THE CHALLENGE OF GUINEAN INDEPENDENCE,
1958-1971

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Since the end of French colonial rule in Guinea, “independence” has held a central place in its political culture. Implying both dignity and self-determination for the sovereign people which possesses it, independence is a concept that has meaning only in relation to other nation-states and cultures. Yet the political elite that dominated Guinea’s First Republic constructed a new national culture around this concept. *The Challenge of Guinean Independence, 1958-1971* examines Guinea’s assertion of its right to independence and the response of powerful Western players, especially the United States and France, as Guinea challenged their assumptions about the nature of African sovereignty.

Considering the history of the international relations of a single African state that enjoyed limited international power and prestige challenges conventions in the historiography of both Africa and international relations. It illuminates and contextualizes expectations concerning the meaning of modernity, African sovereignty as a matter of international law, and the end of formal colonial rule coinciding with the tensions and competitions of the Cold War.

The study demonstrates that the international context played a crucial role, both in conditioning the timing and form of decolonization and in shaping the international community’s adaptation of colonial patterns of economic and political interaction to the new reality of African nation-states. Focusing on the invention, development and
reception of one country’s insistence on independence in turn illuminates significant issues and events: the end of French colonial rule; limitations on the sovereignty of non-European postcolonial states; the advent of neocolonialism and the failure of the nominally anti-colonial United States to oppose it; the ideological appeal of African unity as a means of safeguarding sovereignty and the compromises that its institutional form entailed; foreign aid and the notion that development for modernization could be stimulated from outside; and the implications of unlimited internal autonomy for a state’s people. Guinea’s independence ultimately challenged developing norms of Western economic and political interaction with new African states by complicating assumptions about the universality of Western notions of economic development, justice and morality.
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papers from the conference, *Trajectories of Decolonization: Elites and the Transformation from the Colonial to the Postcolonial* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) is drawn in part from this thesis. The rewards of having an opportunity in such august company to refocus my thoughts on Guinea exceeded even the delights of a visit to Cologne. Likewise, I am grateful to the organizers and fellow-participants in a conference on “African Intellectuals and Decolonization” that took place at Ohio University in October 2008 and to the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations Annual Meetings in 2007 and 2009 for their comments, questions and suggestions on papers I gave which are also drawn from my thesis research. Elizabeth Schmidt, Daniel Byrne and Rob Rakove deserve particular mention in this regard.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEF</td>
<td>Afrique équatoriale française</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGP</td>
<td>Agence Guinéenne de presse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMAX</td>
<td>American Metals Climax Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOF</td>
<td>Afrique occidentale française</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAG</td>
<td>Bloc Africain de Guinée</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPN</td>
<td>Bureau de Politique nationale (Guinea)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFA</td>
<td>Colonies Françaises en Afrique (franc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFLN</td>
<td>Comité français de la Libération nationale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGT</td>
<td>Confédération Générale du Travail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNTG</td>
<td>Confédération nationale des Travailleurs de Guinée</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAL</td>
<td>Direction Afrique-Levant (France – MAE)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE-CE</td>
<td>Direction des Affaires économiques/Service de Coopération économique (France – MAE)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>United Nations Economic Commission for Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEC</td>
<td>European Economic Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEANF</td>
<td>Fédération des Étudiants d’Afrique noire en France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIDES</td>
<td>Fonds d’Investissement pour le développement économique et social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLN</td>
<td>Front de Libération nationale (Algeria)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FLNG</td>
<td>Front de Libération nationale de Guinée</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPRA</td>
<td>Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Algérienne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBRD</td>
<td>International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICA</td>
<td>International Cooperation Administration (US)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAE</td>
<td>Ministère des Affaires étrangères (France)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MinFOM</td>
<td>Ministère de la France d’Outre-Mer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUOI</td>
<td>Direction des Nations-unies et organisations internationales (France – MAE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAMCE</td>
<td>Organisation Africaine et malgache de coopération économique</td>
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<tr>
<td>OAU</td>
<td>Organization of African Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCAM</td>
<td>Organisation commune Africaine et Malgache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCB</td>
<td>Operations Coordinating Board (US)</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronyme</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
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<td>----------</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAIGC</td>
<td>Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCF</td>
<td>Parti communiste français</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDG</td>
<td>Parti démocratique de Guinée</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRA</td>
<td>Parti du régroupement Africain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDA</td>
<td>Rassemblement Démocratique Africain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDECE</td>
<td>Service de Documentation extérieure et de Contre-espionnage (France)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFIO</td>
<td>Section française de l’Internationale ouvrière</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SORAFOM</td>
<td>Société de Radiodiffusion de la France d’Outre-Mer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAM</td>
<td>Union Africaine et malgache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UGTAN</td>
<td>Union Générale des travailleurs d’Afrique noire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMHK</td>
<td>Union Minière du Haut-Katanga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIA</td>
<td>Universal Negro Improvement Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>USIA</td>
<td>United States Information Agency</td>
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Introduction

*Fata mu beri, tinka nan beri.* – “Learning is eternal, knowing is not” – Susu proverb\(^1\)

On 28 September 1958, Guinea became the first of France’s imperial possessions to gain its independence without first having had to go to war. This dissertation examines the evolution of this African nation’s independence, and the responses of the international community to the challenges it posed, over a period of about thirteen years comprising the first half of Guinea’s First Republic under President Ahmed Sékou Touré. The interplay of challenge and response illuminates themes that continue to dominate the African political agenda more than fifty years later. Independence was not simply a principle or a rhetorical device for the politicians who controlled Guinea’s First Republic. It was also a central component of the national identity and self-image they were constructing for the state and its people. The relationship between the principle of independence and the reality of the serious constraints placed on the state’s freedom of action by the geopolitical, economic and post-colonial realities of the 1958-1972 period raises important questions about the nature of national sovereignty in the post-colonial world.

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The independent Republic of Guinea was proclaimed on 2 October 1958, four days after the people of the territory voted to reject France’s offer of membership in the new French Community that was intended to accompany the metropole’s Fifth Republic. The first set of challenges that Guinea’s independence posed to the larger international community, explored in Chapters 1 and 2, arose directly out of these circumstances. Guinea’s political leaders, with the charismatic and astute Sékou Touré firmly in control, challenged the idea that decolonization was a process whose timing and legal form were defined, above all, by the European state which was relinquishing sovereignty over the colony. Guinea mounted this challenge by, in effect, making a performance of its

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\(^1\) Quoted by Fernand Gigon, *Guinée – État-pilote* (Paris: Plon, 1959), 47, who translated it as “apprendre est éternel, non savoir”.

1
2 The new state used the membership it had suddenly acquired in the international community to circumvent the restrictions that France tried to place on it. Guinea exploited the leverage it obtained through the circumstances of the Cold War and the anti-colonial sentiments espoused by both sides of that conflict. In this way it was able to counter France’s attempts to undermine the new state’s stability by rapidly withdrawing administrative, economic and diplomatic support and, more covertly, by exploring whether internal discontent could be harnessed to engineer the overthrow of the new regime. By behaving as though its sovereignty were absolute after the 28 September Referendum and the 2 October declaration of the Republic, Guinea was able to make independence a reality, despite France’s determination to treat the new state as though it were still a colony, albeit one that had renounced any right to assistance or support from the metropole. The performance of sovereignty also, in effect, rendered moot the more usual formalities that would transfer power from metropole to newly independent colony. Guinea’s insistence on its independence and skillful use of global political circumstances made its birth less a European “gift” of decolonization, and more an African “taking” of independence.

Guinea’s next challenge was to the perpetuation of colonialism’s economic and political structures past formal independence, its own and that of other African states. As Chapter 3 explores, the new state’s efforts to foreclose neocolonialism began even before the word came into common use in Africa. Once more, Guinea used its position in the international community to try to induce stronger powers from outside the continent, especially the nominally anti-colonial United Nations and United States, to support its efforts and those of allies such as Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah and Congo’s Patrice Lumumba to resist the perpetuation of colonial structures and privileges in their nominally independent countries. The struggle against neocolonialism also pervaded the campaign to give institutional form and political substance to the old dream of pan-Africanism, described in Chapter 4. Sékou Touré tried to use his own prestige as the leader who had stood up for African independence against France’s Charles de Gaulle to push his contemporaries towards a muscular African economic unity that would leave

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open the option of eventual political unification. His efforts were thwarted by France, but also by the intrusion of the Cold War into African politics in the early 1960s. The creation of the Organization of African Unity as an institution pledged to guaranteeing borders inherited from colonial rule marked the defeat of the pan-African ideal, even as it gave evidence of an important triumph of political will.

The final two chapters of the dissertation explore Guinea’s interaction with the main points of connection already developing between the international community and African states. Tracing the ways in which Guinea’s independence conflicted with the universalization implicit in Western norms governing both economic and political interactions identifies some of the enduring problems in those interactions. In Chapter 5, I explore how Guinea’s independence collided with the assumptions of its major Western aid donor – the United States – about how aid should be managed so as to achieve economic development. The chapter considers the irony that both the donor and the recipient accepted the goals of independence and economic “modernization.” Both used some of the language popularized by the US State Department’s W.W. Rostow to describe the stages of growth through which capitalist societies should inexorably pass on their way to achieving this goal. Yet, partly because of Guinea’s insistence on carving an independent economic path, neither donor nor recipient could achieve results that resembled Rostow’s vision in the slightest respect. Finally, Chapter 6 examines Guinea’s challenge to limitations on its sovereignty that were more notional than practical in the early 1970s. Neither morality nor justice in Guinea was the subject of international conventions, formal or otherwise, but the violation of both, while within the state’s sovereign rights, shocked international opinion. Guinea’s challenge would take on a greater importance in later decades as the international community reacted to the violence that was increasingly visited on postcolonial populations by their own governments. The question of whether, when, and on what legal or moral authority, intervention might be justified remains unanswered, even with the principle established that the United Nations has a Responsibility to Protect. It may be unanswerable.

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In examining the challenges posed by Guinea’s independence, I have made several choices. The most obvious is to limit the time period that is the subject of this
inquiry. The first half of Guinea’s First Republic saw a full arc in Guinea’s relations with the outside world. Those relations began with optimism and with a surprising degree of influence, experienced significant reversals in the face of the perpetuation of colonial-era economic and political structures into post-colonial circumstances, and then suffered a real decline as the world’s interest waned in both the economic and the political potential of the West African state, and as its insistence on independence drove it into more and more extreme actions within its increasingly limited sphere of influence. Until it became independent in 1958, Guinea was not so very different from any of the other territories that made up Afrique occidentale française (AOF). The “vocation for independence” that Guinea discovered had been largely unforeseen, both by France and by Guinea’s political leadership itself.  

In several ways the apotheosis of its sovereignty was the invasion of its territory from neighbouring Portuguese Guinea (Guinea-Bissau) that took place in November 1970, which permitted Guinea to trigger diplomatic – though not practical – sympathy from the international community and to exercise unfettered power within the state to punish those its ruling party held responsible for the invasion. Focusing on the period between 1958 and 1972 allows an exploration of the arc of Guinean sovereignty and its influence on the larger global political scene.

Another reason to focus on these years is that relatively little has been published about Guinea’s post-independence history. The political history of the colonial period has been addressed by Jean Suret-Canale, Claude Rivière and R.W. Johnson. Johnson and Suret-Canale also explored the politics of the period immediately preceding independence. Elizabeth Schmidt has added immensely to our knowledge of this period with her two books on the rise of the Parti Démocratique de la Guinée. The Sékou

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6 Elizabeth Schmidt, Mobilizing the Masses: Gender, Ethnicity and Class in the Nationalist Movement in Guinea, 1939-1958 (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005); Cold War and Decolonization in Guinea, 1946-
Touré years have been the subject of numerous memoirs, many of them extremely poignant reports of persecution by the PDG, as well as several studies of Guinea’s relationship with its former colonial metropole, a few biographies of the president, and two fascinating studies of his rhetoric and use of mass media as a tool to consolidate power.\(^7\) André Lewin’s study of Diallo Telli and review of the role of the two German republics in Guinea also provide much useful information; this former French diplomat’s thesis, defended in autumn 2008 in Aix-en-Provence, also promises to be a superb source of detail concerning the First Republic, including its international relations.\(^8\) None of the published sources, however, provides a satisfactory answer to the question of how Guinea’s exposure to the possibilities offered and restrictions imposed by membership in the wider community of nation-states affected its history or influenced how the rest of the world has learned to deal with African states.

A more significant, and perhaps more controversial, choice is to situate the inquiry within the sources, methods and concerns of the historical study of international relations. In so doing this dissertation builds on recent scholarship that considers the end of formal colonial rule in Africa as the beginning of a new international system. This approach, epitomized by Matthew Connelly’s work on Algeria, contrasts sharply with work that considers decolonization in francophone Africa by focusing primarily on France, either by treating decolonization as the incident that initiated major changes in the society or the self-image of the metropolitan state, or by tracing ongoing French


influence in Africa to emphasize the French design in the process and the outcome of decolonization. Like Connelly’s groundbreaking work, I focus on the intentions of Africans, rather than Europeans or North Americans, as they manoeuvred in and manipulated the larger international community. As did the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (the GPRA), Sékou Touré rode the currents of new mass communications media and the globalization of economic relations to express a challenge to the institution of state sovereignty as it was conceived in the colonial world. The Guinean president took advantage of the “diplomatic revolution” that Connelly describes to ensure his country survived its sudden independence and to attempt to navigate an independent, non-aligned course through the perilous waters of Cold War international politics. Unlike Connelly’s work, however, this dissertation focuses on what happened after the initial challenge was mounted to consider how the international community – and the “system” of laws, norms, behaviours, powers and pressures that it enforces, governing relations between states that are old and powerful as well as between states that are new and weak – responded. Its wider significance is to consider the implications of that response, most narrowly for Guinea and Guineans, but also for the citizens of other postcolonial states in Africa and Asia.

Focusing on Guinea’s international, rather than internal, political intentions and achievements does carry certain risks. By definition, the approach risks overlooking issues and developments that were of more immediate importance to the Guinean people. Foreign diplomats only rarely looked below the surface of their relations with the national government to consider and report on questions, such as demographics, cultural representations, gender roles, and the visible traces of pre-colonial beliefs and expectations concerning political, legal, ethnographic or other cultural matters, that

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interest many contemporary historians. The absence of accessible Guinean government archives from the post-independence period means, too, that even within the range of issues considered, Guinean voices tend to be restricted to the rhetoric of Sékou Touré, whose speeches were collected in an extensive series of books published by Guinea’s Imprimerie nationale Patrice Lumumba during his twenty-six year presidency. The diplomatic archives of the United States and France do offer a useful complement to this voice by showing glimpses of the thinking of a number of the president’s colleagues whose views happened to be captured in reports of speeches, memoranda of conversation and the like. These sources help complicate the simplistic view, prevalent in analyses of Guinea in the early 1960s, that Guinea’s international policy was the product of its primary spokesman alone.\textsuperscript{10} In many cases, the work of the president as representative of his nation was complicated by the divergent views and approaches of his diplomatic envoys and other senior officials. Cold War preoccupations in Washington and Paris meant that when a Guinean official other than the president did express views that seemed more or less favourable to one side or the other, or seemed to indicate ideological sympathy or antipathy, his or her opinion tended to be played up in analyses of Guinea’s politics by American and French foreign affairs professionals.

Focusing on international relations also risks assuming the answer to a question posed by some of the political science literature concerning the post-colonial African state: were, and are, African governments focused on obtaining the approval and favour of more powerful external actors at the expense of ensuring their legitimacy with the people they purport to represent? Put another way, it risks undercutting the innovation and the suggestiveness of Jean-François Bayart’s insight that extraversion – defined formally as “the creation and capture of a rent generated by dependency and which functions as a historical matrix of inequality, political centralization and social struggle”, and more generally as “mobilizing resources derived from [African actors’] (possibly unequal) relationship with the external environment” – is a political process characteristic of African political culture before, during and after the period of formal colonization on

the continent. Bayart argues that strategies of extraversion, as defined, are the means by which African actors have exercised agency in the international relations that created the fact of Africa’s dependency. Focusing on the international relations of one such African actor – Sékou Touré’s government in Guinea – consequently risks over-emphasizing the importance of such relations, and the external resources they offered the actor, to his successes, chief among them the ability to stay in nearly undisputed power for twenty-six turbulent years.

At the same time, though, careful examination of Guinea’s international relations from a historical perspective suggests one limitation to Bayart’s useful concept. While the result of Guinea’s external relations might appear to be dependency, in the sense in which the term is employed by Andre Gunder Frank, Walter Rodney and Immanuel Wallerstein, the intention was, consistently, to assert independence. While Sékou Touré might fairly be accused of deploying strategies of extraversion, it is unduly cynical and, more important, contrary to the weight of the historical evidence to completely discount his stated objectives. Thus, for instance, his refusal to ask for bilateral aid during his first state visit to the United States in October-November 1959, on the grounds that aid, if requested rather than freely offered, would infringe Guinean sovereignty, can be interpreted in two different ways. Following Bayart, one might accuse the Guinean president of protesting too much: after all, he also freely acknowledged that his country needed help and would accept it from all quarters; on this view, surely his insistence on sovereignty was mere window-dressing to a campaign to secure foreign aid the better to extract rents facilitated by Guinea’s dependence. Alternatively, though, one might try to read forward from Sékou Touré’s stated intentions and his emphasis on African dignity to understand when and how Guinea lost its independence to the providers of bilateral and multilateral aid. In the gap between the assertion of independence in international matters and the extraversion that causes dependency lies a history that is too often glossed over.

13 See the discussion of Sékou Touré’s 1959 visit to the US in Chapter 2, infra.
Another reason to take independent Guinea’s international relations seriously as history is simply that it is rare to consider African states as actors in the international community, and rarer still to try to understand the intellectual, material and political context of their actions in that community. Yet the rewards of such inquiry go beyond a better understanding of the mechanics of how, as I. William Zartman put it, “the weak confront the strong.” Listening for African voices in international relations in any period frequently repays the effort by disclosing unacknowledged complexities in what we might casually consider the rules, even the eternal verities, that govern what international actors are and how they are expected to interact. These voices challenge us to identify the context in which legal and practical norms developed and to inquire more closely into the contingencies, assumptions and objectives that shaped their development.

In the post-colonial period, African voices point out both shared values resulting from colonial rule and differing attitudes towards its complex legacy. Thus, for example, the first generation of African leaders tended to share in the dominant Hegelian (or Marxian) understanding of historical processes and teleology. They shared an understanding and a commitment to historical progress, a process that would take their societies away from what a broad consensus considered the “traditional” in Africa – political organization that was limited to timeless and fixed structures of “tribal” allegiance, economic organization stuck, at best, in the “feudal” stage as Marx described it in the European context – towards the “modern” world of nation-states, industrialization and prosperity. That both “traditional” and “modern” were illusory, as, indeed, is the notion of historical “progress,” were observations that might have nagged participants, especially Africans whose own experience and historical memory might have destabilized such categories and the epistemological traditions upon which they were based. The idea that African “tradition” might offer a different and more humane set of cultural values was an important part of the philosophy of nègritude, even though this movement owed a great deal to Western assumptions about history and knowledge.15

15 On the impact of Western epistemology upon our conception of Africa and its influence on the nègritude movement, see V.Y. Mudimbe, The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988). The insight that African “tradition” was, in large measure, a colonial invention (or imagined construct), motivated by colonial powers concerned
Just as the languages in which Africans communicated with one another and the outside world were, for the most part, those they had learned from the colonizers, the conceptual language they used was one they had imbibed in an educational system which, according to popular mythology in France, taught Senegalese children about “our ancestors, the Gauls.”

This shared conceptual vocabulary and historiographical tradition makes parts of Guinea’s story appear familiar to those more knowledgeable about European history, as it did to European and North American diplomats well-trained in the art of analogical thinking. For instance, aspects of Guinea’s revolution, particularly the idea of a permanent conspiracy against the revolution that Sékou Touré used to justify hostility towards certain foreign powers and, more perniciously, a recurring pattern of the announcement of a new plot against the country followed by mass arrests and the persecution and execution of political prisoners, are reminiscent of some of the worst practices of the governments of the French Revolution. The comparison was made regularly by French diplomats posted to Conakry, whose references to la terreur self-consciously echoed the Terror in their own history. Even American diplomats found themselves thinking of the French Revolution while observing the excesses of the Conakry regime. In August 1971, chargé d’affaires Donald R. Norland reported the emergence of “what can only be described as a ‘madame Lafarge’ syndrome” in the


17 Mahmood Mamdani, Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), provides a useful critique of the practice of “history by analogy”. He notes that the practice establishes dualities between what is like the known, which is therefore real, and what is unlike it, which becomes a residual or deviant state, defined by being not right: 9, 299.

Guinean capital, which he defined as “watching for the tell-tale radio hint that new heads are about to roll.”

Though it is relatively easy to discern echoes of the French Revolution in the language that some Guinean officials used to describe and justify their actions, it is harder to know whether it reflects a shared intellectual background, a positive desire to emulate the French Jacobins, or merely the effect of communicating Guinean realities and perceptions in a European language that was the second, third or subsequent tongue to be mastered by most of the officials. Lansiné Kaba implied that the second hypothesis was correct on the basis of evidence of the first: “Not surprisingly,” he observed in 1977, “the Guinean context is reminiscent of the 1792-3 virtue-loving Jacobin régime in France, with its mass arrests, confiscatory policies, and self-righteousness.” He found similarities between the pronouncements of Sékou Touré and those of Marat and other Jacobins, and traced their common roots to Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Yet the influence of language on both expression and comprehension may add to the complexity of this puzzle, as it always does to the challenge of interpreting words spoken and actions taken in the past. Sékou Touré identified himself with the Malinke people due to his mother’s lineage and with the Susu because of the culture within which his father was raised. As president, he gave most of his speeches in French, which was Guinea’s official language. When talking to audiences in Conakry, however, he resorted frequently to Susu. The differences in both content and tone between his French- and Susu-language discourse was the subject of frequent comment on the part of foreign diplomats. French ambassador Jean-Louis Pons theorized that Sékou Touré’s recourse to this “side-stepping” in important moments stemmed from his desire for a more “direct and lively” connection with his audience as well as because “he feels himself to be less observed when he addresses his compatriots in their language.”

An American observer, comparing the two versions of the Guinean president’s speech announcing the November 1964 loi-cadre economic reforms, characterized the Susu version as “more blunt, more

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19 Conakry (Norland) to State, No. 1545, 10 August 1971; POL 29 Guin; Central Subject-Numeric Files, 1970-1973 (SN 1970-73); Records of the Department of State (RG 59), National Archives at College Park, MD (NACP).
detailed but somewhat wilder in its accusations, and more summarily drastic in presenting reform and control proposals.” These “common characteristics” of Sékou Touré’s speeches in “Guinean dialects,” he observed, “frequently give rise to confusion and misinterpretation among the members of his audience and diplomatic observers.”

The lingering effects of French colonial rule in Guinea, of course, extend far beyond linguistic issues and the suspicion that the message being transmitted in vernacular languages was different from the version delivered in Western ones. There is an extensive literature that seeks to trace the unrepresentative, often autocratic, nature of many post-colonial African states to the influence of the colonial state whose structures and procedures the independent government often adopted wholesale when the colonial power left. This political science literature is indispensable to a study such as this, which by its nature must focus on that Western import, the nation-state. The focus of this study on Guinea’s independence, however, means that the colonial remnant that is of most significance concerns the very meaning of sovereignty itself.

Conventional treatments of international law assume that sovereignty is the fundamental attribute of states, and that the discipline itself is most concerned with questions of how order is maintained among those sovereign actors. The discipline has been dominated by the need to respond to the challenge posed by positivists, led by John Austin in the nineteenth century, that since this body of law does not emanate from a single sovereign with acknowledged global jurisdiction, it is not really law at all. In that debate, the sovereignty of all states is considered to be equivalent and, unless limited by the action of some valid international law, it is treated as being absolute.

These assumptions obscure the historical context in which the norms of international law – including the norms concerning sovereignty – were actually developed. As recent scholarship has argued, the evolution of this branch of the law has
been characterized, even driven, by the imperative of justifying and extending imperial and colonial exploitation. This is readily apparent if one takes as the starting point of international law a foundation that would appease even the positivists, such as the 1493 Papal Bull *Inter Caetera*, which divided dominion over newly discovered parts of the world between the Christian powers of Spain and Portugal.\(^2^4\) Even precursors of the doctrine of sovereignty that assert natural law betray colonizing intentions: Antony Anghie points to the theoretical work of Francisco de Vitoria, a Spanish theologian and jurist of the following century who invoked natural law to justify Spanish exploitation of, and war against, native North Americans.\(^2^5\) Sovereignty was an attribute of European states alone, whether they were the Catholic states relying on papal dispensation or Vitorian theory or, after the Reformation, the Protestant states of the Netherlands and Great Britain, which relied on the work of the Dutch jurist and publicist Hugo Grotius. It was the very fact that the peoples of the territories being “discovered” and subjugated were not sovereign that was used to justify war against them, or the appropriation of their lands or their labour for the benefit of sovereign (European) nations. As Anghie shows, international law, and the doctrine of sovereignty that is its fundamental building block, rests ultimately on a conception of cultural difference. The assumption that sovereignty was a monopoly of colonizing powers pervaded the developing international legal regime of the twentieth century. It underlay the development of the international institutions of the League of Nations, in particular the mandate system nominally designed to create the conditions the member states believed to be necessary for the development of new nation-states: social organization, economic development, and political institutions of government and administration. In reality, the mandate system perpetuated European control and entrenched the notion that the people in the mandates could enjoy only a lesser form of sovereignty than their European rulers. Its legacy is visible not only in the United Nations Trusteeship system that succeeded it, but, more pervasively, in the structure and function of the Bretton Woods institutions, the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD or the World


Bank), that continue to play a dominant role in the economies, and therefore in the social and political lives, of many post-colonial nations even into the twenty-first century.\footnote{The impact of large-scale, multilateral or bilateral aid flows to postcolonial states is itself the subject of a growing body of work, both scholarly and popular. Works that focus on the effects on local government, arguing that such flows orient the recipient government towards the donor so that the legitimacy of the government and the political choices it makes come to be determined, not from the people it purports to represent, but from the foreign capitals and the headquarters of the Bretton Woods Institutions that determine who gets aid, how much, on what conditions, and for what purposes, include James Ferguson, 
_The Anti-Politics Machine: ‘Development’, Depoliticization, and Democratic Power in Lesotho_ (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) and, most recently, Dambisa Moyo, 
_Dead Aid: Why Aid is not Working and How there is a Better Way for Africa_ (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2009).}

The argument advanced by Anghie, Siba Grovogui and others\footnote{Anghie identifies himself with a group of scholars that calls itself the Third World Approaches to International Law network: Anghie, 
_Making of International Law_, xiv.} takes a historical approach to tracing the impact of cultural difference on the norms of international relations. This illuminates the unexamined basis for a phenomenon that is at the centre of the challenges that Guinea’s conception of its independence posed to practices, norms and assumptions held by the international community during the first half of its First Republic. The phenomenon the Guineans encountered – that their sovereignty was somehow less powerful, at least as an influence on what was happening outside their borders, than that of other states – has also been approached from the perspective of political science. One useful concept from this literature is Christopher Clapham’s idea of negative sovereignty.\footnote{The term “negative sovereignty” has a different meaning in the current legal literature. Paul W. Kahn argues that “the aspiration of the modern period was to match the regime of negative sovereignty – state boundaries – with the project of positive sovereignty, understood as the self-formation of a people.” Kahn, 
“The Question of Sovereignty,” 40 Stanford Journal of International Law 259-282 (2004) at 260.} Clapham argues that the principles of non-aggression and self-determination combined with the needs of the Cold War powers to create a situation where states became sovereign principally because other states chose to recognize them, rather than because they could control, defend or command legitimacy in the eyes of their own inhabitants. At first this practice created buffer states to demarcate the superpowers’ zones of influence and reduce the chances they would come into open conflict. By the 1950s and 1960s, the negative sovereignty regime was being extended to post-colonial regions in search of self-determination. This gave the superpowers plenty of new fields in which to seek to extend their own influence. It also offered the former colonial powers an acceptable framework for their own disengagement from colonial empires they could no longer control. Finally, it legitimated the individual office-holders who led the
governments of these newly sovereign nations, enhancing their ability to hold and exercise power within the territories they claimed.29

Both the legal theory and the political science literature provide a helpful schematic framework against which to test the empirical record of Guinea’s historical circumstances. This empirical record in turn tests the framework. Certainly the Cold War context that enabled “negative sovereignty” is important to Guinea’s initial successes as a sovereign state, but it is the insight of Anghie and others that has greater resonance in Guinea’s case. It was colonialism – and the unacknowledged survival of some of its key assumptions past the expiry of the institution itself – that limited Guinea’s influence, even as it shaped and channeled the approaches the Guinean leaders themselves applied to govern within their state. The response to Guinea’s more far-sighted proposals, like the response to those of Nkrumah, Tanzania’s Julius Nyerere, and leaders of the non-aligned movement from across Asia, was often couched in the logic of the Cold War. Fear of Communist influence over, and control of natural resources in, Africa was frequently a part of the reaction that Guinea encountered. But the result was, more often than not, a perpetuation of the status quo ante independence: the control of African resources, economic activity, and even popular culture by the former colonial power and its Western allies.

This leads me to the third fundamental choice made in this thesis: to focus on the response of the West to Guinea’s challenges, at the expense of what is likely an equally fascinating story of reactions from the Soviet Union and its allies and the People’s Republic of China. This choice is amply justified by the ongoing dominance of the West in the processes that established, sometimes modified, but more often perpetuated the rules of international relations in the face of pressures from new states such as Guinea. The more specific choice to focus on the United States is, in turn, driven by that country’s domination of the “West” during the Cold War. Its formative influence in the League of Nations and the United Nations, its position in the Security Council and ability to pressure fellow Council-members France and the United Kingdom – and, during most of this period, to keep the pressure on members of the General Assembly to ensure that the

fifth permanent Council membership stayed out of the hands of the People’s Republic of
China – and its sheer political and economic heft in the world that followed the Second
World War made it, in many ways, the de facto arbiter of the international community’s
fundamental rules, of which sovereignty is perhaps the most basic.

Beyond this dominance, though, there are specific reasons to focus on the United
States. For one thing, the American role as arbiter did not simply come about as the
automatic result of its economic and political strength. In a way the United States did, as
France’s ambassador to Washington recognized, seek to “manage all the world.”30
American foreign policy throughout this period – indeed, through much of the twentieth
century – had, as a fundamental objective, the maintenance of global stability.31 Even the
most sincere anti-colonial sentiments of US presidents and policy-makers gave way to
this objective whenever nationalist movements posed a serious threat to world peace or to
the prosperity of the European colonial powers upon which the Americans thought peace
depended.32 A close examination of the interaction of the United States with neutralist,
assertively independent Guinea demonstrates the broad outlines of the Americans’ self-
appointed mandate and how it changed over time and between the four US
administrations that overlapped with the first half of Guinea’s First Republic. It also
discloses that American policy-makers often acted with more subtlety than conventional
images of cold warriors, global imperialists and the world’s policeman might suggest. It
may be trite to say that managing the world entailed a balancing act, but it is no less true

circumstances and implications of Alphand’s observation are discussed in Chapter 3, infra.
31 Works that develop this theme in various contexts across the 20th C. include: N. Gordon Levin, Jr.
Woodrow Wilson and World Politics: America’s Response to War and Revolution (New York: Oxford
University Press, 1968); Arno Mayer, Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking: Containment and
Counterrevolution at Versailles, 1918-1919 (New York: Knopf, 1967); Melvyn P. Leffler, The Elusive
Quest: America’s Pursuit of European Stability and French Security, 1919-1933 (Chapel Hill: University
of North Carolina Press, 1979); and Michael J. Hogan, The Marshall Plan: America, Britain and the
32 Works that explore this phenomenon in various colonial contexts include: Wm. Roger Louis,
Imperialism at Bay: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire, 1941-1945 (New
York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Christopher Thorne, Allies of a Kind: The United States, Britain
and the War Against Japan, 1941-1945 (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978); Robert J. McMahon,
Colonialism and Cold War: The United States and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence, 1945-1959
(Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1981); Thomas Borstelmann, Apartheid’s Reluctant Uncle:
The United States and Southern Africa in the Early Cold War (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993);
and Ebere Nwaubani, The United States and Decolonization in West Africa, 1950-1960 (Rochester:
University of Rochester Press, 2001).
for being rather obvious. In the post-colonial context, the balancing act required a fairly
dynamic process of assigning weight to various US interests. The objective of winning
the Cold War – or at least preventing threats to the uneasy peace that its static nature
enabled – was never far from any policy-maker’s mind, and, at least when the pressure to
consider it came from domestic sources, could be relied upon to spur action or the
rationalization of inaction. Within this overall objective, though, were many, often
conflicting considerations. Shoring up Western European allies by ensuring their
continued economic domination of and political support from their “big hinterland” of
Africa was a frequent theme, but so was direct access by the US government and
American industrialists to the resources of that hinterland, especially those of strategic
importance such as Guinea’s enormous reserves of bauxite, the raw material from which
aluminum is made.\footnote{John Foster Dulles, quoted in Pascaline Winand, \textit{Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the United States of Europe} (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 114.} Trying to preclude access by the Soviet Union, its allies, or the
People’s Republic of China to resources and locations of actual or potential strategic
significance was an important goal, and was often cited in explanation of American
intervention in African states such as Congo. It did not, however, trigger action every
time, or even most of the time, especially when US interests were threatened more
immediately by the inevitable charges of American complicity in colonialism or
neocolonialism than by the Cold War enemy.

Another reason to pay attention to the relationship between the United States and
Sékou Touré’s Guinea is that its subtleties – and what they say about the larger themes of
the objectives and vagaries of US engagement with the wider world, as well as the
themes of crucial importance to Guineans, especially the tension between independence
and colonial or neocolonial control – are at risk of being lost from the official discourse.
In March 2007, the US House of Representatives’ Committee on Foreign Affairs held
hearings on the subject of “Prospects for Peace in Guinea.” The representatives on the
Committee were provided with a bit of historical background on Guinea. A prepared
statement summarized the First Republic:

Guinea was the only former French colony to vote against joining the French
Community of General De Gaulle’s Vth Republic in France in 1958. This
decision had severe economic and political consequences for the newly
independent nation. Brutally cut off from French economic support and subsequently refused aid by the United States, Ahmed Sékou Touré, Guinea’s first President, turned to the then Soviet Union for assistance.

As a result of Soviet influence, Guinea became a socialist country with a command economy, an entrenched Communist single party structure, the PDG, with political cells down to the village and district level, and a system of informants to enforce political orthodoxy.  

The reality of US involvement with Guinea, as well as the nature of the First Republic’s political structure and orientation, is far more complex and nuanced than this revisionist briefing suggests. So is the question of what happened to Sékou Touré and to his country and why. Most importantly, US legislators were being given the false impression that their own country had had almost nothing to do with Guinea’s history, and therefore was in no way complicit in its excesses.

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Late in 1994, I was asked to conduct a minor desk study for the World Bank. As part of the Bank’s structural adjustment program for Guinea, the international financial institution had been supporting a process that was intended to lead to the privatization of Guinea’s state-owned telephone company, Sotelgui. Consultants had prepared and issued a request for proposals to purchase all or parts of the company. At a certain point, though, the Bank’s Guinean interlocutors had simply stopped responding to requests for updates and further work. As someone with expertise in telecommunications policy and regulation, I was asked what might be going on.

Knowing very little about the context and having only the Bank’s files to go on, I could offer nothing very constructive in answer to the question. I was fortunate, however, to get a partial answer fifteen months later. Yes, the RFP had been issued; in fact, several private firms expressed an interest in taking on Sotelgui. But the Guineans were unsatisfied with the terms they were being offered and, realizing they could do little to affect the course of the World Bank’s initiative, they simply stopped participating.

