸⁶ Ibid., 421. “...il est le destin de la France et de la Liberté.”

⁸⁸⁷ Ibid., 455.

Mendès France's popularity and expertise were too valuable to go wasted in the new government. The new Président du Conseil, the socialist Guy Mollet, immediately appointed him as the Ministre d'état – essentially a ministry without portfolio – to enable Mendès France to participate in the deliberations of Mollet's government. His fall from the lead post would further liberate his thinking on Algeria. By June of that year he was making clear the connection between the events in Algeria and the previous tragedy in Vietnam. In a speech before the executive committee of the Parti Radical on June 8, Mendès France emphasized that like the situation in Vietnam, France needed to be more progressive in its policies. Half-measures that might have placated the rebels several months before would no longer suffice. What was at stake was not just the future of Algeria, but also that of France as well:

I still think, at this moment, of French *grandeur*, of the *grandeur* of this magnificent Empire, united and lasting, which has made us proud. We will have guarded it poorly on the day when we disappoint the very people who had faith in us. But this time... we can restore, reclaim, and thus recreate a new French community in Africa, a community that will be based on common interests, but also on restored confidence. This is our duty; it is our historic responsibility.⁸⁸⁸

Mendès France also emphasized that, like Vietnam, the crisis in Algeria had implications for the rest of the French empire as well. Unless France treated its sub-Saharan African territories with a progressive mentality that had escaped it in the years preceding the struggle in Algeria, it would suffer violent turmoil similar to that taking place in North Africa. However, he believed that hope remained for French sub-Saharan Africa, "which

⁸⁸⁸ Pierre Mendès France, "Sauver l'Afrique tout entière" in Pierre Mendès France, *Oeuvres Complètes, Vol. IV: Pour une république moderne, 1955-1962* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 199. "Je pense encore, dans cet instant, à la grandeur française, à la grandeur de ce magnifique Empire solidaire et durable qui faisait notre fierté. Nous l'avons mal gardé le jour où nous avons déçu les peuples qui avaient eu foi en nous. Mais cette fois que nous avons su leur inculquer, nous pourrons la restaurer, la reconquérir, et ainsi recréer une nouvelle communauté française en Afrique, une communauté qui sera fondée sur les intérêts communs mais aussi sur la confiance rétablie. Cela, c'est notre devoir, c'est notre responsabilité historique."

will benefit from the reforms contained in the *loi cadre* adopted by the National Assembly... which will give to the people of black Africa the proof of our voluntary commitment to promotion and progress.”⁸⁸⁹ What was at stake, quite literally, was France’s entire historical project in Africa:

We are at the crucial hour when we must renew and save the whole of Africa – black Africa as well as North Africa. The great interests which are invested there, the general interests of France - political influence, strategic positions, our role in the world, cultural influence, an essential complement to our European economy – and also the interests of French settlers there, some of whom have been there for a very long time, interests acquired through generations of ardent workers who have made the prosperity of these countries, who have contributed to the advancement of their peoples, and who must continue to render the same services tomorrow for the common good – this is precisely what we must save!⁸⁹⁰

Therefore, what was needed in Mendès France’s view was a rejection of traditional colonial mentalities – just as Mitterrand had argued in his writings on the French Union. What threatened the future of the French Union, Mendès France argued, was not a mentality of reform and compromise. Rather, it was “the eternal blindness, the eternal conservative and colonial egoism, it is the misunderstanding of the aspirations of our subjects, it is the recourse to police repression disguised as a political solution.”⁸⁹¹ These

⁸⁸⁹ Ibid. “Il se pose dans cette Afrique noire qui va bénéficier des réformes contenues dans la loi-cadre, adoptée par l’Assemblée nationale, qui a subi depuis quelques marchandages et des retards fâcheux, que je regrette, mais qui donnera aux populations de l’Afrique noire la preuve de notre volonté de promotion et de progrès.”

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid. “Nous sommes à l’heure crucial où nous devons rénover et sauver l’Afrique tout entière, l’Afrique noire comme l’Afrique du Nord. Les grands intérêts qui y sont investis, intérêts généraux de la France – influence politique, positions stratégiques, rôle dans le monde, rayonnement culturel, compléments indispensables à notre économie européenne – mais aussi intérêts des Français installés là-bas, parfois depuis longtemps, intérêts acquis par des générations de travailleurs ardents qui ont fait la prospérité de ces pays, qui ont contribué à l’avancement des populations, et qui doivent continuer à rendre les mêmes services demain pour le bien commun – voilà ce que nous avons à sauver!”

⁸⁹¹ Ibid., 201. “Or, ce qui a compromis le destin de l’Union française, l’éternel aveuglement, c’est l’éternel égoïsme conservateur et colonialiste, c’est l’incompréhension des aspirations des autochtones, c’est le recours à la répression policière en guise de la solution politique.”

hardline solutions, he emphasized, had to be rejected, as they led only to revolt and disorder.

It must be emphasized that while Mendès France's conception of Africa, like that of Mitterrand, represented a break from traditional attitudes toward the colonies, he was nevertheless unable to imagine a future in which the colonies would be outside of the French orbit. Like many other figures in the Fourth Republic, he might have been able to envision a day of independence for many of France's colonies, but he strongly believed that France would continue to play a fundamental and positive role after decolonization. This is precisely why he viewed traditional colonial sensibilities as so dangerous – they threatened to undermine France's ongoing civilizing mission, and consequently its influence, both now and in the future. As he noted in June 1958, as the Fourth Republic began to crumble, "if we consider now, not only in terms of countries suddenly promoted to independence, but also the notion of universal progress, the breaking of relations between a European country and a former colony too often implies the abandonment of large, undeveloped areas to a cruel and disturbing fate."⁸⁹² What was implicitly understood was that without providing continuing economic and cultural benefits, France would be unable to justify its continued involvement on the continent.

The *Loi Cadre* and Eurafrique

Mitterrand and Mendès France's ideas would have great influence on France's Africa policy in the late Fourth Republic. Throughout the latter half of the 1950s, a

⁸⁹² Pierre Mendès France, "Postface à La Politique de Carthage de Simone Gros." Ibid., 433-4. "Si nous nous plaçons maintenant, non plus seulement au point de vue de pays brusquement promu à l'indépendance, mais à celui du progrès universel, la rupture des relations entre un pays européen et une ancienne colonie implique trop souvent l'abandon de vastes régions sous-développées à un sort cruel et inquiétant."

variety of proposals were put forth in an attempt to restructure and better preserve France's relationship with sub-Saharan Africa. In the midst of the ongoing military disaster at Dien Bien Phu, French colonial administrators revealed an ambitious project to increase autonomy at the local level. This new policy was announced by Louis Jacquinot, *Ministre de la France d'Outre-Mer*, in a speech before the National Assembly in April 1954. In the speech, Jacquinot revealed the intention of the colonial office to broaden the powers of the territorial assemblies, set up councils to assist the *métropole*-appointed governors, and enable more input on economic policy from France's subjects within the French Union.⁸⁹³ Later that year, Jacquinot made a trip to AOF to unveil this strategy to the Grand Council there.⁸⁹⁴

However, it would take an additional two years for these reforms in sub-Saharan Africa to be realized. As discussed in chapter three, the constitution of the Fourth Republic had enumerated which powers would reside with the French Union, and had assigned very little real power to the local assemblies in the overseas territories. Therefore, the intended reforms announced by Jacquinot would require a significant restructuring of the French Union itself. At the urging of socialist *Ministre de la France d'Outre-Mer* Gaston Defferre, the National Assembly passed the *loi cadre* in June 1956. As Tony Chafer explains, the law essentially split governmental functions into two categories – state services and territorial services.⁸⁹⁵ The former would remain with the government in Paris, while the latter would be assigned to the territorial assemblies. A

⁸⁹³ The contents of Jacquinot's speech were reported by the French delegation in a meeting with U.S. officials that May. See Memorandum of Conversation by Jerome R. Lavalley, Office of African Affairs, May 13, 1956. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952-1954, Vol. XI: Africa and South Asia* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 121.

⁸⁹⁴ Louis Jacquinot, *Allocution prononcée par Monsieur Louis Jacquinot, Ministre de la France d'Outre-Mer au Grand Conseil de l'Afrique Occidentale Française* (Dakar, 1954).

⁸⁹⁵ Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 166.

series of later decrees determined that “state services” encompassed military defense of the French Union, foreign affairs, national police, customs, the monetary system, and higher education, among others.⁸⁹⁶ The remainder of government functions were defined as “territorial services” and left to the responsibility of local governments in the overseas territories. As Chafer notes, the proponents of the reform “sought to maintain French dominance by keeping control of certain strategic areas of ‘high’ policy deemed central to ‘sovereignty’ ...”⁸⁹⁷ At the same time, they also “sought to take the French colonial administration out of the political front line by transferring responsibility for unpopular decisions to Africans.”⁸⁹⁸

While the *loi cadre* had clear benefits for the *métropole*, many of France’s colonial officials nevertheless viewed it as bringing radical change to colonial government, and were vehemently opposed to it. In January 1955, Paul Chauvet, then governor-general for AEF, wrote a lengthy letter to Robert Buron, *Ministre de la France d’Outre-Mer*, about the brewing reforms. Noting that the law would “radically transform the character of the territorial assemblies,” Chauvet argued that it would unnecessarily accelerate the political evolution of AEF, at a time when there were not enough African leaders ready to assume further responsibilities.⁸⁹⁹ Further, the reforms would undermine the powers of the governor general and cause confusion about the distribution of power in France’s African territories. Most importantly, reform would lead to a loss of French control over the continent, with Chauvet warning of “disorders that will result for the

⁸⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁸ Ibid., 167.

⁸⁹⁹ Paul Chauvet, *Gouverneur-Général de l’Afrique Équatoriale Française*, à Robert Buron, *Ministre de la France d’Outre-Mer*, Jan. 13, 1955, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 491.

overseas territories by the institution of uncoordinated reforms, and for which they are completely unprepared.”⁹⁰⁰

But such sentiments were futile in light of the unfolding anticolonial trend in North Africa. By mid-1955, consensus was already developing as to the need for political reforms in sub-Saharan Africa. An internal memo from July 1955 is instructive of the mentalities of French colonial officials during this period. The memo opened by stating that “the reform of [government] structures in AOF has been forced by events.”⁹⁰¹ As the memo noted, a significant justification for territorial political reforms was that they would enable France to maintain its relationship with Africa going forward. Most importantly, France needed to restructure its relations with the overseas territories so that they “will no longer assume the aspect of one being subjected to another, but rather of assistance and aid freely given.”⁹⁰² Once accomplished, the reforms would help insure that French relations with Africa would be preserved through formation of African cadres friendly to France, technical assistance, and other advances in areas spanning transport, justice, and production.⁹⁰³ Essentially, the *loi cadre* reforms would provide a preemptive strike against the sort of unrest already seen in Vietnam and Algeria – exactly what Mitterrand and Mendès France had been arguing for.

At the same time that the French colonial ministry and the National Assembly were debating whether to extend power to the territorial assemblies, the thinking of many politicians and colonial administrators was being influenced by the concept of

⁹⁰⁰ Ibid., 7.

⁹⁰¹ Ibid., 2.

⁹⁰² Mémoire sur la réforme des structures de l’AOF, July 11, 1955, p. 12, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 491. “...liens qui ne prendront plus l’aspect d’un sujettissement mais d’une assistance et d’une aide gratuites.”

⁹⁰³ Ibid.

Eurafrique. The concept embodied the notion that Europe and Africa had both historical and practical ties that necessitated a closer and more vital relationship in the future. As Louisa Rice has recently demonstrated, the concept can be traced to the 1930s, but began receiving more serious consideration by the early 1950s.⁹⁰⁴ By this time, its main ideas had been clarified – namely, “that the two continents were complementary, inextricably linked primarily through socio-economic interdependency, and that the conjoined land mass was of great strategic importance on the ‘chessboard of the world.’”⁹⁰⁵ As Rice notes, this had clear implications in the international arena during the 1950s, when many modern-day European institutions were constructed, including the European Defense Community and European Economic Community.⁹⁰⁶

Of course, for French leaders, the concept of *Eurafrique* was less concerned with the *European* relationship with Africa than it was with *France’s* future on the continent. As explained by French Ambassador Alphanand in a note to Christian Pineau in May of that year, “the creation of *Eurafrique* involves a tightening of relations between Europe and a large part of the African continent. It has as its object to fortify this ensemble and to maintain it within the camp of the free world by making it less vulnerable to the temptations of communism or totalitarianism.”⁹⁰⁷ As understood by American officials,

⁹⁰⁴ Louisa Claire Rice, *Reframing Imperialism: France, West Africa and Colonial Culture in the Era of Decolonization, 1944-1968*. Doctoral Dissertation, New Brunswick: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2006, 20-1. See also Yves Montarsolo, *L’Eurafrique: contrepoint de l’idée d’Europe: le cas français de la fin de la deuxième guerre mondiale aux négociations des traités de Rome* (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l’Université de Provence, 2010).

⁹⁰⁵ Rice, *Reframing Imperialism*, 21.

⁹⁰⁶ See Rice’s discussion of debates regarding the European Defense Community, *Ibid.*, 29-38.

⁹⁰⁷ M. Alphanand, Ambassadeur de France à Washington, à M. Pineau, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1957, Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1990), 769 “La création de l’Eurafrique implique un resserrement des liens entre l’Europe et une large portion du continent africain. Elle a pour objet de fortifier cet ensemble et de le maintenir dans le camp du monde libre en le rendant moins vulnérable au communisme ou aux tentations du totalitarisme.”

it represented a means to continue France's influence on the continent. A memo from Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to President Eisenhower noted that the concept of Eurafrique "is an ambitious but meritorious idea, which may be a device for transferring the present colonial relationship into a partnership on more equal terms."⁹⁰⁸

These efforts to link the future of Africa to developing European institutions achieved results in February 1957, when diplomatic representatives from the six European Common Market countries met in Paris and agreed to a loose association between the common market and overseas territories, committing \$581 million over five years to France's overseas territories - \$270 million of which came from France.⁹⁰⁹ But there could be no question that the initiative would further French interests both on the continent and within the international arena. British officials immediately became suspicious, complaining in November 1957 that "this so-called free trade zone corresponds only to an extension of a preferential regime, and principally the one that exists between France and its territories in Africa."⁹¹⁰ British officials also felt that associating African territories with European countries could serve as a drag for western economies participating in the free exchange zone.⁹¹¹ It could also hurt the market for European-made goods, given the more cheaply produced goods presumably coming from

⁹⁰⁸ Memorandum from the Secretary of State to the President, Feb. 23 1957. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1955-1957, Vol. XXVII: Western Europe and Canada* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992), 105.

⁹⁰⁹ M. Alphand, Ambassadeur de France à Washington à Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Feb. 27, 1957. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1957 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1990), 349.

⁹¹⁰ M. André Philip, Président de la Délégation française au G.A.T.T., à M. Pineau, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Nov. 8, 1957. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1957 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1991), 649. "...cette prétendue zone de libre-échange ne correspondait qu'à une extension d'un régime préférentiel, principalement de celui existant entre la France et ses territoires d'Afrique."

⁹¹¹ Communication du Département à l'Ambassade de Grande-Bretagne à Paris, Nov. 20, 1957. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1957 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1991), 723.

the continent. For their part, French officials attempted to justify the project by noting that it would help develop solidarity between Europe and the continent, and would lead them to better economic, social, and cultural development.⁹¹²

Ironically, the French also found that the concept of *Eurafrrique* could also be used against them to great effect in their ongoing colonial struggles. What the new concept offered was the possibility of a significantly more decentralized relationship based on trade and economic ties, and not on direct political rule. This was used to great effect by other nations attempting to restrain France's ongoing influence on the continent, as the concept suggested that traditional forms of colonialism were obsolete. One example of this could be seen in the midst of debates at the United Nations concerning the future of Algeria in 1957, when Tunisian and Moroccan officials approached U.S. representatives. They discussed the potential of *Eurafrrique*, and the possibility of its realization being threatened by continued French military action in North Africa.⁹¹³ From the United States' perspective, the notion of *Eurafrrique* offered another defense against the encroachment of communism on the continent, as it would link Africa more closely with the western democracies of Europe. Therefore, the Tunisian and Moroccan officials implied, the United States needed to pressure France to back down in Algeria, so that the new arrangement of power on the continent – specifically one more favorable to American interests – could be realized.

Of course, the concept of using the supposedly liberal ideology of the colonial powers against them was not a novel one. But what both the *loi cadre* and the notion of

⁹¹² Ibid., 723-4.

⁹¹³ M. Alphand, Ambassadeur de France à Washington, à M. Pineau, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1957, Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1990), 769-770.

Eurafrique accomplished was to provide a vision of the future in Africa whereby a colonial system that had existed for decades would have to endure in some alternate form. As this chapter and the previous one have shown, France had its share of foes in the international arena who wished to end the French presence in sub-Saharan Africa completely. But there remained eloquent voices in favor of France's continued role on the continent. The most compelling arguments came from those who were the supposed beneficiaries of the French colonial project.

Voices from Africa: Léopold Sédar Senghor and Félix Houphouët-Boigny

To this point, this dissertation has largely focused on the views of politicians and colonial officials from the *métropole*. But the notion of sub-Saharan Africa as existentially important to France's future was not merely European-driven. Throughout the Fourth Republic – and before it was clear that independence could be realized in the near future – sub-Saharan African leaders played an important role in justifying both the beneficial nature of the French Union, and France's continuing presence on the continent. These leaders freely adopted the language of the civilizing mission, spoke of the importance of France to Africa's future, and framed their discussion of political and economic advancement within the larger structure of the French Union. While a variety of African leaders were strong advocates of France's influence, two were particularly important during the Fourth Republic in justifying the French presence, both to Africans and within the international community. They were Senegal's Léopold Sédar Senghor and Ivory Coast's Félix Houphouët-Boigny.

The two men initially had divergent mentalities concerning the value of French presence in Africa. After decolonization, they would diverge once more, as they became rivals in a series of regional power struggles in West Africa. But for most of the Fourth Republic, Senghor and Houphouët-Boigny could find common ground on the importance of maintaining France's relationship with Africa. Born in Senegal, Senghor came from a part of the French empire in which Africans could be educated within the French system and attain French citizenship.⁹¹⁴ He therefore embodied the success of the *mission civilisatrice*'s attempt to assimilate Africans into the body politic through French culture and education. This enabled him to travel to France before World War II and graduate from the University of Paris. During this prewar period, Senghor taught in France, published several poems, and began collaborations with other African intellectuals to launch the movement eventually known as *négritude*, which strongly rejected traditional French colonial mentalities about Africans and attempted to reinvent literature from a distinctly African perspective.⁹¹⁵ But his criticisms of these colonial mentalities did not represent a wholesale rejection of the French republic. During the prewar era, Senghor maintained that French culture could have a positive effect on Africa's development. His belief in this notion of France would be reflected in his service in the French military during World War II prior to the Nazi invasion of Paris.

⁹¹⁴ See Janet G. Vaillant, *Black, French, and African: A Life of Léopold Sédar Senghor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990); Jean-Pierre Biondi, *Senghor: La tentation de l'universel* (Paris: Denoel, 1993).

⁹¹⁵ See Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Négritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Sylvia Washington Bâ, *The Concept of Négritude in the Poetry of Léopold Sédar Senghor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973); Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Les fondements de l'africanité ou négritude et arabité* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1967).

With the end of the war and the establishment of the new government, Senghor became a deputy in the National Assembly in Paris, and eventually a national symbol for Senegal. In Senghor, the Fourth Republic had from its inception a relatively strong ally who firmly believed in the French colonial project and was eager to mount a spirited defense of the values of French civilization to Africa's future. In 1945, as the war came to an end, and amidst debates about the extent of reform in France's colonies, Senghor contributed an essay to a collaborative work, *La communauté impériale française*, in which he discussed the challenges posed by the encounter between French colonizers and Africans. For Senghor, while the war had undermined the legitimacy of France's presence on the continent, the value of France to Africa's future was beyond question. "France does not have to justify its colonial conquests, any more than it does the annexation of Bretagne or the Basque countries," he noted. "She must only reconcile her interests and those of her subjects."⁹¹⁶ For Senghor, reconciling interests involved a combination of the traditional colonial policies of association and assimilation. France had to assimilate Africans into its empire, while at the same time finding a way to respect those traditions and social structures that had value to the continent. In other words, rather than pursue a radical assimilation that made Africans into Frenchmen, Africans had to become part of France's empire "in the spirit of the French civilization."⁹¹⁷ There could be no question about the mutual relationship the two would have in the future, as Senghor spoke of a "common ideal" that could unite the two continents in a shared

⁹¹⁶ Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Vues sur l'Afrique noire ou assimiler, non êtres assimilés" in *La Communauté impériale française* (Paris: Editions Alsatia, 1945), 58. "La France n'a pas à justifier ses conquêtes coloniales, pas plus que l'annexion de la Bretagne ou du pays Basques. Elle doit seulement concilier ses intérêts et ceux des autochtones."

⁹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 65. "Il est surtout question, pour la Colonie, de s'assimiler l'esprit de la civilisation française."

purpose. “This common ideal,” he noted, “can be found within [the *métropole*’s] traditions, and it will be this tradition that will construct the unity of the French Empire.”⁹¹⁸

To be sure, Senghor was no dupe for the policies of French colonial hardliners. Throughout the Fourth Republic, he worked to ensure that French Union policies would be planned and carried out in the spirit of a cooperative endeavor, and not informed by traditional colonial notions of European domination of Africa. This latter mentality could be clearly seen in 1950 during the London Conference, which as discussed in the previous chapter, had been instrumental in formulating the Combined Commission for Technical Cooperation in Africa South of the Sahara (CCTA) and establishing plans for the economic integration of Europe and Africa. When word of the London proceedings became public, Senghor and his followers were quite concerned that the future of the continent was being determined without proper input from African representatives. On May 17, 1950, Senghor and 67 representatives from the National Assembly and the Assembly of the French Union, labeling themselves the “Groupe Interparlementaire des Indépendants d’Outre-Mer”, drafted a resolution stating their concerns about the proceedings in London. The resolution emphasized that “it is not possible, after having solemnly proclaimed that the colonial regime is abolished overseas, to make French overseas territories in Africa an international colony.”⁹¹⁹ The resolution further argued that a Eurafrikan collaboration could only take the form of “an association of economic

⁹¹⁸ Ibid., 98. “Cette idéal commun, les Colonies disent à la Métropole qu’elle peut le trouver dans sa tradition même et que c’est cette tradition qui fera l’unité de l’Empire Français.”

⁹¹⁹ Une résolution du groupe interparlementaire des indépendants d’outre-mer à propos des décisions de la Conférence de Londres, May 16, 1950, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2224, Dossier 2. “Qu’il n’est pas possible, après avoir proclamé solennellement que la régime colonial était aboli outre-mer, de faire, des Territoires français d’Afrique une ‘colonie’ internationale...”

character, freely concluded on equal terms, in which the present and future interests of Africa will be safeguarded in the same manner as those of Europe.”⁹²⁰ Africa, the resolution emphasized, would no longer accept being an “appendage” of Europe, relegated to a position of providing raw materials and labor for the continent. For his part, *Ministre de France d’Outre-Mer* Jean Letorneau made sure to promptly write Senghor to reassure him that this was not the case, and that the discussions in London were not paving the way for the domination of Africa by Europe.⁹²¹

While initially skeptical about the application of the concept of *Eurafrique* to the future of the continent, Senghor would eventually become one of its greatest proponents. Throughout his political career, Senghor could not divorce himself from his French cultural heritage; he remained a man strongly rooted in two worlds, affirming the fundamental importance of his African background, but nevertheless embracing the contribution that his French education had on his literary and political careers. By the mid-1950s, he had accepted the practical application of the *Eurafrique* concept; as Rice notes, he recognized it “as a way of furthering African participation in decision making that affected Frenchmen beyond the hexagon.”⁹²² The crises of 1954 would have little effect on this fundamental tenet of his ideology; while external events made the possibility of independence more real, they could not dissolve the existential ties that existed between France and her colonies in Africa.

⁹²⁰ Ibid. “Que l’*Eurafrique*, notamment, que nous croyons nécessaire et possible, ne saurait être conçue que sous la forme d’une association de caractère économique, librement conclus sur un pied d’égalité, où les intérêts présents et futurs de l’Afrique seront sauvegardés dans les mêmes conditions que ceux de l’Europe.”

⁹²¹ Jean Letorneau à Léopold Sédar Senghor, June 9, 1950, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2224, Dossier 2.

⁹²² Rice, *Reframing Imperialism*, 41.

Even in the face of possible decolonization, Senghor remained faithful to his vision of France's continued importance for the development of Africa. In his 1959 report on the principles of the African Federation Party, he reaffirmed the French relationship with Africa, noting that "[w]hat unites us is our common determination to construct, in stages, a Federal State, or better still, a Negro-African Nation freely associated with France in a Confederation."⁹²³ While this certainly involved the embrace of African tradition, it also meant continuing to learn from French influence. For Senghor, independence did not represent a radical break; he remained suspicious of militant anticolonial movements, as had been seen at the Bandung Conference. Such desires for immediate independence could only lead to "balkanization" and the weakening of individual territories in Africa.⁹²⁴ Instead, he emphasized, "[w]e should be impoverishing ourselves and very probably renouncing the hope of catching up our thousand year lag if, on the pretext of the anti-colonial struggle, we rejected the contributions of Europe."⁹²⁵ His goal was "a dynamic symbiosis on a scale befitting Africa and the twentieth century, but above all, befitting man."⁹²⁶

While Senghor advocated for continued association with France because of its contributions to the continent, he also understood that Africa was vitally important to France's future. This went beyond mere economic exploitation; instead, France's connection to Africa was deeply rooted in its sense of national identity:

The evolution of the Community in the sense of History and of its own internal dynamism is in our interests. It is also in the interests of France. France has nothing to gain from following a policy of desperation, a policy of all or nothing.

⁹²³ Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Report on the Principles and Programme of the Party* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1959), 7.

⁹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

Naturally, on the economic plane, France can do without Negro Africa. She cannot do without her on the political plane or on the cultural plane. France is not Holland. She is a great lady who needs the luster of a large family. Reduced to a small compass, she would fail in her mission in the world, which is to defend Man; she would lose her soul and her reasons for living.⁹²⁷

As the next chapter will discuss, events would quickly overtake Senghor's hope for West Africa's participation in a federation with France. But he would do his best to maintain a strong relationship with France after decolonization in 1960.

Unlike Senghor, Ivory Coast's Félix Houphouët-Boigny did not receive his education in France, instead taking his medical degree from the French colonial school in Senegal.⁹²⁸ He became a farmer and successful landowner, and later entered local politics. After the war, he was elected to the French National Assembly as the representative from Ivory Coast. But his status as an outsider to the *métropole* had already shaped his political ideology. In Houphouët-Boigny, the young Fourth Republic found a formidable adversary, eager to point out the evils of colonialism and the hypocrisy of the French project in Africa. This was made clear on March 30, 1946, when Houphouët-Boigny, then a delegate to the Constituent Assembly, gave a rousing and combative speech against the evils of forced labor in the overseas territories and the need to abolish it once and for all.⁹²⁹ Despite French efforts to end the practice, Houphouët-Boigny asserted that it persisted throughout France's African territories, and especially his home of Ivory Coast; its continued presence on French territory was "not only

⁹²⁷ Ibid., 29.

⁹²⁸ Houphouët-Boigny's own account of his early years can be found in Félix Houphouët-Boigny, *Mes premiers combats* (Abidjan: Nouvelles Editions Ivoiriennes, 1994). See also Pierre Nandjui, *Houphouët-Boigny: L'homme de la France en Afrique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995).

⁹²⁹ Félix Houphouët-Boigny, "Rapport sur la suppression du travail forcé dans les territoires d'outre-mer, March 30, 1946" in Félix Houphouët-Boigny, *Anthologie des Discours, Tome I* (Abidjan: Editions Ceda, 1978), 25-45.

destructive, inhumane, and anti-democratic, but also anti-economical.”⁹³⁰ Throughout the speech, he referred bitterly to the French *colons* who had imposed the policy on the continent; quite simply, these practices had put the lie to the notion of the French civilizing mission. In urging the Constituent Assembly to take further measures to abolish forced labor, Houphouët-Boigny emphasized that “a unique occasion is offered to us today to prove to the world that the France of the rights of man and the citizen, the France of the abolition of slavery, always remains equal to itself and will not challenge or limit the freedom of peoples living under its own flag.”⁹³¹

As discussed in chapter three, while France had already made efforts to attempt to abolish forced labor, Houphouët-Boigny became rapidly disenchanted with the new republic. Starting with the Bamako Conference of October 1946, which consolidated many of Africa’s pro-autonomy political movements into the cross-territorial *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (RDA), Houphouët-Boigny assumed a decidedly more militant stance, criticizing French hypocrisy at every turn and questioning the wisdom and necessity of a continued French presence in Africa. In December 1947 in Dakar, he emphasized that Africa was “on the move” – largely because of the growing realization by Africans that they had to seize their political rights from a French government that was hesitant to grant them. Houphouët-Boigny indicated that with the war over, it was now time to organize politically in sub-Saharan Africa. In the process, he urged Africans to take note of several French “contradictions” – including the

⁹³⁰ Ibid., 26. “...le travail forcé dans une terre française est non seulement destructeur, inhumain, anti-démocratique, mais anti-économique.”