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Some months later, Guinean president Lansana Conté personally found a willing investor for Sotelgui, almost by accident, and privatization was proceeding – on the Guineans’ terms. The main problem now was training Guineans, whose official national language was a legacy of French colonialism, to communicate with workers from the investing company, based in a country whose colonial language had been English.

A decade later, as I began to research the history of Guinea as a colonial and post-colonial state, I was reminded again and again of this anecdote. Time after time, Guinea’s relations with foreign powers, whether states or aid agencies, demonstrated a similar attitude: though the Guineans were quick to welcome cooperation and assistance and not shy to acknowledge their needs, they insisted on their right to direct and control the help they got, and were willing to forego it if the terms seemed too intrusive.

“Independence”, for Guinea and Guineans, was not just a matter of rhetoric. The defiance that Sékou Touré expressed when he warned Charles de Gaulle that Guineans “preferred freedom in poverty to wealth in slavery” was still echoing, many years after both men were dead. It is my hope that this history of Guinea’s independence, its triumphs and its setbacks, starts to shut an important memory hole\(^{35}\) and to open a discussion about the meaning of independence from a point of view that is still, more than fifty years after independence, ignored more often than not.

\(^{35}\) I use the term in George Orwell’s sense, as the means by which “all history [became] a palimpsest, scraped clean and re-inscribed exactly as often as was necessary.” George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Penguin, 1989), 42.
Chapter 1. “Poverty in Freedom”: The Challenge to Colonialism

*Independence is a word that is full of nobility; independence is sacred because it must be born in our spirits on the very day that foreign domination takes hold in a country. That is to say that Africa’s vocation for independence is not born today, but on the very day when foreign powers extorted from African populations the right to the total exercise of their own sovereignty.* – Ahmed Sékou Touré, Conakry, 26 October 1958

On 2 October 1958, Guinea became the first of France’s colonial territories in Sub-Saharan Africa to declare its independence. It did so without having fired a shot, a matter of considerable pride to Guinea’s leaders. However, it also achieved this status against the wishes of its former colonial master and then weathered an administrative and diplomatic assault by France which seemed to the Guineans to have been designed to drive them to their knees. France’s hostility towards the new state – one that had come into being lawfully by taking advantage of an offer extended by the metropole – was hardly the action of a colonial power responding to its independence “without a stumble,” as Charles-Robert Ageron asserts. It was all the more mystifying and enraging to Guinea’s leaders because they consistently expressed their desire to maintain the closest possible ties with France.

The independence that Guinea wanted was not the independence that it got. In seeking a more congenial arrangement with France, its leaders distinguished between African independence, which was a state of honour, equality and respect, and an independent state’s sovereignty, which consisted of certain powers that it could choose to cede to a larger entity of interdependent nations and then take back at will. Rejecting Guinea’s vision, France made the same distinction, but its objective was to maintain colonial control over Guinea’s sovereignty so as to delay, shape, and undermine its independence. Both countries miscalculated, underestimating the symbolic value of independence and overestimating the practical constraints of sovereignty. Neither factored in the international context in which their disagreement would play out.

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In the narrow world of France’s colonial empire, not much distinguished Guinea, its people or its leaders from other sub-Saharan African territories. Nothing in its history suggested, either to France or to Guinea itself, that it alone in francophone Africa would turn out to have what its first president called a “vocation for independence.” Yet the combination of internal and external circumstances resulted in a sudden, and unique, achievement, and this, in turn, became the central point around which its elite began to construct a distinct Guinean nation. The fact that the power base of that elite was political, rather than economic, intellectual, ethnic or religious, was both cause and symptom of Guinea’s successful challenge to colonial rule. It would also be the greatest strength and the most tragic weakness of Guinea as an independent state.

I. Independence or Association?

Guinea proclaimed its independence as a republic four days after its population voted to reject the proposed constitution of France’s Fifth Republic and with it, the offer of membership in a new French Community. Guinea’s “no” vote was overwhelming: over 94 per cent of eligible voters followed the instructions of their local political leaders over the exhortations of the colonial administration. It was also unique. Not a single other territory in French West Africa (AOF) or French Equatorial Africa (AEF) registered a “no” vote, and in most the margin of victory for France was nearly as high as the magnitude of its loss in Guinea. The 28 September 1958 referendum was at once the culmination of a long-term process of expanding the rights and responsibilities of francophone Africans and their political representatives, and a hastily-organized effort to ratify a change of government in response to a crisis in which the role of sub-Saharan Africa was marginal at best.

The gradual expansion had begun, in effect, when General Charles de Gaulle’s Comité français de la Libération nationale (CFLN) became the undisputed leader of Free France in 1943, setting up its headquarters in the French colonial city of Algiers. Although the CFLN moved quickly to repeal the Vichy government’s most repressive and authoritarian aspects in France’s African territories, the general was no more inclined than Vichy’s Maréchal Philippe Pétain to accommodate nationalist leanings or African
desires for self-government, either in the short or the long term. In January 1944, the CFLN convened the Conférence Africaine française at Brazzaville, AEF, bringing together its colonial administrators to discuss the future of the French empire. At the Brazzaville Conference, as a delegate commented many years later, “For the first time in francophone Africa, the language of evolution and change was spoken.” The limits to the extent of permissible change were, however, still strict. The conference recommendations were explicitly framed by the expectation that France’s “civilizing work” would continue indefinitely in its colonial empire: “the eventual establishment, at however remote a date, of ‘self-governments’ in the colonies must be ruled out.” With this important exclusion, conference participants agreed to a number of principles that were to guide reform of colonial legal and economic structures once the free French regained power in metropolitan France. As Denise Bouche has argued, the governors and governors-general who gathered in Brazzaville believed that any changes resulting from these principles would be gradual and would reflect the comfortable, and comforting, assumption that implementation could be tempered by reference to France’s ongoing civilizing mission. They also assumed the Gaullists would remain in control.

None of these beliefs proved to be accurate. A flurry of legislation enacted by the Constituent Assembly, created in October 1945 to frame the constitution of the Fourth Republic, brought rapid change to the political and economic status of France’s African subjects. The pace of change reflected the participation of a number of Africans as directly-elected representatives of the overseas colonies, and their disproportionate influence in an Assembly of which a majority were members of the Parti communiste français (PCF) and the Socialist Section française de l’Internationale ouvrière (SFIO). Taking advantage of the expanded franchise and the new right to form associations, including unions, the new African députés succeeded in having the indigénat, the

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separate system of civil laws applicable only to Africans, abolished as of 1 January 1946 and the separate penal law for Africans abolished on 30 April 1946. A law passed on 11 April 1946 and named for its proponent, député Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Côte d’Ivoire, abolished forced labour (although the practice was much more difficult to eliminate, being important to the viability of many private enterprises and public works alike). At the end of April, the Assembly created the Fonds d’Investissement pour le développement économique et social (FIDES) to channel French development aid to the colonies and overseas territories. Finally, a law named for Parti Socialiste Sénégalaise leader Ahmadou Lamine Guèye and passed on 7 May 1946 abolished “subject” as a civil status and extended citizenship rights across the French Union, although it left both rights and duties of Union citizens undefined.⁷

Even with enhanced rights, citizens of the French colonies were far from self-government. An initial draft constitution for the Fourth Republic, which proposed a French Union of metropole and colonies based on equality and the free consent of its constituent parts, was rejected by a majority of metropolitan voters in a referendum held on 5 May 1946. A second draft, approved by referendum on 17 October 1946, reflected the input of a lobby created at the end of July to represent the views of French colonials and right-wing politicians and, as James I. Lewis shows, the ability of the very conservative bureaucrats in France’s colonial ministry to influence a divided and inexperienced legislature.⁸ Gone was the reference to “free consent” to participation in the French Union, because some considered it to mean that colonies could leave the Union at will. The Union’s council would now answer to France’s president, rather than to the Assembly. Most galling to the African deputies, the constitution for the Fourth Republic retained a double college system of electoral representation in the colonies, which guaranteed disproportionate representation for the relatively minuscule number of white French voters in each territory.⁹

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⁷ On these reforms see Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France’s Successful Decolonization?* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2002), 63-64.
It was not only white French settlers and their right-wing sympathizers in the National Assembly and the civil service who opposed the prospect of independence for the colonies. The major African political parties, though important training grounds for francophone Africa’s first generation of national leaders, were not a significant vector for claims for independence from France. Their conservatism had many sources. For one thing, none of the metropolitan French parties with which the African politicians were allied actually advocated decolonization. For another, some of the politicians were particularly close to specific constituents who were themselves often economically and politically dependent on France. Not to be discounted were the personal and political inclinations of the leaders, many of whom were also sitting members of the French Assemblée Nationale. All of these factors played a role in the positions taken by the largest regional political party in AOF, the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA), whose Guinean branch became the Parti démocratique de Guinée (PDG) in 1950 and was led by Sékou Touré after 1952. The RDA was founded at Bamako, Soudan (now Mali) in October 1946, with Houphouët-Boigny as its president. At first the party, created partly to counter French political coalitions such as the one that had defeated the initial draft Constitution for the Fourth Republic, affiliated itself with the PCF as an anti-imperialist voice in the National Assembly. Houphouët-Boigny, whose own most loyal constituency consisted of indigenous planters in his home territory of Côte d’Ivoire and who represented the more conservative elements in the RDA, engineered its disaffiliation from the PCF in October 1950. Sékou Touré’s rise to power within the Guinean branch


11 The ascendancy of Houphouët-Boigny within the RDA and the decision to disaffiliate from the PCF was precipitated by a series of demonstrations, arrests and clashes between colonial police and the more communist-influenced factions of the RDA in 1949 and 1950, resulting in a number of deaths and the imprisonment of several thousand RDA members by February 1950. These events are discussed in Gabriel Lisette, *Le Combat du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain pour la Décolonisation pacifique de l’Afrique Noire* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1983), 109-17. Other accounts, which tend to be less sympathetic to Houphouët-Boigny, are provided in Marcel Amondji, *Félix Houphouët-Boigny et la Côte d’Ivoire: L’Envers d’une légende* (Paris: Karthala, 1984), 93-147; Djibo Bakary, *Silence! On décolonise: Itinéraire politique et syndical d’un Militant Africain* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1992), 93-100; and Laurent
of the RDA was due, in part, to his ability to control dissenting voices, including the factions within the branch that were never reconciled to its disaffiliation from the French Communists. In 1953, he was elected to represent Beyla in the Territorial Assembly and in 1956 became one of Guinea’s three députés to the French National Assembly along with fellow RDA member Saïfoulaye Diallo and Barry Diawadou, who represented the rival Bloc Africain de Guinée (BAG). The BAG was affiliated with the Parti du régroupe ment Africain (PRA), a regional party whose head was Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal. The PRA differed from the RDA on many issues, but did not demand immediate independence from France any more than Houphouët-Boigny’s group did.

Even if West Africa’s senior politicians did not formally demand it, the idea of independence from France was increasingly a part of the discourse in West Africa as first Indochina and then Algeria went to war to demand their freedom. The first and most direct demands for political sovereignty were made by associations representing the tiny minority of African évolués who had received the rare privilege of bursaries to pursue higher education in France. African students in France organized in the Association des Étudiants africains just after the Second World War. As long as they confined their agitation to the rights of African students pursuing higher education in France, they were supported by the African députés. After about 1950, though, some student groups began to locate their aspirations within the struggle of colonial peoples for liberation, which took them further away from their elders. From its creation in 1951, the Fédération des Étudiants d’Afrique noire en France (FEANF) consistently advocated a radically pro-independence policy and attacked African politicians for their close cooperation with the French government. Student and youth movements also developed in West Africa itself in the 1950s, following the creation of the first tertiary educational institution in West Africa, the Institut des Hautes Études de Dakar. Dakar’s students became more radical in the mid-1950s, influenced in part by the Algerian War. By 1956, student associations were calling openly for African independence.

12 Schmidt, Cold War and Decolonization, 56-59.
13 Chafer, End of Empire, 125-131.
The West African trade union movement also used the language of anti-colonialism to articulate its demands. As Frederick Cooper makes clear, how union leaders such as Sékou Touré used the rhetoric of African independence and anti-colonialism had complex effects on the rights of those they claimed to represent. It was due to union activity that Sékou Touré first came to prominence. By profession a postal clerk, he was one of the organizers of what may have been the first African trade union in Guinea: the Syndicat Professionnel des agents et sous-agents indigènes du Service des Transmissions de la Guinée Française, established in March 1945. It was affiliated with the metropolitan, Communist-influenced Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), whose 1946 Congress occasioned Sékou Touré’s first trip to Paris. Although French colonial authorities encouraged the West African union movement to separate from the CGT as early as 1951, it was not until November 1955 that the CGT-Autonome was created, and then primarily at the initiative of the Senegalese CGT. The Guinean Union des Syndicats confédérés, which was closely connected with the PDG, joined the CGT-Autonome in May, 1956, urged on by union secretary-general Sékou Touré, who called for a united “African solution” to “African problems.” A new African centrale, the Union Générale des travailleurs d’Afrique noire (UGTAN), was formed in Cotonou, Dahomey (now Benin) in January 1957. UGTAN was independent of metropolitan organizations, aspired to unite all the workers of French Africa, and, mostly through Sékou Touré, articulated an ideology that placed greater emphasis on African liberation than on class struggle. At the same time, its leaders were increasingly focusing on their growing political activity at the expense of union representation. As political leaders, including Sékou Touré, gained autonomy over budgetary matters within their territories, they would use this call for African unity and liberation to deny the legitimacy of distinct claims for the rights of the workers they also represented through union activity.

Even as the British colonies in Africa began to attain the self-government rejected by the Brazzaville Conference, and in the face of mounting evidence to the contrary from

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15 Cooper, Decolonization and African Society, 416.
16 Cooper, Decolonization and African Society, 408-422.
not only Indochina and Algeria, but also Morocco and Tunisia, France continued to insist that its overseas territories were still happy within the French Union. On 23 June 1956, the French National Assembly enacted a new framework law for its African territories. The *loi-cadre* was intended to enable changes to the French Union without explicitly amending the constitution of the Fourth Republic. The law itself extended universal suffrage to France’s overseas territories and eliminated the double college electoral system. It also enabled the redistribution of power and responsibility between the metropolitan government and the territorial councils by means of Presidential decree. Thirteen such decrees were issued between 27 March and 4 April 1957, carving out direct French responsibility for foreign relations, defence, police (other than municipal and rural policing), customs, financial and monetary arrangements, communications, the media and higher education. Other public services were devolved to the territories as *Services territoriaux*. The *loi-cadre* effected two particularly significant changes in the relationship between France and the African colonies. First, the responsibility for paying for *services territoriaux* was allocated to the local level together with the authority to manage them; this charged African territorial councils with the difficult problem of balancing tax revenue with wages and benefits that had been pegged to metropolitan French levels through the actions of unions and African deputies. Second, the choice was made to devolve these powers to the individual territories, not to the federation of West Africa.

The first change reflected the one level on which events in sub-Saharan Africa, as opposed to the sites of anti-colonial wars, had become important to the French public. Ongoing links with Africa were becoming expensive. A “modernist” faction within France’s industrial establishment and its public service had begun to articulate its concerns in the 1930s, arguing that colonial autarchy was actually hindering France’s recovery from the Great Depression and its productivity. In the post-war era, this faction added two significant aspects to its argument against colonial economic priorities. First, with the advent of FIDES, the balance sheet of colonialism was demonstrating ever further the drain it represented to the metropolitan economy. Second, autarchic tariff and

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17 Tony Chafer emphasizes that the *Loi-cadre* was itself unconstitutional: *End of Empire*, 165.
18 Gbagbo, *Côte d’Ivoire*, 140-41.
monetary arrangements were more and more out of step with the direction being taken by other capitalist economies, leaving French firms at a competitive disadvantage. The argument became a highly visible public issue in France when journalist Raymond Cartier published two articles focusing on sub-Saharan Africa in the weekly newsmagazine Paris-Match in August and September 1956. He argued that French colonialism had turned into a system for the exploitation of the metropole by the overseas territories. Cartier’s articles were sensationalist, to be sure. Moreover, they played to a prejudice about the paucity of colonial resources that some critics were happy to point out originated with colonialists themselves “so as to justify the state of misery in which that very colonialism kept the indigenous.” They were, however, highly influential. They even attracted the notice of officials with no involvement whatsoever in France’s overseas empire. Hervé Alphand, on his way to become the Fourth Republic’s ambassador in Washington, noted in his diary Cartier’s list of the “terrible errors” committed by France in sub-Saharan Africa and mused, “is our ‘grandeur’ the only compensation?”

The second decision – to devolve powers to the territorial, not the federation level – reflected another division within African politics about the form that an autonomous or independent French West Africa should take. This particular disagreement ran, not only between the African politicians in Paris and those advocating a more aggressive approach, but also among the Paris-based politicians themselves. Houphouët-Boigny championed devolution to the individual territories. Senghor and others argued, by contrast, that completely abandoning the structures established with the Dakar-based federation of French West Africa would result in the “balkanization” of West Africa. In this, Senghor was opposed by the SFIO, to which he was still affiliated in French politics, the French Communist Party, and by the RDA and its Parisian affiliate, François Mitterrand’s Union Démocratique et socialiste de la Résistance.

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The presence of the RDA’s Houphouët-Boigny in each of the French
governments between Guy Mollet’s in February 1956 and the fall of the Fourth Republic
in May 1958, as well as that of the SFIO’s Hamadoun Dicko from Soudan, ensured that
most African deputies supported the *loi-cadre*, lest they be seen to be opposing a
government in which their party was represented. It also doomed the efforts of Senghor
and some of the younger African politicians to prevent the “balkanization” of AOF.24
Houphouët-Boigny’s opposition to the perpetuation of any federal structure in AOF is
most commonly attributed to his concern, and that of his constituency of relatively
wealthy planters, that Côte d’Ivoire would be required to subsidize poorer parts of the
federation.25 He was not alone in this concern: in the debate on the *loi-cadre*, Pierre-
Henri Teitgen, who had been Minister of Overseas France in 1955, argued that people in
Côte d’Ivoire, Dahomey and Guinea would not feel included in a federation based in
Dakar. Moreover, wealthier territories would be unable to pay for the extensive new
powers and responsibilities being devolved to them if they were still required to support
Niger or Haute-Volta.26 The *loi-cadre* was passed, enabling limited self-government at
the territorial level and ensuring that the political and economic strength of AOF would
be split among eight smaller entities.

In Guinea, the local RDA section benefited greatly from the *loi-cadre*. The party
won fifty-six of the sixty seats in the territorial assembly in elections held on 31 March
1957. Accordingly, the French governor, Jean Ramadier, asked Sékou Touré to form the
government and take on the highest position an African could hold in that assembly as
vice-president of the council of ministers. Sékou Touré’s government took full
advantage of the scope afforded by the *loi-cadre* to consolidate its hold on power,
moving in the summer of 1957 to abolish the institution of the chieftaincies within the
territory and waging an increasingly violent campaign against its organized political
rivals.27 Early in June, 1958, Inspector-General Marcel Boyer of France’s colonial

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24 Chafer, *End of Empire*, 172.
25 This view was taken by American observers such as Virginia Thompson, “The Ivory Coast”, in
26 *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, Débats de l’Assemblée Nationale, 20 March 1956, 1070,
quoted in J.-F. Benoist, *La Balkanisation de l’Afrique Occidentale Française* (Dakar: Les Nouvelles
Éditions Africaines, 1979), 143.
27 The most detailed account of this episode remains Jean Suret-Canale, “La Fin de la Chefferie en
Guinée,” *Journal of African History* 7:3 (1966), 459-93. The PDG’s use of violence in its campaign for
ministry reported on some “profound” disturbances that had taken place in Guinea and Niger at the end of April and beginning of May. He concluded that, in contrast to the situation in Niger, the clashes in Guinea were tinged with “racial” antagonism between Susu and Fulbé peoples, which coincided with a political cleavage between the RDA and rival parties. Although there had been no anti-European animosity in either territory, the “explosive” situation in Guinea, and more particularly the fact that the European population there was beginning to fear for its own safety, demanded a response. There was a significant political problem, however, that would make it difficult to respond with the rapid increase of armed forces personnel Boyer thought necessary to deal with the situation. Because Guinea and Niger would soon enjoy “internal autonomy,” would it not be better for France to arrange to shift to the territories the burden – and the cost – of maintaining order and policing borders?28

Boyer’s dispatch encapsulates both the state of nationalism in Guinea and France’s attitude towards its colony in the spring of 1958. Though some change of status was a possible response to internal unrest, Boyer never doubted it would be limited to increased local responsibility for internal affairs, including the challenge of containing political and ethnic rivalries. Guinea was modern enough that there was an urgent need to train its own police force in techniques for maintaining order. At the same time, though, this was still Africa as seen by colonial-era Europeans: on the edge of an “explosive” crisis of ethnic violence. Such a territory could not be trusted to exercise anything more than internal autonomy.

Just as Boyer was reassuring his superiors in France’s colonial ministry that any change in the colonies would continue to be evolutionary, a revolution of sorts was taking place in Paris itself. The formation of the Committee for Public Safety in Algiers on 13 May 1958 precipitated the crisis that ended the Fourth Republic and brought back Charles de Gaulle as president of France’s council on 1 June. De Gaulle proceeded quickly with the first order of business of his new government: the preparation and

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adoption of a new constitution. This was a multi-stage process. First, the general’s new government would prepare a draft. The draft would then be subject to comment from a Constitutional Consultative Committee, half of whose 36 members would be experts, named by decree, and half members of parliament, nominated by parliamentary committees and the council of the Republic. The draft constitution would then be considered by the council and finally it would be put to a referendum in France and in its overseas territories. For the overseas territories, the referendum would become a yes or no choice between, on one hand, a new, poorly defined and untested structure linking each of them with the metropole and, on the other, the unknown.

Only one of the African deputies to the Fourth Republic was actually acquainted with General de Gaulle: Félix Houphouët-Boigny. The Ivoirian leader had arranged a magnificent welcome for the general, l’homme du 18 juin and l’homme de Brazzaville, in Abidjan in March 1953, and in turn had been received at de Gaulle’s Paris office several times in the intervening years. To the rest of the Africans who had exerted a certain influence in the shifting politics of the Fourth Republic, including Sékou Touré, the general was known only by reputation. Moreover, the unusual circumstances of his return to power – and their origins in a near-mutiny of the French army, supported by colons in Algeria – gave rise to a rather cautious welcome. Houphouët-Boigny’s relative proximity to the new president would have significant effects on de Gaulle’s policies towards sub-Saharan Africa, both in the immediate and the longer term. The caution of Sékou Touré and others would also be repaid.

The initial draft of the constitution was prepared very quickly by Prime Minister Michel Debré and a small staff, because it reflected ideas that the general had worked out and made known throughout the years of his self-imposed exile from active politics: direct presidential election, consolidation of executive powers and, insofar as the remnants of France’s African empire were concerned, replacement of “colonialism” by “association”. In his diary, Hervé Alphand recounted a conversation he had with de

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Gaulle in August 1956, nearly two years before the general’s return to active politics in France. “Even de Gaulle,” he noted, “recognized that the time for colonies has passed, that we must substitute ‘association’. Such a reform is only possible with a strong French government and with change to the ‘system’, etc.”31 In de Gaulle’s thinking, “strong French government” equated to increased presidential control, including over the association with France’s overseas territories. It is less clear what either Alphand or de Gaulle meant by the “system”, though the timing suggests they were thinking about how France could maintain its economic links with its colonies even as political arrangements shifted. Their conversation took place at the height of the dispute between France and the Federal Republic of Germany over the association of overseas colonies to the European Economic Community, which Germany opposed on the grounds that it was an attempt to spread the French burden of aid across all six of the EEC’s founding members as well as binding them to restrictive colonial preferences.32

The Constitutional Consultative Committee was duly struck. Its African membership closely reflected Houphouët-Boigny’s wishes and advice. The minister of overseas France, Bernard Cornut-Gentille, tried to neutralize the African left by having Sékou Touré included, either in his capacity as a deputy of the assembly or as a prominent labour leader. Although Houphouët-Boigny claimed to think of Sékou Touré as his little brother, however, the Ivoirian did not trust the younger man to support his own initiatives and inclinations concerning the future of francophone Africa and Cornut-Gentille’s initiative was rejected.33 The most significant differences of opinion between Houphouët-Boigny and Sékou Touré concerned the nature and form of the African entities that would enter into the new association with the metropole. As in the debates over the loi-cadre, the Ivoirian favoured direct association between each individual territory and Paris. Although Houphouët-Boigny took credit for the ultimate inclusion in the constitution of a right to independence for African territories, it was an afterthought. By contrast, Sékou Touré opposed both the structure and the sequence of association as proposed in the draft constitution. At the Fourth Congress of the PDG held in Conakry in

31 Hervé Alphand, L’Étonnement d’être, 282.
33 Kaba, Le ‘Non’ de la Guinée, 50-57.
early June, he pronounced himself in favour of the transformation of AOF into a large African state which, once independent, would then enter into an association with France.  

Sékou Touré was not the only African politician to oppose these aspects of the draft constitution. The Constitutional Committee included Senghor, whose PRA included Guinea’s domestic opposition party, the BAG, and therefore the senior Guinean politician in Paris, Barry Diawadou. In July 1958, the PRA’s Congress also pronounced itself in favour of “independence first, then the rest,” and insisted that the federal structures of AOF and AEF be maintained. But Houphouët-Boigny’s view prevailed. Excluded from the Constitutional Committee and humiliated by being forced by his “older brother” to carry directly to de Gaulle on 5 August the news that the RDA had opted to support Houphouët-Boigny’s position, Sékou Touré flew back to Conakry. On the 8th, de Gaulle addressed the Constitutional Committee to clarify the ambiguity surrounding the question of what alternatives were available to African territories. France would not force anyone to remain in the new Community, he said: “If the territories say ‘no’, it will be secession with all its risks and perils . . . in the hard world where everything militates towards union.” He went on: “We cannot conceive of an independent territory and a France that will continue to assist it.”

When the Constitutional Committee finally concluded its work on 14 August, it recommended two important amendments concerning the proposed Community. First, any territory voting yes could subsequently opt for independence from France; this would not be considered secession, and would not disqualify the territory from French aid. Second, territories could enter the Community in groups, if they wished. De Gaulle accepted these amendments, but did not announce them until the 23rd in Brazzaville, on the second stop of his African tour. Any territory that wanted independence could take it immediately, he said: “The metropole will not oppose it.” But those who voted to accept the constitution and the Community would also have the option of independence at some unspecified date in the future, should the territorial assembly vote for it. The most

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34 Kaba, Le ‘Non’ de la Guinée, 60-61.
35 Kaba, Le ‘Non’ de la Guinée, 62.
important difference was implicit: it would be up to France to decide whether to continue to support a newly-independent territory, depending upon the latter’s degree of cooperation with the metropole.\textsuperscript{37}

For the general and his new government, the details of how France’s sub-Saharan colonies would associate with the new Fifth Republic were far less important than the mandate the new constitution would give them resolve more pressing problems of the Algerian War and economic and political disarray at home.\textsuperscript{38} Nevertheless, no part of France’s overseas territory was neglected in the campaign to win the referendum called for 28 September 1958. The general’s tour of the colonies south of the Sahara took him to six capitals to impress on the locals the advantages of a vote for France as well as the resources the metropole would devote to delivering the desired result. Only in the last two cities he visited – Conakry on 25 August and Dakar the next day – did de Gaulle encounter any opposition to his plans for the French Community. Only in Conakry was that opposition sufficiently well organized to upset them.

\textbf{II. Referendum}

When de Gaulle arrived in Conakry on 25 August, he was received with great fanfare. Dancers and singers lined the parade route from Conakry’s airport to the Governor’s mansion, where the French President would be based. Private discussions between the two leaders appeared to be cordial, but when they took to the podium in front of the Territorial Assembly, the atmosphere deteriorated rapidly. First to speak was Saïfoulaye Diallo, the Assembly’s president. Saïfoulaye emphasized that Guineans welcomed the opportunity de Gaulle’s visit afforded to make “hardy and unequivocal” decisions. De Gaulle and Guinea’s leaders were all patriots, he continued; their patriotism would be “the sure guarantee of a durable connection . . . and the reassuring motive for a free and fraternal association on an egalitarian basis.”\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{38} Alphand, \textit{L’Étonnement d’être}, 293.
Then it was Sékou Touré’s turn. In a speech that Kaba says “like a rocket, launched [him] onto the world scene and into history,” Sékou Touré set out, as clearly as possible, his government’s vision of its future relationship with France. Guinea would support France’s constitutional proposal only if it contained three proclamations. First, the new constitution had to make explicit the right of each of the peoples associated within the proposed Community to independence and to legal equality. Mere words were not enough. Sékou Touré defined these rights: first, as “the freedom such peoples had to adopt institutions of their choice”; and second, as their right to exercise “the powers of self-determination and self-management” not only within their individual states but also at the level of the collectivity. Second, the Guinean wanted the new constitution to acknowledge that the partners in the Franco-African Community also had “the right to divorce.” Without that, he argued, the Community would be “an arbitrary construction imposed upon future generations.” Finally, the new constitution also needed to state that the associated peoples and states were acting in solidarity to accelerate and harmonize their evolution, thereby making explicit what the African states were to get in exchange for agreeing to continued association with France. The right to independence was an essential component of what the Guinean described as “a first and indispensable need” for Africans: their dignity. There could be no dignity without freedom, he argued, and added, “we prefer poverty in freedom to riches in servitude.”

Yet the independence that Sékou Touré thought France should be offering Guinea – and all other components of both AOF and AEF – was never absolute, and never an end in itself. In his speech to de Gaulle, the Guinean listed four attributes of sovereignty that he considered should be exercised by a Community based on mutual recognition and the effective exercise of overseas peoples’ right to independence: defence; diplomatic relations; currency; and higher education. Guinea would “voluntarily” agree to cede certain aspects of the sovereignty it would otherwise enjoy in order to be part of an interdependent entity; it did not, and would not, renounce its “legitimate and natural” right to independence. However, Guinea’s position was not to be confused with secession from France: the territory intended to remain tied to the metropole, and to

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40 Lansiné Kaba agrees with Sékou Touré’s own claim that the speech was written by several of the PDG leaders, not by Sékou alone, and therefore reflected a consensus within the Party’s leadership: Kaba, Le ‘Non’ de la Guinée, 105-6.
“collaborate” with it to “open up our common wealth.” Sékou Touré noted only a free association of its overseas territories would perpetuate France’s influence and safeguard and develop its interests in Africa. Finally, he observed that the “immense majority” of those affected wanted to see the two existing federations replaced by “two powerful states united as brothers with France.”

Responding to the content of Sékou Touré’s speech, not its “hateful” tone, de Gaulle gave a measured and dignified public response to Guinea’s demand that France revise its constitutional offer to its African territories. He defended France’s colonial record in Africa and once more outlined the offer that France was actually extending to its African territories. He added that Guinea could claim its independence as early as 28 September: he guaranteed that France would not stand in its way though Guinea would bear the consequences of its choice. Still, he concluded, he believed that Guinea would say “yes” to France and they could continue to follow a common path. In private, his response was more direct. To Cornut-Gentille, AOF High Commissioner Pierre Messmer and Guinean Governor Jean Mauberna, de Gaulle said: “Well, gentlemen, there is a man with whom we will never agree.” France would be leaving Guinea the day after the referendum, he told his senior colonial officers. Although Algeria might be indispensable to France for strategic, economic or cultural reasons, Guinea was not. The general left the next day for Dakar, and never set foot in Guinea again.

For all the drama of their confrontation on 25 August, neither side was yet fully reconciled to Guinean independence. The leaders of the Guinean branch of the RDA did not finalize the decision to reject de Gaulle’s constitution until 14 September, and then only after intense debate, under pressure from Guinea’s unions, students and youth, and after the main Guinean opposition party, the BAG, had itself decided to recommend a “no” vote to its followers. After all, although the “consequences” of which de Gaulle

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42 Pierre Messmer emphasizes that to the French officials in Conakry that day, the text of the speech, though not good, was not inherently unacceptable; the tone, however, was “offensive.” Messmer, Les Blancs s’en vont: Récits de décolonisation (Paris: Albin Michel, 1998), 148-49.
44 Kaba, Le ‘Non’ de la Guinée, 114.
had spoken may not have been spelled out, France still controlled Guinea’s foreign
relations, was the sole source of foreign aid and the primary source of capital necessary to
its fledgling industrialization process, and provided the majority of its trained
administrative, educational and technical personnel. Voting “no” also implied breaking
with the interterritorial RDA, which had strongly endorsed a “yes” vote. 

De Gaulle’s dismissal of Guinea as unnecessary to France did not prevent the
colonial administration from campaigning for a positive vote. It may, however, have
been his way of acknowledging that France had fewer levers here than in more significant
territories, especially Algeria but also Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire, and fewer incentives to
use them to force the outcome it wanted. In Guinea, the French campaign focused on the
mass media and money.

In Guinea in 1958, radio was the only medium by which a message could be
distributed instantaneously beyond the reach of the human voice. With low literacy rates
and minimal road and rail coverage, what little press there was could exert an influence
only in the major cities. Television was unknown in francophone West Africa until the
early 1960s, and not until many years later did it make its appearance in Guinea. Even
radio was a relatively recent innovation. France did not have a coherent policy on
broadcasting in its overseas possessions until the mid-1950s. In 1956, the National
Assembly created the Société de Radiodiffusion de la France d’Outre-Mer (SORAFOM),
a specialized agency that was to implement broadcast-related aid projects using FIDES
funds. At the time of the referendum, SORAFOM controlled 21 radio stations across
AOF and AEF. SORAFOM took over an experimental station that the French had set up
in Conakry in 1953 and initiated scheduled service in 1956. The reach of the Conakry
station was limited in terms of both technology and appeal. Until the appearance of
transistor radio receivers in the late 1950s, very few Africans had access to any
broadcasts at all, and those who did were concentrated in the major cities and towns.
André-Jean Tudesq notes that to make matters worse colonial radio stations, both
francophone and Anglophone, tended to focus their efforts on Western program styles,

46 Schmidt, Mobilizing the Masses, 188-92.
111-12 and 114.
especially political and cultural programming. This resulted in the medium being “an urban creation in a world that was mainly rural.”\textsuperscript{48}

Although in practice it was relatively limited, in principle the French authorities recognized the potential of radio to reach the mass of African voters. SORAFOM commissioned an Afro-Cuban band to write and perform a referendum song on a recording that was played throughout AOF and AEF:

\begin{quote}
Dis-moi oui, dis-moi oui ou non
Mais si c’est oui, c’est vraiment très bon
À choisir, entre oui et non,
Vaut mieux oui, vaut mieux oui que non.
\end{quote}

The B-side of this cheerful jingle was a song called “Restons-amis” – let’s stay friends.\textsuperscript{49}

In Guinea, however, the French authorities realized about a week before the Referendum that Radio-Conakry might have slipped out of their control. “The station must either be neutralized, silenced, or solidly blocked [from the Guinean authorities] until specific agreement is reached [with them],” wrote Cornut-Gentille to Messmer on 20 September.

Messmer replied that irrespective of the legal agreement between SORAFOM and the territorial government, in fact “Radio-Conakry has come under the total control of the local government and notably, of Minister of the Interior Fodéba Keita.” SORAFOM should be instructed to pull its staff from the station by noon on the 29\textsuperscript{th}, Messmer advised. After some discussion, the minister told Messmer on referendum day itself that he now considered the station to be part of France’s administration, and gave him discretion either to try to reach an agreement with the local authorities whereby they would agree not to use the transmitter for anything other than official communiqués, or to take such other actions as he saw fit if he did not believe such an agreement could be reached, subject only to the condition that he avoid giving the appearance that France was retaliating for the “no” vote.\textsuperscript{50}


\textsuperscript{49} The song translates roughly as: “Tell me yes, tell me no or yes / but if it’s yes, that is really best / It’s your choice, between yes and no / Better yes, better yes than no.” It is included in Episode 1 of a Radio France-Internationale series called “Si RFI m’était contée”, first broadcast in 2003. The series can be heard at L’Institut National de L’Audiovisuel (Paris).

\textsuperscript{50} MinFOM to Haussaire Dakar (Messmer), No. 365, 20 September 1958; Messmer to MinFOM, No. 773-775, 23 September 1958; MinFOM to Messmer, No. 418-20, 28 September 1958; Guinée 9, DAL, AMAE.
The radio station appears to have had more concrete value, too. Elizabeth Schmidt recounts the role of Conakry’s “radio broadcast institute” in a more generalized flight of capital from Guinea in the days leading to the Referendum. The broadcast institute controlled liquid assets alleged to be worth four billion CFA francs, which were transferred to Dakar under the watchful eyes of the company of paratroopers that France sent to maintain order in Guinea.  

While France tried to re-gain control over the radio station and initiated the flight of capital from the territory, Guinea’s political parties were engaged in the real work of instructing and drumming up the vote. When the PDG decided on 14 September to direct a “no” vote, it was Sékou Touré, as the party’s secretary-general, who announced the decision: “We will thus vote no to a Community which is just the French Union re-baptized. . . . We will vote no to inequality, we will be an independent country.” Touré attached great symbolic significance to the date set for this historic vote: just as chance dictated that 29 September 1898, when his ancestor Samori Touré was arrested after nearly twenty years of fighting the French, should be the definitive date on which Guinea was colonized, 28 September 1958 would stand as the date on which it achieved its independence. From the PDG conference, party members fanned out across the country to carry out Sékou Touré’s instructions: “All men, all women must mobilize so that victory is total and so Guinea affirms its unity before the world.” But this general mobilization was orderly: the PDG’s thoroughgoing political structure had reported on popular opinion to the PDG conference and, in turn, conveyed the Political Bureau’s decisions to those in charge down to the level of the village and the neighbourhood. There being no difference between the PDG position on the referendum and that of its main political opposition party, the BAG, political allegiance did not become a point of division during the referendum. None of the senior political leaders even campaigned for either side.

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51 Schmidt, *Cold War and Decolonization*, 167. Pierre Messmer’s memoirs confirms the campaign to repatriate CFA currency from Conakry to Dakar, but is more sober as to the amount involved – one billion CFA francs – and its location, which he says was the issuing office. Messmer, *Les Blancs s’en vont*, 215-16.


53 Kaba, *Le ‘Non’ de la Guinée*, 163-65
The referendum itself was carried out in an atmosphere of extraordinary calm. Voter turnout was about 85 per cent of those eligible; over 94 per cent of those who cast a ballot chose the mauve paper to reject the French Community over the white paper of acceptance. The lowest percentages of “no” votes came from certain towns and cities in the Fuuta Jaloo region, though on the whole the Fuuta, too, opted for immediate independence. There were some reports of voting irregularities, which the French representatives in the newly independent state duly relayed to Paris; one claimed that the PDG had invented slogans such as “white ballots are for whites, mauve ballots for blacks” and had intervened in polling stations to pressure voters, but concluded that it was both “inopportune and impossible” to find witnesses willing to confirm these rumours after voting day.

The result in Guinea contrasted starkly with the overwhelming vote to accept the new constitution that was registered in metropolitan France and in every other one of its overseas territories. In Algeria, the population was caught between the French Army, on the one hand, and on the other, the Front de Libération nationale (FLN)’s injunction not to vote on pain of death; even so, voter turn-out was eighty per cent, and the “yes” side carried 96 per cent of the vote. A positive result was achieved even in Senegal, where neither territorial assembly president Léopold Sédar Senghor nor his vice-president, Mamadou Dia, was present to meet with de Gaulle on his stop there the day after his dramatic exchange with Sékou Touré, and where the general had been given a similar message as he had in Conakry, albeit expressed more diplomatically. The only other African territory where the colonial administration and local politicians failed to deliver such a vote of support was Niger, where the “yes” side obtained only about three-quarters of the votes cast. Sékou Touré’s counterpart in Niger, Djibo Bakary, also called on his supporters to reject France’s offer; when Nigériens voted to accept France’s offer, in part because of pressure from the still-powerful, conservative chiefs and the RDA-affiliated

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55 Risterucci to Min FOM, No. 423-25, 1 October 1958, Guinée 9, DAL, AMAE. As to the slogan itself, one might wonder whether anything so obvious would even need to be said – and whether the French report is not disingenuous or even ironic.
57 Chafer, *End of Empire*, 175.
Parti Progressiste Nigérien, Bakary was forced to resign from the Governing Council. In Côte d’Ivoire, President Houphouët-Boigny insisted on unanimity; even abstentions were forbidden as “a sign of cowardice.” By a mixture of persuasion, facilitation of supporters’ votes, and repression of those of opponents, Houphouët-Boigny succeeded in driving voter turnout in his territory above 99 per cent; only 225 of over 1.6 million valid votes cast rejected the French constitution.

III. Reaction

France had its response to Guinea’s rejection planned well in advance of the referendum itself. True to de Gaulle’s word, the metropole would not stand in the new state’s way. Neither would it soften the blow of the “consequences” to which the general had referred, either by its actions or by its inaction. If there was a logic to how France dealt with Guinea over the next three months – and there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the single consistent feature of French behaviour towards its former colony was the element of personal pique on the part of de Gaulle – it was this. Legally, a simple declaration could not make a state fully sovereign, though it could make it independent. Therefore, until the new state had what France considered to be all the necessary attributes of statehood – attributes which were never defined precisely, even for internal consumption – the former colonial power need not deal with it as though it were a sovereign entity. Instead, the thinking went, it would be more efficient and more effective to continue to use some part of the bureaucracy already in place, that of the Ministère de la France d’Outre-Mer (MinFOM), until Guinea was ripe to be handled by the Ministère des Affaires étrangères (MAE). The MinFOM was best placed to oversee the withdrawal of France’s administrative and other resources from Guinea. It could also arrange and manage the negotiations that must take place so that France could devolve to Guinea the required attributes of sovereignty and resolve the details of their ongoing

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The distinction reflected deliberate policy choices, not just administrative expediency. The MAE’s Direction Afrique-Levant was already handling relations between France and Tunisia at this time, and was capable of taking over in Guinea. Moreover, since the MAE was responsible for representing France in the United Nations, it was already keeping a close watch on developments relating to Guinea. France’s insistence on dealing with the new state through the old colonial ministry was a choice intended to put Guinea in its place: the limbo between colony and sovereign. In developing this logic, France was echoing the distinction between independence and sovereignty that the government of Guinea itself had made in Sékou Touré’s fateful 25 August speech. But while France’s strategy was legally and administratively defensible, it was politically tone-deaf at both the local and international levels.

As the day of the Referendum approached, officials in both France and Guinea expressed some anxiety about how matters would unfold after the expected “no” vote. Except for the note of panic concerning control of the radio station, the French were confident. A note prepared within the MinFOM predicted, on the basis of information gathered by the evening of 24 September, that Sékou Touré would declare Guinea’s independence on or about the 2 October, when the referendum results would officially become known. The writer did not anticipate any serious incidents during the referendum or in the days immediately following it, since the Guinean leadership, wishing to demonstrate its “political maturity,” had given strict orders to its militants to ensure that the situation remained calm; moreover, the French authorities had taken “extensive precautions,” including the company of paratroopers, to ensure that order was maintained. The Guineans were no less confident in their ability to maintain public order; what worried them was what the French would do. On 24 September, Sékou Touré wrote to Gaston Defferre, the former colonial minister for whom the 1956 loi-cadre had been named, to draw the latter’s attention “to the climate of malaise created in the territory by certain rumours according to which the French government is considering the evacuation in the very near future of all metropolitans,” persistent rumours that were spread with the obvious intention of unsettling residents, particularly the Europeans.

60 Note, unsigned, no date (late September 1958), File: Renseignements sur la situation interne de la République de Guinée, Guinée 11, DAL, AMAE.
Sékou Touré was at pains to reassure Defférre that the friendly relations that had “always existed” between the people of France and those of Guinea should not be affected by the consequences of a “no” vote to which de Gaulle had alluded. He expressed confidence that France, too, would want to enter into an association with the newly sovereign state; after all, Guineans knew as well as anyone that, whether or not they were independent, they could not isolate themselves from the rest of the world.\footnote{Sékou Touré to Gaston Defférre, Letter, 24 September 1958; Guinée 8, DAL, AMAE.}

Sékou Touré’s last-ditch appeal was in vain. France’s first official reaction to Guinea’s “no” vote was a harsh and legalistic communiqué, drafted several days in advance and delivered the morning of 29 September by the MinFOM’s newly arrived envoy in Guinea, Jean Risterucci. The unsigned note began by noting Guinea’s excommunication: the territory was no longer represented in any way within the institutions of the Community, whether in France or in Africa. France’s responsibilities in Guinea would undergo a “profound” revision. So as to avoid disturbing administrative or financial operations in the territory, French civil servants would continue to serve in Guinea, but all would be withdrawn within two months. Risterucci reported to his Ministry that Sékou Touré heard him out with “extreme courtesy,” noting that while the measures announced were severe, they could not be challenged on legal grounds.\footnote{MinFom to Messmer, No. 386-94, 25 September 1958; Guinée 9; Risterucci to MinFOM, No. 412-18, 30 September 1958; Guinée 8, DAL, AMAE.}

Although Sékou Touré treated him as France’s representative from the day he delivered this message, France’s colonial ministry did not intend Risterucci’s interaction with Sékou Touré to resemble that of a diplomatic envoy. Instead, Risterucci was instructed very carefully that his remit was limited to the resolution of “purely local questions.” He was to report to the high commissioner in Dakar and to his minister in Paris whatever positions the government of Guinea might take, and in turn to inform Touré and his ministers of the positions arrived at in Paris. Despite this enforced passivity, his task was not simply to accomplish the liquidation of the French state’s assets in Guinea: rather, he was to “strengthen our hand and [impose] the carefully measured pressures that we can exert to put Guinea into the position of the plaintiff.”\footnote{MinFOM to Risterucci, No. 61-63, 30 September 1958; Guinée 9, DAL, AMAE.} This objective – in essence, to make Guinea beg, though whether for readmission to the
Community or just the resumption of French aid was never specified – had also been communicated to Messmer in Dakar a few days earlier, albeit in less pointed terms: Messmer was told that no official communiqué would be published before the referendum, because it “suits us to permit Guinea to place itself in the role of the plaintiff after 29 September.”

It does not appear that anyone thought to consult the MAE as to whether the limits placed on Risterucci would be feasible in practice. In fact, the legal service of the foreign affairs department advised as early as the 29th that one of the many issues that should be raised with the government of Guinea at the earliest possible opportunity was whether France could obtain both diplomatic and consular representation in the new state, at least for a transitional period. In Conakry, Risterucci soon realized the difficult position into which he had been placed by having no discretion in either diplomatic or consular matters. Sékou Touré looked to him as France’s representative, and sought to use him as a conduit for his repeated expressions of friendship towards and requests for association with the metropole. To whom other than the ranking French official in the capital should the head of Guinea’s government address himself? However, when Risterucci relayed those of Sékou Touré’s questions that seemed to touch on the relations of sovereign states, the minister replied curtly that such issues were not within Risterucci’s mandate. For example, on 2 October Cornut-Gentille complained to Messmer that a telegram of Risterucci’s, relaying Sékou Touré’s query as to when the paratroopers might be departing from Guinean soil, gave the minister the impression that the envoy’s very conception of negotiations with Guinea was wrong.

Despite such rebukes, Risterucci persisted in relaying Sékou Touré’s chief preoccupation, which was that France accord the new state diplomatic recognition. Messmer urged Cornut-Gentille and through him, the authorities in Paris, to acquiesce: “With Governor Risterucci, I think it would be in our interests if not to recognize the Republic of Guinea immediately, at least to affirm publicly our intention to do so in short order,” he wired the minister on 3 October. Inspector-General Robert Bargues, Cornut-

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64 MinFOM to Messmer, No. 386-94, 25 September 1958; Guinée 9, DAL, AMAE.
65 Note for the Secretary General, “Indépendance de Guinée”, Jurisconsulte No. 682, 29 September 1958; Guinée 4, DAL, AMAE.
66 MinFOM to Messmer, No. 458-59, 2 October 1958, Guinée 9, DAL, AMAE.
Gentille’s special envoy on financial and economic matters, agreed. It was necessary, he argued, to place France’s relations with Guinea squarely within the framework of international law in order for France to pursue the firm course necessary to salvage its position, not just in Guinea, but also in the rest of the Community. The ranking officers on the spot were unanimous.⁶⁷

But the Elysée refused. Risterucci cabled on 6 October that while his meeting that day with Guinea’s president had ostensibly been to study technical matters, he “sensed anew how much his major preoccupation regarding us is that of recognition of the new state.” Moreover, he thought, France’s silence was jeopardizing Sékou Touré’s position with the “extremist wing” of his cabinet and his party, whose desire to ally with the Communist bloc the President had so far been able to contain. Cornut-Gentille’s response was blunt. “The issues raised in your telegram . . . are not within your competence,” he wired tersely to Conakry. The next day, Risterucci signalled a shift in tactics on the part of Sékou Touré. When he tried to convey de Gaulle’s first response to the Guinean’s telegram requesting recognition and aid – a fairly blunt acknowledgement of its receipt with the statement that France would not oppose those of the territorial assembly’s actions which were within the latter’s jurisdiction – Sékou Touré objected that the message should not be coming through the colonial ministry. Risterucci reported on the 8th that Sékou Touré was now expressing a “definitive and firm” desire to ignore the MinFOM altogether. Moreover, Sékou Touré alleged that prominent Africans outside of Guinea, who could only be acting at France’s instance, were planning to assassinate the Guinean leader, and that MinFOM was planning to crush the new state within four or five months.⁶⁸

Cornut-Gentille’s reaction to what Risterucci had predicted would be “disagreeable” news was to try to pull his messenger’s chain even tighter. To Messmer he wrote:

> Information coming from Conakry and the messages and accounts [received] give the impression that our envoy considers himself to be in some way an Ambassador, while he is no such thing and his position is that of a functionary

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⁶⁷ Messmer to FOM, No. 802, 3 October 1958; Note, Bargues to Minister, 4 October 1958; Guinée 10, DAL, AMAE.
⁶⁸ Risterucci to MinFOM, No. 446-48, 6 October 1958; Guinée 10; MinFOM to Risterucci, No. 64, 6 October 1958; Guinée 9, DAL, AMAE.
... charged with accomplishing a certain number of determinate acts after they
have been weighed by you.

In a formal note to Messmer dated 10 October, the minister instructed his high
commissioner to remind Risterucci that he must not conduct himself as though he were
an ambassador. He must get the government of Guinea to realize that while its current
situation of incomplete sovereignty – “and, consequently, of waiting” – persisted, it was
perfectly normal that France’s intermediary should come from the colonial ministry.
Risterucci’s job was not to report Sékou Touré’s moods but to force the latter to show his
own hand by specifying his negotiating position with France. However, Risterucci was
to tell the Guinean leader that under current conditions, France would not entertain the
opening of negotiations. In fact, the metropole would not reconsider its position until it
had official, definite and absolute proof of Guinea’s good faith.69 Guinea could beg,
France implied: but the metropole would not respond until it was ready.

France’s premier communicated this position officially to Guinea’s president by a
letter dated 14 October. De Gaulle laid out the conditions precedent to French
recognition of Guinea’s independence and to France entering into any form of association
with the former colony. France must first know Guinea’s intentions, particularly what it
would request as terms of association. France must also have proof that Guinea was
capable of meeting all the obligations of independence and of sovereignty. Finally,
France must “consult all the organs of the Community, when they are in place, on the
subject” of future relations with Guinea’s government.70 The box in which France was
trying to enclose its erstwhile colony was taking shape. Guinea must propose the specific
content of an association that would be acceptable to a new French Republic that was
itself still recreating its institutions, particularly those charged with dealing with its
overseas territories. The Guineans could do so only after they had proved, to France’s
satisfaction, that the new country met a standard of sovereignty that France refused to
specify. France would have sole discretion to dispose: only France would judge whether
Guinea had met its conditions, and only France could act to create the institutional
framework that was its final condition precedent.

69 MinFOM to Messmer, Secret and Personal Note, 9 October 1958; Note, “Instructions for the High
Commissioner in AOF,” 10 October 1958; Guinée 9, DAL, AMAE.
70 De Gaulle to Sékou Touré, Letter, 14 October 1958; Guinée 10, DAL, AMAE.
Sékou Touré could be forgiven his perception that France was trying to crush the new state. On 11 October, Bargues, who had been entrusted with the mission of working out how the financial and economic ties between France and Guinea could be severed without harming French interests in either state, reported to the minister that it would be illusory to think that Guinea could not cope without French assistance. Again, Bargues urged recognition; this simple acknowledgment of reality would greatly improve the atmosphere in Conakry. In saying this, Bargues was careful to point out that the opinion was shared universally by the Europeans he had met since he had arrived in the city a few days before. Yet Paris continued to behave as though Guinea could be crushed.

Messmer reported the rapid progress of France’s administrative withdrawal on 27 October. Magistrates, teachers, clerks, labour inspectors, postal workers, railway workers, and other civil servants, senior and junior, French and African: most were leaving or had already gone. On the political side, although Guineans were “astonished” by France’s reaction, this did not mean that with foreknowledge they would have voted otherwise: the governing coalition of Guinea’s political parties remained united. Sékou Touré’s domestic position was strong and being reinforced by increasingly totalitarian measures.

In alleging that France’s hostility towards his government went further than forcing Guinea to disclose its negotiating position in advance of any negotiations, Sékou Touré was not simply being paranoid. Bargues, too, seems to have been aware of rumours in Conakry that France was exploring more direct action. In his report of 11 October, he observed to his minister that any strategy to engineer the overthrow of Sékou Touré’s government, even if it were feasible, was risky and could only bear fruit in the long term. The rumours were well founded. As early as 2 October, Cornut-Gentille had instructed Messmer to try to find out where there had been pockets of defiance to the PDG’s voting instructions, then try, “by absolutely discreet means,” to find emissaries that France could use to stimulate agitation in these areas. Cornut-Gentille went on to ask whether his high commissioner had examined the possibility of using “influential and sure” marabouts – the Muslim religious leaders who had been so effective in swinging

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71 Bargues to MinFOM, Note, 11 October 1958; Guinée 10, DAL, AMAE.
72 Messmer to MinFOM, No. 2881/CAB/DIR/J, 27 October 1958; Guinée 9, DAL, AMAE.
73 Bargues to MinFOM, Note, 11 October 1958; Guinée 10, DAL, AMAE.
the vote in Senegal towards the new constitution — to place pressure on Guinea’s marabouts, particularly those in the Fuuta region. Messmer was also requested to mobilize the anciens combattants, the Senegalese veterans of France’s wars, to influence their Guinean comrades. It is telling that France’s strategy seems to have been, as Bargues suggested, to stimulate rebellion from within rather than to engineer a coup with or without the help of neighbouring states, since this could only be accomplished by plotters with a colonial understanding of Guinea’s internal political situation. It is also telling that Sékou Touré, confident as he was in the ability of the PDG to control potential dissent within the country, should express his outrage at France by accusing it of trying to have it both ways, by refusing to recognize its independence while simultaneously plotting against it as if it were a sovereign state.

IV. “Land of Moderation”

In 1948, philosopher Emmanuel Mounier described Guinea as a “land of moderation” and predicted:

A Guinea that was well equipped, prosperous, harmonious due to the diversity of its resources and the temperament of its peoples, could well be the fulcrum of Africa, if not its thinking head or its living flame.

A decade later, Guinea was indeed aspiring to be the fulcrum of French Africa, the point on which the colonial edifice tumbled and France’s “extortion” of African sovereignty fell into history. No one in 1958 — certainly not in official France — would have emphasized its moderation, and by the end of the year, its former colonial master had made sure that it was neither well equipped nor prosperous. Yet on the eve of the referendum, there had been little to distinguish the political or the economic circumstances of Guinea from those of its fellow-colonies which dutifully endorsed de Gaulle’s new constitution for the French Community. Why was Guinea so quick to discover its “vocation for independence”?

74 Gaston Cusin, Note for the President of Council, 22 September 1958; Fonds Jacques Foccart, Fonds ‘Privé’, 199, Archives National de France (AN, AG/5(FPR)/199). I am indebted to Alexander Keese for all references to the Fonds Jacques Foccart.
75 MinFOM to Messmer, 2 October 1958; Guinée 9, DAL, AMAE.
Guinea was not the oldest, wealthiest or most culturally homogeneous of France’s sub-Saharan colonies; nor had its conquest been noticeably more or less difficult than in other parts of the continent. Guinea incorporates four quite distinct geographic zones and at least as many major culturo-linguistic groups. Lower, or maritime, Guinea fronts the Atlantic ocean for about three hundred kilometres and includes the capital, the offshore islands including the Isles of Los, and the basin of the coastal rivers. The dominant linguistic group in this region is the Susu, who have cultural ties with the Maninka and who have absorbed local groups such as the Baga, Landuma and Nalu peoples since their arrival in the area in the eighteenth century of the Common Era. This region was the first part of Guinea to be annexed by France, and presented the French with relatively little difficulty; they were able to establish both trading and military posts in the area starting at Boké in 1866. The abundance of rain and alluvial soil made this area the agricultural centre of Guinea. In the 1950s, this area was the centre of an export-oriented plantation economy focused on bananas and pineapples; most of the plantations were owned by Europeans, although a class of African planters was beginning to become established as well. Guinea was the single largest producer of these commodities in AOF.77 Lower Guinea was also a significant producer of subsistence staples such as rice, oil and coconut palms, and the cola bush. The region has large deposits of minerals such as bauxite and iron ore. Exploration for these minerals on the coastal shelf around the Isles of Los began in 1953 and in 1955, feasibility studies were already underway for a dam and hydroelectric project on the Konkouré River to support the international consortium building an alumina-processing plant at Fria.

Fifty kilometres inland, the massif of the Fuuta Jaloo78 starts, marking the geographic zone called Middle Guinea. The Fuuta massif is the source of several of the great rivers of West Africa: the Gambia, the Komba, the Bafing, which joins the Bakoy to form the Senegal River, the Niger and its tributary the Tinkisso, the Konkouré and the Kolenté or Grande Scarcie. The Fuuta Jaloo is dominated by the Fulbé people, herders

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77 Kaba, Le ‘Non’ de la Guinée, 122.
79 French sources refer to the Fulbé as “Peul” or “Peulh”. Their language is referred to as Pular.
who settled in the area within the four hundred or so years before French rule, expelling the Susu and related groups from the region. French conquest of the Fulbé was peaceful, but complex. A treaty concluded with Fulbé almamy Ibrahima Sori in July 1881 purported to create a French protectorate in the Fuuta; Fulbé leaders were more inclined to consider that it established a tribute payable by France in exchange for commercial access. French control was consolidated in this region after 1896, when France intervened directly in the rivalry between the two leading families who alternated in governing the Fulbé to depose the Soriya almamy, Bokar Biro. Although by the 1950s there were French banana plantations along its river valleys and the region contributed to Guinea’s subsistence agricultural production, the region is particularly well-known for its minerals, again especially bauxite. The French aluminum firm Pechiney began prospecting for bauxite in the Dabola region in the 1940s. The climate of the Fuuta was also particularly attractive to the French: a report published in 1956 noted that, unusually for tropical or equatorial Africa, here Europeans could “live for years, or at least take advantage of the existence of summer stations, sanatoria and learning establishments.”

Beyond the Fuuta is the region of Upper Guinea. This region is dominated by Mande-speaking people (chiefly the Maninka). This region was incorporated into the French colony of Guinea only in the late 1890s after the defeat of almamy Samori Touré, whose lengthy resistance to European colonization made him a useful hero in the rhetoric of Guinea’s first president. Here the land is primarily savanna and terraced plateaus; seasonal rainfall permits some agriculture, particularly in the plains around Kankan, Siguiri and Kouroussa which are fed by the Niger River and its tributaries on their journey east to present-day Guinea’s border with Mali. Upper Guinea also enjoys

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80 Jean Suret-Canale, “La Guinée dans le système colonial,” in Essais d’histoire africaine (de la traite des Noirs au néocolonialisme) (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1980), 141-44. The title “almamy” denotes both religious (Muslim) and temporal authority.
81 Kaba, Le ‘Non’ de la Guinée, 124.
83 The Maninka language and those who speak it are known to the French as Malinké and to the English primarily as Mandingo or Mandinka. “Maninka” is transcribed in accordance with the UNESCO alphabet for certain Guinean languages created in February-March 1966. For a guide to the UNESCO alphabet, see Ismaël Barry, Le Fuuta-Jaloo face à la colonisation, Vol. 1, 12-15.
84 The most complete source available concerning the life and career of Samori is Yves Person, Samori: Une Révolution dyula (Dakar: IFAN, 1970). The record is unclear concerning whether Sékou Touré was, or even claimed to be, a descendant of Samori, although claim was frequently made on his behalf.
significant mineral wealth. In addition to the country’s omnipresent deposits of iron, seams of gold have been exploited in the region of Siguiiri for centuries, and the discovery of diamonds near Kankan contributed to that region’s commercial vitality from the mid-1950s.  

The fourth of Guinea’s geographic regions is the forest zone, south of Upper Guinea and bordered by Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire. The tropical forest covers two significant mountain ranges, Nimba and Simandou, each of which contains rich deposits of iron ore. The richest deposits of diamonds in Guinea are found in the Forest region, which during colonial times also produced plantation crops of coffee, oil palms and cola bushes as well as subsistence crops. Unlike Guinea’s other three regions, the Forest zone contains an ethnological mosaic: in addition to mostly Muslim Maninka traders and rice-growers, the people here speak Kissi, Toma, Guerzé, Manon and Kono languages and are often very closely related to populations across the borders with neighbouring states. The Forest region was the last part of Guinea to come under French control, with armed resistance ending only in 1912. Relatively diffuse political authority in the region made it impossible for the French to conquer the area by co-opting existing political units, whether by treaty or by military means.

Thus, in 1958, parts of Guinea had been under French control for less than half a century. French colonial rule had done little to eliminate tensions among Guinea’s ethnic groups, which in the case of resentment of the Fulbé by the Susu and of the Maninka by various peoples of the Forest region pre-dated European contact altogether. Nor had it yet delivered significant investment in Guinea’s natural or human resources. In most respects, Guinea’s economic and social conditions were more similar to those found in other parts of French West Africa than they were different. What did distinguish Guinea was its politics, and, more particularly, the unusual degree of monopoly over power exercised by its political elite in the PDG. The actions of the PDG and its secretary-general in the years leading up to independence sowed the seed of this monopoly, but it

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85 Kaba, *Le ‘Non’ de la Guinée à de Gaulle*, 126. In September 2007, the Australian company Murchison United NL announced that it had found significant deposits of uranium in this part of Guinea.
took the harsh reaction of France and the self-interested responses of other international players to germinate it and bring it to fruition.

The PDG and its secretary-general had established their pattern for dealing with potential opponents by 1956 or 1957. At base was an organizational structure that tied its leaders into grassroots political activity through party cells established in urban neighbourhoods and rural villages. The structure permitted “the rapid transmission of information and concerns – from top to bottom and bottom to top.” More ominously, it also ensured that decisions taken at the top were communicated, explained, made the subject of consensus, and then enforced throughout the country. As a French commentator wrote several years later, “this organization permits the government and Sékou Touré in particular to make itself heard to the very depths of the virgin forest all the while controlling the reactions of his people.”

Secure in this administrative structure, the PDG could co-opt potential opponents, such as union leaders, with whom it had some overlapping objectives, and confront those whom it could not control. In 1957, the party disciplined a more radical internal faction whose leaders constituted a sort of intellectual elite, being graduates of the École William Ponty in Dakar and therefore having more formal education than the vast majority of Guineans including, not incidentally, Sékou Touré himself. Vocal members of the party section in the town of Mamou became increasingly critical in 1956 and 1957 of the policies and practices of the PDG’s Conakry leadership, including the number of offices its secretary-general held. Conakry responded by expelling the Mamou section until it recanted its “deviation.” In these years, too, PDG militants engaged in a number of violent confrontations with supporters and members of rival political parties.

Its move to abolish the institution of the canton chief in 1957 amounted to another confrontation of a potential rival elite, albeit one that was carried out with the full

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90 In 1956, of a total population estimated at 2.3 million, just 530 boys, of whom 19 were identified as “metropolitan [French]”, and 94 girls, including 19 who were French, attended the four secondary institutions in Guinea. J. Chambon, Inspecteur-Général de l’Enseignement de la France d’Outre-Mer, “L’Enseignement en Guinée”, *Cahiers Charles de Foucauld* 44 (4th quarter 1956), 116-24.
92 Schmidt, *Cold War and Decolonization*, 122-23.
cooperation of the French colonial authority which had long relied on these intermediaries to extend their rule across the territory. Historical opinion on the abolition of Guinea’s chiefdoms ranges from the relatively sympathetic to the bitterly hostile. In the first category are historians such as Jean Suret-Canale, who argues that the end of chieftaincy “was the result of a profound popular movement,” and Elizabeth Schmidt, who asserts that the Guinean section of the RDA “was able to capitalize and expand upon preexisting anti-colonial sentiment” in the form of “rural-based mobilization against village and canton chiefs.” A more hostile view attributes Machiavellian motives to Sékou Touré and his PDG cohorts. Ibrahima Baba Kaké notes their expansive use of the powers delegated to Guinea pursuant to the loi-cadre and suggests the PDG had three goals: successive or simultaneous elimination of rival political parties; destruction of customary chiefdoms; and Africanization of the administration’s workforce. Violence was used in pursuit of all of these goals, and all three ultimately amounted to the same objective: the elimination of all potential sources of challenge to the PDG’s hold on power. An assessment written within the French colonial ministry at the end of 1957 was even more negative. Sékou Touré was trying to “play the role of chief”; his totalitarianism could be understood only in light of the basic principle “that the African conception of power is [itself] totalitarian.” There was a danger that extremism, too, was in his nature. It would serve his political interests, the writer worried, and “correspond more closely with his own temperament.”

Even a more neutral assessment, that of Malagasy poet and politician Jacques Rabemananjara, attributes to Sékou Touré an uncanny degree of prescience: had he not eliminated the institution and removed the chiefs from their positions of power, their conservatism and their ties to the French administration would have led them to exert their influence to induce their followers to vote “yes” in the constitutional referendum of

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96 “Note d’Information: Sékou Touré”, No. 82/BE, Ministère de la France d’Outre-Mer (MinFOM), Directorate of Political Affairs, 10 January 1958; Fonds Jacques Foccart, Fonds ‘Privé’ 197, Archives Nationales de France (AN/AG5(FPR)/197).
September 1958, thus defeating his movement towards independence.\footnote{Jacques Rabemananjara, “Préface”, in Guinée: Prélude à l’indépendance, 11. Elizabeth Schmidt concurs with this assessment: “Cold War in Guinea,” 120.} The Guinean president himself made a similar retrospective assessment in 1959 when he described the move to a journalist as a necessary “frontal attack on the irrational elements that permitted ethnic groupings to develop and endure.”\footnote{Fernand Gigon, Guinée: État-pilote (Paris: Plon, 1959), 21.}

Despite their conflicting assessments of the venality and prescience of Sékou Touré, all of these views complement a different interpretation: abolishing the institution of the canton chief was intended to enhance the position of political parties, particularly the PDG, at the expense of a potential rival for political influence. As he often did, Sékou Touré borrowed the language of Marxism to explain to the conference that approved it why his party’s initiative was historically inevitable. “The old feudal organization that lived incontestably in the person of the chief . . . has ceded its place to new realities by the medium of the actions of the various political parties, which is to say that the peasants are now grouped on the basis of their political party,” he argued. This form of organization was more modern and better adapted to the challenges that the territory would face: the “root of the problem is firstly political, but also essentially economic . . . in the sense of the country’s economic development which must be sought on all fronts if we do not want to fail,” he said. The Guineans’ appeal to progress struck a chord with the French administration. Governor Ramadier set the tone for the conference by pointing out at the outset, “we all know that the chieftaincy’s role is finished.” The point of the conference, he announced, was to seek the views of its delegates, including senior French administrators (commandants de cercle) from across the territory, on the new administrative order that would succeed the chieftaincies. To Sékou Touré, there was only one answer: to bridge the gap between Guinea’s needs and aspirations, on the one hand, and its means, on the other, the PDG leadership must hold “the key to the masses.”\footnote{Rabemananjara, Guinée: Prélude à l’indépendance, 24-29; 22 and 57 (Ramadier); 147-48.}

The ease with which the PDG leadership translated its decision that Guinea should reject France’s constitutional offer to the resounding “no” vote of 28 September 1958 suggests that the party did, indeed, hold the key to the masses. It also, and not
incidentally, reflected Sékou Touré’s own power, a matter of charisma, rhetorical facility in several of the most widely spoken languages in Guinea, adept political maneuvering, and underlying ruthlessness. He made highly effective use of these strengths both during his ascent and throughout his long tenure as Guinea’s president, which endured until his death in a Cleveland hospital in 1984. Members of his audiences, diplomatic observers, and academic analysts have all attested to his powers of speech, even as some bemoaned his habit of addressing crowds for many hours at a time.¹⁰⁰

Yet the PDG was not Guinea’s only political party in 1958, and its adherents, even if they did represent the “masses,” controlled very few of Guinea’s material resources. To consolidate its power, the PDG needed to co-opt or confront the territory’s ethnic, cultural, religious and economic elites, as well. The elimination of the chieftaincy went some way towards controlling ethnic elites. Sékou Touré was also very careful to distribute both privilege and punishment across Guinea’s main ethnic groups, especially the Fulbé, in a bid to co-opt potential rallying points for opposition efforts. The PDG’s efforts to establish a new, modern, national culture in Guinea, in part by severing Guineans’ allegiances to cultural or religious forces around which opposition might coalesce, took two forms. In some cases, the PDG government simply established new cultural symbols and referents that they believed to be under their control. Fodéba Keita, who was a minister in Sékou Touré’s government until his arrest and execution in the wake of a supposed army coup in 1969, was also the founder of Les Grands Ballets Africains, a prominent dance troupe based in Conakry that continues to tour the world. The Syliphone studio, named from the Susu word for that elephant that was the symbol both of the PDG and of its leader personally, ensured that Radio Conakry had plenty of music to broadcast; recordings of the state-sponsored music created under PDG cultural policy by Guinea’s orchestres fédéraux and nationaux are still available today.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Elizabeth Schmidt makes extensive use of oral testimony, including memories of Sékou Touré, in Mobilizing the Masses and Cold War and Decolonization. Several of his speeches are analyzed as rhetoric in Alpha-Ousmane Barry, Pouvoir du discours et discours du pouvoir: l’art oratoire chez Sékou Touré de 1958 à 1984 (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2002). His use of mass media for political ends is assessed in Mohamed Saliou Camara, His Master’s Voice: Mass Communication and Single Party Politics in Guinea under Sékou Touré (Trenton and Asmara: Africa World Press, 2005). The diplomatic archives of France and the US are replete with complaints about the President’s prolix nature from those assigned to hear him out.