⁹³¹ Ibid., 45. “...une occasion unique nous est offerte aujourd’hui de prouver au monde que la France des droits de l’homme et du citoyen, la France de l’abolition de l’esclavage reste toujours égale à elle-même et ne saurait contester, ni limiter la liberté d’aucun des peuples vivant sous son drapeau.”

contradiction between the abolition of slavery and the persistence of forced labor; the supposed French dedication to educating their subjects, juxtaposed with the reality of a broken education system; the futility of sponsoring development programs at the same time that Africa's resources were being pillaged; and many others.⁹³² The following year, after the communists had been expelled from the Fourth Republic's ministries by Paul Ramadier, Houphouët-Boigny condemned the hypocrisy of the French political system, noting the contradiction between France's alleged support for political rights and "the present policy of repression against our populations, which coincides with its anti-labor policy and measures taken against the most democratic of the French, our friends the communists..."⁹³³

Strikingly, in these early years when the RDA was collaborating with the PCF, Houphouët-Boigny spoke in very combative terms when it came to the French colonizers. In the same address in December 1947, he attacked the "colonialists" who, "with the millions earned from the labor of the African masses, have come to Paris to distribute monstrous propaganda against the maintenance of democratic liberties... liberties that risk limiting their scandalous profits."⁹³⁴ In the long run, he strongly implied, Africa could not expect the French colonizers to uphold political rights for Africans, as these "colonialistes" could not be trusted. Consequently, Africa's future lay on its own continent, and not in association with France. He emphasized that "the unity of action by

⁹³² Félix Houphouët-Boigny, "Le continent Africain en marche", December 1947. Ibid., 49-50.

⁹³³ Félix Houphouët-Boigny, "Rapport sur les conditions historiques du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain" Oct. 21, 1948. Ibid., 75. "...la politique actuelle de répression contre nos populations qui coïncide avec la politique anti-ouvrière et exclusive lancée contre les meilleurs démocrates français, nos amis communistes..."

⁹³⁴ "Les colonialistes, avec les millions gagnés aux dépens de la masse laborieuse africaine, sont venus à Paris faire une propagande monstre contre le maintien des libertés démocratiques... libertés qui risquent de limiter leur scandaleux profits." Ibid., 56.

Africans is the primordial condition of success in their battle for the emancipation of Africa.”⁹³⁵ Closing with a flourish, he urged Africans to seize their future, noting that the continent “is going – painfully, but confidently, toward its future, a luminous future. The sun is shining over Africa.”⁹³⁶

The rhetoric of Houphouët-Boigny and other RDA leaders, along with the escalating political unrest in Ivory Coast and the RDA’s affiliation with the communists, partially explain the Fourth Republic’s policy of repression against the party. From 1947 to 1950, the more the RDA found increasing popularity throughout West Africa, the greater the threat that French leaders believed that it posed to stability in the republic. But as already discussed, the appointment of François Mitterrand to the post of *Ministre de la France d’Outre-Mer* presented a watershed moment for the RDA’s future. With the RDA’s abandonment of the PCF in October 1950 – some called it a betrayal – it became a generally accepted political party within the framework of the French Union. Now, instead of being known as a recalcitrant party opposed to the basic mission of the French Union and republican democracy, the RDA entered the mainstream, eager to exercise its newfound political relevance both in the *métropole* and in Africa. Not surprisingly, its leaders, and most prominently Houphouët-Boigny, reoriented their approach to accommodate the notions of Africa’s future under French guidance, and the mutual importance of the two continents to one another.

Essentially, with the RDA out of political exile, Houphouët-Boigny became one of the most effective and outspoken advocates for France’s project in Africa. Like

⁹³⁵ Ibid. “L’unité d’action des Africains est la condition primordiale du succès dans leur lutte pour l’émancipation de l’Afrique.”

⁹³⁶ Ibid., 59. “Elle va, douloureuse, mais confiante, vers son destin, un destin lumineux: le soleil est de l’Afrique.”

Senghor and Félix Éboué before him, Houphouët-Boigny represented both the success of French education in Africa, and the embodiment of why France was necessary for Africa's future. The message was even more powerful given Houphouët-Boigny's former status as a political exile. Once vehemently opposed to the French mission, he now stood as one of its greatest champions. What is important to note is that, even in the face of France's military setbacks in Vietnam and Algeria, unlike political leaders in Algeria, the RDA did not adopt a more militaristic or aggressive approach in the face of French weakness. Instead, it framed the cause of African progress within the larger narrative of mutual ties between France and Africa.

This dramatic *volte-face* was made clear in Houphouët-Boigny's address in Abidjan on October 6, 1951, when he called for calm in the midst of civil and political unrest rampant throughout the country. He also attempted to justify the recent break of the RDA from the PCF, claiming that the RDA had never "shared the communist ideology."⁹³⁷ Noting that circumstances were now different from the ones that existed in 1946, he emphasized that it was now time to cooperate with the institutions of the Fourth Republic:

What matters most to us is the union of all men of good will, above our political parties and in the best interests of Côte d'Ivoire, the Republic and the French Union. To our brothers in the *métropole*, I give assurances that the union of Africans will not provide any cause for concern. The Republic is made of the union of all regions within it. The French Union is the harmonious synthesis of all local unions, drawing its strength from the common interests to develop, defend, and safeguard. In our obligatory coexistence on this territory of the Republic, we need one other.⁹³⁸

⁹³⁷ Félix Houphouët-Boigny, "Solennelle déclaration publique au Stade Géo André à Abidjan", Oct. 6, 1951. Ibid., 85.

⁹³⁸ Ibid., 88-9. "Mais ce qui compte le plus à nos yeux, c'est l'union de tous les hommes de bonne volonté, par-dessus nos partis politiques et dans l'intérêt supérieur de la Côte d'Ivoire, de la République et de l'Union Française. A nos frères métropolitains, je donne l'assurance que l'union des Africains ne peut à aucun titre les inquiéter. La République est faite de l'union de

In closing, Houphouët-Boigny emphasized the shared destiny of the two continents, noting “our unwavering faith in the magnificent future of our beloved territory within the French Union.”⁹³⁹

Throughout the 1950s, Houphouët-Boigny’s rhetoric against the *métropole* would continue to thaw, as it became increasingly apparent that the French presence on the continent was well-entrenched, and that Africans were gradually attaining political freedoms. The RDA made certain to discourage political unrest by emphasizing the importance of peaceful cooperation with the French authorities. From June 8-11, 1955, the RDA met in Conakry, and afterwards, Houphouët-Boigny issued a statement about further cooperation with France, affirming the party’s belief that “it is possible to make a better life for all, if we know how to coordinate our efforts for a peaceful and prosperous coexistence.”⁹⁴⁰ In order to achieve this, he argued, Africans had to relinquish any petty resentments they held about France’s past role on the continent. He noted that “no profound antagonism separates the colonizers from the *métropole* from Africans, with the exception of vain prejudices and irrational fears, which the concern for our common future gives us a duty to combat together.”⁹⁴¹ Therefore, Houphouët-Boigny noted that the RDA encouraged cooperation between African leaders and the colonial

toutes les régions qui la composent. L’Union française sera la synthèse harmonieuse de toutes les unions locales, puisant ses forces dans la communauté des intérêts à développer, à défendre, à sauvegarder. Dans notre coexistence obligatoire sur ce territoire de la République, nous avons besoin les uns des autres.”

⁹³⁹ Ibid., 90. “Notre foi inébranlable en l’avenir magnifique de notre cher territoire au sein de l’Union française...”

⁹⁴⁰ Félix Houphouët-Boigny, July 11, 1955, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2246, Dossier 5. “...il est possible de préparer à tous une vie meilleure, si nous savons concerter nos efforts en vue d’une cohabitation, paisible et prospère.”

⁹⁴¹ Ibid. “Aucun antagonisme profond ne sépare les colons d’origine métropolitaine des Africains, sinon la barrière de vains préjugés et de peur irraisonnées que le souci de notre avenir commun nous font un devoir de combattre.”

administration; to do otherwise was contrary both to the interests of Africa's future, as well as those of France. "The fate of Africa within the French Union," he emphasized, "depends on good relations as much as the mutual comprehension of our interests, and the reciprocal respect of our originalities that will be established among the diverse groups that populate our countries."⁹⁴²

Houphouët-Boigny even began to appropriate the language of French colonial leaders in justifying Africa's presence within the French Union. While the Houphouët-Boigny of the 1940s had been significantly more concerned with the future of Africa than with the future of France, the Houphouët-Boigny of the 1950s now increasingly portrayed himself – and by extension his countrymen – as having a full stake in the future of the *métropole*. Essentially, Houphouët-Boigny saw himself as part of France's larger mission in the world. Therefore, political evolution was no longer accomplished solely for the benefit of Africans, but also for the greater advancement of France. On May 1, 1956, in a speech in Abidjan, he spoke about France's special vocation in the world, and emphasized that Africa would be served better by remaining in the French orbit. "A mystique of independence runs throughout and shakes our modern world," he warned. "We prefer the mystique of *fraternité* to this mystique of independence, which is not always constructive."⁹⁴³ In a speech in his birth village of Yamoussoukro on May 3, he discussed the advances being made in Africa in light of the new *loi cadre*. These new reforms, he argued, "will serve no purpose if in our respective territories, metropolitans

⁹⁴² Ibid. "Le destin de l'Afrique au sein de l'Union Française dépend des bons rapports que la compréhension mutuelle de nos intérêts et le respect réciproque de nos originalités auront su établir entre les divers groupements qui peuplent nos pays."

⁹⁴³ Ibid., 118. "Une mystique d'indépendance parcourt et secoue notre monde contemporain... A cette mystique d'indépendance qui n'est pas toujours constructive, nous préférons la mystique de la fraternité." Félix Houphouët-Boigny, "Réponse aux paroles de bienvenue au Président du cercle sportif Abidjan, May 1, 1956."

and Africans do not unite fraternally to work together, with the same spirit, for the *grandeur* of the French Union.”⁹⁴⁴ Two days later, in a speech in Dalao, he addressed the governor of Ivory Coast, a number of assembled dignitaries, and his fellow countrymen, claiming to speak “in the name of France.”⁹⁴⁵ Houphouët-Boigny referred to a shared challenge for both Frenchmen and Africans, through which “France will help us accomplish the great mission which has also become theirs – the emancipation of Africa within a genuine French Union, humane, egalitarian, and fraternal.”⁹⁴⁶ Strikingly, in contrast to his rhetoric from a decade earlier, Houphouët-Boigny no longer saw the emancipation of the continent as an exclusively African endeavor.

On the contrary, Houphouët-Boigny would continue to support the French presence on the continent throughout the Fourth Republic – a presence that became all the more important to Houphouët-Boigny even in the face of the deteriorating situation in Algeria. Referring to these events in May 1956, he noted that:

At a time when France is going through difficult times that we are well aware of, I cannot emphasize enough to our brothers from the *métropole* and Africa that they must put a definite end to the sad past of errors (to err is human) and delays so that together in this troubled world, we can affirm that France is the great destiny of Africa, and that our Africa – black Africa above all – will always remain the great destiny of France.⁹⁴⁷

⁹⁴⁴ Félix Houphouët-Boigny, “Monsieur Houphouët-Boigny rend hommage à son village natal, May 3, 1956.” *Ibid.*, 125. “Les réformes... ne servirait de rien si dans nos territoires respectifs, Métropolitains et Africains ne s’unissaient fraternellement pour œuvrer ensemble, et d’un même cœur, pour la grandeur de l’Union française.”

⁹⁴⁵ Félix Houphouët-Boigny, “Discours prononcé à Dalao, May 5, 1956.” *Ibid.*, 133.

⁹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 136. “...la France les aidera à accomplir la grande mission qui est devenue la leur, l’émancipation de l’Afrique au sein d’un véritable Union française humaine, égalitaire et fraternelle.”

⁹⁴⁷ Félix Houphouët-Boigny, “Discours prononcé à l’occasion du ministre Houphouët-Boigny à l’assemblée territoriale, May 8, 1956.” *Ibid.*, 140. “Au moment où la France traverse les heures difficiles qui nous connaissons, je ne saurais trop répéter à nos frères Métropolitains et Africains de tourner un page définitive sur le triste passé des erreurs (l’erreur est humaine) et sur les lenteurs du passé, pour que, ensemble, dans ce monde inquiet, nous puissions affirmer que la France est la grande chance de l’Afrique, et que notre Afrique, l’Afrique noire surtout, demeurera toujours la grande chance de la France.”

Houphouët-Boigny's political transformation was highly valued by the French authorities; in October of 1956, they actively sought his and the RDA's support for the newly passed *loi cadre*.⁹⁴⁸ By the following year, his statements in favor of the French presence in Africa could not have been any more zealous; on April 11, 1957, Houphouët-Boigny asserted that "we have agreed to link the future of Africa to French culture, as well as to France itself."⁹⁴⁹ On May 15, he wrote personally to President René Coty, thanking him on behalf of Ivory Coast for the *loi cadre* reforms.⁹⁵⁰

Given the turn in his rhetoric and level of support for France, Houphouët-Boigny also became an excellent example to the international community of the success of the French Union. On January 9-10, 1957, he visited Washington and met with several officials from the State Department, including Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. During his meetings, Houphouët-Boigny extensively discussed the successes and future projects of the French Union, including general principles of French policy, the recent *loi cadre*, the future of Africa, and the importance of the concept of *Eurafrrique*, both to the continent and the interests of the free world.⁹⁵¹ Houphouët-Boigny's visit had quite an effect on his hosts; *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères* Christian Pineau noted that the Americans were "very impressed by the manner in which Mr. Houphouët-Boigny expressed himself on the evils and the benefits of colonialism, to which he acknowledged the merit... of having launched Africa out of the state of savagery, in which it would still

⁹⁴⁸ Note pour Monsieur le Ministre, Oct. 4, 1956, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 491.

⁹⁴⁹ "Allocution prononcée à la chambre de commerce de Côte d'Ivoire, April 11, 1957" in Félix Houphouët-Boigny, *Anthologie des Discours, Tome I* (Abidjan: Editions Ceda, 1978), 170. "Nous avons accepté de lier le destin de l'Afrique Noire de culture française à celui de la France."

⁹⁵⁰ Telegram from Félix Houphouët-Boigny to René Coty, May 15, 1957, ANP, 4 AG 47.

⁹⁵¹ Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères à Monsieur le Ministre de la France d'Outre-Mer, Jan. 1957, ANOM, 1 AFFPOL 2183, Dossier 6.

find itself if the European colonizers had never intervened.”⁹⁵² For their part, French officials felt that Houphouët-Boigny’s visit had made a great contribution to the State Department’s understanding of France’s overseas problems.⁹⁵³ Given his earlier rhetoric, such a development would have been unimaginable a decade previously.

De Gaulle and Africa during the Fourth Republic

In assessing the evolution of mentalities about Africa during the Fourth Republic, a final word must be said regarding Charles de Gaulle. After his resignation as head of the Provisional Government in 1946, he went into political exile for the next 12 years, occasionally making speeches but never getting directly involved with the functions of government. De Gaulle continued his political exile until 1958, when he would be called back to form a government by President René Coty at the height of the Algerian crisis. But by this point, like his counterparts in the government, his thinking had already been affected by the explosive events of the mid-1950s. As discussed in chapter two, de Gaulle’s appreciation of Africa’s importance to the empire developed during World War II, given the role that AEF played in rallying to Free France. But this appreciation for Africa’s contributions was only part of the larger importance of the empire as a whole in restoring French *grandeur* after the war. Essentially, although De Gaulle had a heightened sense of sub-Saharan Africa’s standing in the empire, AOF and AEF were mere complimentary parts, and not necessarily the central pieces of the empire – these

⁹⁵² “Les fonctionnaires américains ont été également très impressionnés par la manière dont M. Houphouët-Boigny s’est exprimé sur les méfaits comme les bienfaits du colonialisme auquel il a reconnu la mérite... d’avoir tiré l’Afrique de l’état de sauvageries dans lequel elle se trouverait encore si les colonisateurs européens n’étaient pas intervenus.” Ibid.

⁹⁵³ Ibid.

remained Algeria, Vietnam, and to a lesser extent, France's possessions in the Middle East.

Although de Gaulle had been in political exile since 1946, he continued to follow events in the hopes of returning to power. His initial mentality about Africa and the French Union was evident in a speech in Bordeaux in May 1947, in remarks given at the dedication of a plaque in memory of Félix Éboué, who had rallied AEF to Free France in August 1940. De Gaulle used his speech not only to reflect on Éboué's life, but also to assess the state of the French Union and its importance to the future. As he noted, "the fate of our country, as well as the territories over which our flag flies, and even the destiny of the entire world, depend on what happens to the magnificent work of France overseas."⁹⁵⁴ De Gaulle made clear that this ongoing project relied on progress being made in *all* of the colonies, including Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Vietnam, Madagascar, and "black Africa." Not coincidentally, "black Africa" was last on his list of France's overseas territories.⁹⁵⁵ It also went unmentioned when de Gaulle described the extensive political reforms that had taken place throughout the empire since the war, most notably in Algeria, Vietnam, and Morocco.⁹⁵⁶ Instead, the main focus of the speech seemed to be the French Union as an aggregate, rather than the particular importance of any one of its parts. To lose the French Union, de Gaulle argued, "would be a wound that could cost us dearly, up to and including our independence."⁹⁵⁷

⁹⁵⁴ Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages: dans l'attente, 1946-1958* (Paris: Plon, 1970), 74. "...le destin de notre pays, celui des territoires où flotte notre drapeau, et même dans une large mesure celui du monde tout entier, dépendent de ce qu'il adviendra de l'œuvre magnifique de la France au-delà de mers."

⁹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 75-6.

⁹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 81. "...ce serait un abaissement qui pourrait nous coûter jusqu'à notre indépendance."

In addition to its lack of emphasis on sub-Saharan Africa, de Gaulle's speech diminished the importance of Éboué as a distinctly African figure, and instead portrayed him in the light of a larger historical narrative about France's empire. In praising Éboué, de Gaulle placed him in the lineage of famous colonial administrators who had advanced France's standing in the world, including Louis Faidherbe, largely responsible for pacifying much of AOF; Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza, who led the initial expeditionary mission in AEF; and Hubert Lyautey, the colonial administrator *par excellence* of Morocco in the early twentieth century.⁹⁵⁸ In addition, he firmly placed Éboué's sacrifices during the war in the larger context of France's international struggle to regain legitimacy, both at home and in the empire. And Éboué's greatest postwar contribution – namely, his emphasis on the need for distinctions in policy vis-à-vis specific African tribes – was blurred by De Gaulle, who focused instead on the Brazzaville Conference's general importance to the empire.⁹⁵⁹ In commemorating Éboué as a product of the larger French empire, rather than a figure crucial to the development of sub-Saharan Africa, De Gaulle revealed the low priority he placed on sub-Saharan Africa in relation to the rest of the French Union.

Only a few years later, his views seemed to have had already shifted regarding the distinct importance of sub-Saharan Africa to France's future. In March 1953, he travelled to both AEF and AOF to observe the reforms that had taken place since the Brazzaville Conference. In a parallel to his speech in Bordeaux six years earlier, he was asked to participate in another commemoration of Éboué, for a dedication of a monument

⁹⁵⁸ Ibid., 76. For a recent biographical look at all of these men, see Edward Berenson, *Heroes of Empire: Five Charismatic Men and the Conquest of Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

⁹⁵⁹ Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages: dans l'attente, 1946-1958*, 77

in Bamako, Mali. This time, De Gaulle emphasized Éboué's sub-Saharan African heritage, noting that Éboué was a "black Frenchman" who had helped rally all of Africa to Free France.⁹⁶⁰ In addition to this revised view of Éboué's identity, De Gaulle also placed an emphasis on sub-Saharan Africa in a way that he had not done in his speech in Bordeaux six years earlier. Now, he discussed the "transformations in Africa" in a wide variety of areas, through which "the spirit of solidarity replaces bit by bit that of the former colonialism."⁹⁶¹ Interaction between the French and autochthonous populations in Africa had also reduced prejudices and had led to more cooperation since the war. As De Gaulle noted, these developments could be attributed in large part to the Brazzaville Conference. But now, instead of framing the Conference within the larger sense of the French Union, De Gaulle emphasized its particular importance to the evolution of French Africa. This evolution had increased the importance of Africans within the French Union. As he noted, "what marks the evolution we see here, is very much the part played by Africans, and the role played here by France."⁹⁶²

While the shift between De Gaulle's remarks in 1947 and 1953 may seem subtle, he gave indications elsewhere about his views on the increasing importance of Africa to France's future. As the head of the Rassemblement du Peuple Français (RPF), and hoping to return to a prominent role in French politics, De Gaulle maintained numerous back-channel relationships with foreign leaders. In April 1952, he met in Paris with General Dwight Eisenhower, soon to be a candidate for president in the United States. During their conversation, De Gaulle, who in 1940 had shown little interest in Africa,

⁹⁶⁰ Ibid., 576.

⁹⁶¹ Ibid., 578. "Dans le domaine moral et politique, l'esprit de solidarité remplaça peu à peu celui de l'ancien colonialisme."

⁹⁶² Ibid. "...ce qui marque ici l'évolution, c'est bien la part qu'y prennent les Africains et le rôle qu'y joue la France."

revealed that he now placed great emphasis on the continent. According to the American memorandum of conversation:

[De Gaulle] said that in Africa the French had sometimes been wrong and sometimes been right, but nevertheless France needed that portion of Africa which was associated with her. There were reforms which would have to be carried out, but in the framework of these reforms the French hoped that this portion of Africa would remain with them, as it was a prerequisite of their own greatness, and because they felt so strongly about this that anything which they interpreted as being interference or trespassing on their rights made them “leap into the air, and particularly myself,” added General de Gaulle.⁹⁶³

Essentially, for De Gaulle, Africa was now an important aspect of France’s empire, which had to be protected and preserved at virtually all costs. As the next chapter will illustrate, this notion would greatly inform De Gaulle’s Africa policy in the postcolonial era.

Conclusion

The events of May 1958 would bring an ill-fated end to the Fourth Republic. No longer able to maintain control in Algeria – either over the war or the increasingly hardline European settler community – the Fourth Republic lost all legitimacy, leading to both President Coty’s request for De Gaulle to form a government, and the subsequent drafting of a new constitution. As this chapter has demonstrated, there was an inverse relationship between political stability in the *métropole* and France’s relationship with sub-Saharan Africa during the late Fourth Republic. Even as the situation in Algeria spun increasingly out of control and undermined confidence in one French cabinet after another, France consolidated its control in sub-Saharan Africa through new institutions and reforms. By 1958, there had been a dramatic transformation of both mentalities and

⁹⁶³ Memorandum of Conversation, by Lieutenant Colonel Vernon A. Walters, April 30, 1952. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952-1954, Vol. VI: Western Europe and Canada* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), 1201.

government policy. The links between France and Africa were now based in abstract notions of cultural heritage, contributions to material progress, and a shared future. Given this shift, it was significantly less dangerous to devolve governmental functions back to AOF and AEF – a process that was well underway in 1958 as the European settlers in Algeria began their attempted coup against the French government.

From France's perspective, the shift in Africa policy was fortuitous – its necessity having already been predicted by François Mitterrand and Pierre Mendès France a few years earlier. The nature of France's colonial wars in Vietnam and Algeria would preclude the formation of familial ties with those countries after independence. But the relationship between Fifth Republic France and sub-Saharan Africa would flourish, both in the initial months of De Gaulle's presidency, and after decolonization in 1960. Of course, independence for France's former colonies in Africa brought new challenges to France's Africa project. By relinquishing political control, France's power *vis-à-vis* its former colonies, as well as its standing in the international community, were arguably diminished. It would be up to De Gaulle and his followers to preserve France's influence on the continent through other means.

Chapter Six

From Colonies to Client States: The De Gaulle Regime, 1958-1969

The character of Francophone countries does not permit the former *métropole* to have economic interests in Africa equal to those of Great Britain. But the political interest that France preserves in African countries and Madagascar is on a different level from its strategic and economic interests. It maintains close relations with [African leaders] and will maintain a presence in Francophone capitals, regardless of the type of regime in power.⁹⁶⁴

-Internal Quai d'Orsay memo, Nov. 18, 1967

Introduction

By early 1958, the Fourth Republic was rapidly losing control over events in Algeria. In February, seeking to achieve a strategic breakthrough against the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), French planes bombed Sakhiet, a suspected FLN stronghold in Tunisia. The operation was a disaster; dozens of civilians were killed, instigating a public relations nightmare and leading to the resignation of Président du Conseil Félix Gaillard. On May 13, what little legitimacy remaining with the Fourth Republic crumbled with the seizing of power in Algeria by hardline Generals Jacques Massu and Raoul Salan. Fed up with what they perceived as the Fourth Republic's constant weakness in the face of the FLN, they soon demanded that Charles de Gaulle be invested with the office of Président du Conseil in order to clean up the mess in Algeria. De Gaulle's announcement days later that he was ready to assume power, and President René Coty's subsequent request for him to form a government, would sound the death knell for

⁹⁶⁴ Note: Vues françaises et britanniques sur la situation de l'Afrique à la fin de 1967, Nov. 18, 1967. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1967 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2008), 640-1. "Le caractère des pays francophones ne permet pas à l'ancienne métropole d'avoir des intérêts économiques en Afrique égalant ceux de la Grande-Bretagne... Mais l'intérêt politique que la France conserve dans les pays africains et malgache est sans commune mesure avec ses intérêts stratégiques et économiques. Il tient aux liens étroits les hommes et subsistera vraisemblablement dans les capitales francophones, quel que soit leur régime."

the Fourth Republic. By September, the French public had voted to abolish the constitution in favor of a new one that would grant broader powers to the executive branch. Three months later, de Gaulle was elected as the Fifth Republic's first president. In exile for twelve years, the general now returned to power triumphantly, hoping to succeed in the same mission he had pursued in the wake of World War II – to restore French *grandeur*. As he noted to U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles that July, “if France ceases to be a world power, she ceases to be France.”⁹⁶⁵

In this chapter, I examine the rapid and startling transformation of the French relationship with Africa during the de Gaulle regime. To be sure, de Gaulle's African policy has been the subject of considerable scholarship in recent years. As previously discussed, Tony Chafer's work has been particularly helpful in deconstructing the myth of African independence as a “gift” willingly and magnanimously given by the new de Gaulle regime.⁹⁶⁶ Because of this misconception, Chafer argues, “complicity between France's governing elites and African leaders has been one of the most enduring political aspects of the French colonial legacy in Black Africa.”⁹⁶⁷ *Contra* this myth, Chafer has provided insight on the role of West African political movements in winning independence for their countries. Other historians, notably Guia Migani and Frédéric Turpin, have examined de Gaulle's Africa policy as a distinct phenomenon, thus largely confining their analysis to the de Gaulle presidency and afterward. However, Migani's

⁹⁶⁵ Comptes rendus des entretiens franco-américains du 5 juillet 1958. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1958 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1993), 26. “Mais comment la France peut-elle avoir sa place dans la situation mondiale? Car si la France cesse d'être mondiale, elle cesse d'être la France. C'est vrai du point de vue territorial comme point de vue politique.”

⁹⁶⁶ For two examples of this line of thought, see Dorothy Shipley White, *Black Africa and De Gaulle: From the French Empire to Independence* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979); John Chipman, *French Power in Africa* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

⁹⁶⁷ Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France's Successful Decolonization?* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 235.

work stops at 1963, around the time when the transition to client-state relationships was becoming more apparent.⁹⁶⁸ In contrast, Turpin’s research extends well into the formation of client-state relationships by demonstrating the continuity in policy between the de Gaulle and Pompidou regimes, but focuses less on the connections between this period and the years following World War II.⁹⁶⁹

As valuable as the aforementioned work has been, more insight can be provided about how the development of Africa’s political institutions remained reliant on assistance from the *métropole*, and how these affiliations with African leaders were influenced a great deal by the exigencies of France’s international situation. Like his predecessor regimes, de Gaulle’s faced challenges on a number of foreign policy fronts. In his view, what was needed was strong leadership to restore France’s stature and “national independence.” Consequently, one fundamental aspect of de Gaulle foreign policy was carving out a “special role” for France in Africa. After the end of the Algerian War in 1962, French interests in North Africa would no longer predominate on the continent. Although de Gaulle’s decision to withdraw from Algeria was dictated by a variety of factors – most notably France’s continued defeats at the hands of the Algerian independence movement – the growing instability in North Africa also threatened France’s continued presence further south. As the French ambassador in Gabon warned *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères* Maurice Couve de Murville in July 1961, Francophone

⁹⁶⁸ Guia Migani, *La France et l’Afrique sub-saharienne, 1957-1963: Histoire d’une décolonisation entre idéaux eurafricains et politique de puissance* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2008). Migani has also produced an English language article summarizing his research. See Guia Migani, “De Gaulle and Sub-Saharan Africa: From Decolonization to French Development Policy, 1958-1963” in *Globalizing de Gaulle: International Perspectives on French Foreign Policies, 1958-1969*, eds. Christian Nuenlist, Anna Locher, and Garret Martin (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), 251-70.

⁹⁶⁹ Frédéric Turpin, *De Gaulle, Pompidou, et l’Afrique (1958-1974): décoloniser et coopérer* (Paris: Indes Savantes, 2010).

African leaders tended to identify with the Algerian independence movement, and any action reflecting poorly on France would have the tendency to undermine the ties it had so carefully forged on the continent.⁹⁷⁰

With French withdrawal from North Africa on the horizon, sub-Saharan Africa became the last significant remnant of France's former colonial power. To be sure, France had specific strategic interests in the region, most notably the presence of oil in the Sahara, as well as the desert's usefulness for the testing of atomic weapons. But sub-Saharan Africa represented more than these base interests. French influence in Africa served as both a reminder of the *métropole*'s former colonial power, as well as a promise of its continued relevance in world affairs. In short, it was the one area France could not afford to lose. Therefore, de Gaulle's initial challenge was managing the transition of the former colonies' status under the French Union toward a significantly looser French "Community" which devolved most of the remainder of state functions back to local governments. Just two years later, all of France's former colonies in sub-Saharan Africa would declare their independence with little protest from the *métropole* – a clear sign that the legal form of France's relationships with African countries mattered less than France's actual influence on the continent.