¹⁰¹ For instance, a recent compilation of 28 such tracks is called Authenticité: The Syliphone Years – Guinea’s Orchestres nationaux and fédéraux, 1965-1980 (Stern’s Music / Stern’s Africa, 2007).
other cases, the PDG used violence and coercion in its efforts to change Guinean cultural allegiances. Christian Kordt Hojberg and Michael McGovern, among others, have explored the devastating impact of the Guinean government’s “demystification campaign” on the Loma peoples in Guinea’s Forest region, and the high degree of resilience of their pre-existing religious and cultural beliefs and practices.\footnote{Christian Kordt Hojberg, \textit{Resisting State Iconoclasm Among the Loma of Guinea} (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2007); Michael McGovern, \textit{Unmasking the State: Developing Modern Political Subjectivities in 20th Century Guinea} (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Emory University, 2004).} Jay Straker puts this iconoclastic endeavour in the context of Guinea’s youth culture, highlighting the irony that after the campaign ended, Forest region dance and imagery were accorded a prominent place in the militant theatre and dance with which the PDG sought to instruct and involve youth in the life of the new nation.\footnote{Jay Straker, \textit{Youth, Nationalism, and the Guinean Revolution} (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009).}

Eliminating the potential rivalry of an economic elite was, by contrast, remarkably easy. Here, the PDG’s agenda was greatly advanced even as the country suffered from France’s sudden withdrawal of export trade links, economic, legal and administrative structures and payment for ongoing projects through FIDES.\footnote{MAE/Direction économique to Olivier Wormser, “Guinée,” 21 October 1958; Guinée 13, DAL, AMAE.} France also contributed to the vacuum of non-PDG economic powers by its efforts to repatriate, relocate or compensate French traders and planters after independence.\footnote{Conakry (Risterucci) to FOM, 7 October 1958; FOM to Haussaire/Dakar, No. 20020, 22 October 1958; MinFOM to Min. des Finances et des Affaires économiques, “Mesures en faveur de certains ressortissants français de Guinée,” 10 November 1958; Conakry (Risterucci) to FOM, No. 475-76, 14 October 1958; MinFOM (Risterucci) to Haussaire/Dakar, No. 20019, 23 October 1958; Guinée 8, DAL, AMAE.} Of the few French interests that remained in Guinea after independence, the most significant were members of international consortia formed to mine bauxite and transform it into alumina. The significant investment these consortia made, and the enormous potential of Guinea’s bauxite deposits, ensured that the consortia would deal with whoever controlled the national government. Their international character ensured that they would be more interested in working with the PDG-controlled government than in conspiring with internal or external forces to overthrow it.

Guinea’s wealthy bauxite reserve, and its strategic importance for the manufacture of military and civilian aircraft in the 1950s and 1960s, contributed greatly to the third pillar of the PDG’s power in Guinea. This was international recognition of
the new state and its government. Sovereignty and the international prestige that it conveyed to the new state’s leaders, a prestige greatly enhanced in African circles by the fact that Guinea survived France’s administrative and diplomatic assaults, was the element without which there would have been no nation to build. It was essential to economic development, without which the nation could not thrive. And it carried with it the right to be left alone. The discretion that the principle of non-interference afforded Guinea’s government contributed greatly to its consolidation of political, economic and cultural authority throughout the new nation. Identifying Guinea as a modern, independent, non-aligned member of the world of nations in turn permitted its political elite to control, and often to destroy, competing sources of power within the new state. Without political power, the PDG would not have been able to make Guinea independent. Without international recognition and support of that independence, the PDG would not have been able to entrench its rule within the country. Independent Guinea would be no land of moderation, even with its diverse natural resources and the “harmonious temperament” of its peoples.
Chapter 2. “Africa, the great question mark”: The Challenge to the Transfer of Power

_The Government over which it is my honour to preside . . . wishes to proclaim once again that the liberty of Africa is indivisible and that, consequently, Guinean independence is inseparable from that of other peoples of Africa. . . . Thus, independence and unity are today the two irresistible forces which are shaking Africa – Africa, the great question mark – enlisting all its vital forces._ – Ahmed Sékou Touré to the United Nations General Assembly, 5 November 1959

For the first three months of the Republic of Guinea’s existence, France exerted diplomatic pressure all around the world to block or delay the new state’s entry onto the world scene. The metropole clung to its strategy even as it became clear that in order to bring Guinea begging for readmission to the Community, France would have to enjoy a much greater degree of control over Guinea, as well as much more influence over the rest of the world. As it was, France could not stop Guinea’s leaders from communicating with and appealing directly to third countries for diplomatic recognition and material assistance. Moreover, these countries soon made it clear that they would calculate their responses based on their own objectives and geopolitical assessments, despite France’s dogged insistence that it would not transfer power to Guinea until all the outstanding questions surrounding the meaning of sovereignty for a post-colonial African state had been resolved.

The idea of the transfer of power – the legal fiction that sovereignty over a territory and its people was exercised by the colonial power one day, and by the new nation-state on the next – is a central point in the literature concerning decolonization, particularly the end of the British empire. The transfer was often marked by formalities in the imperial or colonial capitals, or even both: Robert J. McMahon vividly contrasts the sombre meeting in the Burgherzal in Amsterdam on 27 July 1949 with the triumphant

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return of Sukarno to Djakarta in newly-sovereign Indonesia the next day.\(^3\) In one way, Guinea’s case is the closest empirical example that history offers of this legal fiction: the gap between Guinea’s rejection of membership in the French Community and its declaration of independence was a mere four days. Indonesia’s war of independence against the Netherlands went on for four years, and even in sub-Saharan Africa the British made some attempt to control the process of decolonization by gradually transferring powers to its colonies over a period of years. In another way, though, Guinea’s is a poor example of the concept, and one that actually challenges the underlying conceit of most histories of “decolonization”: that it was a process that was decided on, planned and carried out primarily by the colonial power.\(^4\) Not only did France not plan or control the transfer of sovereign powers to Guinea: the metropole made no real effort to define which powers it believed needed to be transferred, either bilaterally or in the United Nations. France ultimately resorted to making bilateral arrangements with Guinea to protect French interests in a narrow range of areas. It was only able to impose its conditions on Guinea by refusing to extend it diplomatic recognition, and was ultimately never able to enforce any of them. Guinea’s actions and adroit diplomatic manoeuvring rendered the “transfer of power” moot.

Given the circumstances of Guinea’s independence, it was not surprising that there should be differences between France and Guinea over what degree of control the new state could exercise over its foreign policy, its self-defence, and its economic future. More distressing, certainly to the Guineans, were the ongoing differences about the same issues between themselves and avowedly anti-colonial countries such as the United States. US policy towards Guinea was caught between a stated aversion to European colonialism and a widely-held belief that the chief contribution the African continent should make towards world peace and security was to continue to support Western Europe, itself the front line in the Cold War. Thus the US pursued apparently conflicting


\(^4\) Taking this conceit further, Todd Shepard argues that “decolonization” itself was an invention of the French political elite intended to bridge the gap between the assimilationist rhetoric of the French Republic and the racism and “othering” that France applied to Algerians during and after the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962) by characterizing the separation as part of an inevitable historical progression: Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).
goals. On one hand, it seemed to be pushing France to acknowledge Guinea’s sovereignty and start dealing with the new state as being itself an object in the battle between East and West. On the other hand, though, America’s own relations with Guinea demonstrated that the US was not ready to take Sékou Touré’s government seriously as an independent voice. The ambivalence was rooted in domestic political disputes and prejudices concerning the rights, claims and capabilities of people of African origin. It also reflected a hope that sovereign African states would be nearly as easy to control as the colonies they replaced, and a nostalgia for a world in which the powers of a sovereign state were transferred in an orderly manner that remained firmly within the control of the metropole.

I. “To Frequent the Right People”

Within a month of declaring the Republic, Guinea had been recognized by many of the most powerful states on earth. Six weeks after that, it was welcomed into the United Nations. France could not count on either loyalty or law in its bid to convince its Western allies to protect its colonial interests above their own geo-strategic and material ones.

Sékou Touré quickly signalled his intentions using both of the main channels available to him: publicity and diplomacy. At a press conference in Conakry on 1 October, Touré made a point of reiterating that Guinea would turn first to France to meet all of its needs for technical and financial assistance; however, if France rejected the new state’s requests, it would seek help elsewhere. Guinea’s policy would reflect local needs and interests. Sékou Touré also used this public forum to express his expectation that France would recognize and support his country on the international level.\(^5\) In response, French colonial minister Bernard Cornut-Gentille instructed his envoy Jean Risterucci to clamp down on journalists in Guinea. Those already in the new country were to be encouraged to leave; foreign journalists were to be kept at arm’s length “under diverse pretexts”; their dispatches were to be censored, secretly, by systematically delaying their transmission and by restricting their number and length using the excuse that the

\(^5\) Risterucci to Ministre de la France d’Outre-Mers (MinFOM), No. 421-23, 1 October 1958; Guinée 8, Direction Afrique-Levant (DAL), Archives du Ministère des Affaires étrangères, Quai d’Orsay, Paris (AMAE).
telegraph lines were overloaded. Even the representative of Agence France-Presse was to be informed, “categorically”, that any “excessive” dispatch would result in his eviction from the territory.⁶

Despite these measures, Sékou Touré’s message reached the world. The French embassy reported from London on 3 October that the current issue of the Economist contained a “particularly disagreeable” article alleging French reprisals for the “no” vote. The article observed: “The umbilical cord is snapped; and there seems little concern in Paris (or is there satisfaction?) over the prospect that the infant may suffer a grave haemorrhage.”⁷ From Washington, French Ambassador Hervé Alphand wrote an analytical dispatch on the 9th, assessing the state of American opinion on Guinea’s declaration of independence from his review of the newspapers and magazines. Alphand noted that Americans seemed afraid of the danger of Communist infiltration in young African states, yet equally unwilling to spend money to support economies incapable of managing on their own; in short, “the Americans are beginning to be aware of the disadvantages of a systematic and somewhat narrow anti-colonial policy.” Perhaps, he concluded optimistically, the Guinean experience would bring American opinion closer to the European view.⁸

The dilemma that Alphand had identified underlay the difficult decision Western governments had to make concerning whether or not to grant Guinea official recognition. It was not that the rest of the international community wished to engage in a debate about the meaning of African sovereignty, any more than France did. The prospect of a new African state was unsettling. US secretary of state John Foster Dulles had confided to Alphand as recently as September 1958 that he thought France was “too quick to relax our control over all these [African] peoples who are still in the dark night of barbarism.”⁹ At first, other Western countries seemed content to accept France’s word that it had the situation in hand. The initial response of the powerful Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) in the US was to observe, “Reports to State from Paris and Dakar indicate that intermediate legal steps will probably be required before sovereignty is assumed by the

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⁶ MinFOM to Messmer, No. 431-32, 1 October 1958; Guinée 9, DAL, AMAE.
⁸ Alphand to MAE/AL, Dispatch, 9 October 1958; Guinée 4, DAL, AMAE.
former territory.”

The British consul-general in Dakar was instructed to rely on this same gap in the United Kingdom’s first response to Sékou Touré from Prime Minister Harold Macmillan. “In the view of my Government,” Macmillan noted, “it would not be in accordance with international practice for them to reply formally until the necessary legal procedures for transferring sovereignty from France to Guinea have been completed.”

As the French had predicted, Guinea’s territorial assembly declared independence from France on 2 October, dissolving and reforming itself as a constituent assembly. It then elected Sékou Touré to be president of the government of the Republic, adopted the Charter of the United Nations and began work on a new constitution. Its declaration of independence closed with a new and powerful slogan: “For a united and independent Africa, long live the Republic of Guinea.” The slogan reflected two of the strongest currents of thought in Africa – especially its Anglophone regions – in the 1950s and 1960s: Pan-Africanism and nationalism.

The same day, Sékou Touré sent telegrams to the capitals of the world, Paris included, notifying foreign governments of the new state of affairs, and inviting their leaders to recognize the world’s newest state and help meet its material needs. Ghana had been the first foreign state to recognize the new country; Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah sent his message of congratulations even before receiving Sékou Touré’s telegram. Liberia was next. By the time the United States sent its first, non-committal response to Sékou Touré’s telegram on 6 October, the new country had also been recognized by the Soviet Union and by Gamal Abdel Nasser’s United Arab Republic. By the 8th, the People’s Republic of China had also sent a message of recognition. If France’s allies were still expecting the metropole to make a formal transfer of sovereignty to Guinea, countries that France and the US considered hostile were not waiting for such niceties.

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11 “Reply to be transmitted by H.M. Consul-General Dakar to M. Sékou Touré’s message to Mr. Macmillan,” 9 October 1958; Guinée 4, DAL, AMAE.
12 On Pan-Africanism in Anglophone and francophone Africa, see Chapter 4, infra.
Paris was delighted with the UK’s temporizing first response to Sékou Touré’s telegram, so much so that it recommended the British formula for use by other friendly governments. The French were also pleased with the substance of the US message, even though the colonial ministry expressed bitter disapproval of the channel the Americans had chosen to convey it. Any efforts by Donald Dumont, the American consul-general in Dakar, to respond to Guinea’s request for recognition and aid would be an unwarranted intrusion into France’s internal affairs, sniffed Fernand Wibaux to Pierre Messmer, his ministry’s high commissioner in Dakar. Nevertheless, although the French authorities refused to allow Messmer to deliver Dumont’s letter to Sékou Touré, they did not try to prevent the US or any other foreign government from transmitting messages directly to the Guinean leader. Dumont did so, promising Sékou Touré that “a final reply will be transmitted to Your Excellency when all aspects of the juridical position of Guinea are clarified.”

Touré responded on 13 October with another telegram to US President Dwight D. Eisenhower, this one requesting “details of the intentions of your Government.” Secretary Dulles signed the reply on the 18th. The United States, he said, was “giving due consideration to the question of recognition.” The Guinean’s reply to this telegram was unexpected. On the 20th, he cabled back that the Republic and the people of Guinea were proud to receive the American “message of recognition.” The OCB weekly activity report notes blandly: “Apparently the friendly concluding statement in the US message was interpreted by Guinea as providing recognition.” France was less sanguine. On the 20th, the contents of Sékou Touré’s telegram were reported to Messmer, together with the observation that the Guinean appeared to have taken liberties with the US message. Yet the telegram was deft, in that it would force the Americans’ hand: it would be difficult for the US to tell Sékou Touré he had made a mistake. The next day, the same staff member reported rather breathlessly that the US had instructed Dumont to go to Conakry to clarify all misunderstanding with Sékou Touré. Though he was to be sympathetic,

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13 MAE to Ambassadors, Circular Telegram No. 136, 11 October 1958; Guinée 4, DAL, AMAE.
14 MinFOM (Wibaux) to Haussaire Dakar, No. 454, 2 October 1958; Guinée 9, DAL, AMAE.
15 George D. Lamont to James K. Penfield, Memorandum, 9 October 1958; Guinea; Country Files 1951-1963; Office of West African Affairs, Bureau of African Affairs (BAA-OWA); RG 59; NACP.
16 Sékou Touré to Eisenhower, 13 October 1958; Dulles to Sékou Touré, 18 October 1958; both in Guinée 4, DAL, AMAE.
17 OCB Activity Report, 20 October 1958; OCB Activity Reports, 1958-1959; RG 59; NACP.
Dumont was to lecture Sékou Touré on how not to conduct international affairs, and to warn him that “any publicity given to a purported recognition of Guinea by the US will result immediately in a formal denial by the State Department.”18

But the die had already been cast. As early as 9 October State Department staff were recommending that the US recognize the new state no later than the end of the month.19 They also recommended close coordination with the British, whose dilemma was perhaps even more acute because of their desire to maintain good relations with their former Gold Coast colony, now Ghana. On 13 October, the UK’s councillor-minister in Paris explained the British view that the best way to avert a possible crisis at the United Nations over Guinean membership was for France first to grant the new state legal recognition.20 On the 21st, Alphand reported a rumour circulating within the State Department that Sir Gladwyn Jebb had informed the Foreign Office that France “had no further objections to the recognition of Guinea by the United Kingdom.” If this were indeed the case, State officials told him, recognition by the US would only be a few days away. The French ambassador in London, Jean Chauvel, confirmed the rumour the next day.21 Chauvel met with Sir Frederick Hoyer Millar on the 23rd; Millar in effect confirmed that the British had decided to give a liberal interpretation to the news that France had acknowledged Guinea’s independence – at least de facto – the day after the referendum. Two days later, the Foreign Office sent Chauvel the text of a message of recognition they proposed to send Guinea on 29 October. On the 29th, the British sent a further aide-mémoire with revised text and an explanation of their decision to send official recognition and to proceed, “in due course,” to the establishment of diplomatic relations. Citing their own interests in Guinea and Sierra Leone and “their general concern for the stability of West Africa,” the British government “[did] not feel able to hold up indefinitely” the establishment of relations with the new state. The aide-mémoire added:

18 R. Chambard to P. Messmer, 20 October 1958; Chambard to Messmer, 21 October 1958; Guinée 4, DAL, AMAE.
19 LaMont to Penfield, Memorandum, 9 October 1958; Guinea; Country Files 1951-1963; BAA-OWA; RG 59, NACP.
20 Note, MAE/AL, 13 October 1958, Guinée 17, DAL, AMAE.
21 Alphand to MAE, No. 6189-90, 21 October 1958, Guinée 17; Chauvel to MAE, No. 3395-96, 22 October 1958, Guinée 4, DAL, AMAE.
The French Prime Minister has himself said that Guinea will partly be judged by her ‘fréquentations extérieures’. HMG suggest that it is important that Guinea should not be given the impression, at the outset of her independence, that she is being cold-shouldered by the West: she should be encouraged at least to frequent the right people.22

Washington stalled for a few more days, but sent Eisenhower’s official message of recognition to Guinea on 1 November.

Both London and Washington cited the facts of geopolitical life to justify the decision to waive their earlier objections to Guinea’s incomplete sovereignty, but in neither case does this appear to have been the whole story. The British communiqués suggest that they had become aware of, and increasingly impatient with, the fact that at the same time that France was insisting that Guinea had to appear before it as a supplicant and plead for the return of complete sovereignty, the former metropole was also effectively refusing to respond to any communications from Conakry.

Although American diplomats were also beginning to see the outlines of the impasse France had created, the evidence suggests that State Department officials were thinking more practically about what Guinea had to offer to countries with which it had friendly relations and saw an opportunity to improve the American position at French expense. Official Washington was well aware of Guinea’s enormous potential as a supplier of bauxite. In June 1958, Eugene R. Black, President of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank), met Clarence Randall, Eisenhower’s special assistant for foreign economic policy, to discuss the Bank’s activities in sub-Saharan Africa. According to Black, the best “of all the projects in Africa currently under consideration” was the prospect of a dam and hydroelectric project on Guinea’s Konkouré River, intended to support the international consortium building an alumina-processing plant at Fria.23

Executives of the Fria partners, including the French firm Pechiney and the US-based Olin Mathieson Chemical Corporation, wasted no time in approaching governments on both sides of the Atlantic for reassurance that their investments in

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22 Chauvel to MAE, No. 3406-10, 23 October 1958; Foreign Office Aide-Mémoire, 25 October 1958; Foreign Office Aide-Mémoire, 29 October 1958; Guinée 4, DAL, AMAE.
23 “Views of Mr. Eugene Black, President of the IBRD on Africa South of the Sahara,” Memorandum of Conversation, 28 June 1958; Central Decimal File 398.14/1-758; RG 59, NACP.
Guinea would be supported by public treasuries, even after the change in Guinea’s status. The heads of the two companies, Pechiney’s Raoul de Vitry and Olin Mathieson’s Stanley DeJong Osborne, met with Georges Pompidou, then de Gaulle’s Chief of Staff, in the latter half of October 1958. After emphasizing to Pompidou that they would keep the results of their conversation a secret from their insurers and foreign governments, they succeeded in extracting from him a fairly clear statement of France’s policy towards Guinea. Osborne’s greatest concern was to find out whether French guarantees to Fria would continue to apply even if relations between the two states did not improve. He received an ambiguous reply: France wanted to continue to be part of the enterprise, said Pompidou, “unless this presence is in violent contradiction” of its general policy towards Guinea.24

Osborne adapted his tactics to win US government guarantees for Olin’s investment by giving every impression that the partners were continuing to invest heavily in Fria regardless of Guinea’s independence. If there was any change to business as usual, it would be a shift away from French control and investment in the enterprise; in any event, it was important to maintain and support an American presence lest Guinea’s bauxite be abandoned to the Soviet Union and its allies. Thus Dumont reported from Dakar that the Texas Petroleum Company was going ahead with the delivery of three high-capacity fuel oil storage tanks to Conakry for Fria’s use.25 John Tuthill, in the US embassy in Paris, informed the State Department that Vereinigte Aluminiumwerke, a company owned by the Federal Republic of Germany, had been permitted to go ahead with a planned investment in Fria despite reports that the new Guinean government had entered into a trade agreement with the German Democratic Republic.26 The technique paid off handsomely. The State Department announced in early February 1959 that the US government had agreed to guarantee Olin’s investments in Guinea to the tune of $72

24 “Compte-rendu de la visite de M. de Vitry et de M. Osborne à M. le Directeur du Cabinet du Président du Conseil,” undated (late October 1958); Guinée 12, DAL, AMAE.
25 Dakar (Dumont), “Texas Petroleum’s plans to build 1.5 million dollar fuel oil storage tanks at Conakry for FRIA’s bauxite dehydrating plant,” 16 October 1958; 851T.2553/10-1658, Central Decimal Files, 1955-1959, RG 59, NACP.
The scale of the US government’s commitment to this one firm was extraordinary: the entire authorized capital of the World Bank’s International Finance Corporation, which was set up in July 1956 to promote private investment worldwide, was $100 million.

II. The Test for Sovereignty

Having lost its bid to prevent its allies from recognizing Guinea, France turned its attention to preventing or delaying Guinea’s accession to the United Nations. It was in this forum that the colonial power raised questions about the new state’s sovereignty, though it never specified which aspects had to be transferred from the former metropole before the UN could safely consider Guinea to be sovereign. Here, the issue of Guinea’s ability to fulfill the undertakings it made under the United Nations Charter might have been expected to carry more weight – or at least receive more explicit attention – than the unmentionable political concerns that seemed to be pushing France’s allies towards diplomatic recognition. Even here, though, Guinea out-maneuvered France using the leverage it gained from the geopolitical situation.

The day that Guinea proclaimed independence, France’s ambassador to the UN, Guillaume Georges-Picot, reported to the MAE that the representatives of the eight current member states from Africa had met the day before and were preparing “eventually to welcome [Guinea] to the UN.” Georges-Picot signalled one of the central issues for France in this battle, and one of the few arguments that would attract much sympathy from other members of the world body: “It is not impossible,” he commented,


29 This campaign has been described in André Lewin, Diallo Telli: Le tragique destin d’un grand Africain (Paris: Jeune Afrique Livres, 1990), 45-95, and by Jean-Claude Allan, “La France et l’admission de la Guinée-Conakry à l’ONU”, in Charles-Robert Ageron and Marc Michel (ed.), L’Afrique noire française: l’heure des indépendances (Paris: CNRS, 1992), 551-66. Both accounts relied of necessity on eyewitness accounts and documents provided by persons who had been involved in the events, rather than on access to the archives, now opened.
“that other delegations are already trying to use Guinea as a corner from which to try to force the whole of the Franco-African Community to explode.”

A note prepared the next day by the United Nations and International Organizations (NUOI) group within the MAE counselled the government of France to begin to study, in concert with the government of Guinea, “the practical conditions in which Guinea’s candidacy” should be presented. Further, France should take up Sékou Touré’s invitation to present Guinea’s bid for membership, lest an African state such as Ghana take on this role instead. The NUOI group pointed out that it would be impossible to guarantee that Guinea’s candidacy would not come before the UN during the current session, and suggested the political realities of the situation would prevent France from using its veto to delay or deny Guinea’s admission.

Despite this sound advice, Foreign Minister Maurice Couve de Murville ordered Georges-Picot to try to delay Guinean admission until the next session. His ambassadors in Security Council member countries, chiefly Chauvel and Alphand, were instructed to drum up support for France to guarantee that a majority of the members of the Security Council opposed Guinea’s membership bid. After the UK and US recognized Guinea, France stepped up its efforts to distinguish between widespread recognition, which the MAE and the State Department agreed was not in itself any indication that Guinea could meet its obligations to the UN, and true sovereignty. Alphand advocated invoking “all the jurisprudential resources of the UN,” including reference to the debate over admission of France’s trust territory of Togo, to “avoid the debate developing an overtly political character.” France’s position could easily be “distorted” in a political debate “and presented as an attempt to penalize a territory which preferred not to join the Community.” Moreover, France would lose US support in the Security Council, whereas, he thought, if he could just present his State Department contacts with a precise view of “our intentions and the various steps of our plan” for the new French Community, he should be able to keep them onside. As it was, American observers

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30 Georges-Picot to MAE, No. 1693-94, 2 October 1958; Guinée 17, DAL, AMAE.
31 MAE United Nations and International Organizations (NUOI), Note/Minute to the Minister, No. 082, 3 October 1958; Guinée 17, DAL, AMAE.
thought the Community likely to “create the type of situation which, to date, has led to friction between peoples of colour and the Western powers.”

When he put this thesis to Dulles, however, the US secretary of state insisted that the most important issues were political. Although Dulles agreed that Guinea’s admission in the current session would be “contrary to the spirit of the Charter” as well as to US interests, he warned Alphand that the US would support France only if it did not risk a “major confrontation with the Afro-Asian bloc.” France must state publicly, not only that Guinea did not yet have all the attributes of sovereignty, but also that “it would soon have international status” and that France intended, “at the right moment and one in the not too distant future, to initiate negotiations with Guinea which could lead to admission to the UN.” Making such a statement, however, remained out of the question in Paris. De Gaulle remained adamant that if there were to be negotiations, it was Guinea which must initiate them.

Once again, Guinea’s new government took the matter out of French hands. On 14 November, NUOI wired New York to ask Georges-Picot to confirm a rumour that Sékou Touré had sent an envoy to New York via London and Washington to present Guinea’s request. The rumour the MAE had heard was correct, but premature. Diallo Telli did not leave Africa until 24 November, after accompanying his President to Accra to meet with Ghana’s Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah. Telli was well known to the French colonial ministry. He had trained as a lawyer and at the École Nationale de la France d’outre-mer, resigning from the colonial service in late October to serve the country of his birth. When he met with the Foreign Office in London on the 25th, it was to deliver the message that Touré had sent to de Gaulle the previous day: Guinea had decided to seek UN membership in the current session; because of their shared past, Guinea requested France’s sponsorship; irrespective of France’s response, however, Telli

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32 Alphand to MAE, No. 6473-77, 3 November 1958; Jurisconsulte to MAE Secretary-General, “Entrée de la Guinée aux Nations Unies,” No. 786, 3 November 1958; Guinée 17, DAL, AMAE.
33 Alphand to MAE, No. 6540-43, 5 November 1958; Guinée 17, DAL, AMAE.
34 De Gaulle to Sékou Touré, 5 November 1958; Guinée 10, DAL, AMAE.
35 MAE/NUOI to Georges-Picot, No. 5780, 14 November 1958, Guinée 17, DAL, AMAE.
was leaving for Great Britain and then the United States to present his country’s candidancy to the world body.\textsuperscript{36}

Explicitly instructed to snub Telli should he telephone or seek a meeting with them, Chauvel and Alphand were reduced to repeating France’s message and reporting the intelligence they gathered concerning the Guinean envoy’s meetings in London and Washington.\textsuperscript{37} France’s position was unchanged. Washington formally warned Paris on 1 December that it anticipated that the State Department would not be able to sway Telli; moreover, the United States was not inclined to abstain when Guinea’s bid came before the Security Council. Once again, the Americans cited Cold War fears to justify their move. If “friendly Security Council members” failed to support Guinea’s bid, it would look like Guinea had been admitted solely due to the efforts of the Soviet and the Afro-Asian blocs. “Serious repercussions detrimental to the overall Western interests would thereupon result in Guinea in particular and in Africa in general,” noted the aide-mémoire.\textsuperscript{38}

Guinea’s request was duly forwarded to the Security Council on 3 December. On the 6\textsuperscript{th}, Georges-Picot confirmed to Paris that Japan had agreed, under pressure from the Afro-Asian bloc, to introduce a Security Council resolution proposing Guinea’s membership. The next day the French representative reported that the British delegation had been instructed to vote in favour of the resolution, and on the 8\textsuperscript{th} the Americans followed suit. That night the Japanese resolution passed by a vote of ten to zero, with one country abstaining: France. On 12 December, Guinea became the 82\textsuperscript{nd} member of the United Nations; despite Georges-Picot’s last ditch plea to his masters in Paris, France also abstained on the vote in the General Assembly.\textsuperscript{39}

Ironically, France made its strongest argument that Guinea was not sovereign and could, therefore, not meet the UN’s standards for statehood only after its former colony

\textsuperscript{36} Sékou Touré to Charles de Gaulle, 24 November 1958; Guinée 8; Chauvel to MAE, No. 3762, 26 November 1958; Guinée 17, DAL, AMAE.

\textsuperscript{37} MAE (Roux) to Alphand, No. 12270, and to Georges-Picot, No. 6030, 27 November 1958; Chauvel to MAE, No. 3800, 28 November 1958; Guinée 17, DAL, AMAE.

\textsuperscript{38} Amory Houghton (US Ambassador to France) to MAE, Aide-Mémoire, 1 December 1958; Guinée 17, DAL, AMAE.

\textsuperscript{39} Georges-Picot to MAE, No. 2736-38, 6 December 1958; Georges-Picot to MAE, No. 2739, 7 December 1958; Alphand to MAE, No. 7063-64, 8 December 1958; Georges-Picot to MAE, No. 2782, 9 December 1958; Georges-Picot to MAE, No. 2847, 12 December 1958; Guinée 17, DAL, AMAE.
had joined the world body. The statement that Georges-Picot was instructed to make to justify France’s abstention in the Security Council and the General Assembly reiterated most of the arguments that France’s diplomats had made in their efforts to delay Guinean membership. France, he said, had a particular interest in the matter because, in respect of this former colony, if found itself “a sort of guarantor of the capacity of this state to fulfill the obligations foreseen by the Charter.” The new country’s status in relation to the rest of the international community and, in particular, to its francophone neighbours, must be determined before Guinea could be considered to be fully independent. In this respect, France had been unable to clarify the situation. Disorder and confusion would result if Guinea were to be accorded full international status before “the passage from French supervision to complete independence” was complete.  

So far, Georges-Picot’s public statement echoed what was already known: France’s imprecise legal argument about Guinea’s incapacity to meet the requirements of the Charter; the administrative stand-off the metropole had imposed by its position on negotiations; the difficulties posed to France’s new Franco-African Community by the defection of one of its members; the danger – to which Dulles was particularly sensitive – that the UN would be forced to accept member states that the Western countries did not find suitable.

But Georges-Picot introduced a new element with his statement to the UN. The French representative alluded to the outcome of Sékou Touré’s 23 November meetings with Nkrumah in Accra. What, he asked, was the exact nature of the proposed Union announced between Guinea and Ghana? Surely it is the union that must sit in the UN, not each state on its own. And what did the two leaders intend when they referred to relations with the French Community, on one hand, and the British Commonwealth, on the other?

The issues that Georges-Picot raised about the international capacity of the members of this new Ghana-Guinea Union were valid ones, even if his timing ensured that the Security Council did not have to give them any serious consideration. But these were not the main concerns for France. The imprecise agreement between Nkrumah and

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40 MAE to Georges-Picot, No. 6087-96, 29 November 1958; final version of statement in MAE to Georges-Picot, No. 6208-09, 4 December 1958; Guinée 17, DAL, AMAE.
41 MAE to Georges-Picot, No. 6087-96, 29 November 1958; MAE to Georges-Picot, No. 6208-09, 4 December 1958; Guinée 17, DAL, AMAE.
Sékou Touré would do what all the polite diplomatic efforts of the US and the UK could not: force France to specify which aspects of Guinea’s sovereignty it insisted on trying to control, and open negotiations with its former colony to get what it really wanted.

Though foreign diplomats in Accra reacted to the Sékou Touré-Nkrumah meetings with alarm, the reasons why were not clear at first. Diplomatic reporting concentrated on the issue of how far each leader intended to go in merging his state with the other. The French ambassador to Ghana, Louis de Guiringaud, first caught wind on 22 November of a possible federation. As he understood the proposal, the two states would adopt a common currency and flag, and Guinea would enter the Commonwealth. Nkrumah seemed confident that any legal problems this might pose for the Commonwealth could easily be resolved and, in any case, the Americans would favour it, “seeing in it a guarantee against Soviet influence.”

De Guiringaud reported that the British High Commissioner, Sir Ian Maclellan, told him on the 23rd that Nkrumah considered that the Ghana-Guinea Union would develop very quickly and was meant to entail “a near-total constitutional unity” between the two states. The high commissioner even thought that the question of a common chief of state would arise very soon, and that a single diplomatic representation for the two countries went without saying.

Sékou Touré and Saïfoulaye Diallo were quick to reassure de Guiringaud that they had no intention of surrendering Guinea’s independence. The first text that Nkrumah proposed went much further towards complete integration than they were comfortable with, they said; they had fought to retain Guinea’s “personality and sovereignty” and were successful in watering the final communiqué down so that it called for the creation of a joint body which would consider how the policies of the two states could be harmonized with a view to becoming the “nucleus of the future United States of West Africa.” Guinea’s leaders also assured de Guiringaud that the communiqué specified that the new institution would not affect current or future relations between Guinea and France and the Community, on one hand, or between Ghana and the Commonwealth, on the other, and took credit for this amendment. In any case, the national assemblies of each state had to ratify the agreements before they would come

42 Note, “Projets d’union entre le Ghana et la Guinée,” 24 November 1958; Guinée 8, DAL, AMAE.
43 Communiqué, de Guiringaud to MAE, copied to MinFOM on 24 November 1958; Guinée 8, DAL, AMAE.
into effect. Sékou Touré also told the ambassador that he had resigned himself to accepting Ghana’s offer only in the face of France’s continuing silence and had waited as long as he could. For all the talk of constitutional ambiguity, to France the single most important issue that the proposed Union raised was the first one de Guiringaud mentioned: currency. The question was whether the Union offered Guinea an alternative to remaining within the franc zone, the territory whose currency, the CFA franc, was so closely pegged to the French franc that any revaluation of the latter currency immediately affected everyone using the former. In particular, the possibility that their former territory would leave the franc and adopt instead the use of pounds sterling, as Ghana did, raised issues that were both emotional and practical. On the emotional side, the prospect of losing Guinea to the sterling zone raised the spectre of losing a colony, not to independence, but to the ambit of a rival. London’s Economist pinpointed this fear. In its 29 November 1958 issue, the paper recommended that the Foreign Office be deployed “to try to reassure the French that the British are not bagging a fragment of their empire in revenge for the creation of the [European] common market.” In fact, the Economist was slightly behind the times. The Foreign Office had already tried to reassure France that Guinea’s trade agreement with East Germany worried Britain far more than African federation. Still more upsetting was the thought that French opinion falsely blamed the UK for the rapprochement between the two West African states.

France’s fear that its Western allies were trying to replace its influence in Africa would persist long after the question of Guinea’s currency was answered. In the short term, though, it raised significant concerns. A memorandum prepared within the French colonial ministry on 31 October listed several. If Sékou Touré insisted on French recognition before concluding negotiations on Guinea’s continued use of the supported currency, France would have to suspend the activities of a half dozen financial agencies in Guinea. Guinea’s products, notably its bauxite and the alumina derived from it, would

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44 Note, “Projets d’union entre le Ghana et la Guinée,” 24 November 1958; Guinée 8, DAL, AMAE.
45 “Two Guineas,” The Economist, 29 November 1958, 775.
46 MAE, “Mise au point: Portée de la Déclaration d’Accra,” 28 November 1958; Guinée 17, DAL, AMAE.
no longer be available in France, which might have consequences for industrialization and ongoing investments. Most important, maintaining Guinea in the franc zone, even for a transitional period, would slow the liquidation of French interests in the former colony, a process which threatened to burden the French treasury by increasing the demands of French businesses in Guinea for compensation.48

In the last days of November, it seemed that France had simply waited too long to recognize Guinea’s independence and lock the territory into the franc zone. Ambassador de Guiringaud warned on 24 November that the Canadian high commissioner, Evan Gill, was firmly convinced that Guinea would join the sterling zone within fifteen days. Gabriel Ferras, director of the International Monetary Fund’s European Department and currently on an inspection tour in Accra, also thought this likely, though he believed France might yet be able to bring the matter under control by providing Sékou Touré with sufficient advances from its Treasury to permit him to meet the government’s end-of-November obligations and to table a balanced budget later that week. On the other hand, Guinea’s leaders and diplomats continued to express both pro-association and pro-franc sentiments.49

In the end, it was the currency question that forced France to abandon its insistence that Guinea show its hand before the metropole would negotiate any ongoing arrangements. As recently as 21 November, de Gaulle had insisted that France would send no new mission to Conakry after Risterucci’s mandate expired on the 30th. He seemed unconcerned that the franc would thereby have indeterminate status in Guinea: “no new measure is foreseen concerning financial relations between Guinea and the franc zone,” reported the MAE of the premier’s meeting with Pierre Messmer. Yet within days, Risterucci was instructed to present Sékou Touré with a note offering to establish a new liaison body to replace the Risterucci mission and carry out negotiations with Guinea. The Guinean president accepted the offer, and four French officials were instructed to negotiate an agreement concerning Guinea’s use of the CFA franc.50

48 Note, Ministère de la France d’outre-mer, 31 October 1958; Guinée 12; Conakry (Risterucci) to MinFOM, 7 October 1958; MinFom to Haussaire Dakar, No. 20020, 22 October 1958; MinFom to Ministre des Finances et des Affaires économiques, “Mesures en faveur de certains ressortissants français de Guinée,” 10 November 1958; Guinée 8, DAL, AMAE.
49 De Guiringaud to MAE, Communiqué, 24 November 1958; Guinée 8, DAL, AMAE.
50 Note, MAE/DAL, undated (late November 1958); Guinée 12, DAL, AMAE.
The new mission was headed by Inspector-General Robert Bargues. Its progress was not smooth: even once the substantive text of the Franco-Guinean agreements was more or less agreed, the ongoing irritant of France’s refusal to grant formal recognition almost derailed the accords. When the texts were complete, de Gaulle signalled the French government’s assent to their language by sending a letter to Bargues. Sékou Touré protested both the form and the content of de Gaulle’s letter. As a matter of form, it should have been sent to Guinea’s president, not to France’s own representative. More significantly, because the accords would finally signal France’s recognition of Guinea’s independence, it was not appropriate that they should be signed by the French ministers responsible for their contents. Recognition required the signature of either foreign minister Maurice Couve de Murville, or of de Gaulle himself. De Gaulle would not bend. “I confirm,” he cabled en clair to Bargues, “that the powers granted to the three Ministers of the Government include the signature of the preamble of recognition and of the text of the three protocols. There can be no equivocation on this subject and this procedure conforms exactly with that which has been agreed.”

When Bargues left Conakry on 25 December, Guinea’s government had still not signed the accords. Sékou Touré issued a statement announcing his government’s refusal to pursue negotiations further with France until official recognition was granted. But France, sensing victory, was now willing to ignore such provocations, and the rest of its mission stayed on in Conakry. On 3 January 1959, the political bureau of the PDG achieved consensus and announced it would send three of its own ministers to Paris to sign the agreements. Their mission would be limited to signing the technical protocols: Guinea, as a member of the United Nations, could not “accept that its recognition by the French government appear to be the consequence of bargaining.” However, when the agreements were finally signed on the 7th, even this element of its international prestige was stripped away from Guinea: Sékou Touré’s government had been forced to waive its

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52 Mission française Conakry (Boyer) to MinFOM, No. 613, 26 December 1958; Guinée 10, DAL, AMAE.

53 Philippe Raguenneau (Office of the President of the Council) to Cornut-Gentille, MinFOM, Note, 4 January 1959; Guinée 10, DAL, AMAE.
requirement for prior legal recognition.\textsuperscript{54} Recognition, when it finally came, was conveyed by an informal and anodyne personal message from de Gaulle to Sékou Touré, sent on 16 January: “I send you my best wishes for the Republic of Guinea, recognized by the French Republic, and I hope that the ties of cooperation will be strengthened between Guinea and France.”\textsuperscript{55}

\textbf{III. Testing the Limits}

On their face, the three accords that Guinea signed with France on 7 January 1959 seemed to constrain only one of the major attributes of a sovereign state: its currency. Guinea agreed to keep using the CFA franc, still officially bearing the label of the Colonies Françaises en Afrique and backed by French institutions and the much stronger French franc. The other two accords offered French technical assistance and educational resources, suggesting that France would begin its cooperation with sovereign Guinea by replacing the expertise it had so suddenly withdrawn the previous October.\textsuperscript{56} For all its bluster, France had recognized Guinea’s independence without completing the decisive redistribution of sovereign powers that France had tried to convince the world community was required before Guinea could truly be independent.

What France intended the accords to mean was largely unstated. The only clue was in the condition that Guinea must seek all the technical and educational help it needed from its former metropole first; only if France could not meet its needs could the new state approach other countries or multilateral institutions for assistance. It soon became clear that the French thought the Guineans had given them far more than this limited right of first refusal.

The French chargé d’affaires, Francis Huré, was in place by the end of January. Almost immediately, the French began to doubt that it would be easy to obtain all they

\textsuperscript{54} Sékou Touré’s statement is quoted in La Documentation française, “Chronologie Internationale,” 1959 No. 1, 1-15 January 1959.
\textsuperscript{55} Reproduced in de Gaulle, \textit{Lettres, notes et carnets}, p. 181. An analysis prepared quickly for the French yearbook of international law by Georges Fischer concluded that the accords themselves implicitly constituted recognition at law (\textit{de jure}), even if they never mentioned the word: Fischer, “L’Indépendance de la Guinée et les accords franco-guinéens,” \textit{Annuaire Français de Droit International} IV (1958), 711-22.
\textsuperscript{56} The accords were published in La Documentation française, \textit{Notes et études documentaires} 2503, 29 January 1959, and are reproduced in Sylvain Soriba Camara, \textit{La Guinée sans la France} (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1976), Annex III, 271-77.
wanted from the accords. The agreements did not seem to be appreciably constraining Guinean economic or political behaviour. On 16 February, Huré reported that measures already taken by Guinea to centralize control over its economy, ostensibly to support trade agreements with Soviet bloc countries signed before the French accords were complete, smacked of “dirigisme.” If this path were followed, Huré noted, “one might fear that it would lead inevitably to the disruption of harmonization with the franc zone’s policies . . . and thereby to . . . the accords themselves coming into question.”

In Paris in early March, Guinea’s ambassador met with the MAE’s deputy director for Africa, Paul Marc Henry, to discuss the matter. After the long wait to establish diplomatic relations, Nabi Youla complained, why was France now apparently stalling the implementation of the January accords and the negotiation of further agreements? Henry replied that Huré had been doing what he could and France had begun the preliminary studies that must be completed before implementation. However, Henry hinted that France might indeed be stalling. He complained that Guinea’s actions on the world stage were a bit worrisome. As an example he cited Guinea’s opposition, expressed in the UN, to France’s plans to grant independence to its trust territory of Cameroon without first holding free elections for fear that the incumbent, conservative, and francophile government would be ousted. Such actions, Henry complained, “did not augur well for the development of an appropriate understanding” between Guinea and France, which “must extend to international questions” as well as to bilateral issues.

France was behaving as though in exchange for the accords’ potential economic benefits, Guinea would come back into the fold of states whose foreign political and economic allegiances would be dictated by the former metropole.

Guinea signalled it had no intention of abiding by France’s unwritten rules by choosing a highly provocative way to assert its right, as a sovereign nation, to defend itself. On 23 March, the French chargé d’affaires in Conakry, Francis Huré, reported to the MAE that a Russian-built aircraft carrying a party of Czech technicians had arrived in Conakry a few days before. It was followed within days by a Polish ship, the Stettin,

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57 Huré to MAE/AL, “La Guinée face aux trois protocoles du 7 janvier,” No. 36/AL, 16 February 1959; Guinée 13, DAL, AMAE.
which began to unload some rather suspicious cargo, also of Czech origin. In addition to radio equipment, it appeared that the Czechs were shipping arms to the new state. Once the French chargé had confirmed the existence and the contents of the Czech shipment, the MAE reacted quickly, calling Nabi Youla in to deliver a stern rebuke:

Up to this point, we have been able to extend to Guinea the benefit of the doubt in considering that its numerous contacts with countries of the Eastern bloc did not necessarily imply the orientation of its policy in that direction. While we would have considered acceptable the provision of arms by, for example, Sweden or Switzerland, we can no longer have any illusions, despite the reassuring declarations that have been provided to us, concerning the political orientation adopted by the Government at Conakry following the spectacle of the arrival in Guinea of a Czechoslovakian mission accompanying a significant delivery of weapons.59

Sékou Touré was quick to deny France’s accusations. The Guinean president protested that Guinea had not asked the East to provide it with weapons: “Prague had sent a ‘gracious’ gift, without political conditions; other countries had offered other types of equipment, notably agricultural, and Guinea would accept all contributions, irrespective of the source.”60

In view of the implications of Guinea’s choice of arms supplier, the US embassy in Conakry was strangely silent on the subject of the Czech deal. Set up on 13 February, the American diplomatic mission in Conakry was in the care of chargé d’affaires Robert W. Rinden.61 Rinden’s mandate and resources were both very limited, and he faced significant difficulties in setting up a working embassy in a town that was short on available space and skilled labour.62 His instructions, consistent with general policy guidelines, were to “assume that the French-Guinea agreement eliminates any request for US technical cooperation.” The only forms of aid that might be forthcoming from the US

59 MAE/AL (Daridan) to Conakry (Huré), No. 193-94, 28 March 1959; Guinée 3, DAL, AMAE.
60 Sékou Touré’s response is paraphrased in Conakry (Huré) to MAE, No. 192-94, 1 April 1959; Guinée 3, DAL, AMAE.
62 George B. Lambrakis (US Embassy, Conakry) to Robert Baum, 14 March 1959; Records of Component Offices of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, 1947-1963, Lot File 65D350 (INR 1947-63); RG 59, NACP.
would be development loans. The announcement, just days before he arrived in Conakry, that the US International Cooperation Administration (ICA) had guaranteed the investment of Olin Mathieson and its subsidiaries in Guinea against expropriation and other risks, both tied his hands and signalled his true function: Rinden had been sent to protect an investment the US government had already made in the new state.

When news broke of the arms shipment, the more senior US consul-general in Dakar, Donald Dumont, noted acidly that he had had no official report of this “one ‘little’ item”, and wondered whether Rinden had actually told their superiors in Washington what was going on. Whether or not they heard it directly from Conakry, State Department officials were soon involved. For one thing, on 1 April Alphand raised the issue with C. Vaughan Ferguson Jr., director of the Office of Middle and Southern African Affairs, and found him generally sympathetic but concerned that neither the French nor the American chargé in Conakry had the stature necessary to “draw Sékou Touré’s attention to his responsibilities.” On 3 April, Diallo Telli, now Guinea’s representative to both the US and the UN, reacted by giving a press conference in New York in which he accused “diplomatic circles of the colonial powers” of conducting a “whispering campaign” intended to “create the impression that the removal of colonialism inevitably opens the way to infiltration from outside,” meaning, as the New York Times report said, “communism.” Indeed, the front page of the next day’s Times contained an article entitled “Rising Red Influences in Guinea Stir U.S. Concern About Africa.” This in turn prompted a visit to Washington from Diallo Telli, seeking clarification of the journalist’s contention that the US was “alarmed” by the arms shipment. Ferguson reassured Diallo that the article “did not reflect official United States Government opinion,” and that the Embassy in Conakry would be instructed to reassure the Guinean government that its representative had not sparked a diplomatic incident.

63 OCB Weekly Activity Report, 16 March 1959; OCB Activity Reports, 1958-59; RG 59, NACP.
64 Donald Dumont (Dakar) to William C. Canup (Office of International Affairs, AFS), 31 March 1959; File I.A-1, Senegal – Correspondence with Principal Officer; Country Files, 1951-63; BAA-OWA; RG 59, NACP.
65 Alphand to MAE, No. 1754-55, 1 April 1959; Guinée 3, DAL, AMAE.
67 Jack Raymond, “Rising Red Influences in Guinea Stir U.S. Concern About Africa,” New York Times, 4 April 1959, 1; Memorandum of Conversation, 6 April 1959; Guinea; Country Files, 1951-63; BAA-OWA; RG 59, NACP.
Concerned that their Western allies were not taking news of Guinea’s apparent defection to the Soviet bloc as seriously as they should, the French decided to take advantage of tripartite meetings scheduled for mid-April to convince the Americans and the British that Guinea was now a threat to the security of the entire West African region. The meetings were a response to de Gaulle’s suggestion, first made the previous September, that a new tripartite organization should be created to deal with the global Soviet challenge. When the General proposed the organization, he alluded to the previous summer’s troubles in Lebanon and the straits between the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan, but by the time staff from the MAE met with their counterparts in the US State Department and the British Foreign Office, there was only one continent on the French mind. On 15 April, MAE and State Department representatives met to discuss the agenda for the formal meetings, which would begin the next day. Louis Joxe, the Quai’s Secretary-General, suggested the high-level group should confine its discussions to three matters:

1. The Soviet menace in Africa.
2. The special interests and responsibilities of each country in Africa.
3. Political and strategic planning for Africa.

The defence of the continent, he said, “is essential to France, and the three must arrive at a common appreciation of the problem for psychological as well as defense needs.” Though Joxe listed Algeria, the Maghreb, the Sahara and the new Community as the topics France was willing to discuss in this connection, the US representative, Robert D. Murphy, tried to take the initiative by raising the subject of Guinea. The Czech arms shipment and the internal situation in the new state “disturbed” the Americans, he said; the preferred solution was to upgrade their representation in Conakry to a full ambassador, but they would wait for France to make the first move. Joxe’s response was noncommittal. The MAE agreed with the State Department’s analysis and Joxe had spoken to Minister Couve de Murville and President de Gaulle about the need to send an ambassador of their own to Conakry. However, it was the president himself who was

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hesitating: “There are problems with the Community to consider. The members are jealous and reluctant to see Guinea-French ties re-forged.” There the matter rested.

Joxe was more forthcoming the next day when the formal talks began. To Murphy’s opening statement that the Americans’ main concern was “to avoid African nationalism turning into a massive anti-European sentiment which the Communists could exploit,” Joxe retorted that in the case of Guinea this concern was both too little and too late. He pulled no punches in labelling Sékou Touré and his government: “if not actually Communist, [Guinea] was drifting towards Communism.” Joxe pointed to Guinea’s authoritarianism, its “crude . . . monolithic state”, and the “economic and social transformation which overtook” new African states, making them vulnerable to Soviet intervention. Because in his view defence of Europe was defence of Africa and vice versa, the only appropriate response was “a common military, political and economic doctrine for Africa” to be agreed by the three Western powers.

It was only later that France specified what it thought that doctrine should be. France wanted to revive an international instrument used to disarm African resistance that dated from the European conquest of the interior of the continent: an agreement among the arms-exporting powers not to sell to sub-Saharan Africa. The logic behind its proposed replication nearly seventy years later was defensive – though the primary prize to be defended was France’s reputation and the perceived value of belonging to the French Community, not the safety of the free world. MAE analysts argued that “Sékou Touré’s campaign . . . seems to be to assign to France the responsibility for the new state of affairs created by the deliberate establishment, in a part of Africa that to date has been effectively disarmed, of an arsenal that risks overturning the political and strategic

69 Memorandum of Conversation, 15 April 1959; Subject Files Relating to France 1944-1960; Office of Western European Affairs (Lot 61D30), RG 59, NACP.
71 The most comprehensive such effort was the Brussels Convention of 1890, which saw all the European colonial powers together with the so-called “Islamic” powers such as the Sultan of Oman and the United States agree to impose civilization and eliminate all remnants of slavery in Africa by, among other things, agreeing not to sell arms to Africans in most of the continent. See “General Act of the Brussels Conference relative to the African Slave Trade, etc. Signed at Brussels, 2nd July, 1890” in Sir Edward Hertslet (ed.), The Map of Africa by Treaty (2nd ed. London: HMSO, 1896), Vol. I, 48-89. The origins of the Convention are discussed in Suzanne Miers, Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade (London: Longman, 1975). The administration of the arms embargo in French West Africa has been explored by Sokhna Sané, Le contrôle des armes à feu en Afrique occidentale française 1834-1958 (Paris: Karthala and Dakar: Crépos, 2008).
balance solely for the benefit of subversive activities.” Surely this must provide the three powers with a reason to define a common policy concerning “what appears to be a new instance of Soviet expansionism.” Advised by its lawyers that nothing in current international law prevented independent Guinea from purchasing arms from any willing seller, the MAE was seeking to convince the US and the United Kingdom that a new norm should be established to do just that. The MAE instructed Alphand and Joxe to inform their interlocutors that France “would be disposed to study, in concert with the Government of the US and the British Government, all practical measures enabling, while there is still time, the cessation of the provision of unjustified armaments to a state whose external security is not menaced in any way.”

Neither the American nor the British government shared France’s enthusiasm for such measures. Apparently on its own initiative, the State Department had considered back in mid-February whether a Brussels Convention–like agreement should be pursued to limit arms in independent Africa. At that time, assistant secretary of state for African affairs Joseph C. Satterthwaite pointed out to Acting Secretary Christian Herter that such a move would be perceived as “neo-colonialism” and therefore, in his opinion, “it would not … be in the interest of the US position in Africa to take the initiative in suggesting such an agreement.” Accordingly, when the issue was formally addressed at the ambassadorial level following France’s proposal in April, the Americans raised the reasonable concern that any action giving new African states the impression that the Western powers were attempting to supervise them risked “raising a common front of African states” against them. As Peers Carter from the British embassy in Washington pointed out to his State Department contacts once all three governments had studied the matter, France’s only legally and politically viable suggestion was “that it would be

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72 Telegram, MAE/AL to Washington (Alphand), No. 4415-21, 17 April 1959; Guinée 3, DAL, AMAE.
73 Jurisconsulte to MAE Secretary-General, “Contrôle de l'envoi d'armes en Afrique,” No. 279, 22 April 1959; Guinée 3, DAL, AMAE. The MAE’s legal service had answered a very similar question the previous month: whether the 1919 Treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye could still operate to prevent arms shipments to Algeria. The legal opinion was equally discouraging in that case. See Service Juridique, Note for Directorate of Political Affairs (Liaison Mission for Algeria), “Convention du 10 septembre 1919 relative au contrôle du commerce des armes et des munitions,” No. 172, 13 March 1959; Guinée 3, DAL, AMAE.
74 MAE/AL (J. Roux) to Alphand and Joxe, No. 4493-97, 18 April 1959; Guinée 3, DAL, AMAE.
75 Satterthwaite to Herter, 13 February 1959; Africa – military; Records of the Political Military Advisor, 1951-1963; Office of Inter-African Affairs, Bureau of African Affairs; RG 59, NACP.
76 Telegram, Alphand to MAE, No. 2254-61, 28 April 1959; Guinée 3, DAL, AMAE.
useful if one of the states adjacent to Guinea were spontaneously to come out with a
declaration that Africans themselves wished to see their countries remain in their present
virtually defenceless state.” Noting, however, that even a genuinely spontaneous
declaration to this effect would be subject to allegations by “anti-colonial propaganda . . .
that [it] had only been made at the behest of the Western powers,” Carter stated that his
Government would not urge African states to this action. Of course, Carter said, if such a
declaration were made, his government “would welcome it.”

France ultimately failed to get either the US or the UK to agree to its suggestions
on the substance of a common policy towards Africa. By the time Eisenhower agreed to
Charles de Gaulle’s proposed tripartite mechanism in December 1959, the French
president seemed to have lost interest. However, the reasons for the American
opposition to French plans had little or nothing to do with a desire that relations with
Guinea should be based, as Diallo Telli put it during a press conference he held in New
York on the day the tripartite talks began in Washington, “on dignity and respect for
independence.” Instead, the US cited the same reluctance to alienate Asian and
African opinion by appearing to support European colonialism that Dulles had mentioned
in connection with the US refusal to block Guinea’s bid for UN membership.

American policy-makers may also have been thinking of US interests as an arms-
exporter. Certainly they knew that their own refusal, the previous December, to entertain
a request for arms from Sékou Touré would put them in a difficult position if they were
now seen to be trying to prevent a sovereign state from acquiring the means of its defence
from anyone else. The Guinean president made sure the world knew, too. He told
Thomas Brady of the New York Times that he had approached the US long before hearing
from the Czechs, and Brady duly published the story on 30 April. It was true. Guinea
had made the request through Liberia’s ambassador to the US on two separate occasions
late in 1958. Vaughan Ferguson explained to Alphand that his department had not
considered itself “seized of an official request,” and had decided not to respond “out of

77 Letter, Carter to Ferguson, 22 May 1959; File: 14.1 Guinea – Czech Arms Shipment; Country Files
1951-63; BAA-OWA; RG 59, NACP.
78 Matthew Connelly, A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria’s Fight for Independence and the Origins of the
States, and the Algerian War (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 210. See also Chapter
3, infra.
79 New York (Georges-Picot) to MAE, No. 612, 17 April 1959; Guinée 13, DAL, AMAE.
consideration for France.” However, neither the shield of diplomatic procedure nor consideration for its European ally could now protect the US from an uncomfortable position.

What the US could do in the wake of the arms shipment and the tripartite meetings was to go ahead and upgrade its own representation in Conakry to the ambassadorial level so as to exercise more influence or even supervision in the new state. Despite Joxe’s assurance to Murphy that the MAE agreed that the time had come to escalate Western representation in Conakry, it was clear to the Americans that the French were still not ready to normalize their relationship with Guinea. Accordingly, the US decided that it must take the initiative that Murphy had signalled to Joxe, and try to influence Guinea through a more positive engagement.

IV. A Show of Friendship

As predicted, the French were not pleased with the decision to send a US ambassador to Conakry with authority to administer a minor program of bilateral aid. Nearly two weeks after the tripartite meetings, Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Satterthwaite noted that French experts remained “unreceptive” to his suggestion that a “show of friendship,” including sending an ambassador and “at least token” aid, should be made so as to counter Soviet influence. The fact that the US went ahead, however, did not mean that it had opted for Guinea over France. Rather, the Americans were still searching for half-measures that would suffice to protect their geopolitical and material interests in the West African country yet not alienate their far more important European ally.

The initiative to appoint John H. Morrow as the first US ambassador to Guinea seems to have come from the White House, not the State Department. Morrow claimed that his first indication that he was being considered for the post came from the State Department. However, it was a call from the White House that summoned him to

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80 Thomas F. Brady, “U.S. Said to Spurn Guinea Arms Plea,” New York Times, 30 April 1959, 1; Memorandum of Conversation, “Arms for Guinea and Liberian-Guinea-Ghana Relations,” 17 December 1958; Guinea; Country Files 1951-63; BAA-OWA; RG 59, NACP; Alphand to MAE, No. 2277-78, 30 April 1959; Guinée 3, DAL, AMAE.

81 Satterthwaite to Murphy, 27 April 1959; Guinea; Country Files 1951-63; BAA-OWA; RG 59, NACP.
Washington. Moreover, State Department officials had been preparing to defend their acquiescence to France’s wishes in front of White House staff such as Karl Harr, the President’s special assistant for security operations coordination, who thought the “US is being unduly responsive to French sensitiveness about Guinea.”\textsuperscript{82} However, perhaps to counter any inference of favoritism in making a rather controversial appointment, both John H. Morrow and the brother who phoned him, E. Frederic Morrow, who was Eisenhower’s administrative officer for special projects, would later insist that it was the State Department that had made the selection.\textsuperscript{83}

In addition to being the brother of the only African-American member of the Eisenhower White House executive staff, John Morrow was a professor of French literature and chair of the modern languages department at North Carolina College at Durham. His knowledge of Africa seems to have been primarily academic, rather than practical. He had spent the summer of 1958 in Paris, trying to get permission from the colonial ministry there to travel to francophone North and West Africa to research a manuscript concerning “challenge and response in French colonial politics.”\textsuperscript{84} Morrow’s appointment as ambassador was somewhat contentious: as an African-American, he was accused of being a second-class citizen of the US, and the appointment was assailed as “condescension” and tokenism. Moreover, there was a suggestion that he was being set up to fail: someone with no experience or expertise in diplomacy was being sent to a country about which the only thing anyone who read American newspapers knew was that its leaders were accused of allegiance to the Soviet bloc.\textsuperscript{85} Despite these misgivings and Morrow’s own reluctance to abandon a successful and hard-won academic career, he was confirmed as ambassador on 19 June 1959, and set off for Conakry with his family in mid-July.

\textsuperscript{82} Undersecretary for Operations (Loy Henderson) to Acting Secretary, 14 April 1959; OCB Luncheon Items; Records Relating to State Department Participation in the Operations Coordinating Board and the National Security Council, 1947-63 (Lot File 62D430); RG 59, NACP.


\textsuperscript{84} Morrow, \textit{First American Ambassador}, ix.

Although he was a full ambassador, John Morrow’s scope of action was not significantly wider than Rinden’s had been as chargé d’affaires. In his memoirs, Morrow asserts that three weeks of State Department briefings following his confirmation left him unenlightened: “I was finding it difficult to ascertain the current United States policy in Africa in general, and in Guinea in particular.” The issue that he felt most unclear about, at least in hindsight, was “what kind of commitment, if any, the United States intended to make toward the economic, political, and cultural development of this African republic that was being courted by the Communist bloc countries.”

Morrow’s inadequate briefing, if frustrating, was an accurate reflection of the state of American policy towards independent Africa. The official policy had been in place since the previous August. NSC 5818, the “Statement of U.S. Policy toward Africa South of the Sahara Prior to Calendar Year 1960,” was limited in more than time. It expressed an interest in African independence that was well-meaning and polite, but not much more than that. The fact was that the region remained marginal to US concerns. The statement noted that although the US had both economic and strategic interests in the region, the former were not significant compared to other areas, and the latter were important solely as a potential barrier to access to the Far East. In this, the logic of NSC 5818 was fundamentally colonial. Its assessment of the region’s importance to the US echoed Britain’s justifications for its interests in Africa, nearly a century earlier and before its own participation in the scramble for Africa, as a means of facilitating access to India and China. On the crucial issue of which side of the Cold War new African states might choose, the policy was to encourage de facto Western alignment, though without forcing the states explicitly to choose a side. “The eventual political orientation of the emerging African states will probably be determined by what the leaders and peoples conceive best serves their own interests, measured primarily in terms of ‘independence’ and of ‘equality’ with the white man,” it observed. To encourage an appropriate choice, NSC 5818 prescribed that the US should spend the remainder of President Eisenhower’s

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term of office supporting the status quo of Western European economic and political domination of Africa. Progress towards African self-government and independence should be “orderly” and “in cooperation with the European powers”; the US believed it “generally desirable that close and mutually advantageous economic relations between the European powers and Africa should continue after the colonial period has passed.” Nominal independence was welcome, but it should not replace continuing economic and political dependence.

French hostility to Guinea made NSC 5818 obsolete within weeks of its approval. That the second sub-Saharan colonial territory to take its independence had done so without the cooperation of the metropole did not augur well for the cozy post-colonial relationship favoured by US policy. The Operations Coordinating Board recognized in mid-January that there was a problem, opining that Guinea’s accession to independence had drawn the US into “a controversy between an emerging African state and a European power with each side looking to us to influence the other.” Like NSC 5818 itself, however, this recognition provided Morrow with little guidance concerning how to handle his new situation, because it fundamentally misread Guinea. The Guinean leadership was not interested in using the US to “influence” France. Nor was it seeking “equality,” an understandable preoccupation of black people in the United States and, therefore, of Washington’s policy-making apparatus. As far as Sékou Touré and the PDG were concerned, independence gave their state equality, and their control over Guinea’s government gave them the same stature as any other nation’s leaders. What it sought from the US, then, was not aid, whether material or diplomatic. It was a much more profound sort of recognition than the acknowledgment Eisenhower had sent the previous November: that of the dignity of Guineans.

Morrow’s arrival, and the colour of his skin, raised comment in Conakry. Pierre Siraud, a more experienced diplomat with whom the French had replaced Huré as chargé in early July, reported the rumour that “the nomination of a coloured man” had inspired “mixed feelings” in Guinea’s governing circles. The rumour was sufficiently widespread, at least among the white diplomats in Conakry, that on 22 August Sékou

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Touré issued a communiqué to address it. His government affirmed that, “far from perceiving in M. Morrow’s nomination a clumsy act of propaganda,” it considered his selection to be a “concrete demonstration of the American desire to bring to African problems a special attention and to do their utmost to foster a direct and perfect comprehension between the two states.” As he had with Jean Risterucci the previous October, Sékou Touré was proposing to treat John Morrow as the representative of a foreign state that considered Guinea to be its equal, in the hope that the reality would follow.

Like Risterucci before him, Morrow was hampered by limited authority and could not act either as quickly or as fully as Sékou Touré wanted. The American ambassador focused on what material aid his country might be prepared to send to Guinea. He raised the issue with Washington after his first meeting with Sékou Touré. The OCB, sounding somewhat disapproving, observed that the new Ambassador “requests guidance regarding indicating [sic] to the President the types of US aid under consideration – even before the programs are finalized.” The aid being considered was minor: a fairly small contribution of rice and wheat had been offered under the terms of Public Law 480, the so-called Food for Peace program; and the ICA had sent a study mission. Still, the US had conceded an important principle: there would be American aid to Guinea, irrespective of the fate of the Franco-Guinean accords.

As an important part of the show the US intended to make of its friendship towards Guinea, there was some urgency to establishing bilateral US aid. Sékou Touré was due to make a state visit to the United States in October, and the American plan was to formalize and announce American aid initiatives to his country during the visit, thereby ensuring that both countries saw it as a success. In September, State presented the OCB with an “Operations Plan for Guinea”, which was approved in early October, and which was intended to embody any changes required to NSC 5818 “as a result of the rapidly evolving political situation” in this part of Sub-Saharan Africa. The changes were minor. The main difference from the policy agreed to the previous year was that the Operations Plan incorporated a new aid program for Guinea. State had been discussing

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90 Conakry (Siraud) to MAE, No. 394/AL, 22 August 1959; Guinée 18, DAL, AMAE.
91 OCB Weekly Activity Report, 3 August 1959; OCB Activity Reports 1958-59; RG 59, NACP.
the magnitude and structure of such a program with the ICA and the United States Information Agency (USIA) since Morrow went to Conakry in July. The program called for not more than $2 million to be dispensed in aid to Guinea in 1960, which would be drawn from special assistance contingency funds. Of this, no more than $600,000 would represent technical cooperation, the category of aid the Franco-Guinean accords reserved first to France, even though the accords had still not been implemented. The OCB approved the aid program in readiness for the Guineans’ visit.\textsuperscript{92}

A few days before the Guinean party was due to arrive, Secretary Herter’s memorandum for the president spelled out what the US hoped to gain from their visit. The “primary objective” of the US was to demonstrate to the Guinean president and his party “that it is in their interest to maintain close ties with the United States and the West,” wrote Herter. They would do this by showing the delegation “that the Marxist picture of the United States is distorted,” and that “we genuinely support the well-being and aspirations of Africans.”\textsuperscript{93} Although both the Americans and the Guineans would later be effusive with thanks for a successful visit, direct exposure to Guinea’s leaders failed to alert the Americans to the magnitude of the gap between, on the one hand, the status they were inclined to offer this independent African state and, on the other, the Guinean political elite’s perception of their own situation. The record of the Guineans’ visit should also have demonstrated how false were the premises on which Herter based his definition of success – both as to how the Guineans would choose to conduct their foreign policy and as to how the US might influence it.

Some State Department officials did become aware of the important role consensus played in the decisions of Guinea’s political elite simply by observing Sékou Touré’s party. In addition to the president and his wife Andrée, the delegation consisted


\textsuperscript{93} Christian A. Herter, Memorandum for the President, 22 October 1959; President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s Office Files, 1953-61, Part 2: International Series, Reel 15 of 32 (DDE Office Files, Reel 15); Robert E. Lester, project coordinator; William E. Leuchtenberg, general editor, Research Collections on International Politics (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1990).
of Saïfoulaye Diallo, president of the National Assembly; Louis Lansana Béavogui, Minister of the General Economy; Fodéba Keita, Minister of the Interior; Noumandian Keita, Chief of Staff; and Ambassador Diallo Telli and his wife. Arva Floyd, the State Department interpreter who accompanied the party on its visits to Washington, New York, Chapel Hill, Chicago and Los Angeles, observed that “Guinea’s leadership is collective in a real sense.” Although Sékou Touré did all the speaking for the group and was, as Floyd noted, “first among equals,” at least one other member of the Cabinet was present for each conversation, and Saïfoulaye Diallo “would sometimes nod vigorously as if to suggest that he too had had a hand in working out the official position on these matters.” Despite this evidence, US policy-makers were convinced, as Herter’s briefing memorandum had put it, that “the Republic of Guinea is largely a creation of this one man.” They would continue to focus on trying to influence Sékou Touré alone throughout the remaining year of Eisenhower’s administration, missing the broader implications of their own observation for the fragility of the new state – and the tenacity of its president.

State did not do much better when it came to interpreting Sékou Touré’s message concerning what Guinea really did want from the United States. In his memoir, John Morrow observed that to the surprise of “even some career diplomats,” Sékou Touré never once asked for American aid during his visit. As Arva Floyd explained, the Guinean President tried to turn the attention of those who asked him how the US could help his country away from economic or technical aid and towards what he thought would be more useful: “diplomatic and political support for the cause of African independence. A powerful country like the United States could do a great deal in this regard.” Floyd noted that at least two of Sékou Touré’s interlocutors, Averell Harriman and Congressman Barratt O’Hara, chair of the House Subcommittee on Africa, were visibly annoyed by the president’s refusal to ask for specific, tangible forms of aid.

Their annoyance, and the expectation that Sékou Touré had come to the US primarily to seek tangible forms of assistance, reflected two dubious assumptions: first, that Guinea and its president could easily be influenced with the effect that Sékou Touré

94 Memorandum, Arva C. Floyd to Thomas J. Cassilly, “Impressions of the Visit of Sékou Touré and his Party to the United States,” undated (November 1959); INR 1947-63, RG 59, NACP.
95 Morrow, First American Ambassador, 99.
96 Floyd to Cassilly, November 1959, op. cit.
would swing his country back towards the West and away from the East; and second, that providing aid was the key to establishing this influence. These assumptions had been spelled out in the briefing memorandum prepared for Eisenhower before the Guinean party’s arrival. There was a risk of failure, but it was manageable: “despite this definite tendency toward the East, President Touré is committed to a policy of non-alignment,” noted the briefing paper. “Our principal objective is to prevent Guinea’s being further drawn into the Soviet orbit; we are prepared to provide a program of economic assistance.”

Sékou Touré confounded the Americans’ expectations out of a concern that aid, if requested rather than freely offered, would infringe on Guinea’s sovereignty. He said this repeatedly on his tour of the US and of the five other countries he visited, in both Western and Eastern Europe, after he left the US in mid-November. He even said it to the United Nations when he addressed the General Assembly on 5 November, warning that Africa would not tolerate “paternalism” in aid or any other matter. As Floyd noted, “Touré seemed intensely preoccupied with the dignity of Africa and the Africans, i.e. ‘Black’ Africa and negro Africans.” The link with foreign aid was explicit. John Morrow, seeking to explain Sékou Touré’s reticence, pointed to the speech he made the following April to the PDG’s national convention: “We are certainly not going to disguise ourselves as beggars to explain our indigence which everybody knows, which everybody can appreciate, and to which each one can, loyally and in strict respect of our sovereignty, bring remedy.” Even the French recognized the essential connection between dignity and foreign aid. Although the MAE instructed its diplomats to stay away from all gatherings organized in the Guineans’ honour so as to emphasize to their hosts that those being friendly to the visitors were being “played for dupes . . . in a propaganda operation,” it scrutinized with great interest both the Guinean party’s

98 Sékou Touré cancelled his planned stop in Ottawa at the last moment, and instead flew directly to London. From there, he went to Bonn, Moscow, Leningrad, Prague and Rabat before returning to Conakry on 2 December. Apparently the party also cancelled a visit to Tunisia after its stop in Morocco. Note, “Voyage de M. Sékou Touré aux USA et en Europe”, 2 December 1959; Dakar, Ambassade, Série Afrique-Levant, Carton 417, “Guinée – Politique extérieure, 1958-1962” (Dakar 417); Centre d’Archives diplomatique de Nantes (CADN).
statements and their reception in foreign capitals. In London, the ministry reported, Sékou Touré affirmed that “his country did not want to appear as a beggar. He wants it to be ‘respected.’” Guinea would cooperate with France “to the extent that its leaders respect us.”