Of course, by 1958, the trend was clearly against continued European presence in former colonial areas. Fortunately for de Gaulle, he could draw on one particularly valuable asset – the stature and respect accorded to him by African leaders. As Tony Chafer notes, "[t]o many Africans, de Gaulle was 'the man of Brazzaville' and, as the

⁹⁷⁰ M. Risterucci, Haut-Représentant de France à Libreville, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, July 17, 1961. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1961 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1998), 101-3.

leader of Free France, was seen as the liberator of Africa.”⁹⁷¹ While Chafer has shown that de Gaulle’s motives in 1944 were far from altruistic, there is little doubt that they were at least perceived that way in many circles at the time. Simply put, there was no man better placed to reorient the relationship between France and Africa, especially given the troubles that France and its overseas territories faced as de Gaulle came to power. By all accounts, he took full advantage of his standing in order to fully establish a French presence on the continent in the postcolonial era. Throughout his regime, he was arguably the most significant political figure in Africa; there was a reason that so many African leaders referred to him affectionately as “papa”.⁹⁷²

However, the extension of French influence in Africa did not go unchallenged. As discussed in the previous chapters, a vibrant anticolonial movement in Africa had already developed well before the inception of the Fifth Republic. Led by Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah, the new “pan-African” movement sought to develop the continent without continued European interference. Not surprisingly, de Gaulle and his followers saw such notions of pan-African identity as a direct threat to the continuing French presence. To this end, France encouraged its former colonies to oppose efforts by the pan-African bloc, both at the United Nations and in other international circles. French leaders also fostered the development of a Francophone bloc, which could more effectively preserve the former colonial power’s interests in Africa. With the independence of Belgian’s colonies, French influence could also extend into Congo, Burundi, and Rwanda.

⁹⁷¹ Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 173.

⁹⁷² Martin Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair – A History of Fifty Years of Independence* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), 227-8.

The de Gaulle regime also faced perceived challenges from its western allies. As chapters four and five illustrated, there was certainly a measure of skepticism among Fourth Republic leaders about the intentions of the United States and Britain. But with de Gaulle's rise to power, suspicions of the "Anglo-Saxons" reached a level unseen since the war era. This sentiment manifested most prominently during debates about France's role in NATO and Britain's potential entry into the European Economic Community. But it could also be seen in dealings with the "Anglo-Saxon" powers in Africa. A variety of policies followed by the United States and Britain – including involvement in the Congo Crisis and support of certain African regimes – were often seen as attempts to undermine French influence on the continent. After independence, Britain's former colonies would also become a source of suspicion, as they were considered capable of furthering "Anglophone" interests in Africa.

Through all of these efforts, the main focus was to preserve French influence in Africa at all costs. Immediately after independence, it was fairly easy to reconcile this with the goal of encouraging democratic governments in African states. But as the development of de Gaulle's African policy illustrates, the realization quickly set in that a more flexible approach might be necessary in order to protect French interests. In recent years, France has been the target of significant criticism for its client-state relationships with African dictators. I will discuss this further in the conclusion, but it should be noted here that the seeds for this policy were sown during the early Fifth Republic. What started as an effort to cultivate direct relationships between de Gaulle and African leaders eventually descended into active collaboration with despotic regimes. By the mid-1960s, de Gaulle's regime was actively supporting dictators with both military and financial aid,

and intervening with force when it became necessary to defend French interests. As the previous chapters have demonstrated, these efforts were the culmination of two decades of insecurity stemming from World War II. The resulting legacy was four decades of French collaboration with dictators in Africa.

The Vote on the Community and the Secession of Guinea

In 1958, de Gaulle's main objective for France's new constitution was to expand the power of the executive branch of the French government. But he also recognized, given the ongoing war in Algeria and other troubles faced by the French Union, that a new relationship between the *métropole* and its overseas territories would have to be forged. On July 13, 1958, he emphasized that "we must build new institutions, establish the bonds of our union in a federal arrangement, and organize a great political, economic, and cultural ensemble that meets the conditions of modern life and progress."⁹⁷³ This would entail modifying the arrangement with the overseas territories from a "Union" to a "Community", whereby all governing powers would be returned to the overseas territories, with the exception of defense, foreign relations, economic policy, justice, and education. Naturally, with the executive strengthened, the new President of the Fifth Republic would oversee the new Community. As de Gaulle noted in a speech in Paris that September, this reorganization was vital to maintaining France's standing in the world:

⁹⁷³ Allocution radiodiffusée prononcée à l'Hôtel Matignon, July 13, 1958. Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages: avec le renouveau, Mai 1958 – Juillet 1962* (Paris: Plon, 1970), 25. "...nous devons bâtir de nouvelles institutions, établir sur le mode fédéral les liens de notre union, organiser un grand ensemble politique, économique et culturel qui réponde aux conditions modernes de la vie et du progrès."

The relationships between the *métropole* and the overseas territories require intense adaptation. The world is crossed by currents that challenge the future of mankind and that are leading France to be cautious, all while fulfilling the role of restraint, peace, and fraternity, which is dictated by her vocation. In short, the French nation will blossom or perish depending on whether the state has sufficient strength, perseverance, and prestige to take it where it needs to go.⁹⁷⁴

In order to promote the proposed reorganization, de Gaulle embarked upon a tour of Africa in late August 1958, visiting Chad, Madagascar, Congo-Brazzaville, Ivory Coast, Haute-Volta, Guinea, and Senegal.⁹⁷⁵ De Gaulle's message to his audiences was clear: if any of France's African territories wished to become independent, they could simply vote "no" in a coming referendum, and France would not interfere with their decision. But he emphasized that his strong preference, and that of France, was for Francophone Africa to remain affiliated with the *métropole*. In a speech delivered in Abidjan, Ivory Coast on August 25, he explained the importance of the continued relationship between France and Africa, especially in light of the growing Cold War and threats to the continent:

I am convinced of the magnificent and universal solidarity of all men and women of our African territories and our *Métropole* which is offered to them by this Community. I am convinced that, a vote of "yes" having been pronounced everywhere, we will embark on the right path together. We will enter together on the great way of free men...

We will also provide an example to a world in peril, because who can doubt that this ensemble that we want to form together, is indispensable to us in the very grave circumstances that are encompassing our lands and the human race... With this terrible danger hanging over our heads, should we not stand together, shoulder to shoulder, over the largest possible space? In as great a number as

⁹⁷⁴ Discours prononcé Place de la République à Paris, Sept. 4, 1958. Ibid., 43. "Les rapports entre la métropole et les territoires d'outre-mer exigent une profonde adaptation. L'univers est traversé de courants qui mettent en cause l'avenir d'espèce humaine et portent la France à se garder, tout en jouant le rôle de mesure, de paix, de fraternité, que lui dicte sa vocation. Bref, la nation française reflourira ou périra suivant que l'État aura ou n'aura pas assez de force, de constance, de prestige, pour la conduire là où elle doit aller."

⁹⁷⁵ Voyage du Général de Gaulle en Afrique Occidentale Française, Archives Nationales de Paris (hereinafter ANP), 4 AG 299.

possible? As fraternally united as possible, to face this threat, and by all means, to turn it away?⁹⁷⁶

In general, de Gaulle received an overwhelmingly positive reception on his trip, thanks in large part by the efforts of African leaders wishing to stay affiliated with Paris. For example, Houphouët-Boigny, who also served as the Minister of State in de Gaulle's first cabinet, noted his concerns with the new constitutional arrangement. He nevertheless stated that "we cannot remain indifferent to anything that affects the renewal of France, the *grandeur* of France, the unity of France..."⁹⁷⁷ However, elsewhere on the continent, there were signs that France's former subjects might not accept the Community. In Dakar and Conakry, de Gaulle was met by demonstrators calling for independence.⁹⁷⁸

De Gaulle's political gamble paid off. The referendum, which took place on September 28, provided two choices for the overseas territories: continued association with France as part of the new Community, or complete independence. As Tony Chafer

⁹⁷⁶ Discours prononcé par le Général de Gaulle à Abidjan, Aug. 25, 1958, p. 3-4, ANP, 4 AG 299. "Je suis convaincu de l'adhésion universelle et magnifique de tous les hommes, de toutes les femmes de nos Territoires d'Afrique et de notre Métropole à cette Communauté qui leur est offerte. Je suis convaincu que cela étant dit, c'est-à-dire le « oui » étant partout prononcé, tous feront ensemble le bon chemin. Nous entrerons ensemble dans la grande voie des hommes libres..."

Pour l'exemple aussi à donner à un monde menacé, car, qui peut douter, que cet ensemble que nous voulons former en commun nous soit indispensable dans les circonstances si graves que traversent notre terre et l'espèce humaine... Dans cet immense danger qui pèse sur nos têtes, ne faut-il pas que nous nous tenions ensemble, coude à coude, sur le plus grand espace possible? en aussi grand nombre que possible? aussi fraternellement unis que possible, pour faire face à cette menace et, en tout cas, tenter de la détourner?"

⁹⁷⁷ Houphouët-Boigny then proceeded to discuss his concerns whether France understood Ivory Coast's eventual desire for independence. Discours prononcé au stade Géo-André, Sept. 7, 1958. Félix Houphouët-Boigny, *Anthologie des discours, 1946-1978*, Tome I (Abidjan: Editions Ceda, 1978), 194. "Bien que nous ne puissions demeurer indifférents à tout ce qui touche le renouveau de la France, la grandeur française, l'unité française, bien que j'appuie pour ma part avec joie et fierté, les textes qui consacrent désormais l'autorité, l'efficacité du Gouvernement français dont dépend en grande partie notre évolution commune..."

⁹⁷⁸ Geoffrey Myers, "Shouts of 'No, No,' as De Gaulle Enters Dakar," *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post*, Aug. 27, 1958, p. 10. See also Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 174-5.

notes, de Gaulle had also implicitly offered a third option in a speech in Brazzaville that August, when he alluded to the possibility of independence for African states in the community at some later time.⁹⁷⁹ The effect that this may have had on the eventual vote is unclear, but there was no question that the result of the referendum was an overwhelming victory for de Gaulle. All of France's African territories, save one, voted for continued association with France through the new Community arrangement. In West Africa, the official numbers were particularly staggering. Of the seven states voting in favor of the Community, six had "yes" totals of over 94 percent, with Niger weighing in at 78 percent in favor.⁹⁸⁰

But Ahmed Sékou Touré's Guinea had other ideas. A member of the cross-territorial Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA) and a vigorous trade union advocate, Sékou Touré had already earned a reputation as a populist and unpredictable political figure intent on winning independence for his country at all costs. Leading up to the referendum, he appealed to Guineans to reject continued dependence on France so that Guinea could set its own path, noting that the proposal for the new Community "follows the logic of colonialism."⁹⁸¹ In a speech calling for independence, given in front of de Gaulle during his visit to Guinea, Sékou Touré called for a new basis for French-Guinean relations, noting that "the quality, or rather the new nature of relations between

⁹⁷⁹ Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 174. See also Jacques Foccart's discussion in Jacques Foccart, *Foccart parle: entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard*, Vol. I (Paris: Fayard/Jeune Afrique, 1995), 161.

⁹⁸⁰ Chafer's work contains a chart of the relevant vote totals. Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 179.

⁹⁸¹ "Interview Exclusive: Sékou Toure," *L'Humanité*, Aug. 25, 1958.

France and its former colonies will be determined without paternalism or deception.”⁹⁸²

During the visit, he famously told de Gaulle that “we want independence... we prefer liberty in poverty over riches without dignity.”⁹⁸³ On September 28, Guinea responded to Sékou Touré’s appeals and rejected the French Community by an overwhelming vote – the only former African colony to do so.⁹⁸⁴ Four days later, its newly-constituted national assembly declared independence.⁹⁸⁵

The de Gaulle regime’s swift and draconian reaction to the vote in Guinea illustrated how severe a loss the decision was to the *métropole*. Although he had indicated that France would not present any obstacles to Guinea’s independence, de Gaulle also made clear that there were consequences for not cooperating in the way France had envisioned. The day after the vote on the community, Jean Risterucci, the chief of the French mission to Guinea, wrote to Sékou Touré, indicating that France would be pulling out all assistance from the newly independent country:

Due to this act, Guinea has no representation within the Community either from African or *métropole* agencies. Due to this, Guinea can no longer normally receive either the support of the administration or the French state nor any loans for equipment. Due to this, the responsibilities formerly assumed by the French state in Guinea must be profoundly revised... Similarly, the suspension of equipment operations will not allow for any new initiatives [in the country].⁹⁸⁶

⁹⁸² Discours de M. Sékou Touré, Aug. 25, 1958, ANP, 4 AG 47. “La qualité ou plutôt la nouvelle nature des rapports entre la France et ses anciennes colonies devra être déterminée sans paternalisme et sans duperie.”

⁹⁸³ Reported in Jacques Foccart, *Foccart parle: entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard*, Vol. I (Paris: Fayard/Jeune Afrique, 1995), 161. “Nous voulons indépendance. Nous préférons la liberté dans la pauvreté à la richesse sans dignité.”

⁹⁸⁴ Over 95 percent of Guineans voted against joining the Community. Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 179.

⁹⁸⁵ M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, aux représentants diplomatiques de France à l’étranger, Oct. 11, 1958. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1958 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1993), 496.

⁹⁸⁶ The text of this communication can be found in an unattributed communication in the Guinea dossier in ANP, 5 AG I 214. Its author is confirmed in M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, aux Représentants diplomatiques de France à l’étranger, Oct. 11, 1958. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1958 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1993), 497-8.

The communiqué indicated that there would be a two month transition period in order not to disturb the functions of government.⁹⁸⁷ But as Martin Meredith indicates, the exodus of French officials was highly vindictive – “[t]hey took with them any French government property they could carry and destroyed what had to be left behind. Government files and records were burned; offices were stripped of furniture and telephones, even of their electric light bulbs.”⁹⁸⁸ The same day as Risterrucci’s communiqué to Sékou Touré, French representatives wrote to the Secretary General of the United Nations, opposing Guinea’s admission as an independent state to the organization. They justified this position by arguing that Guinea was not ready to competently assume a variety of government functions including defense and foreign affairs, and could not protect the rights of minorities.⁹⁸⁹

For its part, Guinea attempted to maintain some level of cooperation with France, requesting that it remain within the franc monetary zone and that the two countries continue to trade. In a series of letters to de Gaulle in early October, Sékou Touré reaffirmed these requests and further asked that France recognize Guinea as an independent nation.⁹⁹⁰ But matters were complicated by Soviet recognition of Guinea on

“De ce fait, la Guinée ne dispose d’aucune représentation valable à l’intérieur de la communauté, qu’il s’agisse des organismes métropolitains ou africains. De ce fait, la Guinée ne peut plus recevoir normalement le concours ni de l’Administration de l’État français, ni des crédits d’équipement. De ce fait, les responsabilités assumées par l’État français en Guinée doivent être profondément révisées... De même, la suspension des opérations d’équipement ne permettra aucune initiative nouvelle.”

⁹⁸⁷ Ibid., 498.

⁹⁸⁸ Martin Meredith, *The Fate of Africa*, 21.

⁹⁸⁹ ANP, 5 AG I 214

⁹⁹⁰ Ibid.

October 4, which suggested the possibility of communist aid to Sékou Touré.⁹⁹¹ As discussed in previous chapters, France had already been very concerned about possible communist penetration of the continent, from both the Soviet Union and Mao's China. These concerns were particularly heightened after Khrushchev's speech before the 20th Congress of the communist party in February 1956, in which Khrushchev noted that the elimination of colonial regimes was an official goal of the USSR's foreign policy.⁹⁹² Partially because of this communist threat, de Gaulle was naturally skeptical of Sékou Touré, writing to him on Oct. 14:

In order for the [French government] to be able to follow the path that you would like it to, you must understand that certain conditions must be fulfilled as preliminary matters. It is a matter of, firsthand, that the government knows your intentions, notably concerning the requests you may think proper as to what would constitute an agreement of association. On the other hand, we must receive evidence from the present government of Guinea regarding its ability to insure the effective charges and obligations of independence and sovereignty.⁹⁹³

The mercurial Sékou Touré did not take kindly to de Gaulle's suspicions about Guinea. He replied to de Gaulle the following day, accusing France of "an undeniable willingness

⁹⁹¹ M. Dejean, Ambassadeur de France à Moscou, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Oct. 5, 1958. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1958 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1998), 469-70.

⁹⁹² Note du Département, pénétration Soviétique en Afrique, Jan. 26, 1959. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1959 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1994), 99.

⁹⁹³ Charles De Gaulle to Ahmed Sékou Touré, Oct. 14, 1958, ANP, 5 AG I 214. "Pour que le Gouvernement puisse entrer dans la voie que vous souhaitez, vous comprendrez certainement que diverses conditions doivent être remplies au préalable. Il s'agit, en premier lieu, pour le Gouvernement, de connaître vos intentions, notamment en ce qui concerne les demandes que vous croiriez devoir formuler quant à ce que pourrait être un accord d'association. Il s'agit pour lui, d'autre part, de recueillir les preuves que l'actuel Gouvernement de la Guinée pourrait donner quant à ses possibilités d'assurer effectivement les charges et les obligations de l'indépendance et de la souveraineté."

to stifle our young republic.”⁹⁹⁴ Nevertheless, he pressed his requests that Guinea remain in the franc zone – a request that was denied on October 28.⁹⁹⁵

Having failed in this attempt, Sékou Touré appealed directly to de Gaulle, at the very least, to recognize Guinea as an independent and sovereign nation.⁹⁹⁶ But this was completely out of the question within French diplomatic circles. As already noted, France already publicly opposed any recognition of independence or entry into the United Nations on the part of Guinea. And, as an internal memo from later that month reveals, French officials made it a priority to pressure its western allies – notably Great Britain, Canada, and the United States – not to recognize Guinea in any way.⁹⁹⁷ By this point, Guinea had allies elsewhere on the continent, with Sékou Touré turning to Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah for a loan of 10 million francs to help establish the new administration. The two leaders also declared a loose union between the two countries. This latter declaration infuriated French leaders, as it was seen as Guinea’s betrayal of the Francophone bloc in Africa in favor of better relations with an Anglophone power. Nevertheless, Guinea continued to press its case with France, with Sékou Touré petitioning de Gaulle to sponsor Guinea’s application for admission to the UN. De Gaulle’s curt response reveals his continued fury at Guinea’s rejection of entry into the French Community. “Without completely rejecting [the possibility of eventually favoring Guinea’s admission],” de Gaulle indicated, “it appears to me that the situation created by your recent statement regarding a union with Ghana, a member of the British

⁹⁹⁴ Ahmed Sékou Touré to Charles De Gaulle, Oct. 15, 1958, ANP, 5 AG I 214.

⁹⁹⁵ Memo from French representative in Guinea to Ahmed Sékou Touré, Oct. 28, 1958, ANP, 5 AG I 214.

⁹⁹⁶ Ahmed Sékou Touré to Charles De Gaulle, Oct. 29, 1958, ANP, 5 AG I 214.

⁹⁹⁷ Internal memo, author unknown, Nov, 27, 1958, ANP, 5 AG I 214.

Commonwealth, is weighing heavily on any future relations between us. Consequently, it does not seem opportune to me to satisfy your request at the present time.”⁹⁹⁸

It must be emphasized that, despite these tensions, the French government attempted to maintain some semblance of a relationship with Guinea. In the long run, it made no sense to cut off Guinea completely. Such an action only risked the permanent defection of Sékou Touré to the Anglophone bloc, and/or to the growing number of anticolonial powers on the continent. Perhaps having understood this problem, on January 16, 1959, de Gaulle officially recognized Guinea.⁹⁹⁹ This did not necessarily settle the tensions between the two sides, as illustrated by Sékou Touré’s diatribe against France at the pan-African Conakry conference of April 1959, as well as a constant propaganda campaign within his own country blaming France for all of Guinea’s economic problems.¹⁰⁰⁰ But France was willing to overlook some of these transgressions in order to keep Guinea reasonably within the French orbit. An internal memo from May 1959 warned that the deteriorating diplomatic situation was enabling the communist bloc to substitute its influence for that of France and the western world.¹⁰⁰¹ Cognizant of this threat, French officials met with Sékou Touré and members of his administration that May to discuss ways the two nations could cooperate with one another. While acknowledging that Sékou Touré was not a friend of France in the region, French

⁹⁹⁸ Charles de Gaulle to Ahmed Sékou Touré, Nov. 29, 1958, ANP, 5 AG I 214. “Sans rejeter aucunement cette perspective éventuelle, il m’apparaît que la situation créée par votre récente déclaration d’intention d’union avec le Ghana, État membre du Commonwealth, fait peser sur nos rapports futurs tout au moins une incertitude. En conséquence, il ne me semble pas opportun de donner actuellement satisfaction à votre demande.”

⁹⁹⁹ Charles de Gaulle to Ahmed Sékou Touré, Jan. 16, 1959, ANP, 5 AG I 214.

¹⁰⁰⁰ M. Francis Huré, chargé d’affaires de France à Conakry, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, April 22, 1959. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1959 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1994), 544-5; Note de la direction d’Afrique-Levant, May 2, 1959. *Ibid.*, 596-8.

¹⁰⁰¹ Note de la direction d’Afrique-Levant, May 16, 1959. *Ibid.*, 636.

diplomat Roger Seydoux nevertheless warned the de Gaulle regime that a policy seeking to punish and exclude Guinea only harmed French interests in the long run:

If France is less and less present in Guinea, its place will be quickly taken by candidates from the free world or behind the iron curtain who, lacking an ideological entente, will in any case find agreement on a common theme – anticolonialism. They will threaten the flank of the [French] Community with a constant source of intrigue and subversion... If we allow the ties between us and Guinea to be loosened, we will contribute to providing more vigor to attempts at seduction now acting on Guinea. If instead we continue to support them and help them adapt to independence, we will prepare an association in which the young state will be integrated more easily...¹⁰⁰²

These sentiments would persist throughout the de Gaulle regime; despite whatever level of intransigence posed by Sékou Touré, France was willing to make accommodations for its continuing existence within the French orbit. Just two years later, after a particularly troublesome period of relations between the two countries, Guinea once again asked for a *rapprochement* between the two sides. Despite signs of Sékou Touré's increasingly repressive behavior, an internal French memo noted that "our interest is to encourage and favor with discretion this *rapprochement*."¹⁰⁰³ But by then, Guinea was just one of several African countries in which France was zealously attempting to maintain its postcolonial influence.

¹⁰⁰² Note de M. Roger Seydoux sur les entretiens franco-guinéens, June 24, 1959. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1959 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1994), 872-3. "Si la France est de moins en moins présente en Guinée, la place sera vite prise par des candidats venus de monde libre ou de rideau de fer qui, à défaut d'entente idéologique, se mettront en toute cas facilement d'accord sur un thème commun: l'anticolonialisme, et maintiendront au flanc de la Communauté un foyer permanent d'intrigues et de subversion..."

Si nous laissons se desserrer les liens de toute nature qui nous unissent toujours à la Guinée, nous contribuerons à donner plus de vigueur aux tentatives de séduction qui, dès à présent, s'exercent sur elle. Si, au contraire, nous les maintenons et les étendons en les adaptant à l'indépendance, nous préparerons une association de fait dans laquelle le jeune état devrait s'insérer d'autant plus facilement que les courants historiques, économiques et culturels vont dans ce sens."

¹⁰⁰³ Note de l'Ambassade de France à Conakry, June 30, 1961. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1961 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1997), 990.

Jacques Foccart and the Development of Francophone Africa

Although Guinea had refused admission into the new French Community, the remainder of France's overseas territories in sub-Saharan Africa all quickly acquiesced to the new administrative structure. From October to December 1958, twelve African states joined the new Community.¹⁰⁰⁴ The new arrangement would not last long; within two years, all twelve would be independent, this time without the rancor that had marked Guinea's split two years previously. What mattered now was that France would be able to continue to exert its influence over the developing "états d'expression française" on the continent; the legal nature of that relationship was of little concern. As de Gaulle noted in a speech in Senegal in December 1959:

It is vital that the French, Africans, and Malagasy remain close together. It is vital because of this continent of great men, who want and deserve progress. It is vital because of France, whose assistance implicates reciprocal ties between us. It is vital so that we can represent and advocate the ideals that we share throughout the world. It is vital so that we are able, if necessary, to defend our lands against all those who wish to take them, and our souls against those who would enslave them. And it is vital so that the fraternal ensemble that we are – which is a balancing element and an example for the world – succeeds.¹⁰⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰⁴ The twelve states were Madagascar, Mali, Senegal, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Mauritania, Chad, Central African Republic, Dahomey, Cote d'Ivoire, Haute Volta, and Niger.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Allocution prononcé à Saint-Louis du Sénégal, Dec. 12, 1959. Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages: avec le renouveau, Mai 1958 – Juillet 1962*, 150. "Il faut que les Français, les Africains et les Malgaches restent étroitement ensemble. Il le faut à cause des hommes de ce grand continent qui veulent et qui méritent le progrès. Il le faut à cause de la France, dont le concours implique des liens qui soient réciproques. Il le faut pour que nous puissions représenter et faire valoir, dans le monde, l'idéal qui nous est commun. Il le faut pour que nous soyons en mesure, s'il le fallait, de défendre ensemble nos terres contre ceux qui voudraient les prendre et nos âmes contre ceux qui voudraient les asservir. Et il le faut pour que l'ensemble fraternel que nous sommes, et qui est un élément d'équilibre et un exemple pour le monde, réussisse."

De Gaulle also made clear to other world leaders that France had a long-term interest in the continent. As he noted to President Eisenhower in December 1959, “the countries of Africa must evolve with France, and not in opposition to it.”¹⁰⁰⁶

Of course, it was vital that the new Francophone Community in Africa remain united as a bloc, especially given the increased focus on the continent by foreign powers. One immediate problem arose with the rapidly developing rivalry between the two most prominent leaders in France’s former African colonies, Félix Houphouët-Boigny and Léopold Sédar Senghor. Each had different ideas about how African states should evolve; Houphouët-Boigny believed that each state should individually pursue its own path to development, while Senghor openly worried about the “balkanization” of West Africa resulting from these various paths.¹⁰⁰⁷ After the 1958 vote on the Community, both leaders sought to enhance their power in West Africa by forming alliances in the region. In Senghor’s case, this led to an initial agreement in January 1959 by four West African states – Senegal, Soudan, Dahomey, and Haute-Volta – to association within the Community. After independence in 1960, Senghor led Senegal to join Soudan in a short-lived union known as the Mali federation. Houphouët-Boigny’s efforts focused on linking Côte d’Ivoire in a federation with Dahomey, Haute Volta, and Niger, known as the Conseil d’Entente, which was aimed at more technical and economic cooperation among the four states.¹⁰⁰⁸ Another union, which included Central African Republic,

¹⁰⁰⁶ Réunion des trois à Rambouillet, Dec. 20, 1959. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1959 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1995), 765. “Il faut que les pays d’Afrique évoluent avec la France et pas contre elle.”

¹⁰⁰⁷ Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*, 180.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Note du Secrétariat d’État aux relations avec les États de la Communauté, April 1, 1960. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1960 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1995), 351-4.

Congo-Brazzaville, and Chad, was formed at a conference at Fort Lamy in May 1960.¹⁰⁰⁹ These various groupings had proven Senghor's fears, with French leaders growing concerned about a "balkanization" of the continent, whereby the Francophone bloc would be split up and weakened in the face of Anglophone interests in Africa.¹⁰¹⁰

Fortunately for France, all of these new African blocs quickly professed their intention to remain closely affiliated with the *métropole*. When the Conseil d'Entente countries requested independence, they made certain to clearly indicate that they wished for a continued strong association with France.¹⁰¹¹ For its part, France quickly and positively responded to these desires for continued association, signing a series of cooperative accords spanning economic, technical, and educational aid with several Francophone states within a year of independence. Most importantly, the de Gaulle regime agreed to provide military aid to new African states. France also encouraged the former Community states to cooperate on a variety of issues. Shortly after independence, twelve states took part in a series of meetings meant to search for a common ground on developments in Congo, the war in Algeria, and the threat of the pan-African movement.¹⁰¹² By April 1961, when the twelve nations met in Yaounde, an internal

¹⁰⁰⁹ Note de la sous-direction des affaires de la Communauté: Naissance de l'Union des Républiques d'Afrique centrale, June 7, 1960. *Ibid.*, 782-8.

¹⁰¹⁰ See Jacques Foccart's brief discussion of the dangers of "balkanization" with regard to Nigeria's power in West Africa, in Jacques Foccart, *Foccart parle: entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard*, Vol. I (Paris: Fayard/Jeune Afrique, 1995), 342.

¹⁰¹¹ Note: Évolution politique des États du Conseil de l'Entente, Aug. 19, 1960. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1960 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1996), 230.

¹⁰¹² These meetings took place in Abidjan in October 1960, Brazzaville in December 1960, and Yaounde in April 1961. The twelve states were Senegal, Ivory Coast, Niger, Upper Volta, Dahomey, Mauritania, Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, Central African Republic, Chad, Cameroon, and Madagascar. Note du Secrétariat d'État aux Relations avec les États de la Communauté, April 11, 1961. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1961 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1997), 448.

French memo approvingly noted a growing solidarity among these Francophone states and a shared purpose on a variety of issues.¹⁰¹³

In addition to these early efforts to transform the former colonial arrangement in sub-Saharan Africa into a new French community, the de Gaulle administration mounted a vigorous diplomatic effort designed to strengthen direct ties between Paris and individual African leaders. The man charged with leading this effort was Jacques Foccart, the Secrétaire Général aux Affaires Africaines et Malgaches, serving under de Gaulle's direct supervision. Foccart's tenure in the office, which lasted from 1960-1974, would lead to his being given the nickname *Monsieur Afrique*.¹⁰¹⁴ Within the administration, he had virtually unchecked power on African matters, needing to consult de Gaulle only on serious decisions, and often having final say over the Quai d'Orsay.¹⁰¹⁵ By the end of the de Gaulle regime, Foccart's influence on the continent had grown to the extent that he took frequent telephone calls from African leaders, including Togo's Gnassingbé Eyadema, Congo's Mobutu Sese Seko, and Gabon's Omar Bongo, during which he gave them advice on ruling their respective countries.¹⁰¹⁶ When Foccart was

¹⁰¹³ Ibid., 454.