As Morrow knew, Sékou Touré also had a much more specific reason to suspect that at least some of the American aid he was being offered had strings attached that were incompatible with his understanding of national sovereignty. Just a few days before leaving Conakry, Morrow had presented the Guineans with the ICA’s standard agreement in order to establish the ground rules for an ICA technical mission. To the ICA representative’s distress and disappointment, negotiations broke down very quickly over the standard agreement’s requirement that recipient governments grant ICA personnel privileges that included diplomatic immunity. As Morrow put it, “the Guinean officials made it clear that their Government would accept no agreement which encroached upon their national sovereignty.” When the ICA agreement was eventually signed on 30 September 1960, the offending provisions had been removed to a confidential letter – and even then had been watered down from the standard ICA language.

Despite frustration on both sides, both the US and Guinea counted the visit a success. So convinced were the Americans that they had made a good – and more important, an influential – impression on Guinea’s president that Acting Secretary Douglas Dillon urged President Eisenhower to take the unusual step of replying to a second telegram of thanks from Sékou Touré in December: “I am informed that during his trip to the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, President Touré not only kept forcefully to his neutral attitude despite blandishments to the contrary by his hosts but on several occasions made friendly references to his reception in this country.” The second telegram, therefore, had “a special meaning.” Eisenhower agreed and cabled Sékou Touré, “I fully reciprocate your expressed desire for cooperation between our two

100 Floyd to Cassilly, November 1959, op. cit.; Morrow, First American Ambassador, 100, emphasis added; “Voyage de M. Sékou Touré”, 2 December 1959, Dakar 417, CADN.
101 Morrow, First American Ambassador, 239.
102 Confidential Airgram, State to Conakry, A-5, 28 July 1960, Central Decimal Files, 611.70B7/7-2860; Confidential Telegram, Conakry (Morrow) No. 83, 18 August 1960, Central Decimal Files, 611.70B7/8-1860; Confidential Airgram, State to Conakry, G-12, 9 November 1960, Central Decimal Files, 611.70B7/11-960; RG 59, NACP.
peoples.”

US policy-makers believed themselves to be fully vindicated in their advocacy of a friendly approach.

The US kept to the path of modestly friendly bilateral engagement with Guinea through the rest of 1959 and into 1960. It was clear that “a show of friendship” was as far as the US could go towards influencing how Sékou Touré’s government chose to exercise its new powers without risking unacceptable upset to France. Less obvious was that it may also have been as far as US policy-makers could have gone with any post-colonial African state. Sékou Touré’s address to the UN in November identified some of the impediments. Africa remained “the great question mark” in the eyes of the West. It was not seen as a continent whose people were individuals, economic and political actors in their own right, deserving of a fundamental respect and support for their dignity. The Guinean president’s warning that Africa would not tolerate paternalism was also more descriptive of the challenge new African states would face than it was predictive of their willingness to put up with it.

V. Conclusions

Having seized the bulk of its sovereign powers, rather than waiting for France to transfer them, Guinea demonstrated time and again during its first year of independence that it would not accept the limitations that more powerful states tried to place upon the scope of its sovereignty. Such limitations might be practical, such as the right to secure the state’s self-defence by purchasing weapons. They might also be more ephemeral, such as the infringements of African dignity that its leaders perceived in the assumption, made by many in the world’s wealthiest nation, that Guinea would beg for assistance and would accept any conditions that a donor might choose to attach to its aid. Either way, they suggested that Guinea’s sovereignty was somehow lesser than those of more powerful, better-established, wealthier states, and that was an implication that Sékou Touré would fight against.

No doubt there were many reasons for the paternalism that more powerful states exhibited towards Guinea. The legacy of many years of colonial rule in Africa, and the

103 Memorandum for the President, “Reply to Telegram from Sékou Touré,” 23 December 1959; Telegram, State to Conakry, No. 241, 24 December 1959; DDE Office Files, Reel 15.
previous centuries of economic exploitation, in particular the imposition of chattel
slavery on so many African people, could not be erased overnight from the minds of the
diplomats and politicians who were suddenly faced with the realities of political
independence according to the dominant model of the nation-state. This legacy was more
than the ingrained habit of thinking of African people as less capable or less dignified
than those of European extraction, although the experiences of John Morrow attested to
the persistence of such beliefs. It was also a conviction that Africa’s resources, both
human and natural, should be harnessed for the benefit of others. Western powers might
agree with Charles de Gaulle’s observation that “the time for colonies has passed.” This
did not mean that the urge to create empires, or the belief that Africa’s natural state was
as the target of imperialist acquisition, had disappeared with it.
Chapter 3. **A Change of Form and Field: The Challenge to Neocolonialism**

*The construction of the new democratic State [of Guinea] therefore constitutes an African experiment towards whose success all Africans must contribute who desire the restoration and greatness of the African motherland. . . . The accession to political independence, by liberating Guinea from imperialism, does not put an end to the struggle against colonialism, but merely changes its form and field of action.* – Ahmed Sékou Touré, Conakry, 15 January 1959

Sékou Touré’s call for Europeans and Americans to recognize the dignity of African nations was, self-evidently, not what they wanted to hear. The major Western powers were, after all, distracted by the practical consequences of competing abstractions, such as the Cold War struggle between the adherents of communism and capitalism and the question of how, as nationalist movements challenged colonial rule, European powers were to maintain the international prestige and the relatively high standard of living that supported claims to the superiority of capitalist democracy over its challengers along the spectrum from socialism to communist autocracy. But the Guinean president was articulating an alternative to the cozy arrangement that he saw taking shape in neighbouring countries, one of nominal independence with real, ongoing reliance upon the former colonizer’s economic and military strength at the cost of divergent international policy and wider economic connections. In this regard, Sékou Touré was one of the first to articulate a challenge to what an increasing number of politicians, academics and activists would come to call neocolonialism. Guinea’s experience and its political orientation led it to oppose any developments that perpetuated colonial links, especially the efforts of its former metropole to maintain ties with other francophone African territories like those it had severed with Guinea. In turn, the persistence of neocolonial relationships across Africa would challenge the beliefs around which Sékou Touré was trying to build his new country.

As with Guinea’s own accession to independence, the process of decolonization in sub-Saharan Africa and its replacement with what French president Charles de Gaulle called “ties of cooperation” took place in full view of a set of highly interested, and self-

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interested, global players. The larger context had implications for both bilateral and regional relationships. It also had the potential to affect developments far further afield. The fact of global publicity allowed the decolonizing Europeans and their African allies to obscure the interests at stake and discredit more radical nationalist opponents by pointing, instead, to the Cold War contest, as though it were foreground rather than backdrop to local events. As more and more of Guinea’s neighbours acceded to national sovereignty, the possibility that they might choose the Soviet bloc over Western and colonial interests became a bigger and more realistic worry for the United States, whose ongoing efforts to manage the world were becoming increasingly challenging.

In 1959, Guinea’s agency and influence had a significant impact on the form of France’s “successful decolonization” and on the nature of the links that would replace the bonds of empire. However, neither its example nor its intervention could do a thing to stop the tragedy that emerged in the Congo the following year. 1960 was the “Year of Africa,” recognized in the United Nations by the passage of a sweeping resolution recognizing the right of colonized peoples to their political independence. But it was also the year in which it became painfully obvious that formal sovereignty would not necessarily translate into economic or political self-determination. Nor would it guarantee the security or integrity of new states or the safety of their leaders. Sékou Touré’s reaction to the murder of Congo’s first prime minister, Patrice Lumumba, threatened a diplomatic incident with the new US administration of John Fitzgerald Kennedy. The threat was quickly averted, but the effects of Lumumba’s death on Guinea’s president, and consequently on his people, were much more lasting.

I. Squaring the Circle: France, Guinea and the Community

When Charles de Gaulle’s government offered referendum voters in France’s overseas territories membership in a new French Community as an alternative to immediate independence “with all its consequences,” neither option was well defined. As the one territory to vote for the second option, Guinea soon found out how far France was willing to go to convince its people, and their neighbours, that the Community

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represented the better choice. France made its point about the negative consequences of independence by withdrawing administrative resources and financial support, severing many economic ties, and trying to undermine the stability of Guinea’s government through subversion at home and diplomatic pressure abroad. The metropole was less effective in making the positive case for Community membership, in part because Guinea survived – and its politicians gained in stature by heading a sovereign country, not merely a territory within a France-dominated group of colonies.

Louis Joxe, secretary-general of the French Ministère des Affaires étrangères (MAE), had been frank with representatives of the US State Department when, in April 1959, he attributed his country’s opposition to American engagement with Conakry to de Gaulle personally, and especially to his concern that the French Community succeed. The Community – a “Gaullist venture par excellence,” according to one observer – was a significant element of de Gaulle’s strategy to restore France’s grandeur with the Fifth Republic and reflected two of the tactics that seemed most promising in 1958: preserving la grande France as an entity beyond the hexagon; and creating a strong central government, with the presidency – and of course the president – firmly in control.3 It was not long, however, before American observers in France and throughout the new Community began to identify problems with these tactics. For one thing, the Community was never going to satisfy the aspirations of committed African nationalists. For another, it would never dissuade them from their position. Thomas Diop, who worked as an editor at the Paris-based publishing house Présence Africaine, warned the American embassy of this in December 1958. The Community, he said, “was merely another form of French imperialism.” If it did work, it would be because of the trust Africans placed in de Gaulle himself: they “could place no trust or faith in any other French leaders.” Diop hastened to reassure the embassy’s third secretary, David Korn, that he and fellow partisans of African independence were not “firebrands”: “On the contrary, they favored

slowly untiring the ‘Gordian knot’ of colonialism, rather than attempting to break it forcibly ‘in the manner of impatient Alexander.”

A more serious problem was that even for the African leaders who had brought their territories into the new Community, important issues concerning the distribution of power had been left unanswered by the constitution. The first indication that American diplomats in Paris had of this concern also came in December 1958, when they were invited, together with representatives from other Western countries, to join students at the École nationale de la France d’outre-mer for a week-long seminar to discuss the “creation and entry into operation of the institutions of the new Community.” The “crucial question” raised by these institutions soon became obvious to the American observer, William Canup. It was “the degree to which the Member States will be permitted to participate in the exercise of powers concentrated at the peak of the Community pyramid.” The issue was not only whether the Executive Council, where chiefs of state of the territories would meet with France’s president, would have powers to decide rather than merely to advise de Gaulle on matters of mutual interest and concern. It was also a question of what power would be exercised by the Secretariat of the Community, which would replace the ministry of overseas France (MinFOM) in mid-January 1959. Canup noted that if, as was hinted, the Secretariat was placed under a person of ministerial rank, it “could conceivably assume important powers and controls over the Community entirely outside the operation of the Executive Council.”

Canup was observant. The institutional flaws of the Community – which reflected, as Jean-Claude Gautron has observed, the fact that the government of France had no intention of allowing the powers of the Republic to be transferred to a federation of which it would be no more than one member – were immediately apparent to the experienced African politicians representing their territories on the Executive Council. Léopold Sédar Senghor, president of the Federation of Mali, complained that the Community was an attempt to “square the circle,” a compromise based on a half-hearted

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4 Memorandum of Conversation, 20 December 1958; File: Memorandums of Conversation 1958, Subject Files Relating to France 1944-1960, Office of Western European Affairs, Lot File 61D30 (OWEA – France, 1944-1960); Records of the Department of State (RG 59), National Archives at College Park, MD (NACP).
and unequal federalism.\(^6\) The potential that Canup saw for the concentration of powers in the Secretariat came to be reality, as well, particularly after de Gaulle appointed Jacques Foccart as secretary on 21 March 1960.

Sékou Touré, meanwhile, passed up no opportunity to promote his vision of a future where francophone Africa would align its interests with the continent, rather than with France. In January 1959, Guinea’s president convened a congress of the Union Générale des travailleurs d’Afrique noire (UGTAN), the organization of African labour unions in whose 1957 creation he had played an important role. The general resolution of the congress – which, according to US observers, closely resembled the report on orientation and doctrine that Sékou Touré had presented when the congress opened – emphasized “the struggle against Colonialism and Imperialism and . . . the necessity for directing all the efforts of the working class toward the achievement of Independence and African unity.” UGTAN’s anti-colonial agenda was explicitly not anti-capitalist. Nor was it, on its face, opposed to investment from the colonial powers, as long as it was understood that the terms would be set by African nations, not European ones. The report committed delegates “to encourage all capital investment which conforms to the imperative need for national sovereignty and takes account of the concrete interests of the populations and workers.”\(^7\)

Neither these assurances nor the broad base of participation in the UGTAN Congress mollified the French or Francophile observers. The Congress drew 318 UGTAN delegates from six other francophone West African territories, French Equatorial Africa and Cameroon, as well as observers from Ghana, Morocco, Tunisia and union organizations around the world. Nevertheless, the US consul-general in Dakar, Donald Dumont, concluded that with Conakry for its headquarters and Sékou Touré as its president, UGTAN could “do little more than serve as instrument of Guinea’s foreign policy.”\(^8\) France and some members of its Community obviously agreed with Dumont’s assessment and disapproved of UGTAN’s direction. By the end of March, Senegal’s


\(^7\) Donald Dumont (Dakar), “First Congress of UGTAN, Conakry, January 1959”, Despatch No. 209, 16 February 1959; Central Decimal File 851T.062/2-1659; RG 59, NACP.

\(^8\) Dumont (Dakar), Despatch No. G-116, 23 January 1959; Central Decimal File 851T.062 / 1-2359; RG 59, NACP.
Alioune Cissé had proposed the creation of a new federation of trade unions in the African states of the Community, with the full support of the French authorities in Dakar. This provided an interesting contrast to the situation two years before, when the French high commissioner in Dakar had expressed the hope for “as close a liaison as possible” with Sékou Touré’s faction of the contested leadership of the Union, as opposed to those of his competitors, which included Cissé as well as Soudan’s Abdoulaye Diallo. In 1959, UGTAN headquarters denounced the developments as the result of “divisive tactics of French Imperialism and its African agents in the Community,” but this failed to persuade Guinea’s immediate neighbours: by the end of the year most of the French Community states had followed Senegal’s lead and abandoned the old UGTAN leadership.

France also sought to re-establish its influence with independent Guinea by implementing the three accords they had signed in early January 1959. Even though Guinea continued to use the CFA franc, as provided for by the most significant of the agreements, the new state showed less inclination to abide by the other commitments it had signed in order to gain France’s recognition of the state. Each party blamed the other for the failure to move ahead with their accords. In April, Guinea’s representative to the US and the United Nations addressed the matter openly at a press conference he held in New York. France “did not seem to be in a hurry to give concrete expression to the economic, technical, cultural and financial protocols signed last January,” complained Diallo Telli. France’s first reaction was defensive. Citing as violations of the accords all of Guinea’s trade agreements with the Eastern bloc, its failure to inform France of an agreement with the Federal Republic of Germany, a new import certification program, and Guinea’s requests to the UN and the Swiss government for financial and economic technical assistance, a note prepared within the Ministry late in April observed that the

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9 Pierre R. Graham (Dakar), Despatch No. 256, 7 April 1959; Central Decimal File 851T.062/ 4-759; RG 59, NACP.
11 Robert W. Rinden (Conakry), Despatch No. 45, 7 April 1959; Central Decimal File 851T.062 / 4-759; Donald R. Norland (Abidjan), Despatch No. 26, 13 August 1959; Central Decimal File 851T.062 / 8-1359; RG 59, NACP.
12 French Delegation to the United Nations (Georges-Picot) to MAE, Telegram No. 612, 17 April 1959; Guinée 13, Direction Afrique-Levant (DAL), Archives du Ministère des Affaires étrangères, Quai d’Orsay, Paris (AMAE).
Guineans seemed to want to re-open negotiations on a government-to-government basis: “The Guineans assert that the protocols of 7 January continue to be valid, but that they constitute a type of declaration of intention, the implementation of which must still be spelled out.” In Conakry, French chargé d’affaires Francis Huré attempted to bully Sékou Touré into implementing the accords in their present form: France wanted to move rapidly to implement the protocols and thus “initiate all the possibilities that they promised for Guinea,” he told the president on 23 April, but was concerned that the Guinean authorities “appeared to be seizing on pretexts to conduct a campaign against us.”¹³ Not surprisingly, this approach failed to move the Guineans.

By mid-May, the French government had made a formal offer to re-open negotiations on the issues impeding implementation. It had both immediate and longer-term reasons for its change of heart. On a day-to-day level, a MAE analyst noted, “nothing must be done to rupture the existing ties, particularly the monetary ones, which permit significant French commercial and industrial interests in Guinea to continue to function as normally as possible under difficult conditions.”¹⁴ These interests were indeed significant: about 4,000 French citizens still lived in Guinea, where they owned and operated more than 300 plantations and mining concessions; French trading and transport companies still operated to and from the port of Conakry and feared losing their near-monopoly on Guinea’s external trade; and most important, Pechiney, the venerable aluminum company, still held a significant stake in the Fria bauxite processing plant.¹⁵ Guinea had already demonstrated that it was willing to take measures to protect its own economy – and the power of its government to direct economic activity in the country – in January, when it instituted a procedure to certify imports for goods coming into Guinea from elsewhere in the franc zone and sought to favour its own major port by restricting imports coming through Dakar. There was, therefore, some urgency to delivering French technical assistance to Conakry so as to make sure that French and Community economic privileges remained intact.¹⁶

¹³ Note, “Manquements de la part de la Guinée aux protocoles du 7 janvier 1959”, MAE/AL, 21 April 1959; Conakry (Huré) to MAE, No. 257, 24 April 1959; Guinée 13, DAL, AMAE.
¹⁴ Note, “Guinée,” May 1959; Guinée 13, DAL, AMAE.
¹⁵ Note, “Problèmes soulevés par une rupture eventuelle des relations diplomatiques avec la République de Guinée”, MAE/AL, 7 August 1959; Guinée 13, DAL, AMAE.
¹⁶ Note, “Guinée,” MAE/Direction économique (DE), 11 March 1959; Guinée 13, DAL, AMAE.
That France’s interests extended well beyond Guinea’s beleaguered economy became clear when its new negotiating team, led by Roger Seydoux, started work in Conakry in late June. Seydoux soon urged the ministry to expand his mandate so that he could take advantage of the openness and good will towards France that still existed in Conakry to resolve the larger issues that must be dealt with to complete Guinea’s separation from France and from the former Afrique Occidentale française (AOF). But even Seydoux’s skill and good intentions could not repair the damage between the former colony and its metropole. Early in August, 1959, Seydoux’s mission failed over two intractable issues that were ultimately more important to France than the maintenance of monetary ties with Guinea: the new state’s apparent sympathy with those fighting for independence in Algeria, and the French preoccupation with gaining the greatest possible advantage for those territories which had opted to remain in the Community.

As it had been in March when France protested Guinea’s decision to accept arms from Czechoslovakia, the resolution of bilateral issues between Guinea and France was postponed because of Guinea’s insistence that it be able to set a foreign policy that deviated from French interests. Seydoux’s mission came to an abrupt end in August 1959 when Ismaël Touré, Sékou Touré’s half-brother and an increasingly prominent member of his government, began to muse publicly about recognizing the Provisional Government of the Republic of Algeria (GPRA). At least some in the French government considered breaking relations with Guinea altogether over this. In response, the MAE produced an analysis of the potential consequences of such a step. In the interests of the French commercial and industrial concerns still operating in the country, the ministry urged, France should wait until it had unequivocal indications that Guinea really did intend to recognize the GPRA. Instead, Seydoux’s mission could safely be sacrificed to convey France’s displeasure to its former colony. Seydoux was instructed to try to get a categorical denial from Sékou Touré. If he could not, the French

17 In particular, see Conakry (Siraud on behalf of Seydoux) to MAE, No. 395-97, 17 June 1959, and “Note sur les entretiens franco-guinéens”, 24 June 1959; Guinée 13, DAL, AMAE.  
18 When the Front de Libération national had declared itself the GPRA the previous September, Minister of Foreign Affairs Maurice Couve de Murville instructed all of France’s diplomatic representatives to warn their host governments that recognition of the GPRA would be considered interference in internal French matters and an unfriendly act by Paris. Documents Diplomatiques français, Nouvelle série (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1996), 1958, t. II, 396 and Irwin M. Wall, France, the US, and the Algerian War (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 169.
envoy should wrap up the negotiations, citing as his reason the difficulties of resolving the larger issues Guinea had raised. This put Sékou Touré’s government in a difficult position: forcing the government to take a clear position on the GPRA would undoubtedly distress one faction or another of the Bureau de Politique nationale (BPN). In the end, Seydoux and his Guinean counterparts agreed that ending the negotiations was the best course all-round. The press would be told only that the process had been adjourned temporarily.19

France’s decision to recall Seydoux was an indication of how seriously it took the expression of any opposition to its position that Algeria was an internal matter. The intended audience for its message was, however, only partly Guinea itself. France was speaking through its recalcitrant former colony to appeal to the more cooperative territories that were still part of its Community. The issue of how to liquidate the old AOF and distribute its revenues and debts among its component territories was of vital importance to Guinea, since it represented the possibility of a significant payment from the French Community. France needed to maintain the greatest possible degree of control over matters like this, not just to discipline Guinea but to maintain the promise that membership would continue to offer significant advantages.

By the summer of 1959, other francophone territories in Africa were showing signs of giving up on France’s promises. Even Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Côte d’Ivoire was growing impatient. Houphouët-Boigny had benefited from his relationship with de Gaulle to exercise significant influence over the structure of the Community. Yet in August the American consul in Abidjan, Donald Norland, reported “serious differences” between Côte d’Ivoire and France. As Norland saw it, the difficulty was that France was deferring to pressures from the Federation of Mali, which had been created in April by Senegal and Soudan (later the Republic of Mali). Mali’s leaders advocated a form of association closer to a confederation between France and multi-state entities like the Federation itself than to the model that Houphouët-Boigny had been pushing for years, a

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19 Seydoux to MAE, Telegram, 5 August 1959; Note, “Problèmes soulevés par une rupture eventuelle des relations diplomatiques avec la République de Guinée”, MAE/AL, 7 August 1959; Note, “Négociations avec la Guinée”, MAE/AL, 8 August 1959; MAE/DE and MAE/AL to Seydoux, No. 667-72, 10 August 1959; Telegram, Seydoux to MAE, No. 582, 13 August 1959; Guinée 13, DAL, AMAE.
federation of individual territories directly with France. Sure enough, and despite the assurances of French officials that they were successfully managing differences among Hôpouët-Boigny, Senegal’s Senghor, and Soudan’s Modibo Keita, American observers caught wind of an increasing challenge to the constitutional Community coming from the Federation of Mali. Meeting in Paris with the US ambassador and several of his staff, Soudan’s minister of the interior Madera Keita openly expressed his disillusionment with the Community. At its meeting in Madagascar in March, said Keita, “the French Ministers made their reports, a few Africans dared make remarks or criticisms, and then de Gaulle, as arbiter, made his decisions.” All real power remained French. Keita assured his American audience that independence for the Mali Federation was “now merely a question of timing, and no longer an ‘if’.”

As discontent increased, General de Gaulle began a tactical shift. Instead of his constitutional Community, its component parts tied integrally into la plus grande France, the associational mechanism would gradually become, like the relationship with Guinea, primarily a matter of contract. The first sign that de Gaulle was coming to acknowledge the failure of his constitutional vision was the general’s address to the Community’s Executive Council on 10 September, when he alluded to the “evolving nature” of the Community. As Le Monde’s Philippe Decraene reported to David Korn in Paris two weeks later, even Hôpouët-Boigny “was now beginning to move cautiously – very cautiously – toward the idea of some type of confederal arrangement.”

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20 Norland to State, 11 August 1959; Central Decimal File 651.51T/8-1159; RG 59, NACP.
21 Third Secretary David Korn recorded the assurances provided by Philippe Antoine, a member of Prime Minister Michel Debré’s Cabinet, that the French Government had been at pains to conciliate the Mali Federation with Hôpouët-Boigny and the Conseil de l’Entente states that he led: Memorandum of Conversation, 17 June 1959; File: 14.1 Senegal – French Community; Country Files 1951-63, BAA-OWA; RG 59, NACP.
22 Memorandum of Conversation, 17 August 1959; OWEA – France, 1944-1960, File: Memorandums of Conversation 1959; RG 59, NACP.
24 Irwin Wall characterizes as a “spectacular turn in French policy” de Gaulle’s decision in the same month to introduce the topic of self-determination for the North African territory as a matter for debate within his own cabinet. Taken in the context of French African policy as a whole, this seems less an about-turn and more a tactical shift on the part of the General. See Wall, France, the United States, and the Algerian War, 187.
There seemed to be no doubt in the official French mind (at this point, a mind composed almost exclusively of de Gaulle’s and those of a few close advisors) that both Guinea and the US were to blame for forcing the metropole to modify its plans for francophone Africa. The argument against Guinea was relatively simple. Guinea, or at least its “radical” leaders, was attempting to influence its neighbours to adopt a model of full and immediate independence and abandon the Community; it was, therefore, flaunting any success it might have in the international community as evidence that it was possible to go it alone. Its success, coupled with the growing myth that Guinea had firmly repudiated the French, would be used to encourage its neighbours to leave the French Community.

The complaint against the US was more nuanced, befitting the different power relations involved. The American perfidy was in lending support to Guinea and, more generally, any comfort to pro-independence forces in Africa. This was held to be part of a larger plot to supplant French influence in the continent.²⁶ The French ambassador in Washington, Hervé Alphand, took up the issue with Under-Secretary of State Douglas Dillon in August 1959. Alphand reported that Dillon denied any such intentions: “The Americans are not acting out of imperialism,” he said. Yet even if Dillon could be believed, the failure of the US to support the French presence in Africa meant that “if [France] were absent, [the US] would permit Russia or China to take our place” in countries like Tunisia, Morocco and Guinea. Alphand was pleased when Eisenhower assured de Gaulle in September that the US agreed in principle with the French Community project but feared that without positive actions to support the Community, Eisenhower’s good will would accomplish little. Alphand noted with disdain that Washington feared “losing the sympathy of all of Africa” if it supported France in the UN or elsewhere. By “trying to manage all the world,” he predicted, the US would end up being “hated by all.”²⁷

Madera Keita encapsulated France’s fears in a conversation at the American embassy in Paris in mid-August, 1959: “In connection with Mali freedom, Madera Keita

stated that Guinea had managed satisfactorily thanks to US and other outside aid.”

Though objectively the US had not been a major source of assistance to Guinea by August 1959 – to that point, it had provided only a minimal amount of food aid – Keita’s statement did express a much more important truth: the fact that Guinea had not suffered total economic or political collapse within its first ten months of independence was highly significant to its neighbours, especially those in the Federation of Mali.

Paris attempted to counter the impression that Guinea was doing just fine without it by keeping up the financial pressure on Guinea and reminding its neighbours that maintaining a close relationship with France and its venerated president offered far greater benefits than following the dangerous radical in Conakry. At the same time, French officials sought to convince their American counterparts that by being friendly to Guinea, they were in effect undermining US policy, not just towards West Africa but for the entire world. The most common argument was the one that MAE secretary-general Louis Joxe had made to the tripartite meeting in April 1959: Guinea’s inclinations were to join the Soviet bloc, undermining the certainty of European control over Africa and thereby destabilizing the balance of the Cold War itself. This logic was explicit in a representation that Guy Dorget, newly appointed deputy director in the MAE’s Community affairs section, made to David Korn at the end of October 1959, while the Guinean party was touring the United States. “American policy toward Guinea, and especially the ‘enthusiastic’ reaction given Sékou Touré in the United States . . . made France’s task more difficult,” he told Korn. “When Guinea received millions of dollars from the Soviet Union and Sékou Touré was welcomed to the White House by President Eisenhower, the Africans, especially the younger generation, naturally thought that independence meant that they ‘would all be ambassadors, have Cadillacs and smoke big cigars.’” Dorget described what the French Community was intended to do for “the Africans” in similarly paternalistic and dismissive terms and made it clear that only if France continued to spare them “the burden of raising costly armies and maintaining

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28 Memorandum of Conversation, 17 August 1959; File: Memorandums of Conversation 1959; OWEA – France, 1944-1960; RG 59, NACP.
diplomatic relations throughout the world” would they withstand Guinea’s experience of “falling risk to Communism.”²⁹

The French and their allies did not limit themselves to the easy target of American sensitivities about the Cold War in pressuring the US to shun Guinea. France and its West African allies also sought to involve the leaders of long-time American client state Liberia. Liberian president William Tubman reported to the American ambassador in Monrovia, Elbert Mathews, that Houphouët-Boigny wrote to him in early November alleging that Guinea and Ghana were sponsoring subversive activities in Côte d’Ivoire and more generally across West Africa.³⁰ The US administration took such reports seriously enough to ask the internal security survey team assessing Liberia to consider whether its government was, indeed, at risk. The team concluded that probable UN or US action was a sufficient deterrent to Guinean aggression.³¹

Even as the constitutional Community was beginning to crumble, France pushed the US to follow up on its agreement in principle from the Paris meetings and make a show of support for the Community. On 30 September 1959, American minister Cecil B. Lyon met in Paris with Jean-Marc Boegner. It was Boegner’s last day as political adviser to President de Gaulle, but even so, he was pushing for support for the project closest to de Gaulle’s heart. “Boegner said he wished that somehow we could give some public warm endorsement of the community,” Lyon reported. However, when Lyon suggested, apparently off the cuff, that President Eisenhower’s travels during his last months in office might include the Community, Boegner worried that this might be “a bit too much.” “A visit of Mr. Eisenhower, President of the United States, the symbol of anti-colonialism, might afford opportunities for demonstrations in favor of independence organized by all sorts of groups, etc. No, he didn’t think this would be a good idea.”³²

In the end, both Guinean and American influences in francophone Africa were beside the point. The French Community would transform into much less formal ties

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²⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, 29 October 1959; File: 14.1 Senegal – French Community; Country Files 1951-63; BAA-OWA; RG 59, NACP.
³⁰ Airgram, Mathews (Monrovia), No. G-27, 16 November 1959; Central Decimal File 651T.70B/11-1659, RG 59, NACP.
³¹ Report of the US Internal Security Survey Team to Liberia, 16 November to 14 December 1959; NSC Meeting Files and Policy Reports, 11/1959 – 05/1966 (Lot 70D265), RG 59, NACP.
³² Secret Memorandum of Conversation, 30 September 1959; Memorandums of Conversation 1959; OWEA – France, 1944-1960; RG 59, NACP.
binding France with its former African colonies because the Community as constituted did not meet the needs of the least radical – and wealthiest – of the territories: Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire. And so it was de Gaulle himself that created the formula to “square the circle.”

On 13 December, in Saint-Louis, Senegal, de Gaulle acknowledged the Federation of Mali’s desire – and that of its constituent states – to become independent without leaving the Community. The French president announced that negotiations would take place leading Mali to a form of independence. De Gaulle qualified this status, though:

I prefer to call [it] ‘international sovereignty’. This means that a people takes on its own responsibilities in the world, speaks for itself and by itself, and that it is responsible for what it says and for what it does. It is to this rank that Mali and with it, its component states, will accede with the support, the agreement and the assistance of France.

The French president had an answer to anyone who might object that international sovereignty was not true independence. Independence, he said, was “a desire, an attitude, an intention.” But it was an impossible dream: “the world being what it is, so small, so narrow, so prone to interference, real independence . . . truly belongs to nobody.”

It was a masterful redefinition of the concept of independence. It contained sufficient truth to give those willing to accept his offer of international sovereignty an answer to their political opponents who wanted “real independence”, whatever that might be. At the same time it left France and its African allies plenty of scope to appear to satisfy the desire while maintaining the reality of ongoing economic and political dependence on Europe. It would satisfy the international audience that counted: powerful observers like the US whose anti-colonial views would be satisfied, but whose fundamentally imperial views of how Africa should be managed would not be offended. Moreover, “international sovereignty” would permit the leaders of post-colonial states to attain the international status, and privileges, of leaders of fully sovereign countries,

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33 Guy Dorget told David Korn that “matters concerning Mali independence were being handled directly and almost exclusively by de Gaulle.” Memorandum of Conversation, 10 December 1959; OWEA – France, 1944-1960, Memorandums of Conversation 1959; RG 59, NACP.


without having to risk economic, diplomatic, administrative or financial disruption. And while it would fail to satisfy those, like Sékou Touré, who saw a different future for his state and its neighbours, one whose political and economic orientation was towards their own continent rather than their European colonizers, it conceded just enough to independence to take the wind out of their sails.

De Gaulle’s change of direction in December 1959 had a significance that went far beyond the concession of the limited right to “international sovereignty” to the Federation of Mali. It also signalled a possible change in France’s relationship with Western allies including the United Kingdom and United States. Just a few days after de Gaulle’s speech in Saint-Louis, the US president finally agreed to the proposal his French counterpart had made in September 1958 for a new organization, to be made up of France, the UK and the US, to plan and coordinate the West’s response to the global challenge posed by the Soviet Union and its allies. Having delayed for fifteen months, Eisenhower now agreed to “tripartite machinery to operate on a clandestine basis.”\textsuperscript{36} De Gaulle proclaimed himself to be “very satisfied” with Eisenhower’s statement, but then never followed up.\textsuperscript{37} Historians examining the Franco-American relationship surrounding the Algerian war suggest that de Gaulle’s failure to press the point is mysterious; the war, after all, would grind on for a further thirty months, and US and British “machinery” might have been useful.\textsuperscript{38} In light of France’s evolving relationship with the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, though, it seems clear that de Gaulle knew, based on American and British responses to the one francophone state that was already sovereign and independent – Guinea – that however clandestine its operations, tripartite machinery would not reinforce France’s autonomous control over a region made up of states, rather than territories. In fact, the MAE instructed Alphand to avoid tripartite discussion of the situation in Guinea. While there was value in high-level consideration of global strategic challenges and the preparation of common action plans in the event of conflict, putting the specific topic of Guinea on the agenda might give the British and the Americans an


\textsuperscript{38} Connelly, Diplomatic Revolution, 192.
opportunity to act as “judges or arbiters of our policy vis-à-vis Guinea,” leading them to “give us advice or direct our actions.”

With his statement in Saint-Louis, de Gaulle was acknowledging that France’s concern would now be how to manage relationships with independent African countries so as to get what France needed – psychologically, militarily and materially – from sovereign states. The US, with its own interests and its own relationships to manage with each new state, would be unlikely to lend military or economic assistance to such post-colonial (and neocolonial) objectives. To Alphand, de Gaulle explained why he had given up on the prospects of having the US play such a role. Alphand repeated his theory that the American “attitude can be explained as a concern to manage all the world, in consequence of which they lose on all fronts.” De Gaulle agreed: “They are not disciplined.” As a result, de Gaulle thought, France could not rely on the American military or nuclear umbrella: “We should have our own naval and aerial resources in Africa and have our bomb, even if it does not equate to ten Hiroshimas,” he told his ambassador. De Gaulle’s words signalled his agenda for 1960 and beyond, with far-reaching and long-lasting consequences, especially to the military alliance of NATO. It was Alphand, though, whose observation proved prophetic. The American concern “to manage all the world,” even Africa, began to take shape in response to the challenges the continent posed during the coming year.