¹⁰¹⁴ Foccart, who died in 1997, has left behind several valuable sources on his time as head of the Africa cell. In 1995, he did a series of interviews with journalist Philippe Gaillard. See *Foccart parle: entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard* (2 vols.) (Paris: Fayard/Jeune Afrique, 1995). His journals, written while he was in office, have also been published. See *Journal d'Élysée* (5 vols.) (Paris: Fayard/Jeune Afrique, 1997). Of the latter set, the first two volumes address his service under the De Gaulle regime. In the coming years, more insight into his work will be possible due to the recent opening of the long-awaited Archives du Secrétariat Général pour les Affaires Africaines et Malgaches, in the Archives Nationales de Paris. As of this writing, an inventory of documents was close to completion. For a discussion of the collection, which contains over 5,000 dossiers, see Pascal Geneste, "Les papiers Foccart aux Archives Nationale," *Vingtième Siècle* 78 (2003): 157-162. I would like to thank Pascal Geneste, who works at the Archives Nationales, for his helpful responses to my queries about the collection.

¹⁰¹⁵ Foccart somewhat modestly describes his authority over the various French bureaucracies on African matters in Jacques Foccart, *Foccart parle: entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard, Vol. I* (Paris: Fayard/Jeune Afrique, 1995), 233-4.

¹⁰¹⁶ Ibid., 236.

temporarily relieved of his duties following de Gaulle's resignation in April 1969, Houphouët-Boigny personally wrote to Foccart to express his gratitude for his contributions, noting that he had become "the living symbol of the privileged relationship that we had with [de Gaulle]."¹⁰¹⁷

Foccart, one of de Gaulle's closest advisors throughout his political life, gained the general's confidence during his time in the Resistance, which he joined in 1942. His clandestine service during the war made him well-suited to reorganize the provisional government's security forces after liberation. After de Gaulle's self-imposed exile from power, Foccart turned his attention to politics, where he helped de Gaulle build the structure for the new Rassemblement du Peuple Français (RPF). In 1949, he became the president of the RPF's Overseas Commission.¹⁰¹⁸ From 1947 to 1952, de Gaulle sent Foccart on a series of missions to Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane, and Réunion to make contact with local representatives of the RPF and help build the party.¹⁰¹⁹ After de Gaulle disbanded the RPF, Foccart accompanied the general on trips to Africa in March 1953 and March 1957, as well as during de Gaulle's 1958 tour in advance of the vote on the Community. It was during all of these trips that Foccart developed his network, making acquaintances with the men who would eventually rise to power in Africa.¹⁰²⁰ When de Gaulle returned to politics in 1958, the choice of Foccart to head the Fifth Republic's "Africa cell" was an obvious one. As Foccart would later note, de Gaulle trusted his counsel on African affairs, and the general took a great interest throughout his presidency in events transpiring on the continent:

¹⁰¹⁷ Félix Houphouët-Boigny to Jacques Foccart, May 3, 1969. *Ibid.*, 483. "...le symbole vivant des relations privilégiées que nous entretenions avec lui."

¹⁰¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁰¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 476.

¹⁰²⁰ *Ibid.*, 100-1.

African affairs interested the General in all their details. He paid close attention to me every day, regardless of the importance of the events I spoke with him about, often minor in international news or in relation to national concerns. One cannot say anything similar about any other region. He wanted to follow the evolution [of the continent] bit by bit, and country by country. He knew the men who mattered, and not just the heads of state; he was fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their character, their supporters, their adversaries, and their problems.¹⁰²¹

Although Foccart had great influence in all of France's dealings with her former African colonies, the centerpiece of his early efforts was a series of high-level visits by African heads of state, aimed at reinforcing common interests, as well as shared cultural and historical ties. Starting in 1961, de Gaulle personally welcomed to Paris those leaders vital to French interests on the continent. In the first year of the initiative, Senghor, Houphouët-Boigny, Leon M'Ba of Gabon, Hubert Maga of Dahomey, Fulbert Youlou of Congo-Brazzaville, and Diori Hamani of Niger were all treated to lavish multiday visits to the *métropole*. These visits typically involved a welcome at Orly Airport by de Gaulle or Foccart with an accompanying full military honor guard, a ceremony at the Arc de Triomphe's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, presentation before the French diplomatic corps, and a state dinner at the Elysée Palace. In the following days, their tours involved a visit to the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, additional meetings with French officials, a joint press conference with de Gaulle, and entertainment

¹⁰²¹ Ibid., 241-2. "Les affaires africaines intéressaient le Général dans tous leurs détails. Il s'en entretenait quotidiennement avec moi quelle que fût l'importance des événements dont je lui parlais, souvent mineure dans l'actualité internationale ou par rapport à ses préoccupations d'ordre national. On ne peut rien dire de semblable à propos d'aucune autre région du monde. Il tenait à suivre le fil d'évolution qu'il avait amorcée et à la comprendre, pays par pays. Il connaissait les hommes qui comptaient, et pas seulement les chefs d'État ; il n'ignorait rien de leurs forces et de leurs faiblesses de caractère, de leur assise, de leurs soutiens, de leurs adversaires ni de leurs problèmes."

involving some aspect of French culture, such as an outing to the Comedie Française or a presentation at the Bibliotheque Nationale about France and Africa's shared heritage.¹⁰²²

But the centerpiece of these visits was undoubtedly the state dinner given by de Gaulle, during which the President commemorated the special relationship that existed between France and each leader's respective country. Exemplary of this were his comments during Senghor's visit in April 1961, when de Gaulle spoke of the long history between France and Senegal:

For three centuries, our two countries have had close contact and yet they have never opposed each other, have never ignored each other, and have never fought with each other. For three centuries, they established strong and numerous links between them. For three centuries, there is not one great human cause - and it goes without saying that great human causes are also those of France - there is not one great human cause that has not been supported at the same time by the men of Senegal: the advent of democracy, the abolition of slavery, the opening of Africa to civilization, the defense of freedom in two world wars, and the liberation of Europe in World War II. Of course, it is mostly the blood of soldiers and ideas of thinkers that sealed this fraternity. For France, a black soldier, in common parlance, is a Senegalese soldier. For France, President Senghor is a Senegalese poet and also a French writer, as well as a Head of State.¹⁰²³

De Gaulle was also effusive in his praise for other African leaders. Two months later, in a state dinner for Houphouët-Boigny, de Gaulle emphasized both "the eminent role you

¹⁰²² The details of these meetings can be found in the following records: Leon M'Ba of Gabon, ANP, 5 AG I 576; Leopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal, ANP, 5 AG I 577; Felix Houphouët-Boigny of Ivory Coast, ANP, 5 AG I 580; Hubert Maga of Dahomey, ANP, 5 AG I 583; Fulbert Youlou of Congo-Brazzaville, ANP, 5 AG I 584; and Diori Hamani of Niger, ANP, 5 AG I 582.

¹⁰²³ Toast adressé à S.E. M. Léopold Senghor, Président de la République du Sénégal, April 19, 1961. Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages, avec le renouveau: Mai 1958 – Juillet 1962*, 304-5. "Depuis trois siècles, nos deux pays sont en contact étroit et ils ne se sont jamais opposés, jamais méconnus, jamais combattus. Depuis trois siècles, ils nouent entre eux des liens forts et nombreux. Depuis trois siècles, il n'y a pas une seule grande cause humaine – et il va de soi que les grandes causes humaines sont celles de la France – il n'y a pas une seule grande cause humaine qui n'ait été soutenue en même temps par les hommes du Sénégal : l'avènement de la démocratie, l'abolition de l'esclavage, l'ouverture de l'Afrique à la civilisation, la défense de la liberté dans les deux guerres mondiales, la libération de l'Europe au terme de la deuxième. Bien entendu, ce sont surtout le sang des soldats et les idées des penseurs qui ont scellé cette fraternité. Pour la France, un soldat noir, dans le langage courant, c'est un soldat sénégalais. Pour la France, le Président Senghor, c'est un poète sénégalaise et un écrivain français, en même temps qu'un Chef d'État."

play at the essential action you have taken” as well as the “profound esteem and attachment” felt by France for the Ivoirian leader.¹⁰²⁴ When Congo-Brazzaville’s President Abbé Fulbert Youlou visited that November, de Gaulle took note of Congo-Brazzaville’s vital role in the early stages of the resistance.¹⁰²⁵ The following year, de Gaulle welcomed the Central African Republic’s David Dacko, and praised him for being “the guide and main craftsman of the profound transformation which is in the process of being realized in the Central African Republic.”¹⁰²⁶

For their part, many African leaders remained loyal to France throughout de Gaulle’s tenure as president. In particular, Houphouët-Boigny would become the linchpin of French policy in Africa, and he frequently expressed his deep gratitude for the continuing relationship with France, as he did in a 1966 speech marking the anniversary of Ivory Coast’s independence.¹⁰²⁷ In turn, de Gaulle cited Houphouët-Boigny and Senghor as positive examples during conversations with other African leaders.¹⁰²⁸ For example, both Houphouët-Boigny and Senghor were often instrumental in keeping the recalcitrant Guinea within the French orbit.¹⁰²⁹ In 1965, de Gaulle credited Houphouët-Boigny for having played an important role in the *rapprochement* between France and

¹⁰²⁴ Toast adressé à S.E. M. Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Président de la République de Côte d’Ivoire, June 7, 1961. Ibid., 323.

¹⁰²⁵ Toast adressé à S.E. M. l’Abbé F. Youlou, Président de la République du Congo, Nov. 20, 1961. Ibid., 365-7.

¹⁰²⁶ Toast adressé à S.E. M. D. Dacko, Président de la République Centrafricaine, June 20, 1962. Ibid., 425.

¹⁰²⁷ Discours prononcé à l’occasion du sixième anniversaire de l’indépendance, Aug. 5, 1966. Félix Houphouët-Boigny, *Anthologie des discours 1946-1978, Tome II* (Abidjan: Editions Ceda, 1978), 741.

¹⁰²⁸ Meeting between Charles de Gaulle and Foreign Minister of Kenya Joseph Murumbi, March 29, 1965, ANP, 5 AG I 214.

¹⁰²⁹ Note de la direction d’Afrique-Levant: relations franco-guinéennes, June 4, 1963. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1963 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1999), 590.

Nigeria.¹⁰³⁰ They were also not afraid to go on the attack when necessary. This could be seen after Guinea's declaration of independence, when Senghor criticized Sékou Toure's ambitions and his growing relationship with the Soviet Union in a press conference in Paris on May 22, 1959.¹⁰³¹ Houphouët-Boigny and his followers in the Conseil d'Entente took a more hardline approach, insisting that no state that wanted immediate independence should be allowed to join the French Community.¹⁰³² In November 1965, Sékou Touré, during another period of disenchantment with France, accused French officials, along with Houphouët-Boigny and the presidents of Dahomey, Upper Volta, and Congo of participating in a plot to assassinate him.¹⁰³³ In a press conference on November 17, Houphouët-Boigny attacked Sékou Touré's regime, accusing him of despotism and manufacturing the accusations to deflect attention from problems with his own regime. Most notably, he mounted an impassioned defense of France, complaining that Sékou Touré should not have made accusations against the French authorities who had tried to work with him in good faith.¹⁰³⁴ This latter defense demonstrated a well-entrenched pro-French bloc in Africa, which French officials had exerted a great deal of effort coordinating.

¹⁰³⁰ M. le Général de Gaulle, Président de la République Française, à Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Premier Ministre de la République du Nigeria, Sept. 28, 1965. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1965 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2004), 377.

¹⁰³¹ M. de Guiringaud, Ambassadeur de France à Accra, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, May 25, 1959. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1959 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1994), 701 note 1.

¹⁰³² Note: Evolution politique des États du Conseil de l'Entente, Aug. 19, 1960. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1960 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1996), 228.

¹⁰³³ M. Koenig, Ambassadeur de France à Conakry, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Nov. 16, 1965. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1965 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2004), 594.

¹⁰³⁴ M. Ragueneau, Chargé d'affaires de France A.I., près l'ambassade de France à Abidjan, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Nov. 22, 1965. *Ibid.*, 629.

The Francophone Bloc and African Politics

The coalescing of a Francophone bloc was especially important given the continued collaboration of the anticolonial states in Africa. As noted in the previous chapter, the work of the 1955 Bandung Conference had served as an inspiration for the movement. Its leader in West Africa was Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, whose country had won its independence from Britain in 1957. His "pan-African" movement aimed to form a common African consciousness and expel western interests from the continent. For French leaders, Nkrumah's movement threatened to bolster a "myth of African unity" that could potentially undermine the unique bond among Francophone African nations.¹⁰³⁵ Not coincidentally, the pan-African movement began to gain momentum just as the controversy between France and Guinea broke out. In December 1958, Nkrumah held a pan-African conference in Accra, and attacked colonialism, imperialism, and racism in all its forms. France's recent draconian measures in Guinea were heavily criticized, as was France's attempt to maintain a continuing presence on the continent. As the French representative to the conference later noted, Nkrumah declared that "Africa is not the extension of Europe or any other continent, and he opposed the contention of some non-African elements entrenched on the continent that they could refuse to allow the application of the law of the majority, despite the fact that this is the basis of the West's political doctrine."¹⁰³⁶

¹⁰³⁵ Note de la direction d'Afrique-Levant, Sept. 16, 1960. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1960 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1996), 354.

¹⁰³⁶ M. de Guringaud, Ambassadeur de France à Accra, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Jan. 1, 1959. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1959 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1994), 5. "L'Afrique n'était le prolongement ni de l'Europe ni d'aucun autre continent, et s'éleva contra la prétention de certains éléments d'origine non africaine établis en Afrique qui se refusent à laisser appliquer la loi de la majorité, laquelle constitue pourtant... la base de la doctrine politique de l'Occident."

Although representatives from most of the French territories in Africa were invited, very few attended, having been discouraged from doing so by the French authorities. But despite this failure in outreach, Nkrumah's conference posed a challenge to French interests, especially in West Africa. He announced the eventual formation of a "United States of Africa" with the union between Ghana and Guinea serving as a fundamental first step.¹⁰³⁷ The two countries also immediately began supporting Algeria in UN debates concerning French actions in North Africa. That April, the Accra coalition reunited in Conakry, Guinea, where Sékou Touré attacked France and promised "the final liquidation of colonialism by peaceful means of non-cooperation, that is to say, by economic boycott wherever necessary and possible."¹⁰³⁸ The following August, nine independent states met in Monrovia, Liberia, to discuss, among other things, French actions in Algeria and the testing of nuclear weapons in the Sahara.¹⁰³⁹ This latter issue would continue to be a source of discontent with France in Africa and a powerful counterpoint against continuing French influence in the region.

Nkrumah reasserted the position of the newly-independent African countries in a meeting with the French ambassador to Ghana, Louis de Guiringaud, in May 1959. After Guiringaud explained the structure of the new French community, Nkrumah noted that

¹⁰³⁷ M. de Guiringaud, Ambassadeur de France à Accra, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Dec. 9, 1958. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1958 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1993), 826-7. M. de Guiringaud, Ambassadeur de France à Accra, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Jan. 1, 1959. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1959 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1994), 2-12.

¹⁰³⁸ M. Francis Huré, chargé d'affaires de France à Conakry, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, April 22, 1959. *Ibid.*, 545. "la liquidation finale du colonialisme et du racisme par le moyen pacifique de la non-coopération, c'est-à-dire, le boycottage économique partout où cela sera nécessaire et possible."

¹⁰³⁹ Note de la direction d'Afrique-Levant, au sujet de la conférence de Monrovia, Aug. 10, 1959. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1959 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1995), 162-3. The nine countries were Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Libya, Morocco, Egypt/RAU, Sudan, and Tunisia.

this made Francophone African territories beholden to France, which was in contravention to their natural wishes to be more integrated within Africa.¹⁰⁴⁰ “Africa must belong to Africans,” Nkrumah emphasized. “No part of Africa can be considered as an extension of Europe or any other continent.”¹⁰⁴¹ For his part, Guiringaud responded that in the age of atomic weapons, “it is not nominal independence that matters, but the way to earn respect and the possibility of cooperation between peoples.”¹⁰⁴² He noted that Houphouët-Boigny and other African leaders had already decided that their best interests lay with France. Upon leaving the meeting, it was clear to Guiringaud that Ghana considered France “adversary number one”. He concluded that France might be the only power “which places a check on [Nkrumah’s] expansionist and pan-African dreams.”¹⁰⁴³

Fortunately for France, it could count on its friends in Africa to defend its interests on the continent. The new Francophone bloc was particularly useful at the United Nations. A November 1960 internal memo from the French delegation to the UN approvingly noted the debut of this concerted lobby by Francophone African countries at the General Assembly. “Our black friends,” the memo noted, “have asserted their presence and their faith in a new Africa – certainly liberated [from colonial rule], but hostile to all forms of violent upheaval.”¹⁰⁴⁴ More importantly, the new Francophone

¹⁰⁴⁰ M. de Guiringaud, Ambassadeur de France à Accra, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, May 26, 1959. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1959 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1994), 706.

¹⁰⁴¹ “L’Afrique doit appartenir aux Africains. Aucune fraction de l’Afrique ne peut être considérée comme le prolongement de l’Europe ou d’un autre continent.” Ibid., 706.

¹⁰⁴² Ibid., 706-7.

¹⁰⁴³ Ibid., 708. “Nous sommes bien ceux, et peut-être les seuls, qui font échec à ses rêves expansionnistes et panafricains.”

¹⁰⁴⁴ Note de la Délégation française auprès du Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies, Nov. 24, 1960. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1960 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1996),

African bloc was only “moderately anticolonial” and did not seem inherently disposed to opposing French ideas for the development of Africa.¹⁰⁴⁵ As the head of the French delegation at the UN noted, this showing at the General Assembly was illustrative of an “amicable collaboration” between France and Francophone nations, which was superior to the relationship being developed between Britain and Anglophone countries on the continent.¹⁰⁴⁶

The growing rivalry between the pan-African and Francophone blocs led to a further hardening of alliances. On the pan-African side, the Casablanca Conference, held from January 3-7, 1961, demonstrated the developing cooperation among the anticolonial powers. Chaired by Morocco’s Mohammed V, it brought together the main players in the anticolonial movement, including Nkrumah, Sékou Touré, Mali’s Modibo Keita, Egypt’s Gamal Abdel Nasser, and Algeria’s Ferhat Abbas.¹⁰⁴⁷ In the years that followed, French diplomats would refer to these countries as “the Casablanca powers”. The conference addressed a number of matters, including the unfolding crisis in Congo (discussed below), the continued war in Algeria, and France’s testing of atomic weapons in the Sahara.¹⁰⁴⁸ As in the past, such discussions posed a serious threat to France’s interests on the continent. An internal Quai d’Orsay memo on the conference, while acknowledging that rivalries existed among the aforementioned anticolonial leaders, nevertheless warned that the Casablanca powers were capable of presenting a “common front” against African

632. “Nos amis noirs... ont donc tenu à affirmer leur présence et leur foi dans une Afrique nouvelle, émancipée certes mais hostile à tout bouleversement violent.”

¹⁰⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴⁶ M. Bérard, Chef de la Mission permanente de la France auprès de l’Organisation des Nations Unies, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Dec. 21, 1960. Ibid., 773.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Note de la direction d’Afrique-Levant, Conférence de Casablanca, Jan. 10, 1961. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1961 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1997), 14.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Ibid. 16-7.

nations loyal to France. This threat was even more dangerous given the potential of the deteriorating situation in Congo to undermine western authority there. “This summit of African extremists will probably be quite disappointing for the participants,” the memo noted. “But the evolution of events in Congo could once again tip the scales in their favor.”¹⁰⁴⁹

Partially in response to the Casablanca Conference, the Francophone bloc continued its efforts to form a loose union around shared goals and principles. To this end, twelve states that had previously met at Abidjan, Brazzaville, and Yaounde convened in September 1961 in Tannarive, Madagascar to form the Union Africaine et Malgache (UAM).¹⁰⁵⁰ The organization had as its goal “to organize, in all areas of foreign policy, cooperation among its members in order to strengthen their solidarity, to assure their collective security, to aid their development, and to maintain the peace in Africa, Madagascar, and the world.”¹⁰⁵¹ To this end, the Tannarive powers agreed on a mutual defense pact to supplement their existing arrangements with France, established an organization for economic cooperation, and concluded pacts to coordinate policy in the areas of diplomacy, justice, and communications.¹⁰⁵² Most important for France, the UAM, while ideologically sympathetic to general pan-African notions and the larger

¹⁰⁴⁹ Ibid., 17. “Ce sommet des extrémistes africains aura sans doute finalement été assez décevant pour tous les participants. Mais l’évolution des événements au Congo risque de faire à nouveau pencher la balance en leur faveur.”

¹⁰⁵⁰ See M. Couve de Murville, *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, aux Représentants diplomatiques de la France à l’étranger*, Sept. 21, 1961. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1961 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1998), 446-9. The UAM would later become the Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache at the Nouakchott Conference of February 1965. See Note de la Direction des Affaires Africaines et Malgaches: Participation du groupement francophone aux conférences d’Alger et d’Accra, Aug. 12, 1965. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1965 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2004), 226 note 2.

¹⁰⁵¹ Ibid. 447. “...d’organiser, dans tous les domaines de la politique extérieure, la coopération entre ses membres afin de renforcer leur solidarité, d’assurer leur sécurité collective, d’aider à leur développement et de maintenir la paix en Afrique, à Madagascar et dans le monde.”

¹⁰⁵² Ibid. 448.

nonaligned movement, was not rabidly anticolonial.¹⁰⁵³ As *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères* Maurice Couve de Murville noted in his report on the conference to French diplomatic representatives around the world, “both by its style and its conclusions, the Tannarive Conference has attested to the existence among its participants of a maturity and a cohesion, which have to this point not been seen among the rival Casablanca states.”¹⁰⁵⁴ The following February, Couve followed up with his diplomatic corps, approvingly noting that “this beginning of consolidation in moderate Africa is in itself encouraging, as it was important to undermine the extremists’ monopoly on exploiting the myth of the unification of Africa.”¹⁰⁵⁵

For his part, de Gaulle was strongly supportive of these efforts. Any developments on the continent that hindered the formation of a strong Francophone bloc also threatened to undermine French influence in Africa in general. In January 1962, he wrote to Houphouët-Boigny, congratulating him on his efforts to construct a Francophone African union, and emphasizing its importance to France’s future:

... Europe, which also intends to unite its free nations, has a great interest in dealing with as coherent a group as possible in the middle of your continent. France, in particular, strongly wishes that the assets of moral, cultural, and material values, which it has in common with many African countries and Madagascar, are represented and developed by them in a common African community and not divided into multiple and feeble elements. Finally, the world would have nothing to gain from the pulverization of these peaceful regions.¹⁰⁵⁶

¹⁰⁵³ *Ibid.*, 446.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 449. “Tant par son style que par ses conclusions, la conférence de Tannarive a attesté l’existence, chez ses participants, d’une maturité et d’une cohésion qui ont jusqu’ici totalement fait défaut au groupe rival des États de Casablanca.”

¹⁰⁵⁵ M. Couve de Murville, *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères*, aux Représentants diplomatiques de la France à l’étranger, Feb. 3, 1962. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1962 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1998), 94. “Ce début de consolidation de l’Afrique modérée est en soi encourageant et il importait certainement d’enlever aux extrémistes le monopole de l’exploitation du mythe de l’unification de l’Afrique.”

¹⁰⁵⁶ Le Général de Gaulle, *Président de la République Française*, à M. Houphouët-Boigny, *Président de la République de Côte d’Ivoire*, Jan. 22, 1962. *Ibid.*, 52. “D’ailleurs, l’Europe qui,

French officials were greatly heartened by the role played by the UAM at the United Nations. As noted in chapters three and four, France had been subjected to a series of attacks in the General Assembly throughout the 1950s. With the transition to independence of France's former colonies, they could take a more prominent and eloquent stand in the General Assembly in defense of their former colonizer. As noted by French UN representative Roger Seydoux, several UAM members spoke in favor of France in proceedings of the Fourth Committee; each time they were given the opportunity to discuss France, "they praised the benefits of our actions in their countries, manifested their pride in taking part in our culture, and exemplified the success of the decolonization policy of General de Gaulle."¹⁰⁵⁷ This was in stark opposition to attacks by some of the UAM countries on Great Britain and Anglophone countries in Africa, and embodied a loyalty not seen among the African countries in the British Commonwealth.¹⁰⁵⁸ As Seydoux proudly noted two months later, the most striking aspect of the relationship between France and the UAM nations was "solidarity and unity based primarily on our shared language and culture."¹⁰⁵⁹

elle aussi, tend à d'unir dans sa partie libre, a grand intérêt à avoir affaire, au milieu de votre continent, à un groupement aussi cohérent que possible. La France, en particulier, souhaite fort que le capital de valeurs morales, culturelles, et matérielles, qui lui est commun avec nombre de pays africains et avec Madagascar soit représenté et développé par eux en Afrique comme un tout, et non pas fractionné en multiples et faibles éléments. Enfin, le monde, lui non plus, n'aurait rien à gagner à la pulvérisation de ses régions pacifiques."

¹⁰⁵⁷ M. Seydoux, Représentant permanent de la France auprès de l'Organisation des Nations Unies, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Jan. 3, 1963. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1963 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1999), 13. "...ils ont loué les bienfaits de notre action dans leur pays, manifesté leur fierté de participer à notre culture et cité en exemple le succès de la politique de décolonisation du général de Gaulle."

¹⁰⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵⁹ M. Seydoux, Représentant permanent de la France auprès de l'Organisation des Nations Unies, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, March 15, 1963. Ibid., 283. "...la solidarité et l'unité reposent avant tout sur l'usage de notre langue et l'appartenance à notre culture."

In 1965, the UAM would transform into a larger organization, the Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache (OCAM). This organization, which focused on educational, technical and economic cooperation, was comprised of all Francophone countries with the exception of Mauritania, and unlike the UAM, expanded to include Rwanda and Congo. Like the creation of the UAM, the founding of the OCAM heartened French leaders, as it helped present a more unified Francophone bloc to counter other interests on the continent. That July, de Gaulle welcomed the heads of state of eight OCAM members to the Elysée Palace, and reaffirmed the essential ties that existed between France and Francophone African nations:

All of you here... united in the desire to ensure that your states, their elites and their people, are profoundly linked among themselves by a decidedly common language and culture. Because this language and culture are that of we other Frenchmen, we can only rejoice at the decision taken by yourselves and which, for the foreseeable future, will bring even more each day through its spirit, soul, and radiance.¹⁰⁶⁰

It should be noted that de Gaulle only encouraged *Francophone* African collaboration. Indeed, French leaders were highly suspicious of any cooperative agreements in Africa that were not purely Francophone. As one example, the Organization for African Unity, founded in 1963 by 32 African nations in an attempt to reconcile the divide between the Casablanca and Francophone blocs, was seen by the de Gaulle regime as a potential proxy for the dangerous pan-Africanist philosophy. Similarly, the pursuit of an Anglophone-inclusive West African regional economic

¹⁰⁶⁰ Toast adressé à L.L.E.E. Mm. Les chefs d'état de l'OCAM, July 9, 1966. Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages: vers le terme, Janvier 1966 – Avril 1969* (Paris: Plon, 1970), 59. “Vous voici... réunis dans la volonté de faire en sorte que vos États, leurs élites et leurs peuples, soient liés entre eux en profondeur par une langue et une culture décidément communes. Comme cette langue et une culture sont celles de nous autres Français, nous ne pouvons que nous réjouir d'une décision prise par vous-mêmes et qui, au long des temps, nous rapprochera chaque jour davantage par l'esprit, l'âme et le rayonnement.”

arrangement (the organization that would eventually become ECOWAS) by Senegal, Mali, and other Francophone states was heavily frowned upon. As an internal Quai d'Orsay memo from March 1968 noted:

If this project were completed, it would involve serious danger both for the Francophone African states and us. It would end the West African monetary union as well as the franc zone; undermine the foundations of the Yaounde Convention [a financial aid agreement between Europe and Africa]; probably mark the end of Francophone African organizations; disrupt our policy of cooperation, and because of economic disparities among the Anglophone countries, render uncertain the latter's economic takeoff.¹⁰⁶¹

The idea of shared ties in Africa based on French language and culture would later inspire Senghor's concept of *Francophonie*, which he began discussing in connection with the UAM's successor organization, the Organization Commune Africaine et Malgache (OCAM), by the mid-1960s. As discussed in chapter five, for Senghor, there was something inherent about French culture and education that made Francophone countries particularly situated to bring progress to Africa. In a conversation with the French ambassador to Senegal in 1966, Senghor noted that "it is obvious that only *Francophonie*... can provide a solution for African problems, among them the relationship between the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa."¹⁰⁶² Eventually, the concept of *Francophonie* would expand beyond the *métropole* and Africa; Senghor also

¹⁰⁶¹ Note de la direction des affaires Africaines et Malgaches, March 28, 1968. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1968 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2009), 580. "Ce projet, s'il était même à son terme, comporterait de sérieux danger tant pour les États africains francophones que nous-mêmes. Il mettrait un terme à l'union monétaire Ouest-africaine et de ce fait à la zone franc, saperait les fondements de la Convention de Yaoundé, marquerait probablement la fin des organisations francophones africaines, perturberait notre politique de coopération et, en raison des disparités économiques entre pays anglophones, rendrait aléatoire le décollage économique de ces derniers."

¹⁰⁶² M. Vyau de Lagarde, Ambassadeur de France à Dakar, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, April 18, 1966. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1966 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2006), 650. "Mais il bien est évident que seule la francophonie... peut apporter une solution aux problèmes africains, entre autres celui des relations entre le Maghreb et pays au sud du Sahara."

envisioned it encompassing Belgium, Switzerland, and Canada.¹⁰⁶³ That year, at the OCAM conference in Tannarive, Madagascar, the organization agreed to form an exploratory committee chaired by Senghor and Niger's Hamani Diori to further discuss the issue.¹⁰⁶⁴ The foundations for the formal organization would later be established at the 1969 Niamey Conference in Niger, which brought together the ministers of education from Francophone countries to discuss efforts to preserve and spread French culture throughout the world. It persists to this day and includes over 50 members from four continents.¹⁰⁶⁵

De Gaulle's Relationship with the United States and Great Britain

The increased collaboration of the anticolonial powers in Africa was not the only compelling reason to encourage development of a strong Francophone bloc. With the return of de Gaulle to power, French foreign policy would be underscored by a strain of Anglophobia not seen since the end of World War II. To be sure, as chapters four and five discussed, suspicions of the "Anglo-Saxons" had not disappeared completely, as Fourth Republic leaders remained concerned about American and British intentions on the continent. But there had also been increased collaboration with the western alliance in Africa, especially in the face of potential communist penetration. Of course, de Gaulle had similar concerns about Soviet, and later Chinese designs. But while he remained a believer in the American alliance in many respects, he also worried that the United States

¹⁰⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Le Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, aux Représentants diplomatiques de la France (in Africa), Jan. 12, 1968. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1968 Tome I* (Paris : Imprimerie Nationale, 2009), 69.

¹⁰⁶⁵ For more on Francophonie's history, see Christian Valantin, *Une histoire de la francophonie* (Paris: Belin Littérature et revues, 2010). See also Christophe Traisnel, *Francophonie, francophonisme : groupe d'aspiration et formes d'engagement* (Paris: L.G.D.J, 1998).

had too much power – a sentiment he conveyed to UN Secretary-General U Thant in July 1964, when he noted that “although she is an ally of the United States, France does not believe that American hegemony is good for the world.”¹⁰⁶⁶ He was also quick to view U.S. and British interests as intertwined; for de Gaulle, France, while remaining close to the western alliance, also had to assert its autonomy between the twin poles of “Anglo-Saxon” and Soviet domination. To this end, de Gaulle pursued a policy of “national independence” for France that could give it more latitude vis-à-vis the Cold War powers. In his own words, this independence would “allow France to become – despite the ideologies and hegemony of [the United States and the Soviet Union], in spite of the passions and prejudices of race, above the rivalries and ambitions of nations – a champion of cooperation, whose absence would lead to the troubles, the interventions, and the conflicts, which lead to world war.”¹⁰⁶⁷

De Gaulle’s policy of “national independence” was made clear during controversies concerning France’s development of atomic weapons and its involvement in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). During the Eisenhower administration, the preference of the U.S. government was to have its nuclear umbrella protecting Western Europe, instead of having individual nations develop their own atomic weapons. To this end, the United States generally refused to share nuclear secrets

¹⁰⁶⁶ Compte rendu: entretien du général De Gaulle et de M. Thant, secrétaire général de l’ONU, July 21, 1964. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1964 Vol. II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2002), 81. “Bien qu’elle soit l’amie des États-Unis, la France n’estime pas qu’une hégémonie américaine soit bonne pour le monde.”

¹⁰⁶⁷ Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l’Élysée, Sept. 9, 1965. Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et Messages, pour l’effort: Août 1962 – Décembre 1965* (Paris: Plon, 1970), 384. “En effet, l’indépendance ainsi recouvrée permet à la France de devenir, en dépit des idéologies et des hégémonies des colosses, malgré les passions et les préventions des races, par-dessus les rivalités et les ambitions des nations, un champion de la coopération, faute de laquelle iraient s’étendant les troubles, les interventions, les conflits, qui mènent à la guerre mondiale.”

with its allies in mainland Europe – with the exception of Britain, which had tested its first nuclear weapon in 1952 and began cooperating with the United States on nuclear technology later in the decade.¹⁰⁶⁸ However, France, which had already been pursuing its own nuclear program during the Fourth Republic, was excluded from these cooperative efforts – a decision which enraged de Gaulle. From the outset of his return to power, de Gaulle made no secret about his intentions for France to achieve an atomic arsenal. As he noted to U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in July 1958:

We do not have the atomic bomb. We are far behind you; we are not as rich as you are. But we are on track to make ourselves an atomic power, which, of course, will not rival your arsenal or that of the Soviet Union. It is now only a matter of months. But one thing is certain: we will have atomic weapons.¹⁰⁶⁹

That October, in a press conference, de Gaulle justified France's pursuit of atomic weapons by indicating that France had favored complete disarmament. But this having failed, it made no sense for France not to develop a nuclear arsenal – especially when both the “Anglo-Saxons” and the Soviets already had them.¹⁰⁷⁰ In 1960, de Gaulle's vision was realized when France completed its first successful nuclear test in the Sahara – a decision that caused great consternation among the western alliance, as well as anger throughout African capitals.¹⁰⁷¹

¹⁰⁶⁸ For an overview of the early British atomic weapons program, see John Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence: British Nuclear Strategy, 1945-1964* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

¹⁰⁶⁹ Comptes rendus des entretiens franco-américains du 5 juillet 1958. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1958 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1993), 26. “Nous, nous n'avons pas cette force atomique. Nous sommes très en retard sur vous; nous sommes beaucoup moins riches que vous. Mais nous sommes sur la voie de nous faire une puissance atomique qui, bien évidemment, sera sans rapport avec la vôtre ou avec celle de l'URSS. C'est maintenant une affaire de mois. Une chose est certaine: nous aurons l'arme atomique.”

¹⁰⁷⁰ Conférence de presse tenue à l'Hotel Matignon, Oct. 23, 1958. Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages: avec le renouveau, Mai 1958 – Juillet 1962* (Paris: Plon, 1970), 57.

¹⁰⁷¹ For more on the history of the French nuclear program, see Bruno Tertrais, *La France et la dissuasion nucléaire: concept, moyens, avenir* (Paris: Documentation française, 2007); Wilfrid L. Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971). See also Philip

In addition to these tensions with the western alliance about nuclear weapons, de Gaulle's regime also initiated efforts to change the terms of the NATO alliance in a manner more favorable to France. The primary concerns regarding NATO were twofold. First, de Gaulle and his followers were upset that the collective security pact did not encompass the French community in Africa. This meant giving France privileged control over the Mediterranean and Africa, where it could defend its particular sphere of interest. Second, de Gaulle wished to undermine, and perhaps abolish, the practice of integrating NATO forces. He viewed the defense of national territory as the primary responsibility of that nation's citizens, and did not want French troops taking orders from foreign officers on matters of national security.¹⁰⁷² Based on these two areas of discontent, along with the aforementioned resentment about American nuclear policy, the de Gaulle regime would make a series of decisions significantly diminishing French participation in NATO command, including the withdrawal of all of France's fleets, the expulsion of NATO troops from the *métropole*, and the removal of all non-French nuclear weapons from French soil.¹⁰⁷³

In addition to its growing rivalry with the United States, the French relationship with Britain also worsened during the de Gaulle years, mostly because of debates about

G. Cerny, *The Politics of Grandeur: Ideological Aspects of De Gaulle's Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

¹⁰⁷² These views were made clear in De Gaulle's press conference in Paris on Sept. 5, 1960.

Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages: avec le renouveau, Mai 1958 – Juillet 1962*, 248-9.

¹⁰⁷³ Several excellent sources on the troubled relationship between France and the western alliance are available. See Christian Nuenlist, Anna Locher, and Garret Martin, eds., *Globalizing de Gaulle: International Perspectives on French Foreign Policies, 1958-1969* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010); James Ellison, *The United States, Britain and the Transatlantic Crisis: Rising to the Gaullist Challenge, 1963-68* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Frédéric Bozo, *Two Strategies for Europe: De Gaulle, the United States, and the Atlantic Alliance* (Lanham: Rowan and Littlefield, 2001); Constantine Pagedas, *Anglo-American Strategic Relations and the French Problem, 1960-1963: a Troubled Partnership* (London: Frank Cass, 2000); Michael M. Harrison, *The Reluctant Ally: France and Atlantic Security* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1981).

Britain's entry into the European Common Market, and to a lesser extent, British support for Anglophone African countries. De Gaulle also remained highly suspicious of Britain's special relationship with the United States, as well as the possibility that joint "Anglo-Saxon" action could hinder French designs in a variety of areas. From his perspective, Britain could not focus its attention across the Atlantic and maintain a special relationship with the United States, while at the same time attempting to receive favorable treatment on the European mainland. This led to French attempts to prevent Britain from joining the Treaty of Rome, which had established the European Economic Community in 1956. When Gladwyn Jebb, the British ambassador to France, indicated to de Gaulle in December 1958 that Britain felt it was being subjected to "hostile maneuvers" by France, de Gaulle responded that "it was the United States and England that have pushed France toward the track of European community."¹⁰⁷⁴ This issue would persist throughout the de Gaulle regime; when negotiations broke down in May 1963 between the six European members and Britain, the French ambassador to London attacked the British unwillingness to understand how the U.S.-U.K. special relationship interfered with eventual integration with the mainland.¹⁰⁷⁵ Maurice Couve de Murville confirmed these sentiments in conversations with President Kennedy later that month. After Kennedy confronted him about French efforts to exclude Britain from the EEC and suggested that French sentiments bordered on anti-Americanism, Couve noted that the special relationship with United States prevented Britain from establishing similar

¹⁰⁷⁴ Note de la Présidence du Conseil, Dec. 12, 1968. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1958 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1993), 855.

¹⁰⁷⁵ M. de Courcel, Ambassadeur de France à Londres, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, May 22, 1963. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1963 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1999), 521-2.

relations with Europe.¹⁰⁷⁶ De Gaulle's policy was so vindictive that even after Britain's Prime Minister Harold Wilson made several overtures to de Gaulle promising to make his country more independent of the United States, de Gaulle still vetoed Britain's entry in November 1967.¹⁰⁷⁷

More importantly, the return of de Gaulle to power marked a significant shift in the level of suspicion of British intentions in Africa. While these suspicions had certainly existed during the Fourth Republic, the level of paranoia about Anglophone intrigues on the continent reached a high point during the de Gaulle regime. To be sure, there remained a level of cooperation between the respective French and British diplomatic corps, especially regarding planning for the future of Africa. But the level of trust between the two nations had changed permanently. This could be immediately seen during the crisis in relations with Guinea, when Sékou Touré announced the formation of a loose union with former British colony Ghana. Sufficient hostility was evident from both the French government and the French press about potential British plots that it prompted a meeting on November 25, 1958 with British ambassador to France Gladwyn Jebb, who attempted to reassure French officials. His *aide-memoire* of the conversation detailed the sentiments he expressed to the French delegation:

The French government have already been given categorical assurances that HMG were in no way a party to the agreement reached between Dr. Nkrumah and M. Sékou Touré. It would indeed be ridiculous to conclude from this agreement that the United Kingdom, which has been gradually relinquishing its colonial responsibilities throughout the world, has any desire to supplant or weaken the French position in Africa. On the contrary, HMG fully realise the value of the French Community as a defence against Communist or Nasserist expansion. Both

¹⁰⁷⁶ Entretien entre le Président des États-Unis et le Ministre des Affaires étrangères à Washington, May 25, 1963. Ibid., 539.

¹⁰⁷⁷ For Wilson's talks with De Gaulle, see M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, à divers représentants diplomatiques de la France à l'étranger, Jan. 30, 1967. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1967 Tome I* (Paris : Imprimerie Nationale, 2008), 174.

France and the United Kingdom are basically in the same position in Africa. The essential problem for both countries, as the French government will agree, is to ensure that their former colonies, whatever degree of independence that they have obtained, remain in close and friendly relations with them and with the West as a whole.¹⁰⁷⁸

Despite such frequent assurances, de Gaulle's mentality about British and American actions in Africa was unwavering, as illustrated by a note to Foccart, written by the General on July 5, 1962. De Gaulle had received word that the Quai d'Orsay was in discussions with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Mennen Williams regarding further cooperation on the continent. De Gaulle, highly suspicious of any such talks, made clear that he had no tolerance for Anglophone interference in what he considered was France's exclusive domain:

Why even have these negotiations? All we will accomplish is to allow the Americans, and especially this American, who is hostile to us, to interfere in our African affairs.... We must not engage with the Americans on any subject or on any point. This unfortunate meeting that will take place is to be limited to a simple summary and exchange of views.¹⁰⁷⁹

Of course, de Gaulle's mentality was not lost on Francophone African leaders eager to cooperate with France in the postcolonial era. Houphouët-Boigny in particular remained a staunch critic of Anglophone Africa; in January 1961, he met with French Prime Minister Michel Debré and assailed British policy in Africa, which he considered "egotistical and hostile to French policy, and without any real effort at cooperation with

¹⁰⁷⁸ Aide-memoire from British ambassador Gladwyn Jebb, Dec. 5, 1958, ANP, 5 AG I 214.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Charles de Gaulle to Jacques Foccart, July 5, 1962. Jacques Foccart, *Foccart parle: entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard, Tome I* (Paris: Fayard/Jeune Afrique, 1995), 479. "Pourquoi faire ces négociations? Tout se passe comme si nous mettions nous-mêmes les Américains (et spécialement cet Américain-là, qui nous est hostile) dans nos affaires africaines. D'ailleurs, les Anglais, eux, se sont défilés ! Sur aucun sujet, sur aucun point, nous ne devons nous engager en rien vis-à-vis des Américains. La fâcheuse réunion qui va avoir lieu est à limiter à un simple et sommaire échange de vues."

the West.”¹⁰⁸⁰ He also criticized the “mediocrity” of Anglophone African leaders and the growing influence of Nigeria in West Africa.¹⁰⁸¹

To be sure, as was the case for the Anglophobic strain in the Free French movement, the level of enmity between de Gaulle and the Anglo-Saxon powers should not be overstated. Later in the de Gaulle regime, France began to move away from a policy of direct rivalry with Britain in Africa. Foccart would later claim that with the exception of the conflict in Biafra, Nigeria (discussed below), there was very little direct confrontation with Britain on the continent.¹⁰⁸² But there still remained an Anglophone threat – the problem was no longer active *British* threats to the French presence in Africa, but rather the rivalry between Francophone and Anglophone territories. As an internal memo from June 1959 noted:

There no longer exists in 1959 what could properly be called a franco-British rivalry in Africa. There exists an antagonism between the British Commonwealth and the French Community. Our adversary is no longer the colonial office, but rather the office that has relations with the commonwealth, the Foreign Office, those sectors with a large majority in favor of British opinion, and of course the dominions of black Africa – the countries descended from British language and civilization (with the exception of South Africa).¹⁰⁸³

¹⁰⁸⁰ Note du Premier Ministre, M. Michel Debré, entretien avec M. Houphouët-Boigny, Jan. 16, 1961. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1961 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1997), 50. “... une politique égoïste, hostile à la politique française et sans véritable effort de coopération occidentale.”

¹⁰⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸² Jacques Foccart, *Foccart parle: entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard, Tome I*, 253.

¹⁰⁸³ M. Debré, Première Ministre, à M/ Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Aug. 26, 1959. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1959 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1995), 237. “Il n’existe plus à proprement parler en 1959 de rivalité franco-britannique en Afrique. Il existe un antagonisme entre le Commonwealth (britannique) et la Communauté (française). Notre adversaire n’est plus le Colonial Office, mais l’Office des relations avec le Commonwealth, le Foreign Office, des secteurs très largement majoritaires de l’opinion britannique, et bien entendu avec les Dominions du continent noir, les pays africains de langue et de civilisation britannique (Afrique du Sud exceptée).” France was a frequent supporter of the apartheid regime in South Africa, partially due to the Pretoria government’s independence from Anglo-American policy on the continent. An internal Quai d’Orsay memo from April 1966 noted that despite the apartheid policy, French-South African relations were “satisfactory”, in part because South Africa “clearly desires to free itself from the economic influence of the Anglo-Saxons...” Note: Les

The rivalry with Anglophone Africa posed an even greater threat given French efforts to support the development of the UAM, which could help further Francophone interests on the continent. As the organization took shape, officials at the Quai d'Orsay made certain to emphasize the importance of being wary about the intentions of the former British colonies, and particularly Nigeria. In the wake of a conference in Lagos in January 1962 during which the UAM met with Nigeria and other African states to discuss regional cooperation, Couve wrote to the diplomatic corps the following March 1962, and warned them that at some point, it would be important "it would be important "to highlight the dangers to the UAM that can be presented by regional consolidations with neighboring Anglophone states, which will use to maximum advantage their geographical position and superiority of resources."¹⁰⁸⁴ Given this, Couve noted it might be a good

relations économiques entre la France et l'Afrique du Sud, April 28, 1966. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1966 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2006), 705. This economic cooperation included the sale of uranium by South Africa to France for use in its atomic weapons program, and the shipment of significant amounts of weapons from France to South Africa. *Ibid.*, 706. In the UN, while France did not outwardly support South Africa's apartheid policy, it also opposed efforts to sanction the Pretoria regime and refused to participate in committees addressing apartheid. *Ibid.*, 707. When African countries began to more publicly criticize France's arms sale, the Quai d'Orsay, rather than re-evaluating its policy, simply blamed Britain and Anglophone African countries. Note de la sous-direction sur les réactions africaines à la campagne contre nos ventes d'armes à l'Afrique du Sud, Jan. 30, 1968. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1968 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2009), 179. Only after understanding that continued arms sales would have serious consequences for "our economic presence and our political influence on the African continent" did French officials decide to cut back the arms sales. Note de la sous-direction d'Afrique: les livraisons d'armes à l'Afrique du Sud, June 5, 1968. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1968 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2009), 879.

¹⁰⁸⁴ M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, aux Représentants diplomatiques de la France à l'étranger, March 14, 1962. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1962 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1998), 252. "Il y aurait lieu, à cette occasion, de souligner les dangers que peuvent présenter pour l'UAM les regroupements régionaux avec les États voisins de l'Afrique anglaise, qui utiliseront au maximum les avantages découlant de leur position géographique et de la supériorité de leurs ressources."

idea to enlarge the UAM to include Francophone states Rwanda, Burundi, and Congo, in light of “the latent competition between French Africa and Anglophone Africa.”¹⁰⁸⁵

Although they were not French colonies, Rwanda and Burundi nevertheless held significant importance, given their proximity to former British colony Uganda, which the de Gaulle regime saw as a natural rival to French interests in east Africa. The independence of both nations in July 1962 presented an opportunity for France. A Quai d’Orsay memo from March 1962 emphasized the importance of Rwanda and Burundi to France’s future:

These two countries are of particular importance to us because they are Francophone, and because of the more or less avowed greed they are subjected to by neighboring English language countries, Uganda and especially Tanzania. The leaders of Dar-es-Salaam [the capital of Tanzania] dream of effectively reconstituting the former German East Africa. Our interest is obviously that Rwanda and Burundi remain in the realm of Francophone Africa.¹⁰⁸⁶

To this end, the memo concluded that any aid provided to Rwanda and Burundi should be commensurate to significant aid already being given to the former Belgian Congo.¹⁰⁸⁷ A memo from that May concluded that the need for military, economic, technical, and educational aid was significant, given the coming departure of Belgian forces and the possibility of ethnic violence and general disorder.¹⁰⁸⁸

¹⁰⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸⁶ Note de la direction d’Afrique-Levant: Ruanda-Urundi, March 13, 1962. *Ibid.*, 248. “Ces deux pays revêtent pour nous une importance particulière du fait qu’ils sont francophones, et en raison des convoitises plus ou moins avouées dont ils sont l’objet de la part des pays voisins de langue anglaise, l’Ouganda et surtout le Tanganyika. Les dirigeants de Dar-es-Salaam rêvent en effet de reconstituer l’ancien Est-Africain allemand. Notre intérêt est évidemment que le Ruanda et le Burundi demeurent dans le monde africain de langue française.”

¹⁰⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 249.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Note de la direction d’Afrique-Levant, May 5, 1962. *Ibid.*, 461-464; M. Massé, Consul de France à Usumbura, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Jun 13, 1962. *Ibid.*, 590-1.

For his part, Rwandan president Grégoire Kayibanda made significant efforts to cultivate this relationship, meeting with French officials in August 1962 and telling them that he and his collaborators “had for many years kept an eye on France.”¹⁰⁸⁹ With Rwanda’s independence and the opening of the French embassy in Kigali, Kayibanda looked forward working with France to obtain technical assistance, and also to working with the larger Francophone community in Africa.¹⁰⁹⁰ The following month, Kayibanda and his counterpart from Burundi attended a UAM conference in Bangui in order to develop these relationships.¹⁰⁹¹ In line with Foccart’s outreach to African leaders, Kayibanda was rewarded with a state visit to Paris that October, including a personal meeting with de Gaulle.¹⁰⁹² This led to a series of accords between the two countries for aid in several areas. By May of 1965, Kayibanda began petitioning France for even more aid.¹⁰⁹³ Mwambutsa IV Bangiricenge, the king of Burundi, was given a similar audience in December 1962, eventually leading to French-Burundi accords on technical and education cooperation in February of 1963.¹⁰⁹⁴ By early 1966, the French ambassador in Burundi had noted that French assistance to the country was preventing it from forging a closer relationship with the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁹⁵ In addition to this, the French government

¹⁰⁸⁹ M. Barbey, Ambassadeur de France à Usumbura et à Kigali, à. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Aug. 21, 1962. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1962 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1999), 145.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹¹ M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, à M. Roger Seydoux, Chef de la Mission permanente de la France auprès de l’Organisation des Nations Unies, Oct. 2, 1962. Ibid., 265-6.

¹⁰⁹² Ibid. note 3.

¹⁰⁹³ M. Fines, Ambassadeur de France à Kigali, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, May 21, 1965. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1965 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2003), 618.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Note: Situation au Burundi, April 8, 1965. Ibid., 425-7.

¹⁰⁹⁵ M. Barbey, Ambassadeur de France à Bujumbura, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Jan. 22, 1966. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1966, Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2006), 120-2.

was already taking steps to strengthen its relationship with another Francophone nation – the largest on the continent.

“Nonintervention” in Africa: The French Position during the Congo Crisis

Like Rwanda and Burundi, the former Belgian Congo provided a valuable opportunity for French interests in Africa. Congo had been a source of both great wealth and prestige for King Leopold II, who secured Belgium’s interest in the vast territory in the heart of Africa in the late 19th century.¹⁰⁹⁶ For over twenty years, Leopold and his followers exploited Belgium’s prize colony, extracting tens of millions of dollars worth of rubber and ivory through the use of slave labor, and massacring untold numbers of Congolese in the process.¹⁰⁹⁷ By the early twentieth century, reports of the atrocities in the Congo had been made public, forcing Leopold to divest himself and his heirs of their interests in the Congo, and leading to the turnover of the colony to the Belgian state. It would remain in Belgian hands until June 30, 1960, when, following the prevailing winds sweeping across the continent, Congo gained its independence.

But the decolonization of Congo quickly led to disaster. Power was initially split between Joseph Kasavubu, the country’s new president, and Patrice Lumumba, its prime minister. The latter was a charismatic firebrand with sympathies for both the Soviet Union and the pan-African movement. His speech on Congo’s day of independence, which attacked Belgian rule and continued European involvement in Africa, quickly gave

¹⁰⁹⁶ In 1971, Mobutu Sese Seko would rename the former Congo as Zaire. For purpose of consistency, I simply refer to it as Congo in this dissertation. France’s former colony in Afrique Équatoriale Française, now known as Republic of the Congo is referred to as Congo-Brazzaville after its capital city.

¹⁰⁹⁷ See Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998); Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa: White Man’s Conquest of the Dark Continent from 1876-1912* (New York: Avon Books, 1992).

him a reputation among the European community as a man who could not be dealt with.¹⁰⁹⁸ Part of the transition agreement between Congo and Belgium included the maintaining of Belgian officers in command positions in the Congolese army to train new military leaders. But, partially inspired by Lumumba's words, Congolese troops mutinied against the Belgian officers still holding command positions in the national army. From the standpoint of internal control, this could not have come at a worse time, as President Kasavubu immediately had problems consolidating power in the vast new nation. Angered by Lumumba's intransigence and concerned about Belgian commercial interests in the Congo, Belgium encouraged and supported the independence of the province of Katanga only 11 days after Congo's independence. The secession of Katanga, rich in minerals, posed an immediate challenge to Kasavubu and Lumumba's legitimacy in Congo. They immediately set about subduing Katanga by force, and requested UN military aid in order to do so. For its part, the UN was willing to sponsor a peacekeeping force, but was largely unwilling to intervene in the growing civil war. The fallout from this stalemate, now known as the Congo Crisis, would last until 1966.

From the beginning, France pursued a complex policy for the settlement of the conflict in Congo. Overall, the Quai d'Orsay strongly supported the Kasavubu government in Leopoldville, while remaining strongly skeptical of Lumumba, who was seen as a proxy for both Soviet and pan-African interests in Congo. However, French officials also generally opposed any efforts by the UN and its Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold to mediate the conflict. Part of this could certainly be ascribed to general French suspicion of UN actions in the developing world, as already demonstrated by

¹⁰⁹⁸ See Ludo de Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*, Renee Fenby and Ann Wright, trans. (New York: Verso, 2003).

French perception of UN interference in French matters in Africa during the 1950s. Fittingly, Maurice Couve de Murville noted in a letter to the French ambassadors to Britain, the United States, and Congo in January 1961 that “the policy of the UN in Congo appears to have as its objective the extension of chaos and anarchy and is leading to the disintegration of the country.”¹⁰⁹⁹ French officials worried that outside interference would undermine internal acceptance of the Leopoldville regime’s legitimacy, thus preventing long-term stability in the region.¹¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, while the de Gaulle regime professed a policy of noninterference in the conflict, it did all it could to insure that France would establish a presence in the Francophone nation once things eventually settled. In late 1960, the situation deteriorated even further after a split between Kasavubu and Lumumba, leading to divisions within those parts of Congo not yet subject to the war with Katanga. Lumumba was removed from power later that year in a coup by U.S.-backed strongman Joseph Mobutu. The latter surrendered him to Katangese forces, who killed Lumumba with Belgian help on January 17, 1961. While controversial to this day, the murder of Lumumba, and the subsequent election of a new prime minister, Cyrille Adoula, brought a temporary respite of stability to Congo. By August 1961, the French ambassador Fulgence Charpentier urged the Quai d’Orsay to take an active more role in the country, noting that recent developments “should lead us to reconsider our policy in Congo where, in light of the competition for power, our task is to maintain the primacy of the French

¹⁰⁹⁹ Le Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, aux représentants diplomatiques de France à Londres, Washington, Léopoldville, Jan. 11, 1961. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1961 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1997), 22. “La politique de l’ONU au Congo paraissait avoir pour objectif l’extension du chaos et de l’anarchie et tendre à la désintégration du pays.”

¹¹⁰⁰ M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, à M. Bérard, Chef de la Mission permanente de la France auprès de l’Organisation des Nations Unies, Sept. 17, 1960. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1960 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1996), 361.

language and to avoid an evolution toward anarchy, which would be catastrophic for those neighboring countries friendly to France.”¹¹⁰¹ In this vein, he also recommended that Francophone African countries be persuaded to open embassies in Leopoldville.¹¹⁰² “Since independence,” Charpentier noted, “we have exercised a certain reserve and discretion. But the times have changed... the evolution can be rapid. We must be prepared to adapt to new circumstances.”¹¹⁰³

France received assistance in its Congo policy from the developing Francophone bloc, which supported French initiatives in the UN and provided continuing aid to the Kasavubu regime. In the UN, supporters of Lumumba tended to favor robust UN military involvement in the Katanga conflict – an initiative opposed by all of the Francophone African states except Mali and Guinea.¹¹⁰⁴ Further, in December 1960, twelve sub-Saharan Francophone nations met in Brazzaville, in part to discuss the Congo conflict. In accord with already-established French policy, they agreed not to send any military aid to either side of the conflict, and insisted that the UN not involve itself any further.¹¹⁰⁵ Instead, they favored a policy whereby political and economic support would

¹¹⁰¹ M. Charpentier, Ambassadeur de France à Léopoldville, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Aug. 7, 1961. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1961 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1998), 230-1. “Ces données nouvelles doivent nous conduire à revoir notre politique au Congo où, devant les compétitions des puissances, nous avons pour tâche de maintenir la primauté de la langue française et d’éviter une évolution anarchique qui serait catastrophique pour les pays voisins amis de la France.”

¹¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 231.

¹¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 233. “Depuis indépendance, il y un an, nous avons tiré parti de notre réserve et de notre discrétion. Mais les temps ont changé... L’évolution peut être rapide. Nous devons être prêts à nous adapter à une situation nouvelle.”

¹¹⁰⁴ M. Bérard, Chef de la Mission permanente de la France auprès de l’Organisation des Nations Unies, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Nov. 22, 1960. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1960 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1996), 614.

¹¹⁰⁵ M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, à M. de Juniac, Ambassadeur de France à Addis-Abeba, Dec. 27, 1960. *Ibid.*, 810 note 4.

be provided to the Kasavubu regime, while allowing Congolese forces to police the country exclusively.¹¹⁰⁶

For their part, Congolese officials encouraged France's new interest in their country. Prime Minister Adoula frequently met with French officials to emphasize shared ties between the two nations and the need for France to become more involved in Congo's future. In March 1962, he met with Fulgence Charpentier and noted that given its culture and its language, France should play an "eminent role" in the Congo.¹¹⁰⁷ Charpentier assured him that France was devoted to Congo's unity and that France accorded the highest importance to Congo, as it was the premier Francophone country in Africa.¹¹⁰⁸ Adoula continued to play this card in a meeting with the new French ambassador Clauzel that June, noting that with the end of Belgian presence in the country, "it was normal for Congo to hope that France will provide indispensable technical aid, because [France] is the home of cultural treasure and is the only nation in the world toward which it is natural for the Congolese to turn."¹¹⁰⁹ In a March 1964 meeting with *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères* Couve de Murville, Adoula emphasized that "France must not ignore Congo, a great African country of French culture."¹¹¹⁰ In

¹¹⁰⁶ Note de la Direction des Nations Unies et Organisations Internationales, Feb. 21, 1961. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1961 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1997), 235.

¹¹⁰⁷ M. Charpentier, Ambassadeur de France à Léopoldville, à M. Couve de Murville, *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères*, March 13, 1962. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1962 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1998), 244.