II. The Year of Africa

Over the course of the year 1960, seventeen African nations became independent. All but two of them, the former Belgian Congo and Nigeria, were colonies or trust territories administered by France. All seventeen gained admission to the United Nations unopposed, although in the case of Congo the question of whether President Joseph Kasavubu’s or Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba’s was the legitimate government soon spilled over into the question of UN representation. On 14 December 1960, the UN General Assembly passed its landmark resolution 1514 (XV), the “Declaration on the

39 MAE (Lucet) to Washington (Alphand), No. 11534-36, 19 October 1959; Guinée 13, DAL, AMAE.
40 Alphand, L’Étonnement d’être, 318.
granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples.” The rapid deterioration of conditions in Congo within weeks of its independence at the end of June, and in particular the secession of the province of Katanga from the new country on 11 July, led to the first UN action on African soil. In both benign and tragic ways, it was the year of Africa.

As most of French sub-Saharan Africa proceeded to “international sovereignty” during 1960, France’s policy towards Guinea continued to be to try to limit the influence of its government over its neighbours, lest the upstart disturb the metropole’s post-colonial plans. Because France had recognized Guinea’s independence, the MAE and its representatives in Conakry, led by Pierre Siraud, still a chargé d’affaires, handled its day-to-day relations with Guinea. The trouble was that the MAE and its minister, Maurice Couve de Murville, had little power in the French government, and less influence over French policy towards sub-Saharan Africa. The MAE’s assessments of Guinea by the end of 1960, while no less censorious and disapproving than they had been since independence, reflected an almost wistful desire to be able to implement a more positive, if not friendly, relationship with the state so as to better protect the interests of France and of French businesses and individuals still operating in Guinea.42

Guinea, for its part, stepped up its efforts to differentiate its vision for the post-colonial future of Africa from an emerging French model which promised more continuity than change in both economic and cultural matters. As it had since independence, Guinea relied on its relations with more powerful states outside of Western Europe to counterbalance colonial pressures and promises. As far as its relations with the United States were concerned, however, 1960 saw increasing conflict between what Guinea wanted to get from the US, and how the US itself planned to “manage all the world.”

In early March, two developments in Guinea’s ongoing campaign for economic and political independence triggered differing US reactions, which in turn showed the emerging outlines of its management strategy. The first was Guinea’s announcement, on 1 March, that it would no longer use the CFA franc but instead had adopted a new, independent currency. The syli, which took its name from the Susu word for the PDG’s

42 Note/Minute, “Guinée”, 3 October 1960; Guinée 43, DAL, AMAE.
symbol, the elephant, would be printed in Czechoslovakia and was backed by significant economic aid from the Soviet Union. The Guinean government accompanied the change by increased “customs vigilance” on the country’s borders but was unable to stem what even a French report described as a “massive capital flight,” as traders sold the harder CFA franc for higher and higher rates of exchange, driving down the value of the *syli*. The government retaliated by imprisoning anyone caught denigrating the new currency’s value or even its appearance. It expelled all Europeans caught trading on the black market currency exchange that developed almost instantly. The French interpreted the switch, and the draconian measures that accompanied it, to mean not only that Guinea wished “to rupture all ties with France and to attempt to dismember our whole economic [position] in Africa,” but also that Guinea’s stated foreign policy of “positive neutralism” was a sham. The “Marxist penchant” of its internal policy had led the country to “extend its preference to the countries of the East.” The US, however, had almost no reaction at all. Eisenhower’s reply to Sékou Touré’s letter of 20 April concerning the new Guinean currency commented that such reforms being internal matters, he would “say only that they are evidence of the remarkable effort which you and your Government are making to improve the living standards of your people.”

The second incident in March 1960 drew a sharper reaction from Washington. A few days after the creation of the new Guinean currency, the official news service of the German Democratic Republic announced that Guinea would soon be exchanging ambassadors with East Germany. The Federal Republic of Germany reacted by seeking clarification and then by sending the head of its foreign office’s political department, Hasso von Etzdorf, to intervene directly with Guinea’s president. Finally, on 3 April, Sékou Touré agreed to issue an official and public statement denying that his country

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44 MAE/AL, “Guinée,” Note for the Minister, 19 March 1960; Guinée 52, DAL, AMAE.
recognized or had diplomatic relations with East Germany. The East Germans were represented by a trade commission, not an embassy, until September 1970.

Unlike the “internal” matter of securing greater independence from French influence by dropping the CFA franc, the rumour that Guinea had recognized East Germany evoked a reaction from Washington, albeit only after the fact. Sékou Touré, apparently concerned to maintain cordial relations with the US, wrote to Eisenhower on 19 March to explain that Guinea had not recognized East Germany. He went on to explain that although Guinea had recognized the government of North Vietnam, this should not be interpreted as a shift away from neutrality in its foreign policy; the decision had been taken many months before to enable the repatriation of Guinean nationals from the state. Eisenhower’s reply chided the Guinean president: being the only state outside the Communist bloc to recognize North Vietnam “will inevitably risk misinterpretation … and association of Guinea in world opinion with countries of the Communist bloc.” While Eisenhower noted “with deep satisfaction” Sékou Touré’s assurance concerning the German matter, his letter also made it clear that the US had taken the rumour seriously: “you are, of course, familiar with the reasons why neither the United States nor any other non-Communist government regards East Germany as a separate State or the East German regime as a legitimate government,” he noted. Eisenhower’s reply to Sékou Touré was appropriately diplomatic, but unlike most of the correspondence the US president addressed to his Guinean counterpart, Eisenhower’s office had redrafted State’s suggested reply to make the implied rebuke a bit more evident.

The Eisenhower administration was distinguishing between internal matters affecting even the newest and weakest of sovereign states, in which it would not intervene, and matters of geopolitical moment, where it would. But, as de Gaulle suspected, the US was also unwilling to express opinions on, much less intervene in, matters that affected the arrangements that France was building with the states of its former empire. This may have been a matter of necessity, as well as of volition: the

State Department’s contacts were with the MAE, which it knew to have little influence over what the presidency and its new secretary-general for Community affairs, Jacques Foccart, were doing in Africa.48 In any case, Guinea’s withdrawal from the CFA zone was not solely an internal affair, whatever Eisenhower told Sékou Touré: it had significant implications for its neighbours. Senegal’s president, Mamadou Dia, called Pierre Lami of the French High Commission in on 7 March to discuss how Guinea’s move could affect the CFA franc-using states with which it shared borders (both components of the Federation of Mali plus Côte d’Ivoire). Dia, Lami and several technical experts decided that there were two orders of risk: first, that Guinea might start hoarding CFA banknotes from neighbouring states; and second, that Guinea would use CFA notes to inundate neighbouring states so as to disrupt commercial circuits and stimulate inflation. There was no doubt that Guinea’s neighbours considered its recent actions to be “unfriendly and hostile,” a belief that was almost certainly encouraged by their French advisers.49

The US offered no opinion or action even when French colonial matters spilled over into one of the primary traditional concerns of international relations: the prospect of aggression from beyond a sovereign state’s borders. In April, Guinea alleged that France had established camps and arms caches all along Guinea’s borders with Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire with a view to invading Guinea and toppling Sékou Touré’s government. The MAE quickly denied French involvement. The French High Commission in Dakar, meanwhile, coordinated the activities of the secret service agencies reporting on political, economic and ethnic developments in Guinea while Jacques Foccart’s SDECE connections were fomenting subversive activities there.50 Guinea’s evidence was reasonably strong: the government showed foreign and UN diplomats the arms caches it claimed to have seized along the Senegalese and Ivoirian borders. Senegal is also alleged to have publicly acknowledged its involvement in the

48 Dumont to Satterthwaite, Letter, 7 March 1960; File 1-A.1, Senegal – Correspondence with principal Officer, Country Files 1951-63; BAA-OWA; RG 59, NACP.
49 Haussaire Dakar (Lami) to Presicom Paris, unnumbered telegram, 7 March 1960; Dakar 416, CADN.

Although Morrow discusses the 1960 plot in his memoir, there is no evidence that the US made any official comment on these events at the time. There was no response when Dumont reported from Dakar the rumour, passed to him by a French journalist, that the discovery of this plot was Sékou Touré’s way of diverting the PDG and his own country from a situation that had arisen at the Party Congress where it appeared that the president’s five-year plan would be defeated by a majority of his own political bureau.\footnote{Letter, Dumont to Ferguson, 25 May 1960; File: 14.1 Senegal – French Community; Country Files 1951-63; BAA-OWA; RG 59, NACP.}

This accorded generally with the interpretation of the MAE’s chargé d’affaires in Conakry, Pierre Siraud, who thought the evidence from inside Guinea added up to one of two hypotheses: either the government had invented the whole business, or it had gone after relatively minor figures in a genuine internal opposition movement in order to exercise more effective control over its real instigators.\footnote{Siraud to MAE/AL, “L’Affaire du complot,” No. 431/AL, 30 April 1960; Guinée 43, DAL, AMAE.}

Even the news that Guinea had decided to try the alleged plotters in a specially convoked tribunal made up of National Assembly, BPN, labour and Party youth representatives, rather than the regular courts, evoked no response at the time, although Morrow was clearly troubled by how unlikely this made the prospect of the accused receiving fair trials.\footnote{Morrow, First American Ambassador, 138-40.} This too was part of the US approach to managing all the world: even though American policy-makers might be skeptical of whether a country like Guinea could defend its own territory or play a constructive role in the world’s affairs, it would do nothing that could be interpreted as interfering with internal matters in that country, including relations with its former colonial power.

Instead, the US went ahead with plans to expand its own economic and commercial influence in Guinea, despite increasingly noisy allegations that Guinea had
abandoned neutrality in favour of the Communist bloc. In mid-July, the secretary of state authorized Assistant Secretary Satterthwaite to negotiate a new, somewhat broader Economic, Technical and Related Assistance Agreement with Guinea.\footnote{Satterthwaite to Secretary, “Circular 175; Economic, Technical and Related Assistance Agreement with the Republic of Guinea,” 7 July 1960; Central Decimal File 611.70B7/7-760, RG 59, NACP.} Around the same time, the Operations Coordinating Board agreed to update France’s pre-independence survey of the Konkouré Dam project.\footnote{Operations Coordinating Board, Activity Report, Item 8, 11 July 1960; Operations Coordinating Board 1947-1963, RG 59, NACP.} French diplomats in Washington registered their country’s disapproval of this initiative, claiming that it might upset France’s renewed efforts to negotiate a financial settlement with Guinea.\footnote{Memorandum of Conversation, 15 July 1960; File 16.1(b) US-Guinean Relations; Guinea; Country Files 1951-63; BAA-OWA; RG 59, NACP.}

Guinea clearly offered the US something more than simply another state to line up on its side of the Cold War. However, the US project of managing Guinea so as to ensure that “the West” – and US-based businesses – continued to have access to its bauxite and other mineral resources, which entailed minimal interference with Guinean foreign or domestic policy, became much more difficult in that same month of July 1960. The cause was the independence of Congo from Belgian rule, and Sékou Touré’s increasing distress as its nationalist government and prime minister, Patrice Lumumba, were sacrificed to the forces of “imperialism.”

The crisis that began shortly after Congo’s accession to independence on 30 June 1960 was both lengthy and highly complex. It is still difficult to disentangle, in part because the historical record is littered with what Sékou Touré described to the United Nations General Assembly on 10 October 1960 as “contradictory news” and the “discouraging fantasies of those who fear neither man nor God,” which he thought had confused world public opinion on the fundamental question: “Who is the aggressor in the Congo, and who is the attacked?” There was no doubt in the Guinean president’s mind that what was under attack was the legitimate and duly-elected government of Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba and, therefore, the freedom and independence of the Congolese people. The aggressor was the former colonial power, acting in the interests of “foreign enterprises” and supported by “lies . . . by the press in the pay of the colonialists.” Even more distressing, the UN, whose duty it was to “save the world from
the burden of colonialism which can no longer be tolerated,” had taken “negative action” in the crisis, demonstrating “the weakness or the complicity of certain representatives of the United Nations vis-à-vis the enemies of independence and unity in the Congo.” Sékou Touré dismissed the prospect of Soviet domination that had been used to justify intervention in Central Africa. It was a “hypothetical danger,” he said, evoked “in a covert desire to disguise or justify the domination which they exercised over certain territories or peoples of Africa.”

Recent scholarship on the Congo crisis of 1960-61 largely confirms Sékou Touré’s understanding of the events and their causes. Belgium’s hasty decolonization of the Congo began in earnest just five months before official independence. The round table discussions held at Brussels late in January 1960 resulted in the compression of Belgium’s five-year plan for independence into a process that would be formally completed by the end of June. A new constitution was enacted, entrusting day-to-day power to a prime minister and ceremonial authority to a president, and parliamentary elections were called for May 1960. The Mouvement national congolais won a plurality of seats in those elections and so its leader, Patrice Lumumba, became prime minister. This dismayed the Belgian government, which favoured more conservative parties it thought would be, if not more amenable to ongoing Belgian control, then at least “heavily dependent upon Belgian advice and support.” Within a week of independence, it became clear that Lumumba, though legitimately elected, lacked the practical authority to control his new state. Congolese troops, infuriated by their white, Belgian commander’s insistence that independence would make no difference whatsoever to the composition or leadership of their army, rebelled against the Belgian officer class. Lumumba acted quickly to dismiss the Belgian officers and “Africanize” the army, raising Victor Lundula


to commander-in-chief and Joseph-Désiré Mobutu to colonel and chief-of-staff. Nevertheless, Belgium ordered paratroopers in to quell what was reported as widespread looting and attacks on the property and persons of Belgians still in Congo. The paratroopers arrived in Congo’s Katanga province early on 10 July 1960, intervening in its capital, Elisabethville, the same day. Over the next few days, Belgian paratroopers and naval units launched attacks in Luluabourg, Matadi, Léopoldville and elsewhere. On 11 July, buoyed by the presence of Belgian troops, Katangan premier Moïse Tshombe announced that his province was seceding from Congo.

The prospect of Katangan secession had enormous implications, both practical and symbolic, for the new state. On a practical level, Katanga was Congo’s wealthiest province. Its large reserves of strategically or economically valuable minerals, including copper, cobalt and uranium, were being exploited by the Union Minière du Haut-Katanga (UMHK), a Belgian company closely related to the Société Générale de Belgique, and other international concerns including the US-based American Metals Climax Co. (AMAX). UMHK provided about eighty percent of the state revenues of Katanga and its executives in both Elisabethville and Brussels gave both material and moral support to the secessionist movement. Katanga’s separation from the rest of Congo would, therefore, withdraw a significant source of actual and potential revenue from the central government, already stretched to manage an enormous territory and population with minimal resources.

Tshombe’s move had symbolic importance, too. If it proved easy to carve this province away from Congo, none of the new African states could assume their borders would remain inviolate should more powerful neighbours or foreign interests decide to break up their states. To Sékou Touré, the threat was clear. If Congo could so easily fall into instability and violence, and if its legally elected central government could not count on the wider world community to help keep its state together – or, worse, if the world abetted the secession, as the UN forces appeared to do until 1961 – what chance did other African states have to protect the integrity of their territories? And what chance did other

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African leaders have to retain their full measure of power and authority, both domestically and in international circles?

Upon Katanga’s declaration of independence Lumumba, together with President Joseph Kasavubu, appealed to the UN for assistance. On 14 July, the United Nations Security Council authorized the secretary-general, Dag Hammarskjöld, “to provide the Government [of the Republic of the Congo] with such military assistance as may be necessary” until the government’s own security forces could bring the situation back under control. The Council also called upon Belgium to withdraw its troops from Congo’s territory. Both the US and the USSR voted for the resolution; both Britain and France abstained. Within days of the resolution, UN troops were being airlifted into Congo, largely by the US Air Force. Belgian troops withdrew from Léopoldville and elsewhere in Congo, but remained in Katanga.

The UN action was widely supported in Africa, with many countries including Ghana and Guinea offering to send troops to join the international force. Hammarskjöld rejected Guinea, alone among the African states, and suggested that he would reserve Guinean troops for later police actions. Sékou Touré responded by threatening that if his forces were not made part of the UN contingent immediately, he would send them directly to Lumumba’s government. When Hammarskjöld relented, US Air Force planes transported Guinean forces to Congo early in August 1960. The US flights were authorized by US ambassador John Morrow, who warned his superiors of the cost to US-Guinean relations of any action that “could be interpreted as blocking their passage.”

African support for the UN began to falter when, despite the Security Council’s repeated calls to Belgium to withdraw its troops from Katanga, the international body appeared unwilling to force the issue with the Belgians or to intervene to stop Congo from fragmenting. Buoyed by a new Security Council resolution that reaffirmed that the UN force would “not be a party to or in any way intervene in or be used to influence the outcome of any internal conflict, constitutional or otherwise,” another Congolese

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64 Morrow, First American Ambassador, 161-62.
province, South Kasai, announced its secession on 9 August. Sékou Touré wrote to US president Eisenhower, also on the 9th, appealing to him “to take vigorous action to obtain full and immediate implementation” of the resolutions, to guarantee, not only the rapid evacuation of Belgian troops from Congo, but also “respect for the territorial integrity of that State.” In his response Eisenhower hid behind his government’s support for the UN as a reason not to take direct action to oust the Belgian troops or address the Katanga and South Kasai situations. The 9 August resolution was a “great step toward calming the situation in the Congo as a whole,” he wrote. The US had voted for the resolution; now it was the Guinean president’s turn to help. Sékou Touré should use his “prominent position” – not, as the State Department’s earlier draft put it, his “great prestige” – and his influence in Africa to “encourage the fullest possible support for the United Nations effort in the Congo.”

The situation in Congo continued to deteriorate, and with it the African consensus in favour of UN actions. In mid-August, eleven Soviet Ilyushin-18 planes arrived in Congo, accompanied by more than 100 Soviet and Eastern European technicians. Lumumba had warned the Americans on 20 July that “we will take aid from the devil or anyone else as long as they get the Belgian troops out.” Echoing Sékou Touré’s logic during the controversy over the first Czech arms shipment to Conakry in March 1959, Lumumba observed: “If no Western nation helps us, why can we not call on other nations?” On arrival, Lumumba put the Soviet planes and technicians to work to try to halt the secession of South Kasai, which, unlike Katanga, was not reinforced by Belgians, but the government’s forces were defeated by mercenary-led troops. This in turn sparked a new crisis in Léopoldville, where on 5 September Kasavubu dismissed his prime minister. Lumumba appealed to both houses of Congo’s parliament, which kept him in power. Nine days later Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph-Désiré Mobutu led a coup d’état,

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68 Gibbs, Political Economy, 94-95.
removing Lumumba from office. On 20 September, Mobutu ordered Lumumba’s arrest. The deposed prime minister avoided arrest for over two months, staying in his official residence and protected by UN troops, but on 27 November he escaped both Léopoldville and Mobutu’s Force Publique and headed for Stanleyville. He was arrested on 2 December and imprisoned in the army camp at Thysville. On 12 January 1961, the troops in Thysville began to mutiny in support of their prisoner. When the mutiny spread to the capital two days later, it looked as though he might return to power. So as to prevent this outcome, Lumumba was transported to Katanga where, on 17 January 1961, he was murdered, along with two of his associates.

At the time, African observers did not know that the US Central Intelligence Agency, acting with Eisenhower’s implicit authorization, had actively sought Lumumba’s ouster and his death, although it now seems clear that it was the Belgian machinations against him, not the American ones, which ultimately resulted in his murder.69 What observers like Sékou Touré did know for certain was that the US role in Congo had extended beyond the UN’s refusal to intervene in the “internal” matter of the dissolution of the state, into what the Guinean called “a partisan position” against Lumumba and in favour of the Mobutu government, created by coup d’état and rendered nominally legal by a decree signed by President Kasavubu. Guinea waded into the question of which faction could be considered the legitimate government of Congo on 10 October when it moved a resolution that the UN General Assembly seat “the representatives of the Central Government of the Republic of the Congo (Léopoldville)” immediately. Citing Congo’s own constitution, which stated that the actions of the head of state (Kasavubu) could not be valid unless countersigned by a minister of Congo’s government, “which alone is responsible,” Sékou Touré insisted that Lumumba’s government had sole authority to represent the country in the UN, despite his dismissal and the warrant for his arrest.70 The implications of the constitutional argument went further than the question of representation: the UN force’s command could not recognize Mobutu’s government without new authorization from the Security Council, and the continuation of its activities after the coup had been the subject of a special UN session in

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70 Sékou Touré, “Colonialism and Imperialism,” 71, 64-65.
After a bitter and extremely divisive debate in October, the Guinean resolution failed; Kasavubu’s delegation, appointed quickly on the advice of the Americans, took the seat.\footnote{Mahoney, \textit{JFK: Ordeal in Africa}, 49-51.}

Sékou Touré made one last appeal to Eisenhower on 20 November to “cease supporting the position of the enemies of African emancipation,” and threatened that if the US maintained its partisan approach, the government of Guinea “will take any position in African affairs consistent with Congolese interests.” Eisenhower’s response to Sékou Touré’s telegram was brusque: the Guinean’s cable “reflects a serious misunderstanding of the policy of the United States Government in support of African freedom.” If partisanship had been demonstrated, it was the action of “some states” – unnamed, but the implication was unmistakable that he meant the Soviet bloc. By contrast, Eisenhower asserted, the US was supporting Kasavubu in the name of “stable and effective government” in Congo.\footnote{Mahoney, \textit{JFK: Ordeal in Africa}, 53.}

It was becoming clear that “stable and effective government” meant more to the US in this Year of Africa than what the words would ordinarily imply. To be acceptable, the international orientation of such governments also had to demonstrate two characteristics. First, they must be non-communist, in terms both of allegiance and, increasingly, of ideology. Second, and related to this, they must at least cooperate with Western interests, both political and business, if not actively endorse them. US support for the Mobutu-Kasavubu government was less a matter of recognizing its positive characteristics than of having decided irrevocably that Lumumba represented neither of them. Robert D. Murphy, who represented the US at Congo’s independence ceremonies, formed a poor opinion of the new prime minister. The former US ambassador to Belgium and to Vichy France recorded in his 1964 memoir his assessment that Lumumba “had a disorderly mind which was reflected in his actions.”\footnote{Sékou Touré to Eisenhower (official translation), 20 November 1960; Presidential Letter (Eisenhower to Sékou Touré), State to Conakry, No. 303, 25 November 1960; DDE Office Files, Reel 15.} Even John Morrow, who also represented the United States at the ceremony, claimed that compared to Sékou Touré, Lumumba was not impressive. He “lack[ed] . . . common sense, propriety, timing and judgment” and was prone to “the instability and rashness which would be his

\footnote{Robert D. Murphy, \textit{Diplomat Among Warriors} (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 336.}
undoing.” Washington-based State Department officials and members of Eisenhower’s administration made contemporary judgments of the Congolese leader which were both much harsher and more damaging. Lumumba visited the US in late July 1960, to follow up his appeal to the United Nations. Undersecretary of State Douglas Dillon, already primed by dispatches from US ambassador Clare Timberlake in which he described the Congolese as “primitive people,” found Lumumba to be “just not a rational being.”

Despite the warnings from Bureau of African Affairs experts including Martin Herz that whatever his personal failings Lumumba, like Sékou Touré, Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah and others, was an African nationalist and consequently most unlikely to deliver Congo as a satellite to the Soviet Union, CIA director Allen Dulles declared at a National Security Council meeting on 21 July 1960 that “it was safe to go on the assumption that Lumumba had been bought by the Communists.” The assumption was dubious at best.

Having labelled the Congolese prime minister in this way, though, it became safe within the US administration to work actively for his downfall, even his death.

The trope that anti-colonial and nationalist African leaders who sympathized with Lumumba and the Congo were themselves likely to be communists became more and more prevalent in relations between the US and Guinea in the second half of 1960. In September, US ambassador Llewellyn Thompson cabled from Moscow that in view of reports from Conakry about Sékou Touré’s recent behaviour, it seemed “incredible that we should consider [a] major aid program to Guinea at this time.” Though the State Department did not abort the aid negotiations, it did express disapproval more and more directly. In advance of Sékou Touré’s visit to New York in October 1960, the State Department presented Ambassador Diallo Telli with four aides-mémoire on various issues, of which the most serious was US concern that Guinea’s neutrality was slipping into “close alignment with Soviet positions.” The evidence for this was statements attributed to the Guinean president on visits to Budapest, Moscow and Beijing, in which he claimed that Guinea’s views were identical to those of his communist hosts.

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75 Morrow, First American Ambassador, 153.
76 Mahoney, JFK: Ordeal in Africa, 44. Both Mahoney and Gibbs point out that Murphy, Dillon and Dulles all had extensive personal business interests in firms that financed or were related to UMHK and Amax. Gibbs argues that these interests were decisive. Mahoney, JFK: Ordeal in Africa, 54-55; Gibbs, Political Economy, 100-01.
77 Telegram, Thompson (Moscow), No. 809, 21 September 1960; Central Decimal File 851T.0061 / 9-2160; RG 59, NACP.
Following up during Sékou Touré’s visit, State was particularly worried that Guinea’s president appeared to agree “that Soviet power was a ‘decisive contribution’ to African liberation.” A briefing note prepared in advance of US-UK talks on Africa in mid-November stated bluntly that Guinea had moved “significantly closer” to the Soviet bloc in recent months, noting the coincidence of Soviet and Guinean anti-colonial policies and Guinean outrage at events in Congo. Yet these symptoms of increasing American scepticism in the face of Guinean professions of “positive neutrality” did not translate into any major changes in American behaviour towards the new state. The briefing note counselled hope and patience: US aid, plus Sékou Touré’s fear of losing influence in Africa by being too closely associated with the Soviet bloc, might stop Guinea’s eastward movement, and if it did not, the US would want to “review” its policy. The moderation of the Bureau of African Affairs, the lack of priority being accorded to Guinea in American policy-making circles, and, above all, the steady connection of Olin Mathieson’s investment in Guinean bauxite and the US government guarantee that backed it, tempered anti-communist sentiment from forcing any real change in US policy towards the state.

Notwithstanding that the immediate repercussions of his opposition to US actions in the Congo proved to be minimal, Sékou Touré was bitterly disappointed with the United States. Far from being the paragon of anti-colonialism it presented to the world, the US had done nothing to stop Belgian government, army and industrial concerns from instigating and perpetuating the disintegration of Congo and the overthrow of its nationalist prime minister. The Eisenhower administration had shown that it would not lend its weight to supporting the alternative vision for Africa’s post-colonial future that Guinea’s leader had been trying to articulate, in West Africa, Europe and the US, for over two years. Together with many other nationalist leaders in Africa, Sékou Touré held out great hope that the incoming government of John Fitzgerald Kennedy would bring the US’ policy on Africa into line with its anti-colonialist rhetoric.

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78 Memorandum, Penfield to Secretary, 10 October 1960, Guinea; Country Files, 1951-63; BAA-OWA; RG 59, NACP; Memorandum of Conversation, 12 October 1960, FRUS 1958-60, Vol. XIV, 718-21.
III. "This Unspeakable Crime"

There was some foundation to the optimism African leaders like Ben Bella of the GPRA in Algeria, Kwame Nkrumah and Sékou Touré felt about Kennedy. The Massachusetts senator’s famous speech in July 1957, “Facing Facts on Algeria,” had marked him as a potential friend, not just to the Algerian independence movement, but to all African nationalists. Sékou Touré made a point of meeting the senator during his first trip to the US in 1959. About the meeting, the State Department interpreter Arva Floyd reported only that Kennedy said he thought “American policy toward Africa was still too much tied to the interests of our European allies and . . . we should take a more forthright stand in favor of African aspirations.” Kennedy’s statements might have been general, but taken together with the election campaign in full swing when Sékou Touré went back to the US the next year, they suggested that the new president would, at the very least, be careful to distinguish his African policy from that of his predecessor.

To the Democrats fighting the 1960 presidential election, it seemed both natural and desirable to differentiate the approach they would take towards a continent that had experienced such dramatic political changes over the past three years. It was also good politics at home. Richard Mahoney describes how Kennedy’s presidential campaign hoped to benefit: “the strategy was to use concern for Africa as a means of wooing American blacks without alienating Southern whites.” Though Joseph Satterthwaite tried valiantly to defend the outgoing administration’s record, Kennedy’s attacks on Eisenhower’s inaction in Africa raised expectations of change both among interested constituencies in the United States and among the more progressive governments in Africa itself.

The impetus towards a new approach to African relations carried the Kennedy administration through the election and into the choice of people both to advise on African matters and to administer the new policy. Among Kennedy’s first appointments was a new assistant secretary of state for African affairs to replace Satterthwaite, who

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80 Arva C. Floyd to Thomas Cassilly, “Impressions of the Visit of Sékou Touré and his Party to the United States,” undated (late November 1959); Records of Component Offices of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, 1947-1963 (Lot 65D350), RG 59, NACP.
81 Mahoney, JFK: Ordeal in Africa, 31. See also Durand, L’Afrique et les relations franco-américaines des années soixante, 71.
became ambassador to South Africa. The new assistant secretary was a suitable choice only according to the logic of domestic political considerations: not only did he have minimal knowledge of Africa; he had no experience of foreign affairs. Gerhard Mennen Williams, former governor of Michigan, life-long liberal, champion of the rights of African-Americans, and a man who had made a great contribution to Kennedy’s wins in Michigan and New York, was “bitterly disappointed” to be left out of the new president’s cabinet and accepted the appointment only after the intercession of Chester Bowles and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.  

However, “Soapy” Williams – the nickname reflected the source of his family’s fortune – would make up for inexperience with enthusiasm and stamina. He held the post for more than five years, even after Lyndon Johnson humiliated him in April 1964 by appointing Averell Harriman to oversee African policy. During that time, he made at least fourteen official visits to Africa, building personal connections with the leaders of most of its countries, and incidentally building a fine collection of African art.

Though Williams and other “New Frontier” personnel in the State Department and the White House such as Chester Bowles, Walt Whitman Rostow, and Adlai Stevenson would exercise the greatest day-to-day influence on the new president’s African policy, Kennedy also quickly established the habit of going beyond government to solicit policy advice from academics and business people with expertise or experience in Africa. In December 1960, he set up a task force on Africa, composed primarily of academics but also including people like F. Taylor Ostrander, assistant to the chairman of AMAX, which had extensive copper interests in Katanga and elsewhere, and Helen Kitchen, editor of Africa Report and a close friend of the president.  

The task force reported on 31 December. It urged the new administration to place “the highest priority” on developing and promulgating a “doctrine” to guide its approach to Africa, which it

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84 See correspondence in Box 15, G. Mennen Williams – Non-Gubernatorial Papers (hereafter GMWN), Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI (hereafter BHL). The art collection is now housed in the Detroit Institute of Fine Art.
85 The Task Force was distinct from the fact-finding mission that three Democratic senators, Frank Church, Gale McGee and Frank E. Moss, undertook shortly after the election in November 1960, although they are sometimes confused. The Senators submitted their report to the Senate Foreign Relations, Appropriations and Internal and Insular Affairs committees on 12 February 1961.
defined as “an overall view of obligations and guidelines for action selected in the light of our interests in Africa and taking into account the forces that animate African life today.” A new doctrine was needed for new circumstances:

The simple objectives of the old colonial era – the maintenance of order and the furtherance of trade – have been replaced by the complex objectives of the new postcolonial states – the development of indigenous instruments of political stability, the promotion of forced economic growth, the search for new amalgamations of states, the diversification of monocrop economies, and the attempt sharply to reduce dependence upon former metropolitan centers.

If the Eisenhower administration had made a little progress towards recognizing these new complexities in its last months, much more was needed to show American “steady and consistent concern” for the continent. 86

The debate about African policy was also joined in the Senate. Shortly after the election, three Democratic senators, Frank Church, Gale McGee and Frank E. Moss, had set off on a sixteen-nation tour of sub-Saharan Africa. They were accompanied for part of the trip by Edward Kennedy, who briefed his brother privately on their findings. 87

According to press reports, the delegation reported to three Senate committees (Foreign Relations, Appropriations and Interior and Insular Affairs) that Kennedy’s election “had stimulated high hopes” throughout Africa and supported the new administration’s position that the US needed to step up its aid to Africa to forestall Communist incursions. The senators echoed testimony Williams had given to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in which he suggested the US could afford to pass up opportunities to help Africa “only at its peril.” 88

The senators had experienced hostility from the governments of both Ghana and Guinea on their travels, but they, too, believed this reflected past American actions that could be rectified by future American generosity. 89

If the task force appeared to be paying attention to the vision of Sékou Touré and others for a fully independent African future and the Democratic senators seemed attuned to the political imperatives of a new policy, more traditional sources of advice on Africa


87 Mahoney, JFK: Ordeal in Africa, 68.


89 Morrow, First American Ambassador, 216-17; Satterthwaite to Macomber, 4 January 1961; Bureau of African Affairs, 1956-1962 (Lot Files 62D320, 63D77) (BAA 1956-62), RG 59, NACP.
emphasized continuity over change. Business leaders argued that the new administration should focus on ensuring ongoing US access to the African states in which they were active, even if those states were also taking aid from the Soviet bloc. AMAX’s F. Taylor Ostrander wrote to Williams on 8 December 1960, a week after Kennedy announced his appointment, offering “any assistance,” and emphasizing AMAX’s liberal credentials, noting that Williams had likely heard of AMAX subsidiary Rhodesian Selection Trust’s “liberal approach to African problems in the Copperbelt of Northern Rhodesia.” Stanley Osborne of Olin Mathieson was next, inviting Williams to talk any time it was convenient to the new Assistant Secretary; the briefing note endorsing this suggestion pointed out that Osborne was a large contributor to the Republican Party. Edgar Kaiser, who had close ties with Democrats, chimed in on 29 December with a more specific invitation to a meeting with executives from five aluminum companies in New York in early January to help them decide on investments in proposed dams on the Konkouré River in Guinea as well as the Volta River in Ghana.90

State Department staff briefings were even more conservative. The African Bureau recommended briefing the incoming assistant secretary on a wide range of subjects, befitting a routine process designed to inform the new official about US activities in Africa, rather than to educate him about the more fundamental concerns of the Africans with whom staff had had contacts over the few years since independence. The briefing material included papers prepared by the Operations Coordinating Board and National Security Council over the course of the previous year, exploring the US national security implications of anticipated future developments in various parts of Africa, with particular reference to the growing influence of Soviet bloc advisers in Ghana and Guinea. Donald Dumont produced a three-page list of those issues taken up by the UN’s General Assembly the previous autumn, giving the impression that the only serious point of division with African representatives, whom he described as ineffective, inexperienced and naïve, was the ongoing Congo crisis. Oliver Troxel suggested they discuss what policies the US should adopt concerning regional economic integration, as well as ties between African states and the European Common Market; economic issues

90 Letter, Taylor Ostrander to Williams, 8 December 1960, Box 7; Memoranda, James M. Davis to Williams, 19 December 1960, and John Abernethy to Williams, 29 December 1960, Box 11; GMWN, BHL.
would require “about 15 hours” of briefing time. Vaughan Ferguson added to the list economic issues with particular effect in West Africa, including the “bauxite electric power complex” there and more generally priorities for US aid programs throughout the region.  

The staff briefing papers reflected sound bureaucratic practice, emphasizing as they did the task of bringing their new assistant secretary up to speed on ongoing policies and matters, rather than suggesting new directions. More importantly, they also reflected the fact that for a region as remote from US interests as most of Africa was, operations and policy were far more likely to reflect the continuity of high-level geopolitical and economic objectives than the novelty of an anti-colonial agenda. Whatever promises the new administration had made during the election campaign or even with Kennedy’s inauguration, the reality was that there was little to be gained, either domestically or internationally, from switching allegiance away from established colonial and neocolonial interests and towards the radical nationalists. This was even more the case where those nationalists were tainted with charges of communism. The project of gainsaying the influence of Cold War allies like France and Britain over independent African states could always be trumped by the more important goal of denying the Soviet Union, its allies and the People’s Republic of China a foothold in Africa. Because the Kennedy administration shared with its predecessor a commitment to this overwhelming geopolitical objective, and because it was unwilling to examine or abandon its underlying logic of a bipolar contest for domination of areas of the world they considered to be easily led, the new administration would not act so very differently from the old.