¹¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 244-5.

¹¹⁰⁹ M. Clauzel, Ambassadeur de France à Léopoldville, à M. Couve de Murville, *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères*, June 2, 1962. *Ibid.*, 549. "...c'était normalement de la France... que le Congo attendait l'aide technique qui lui était indispensable, car elle était dépositaire du trésor culturel où il puisait lui-même et qu'elle était la seule grande nation du monde libre vers laquelle il était naturel que se tournent les Congolais."

¹¹¹⁰ Le *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères* à M. Kosciuszko-Morizet, Ambassadeur de France à Léopoldville, March 10, 1964. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1964 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2002), 286.

meetings the following month, Adoula repeated his request for additional aid to Prime Minister Georges Pompidou and Couve de Murville.¹¹¹¹

By 1962, French officials agreed that the time had come to provide further aid to Congo. But French motivations were not simply relegated to maintaining the unity of the country. There was an implicit recognition that France had only a short period of time to build relationships with the new government and maximize its influence in Congo – especially given heightened interest in the region by the United States. As noted by the chief of France’s mission to the UN:

The time seems ripe to define our Congo policy for the months to come in light of recent developments. The issue is obviously important. In the rivalry between Anglophone Africa and Francophone Africa, the Congo, through its economic and human resources, is likely to play a determinative role. Our adversaries could use our absence or maintenance of complete detachment to try to undermine our long-term position in Black Africa.¹¹¹²

France wasted little time aiding Kasavubu. The centerpiece of French cooperation consisted of a series of accords signed in December 1963 whereby France provided professors, experts, scholarships for study in France, and over 12 million francs in financial aid.¹¹¹³ This cooperation would continue with the rise of Moïse Tshombe, the former leader of the Katanga province, to Prime Minister in 1964. Just a year and a half

¹¹¹¹ Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères à M. Kosciusko-Morizet, Ambassadeur de France à Léopoldville, April 29, 1964. *Ibid.*, 452-4.

¹¹¹² M. Bérard, Chef de la Mission Permanente de la France auprès de l’Organisation des Nations Unies, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, June 23, 1962. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1962 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1998), 655. “Le moment paraît ainsi venu de définir pour les mois à venir notre politique congolaise à la lumière des éléments nouveaux qui sont intervenus. L’enjeu est évidemment d’importance. Dans la rivalité entre l’Afrique d’expression anglaise et l’Afrique francophone, le Congo, par ses ressources économiques et humaines, est de nature à jouer un rôle déterminant. Nos adversaires pourraient utiliser notre absence ou le maintien d’une complète réserve pour tâcher de compromettre à longue échéance notre position en Afrique noire.”

¹¹¹³ Note de la sous-direction d’Afrique-Levant: Situation intérieure au Congo-Léopoldville et relations avec la France, May 13, 1964. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1964 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2002), 518.

later, even greater flexibility would be required when Tshombe, closely allied to France, fell from power in a military coup. His successor would test the limits of France's willingness to maintain influence in Francophone Africa.

The French Relationship with Mobutu

By 1965, the crisis in Congo had dragged on for nearly five years. With Congo's political institutions no longer able to maintain any semblance of control, Joseph Mobutu and his officers took control of the country on November 24, 1965. Citing the "complete failure of the political system", Mobutu essentially banned all political activity and instituted military control over government functions. These changes were made retroactively legal by the now-impotent Congo parliament on November 26.¹¹¹⁴ On December 13, Mobutu further claimed that internal corruption and stagnation, along with the sacrifice of Congo's independence vis-à-vis foreign powers, had made the change in government unavoidable.¹¹¹⁵ But as his repressive regime in Congo would eventually illustrate, Mobutu's reasons for taking power were far from altruistic.¹¹¹⁶ He proclaimed a dictatorship for the next five years, and announced that political activity would be strictly regulated, with government run by fiat and purges of ministries to control

¹¹¹⁴ Note de la sous-direction d'Afrique: Situation au Congo-Léopoldville, Nov. 30, 1965. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1965 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2004), 668.

¹¹¹⁵ M. Kosciusko-Morizet, Ambassadeur de France à Léopoldville, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Dec. 13, 1965. *Ibid.*, 714-5.

¹¹¹⁶ For more on Mobutu's rule see Michela Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz: Living on the Brink of Disaster in Mobutu's Congo* (New York: Perennial, 2002); Martin Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair – A History of Fifty Years of Independence* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), 293-308.

corruption.¹¹¹⁷ These initial steps to consolidate power were only the beginning; as Martin Meredith notes, over the next few years Mobutu's regime gradually escalated a brutal campaign of political repression throughout the country, which included show trials of members of the former government and public torture of political enemies.¹¹¹⁸

In its immediate aftermath, Mobutu's coup over French-backed Moïse Tshombe was seen by Foccart and de Gaulle as a victory for American and Belgian interests in the region.¹¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, French officials moved quickly to ingratiate themselves with the new regime. French officials had already established a relationship with Mobutu during the Congo Crisis, when he was a general in the national army.¹¹²⁰ This may explain why, despite Mobutu's suspension of democratic institutions, French ambassador to Congo Jacques Kossziusko-Morizet immediately wrote to Couve after Mobutu's coup, emphasizing that "because several states will not fail, upon approval of their parliaments, to announce their official recognition of the new regime, it would be advisable, by any means, that we not be the last to clearly define our position and to signal to General Mobutu our desire for cooperation."¹¹²¹ While this would not immediately include official recognition of Mobutu's government, it did include clear statements of French willingness to work with the new regime. Kossziusko-Morizet was given the opportunity

¹¹¹⁷ M. Kossziusko-Morizet, Ambassadeur de France à Léopoldville, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Dec. 13, 1965. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1965 Vol. II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2004), 716.

¹¹¹⁸ Meredith, *The Fate of Africa*, 293-4.

¹¹¹⁹ Jacques Foccart, *Foccart parle: entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard, Vol. I*, 311.

¹¹²⁰ M. Kossziusko-Morizet, Ambassadeur de France à Léopoldville, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, March 18, 1964. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1964 Vol. I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2002), 314-5.

¹¹²¹ M. Kossziusko-Morizet, Ambassadeur de France à Léopoldville, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Nov. 25, 1965. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1965 Vol. II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2004), 645-6. "Cependant, comme plusieurs États ne manqueront pas, dès l'approbation du Parlement, de proclamer leur reconnaissance officielle du nouveau régime, il serait souhaitable que, par un biais quelconque, nous ne soyons pas les derniers à définir notre position et à marquer au général Mobutu notre désir de coopération."

to do so during a lavish reception given by Mobutu for the foreign diplomatic corps the following day. Upon being prompted for France's position regarding the new government, the ambassador assured Mobutu that "our attitude was unchanged, and that insofar as the Congolese government wished, it retained the cooperation of France."¹¹²² For his part, Mobutu was sure to reciprocate France's goodwill in the early years of his regime. On May 4, he met with Kosciusko-Morizet and, like many African leaders before him, emphasized his great esteem for de Gaulle, noting that he was the head of state that he most admired, and that he hoped that France would join in the effort to bring Congo out of its state of isolation.¹¹²³

Kosciusko was nevertheless circumspect about the extent of French support for Mobutu, emphasizing that it must be considered in light of Mobutu's notoriously mercurial temperament, and that France's relationship with Congo itself should take precedent over support for any particular government.¹¹²⁴ By the following July, there were already clear signs of Mobutu's despotism. An internal Quai d'Orsay memo noted significant political repression by the regime, including the elimination of all potentially dangerous opposition, the stripping of power from both parliamentary assemblies, the suspension of political parties and the right to strike, the seclusion of prominent political

¹¹²² M. Kosciusko-Morizet, Ambassadeur de France à Léopoldville, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Nov. 26, 1965. *Ibid.*, 651. "...notre attitude était inchangée, et que dans la mesure où le gouvernement congolais le désirait, la coopération de la France demeurerait acquise au Congo."

¹¹²³ M. Kosciusko-Morizet, Ambassadeur de France à Léopoldville, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, May 6, 1966. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1966 Vol. I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2006), 772.

¹¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 774.

figures, including former president Kasavubu, and the execution of four prominent leaders accused of attempting a coup against Mobutu.¹¹²⁵

Despite this, France continued to provide aid to the Mobutu regime, including financial assistance, the training of experts, and radio and television technology.¹¹²⁶ Of course, this was in line with a longer policy of cooperation with Mobutu's predecessor Kasavubu.¹¹²⁷ But this was not enough for Mobutu, who conveyed to Kosciusko-Morizet on October 7, 1966 his clear desire for further assistance and a stronger relationship between the two countries. Playing upon France's wishes to bolster regimes in Francophone African countries, Mobutu told the ambassador that "France is present here, and we have welcomed her, because she has respected our dignity. But her action is not of the dimension of relationship that must exist between her and the largest Francophone country in Africa. I would prefer to move beyond the current useful, but limited arrangement, and promote a broader and direct plan of cooperation."¹¹²⁸ To this end, he proposed a loan from France to Congo of 100 million francs, to be made available by November 24 of that year. What was important, Mobutu emphasized, was that France "was actually on our side in our struggle for recovery and national independence."¹¹²⁹

Despite his earlier reservations, Kosciusko-Morizet now backed Mobutu's appeal for aid,

¹¹²⁵ Note de la sous-direction d'Afrique: La situation en République démocratique du Congo, July 21, 1966. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1966 Vol. II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2006), 373.

¹¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 376.

¹¹²⁷ Note de la direction générale des affaires culturelles et techniques: Action culturelle et technique au Congo, June 17, 1966. *Ibid.*, 107-114.

¹¹²⁸ M. Kosciusko-Morizet, Ambassadeur de France à Léopoldville, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Oct. 7, 1966. *Ibid.*, 707. "La France est ici présente, et nous nous en réjouissons, car elle respecte notre dignité. Mais son action n'est pas à la dimension des liens qui doivent exister entre elle et le plus grand pays francophone d'Afrique. Je voudrais aller au-delà des opérations utiles mais limitées actuelles et promouvoir notre coopération sur un plan plus direct et plus vaste."

¹¹²⁹ *Ibid.* "Mais ce qui m'importe... c'est que vous soyez effectivement à nos côtes dans la lutte que nous menons pour notre redressement et notre indépendance nationale."

writing to Maurice Couve de Murville that same day and indicating that “we have arrived at an important time in Franco-Congolese relations, and I hope therefore that all possibilities of a partially or totally favorable response can be explored.”¹¹³⁰

Mobutu clearly knew that he was pushing at an open door. In February 1967, his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Justin Marie Bomboko, visited France for a series of meetings with officials in the de Gaulle government. Throughout Bomboko’s visit, he strongly suggested Congo’s intention to replace Belgium’s influence in the country with that of France. As noted by an internal Quai d’Orsay memo, Bomboko indicated that Congo wished to “look to us for more assistance in order to liberate itself from the monopoly of its former colonizer [Belgium] and thereby achieve a genuine independence.”¹¹³¹ This involved significant requests for aid, including the training of mining experts, the recruitment of French capital for Congolese mines, financial aid separate from the mining sector, and supplementary credit for the government secured by France’s extensive profits from its own gold mining efforts in Kivu province.¹¹³²

Perhaps most importantly, Bomboko conveyed Mobutu’s personal wish to be officially received in Paris by de Gaulle himself, and benefit from the prestige that had already been bestowed upon so many other African leaders during the Fifth Republic.¹¹³³ Although French officials in the Quai d’Orsay were initially noncommittal about such a visit, they nevertheless saw advantages in aligning themselves more closely with Mobutu.

¹¹³⁰ Ibid. 708. “J’ai l’impression que nous arrivons à un moment important des relations franco-congolaises et je souhaite par conséquent que toutes les possibilités d’une réponse partiellement ou totalement favorable puissent être explorées.”

¹¹³¹ Note de la sous-direction d’Afrique (Afrique-Levant), Feb. 28, 1967. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1967 Vol. I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2008), 283-4. “...désir du gouvernement de Kinshasa de rechercher auprès de nous une assistance accrue afin de parvenir à se libérer du « monopole » de l’ex-colonisateur et parvenir à une indépendance réelle.”

¹¹³² Ibid., 284-5.

¹¹³³ Ibid., 286.

On March 3, 1967, Kosciusko-Morizet wrote to Couve to provide his insights into Mobutu in light of a recent meeting with the Congolese leader. Kosciusko-Morizet delivered an overwhelmingly positive report, noting that Mobutu “has no doubts about the reality of France’s financial assistance and welcomes openly, even more so for political and moral strategy than the material gains, this *rapprochement* which he has desired for a long time with our country.”¹¹³⁴ To the ambassador, Mobutu seemed genuinely enthusiastic about collaboration with France, and he emphasized the importance of pursuing a deeper relationship, noting that after the Congo crisis, the country “believes it can count on its friends, and most of all on France.”¹¹³⁵ An internal Quai d’Orsay memo was somewhat more pragmatic, noting that the granting of an official visit to Mobutu “will allow for the reinforcement of our influence in the vastest Francophone African country, filled with potential riches and situated at the heart of the continent. It will consecrate, in the eyes of the Congolese, the beginning of cooperation between the two countries.”¹¹³⁶

By 1968, the French government had an extremely positive view of Mobutu’s rule, noting economic and political progress which could be credited to “the clever, insightful and tenacious actions of General Mobutu.”¹¹³⁷ Mobutu’s visit eventually took

¹¹³⁴ M. Kosciusko-Morizet, Ambassadeur de France à Kinshasa, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, March 3, 1967. Ibid., 289. “[Mobutu] n’a plus aucun doute sur la réalité du concours financier de la France et se félicite ouvertement, tant sur le plan politique et moral, que sur le plan matériel, de ce rapprochement, qu’il désirait longtemps, avec notre pays.”

¹¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹¹³⁶ Note de la sous-direction d’Afrique (Afrique-Levant) pour le Ministre, May 31, 1967. Ibid., 595. “Ce geste permettrait de renforcer notre influence dans le plus vaste pays francophone d’Afrique, potentiellement riche et situé au cœur du continent. Il consacrerait aux yeux des Congolais le démarrage de la coopération entre les deux pays.”

¹¹³⁷ M. de Courson de la Villeneuve, Ambassadeur de France à Kinshasa, à M. Debré, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Sept. 9, 1968. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1968 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2010), 386. “... l’action aussi habile que perspicace et tenace du général Mobutu.”

place in March 1969, the last by an African leader during de Gaulle's presidency. De Gaulle offered very high praise during Mobutu's visit to the Elysée Palace on March 27, noting that France had taken great interest in the African leader. During a state dinner in Mobutu's honor, de Gaulle emphasized the importance of Congo both to France and Africa.¹¹³⁸ Unsurprisingly, he also noted the shared ties in language between the two leaders and offered further cooperation.¹¹³⁹ These shared ties would later be the focus of efforts by the French, Ivory Coast, Senegal, and Central African Republic government to persuade Mobutu to join the new Francophonie organization.¹¹⁴⁰ To be fair, at this point Mobutu's Congo had not yet become what Michela Wrong describes as "the paradigm of all that was wrong with post-colonial Africa."¹¹⁴¹ But as already noted, the signs of Mobutu's despotism and corruption were quickly becoming apparent.

French Involvement in the Civil War in Nigeria

Given the original French position of nonintervention in the Congo Crisis, its involvement in the Nigerian civil war would seem fundamentally inconsistent with Gaullist policy in Africa. But in both situations, French decisions were driven by the best means to secure French influence on the continent. The 1967 secession of Biafra from Nigeria was comparable to Congo's Katanga in one fundamental aspect – it stemmed from the attempt of an ethnic majority in a resource-rich province to assert its autonomy

¹¹³⁸ Toast adressé à S.E. le Général Mobutu, Président de la République du Congo-Kinshasa, March 27, 1969. Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages, vers le terme: Janvier 1966 – Avril 1969* (Paris: Plon, 1970), 388-9.

¹¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴⁰ M. Kosciusko-Morizet, Ambassadeur de France à Léopoldville, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Jan. 20, 1968. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1968 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2009), 123-4.

¹¹⁴¹ Michela Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz: Living on the Brink of Disaster in Mobutu's Congo* (New York: Perennial, 2002), 10.

vis-à-vis a central government desperately trying to consolidate its control over a young nation. While the conflict had its roots in long-simmering ethnic tensions among the three main groups in Nigeria (Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo), the immediate cause was a spate of political and ethnic violence in 1966 that led to the rise to power of Colonel Yakubu Gowon, assisted by elements from Nigeria's Hausa north in order to reassert firm federal control over the entire country.¹¹⁴² In May 1967, much of the Igbo-dominated southeastern Nigeria, rich in oil and mineral resources, declared its independence from the federal government in Lagos. Calling itself Biafra, the breakaway province immediately solicited support from the international community, and especially from France.

French relations with Nigeria had already endured a long period of tension when the conflict in Biafra exploded. As a former British colony and one of the largest and most influential nations on the continent, Nigeria posed severe concerns to France's attempts to maintain a presence in West Africa after decolonization. As an internal Quai d'Orsay memo from September 1962 warned, Nigeria was increasingly turning its focus toward Francophone nations in Africa.¹¹⁴³ To make matters worse, throughout much of the 1960s, relations between the two countries had been nonexistent after French nuclear testing in the Sahara. A test on December 27, 1960 led to Nigeria breaking off diplomatic relations with France the following January, punctuated by the expulsion of

¹¹⁴² For more on the Biafran war, see G.N. Uzoigwe, *Victims of Nationhood: Prelude to the Nigerian Civil War* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2011); Françoise Ugochukwu, *Biafra, la déchirure: sur les traces de la guerre civile nigériane de 1967-1970* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007).

¹¹⁴³ Note de la direction d'Afrique-Levant au sujet de la politique africaine du Nigeria, Sept. 24, 1962. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1962 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1999), 246.

the French ambassador from Lagos.¹¹⁴⁴ Matters had begun to thaw by the mid-1960s, but unrest within Nigeria, along with de Gaulle and Foccart's increasing paranoia about Britain's wishes to undermine French power on the continent, were ultimately too much for any sort of reasonable settlement between the two countries. While French authorities were careful not to directly upset their allies across the Channel regarding Biafran policy, the struggle would play out as a proxy war between Francophone and Anglophone interests. From a very early point in Gowon's regime, French authorities viewed Nigeria's new strongman as a puppet of the Anglo-Saxon powers; an August 1966 Quai d'Orsay memo noted that Gowon was "probably acting under the pressure of the British and the Americans" in his campaign to enforce Nigeria's federal structure.¹¹⁴⁵

Perhaps cognizant of French wishes to undermine British-supported Nigerian interests in West Africa, Nigerian officials made a concerted effort to ensure that France remained on the sidelines of the conflict. This was done primarily through a series of letters sent by Colonel Gowon to de Gaulle himself. On May 30, 1967, Gowon petitioned de Gaulle to "refrain from doing anything that will impair the... sovereignty and integrity of the Federal Republic of Nigeria." He added that any action to recognize Biafra would be considered an unfriendly act by the government in Lagos.¹¹⁴⁶ On June 12, Gowon once again wrote to de Gaulle, blaming the breakdown of recent peace talks in Kampala on the intransigence of the Biafran delegation, and attacking Biafran claims that acts of genocide were being committed during the offensive by the Lagos government. "The basic aim of the war as far as my Government is concerned," noted

¹¹⁴⁴ Note de la direction d'Afrique-Levant au sujet des relations diplomatiques avec le Nigéria, Oct. 26, 1962. *Ibid.*, 336.

¹¹⁴⁵ Note: Situation au Nigéria après le putsch du 29 juillet, Aug. 9, 1966. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1966 Vol. II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2006), 465.

¹¹⁴⁶ Yakubu Gowon to Charles de Gaulle, May 30, 1967, ANP, 5 AG I 215.

Gowon, “is to preserve the territorial integrity of Nigeria and to guarantee to the different tribes equal status and the basis for living together peacefully.”¹¹⁴⁷ On June 14, Gowon wrote to de Gaulle again, imploring him to take no action to recognize Biafra’s independence.¹¹⁴⁸

Initially, the official stance of the French government was consistent with its staunch policy of neutrality during the Congo Crisis. French officials noted their support for quasi-federal arrangements like that of Nigeria, emphasizing the importance of the central government’s ability to exercise control over disparate territories. In March of 1967, an internal memo from the Quai d’Orsay prepared for Foccart indicated France’s desire not to get involved with the internal affairs of other states, and to support the territorial integrity of Nigeria. It also supported whatever measures Gowon deemed necessary to protect foreign nationals, and especially French citizens.¹¹⁴⁹ Ministre des Affaires Étrangères Maurice Couve de Murville ordered the French ambassador to Nigeria to reaffirm this policy to Gowon later that month.¹¹⁵⁰ On June 13, de Gaulle replied to Gowon, assuring him that “true to its traditional line of conduct, the French government does not wish to intervene in the internal affairs of your country, nor compromise in any way the chances of resolving the current difficulties.”¹¹⁵¹ He also noted that France’s only interests in the conflict were to preserve peace and prosperity in

¹¹⁴⁷ Yakubu Gowon to Charles de Gaulle, June 12, 1967, ANP, 5 AG I 215.

¹¹⁴⁸ Yakubu Gowon to Charles de Gaulle, June 14, 1967, ANP, 5 AG I 215.

¹¹⁴⁹ Note de la sous-direction d’Afrique pour le Secrétaire-Général, March 15, 1967. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1967 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2008), 315.

¹¹⁵⁰ M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, à M. Barbey, Ambassadeur de France à Lagos, March 31, 1967. *Ibid.*, 361-2.

¹¹⁵¹ Charles de Gaulle to Yakubu Gowon, June 13, 1967, ANP, 5 AG I 215. “Fidèle à sa ligne de conduite traditionnelle, le Gouvernement français ne désire ni intervenir dans les affaires intérieures de votre pays, ni compromettre de quelque façon que ce soit les chances de résoudre les difficultés actuelles.”

Nigeria and the surrounding region. As late as April 1968, the official French policy was to accord recognition only to the government in Lagos, help maintain peace and prosperity in the region, and refrain from any act that could prolong the suffering of the respective civilian populations.¹¹⁵²

In reality, de Gaulle and his followers had already changed their minds about the need for more direct French involvement in the crisis. This was due in no small part to direct entreaties from Biafran authorities, who recognized that France might have interests in the region beyond the conflict itself. Foccart would admit as much years later, when he noted that “for France, Nigeria was a country disproportionate to those we knew well [i.e., Francophone African nations in West Africa], and which cast over them a disturbing shadow.”¹¹⁵³ De Gaulle, while noting that France should try not to intervene or give the appearance of having done so, nevertheless admitted to Foccart that “the fragmentation of Nigeria is desirable, and if Biafra succeeds, it would not be a bad thing.”¹¹⁵⁴

Biafra’s courting of France began immediately after the declaration of independence in May 1967, when its leader Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu wrote to de Gaulle, imploring him to recognize Biafra’s diplomatic representative to France, and emphasizing the significant natural resources contained in the breakaway province.¹¹⁵⁵ Initially, de Gaulle’s advisors counseled reticence in the face of Biafran attempts to get

¹¹⁵² Note de la sous-direction d’Afrique, April 4, 1968. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1968 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2009), 611-2.

¹¹⁵³ Jacques Foccart, Foccart *parle: entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard*, 341. “...pour la France... le Nigeria était un pays démesuré par rapport à ceux que nous connaissions bien, et qui faisait planer sur ceux-ci une ombre inquiétante.”

¹¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 342. “...le morcèlement du Nigeria est souhaitable, et, si le Biafra réussit, ce ne sera pas une mauvaise chose.”

¹¹⁵⁵ Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu to Charles de Gaulle, May 30, 1967, 5 AG 1 211.

French aid. But Biafra gave indications that it wanted France to replace British influence in the region.¹¹⁵⁶ By December of that year, de Gaulle reversed course, instructing the relevant departments to provide aid to Biafra without providing actual diplomatic recognition.¹¹⁵⁷ On December 14, he wrote to Foccart, noting that “without actually recognizing Biafra, or furnishing direct aid, we must prepare for the issue in the future.”¹¹⁵⁸ This included sending an official representative to Biafra, preparing a plan for cultural exchange with Biafran students, and encouraging SAFRAP (the precursor to French state-owned oil company Elf Aquitaine), to provide a loan of 500,000 pounds sterling to the Biafran government. Most importantly, the French government was willing to “close its eyes” to the Biafran acquisition in France of two B-26 bombers, an Air France Super Constellation aircraft, and several T-6 fighter aircraft.¹¹⁵⁹

For his part, Ojukwu continued his efforts with France, and began to play diplomatic cards that he knew might resonate with the French sense of the balance of power in West Africa. On May 1, 1968, he wrote to de Gaulle, lamenting the “the war of aggression launched against my people by the Nigerian Federal Government, supported

¹¹⁵⁶ Note de la direction d’Afrique : Nigéria, July 11, 1967. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1967 Tome II* (Paris : Imprimerie Nationale, 2008), 49.

¹¹⁵⁷ Note de la sous-direction d’Afrique, April 4, 1968. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1968 Vol. I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2009), 612.

¹¹⁵⁸ Charles de Gaulle to Jacques Foccart, Dec. 14, 1967. Jacques Foccart, *Foccart parle: entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard, vol. I*, 482. “Sans que nous devions actuellement reconnaître le Biafra, ni lui fournir d’aide directe, il nous faut ménager l’avenir à son sujet. D’autant plus que rien n’indique qu’il doive être réduit par Lagos.”

¹¹⁵⁹ Note de la sous-direction d’Afrique, April 4, 1968. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1968 Vol. I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2009), 612. For their part, French authorities maintained that any aid provided to Biafra was meant to relieve the growing humanitarian crisis resulting from the war. The international NGO, Médecins Sans Frontières, was born out of the efforts of French doctors during the Biafra crisis. One of those doctors was Bernard Kouchner, who later served as France’s *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères et Européennes* from May 2007 to November 2010. His involvement in Biafra is discussed in Daniel Pierrejean, *Bernard Kouchner: du Biafra au Kosovo* (Paris: Editeur Indépendant, 2007).

and encouraged in their action by the British government.”¹¹⁶⁰ He first asked de Gaulle to intervene with SAFRAP on behalf of Biafra to ensure that the oil company provided the payment to Biafra that had previously been promised for continued access to the province’s oil. More importantly, Ojukwu made a direct appeal to de Gaulle’s suspicions of the Anglo-Saxons to convince him to officially recognize the Biafran government:

My dear President, I need hardly add, therefore, that my country, beset by Anglo-Saxon intrigue, now looks up to France, under you, as the only country capable of restoring to us our rights and dignity. The British, having failed with their Nigerian friends to obtain a military conquest of Biafra, are now hypocritically trying to promote a peace conference in order to re-establish their domination of our country... Your Excellency, I can assure you that any assistance your Government will give to us at this difficult time will be most amply rewarded in the future. I nourish the hope that, under your great leadership, the Government of France will not disappoint us but will in fact rank amongst the first European states to accord official recognition to Biafra...Nothing will please us more also than the establishment of the closest co-operation with our neighbouring Franco-phone African States, the necessity for which has been so clearly demonstrated in this war.¹¹⁶¹

This direct appeal would be followed up two months later, when Biafra’s representative Pius Okigbo met in Brussels with the French ambassador to Belgium, indicating that the time had come for France to recognize Biafra’s independence. Okigbo emphasized that France and other Francophone African states could play an important role in the mediation of the ongoing conflict, and that only France understood that “Great Britain, in blindly supporting the [Nigerian] federal government, has lost all consideration for Biafrans.”¹¹⁶²

¹¹⁶⁰ Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu to Charles de Gaulle, May 1, 1968, ANP, 5 AG 1 211.

¹¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹¹⁶² Reported in Note de la sous-Direction d’Afrique: Biafra, July 24, 1968. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1968 Vol. II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2010), 116. “...la Grande Bretagne en soutenant aveuglément le gouvernement fédéral a perdu toute la considération des Biafrais.”

Of course, these sentiments played directly to de Gaulle and his followers' distinct sense that the "Anglo-Saxon" powers did not have France's best interests at heart. But Ojukwu and the Biafrans also received support for their cause from other African leaders, who were suspicious of Anglo-American malfeasance in Africa. Houphouët-Boigny had already intervened on Biafra's behalf by asking de Gaulle in September 1967 to put pressure on oil companies to make overdue payments to the Biafran government so that it would have money to buy weapons from Portugal.¹¹⁶³ By May of 1968, Ivory Coast was one of four African nations, including Gabon, Zambia, and Tanzania, to officially recognize Biafra, although they would remain isolated in this policy for the remainder of the conflict.¹¹⁶⁴ With this accomplished, Houphouët-Boigny mounted an aggressive campaign starting in mid-1968 to convince French officials to do more regarding the situation in Biafra. According to Jacques Raphael-Leygues, the French ambassador to Ivory Coast, Houphouët-Boigny indicated to him in a meeting on July 2 that there were two distinct threats to stability in Africa – the spread of Islam and the penetration of the continent by communist Chinese interests. According to Houphouët-Boigny, the subjugation of Biafra implicated the former, as the Lagos government was run by the western-unfriendly, Muslim-dominated North. Therefore, he concluded that, in supporting Lagos, the Anglo-Saxons were "digging their own grave."¹¹⁶⁵ Later that month, Houphouët-Boigny personally vouched for Ojukwu in another conversation with Raphael-Leygues, noting how impressed he was with the Biafran leader in meetings on

¹¹⁶³ Jacques Foccart, *Foccart parle: entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard*, 343.

¹¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 345.

¹¹⁶⁵ M. Raphael-Leygues, Ambassadeur de France à Abidjan, à M. Debré, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, July 3, 1968. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1968 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2010), 13-14.

July 19-20.¹¹⁶⁶ On July 24, Houphouët-Boigny wrote to de Gaulle personally, asking him to intercede in the conflict in Nigeria, and “the quicker the better, because there is not a moment to lose.”¹¹⁶⁷

These efforts would finally pay off with the French decision to increase its aid to Biafra and call for an international solution to enable the Biafrans to attain more autonomy vis-à-vis the government in Lagos. On July 31, the Conseil des Ministres of the Fifth Republic, composed of de Gaulle, then-Prime Minister Maurice Couve de Murville, and the ministers in de Gaulle’s cabinet, issued a statement regarding the ongoing conflict. Noting the overwhelming loss of life and the growing humanitarian crisis, they indicated that “the French government considers that, as a result, the current conflict must be resolved on the basis of the right of peoples to self-determination and include the implementation of appropriate international procedures.”¹¹⁶⁸ While he initially remained silent, de Gaulle reaffirmed this policy in a press conference in Paris on September 9, noting that while France had not yet officially recognized Biafra, he would not rule out doing so in the future, especially given the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe. He added that he could foresee the possibility of Nigeria becoming a loose federation under which Biafrans would be given greater self-autonomy vis-à-vis the government in Lagos.¹¹⁶⁹

¹¹⁶⁶ M. Raphael-Leygues, Ambassadeur de France à Abidjan, à M. Debré, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères. Ibid., 105.

¹¹⁶⁷ Note de la direction d’Afrique-Levant pour le Ministre, July 30, 1968. Ibid., 135.

¹¹⁶⁸ Note: La France en la crise nigéro-biafraise, Aug. 6, 1968. Ibid., 163. “...le gouvernement français estime qu’en conséquence, le conflit actuel doit être résolu sur la base du droit des peuples à disposer d’eux-mêmes et comporter la mise en œuvre de procédures internationales appropriées.”

¹¹⁶⁹ Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l’Élysée, Sept. 9, 1968, in Charles De Gaulle, *Discours et Messages: Vers le terme Janvier 1966 – Avril 1969* (Paris: Plon, 1970), 332.

With the French government's tacit recognition of Biafra, Ojukwu wrote to de Gaulle on August 2. He began by praising de Gaulle, noting his "eternal gratitude for this noble act of humanity, statesmanship, and vision."¹¹⁷⁰ Ojukwu also continued to tie Biafra's ongoing struggle to the broader Anglo-French rivalry in Africa. He emphasized that "[w]e Biafrans, in our just struggle against Anglo-Nigerian conspiracy, have been sustained by the heroic examples of French history and the great men who made them."¹¹⁷¹ Most striking for Ojukwu was de Gaulle's "steadfast dedication to the high principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity."¹¹⁷² Later that month, he would praise de Gaulle even more obsequiously, sending a letter on de Gaulle's birthday, noting that the day marked "the birth of an illustrious and patriotic leader who, in defiance of circumstances sufficient to defeat ordinary mortals, succeeded in restoring his country to dignity and freedom."¹¹⁷³ For Ojukwu, de Gaulle's stature enabled him to serve as an inspiration to both his country and those fighting for freedom around the world, including Africa. Because of de Gaulle's leadership, Ojukwu noted, "France has once again, therefore, become a symbol of hope for all those fighting for freedom, as well as for those who crave for a world order based on the secure principles of respect for human values."¹¹⁷⁴

After the government declarations of late summer 1968, France immediately provided more extensive aid to the Biafran side. By September 3, this already encompassed a grant of 125,000 francs by the French government, the mobilization of private donations of over 12 million francs through the French Red Cross, and 150 tons

¹¹⁷⁰ Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu to Charles De Gaulle, Aug. 2, 1968, ANP, 5 AG I 211.

¹¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹¹⁷² Ibid.

¹¹⁷³ Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu to Charles De Gaulle, Nov. 25, 1968, ANP, 5 AG I 211.

¹¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

of provisions and medical supplies. There were also plans to send French technical experts to help distribute aid, along with additional medical personnel and airplanes.¹¹⁷⁵ While details remain uncertain to this day, France also facilitated significant military aid to the breakaway province. Reports by the British press about this aid and France's violation of an international arms embargo were initially denied by French officials.¹¹⁷⁶ But decades later, Foccart would admit to France's role in the furnishing of arms to Biafra, initially through a scheme which "consisted of allowing the movement to Ivory Coast of arms recovered during World War II, after having effaced their serial numbers."¹¹⁷⁷ Foccart also admitted that this operation, at least in the short term, remained a secret.¹¹⁷⁸ After de Gaulle's pronouncements in 1968 about Biafran autonomy, even more military aid in the form of weapons, planes, pilots, and mercenaries were furnished. When asked about this, Foccart would later admit that "it is certain that we provided aid there."¹¹⁷⁹

Ultimately, the Biafran conflict outlasted de Gaulle's tenure as President. In December 1969, Gowon ordered a final, overwhelming offensive into the breakaway province, routing Ojukwu's forces and causing the Biafran leader to flee the country. By January 1970, the conflict was over, with Biafra eventually re-absorbed back into Nigeria. But France's failed adventure in West Africa had not deterred it from further interference in African politics. In the final years of de Gaulle's regime, the government

¹¹⁷⁵ Note de la sous-direction d'Afrique: Aide française au Biafra, Sept. 3, 1968. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1968 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2010), 356-8.

¹¹⁷⁶ Note de la sous-direction d'Afrique: Pour le Ministre, Sept. 18, 1968. *Ibid.*, 455.

¹¹⁷⁷ Jacques Foccart, *Foccart parle: entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard*, 343. "Elle consiste à laisser filer vers la Côte d'Ivoire des armes récupérées sur l'ennemi pendant la Guerre mondiale, après en avoir effacé les matricules."

¹¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 347. In response to a question posed by journalist Philippe Gaillard about this later provision of military support, Foccart simply responded, "Il est certain que nous y avons aidé."

had already begun laying the groundwork for its fateful relationships with African dictators for the next three decades.

French Support for African Dictators during the de Gaulle Regime

The tumultuous political history of Africa in the past half-century has been well-documented, a trend from which France's former colonies have not been immune.¹¹⁸⁰ After the transition to independence, several Francophone African states underwent political struggles during the 1960s that led to some of the most brutal dictatorships of the twentieth century. In the early years of the de Gaulle regime, France maintained its commitment to the spread of democracy in Africa and support for legitimately elected regimes. But by the mid-1960s, French policy began to shift toward pragmatism, with a tacit recognition that continued African support for the special relationship with France was more important than more idealistic goals of overseeing successful political development. Essentially, France maintained loyalty to the political existence of states in Africa, but not always to the governments that controlled them. In the end, an African ruler's hold on his country was often determined by French confidence in his ability to

¹¹⁸⁰ The larger story of Africa's political and economic development after independence is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Numerous theories have been posed as to why so many African nations have been plagued by despotic regimes. Two opposing viewpoints can be seen in Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), and Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). Herbst emphasizes that the failure of postcolonial African states has less to do with European influence than it does with the longer existence of African social and political norms. In contrast, Mamdani argues that European rule in Africa mutated traditional forms of social and political organization, thus leading to authoritarian postcolonial regimes. Other representative views include Olufemi Taiwo, *How Colonialism Preempted Modernity in Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); Martin Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair – A History of Fifty Years of Independence* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005); Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1981)

maintain control and therefore preserve French influence in the respective state. Three examples of this chameleon-like policy in Africa during the 1960s are particularly illustrative – France’s relationship with the regimes of Congo-Brazzaville’s Alphonse Massamba-Débat, Gabon’s Léon M’Ba, and the Central African Republic’s Jean Bédel-Bokassa.

A crisis in Congo-Brazzaville in August 1963 demonstrated both France’s willingness to intervene in internal conflict when it suited its interests, as well as its ability to quickly adapt to a new regime. Abbé Fulbert Youlou, who had been president of the country since independence in 1960, faced a series of protests against his increasingly authoritarian government. On August 13, the second day of protests, he requested military aid from de Gaulle through Congo-Brazzaville’s defensive treaty with France. Seeking to preserve French influence in the country, de Gaulle immediately sent paratroopers to help Youlou restore order.¹¹⁸¹ While this action was initially successful, a series of more intense riots on August 15 led to Youlou’s resignation. But despite France’s attempt to prop up the Youlou regime, his successor Alphonse Massamba-Débat made sure to placate the French government upon taking power. He assured France that Congo-Brazzaville would continue to maintain its friendship with France and participate in the UAM. More importantly, Massamba-Débat made a public statement that the intervention of French paratroopers “did not constitute an interference into Congo’s internal affairs.”¹¹⁸²

¹¹⁸¹ Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, à Direction des Affaires Africaines et Malgaches, Aug. 17, 1963. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1963 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2001), 183-4.

¹¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 184. Similar assurances would be provided later that year to the French government by the provisional government of Dahomey after the overthrow of President Hubert Maga in October, and again with the arrival in power of Christophe Soglo in December 1965. Note:

Tellingly, the French government adapted quickly, backing the Massemba-Débat regime once it had consolidated power in Congo-Brazzaville. Of course, France was willing to tolerate the new regime only to the extent that it truly remained friendly to French interests. By the following year, there were already indications that Massemba-Débat was becoming increasingly authoritarian and was turning to China for help. Although this had not led Massemba-Débat to take any explicitly anti-French positions, an internal memo recommended that French diplomats clarify the situation for him. Should the regime maintain power, it noted, “we will probably still have a few possibilities to preserve our most important interests, to exercise a certain influence and to curb radical changes. But we must make clear to the Brazzaville leaders, at a sufficiently high level, an explanation which fixes the terms of our support and defines the interests that we seek to preserve.”¹¹⁸³ After a series of continuing brutal crackdowns in Brazzaville in December 1964, Maurice Couve de Murville ordered the French ambassador to Congo-Brazzaville to threaten the removal of all French aid from the country.¹¹⁸⁴ But Massemba-Débat’s continued professions of loyalty to de Gaulle and France seemed to placate the French authorities, despite his reception of significant aid

Audience accordée le 13 novembre à la Délégation du Gouvernement provisoire dahoméen, par M. Habib-Deloncle, Nov. 13, 1963. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1963 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2001), 495. M. Georgy, Ambassadeur de France à Cotonou, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Dec. 27, 1965. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1965 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2004), 789.

¹¹⁸³ Note de la sous-direction des Affaires Africaines et Malgaches: Situation au Congo-Brazzaville, Nov. 26, 1964. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1964 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2002), 505. “...nous garderions probablement quelques possibilités de préserver nos intérêts le plus importants, d’exercer une certaine influence et de freiner une évolution trop radicale. Mais nous devrions provoquer avec les dirigeants de Brazzaville, à un niveau suffisamment élevé, une explication au cours de laquelle seraient fixées les conditions de notre aide et définis les intérêts que nous entendons préserver.”

¹¹⁸⁴ M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, à M. Rossard, Ambassadeur de France à Brazzaville, Dec. 29, 1964. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1964 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2002), 600-1.

from the Soviet Union and his courting of other socialist governments in Africa.¹¹⁸⁵ He reaffirmed these views in a meeting with de Gaulle in October 1965. After de Gaulle indicated that it was important that Massemba-Débat was able to maintain internal order in the country, and that France remained Brazzaville's main source of support, Massemba-Débat sufficiently reassured French representatives that "France must occupy the first place in the Congo."¹¹⁸⁶

By January 1966, the official French policy had been further clarified: as long as Massemba-Débat was willing to cooperate with the French government, France was willing to take actions to prop up his authoritarian regime. As noted in an internal memo:

Our policy has in effect consisted of reminding the authorities in Brazzaville that we do not intend to interfere in [Congo-Brazzaville's] internal affairs, and that we will not support any subversive movements, whether or not they are associated with Abbé Youlou. But, for its part, the Brazzaville government should abandon its attitude of suspicion towards us if it would like to continue an efficacious collaboration between the two countries.¹¹⁸⁷

This support was threatened later that year after Congo-Brazzaville's state media organized a campaign of intimidation against French personnel in the country, including

¹¹⁸⁵ See M. Lalouette, Chargé d'Affaires de France A.I. près l'ambassade de France à Brazzaville, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, June 11, 1965. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1965 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2003), 722-6. M. Lalouette, Chargé d'Affaires de France A.I. près l'ambassade de France à Brazzaville, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, July 30, 1965. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1965 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2004), 172-3.

¹¹⁸⁶ Note de la Direction des Affaires africaines et malgaches, Oct. 28, 1965. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1965 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2004), 501-2.

¹¹⁸⁷ Note de la direction des affaires Africaine et Malgaches: Politique extérieure du Congo-Brazzaville, Jan. 13, 1966. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1966 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2006), 68-9. "Notre politique a en effet consisté à rappeler aux autorités de Brazzaville que nous n'entendons nullement nous ingérer dans les affaires intérieures du Congo et que nous n'accordons notre soutien à aucun mouvement subversif, qu'il se réclame ou non de l'abbé Youlou. Mais, de son côté, le gouvernement de Brazzaville devait abandonner son attitude de suspicion envers nous s'il voulait que continue entre les deux pays une collaboration efficace."

French ambassador Louis Dauge.¹¹⁸⁸ The source of the campaign seems to have been increasing paranoia from the Brazzaville government about France's lack of support for the Massemba-Débat regime.¹¹⁸⁹ In response, de Gaulle ordered Dauge's return to Paris, a breakoff of diplomatic relations that would last until May of 1967. Yet even after the government-organized campaign of intimidation, France was willing to re-establish relations with Massemba-Débat, sending Dauge back to Brazzaville to reaffirm the relationship in May 1967.¹¹⁹⁰ This signaled no particular loyalty for Massemba-Débat himself; when he was overthrown in a military coup the following year, French authorities quickly recognized the new government in Brazzaville once it showed it could maintain order in the country.

The situation in Congo-Brazzaville illustrated France's willingness to maintain a certain flexibility in order to preserve its influence on the continent. However, at times, the de Gaulle regime decided that a more hardline approach was necessary to preserve French interests. One example of this was French restoration of the autocrat Léon M'Ba to power in Gabon after his ouster in a coup in February 1964. M'Ba had served as Prime Minister of Gabon before its transition to independence, and after independence, as its first president. But he quickly cultivated a reputation as a ruler who tolerated no political dissent within his country. A new constitution in 1961 gave him virtually unchecked power. By 1964, the situation had spun totally out of control, with significant

¹¹⁸⁸ M. Alphan, Secrétaire Général du Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, à différents Représentants diplomatiques de la France à l'étranger, Nov. 29, 1966. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1966 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2006), 934-5.

¹¹⁸⁹ M. Picquet, chargé d'Affaires de France à Brazzaville, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Dec. 23, 1966. *Ibid.*, 1057.

¹¹⁹⁰ M. Dauge, Ambassadeur de France à Brazzaville, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, May 31, 1967. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1967 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2008), 592-4.

discontent throughout army ranks concerning M'Ba's grip on the country. On February 18, the army revolted against M'Ba, occupying the presidential palace and placing him under military arrest.¹¹⁹¹ Later that day, he was forced to sign a letter of resignation, thus giving a modicum of legitimacy to the army's action.

Despite M'Ba's troubled past, French action to support him was swift and overwhelming. Just hours after the coup, French forces were ordered to Gabon from positions in Congo-Brazzaville, Central African Republic, and Senegal.¹¹⁹² Although M'Ba had ruled with little consideration for Gabon's laws during his previous three years as president, the French ambassador to Gabon nevertheless indicated that "Gabon's interest is not to allow the mutineers to violate the laws of the country and decide its fate."¹¹⁹³ By the following morning, French forces had already taken control of Gabon's state radio station, the main post office and the presidential palace. After this show of force, the coup against M'Ba quickly collapsed.¹¹⁹⁴ By the end of the day, he was once again well-entrenched – now with French military backing – as the autocratic leader of Gabon. Later that month, a memo from the French ambassador to Gabon would acknowledge that M'Ba only continued to hold power because of the French military intervention and the threat of further action by France.¹¹⁹⁵ Years later, when asked who

¹¹⁹¹ Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, aux Représentants diplomatiques de la France dans les pays Africains d'expression française, Feb. 19, 1964. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1964 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2002), 220.

¹¹⁹² Ibid. 220.

¹¹⁹³ Ibid. 220-1. "...l'intérêt du Gabon n'était pas de laisser des mutins violer les lois du pays et décider de son sort."

¹¹⁹⁴ Ibid. 221.

¹¹⁹⁵ M. Cousseran, Ambassadeur de France à Libreville, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Feb. 27, 1964. Ibid., 254.

had been the de facto leader of Gabon – Foccart or M’Ba – the former admitted that he was frequently available to M’Ba, who consulted him often.¹¹⁹⁶

Until his death in 1967, M’Ba remained close to de Gaulle’s regime. The quick action by the French army in February 1964 resulted in his deep gratitude, as illustrated by a personal letter thanking de Gaulle ten days after the coup attempt.¹¹⁹⁷ That November, he asked for and received French assurances that it would defend his regime from future external threats.¹¹⁹⁸ But the Quai d’Orsay remained skeptical about M’Ba’s utility to France. Noting that his authority had severely deteriorated, the report emphasized that M’Ba’s government had “an allure of brutality and arbitrariness, which has ultimately alienated the entire Gabonese elite and has begun to worry the masses, who are generally passive when it comes to political matters.”¹¹⁹⁹ Despite this, the memo noted that a failure to support M’Ba’s political power was not an option, as his removal from power “would certainly compromise our interests.”¹²⁰⁰ Therefore, it advised a two-step process whereby France would continue to give M’Ba its support while also urging him to prepare for the future by enabling young leadership that could eventually take power.¹²⁰¹ When he died in 1967, his French-approved successor, Omar Bongo, was

¹¹⁹⁶ Jacques Foccart, *Foccart parle: entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard, Vol. I*, 279.

¹¹⁹⁷ Le Président de la République Gabonaise, au Général de Gaulle, Président de la République Française, Feb. 28, 1964. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1964, Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2002). 257.

¹¹⁹⁸ M. de Quirielle, Ambassadeur de France à Libreville, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Nov. 14, 1964. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1964 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2002), 456-7.

¹¹⁹⁹ Rapport rédigé par M. Mérillon à la suite de son voyage à Gabon, Nov. 27, 1964. *Ibid.*, 512. “...une allure brutale et arbitraire, qui, en fin de compte, lui a aliéné l’ensemble de l’élite gabonaise et commence à inquiéter une masse généralement passive devant les jeux de la politique.”

¹²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰¹ *Ibid.* 513-4.

already in a position to take power. He would remain one of France's closest allies in Africa until his death in 2009.

The relationship with M'Ba illustrates that the de Gaulle regime was willing to tolerate autocratic leaders if they remained at least marginally loyal to France. Nowhere was this principle more clear than in France's relationship with the Central African Republic's Jean Bédel Bokassa. The country, formerly Oubangui-Shari, had become independent from France in 1960 and was ruled after independence by David Dacko, who established one-party rule in the country and reinforced his political standing with a sham election in 1964. But by late 1965, both the army and the bureaucracy had turned against him, paving the way for a *coup d'état* on New Year's Eve by Bokassa, who forced Dacko to resign, installed himself as leader, and dissolved the country's parliament.¹²⁰² Despite France's existing defense agreement with Dacko and the Central African Republic, Jacques Foccart pragmatically viewed the coup as a *fait accompli*, and refused to send French troops to back Dacko.¹²⁰³ From France's perspective, in many ways, Bokassa was an ideal candidate to rule the Francophone country. Born in 1921, he joined the French army in 1939 and fought for Free France. He would remain in the army until the Central African Republic achieved its independence, when he transferred his commission to its new army.¹²⁰⁴ Shortly after taking power, he made certain to emphasize the importance of France to his regime, noting the "profound and brotherly attachment between France

¹²⁰² Note: Situation politique en République centrafricaine, June 29, 1966. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1966 Vol. II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2006), 173-4.

¹²⁰³ Jacques Foccart, *Foccart parle: entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard, Vol. I*, 287.

¹²⁰⁴ Note de la direction des Affaires Étrangères et Malgaches, Colonel Bokassa, Président de la République centrafricaine, June 29, 1966. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1966 Vol. II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2006), 176.

and the Central African Republic” in a speech that May.¹²⁰⁵ For its part, France quickly recognized the new regime and furnished Bokassa with a private plane, a Douglas DC-3.¹²⁰⁶

But like the Mobutu regime in Congo, from a very early stage, there were clear signs that Bokassa did not intend to rule his country based on democratic principles. As recently detailed by Martin Meredith, his early years were “not especially brutal” given the excesses of the 1970s.¹²⁰⁷ Nevertheless, there were several disturbing atrocities in the early Bokassa regime, including the murder of a former minister, the execution of a former head of internal security, and the imprisonment of Dacko. Perhaps most disturbing, Meredith notes, “[p]olitical prisoners and inmates in Ngaraba prison in Bangui were routinely tortured or beaten on Bokassa’s orders, their cries clearly audible to nearby residents.”¹²⁰⁸ For their part, French officials found themselves frustrated with Bokassa’s temperament, professing loyalty to France one moment and attacking it vehemently the next.¹²⁰⁹ An April 1968 memo noted that the relationship between the two countries had been subjected to “serious fluctuations” since Bokassa’s assumption of power in 1966, attributable mainly to Bokassa’s “psychology”.¹²¹⁰ In one incident, Bokassa became extremely enraged because of suggestions in the magazine *Paris-Match* that he had bought his military medals instead of earning them.¹²¹¹ Bokassa’s indignation that the French government was unable to silence the reports served as a warning sign

¹²⁰⁵ Ibid. 177.

¹²⁰⁶ Ibid. 176, n. 3.

¹²⁰⁷ Martin Meredith, *The Fate of Africa*, 225.

¹²⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁰⁹ See Foccart’s discussion of the relationship with Bokassa in Jacques Foccart, *Foccart parle: entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard*, 297-300.

¹²¹⁰ Note de la direction des affaires africaines et malgaches, April 23, 1968. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1968 Vol I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2009), 676.

¹²¹¹ Ibid. 676-7.

that he did not fully comprehend western-style democracy. Overall, the French ambassador to Bangui found him “impulsive, impatient, a bit incoherent, stimulated by his apprehensions, and naturally open to excess.”¹²¹²

Despite these incidents, France did everything in its power to maintain its influence with the Bokassa regime. Foccart quickly made it a priority to extend him the same courtesy as he had to other African leaders. In July 1966, Bokassa was invited to Paris and given a full state visit by de Gaulle, who met with him on July 7. During his stay in France, Bokassa made clear that he needed substantial financial assistance from France. For show purposes, he also requested that France provide military uniforms to former soldiers of his country, so that they could march in a parade celebrating the country’s day of independence later that year.¹²¹³ He would be extended another visit in February 1969, just weeks before de Gaulle’s resignation from the presidency.¹²¹⁴

Bokassa was able to extract significant aid from France practically by blackmail; he made clear to French authorities in October 1966 that his country needed foreign aid, and that he had no scruples as to whom he accepted it from – the strong implication being that he could turn to other French rivals on the continent. As the French ambassador to Central African Republic noted to Couve, Bokassa’s game was clear: “we are seized by exorbitant demands, and if we refuse them, or only fulfill them in part, he will take refuge behind our refusal and make appeals to other powers.”¹²¹⁵ This could mean the

¹²¹² M. Français, Ambassadeur de France à Bangui, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Oct. 28, 1966. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1966 Vol. II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2006), 805.

¹²¹³ M. Français, Ambassadeur de France à Bangui, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Oct. 28, 1966. *Ibid.*, 804 note 2.

¹²¹⁴ The details of Bokassa’s 1969 visit can be found in ANP, 5 AG I 650.

¹²¹⁵ M. Français, Ambassadeur de France à Bangui, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Oct. 13, 1966. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1966 Vol. II* (Paris:

acceptance of aid, and the consequent strengthening of its relationship with the United States. The Quai d'Orsay was already significantly concerned about increased communist aid to Africa in general, and the Soviet Union in particular had provided medical aid to the Bokassa regime.¹²¹⁶ According to the ambassador, in this situation, the increasing financial difficulties of the regime, as well as Bokassa's disenchantment, could represent a "pitfall" for France.¹²¹⁷ When France was slow to respond to his requests, Bokassa dressed down its diplomatic delegation with sharp words, accusing them of trying to pressure him into liberating his predecessor David Dacko from prison.¹²¹⁸

Nevertheless, Bokassa remained generally loyal to France, a quality that endeared him to both de Gaulle and his successors. In May 1968, a series of student demonstrations and strikes broke out throughout Paris in response to conditions in universities and workplaces. At the height of the crisis, de Gaulle left the country to meet with French General Jacques Massu in Germany, thus raising questions about a possible abdication of power.¹²¹⁹ On May 30, a day after de Gaulle's departure, Bokassa wrote directly to him, noting that

All the people of Central Africa under my senior direction implore Your Excellency to retain power until the end of your term... It was a unique solution on your part to restore peace in France and the world, as you did in 1958 when France and the French community, as well as the Central African Republic, were

Imprimerie Nationale, 2006), 739-40. "...nous saisir de demandes exorbitantes et, si nous les refusons, ou ne les exauçons qu'en partie, se retrancher derrière notre carence pour en appeler à d'autres puissances."

¹²¹⁶ Note de la direction des Affaires Africaines et Malgaches: L'action des pays communistes au sein des États francophones d'Afrique noire (mars-octobre 1966), Oct. 21, 1966. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1966 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2006), 772-8.

¹²¹⁷ M. Français, Ambassadeur de France à Bangui, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Oct. 13, 1966. *Ibid.*, 740.

¹²¹⁸ M. Français, Ambassadeur de France à Bangui, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Oct. 28, 1966. *Ibid.*, 804.

¹²¹⁹ For more on the 1968 student crisis, see Kristin Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

on the edge of chaos. The six thousand Frenchmen of the Central African Republic and their Central African brothers assure you of their support.¹²²⁰

It is unclear what sort of support Bokassa was implying in his letter to de Gaulle. For their part, French officials were impressed with the leader's show of solidarity, noting that Bokassa's profession of support "constitutes an undeniable gesture of attachment. It has also permitted him – and perhaps he realized this – to escape from a [diplomatic] situation that might have become hopeless."¹²²¹ The following February, he received another invitation to a state visit with de Gaulle in Paris, where the latter praised Bokassa as "a craftsman and an example" of the positive relationship between France and the Central African Republic.¹²²²

Bokassa and Mobutu can be counted among the worst examples of French policy in Africa. But as all of these aforementioned cases have illustrated, there was nothing particularly extraordinary about France's decisions to support dictators on the continent during the de Gaulle regime. In the final years of de Gaulle's tenure, France would also support Gnassingbé Eyadéma after a military coup in Togo,¹²²³ Chad's dictator François

¹²²⁰ Reproduced in M. Herly, Ambassadeur de France à Bangui, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, May 30, 1968. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1968 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2009), 851. "Le peuple centrafricain tout entier, sous ma haute direction, supplie Votre Excellence de garder le pouvoir jusqu'à la fin de son mandat stop. Solution unique pour restaurer la paix en France et dans le monde ainsi que vous l'avez fait en mil neuf cent cinquante-huit lorsque la France et la Communauté française, dont la République centrafricaine, se trouvaient au bord du chaos stop. Les six mille Français de la République centrafricaine, avec leurs frères centrafricains, vous assurent de leur appui stop."

¹²²¹ Note de la direction des affaires Africaines et Malgaches, June 6, 1968. *Ibid.*, 888.

"L'initiative du général Bokassa constitue un geste indéniable d'attachement. Elle lui a permis également – et peut-être en avait-il conscience – de sortir d'une situation qui risquait de devenir pour lui sans issue."

¹²²² Toast adressé à S.E. le Général J.B. Bokassa, Président de la République Centrafricaine, Feb. 11, 1969. Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et message, vers le terme: Janvier 1966 – Avril 1969* (Paris: Plon, 1970), 382.

¹²²³ Eyadéma, a veteran of the French army, took power with the help of the army in January 1967 after ousting Nicolas Grunitzky, who had himself taken power in a coup. Despite this, French ambassador Rostain indicated after meeting Eyadéma for the first time that the dictator had "a

Tombalbye after civil unrest there in the late 1960s,¹²²⁴ and a coup d'état in Dahomey by Alphonse Alley in December 1967 to replace the military dictatorship of Christophe Soglo.¹²²⁵ French officials also made no serious protest concerning the overthrow of Mali's Modibo Keita by military officer, and eventual autocrat, Moussa Traore.¹²²⁶ As already noted, much of this stemmed from France's need to be flexible on the continent. The direction of France's Africa policy going forward was best explained by an internal memo from 1967:

The character of Francophone countries does not permit the former métropole to have economic interests in Africa equal to those of Great Britain. But the political interest that France preserves in African countries and Madagascar is on

good conscience" and "good will." M. Rostain, Ambassadeur de France à Lomé, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Jan. 20, 1967. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1967 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2008), 117. Less than three years earlier, De Gaulle had received Grunitzky in Paris and toasted him at a state dinner, praising his leadership in Togo. Toast adressé à S.E.M.N. Grunitzky, Président de la République Togolaise, March 4, 1964. Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et Messages, pour l'effort : Août 1962 – Décembre 1965* (Paris : Plon, 1970), 186-8.

¹²²⁴ Note de la direction des affaires Africaine et Malgaches, July 26, 1967. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1967 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2008), 115-9. In 1968, France agreed to send troops to support the Tombalbye government should the need arise. Note de la direction des Affaires Africaines et Malgaches: Intervention au Tchad, Sept. 2, 1968. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1968 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2010), 345. French forces intervened to help combat a rebellion against Tombalbye's regime in Northern Chad in September 1968. Note de la direction des affaires Africaines et Malgaches: Intervention française au Tibesti, Sept. 10, 1968. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1968 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2010), 400-1. This was despite Tombalbye's "attitude hostile" towards France, according to Jacques Foccart. Jacques Foccart, *Foccart parle: entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard*, 292-3.

¹²²⁵ Le Général de Gaulle, Président de la République française au Lieutenant-Colonel Alley, Président de la République du Dahomey, Feb. 2, 1968. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1968 Tome I* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2009), 218. De Gaulle's recognition of Alley came just months after France had reaffirmed its support for Soglo. Note de la direction des affaires Africaines et Malgaches : Voyage officiel du général Soglo en France, Nov. 15, 1967. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1967 Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 2008), 617-25. This included a heartfelt toast by De Gaulle on November 21 at a state dinner in honor of Soglo. Toast adressé à S.E.M. C.H. Soglo, Président de la République du Dahomey, Nov. 21, 1967. Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et Messages, vers le terme : Janvier 1966 – Avril 1969* (Paris : Plon, 1970), 224-6.

¹²²⁶ M. Schaffhauser, Chargé d'Affaires de France A.I. à Dakar, à M. Debré, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Nov. 20, 1968. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1968 Tome II* (Paris : Imprimerie Nationale, 2010), 858-9.

a different level from its strategic and economic interests. It maintains close relations with [African leaders] and will maintain a presence in Francophone capitals, *regardless of the type of regime in power*.¹²²⁷ (emphasis added)

Conclusion

Unlike his predecessor regime in the Fourth Republic, de Gaulle's eventual fall from power had little to do with events beyond the *métropole*. Initially, it seemed that he would survive the immediate aftermath of the student riots and his disastrous retreat to Germany to meet with General Massu. His dissolution of the National Assembly in 1968, followed by an election that June, led to overwhelming gains for his party. But the events of May 1968 had nevertheless delivered a mortal wound from which de Gaulle would never fully recover. The following year, he announced plans for a referendum to significantly restructure how the government operated, including an overhaul of the Senate. Staking his political power on the outcome, de Gaulle promised to resign if the referendum failed. Despite victory for his party a year earlier, the referendum was narrowly defeated, losing by a margin of five percentage points. On April 28, 1969, de Gaulle kept his promise, resigning the presidency and retiring to his estate in the small village of Colombey Deux-Eglises. He would be dead by the following year.

But de Gaulle's legacy in Africa would endure long after his death. With the election of de Gaulle's Prime Minister Georges Pompidou to the presidency, continuity in Africa policy was ensured. Pompidou made certain to keep de Gaulle's greatest asset in

¹²²⁷ Note : Vues françaises et britanniques sur la situation de l'Afrique à la fin de 1967, Nov. 18, 1967. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1967 Tome II* (Paris : Imprimerie Nationale, 2008), 640-1. "Le caractère des pays francophones ne permet pas à l'ancienne métropole d'avoir des intérêts économiques en Afrique égalant ceux de la Grande-Bretagne... Mais l'intérêt politique que la France conserve dans les pays africains et malgache est sans commune mesure avec ses intérêts stratégiques et économiques. Il tient aux liens étroits les hommes et subsistera vraisemblablement dans les capitales francophones, quel que soit leur régime."

Africa policy, Jacques Foccart, at the head of the Africa cell in the Elysée Palace. Pompidou and all of his successor executives in the Fifth Republic would continue to cultivate and nourish relationships with Francophone African leaders, just as the de Gaulle administration had done. This policy would continue for the next twenty five years, with little introspection in French government circles concerning its impact on African political development. But when France provided support to a genocidal regime in east Africa that murdered almost a million people, the depths of French African policy could no longer be ignored.

Conclusion – The French Colonial Illusion and the Road to Rwanda

... we have saved tens of thousands of people, poor people, who have already endured much suffering.

-Address to the French nation by President François Mitterrand, July 14, 1994, after the killing of at least 800,000 people by the previously French-backed Hutu regime in Rwanda.¹²²⁸

For more than six decades after the invasion of France by the Nazis, French leaders conveniently avoided a fundamental reality. World War II permanently ended France's status as a first-rate world power, despite heroic efforts by Charles de Gaulle and the Resistance to overthrow Vichy and rally France to the Allied cause. She would no longer be treated as such within the international community, given the spread of American and Soviet hegemony. Yet French politicians and colonial administrators continued to act as if France still had a preeminent role to play in the postwar era. As this dissertation has argued, what enabled their naïveté was the preservation of a vast empire, spanning one-third of Africa and significant parts of Southeast Asia. For de Gaulle and other leaders from the postwar Provisional Government and Fourth Republic, the empire was the object of considerable French pride. It was both a link to France's past and a promise of France's return to its former position of power and influence. Consequently, the empire soon became the linchpin of French foreign policy.

In 1940, sub-Saharan Africa had been just one part of that empire – and was arguably the least important. But the events of the war, and the rapidly changing postwar atmosphere, would eventually elevate sub-Saharan Africa to a principal role in French foreign affairs. In recent years, historians have increasingly focused on how Africans

¹²²⁸ “Génocide rwandais: ce que savait l'Elysée,” *Le Monde*, July 2, 2007. “Nous avons sauvé des dizaines, des milliers de gens, de pauvres gens qui avaient déjà supporté beaucoup de souffrances.”

asserted themselves into this dynamic, and forced French leaders to recognize their political rights and human dignity. This contribution remains important, but as I have argued in this dissertation, international events, largely beyond France's control, also greatly influenced this process whereby French and African paths became more closely intertwined. From 1940 to 1962, French leaders faced an international situation that was increasingly hostile to France's preservation of its traditional empire. This hostility manifested in a number of ways, including the spread of American idealism, the interference of the United Nations in France's territories, the rise of third world anticolonial movements, and eventually, the outbreak of revolution in French colonies. As demonstrated by numerous public statements and confidential government memoranda, presented with these challenges, French leaders searched for new ways to consolidate French standing in the world and uphold the notion of an "eternal France" capable of maintaining its independence in the face of a growing Cold War.

This notion would prove to be stubbornly resilient, as evidenced by the tragic decision to fight colonial wars in Algeria and Vietnam. The case of postwar Britain serves as a useful comparison. In June 1947, exhausted by the war and increasingly focused on the domestic front, Britain agreed to the Indian Independence Act, essentially relinquishing one cornerstone of British foreign power. To be sure, this was not done magnanimously; the political strength and moral appeal of the Indian independence movements had gradually forced Britain to realize the folly of trying to preserve its empire on the subcontinent. But it is important to note that, faced with reality, Britain did eventually leave. In contrast, French leaders spent more than a decade attempting to hold on to the empire at all costs. Not even the loss of the empire's most vital territories –

Vietnam in 1954 and Algeria in 1962 – could undercut the core belief that a fundamental part of France’s future would be determined overseas. To the contrary, the loss of these two territories mandated an even closer relationship with Francophone Africa. By 1962, that region was indispensable. After the fall of Algeria, French leaders vowed to draw the line at sub-Saharan Africa. No foreign power – not the Soviet Union, not Britain, not the United States – could be allowed to interfere with France’s exclusive role on the continent. Consequently, all remaining vestiges of the civilizing mission were gradually abandoned, in favor of a policy of power politics determined to preserve French influence in Africa at any cost.

What is striking about French leaders examined in this dissertation is the relative congruence between their public statements about Africa, and their private reflections, apparent in government memos and correspondence. From Vichy to the Free French, from postwar Gaullists to French Socialists, from France under occupation to the governments of the Fourth and Fifth Republics, a consensus persisted in the French foreign policy establishment that France was entitled to determine Africa’s future, and that its role had to be defended on all fronts – especially from Anglo-Saxon intrigues.¹²²⁹ To be sure, a certain level of cynicism crept into this belief system; by the 1960s, the de Gaulle regime had privately abandoned the ideals of the civilizing mission in favor of a simple conservation of French power. But a core idea persevered – namely, that a French future without Africa was unimaginable. Before World War II, the continued French presence in Africa was often justified through France’s importance to the continent’s

¹²²⁹ Of course, this dissertation has largely focused on those holding political power within the colonial and foreign policy establishments. The Parti Communiste Française, which had little influence over the relevant ministries, is exempt from this analysis. With some exceptions, it took a generally anticolonial stance during this period.

political and economic development. Gradually, as the postwar era unfolded, the situation was reversed – it was now sub-Saharan Africa that held the key to the preservation of French power and influence. As I have argued in this dissertation, this mentality began to develop from the insecurity borne out of the tragedy of 1940, and can be readily identified in the colonial ideology of numerous postwar French leaders, including de Gaulle, René Pleven, Pierre Mendès France, and François Mitterrand.

In his seminal work, François Furet famously referred to the end of support for communism in Europe as “the passing of an illusion.”¹²³⁰ The intellectual strength of communism, he argued, was derived from the ideal of egalitarianism inherent in its founding, as well as the contributions of the Soviet Union in defeating Nazi Germany. In this sense, communism was a backward-looking idea, which could only last so long as its realities lagged behind the powerful memories of its followers. This illusion was shattered in 1989, when virtually all of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe fell. Yet France’s own inflated illusions of international power and entitlement in Africa strangely endured long after the fall of communism. Further, unlike communism, the French colonial illusion lacked an idealized history to draw from. By the 1950s, colonialism had already been discredited throughout the international community. And despite Africa’s contributions to rallying the empire to the Resistance, postwar France could not claim the prestige of war victory, as Stalin and his followers did.

Nevertheless, the French colonial project in Africa persisted long after decolonization, outliving many of the regimes that had attempted to curb France’s interference with the continent’s development. An authoritative treatment of French

¹²³⁰ François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Deborah Furet (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997).

involvement in Africa after de Gaulle's presidency, using state archives, is beyond the scope of this dissertation and has yet to be written. But two examples are illustrative of France's relationships with African leaders during the 1970s and 1980s – President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's dealings with Jean Bédel Bokassa of the Central African Republic, and Mitterrand's continued support for the repressive rule of Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire.¹²³¹ After de Gaulle's resignation in 1969, Bokassa continued to rule the Central African Republic with an iron fist, murdering ministers who disagreed with his policies and using the army to massacre civilians who protested his regime. Yet despite clear indications of the Bokassa regime's brutality, the Giscard regime supported him. Most scandalous was Giscard's agreement to pay for Bokassa's lavish coronation ceremony in 1977 as "emperor" of the Central African Republic, which according to Martin Meredith, cost \$22 million and involved a close reproduction of the coronation of Napoleon almost two hundred years earlier.¹²³² France's support for the ceremony was most likely due to Bokassa's continued loyalty to his country's former colonial master, but there were also whispers about Bokassa's gift of diamonds to Giscard.¹²³³ While the French helped overthrow him in 1979, they did so only after a highly publicized massacre of children in Bangui, at a point when they were "no longer able to stand the embarrassment" of Bokassa's violence and corruption.¹²³⁴ Essentially, until Bokassa became uncontrollable, the French government was perfectly willing to support him.

¹²³¹ Martin Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: A History of Fifty Years of Independence* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006), 224-30 and 524-5.

¹²³² *Ibid.*, 228.

¹²³³ Sandra Burton, "A Campaign Catches Fire," *TIME Magazine*, March 30, 1981, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,922507-2,00.html>.

¹²³⁴ Meredith, *The Fate of Africa*, 230.

This same approach marked France's relationship with Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko, who, as already noted, had been supported by de Gaulle despite continued violence and corruption. By the Mitterrand years, the full depravity of French policy in then-Zaire was fully apparent. As detailed by Michela Wrong, Mobutu engaged in a series of crackdowns that had virtually eliminated all political opposition in his country, constructed a cult of personality through the Zairian state, and robbed the government's treasury dry through lavish shopping sprees and payoffs to his political supporters.¹²³⁵ To be fair, France was not the only western country that supported Mobutu during this period; the United States and Belgium also saw him as a key ally in the region.¹²³⁶ But France's support was of particular importance. Mobutu was given a Concorde jet which he used to make numerous diplomatic and pleasure trips to Paris,¹²³⁷ and Mitterrand did not hesitate to send French paratroopers to Zaire to help Mobutu quell civil protest in the early 1990s.¹²³⁸ In exchange for France's support, Mobutu provided his personal loyalty and continued access for French businesses in Zaire.¹²³⁹ As Martin Meredith notes, when Mobutu's regime began to fall in 1997 during the First Congo War, France went so far as to recruit and send hundreds of Serbian paramilitaries, many of whom had committed war crimes during the Balkan wars, to protect Mobutu.¹²⁴⁰ Like other postcolonial African heads of state, Mobutu was a valuable ally so long as he maintained power and facilitated French political and economic influence in his country.

¹²³⁵ See Michela Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz: Living on the Brink of Disaster in Mobutu's Congo* (New York: Perennial, 2002).

¹²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 202-4.

¹²³⁷ Howard W. French, "Mobutu Sese-Seko, 66, Longtime Dictator of Zaire," *New York Times*, Sept. 8, 1997, <http://partners.nytimes.com/library/world/090897obit-mobutu.html>.

¹²³⁸ Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz*, 203.

¹²³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴⁰ Meredith, *The Fate of Africa*, 535.

The cases of Bokassa and Mobutu are just two examples of how the illusion of French entitlement and power subverted African political and economic development. It would take a genocide to undermine these illusions and finally raise questions about the propriety of France's African adventures. On April 6, 1994, a plane carrying Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana and Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira was shot down over Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. Habyarimana, a Hutu, had brokered a cease-fire with minority Tutsi leader Paul Kagame the previous year, purportedly bringing an end to ethnic conflict that had lasted since Rwanda's independence from Belgium.¹²⁴¹ But with the death of Habyarimana, the cease-fire crumbled, and radical Hutu elements quickly took control of the country. Just hours after the assassination, Hutu militias began rounding up and massacring ethnic Tutsis, first in Kigali, and then throughout Rwanda's countryside. They also murdered Belgian peacekeepers assigned to monitor the cease-fire in the capital, eventually leading to the pullout of the vast majority of UN forces. Within a week, virtually all foreign diplomatic personnel had been evacuated from the country – thus enabling the Hutu regime to continue the grisly killings at an alarming rate. By the end of the month, the International Committee of the Red Cross estimated that 300,000 people had been massacred, often by their own friends and neighbors wielding machetes. The killing continued for a hundred days, ending only when Kagame's forces, previously exiled in neighboring Uganda, invaded the country and deposed the regime. The final toll was devastating – between 800,000 and a million

¹²⁴¹ The United Nations-backed Arusha Accords, signed in 1993, were intended to reduce the tensions between the Hutu government and the Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front and eventually result in a power-sharing arrangement between the two sides. For an account of the UN mission in Rwanda, see Romeo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2004), 53-5.

Rwandans died during the genocide, with hundreds of thousands more surviving terrible injuries at the hands of Hutu militias.

In the past 17 years, France's involvement in the Rwandan genocide has been well-documented. As these studies have shown, France provided vital military and political support to the Hutu regime during the 1990s, helped train some of the *interahamwe* militias that carried out massacres throughout Rwanda in 1994, and shielded high-level Hutu figures from prosecution, most notably radical Hutu Madame Agathe Habyarimana, the widow of the assassinated President Habyarimana.¹²⁴² For its part, the present Rwandan government has leveled numerous accusations against France for its involvement. On August 5, 2008 it released a report that included allegations about French participation in political assassinations, rapes of Tutsi women, and active assistance to Hutu *genocidaires* as they escaped the advancing Tutsi armies in the final days of the genocide.¹²⁴³ In addition, the report named several former high-ranking French officials as bearing responsibility for these actions, including former Prime

¹²⁴² See Daniela Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008); Oliver Wallis, *Silent Accomplice: The Untold Story of France's Role in the Rwandan Genocide* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008); Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998); Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995). The French parliament also conducted an inquiry in 1998 concerning the events in Rwanda. Assemblée Nationale, *Mission d'information sur le Rwanda*, Dec. 15, 1998, <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dossiers/rwanda/rapport.asp>. The report has been heavily criticized as a "whitewash" for not sufficiently criticizing France for its role in the genocide. See Wallis, *Silent Accomplice*, 202-5. For a discussion of the implications of France's actions in Rwanda under international law, see Paul Schmitt, "The Future of Genocide Suits at the International Court of Justice: France's Role in Rwanda and Implications of the Bosnia v. Serbia Decision", *Georgetown Journal of International Law* 40 (Winter 2009): 585-623.

¹²⁴³ Rapport de la Commission Nationale Indépendante Chargée de Rassembler les Preuves Montrant l'Implication de l'état Français dans le Génocide Perpétré au Rwanda en 1994, Nov. 15, 2007, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/4531960/Report-on-Frances-complicity-in-Rwandan-Genocide-in-French>.

Minister Alain Juppé, former Minister of Foreign Affairs Dominique de Villepin, and most notably, former President François Mitterrand.

Mitterrand, who had reinvented himself yet again as a socialist, was elected to the presidency in 1981 after promising to break from some of the policies of the center-right Gaullists, who had held the post for 23 years. In terms of domestic policy, Mitterrand generally kept his word, starting with the nationalization of several industries shortly after he assumed the presidency, and the passage of expansive social legislation. However, this shift from the Gaullist past did not include a change in France's policies in Africa. Like de Gaulle before him, Mitterrand viewed French influence in Africa as a means to counterbalance the gravitation of nations toward American or Soviet influence. When the Cold War ended, he worried that the United States and Britain would be less willing to respect France's sphere of influence on the continent. Therefore, in his second presidential term, Mitterrand initiated a renewed focus on the continent, with Rwanda as a crucial component of this policy. His point man in the country was his son, Jean-Christophe, who was vital in arranging arms deals and providing vital military advice and assistance to president Habyarimana.¹²⁴⁴ Four years prior to the genocide, France supported the Hutu regime through a military intervention (Operation Noiro), during which Mitterrand sent 600 paratroopers to Rwanda. The mission was ostensibly to protect French citizens during the civil war between Hutu forces and the Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which was led by Paul Kagame and backed by Ugandan leader Yoweri Museveni. In reality, the French operation developed into a closely linked

¹²⁴⁴ Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families*, 104. In 2009, Jean-Christophe Mitterrand was sentenced to two years in prison for his role in the "Angola-gate" affair, which involved the illegal sale of arms to Angola during a civil war in the 1990s.

relationship between French and Rwanda military units, with French troops helping the Hutus put down the rebellion.¹²⁴⁵

When the genocide began in April 1994, elites in both the French executive branch and the military had little desire to see their clients lose power in post-conflict Rwanda. As the Hutus were carrying out a relentless slaughter against the Tutsis, leaders in Paris attempted to confuse the issue, with Francois Mitterrand and others implying that *both* sides were carrying out significant acts of genocide.¹²⁴⁶ This pattern of obfuscating the events of the genocide continued after the Hutu regime was defeated. French officials soon propagated what Oliver Wallis refers to as a “double genocide myth” which stated that large groups of Hutus and Tutsis were both guilty of large scale acts of genocide against each other.¹²⁴⁷

Even when the full implications of the genocide began to dawn on him, Mitterrand refused to reverse course. By mid-June 1994, he had concluded that the radical Hutu regime was led by a “bunch of killers” who he could no longer support

¹²⁴⁵ Wallis, *Silent Accomplice*, 38-9.

¹²⁴⁶ Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families*; Wallis, *Silent Accomplice*.

¹²⁴⁷ Wallis, *Silent Accomplice*, 186-7. Former Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin propagated this line as recently as 2003, when he referred to the events in 1994 as the “Rwandan genocides.” Ibid. Olivier Lanotte has detailed the double game that France played in Rwanda in the early weeks of the genocide:

Tout en se disant “consterné par l’ampleur de la violence”, le gouvernement français estime que « le rôle de la France n’est pas de rétablir l’ordre par ses soldats sur l’ensemble du continent africain ». Malgré les demandes répétées des pays du « pré carré » qui redoutent les effets contagieux d’une déstabilisation venue de l’extérieur, la France refuse d’intervenir...Parallèlement à cette politique d’abandon, il apparait que l’Elysée et certain réseaux ont favorisé une « politique des mains sales » ayant consisté à maintenir discrètement une coopération militaire avec les FAR [the Rwandan government forces].

Olivier Lanotte, *La France au Rwanda: entre abstention impossible et engagement ambivalent* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2007), 343-4.

because “there had been a genocide.”¹²⁴⁸ Nevertheless, he preferred to keep the Hutus in power because it “was the democratic thing to do.”¹²⁴⁹ Later in the summer, as the international community urged the UN Security Council to take action, France launched Operation Turquoise, whose mission was allegedly to stop the killing in Rwanda by establishing safe zones for Tutsis. In reality, the mission enabled many of the perpetrators to escape into present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo. Unwilling to face up to France’s responsibility, Mitterrand went on French television on the evening of July 14, ludicrously proclaiming that, through Operation Turquoise, “we have saved tens of thousands of people, poor people, who have already endured much suffering.”¹²⁵⁰

As with so many African dictatorships supported by the de Gaulle regime, France’s motive in Rwanda seems to have been to maintain its political influence in the region by upholding the existing regime as long as possible. But until 1994, the ramifications of this policy had never been so cruel or murderous. How did it come to this? Fifty years earlier at Brazzaville, French colonial administrators had promised a renewed relationship with Africa based on a greater respect for the wishes of France’s subjects on the continent. To be sure, as this dissertation has argued, many of these promises were more rhetoric than reality. But no justification for the involvement in the Rwandan genocide could, on its surface, have anything in common with avowed French colonial ideology during the Third and Fourth Republics. As Alice Conklin has noted,

¹²⁴⁸ Wallis, *Silent Accomplice*, 123. Wallis relies on Alison Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999), <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/rwanda/index.htm>.

¹²⁴⁹ Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*.

¹²⁵⁰ “Génocide rwandais: ce que savait l’Elysée,” *Le Monde*, July 2, 2007. “Nous avons sauvé des dizaines, des milliers de gens, de pauvres gens qui avaient déjà supporté beaucoup de souffrances.”

the French presence in Africa had originally been infused with the notion of the civilizing mission, which encompassed

...an emancipatory and universalistic impulse that resisted tyranny; an ideal of self-help and mutualism that included a sanctioning of state assistance to the indigent when necessary; anticlericalism, and its attendant faith in reason, science, and progress; an ardent patriotism founded on the creation of a loyal, disciplined and enlightened citizenry; and a strong respect for the individual, private property, and morality.¹²⁵¹

Of course, as has already been discussed, these ideals often did not correspond to actual policies followed by the French administration in Africa during the colonial era. Yet this was still a far cry from complicity in a genocide that killed hundreds of thousands of people.

The origins of French support for the Hutu regime can be traced to a few key themes addressed in this dissertation, all of which are vital in understanding France's need to maintain its influence in Africa after decolonization. First, as a Francophone nation, Rwanda was seen as part of France's zone of influence on the continent. Although it had not been a French colony, Rwanda was considered part of the larger community of *Francophonie*, which linked French-speaking nations together through a common history and culture. Consequently, along with former French colonies in sub-Saharan Africa, Rwanda was viewed by French leaders as under France's exclusive purview. This notion was the outgrowth of previous conceptions of French territorial integrity and sovereignty in Africa during the colonial age. During World War II, both the Vichy and Free French administrations zealously guarded against all foreign encroachment in their African territories. Fear of such encroachment also marked the ministries of the Fourth Republic, which struggled to maintain control over French Africa

¹²⁵¹ Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 7-8.

in the face of anticolonial sentiment emanating from the United States and the United Nations.

Second, the French involvement with the Hutu regime was a vital part of maintaining French standing throughout the world. In the postcolonial era, France's close relationships with African leaders were a testament to its continued relevancy within the international community. Although various French administrations from 1940 to 1969 acted under different international constraints, they all recognized that a special relationship with Africa was necessary to sustain French power. The importance of Africa to France's future developed largely from France's postwar international situation. When France lost its colonies in Vietnam and Algeria, the role of sub-Saharan Africa in France's future grew exponentially. As the cases of Rwanda and so many other postcolonial African nations demonstrate, French leaders were willing to do virtually anything to maintain Francophone sub-Saharan Africa within the French orbit, including supporting dictators, ignoring traditional French values, and in Rwanda, providing support to a genocidal regime. Only through such cynical policies could France preserve one of its most valuable bargaining chips in the game of international power, and demonstrate its continued relevance in the face of the United States and the Soviet Union.

Finally, the French involvement in Rwanda demonstrates the deep-rooted fear that "Anglo-Saxon" interests were conspiring to undermine, and possibly terminate, the French presence in Africa. To this end, excerpts from the French presidential archives, published by *Le Monde* in 2007, provide some insight into the Mitterrand regime's mentality during the fateful spring and summer of 1994. French leaders viewed Paul Kagame – who had been trained by the American military at Fort Leavenworth and was

supported by American and British ally Yoweri Museveni of Uganda – as an Anglo-Saxon stooge capable of undermining French power in east and central Africa.¹²⁵² As I have demonstrated, suspicions of the Anglo-Saxon powers – first Britain, and eventually the United States – were shared by French regimes from across the political spectrum, ranging from Vichy to the de Gaulle presidency. While France maintained an alliance with Britain and the U.S. during the Cold War, for French officials, the threat of Anglo-Saxon interference loomed constantly over all of its dealings in Africa.

This fear of Anglo-Saxon encroachment overrode all other imperatives in Rwanda. In January 1993, based on information he had received from informants, the French ambassador to Rwanda warned that the Hutus were already planning to commit genocide, with Habyarimana himself telling his subordinates “to carry out a systematic genocide using, if necessary, the assistance of the army and the involvement of local people in the killing.”¹²⁵³ Nevertheless, French leaders continued to focus on the threat of Kagame’s troops to French influence in the region. That February, French diplomat Bruno Delaye warned in an internal memo that Kagame’s RPF forces were “capable of taking Kigali” thanks in part to the “complicity of the Anglo-Saxon world.”¹²⁵⁴ The

¹²⁵² Wallis, *Silent Accomplice*, 108-9. To be certain, there has been significant debate in recent years about the merits of the Kagame regime, both regarding the nature of its governance of Rwanda, and Kagame’s role in the Congo Wars of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. An evaluation of the Kagame regime is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but great insight has been provided by Jason Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011); Gerard Prunier, *Africa’s World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹²⁵³ “Génocide rwandais: ce que savait l’Elysée,” *Le Monde*, July 2, 2007. “Le président rwandais aurait lui-même donné le signal de départ de massacres après une réunion avec ses collaborateurs. Il aurait intimé “*l’ordre de procéder à un génocide systématique en utilisant, si nécessaire, le concours de l’armée et en impliquant la population locale dans les assassinats*”, écrit l’ambassadeur.”

¹²⁵⁴ Ibid. “Dans une note du 15 février 1993, le conseiller Afrique de l’Elysée s’alarme du fait que le FPR est “*en mesure de prendre Kigali*”, bénéficiant entre autres de la “*complicité bienveillante*”

following year, a full month into the genocide, General Christian Quesnot, serving as Mitterrand's chief of military staff, continued to warn the president of the implications of a victory by Kagame's forces in the civil war. "President Museveni and his allies have established a Tutsiland with the Anglo-Saxon aid and the complicity of our false intellectuals," Quesnot warned.¹²⁵⁵ In order to emphasize the danger posed by Kagame, Quesnot began referring to the RPF as "Khmers Noirs" (Black Khmers) – an allusion to the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia.¹²⁵⁶

Of course, this fear of Anglo-Saxon encroachment was a manifestation of the aforementioned imperative to preserve French influence in Africa at all costs. In this sense, the Mitterrand regime's involvement in Rwanda was a predictable continuation of policies followed by France after decolonization, whereby the maintenance of French power took precedent over enabling economic and political development in France's colonies. In chapter six, I argued that France's support of African dictators began during the de Gaulle regime. These policies continued with his successors Georges Pompidou, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Mitterrand, and Jacques Chirac. Indeed, until very recently, France continued to intervene in African conflicts, including Côte d'Ivoire in 2004, Chad in 2006, and the Central African Republic in 2007.

All of the aforementioned examples demonstrate the underlying problem that French leaders had during the latter half of the twentieth century in managing the decline of French power within the international community. At the mercy of events largely

du monde anglo-saxon" et d'un "excellent système de propagande qui s'appuie sur les exactions malheureuses commises par les extrémistes hutus"

¹²⁵⁵ Ibid. "Le président [ougandais] Museveni et ses alliés auront ainsi constitué un Tutsiland avec l'aide anglo-saxonne et la complicité objective de nos faux intellectuels, remarquables relais d'un lobby tutsi auquel est également sensible une partie de notre appareil d'Etat."

¹²⁵⁶ Ibid.

beyond their control French leaders struggled to preserve a vision of the French nation state which stood in stark contrast to the reality faced by postwar France. In recent years, much has been written about how postwar societies have been affected by the difficult process of integrating painful memories into contemporary notions of national identity.¹²⁵⁷ As Henry Rousso has argued, postwar France dealt with the trauma of the Vichy past largely by relegating the guilt of collaboration to a few select actors.¹²⁵⁸ But collaboration with the Nazis and participation in the Holocaust were not the only inconvenient truths from the war era. The loss of French influence and prestige – de Gaulle’s notion of *grandeur* – was an almost unavoidable reality, given the invasion by the Nazis, the shameful actions of the Vichy regime, and the exclusion of Free French leaders from most of Allied conferences addressing postwar issues. Yet insecurity and sense of loss had the opposite effect. French leaders believed that embracing this reality would be disastrous; instead, preserving the remnants of the French empire was the foremost concern. By 1969, the idea of French influence in Africa had become so imperative as to supersede any previous notions of progress and development.

The road from the 1944 Brazzaville Conference, which raised hopes about France’s devotion to a new era in Africa, to France’s refusal to intervene and stop genocide in Rwanda fifty years later, was a long and winding one, full of contingencies and alternative outcomes. France’s involvement in Rwanda was certainly not the

¹²⁵⁷ For an examination of how the memory of German participation in the Holocaust affected the political culture of postwar West and East Germany, see Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999). The legacy of Japan’s fractured memory of the Hirohito regime’s crimes has been addressed by John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (London: W.W. Norton & Co., 2000).

¹²⁵⁸ See Henry Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours*. (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1990).

inevitable outcome of France's colonial illusion of the postwar era. Yet, as the arguments and evidence in this dissertation have indicated, it was one of the possible outcomes of a French policy that confidently asserted itself in Africa throughout the postwar and postcolonial periods. Although reflection on this period of French history has already begun in France, perhaps this dissertation can contribute to that ongoing conversation, and shed light on how well-meaning ideals are easily subverted by states' fundamental need to preserve power and influence.

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