The conflation of anti-colonialism, African nationalism and communism, as well as the political pressures to distinguish the new approach from the old, came together neatly in the belief, held in some circles in Washington and in the national press, that Guinea exemplified the failure of Eisenhower’s African policy. The allegation was addressed early in January 1961 by Foy Kohler, assistant secretary for European affairs, who took issue with the implication that waiting for the go-ahead from European capitals had prevented US aid from flowing into independent Africa. The only place they had

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91 Briefing binder for new Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, 1 January 1961; Troxel to Ruchti, 5 January 1961; Ferguson to Ruchti, 4 January 1961; O’Sheel to Ruchti, 5 January 1961; Dumont to Ruchti, 5 January 1961; BAA 1956-62, RG 59, NACP.
hesitated was Guinea, he argued. Even after the US had decided to go in, though, “very little happened to bring about the flow of economic development funds to that country from the US.” The fault did not lie in European capitals, nor even with specific parts of the US administration such as Treasury or the Bureau of the Budget: “The problem lies in the basic unwillingness of the US Government as a whole to enter upon economic development activities in Africa on a scale anywhere comparable to the scale undertaken by certain European powers, because of the feeling in this country that our national security is not dependent upon doing so.”

The story that the US had hesitated and therefore “lost” Guinea was being repeated in Congress and refuted, a bit defensively, by State: the real problem was the PDG’s “Marxist” philosophy, “socialistic” form of economy, and “uncritical espousal of anti-colonialism in Africa.” Yes, the US had deferred to French sensitivities over Guinea, but this was solely because they considered President de Gaulle to have the best chance of settling the Algerian crisis.

That the Cold War would trump anti-colonial sympathies became obvious when news finally broke, in mid-February 1961, of Lumumba’s murder. Rumours of his death first began to reach the US on 12 February. The rumour was confirmed the next day, along with Kennedy’s “great shock” at the news. On 15 February, Kennedy announced at a press conference that the US would support the UN and its beleaguered secretary-general by opposing “any attempt by any government to intervene unilaterally in the Congo”. Though expressed diplomatically, the president’s statement was interpreted as a veiled threat of armed response, if necessary, to the Soviet Union and to Nasser’s United Arab Republic, both of which had already recognized the Stanleyville-based regime of Antoine Gizenga as Congo’s legitimate government.

92 Kohler to Satterthwaite, 6 January 1961; BAA 1956-62, RG 59, NACP.
94 An article published that day relayed Katanga’s announcement that Lumumba had escaped from prison, as well as the suspicions of Ghana’s Alex Quaison-Sackey, a member of the UN’s Conciliation Commission in the Congo, that the announcement was a cover-up and “that Lumumba probably has been shot.” “Lumumba Drama,” New York Times, 12 February 1961, E1.
With Lumumba’s death, the subtlety of the new administration’s nascent foreign policy towards Africa was lost in the rush to interpret Congo’s tragedy in the more familiar, and comprehensible, framework of West versus East. As State Department analyst Patrick O’Sheel expressed it in an internal memorandum complaining that the African Bureau had been shut out of the drafting process for the president’s statement, “To focus so greatly on the Russian onslaught on the United Nations suggests that Cold War considerations, for their own sake, are basically what’s at stake.” Instead, he urged, as the Africans were much more interested in “what is happening to their interests, . . . we might better address ourselves to that issue [of Congo] first and to the Soviets second.” 96 Observers outside the State Department also noticed the shift in focus. One of the first to point out its consequences was Times correspondent Dana Adams Schmidt. On 19 February, Schmidt suggested that the risk of the “emotional, Communist-manipulated aftermath” of Lumumba’s killing was that the US might fall into “undiscriminating identification of Soviet and neutralist objectives.” This would preclude the Kennedy administration from carrying out a preferable policy of strengthening neutral African states, including Guinea, by reducing their dependence on the bloc, and thereby enable them to “block Soviet penetration” of Africa themselves, with no overt US interference required. 97

The impact on US-Guinean relations was immediate and severe. Even before the news broke of Lumumba’s fate, Morrow reported from Conakry that the Agence Guinéenne de presse (AGP) had declared the honeymoon with the Kennedy administration to be over: the problem, according to the AGP, was that the new administration’s Congo policy was simply a “rehash” of Eisenhower’s. When Lumumba’s murder had been confirmed, the AGP took an even harsher line: “within these ambiguous declarations and deliberately equivocal positions one can see the design of a policy of force and reaction, which has as its purpose to solve the thorny problems of the world by menace and intimidation.” Although the Guinean media, state-controlled as it was, did not always reflect the views of the state’s leaders, in this case the AGP’s

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statement was almost mild by comparison to the official statement. On 14 February, Sékou Touré dashed off a telegram to Kennedy. “This unspeakable crime destroys the hope that African nationalism had placed in your government, which was unwilling to use its authority to prevent the liquidation of legality in the Republic of the Congo.”

Although Kennedy took the advice of the State Department and made no direct response to the Guinean president’s telegram, Sékou Touré’s attack, as well as his decision to recognize Gizenga’s government and to withdraw Guinean troops from the UN contingent, added to the disturbing pattern of Guinean behaviour that had already affected relations between Guinea and the US.

V. Conclusions: The Arsonists’ Reproach

American foreign policy-makers’ confidence in their approach to resolving the world’s troubles – especially troubles caused or exacerbated by colonialism and imperialism – was nothing new in 1960. Nor was the American prescription for peaceful, Western-oriented development in Africa developed solely either at the instance of, or in reaction to, the challenges posed by Guinea’s independence. However, the experience of dealing with Guinea’s unique circumstances, as well as the insistence of its leaders on being accorded dignity and honour, had contributed to official US perspectives. The lessons the US drew from Guinea’s experience were not always the ones that Guinea’s leaders wanted to teach. In some cases, the Guineans would have been horrified. For instance, in discussing his unease with the wording of UN Declaration 1514/XV, Eisenhower pointed to Guinea, “which had always claimed that France pulled out on them too fast,” as an example of what was wrong with the resolution’s declaration that “Inadequacy of political, economic, social or educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence.”

Even so, Guinea’s experience of independence and its ongoing struggles against colonialism had made an impression on

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the American policy-making mind as it sought to resolve the contradictions between its ideological and rhetorical anti-colonialism and the reality of dealing with an important Western European ally that seemed very reluctant to relinquish its colonial privileges.

What was more problematic was that American policy-makers seemed content to try to resolve these contradictions, and to balance Cold War against anti-colonial concerns, without taking much notice of the expressed desires and perspectives of those trying to complete the “struggle against colonialism.” As Sékou Touré complained to the UN General Assembly, “Certain member states . . . are reproached with denouncing constantly and vehemently the evils of imperialism and colonialism. If a man cries “Fire” upon seeing his neighbour’s house burning, it is only the arsonists who can reproach him for giving the alarm.”100 The words of Sékou Touré and his fellow nationalists were too easily dismissed as rhetoric, and Marxist-inflected rhetoric at that. When his messages were taken seriously as expressions of an independent foreign policy, they were interpreted solely as efforts to influence other Africans, people who were considered to be, above all, easily influenced to the point of being simple-minded. All these words and actions could too easily be subsumed in the issue that most preoccupied American foreign policy-makers in those years.

Sékou Touré’s distress at the ease with which Patrice Lumumba’s constitutional, legitimate and popular government had been overthrown in Congo, deprived of its authority and even its right to represent the country in the UN, abandoned as the state’s territory was dismembered by neocolonial secessionist movements, and, worst of all, denied the opportunity to reassert authority by the abduction and brutal slaying of its leader, would have a lasting impact in Guinea. Congo was the neighbour’s house; Lumumba, the neighbour. The conflagration there, and the failure of the UN to act as he said it was expected, both in Congo and across independent Africa, to behave, “as a means of ensuring an international equilibrium based on justice and law, . . . a means of political safeguards for each nation,” left the Guinean president more alone than ever. France’s success in inducing most of its West African colonies to accept international sovereignty with ongoing economic and political orientation towards the metropole, and to reject Sékou Touré’s vision of “a typically all-African economy,” deprived him of the

100 Sékou Touré, “Colonialism and Imperialism,” 67.
potential allies with whom he shared the most: the language, history and economic infrastructure built up by eighty years of colonial rule.\textsuperscript{101} The resulting isolation and fear translated, more and more as the 1960s wore on, into an increasingly autocratic and brutal grip on power in Guinea, with terrible consequences for the lives and livelihoods of Guineans.

\textsuperscript{101} Sékou Touré, “Colonialism and Imperialism,” 63, 56.
Chapter 4. Organizing African Unity: The Challenge to Pan-Africanism

Our common determination to rid our economies of all foreign pressures, stems from our will to consolidate our states’ political independence, which we have placed at the disposal of African freedom and unity, for the sake of all the peoples of Africa. ... It is not without serious fears that we consider the dupes’ bargain contrived by neo-colonialism, which, under paternalist guises, uses every effort in our newly liberated countries, to secure the control of our political freedom by keeping us in a condition of economic dependence, to hinder our economic liberation through financial pressures, and to maintain our states under their military control. This is why we observe the hasty creation of bodies that marry the horse and the rider at the altar of one-way profit. The community of robber and robbed! – Ahmed Sékou Touré, 17 July 1961

As Sékou Touré had signalled in his first speech to the United Nations in November 1959, he considered independence to be only the first step for Guinea. “The liberty of Africa is indivisible,” he proclaimed; “our action for African emancipation is tied to our internal preoccupation with the liquidation of traces of the old regime and the construction of Guinea on a solid economic basis.” It was more than mere rhetoric: achieving a pan-continental association that would incorporate every independent state in Africa was the single biggest goal of Guinea’s foreign policy in the years 1961 to 1964.

The ends Sékou Touré hoped to achieve were, above all, economic. He sought nothing less than the reorientation of Africa’s economic and trade relationships towards the continent and away from the European countries that had colonized it. Continental economic ties would not preclude links with outside countries or interests. Nor would they necessarily take precedence over measures to strengthen political alliances or cultural identities. In Sékou Touré’s thinking, though, the continent’s inability to harness its varied resources primarily to benefit its own people was an enormous impediment to prosperity and to “maintaining peace and developing friendship between all peoples.”

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2 Speech to United Nations XIVth General Assembly, reproduced in International Policy, 30; a longer excerpt is the epigraph for Chapter 2, supra.
3 Speech to United Nations XIVth General Assembly, reproduced in International Policy, 30.
The means available to Guinea’s president were rooted in an idea widely cherished by Africa’s western-educated elite and shared, to one degree or another, across the global African diaspora. African unity was both a very old dream and a response to the demands of a new reality. Born as a way to assert a positive African identity in the face of the negative characterizations of Africans created by racism and by colonial domination, the prospect that newly independent states might realize pan-Africanism triggered hard questions about sovereignty. The idea raised both philosophical and practical problems. On a philosophical level, pan-Africanism was equally essentialist as the racism it sought to rebut and, therefore, of questionable appeal at a time when African leaders were trying to distinguish the nations they were building from one another. In its political incarnations, it implicitly identified the “sovereign” with all the people of a large and varied continent and, potentially, with the members of a diaspora that had been established over centuries by means of the slave trade. Acting in the common interests of the African people would be challenging enough; it risked becoming unmanageable if the sovereign included a worldwide population that shared little with people living in new African states except the skin colour of the majority of those who lived south of the Sahara. Such philosophical issues raised practical questions for the politicians trying to give effect to the old dream. The most obvious problem was how to protect hard-won independence while voluntarily surrendering some of the privileges of the sovereign state to create a larger whole. This was doubly intractable because in practice, the privileges of independence became the monopoly of the political elites in the post-colonial states. Against the temptations of international prestige and domestic power through the dispensation of patronage, the benefits of unity seemed like a mirage.

Sékou Touré’s approach to achieving African unity was pragmatic. The only ideological qualification he would set for membership in the continent-wide association he wanted so desperately to create was a commitment to the independence of, and cooperation between, African states. Even so, his project was very nearly derailed by the ongoing influence of France in its former colonies and by the reluctance of the US to be drawn in to the debate as a counterweight. The reality was that even the strongest and most determined African state was operating in a world where most power was exercised by foreign countries motivated, not by aspirations to creating a sovereignty based on the
African personality, but by neocolonial ambitions and Cold War fears. Yet once again Sékou Touré’s Guinea proved able to manipulate much stronger states so as to strengthen its hand and advance its causes.

The Organization of African Unity, created in May 1963, was an association of sovereign states. Its charter appeared to be more concerned with committing the members to respecting one another’s colonially defined borders than with building the United States of Africa that Ghana’s president Kwame Nkrumah urged upon his peers. As such, it was both a crowning achievement for the fractious leaders who signed the charter in Addis Ababa, and a terrible failure for the visionaries whose pursuit of the pan-African dream had inspired its laborious creation. As one of the chief architects of the compromise that enabled it to come into being, Sékou Touré at first portrayed the OAU as a triumph. Yet fourteen months later, at the OAU Summit meeting in Cairo, the Guinean’s disappointment in the new organization would rival that of his Ghanaian counterpart whose more ambitious vision of unity Guinea had helped to sink in 1963. The dream of pan-Africanism, even in its much more modest and pragmatic Guinean version, would fall prey to the realities of an international system which remained profoundly deaf to African voices and to the self-interest of the leaders of post-colonial states. In such a world, the achievement of the Organization of African Unity, flawed and compromised as it was, remains a significant one.

I. Sovereign Dreams: from Pan-Africanism to African Nationalism

In calling for African unity, politicians including Kwame Nkrumah and Sékou Touré could draw on a lengthy tradition of thought among the Western-educated elite both in Africa and across the African diaspora. The idea of an “African” identity – and, concomitantly, of political rights for people of “African” origin – grew through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as an expression of resistance to slavery, colonialism and the racism that enabled them.\(^4\) As the “intellectual and emotional sign of opposition
to the ideology of white superiority,” pan-Africanism and négritude were firmly rooted in
the epistemological traditions of Western thought with its reliance on analogy as a way to
understand the “other,” as well as Hegelian historiographic assumptions that all societies
could be measured on a single scale of progress towards the modern. The notion that all
Africans shared a cultural identity, that they could characterize themselves as a unified
people, was itself a form of “anti-racist racism”, and appealed most to those of African
descent whose accomplishments in colonial and racist societies were forever undermined
by their own black skins – that is to say, those educated in Western traditions.

The call for an African identity took many forms beyond the political: cultural,
religious, even occasionally economic. But a fundamental strand of this multifarious
entity engaged with ideas of political sovereignty. The concept of “sovereignty” itself
was being redefined by the positivists who dominated international law during the
nineteenth century to refer exclusively to an attribute of “civilized” European states,
which were thus authorized to appropriate territory under the control of “uncivilized”
non-European peoples. The pan-Africanist movements sought to counter the white,
European claim to exclusive access to sovereign rights by making a claim to similar rights for a community defined by race. In this way, their claim was not unlike the various “nationalisms” of the nineteenth century, including pan-Germanism, Zionism and pan-Slavism, to which pan-Africanism was sometimes explicitly compared. All were ways of asserting rights to sovereignty based on a claim of racial unity.8

Pan-Africanism’s links to an alternate vision of sovereignty have been traced to the origins of the movement in the Haitian Revolution of the early nineteenth century. Haiti’s “Black Jacobins”9 contributed to emerging notions of sovereignty by adding the element of race to the definition of the revolutionary subject, building on ideas about individual legal and socio-economic rights that had developed first with the British social revolution that accompanied enclosure in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and then on the identification of the sovereign with the “people” that arose out of the French revolution of the 1780s and 1790s. The tragedy of the Haitian revolution in turn galvanized thinkers of African descent across the Americas who began to articulate a foundation for equality and improvement of the conditions of black people’s lives.10

Haiti was especially important to Marcus Garvey of Jamaica, who established the Universal Negro Improvement Association. UNIA, first formed in Jamaica in 1914 and transplanted to the US with Garvey in 1916, itself acquired many of the trappings of the nation-state: paramilitary units, a civil service, passports, a parallel court system, even a flag and national anthem.11 What it did not have was a territory of its own, despite the slogan “Africa for the Africans” which Garvey popularized.12 At its height in the 1920s, Garvey’s UNIA tried to fill this gap by acquiring a territorial base in Africa. In 1920, Garvey entered into negotiations with the government of Liberia with a view to transferring his headquarters there and to resettling a number of people from the

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12 Esedebe, Pan-Africanism, 60.
Americas on land he hoped the Liberian government would give him. In 1922, UNIA also petitioned the League of Nations to turn ex-German colonies in Africa over to the Association. UNIA folded after its founder was convicted in the US of mail fraud and sentenced to four years’ imprisonment. When he was released from jail in 1927, Marcus Garvey moved to London and joined in with some of the pan-African activists based in England before his death in 1940.

Garvey had taken a particularly muscular view of African nationalism, picking up Edward Blyden’s 1862 call – itself partially inspired by Haiti’s ongoing struggle to maintain its independence – to “build up negro states.” However, even the less radical elements of the pan-African movement made the independence of Africa’s two non-colonial states, Liberia and Ethiopia, a central part of their agenda throughout the twentieth century. Other than a recurring demand to respect the independence of the two countries, though, the mainstream movement’s engagement with nationalism was more a matter of general ideology than of specific claims to sovereign powers. In an era of pan-German and pan-Slavic nationalism and of Zionism, with which it was sometimes directly compared, pan-Africanism seemed only fair.

Inspired by American historian W.E.B. Du Bois’ concept of “Pan-Negroism” and organized in large part by Henry Sylvester Williams of Trinidad, the first formal Pan-African Conference was held in London in July 1900. The conference adopted a statement, drafted by Du Bois, which, among many other items, called on Britain to grant responsible government to its colonies in Africa and the Caribbean, and asked the great powers to “respect the integrity and autonomous status” of Ethiopia, Liberia and Haiti. This Conference, though attended by representatives of Liberia and Ethiopia as well as individuals from the British African colonies of West Africa (Gold Coast, Lagos and Sierra Leone), was dominated by blacks from the US and the Caribbean.

The second formal international meeting of the movement coincided with the Paris Peace Conference at the end of the First World War. The Pan-African Congress,

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16 Esedebe, Pan-Africanism, 41-47.
held from 19 to 21 February 1919 at the Grand Hotel in Paris, had been proposed by Du Bois through the US National Association for the Advancement of Colored People the previous September. 17 Though Du Bois and the NAACP articulated high hopes that the Congress would be in a position to advocate the extension of the principle of self-determination to people in colonized Africa, it proved largely ineffective. Among the fifty-seven delegates were several Africans, including representatives of its two independent states. Senegal’s Blaise Diagne, a deputy in the French National Assembly, was considered, at least by the host country, to be speaking for all Africans under French colonial rule. Similarly Sierra Leonean lawyer M.E.F. Fredericks was supposed to represent all Africans within Britain’s empire. 18 Although the Congress passed a resolution calling for gradual self-government for Africans, its voice was sufficiently muted that colonial powers could ignore the challenge it posed to their sovereignty over the continent. To Maurice Delafosse, longtime French colonial official and scholar of African history, the challenge was imperceptible. “I do not think that anyone interested in the future of our African colonies,” he observed, “could do otherwise than to subscribe to the ideas formulated by the Pan-African Congress and to exert himself to transform them into acts.” 19 Delafosse’s belief that the delegates were, on the whole, eminently satisfied with French colonialism’s gradual, paternalistic approach – the civilizing mission – extended to France’s allies, Belgium, Britain and Portugal. And of course any objections Germany might have been inclined to raise to this harmonious view of the colonial mission had been rendered moot by its defeat and the determination of the victors to eliminate it as a colonial power.

After the 1919 Congress, the new Paris-based Pan-African Association convened three Congresses during the 1920s then fell quiet during the Great Depression. The movement was revived again in 1945 with the organization of the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester in October. Du Bois was again a key figure in putting this Congress together and acted as its president. The two individuals with the greatest organizational and ideological influence over the Manchester Congress, however, were

its political secretaries: George Padmore of Trinidad, who had worked for the Comintern before 1933; and Kwame Nkrumah, recently arrived in London from ten years’ study in the United States. Their organizational influence was evident in the composition of the delegates. For the first time, the majority was African-born, many of them expatriate students in European capitals including several, like Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta, who would become the political leaders responsible for taking their respective states into independence in the 1950s and 1960s. The ideological influence of Padmore and Nkrumah was evident in the Congress’ final resolutions, which reflected a more aggressive African nationalism and socialism as well as the more usual concerns of pan-Africanism. The Manchester Congress demanded immediate independence for British and French West Africa, British Sudan, the French colonies in North Africa (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) and the Italian dependency of Libya. Elsewhere in the colonial empires, far-reaching legal, economic and social reforms were to be undertaken at once. The movement had been galvanized by Italy’s 1935 invasion of Ethiopia, and this time, in addition to the call for respect of Ethiopian, Haitian and Liberian sovereignty that had formed part of every Pan-African Congress so far, the delegates supported Ethiopia’s claims to Eritrea and the Ogaden.20 The nationalism of the pan-African movement was now overt: Africans were exhorted to adopt a socialist-inflected program whose main objective was to oust colonial rule from the continent itself.

Although this nationalistic pan-Africanism had its adherents among European expatriates from the French African colonies, the mainstream pan-Africanism of the francophone world was politically more conservative than its Anglophone counterpart. With the notable exception of certain student groups in Europe, the francophone African cultural and political elites of the 1950s were better acquainted with a pan-Africanism that was focused on the cultural expression of an African personality. The négritude movement was described by Aimé Césaire, the Martinican writer who named it, as “a resistance to the politics of assimilation”.21 Founded by Césaire, Senegal’s Léopold Sédar Senghor, and other African and Antillean expatriates in Paris in the 1920s, négritude was above all an effort to articulate what Senghor referred to as “African

20 Esedebe, Pan-Africanism, 138-44.
cultural values”, a “collective soul” of all African-descended peoples derived from their common heritage. Such a soul neither could nor should be assimilated to the greater French identity.

Négritude’s resistance did not tend to take the form of an alternate vision of political organization. In particular, Senghor, who sat as a député in France’s National Assembly from 1946 until Senegal’s independence in 1960, did not link African cultural integrity with independence from colonial rule. Instead, he argued that Africans should be full citizens in France’s imperial federation, even though, culturally, they should resist French assimilation. As a result, he was increasingly outflanked by students and others associated with the movement who were expressing a growing nationalism in the form of demands for political independence. For example, in September 1956 négritude’s house organ, Présence Africaine, convened the First Congress of Negro Writers and Artists at the Sorbonne in Paris. On the opening day, Senghor spoke of the “spirit of Negro-African civilization” and the role it should play in inspiring black African writers and other artists around the world. He seemed surprised by the storm of controversy this set off. The first salvo came from American writer Richard Wright, who objected that he did not see himself in the civilization Senghor described. Haitian doctor and writer Jacques-Stéphen Alexis was more direct: “What is required,” he said, “is to frame questions of culture in terms of national independence – in terms of the creation of nations.” Senghor was rescued by Césaire, who made an eloquent plea that writers and artists intervene in formulating national cultures in the post-colonial world. By the final day of the conference, Senghor had clearly got the message:

I am explaining the reason why we say that, in order to live our culture, in order to have an authentic culture, a political problem must be resolved; and that, even once we have resolved this issue, there is another problem: that of a choice between civilizations that we have met; we must take care as to what we take from western civilization and what we keep from Negro-African civilization.

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As well as reinforcing a favourite theme, that Africans could shape their culture selectively rather than accepting the crude stereotypes imposed on them by “western civilization”, Senghor’s concession maintained a tension between the focus on cultural expression that négritude had maintained and the push to use this francophone pan-African movement for more explicitly political objectives. The tension was appropriate: as African politicians would soon discover, unity would prove much more difficult to achieve than division when what was at stake was the decision to share power, rather than the campaign to assert a distinct, and positive, cultural identity.

II. Sovereign Realities

As the leaders of the only francophone territory south of the Sahara to have accepted France’s back-handed offer of independence in 1958, Guinea’s political elite was ideally placed to try to mediate between the state-focused nationalism of Anglophone pan-Africanism and the efforts of the négritude thinkers to define an African culture. Explaining his decision to join with Nkrumah to establish the Ghana-Guinea Union, Sékou Touré told the All-Africa People’s Conference in Accra:

It is because we are fully aware of the fact that sovereignty could not be exerted in favour of the people if it is divided and isolated in an Africa otherwise under foreign rule that our Constitution allows for the partial or total abandonment of sovereignty in the interest of African unity.25

Emphasizing the liberation of the continent from colonial rule as the reason for the flexibility built into Guinea’s constitution was a safe bet at a conference where the majority of delegates represented nationalist parties from parts of the continent still in European hands. As host, Nkrumah compared the December 1958 meeting to the 1884-85 Berlin Conference; the All-Africa People’s Conference was to mark the end of the era that Berlin had begun.26 But Sékou Touré’s statement also emphasized that the importance of sovereignty was its exercise “in favour of the people”. For the Guinean, the sovereign was the African people. The form taken by the state, or states, in which

they lived was secondary. The independence that mattered most was freedom from foreign rule, not self-government within the structure of the nation-state.

Although Sékou Touré’s notion of an African popular sovereignty owed a great deal to French post-Revolution political traditions, France’s self-interest dictated that it reinforce the identification of francophone African politicians with a French, rather than an African, popular sovereign.27 France responded to Sékou Touré’s appeal for African unity by arguing that since négritude’s battle had been won, its African colonies had no need to re-orient their allegiance towards the continent. Paul-Marc Henry, Director of the African bureau in the French Ministère des Affaires étrangères, outlined this position in a commentary about developments in Ghana and Guinea published in Foreign Affairs in April 1959. Provocatively titled “Pan-Africanism: A Dream Come True,” the article suggested there was a gulf between the pan-Africanism of Nkrumah, Padmore and Du Bois as expressed at the December 1958 All-African People’s Conference and the views of the “French-trained African politicians” with whom he was better acquainted. Pan-Africanism was “a doctrine which has been evolved by small teams of theoreticians who have derived their experience from the very special situation of the Negroes in America or of the constitutional struggles in British crown colonies.” Accordingly, it was of no interest to the politicians of francophone Africa. Citing the 1956 Paris Congress of Black Writers and Artists at which even Senghor was forced to confront nationalism, Henry asserted pan-Africanism was not necessary for French Africans: a “spiritual revolution” had already taken place in French Africa, whereby all that was demanded by the négritude writers – cultural equality with the metropolitan French – had already been granted. Francophone Africa’s true leaders, he was assuring his American audience, had found their place within the French Community.28

Henry backed up his argument with a second theme that would have greater longevity in both the public and private utterances of French officials. This was the suggestion that those calling the loudest for unity were not to be trusted. He alleged that Nkrumah’s real motive, for instance, was to extend his own power. “To a next-door

neighbor,” Henry suggested, citing Houphouët-Boigny and Togo’s Sylvanus Olympio, “pan-Africanism is apt to look like a convenient smoke screen for very precise and down-to-earth territorial ambitions.” This, he suggested, was the real reason that the declaration of the Ghana-Guinea Union stopped short of a full act of union. Even Sékou Touré had proven himself to be “anxious to keep [his state’s] separate personalit[y].”

As France’s Sub-Saharan colonies followed Ghana and Guinea into independence in 1959 and 1960, France abandoned its formal, constitutional Community, and defences of its viability disappeared from public view. This was by no means to say that France was abandoning plans to maintain economic, political and cultural influence on the continent. On the contrary: the metropole spared no effort to defend its privileges, and its reputation, through a wide range of overt and covert means. The French saw in efforts to create supra-national groupings in Africa – and in attempts to recreate aspects of the colonial federations of French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa which had been lost when the Loi Gaston Defferre (the loi-cadre) was passed in 1956 – an opportunity to preserve its own influence in the postcolonial environment. Any cohesion among francophone states could be used to reinforce the virtually exclusive trade and aid links between France and its former colonies and the dominance of the French franc-backed currency, still widely used throughout west and central Africa, which enabled them. Nascent supra-national groupings of new states could also be used to reinforce sympathy for French positions on political issues of interest in Africa, such as the ongoing war of independence in Algeria or France’s nuclear tests in the Sahara.

It was, accordingly, important to thwart any effort to unify Africa against such neocolonial influences. Thus it was particularly important to sow suspicion of vocal unifiers such as Sékou Touré and Kwame Nkrumah. Henry’s second argument struck a receptive chord because it played on fears, not only of Anglo-Saxon and Anglophone motives, but also of how much each leader’s position depended on the ability to attract and redistribute resources from outside the state – and how vulnerable they were if they

lost the privileges that came with sovereignty. For the most part, post-colonial regimes perpetuated a highly centralized form of government primarily intended to control populations that in many cases had no firmer attachment to the new African rulers than they had to their French or British predecessors. The new governments often held power through a combination of dispensing favour and exerting authority with greater or lesser degrees of violence, relying on techniques rooted in practices of much longer duration than the period of formal colonial rule. Neither the dispensation of patronage and privilege nor the exercise of central control, however, would be advanced by ceding the powers of sovereign government to any external authority.

While France’s Sub-Saharan territories were still members of the French Community, disapproval of French actions in Africa would sometimes offer African politicians an opportunity to create the illusion of unified positions to paper over the reality of a fundamental unwillingness to give up the privileges of state sovereignty. For instance, in the summer of 1959, Nkrumah and Sékou Touré tried to enlist the oldest independent state in West Africa in the regional union to which they had committed the previous November and the Union of Independent African States to which they had expanded their ambitions in May. From 15 to 18 July, the Ghanaian and Guinean leaders met with Liberia’s president, William Tubman, at Saniquellie, near Liberia’s border with Guinea. The three West African leaders found significant common ground on matters of foreign policy concerning developments elsewhere in Africa. In addition to condemning apartheid in South Africa and agreeing to ensure “unity of action” at the United Nations, the leaders addressed three pressing issues involving France. They “deplored” the situation in Cameroon, where the UN had agreed to a French proposal to


33 Joint Declaration at Conakry, 1 May 1959, accepted by the Parliament of Ghana on 13 July 1959; Official Report of Parliamentary Debates, Ghana, 10 July 1959 (Vol. 16, No. 11); File 16.8 – Relations – Guinea-Mali-Ghana; Ghana; Country Files, 1951-63; Office of West African Affairs – Bureau of African Affairs (BAA-OWA); Records of the Department of State (RG 59), National Archives at College Park, MD (NACP).
enable the trust territory to proceed to independence without first holding free elections.\footnote{Richard A. Joseph, “Ruben um Nyobé and the ‘Kamerun’ Rebellion”, \textit{African Affairs} 73:293 (1974), 428-448 at 447.} They called on the UN to deal with the ongoing Algerian war. Finally, they appealed for a unified African position against French plans to conduct nuclear tests in the Sahara. At least on matters of colonial influence, the independent African states could agree.\footnote{Alan Gray, “Quarterly Chronicle,” \textit{African Affairs} 58: 233 (1959), 268-84 at 268-69.}

The question of political unity was more problematic. At the end of their meeting, the three leaders agreed to call a wider conference in 1960 with a view to forming “a community of independent African States.” But they also agreed to ten principles for such a community, including that each of its members would maintain its own national identity and constitutional structure. Moreover, members would agree not to interfere in one another’s internal affairs, and the community would be created without prejudice to their “present or future international policies, relations and obligations.”\footnote{Gray, “Quarterly Chronicle,” 268.}

Not only did the Saniquellie principles foreshadow the Charter of the OAU, still nearly four years away: they also staked out a strong position in favour of the sovereign rights of African states rather than their eventual union.

Once most of the remaining French territories got their independence in 1960, attitudes towards France’s actions became a point of contention between African groupings rather than a cover for more fundamental disagreements. So divisive was French influence that as they achieved independence, francophone states formed their own association rather than join the existing grouping of Independent African States set in motion by the Saniquellie meeting. There was one notable exception: Mali, the former Soudan, indicated its intention to join the Ghana-Guinea Union as the result of meetings that took place in Siguiri and Conakry in December 1960.\footnote{“Ephémérides politiques, décembre 1960,” No. 5/AL, 7 January 1961; “Ephémérides politiques, février 1961,” No. 152/AL, 9 March 1961; Guinée 43, DAL, AMAE.} Otherwise, the francophone states closed ranks around their own kernel of much more conservative states, emphasizing economic issues rather than political ones, which permitted them to maintain much closer ties with France. The Conseil de l’Entente, formed in May 1959 by Côte d’Ivoire’s Félix Houphouët-Boigny to represent Dahomey (now Benin), Niger and Upper Volta (Burkina Faso) as well as Ivoirian interests, had mostly economic objectives
despite its initial pledge to “offer a framework for political cooperation to the Chiefs of State” of these territories.\(^{38}\) In December 1960, the *Conseil* members met at Brazzaville with the leaders of eight other new francophone states. At a follow-up meeting in Dakar at the end of January 1961, the resulting so-called “Brazzaville group” became the Organisation Africaine et malgache de cooperation économique (OAMCE), reflecting Madagascar’s insistence that the island nation was distinct from continental Africa. The OAMCE in turn became the Union Africaine et malgache (UAM) the following September.\(^{39}\)

France’s support for this initiative was unequivocal, for it offered significant political and economic advantages. “Our interest is . . . to do all that is in our power to reinforce the group of francophone states so as to create a pole of attraction for all moderate African states,” noted an analysis prepared in the Ministère des Affaires étrangères (MAE) a few days after the draft OAMCE treaty was prepared in February 1961. Even if such an organization could not entirely “correct . . . the effects of political balkanization which threatens to dangerously fragment the Franco-African common market,” it would help the francophone states to withstand the attentions of their “British neighbours,” especially Nigeria. Moreover, once its institutions evolved sufficiently, the OAMCE could receive, administer and distribute aid funds from France, the European Common Market, and even the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Though Houphouët-Boigny, still committed to a bilateral relationship between Côte d’Ivoire and France, would no doubt object, this sort of structure would defuse accusations of neocolonialism against France, as well as improving the coordination of aid flows to OAMCE members.\(^{40}\)

The creation of the Brazzaville group, and the support it expressed for French positions on key controversies in Africa including Algeria’s ongoing war of


\(^{39}\) On the formation of the OAMCE: Robert K. Sherwood (Paris), No. 224, 10 February 1961; Central Decimal File 851T.00/2-1061, RG 59, NACP. The Brazzaville twelve were: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo (Brazzaville), Côte d’Ivoire, Dahomey, Gabon, Madagascar, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Upper Volta.

independence and the secession of Katanga from Congo, in turn encouraged Nkrumah and Sékou Touré to try to consolidate states less sympathetic to France around their more aggressively anti-colonial vision of pan-Africanism. Ghana, Guinea and Mali met at Casablanca in January 1961 with four North African entities: Morocco, their host; the United Arab Republic (Egypt and Syria); Libya; and the Provisional Government of the Republic of Algeria (GPRA). Although Morocco, a conservative monarchy, also invited Ethiopia, Liberia, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Togo and Tunisia, none of these more moderate states attended, leaving the kingdom alone with some of Africa’s most politically progressive entities in the resulting Casablanca group. Morocco’s primary interest was in gaining support for its dispute with Mauritania, a member of the Brazzaville group, for control over the Western Sahara. The meeting duly condemned Mauritania as a French puppet, but it also denounced other instances of neocolonial intervention with a set of resolutions that, in the words of one commentator, “appeared to be written in acid.” Among other issues, the Casablanca states resolved to withdraw their contingents from the UN force in Congo, which they contended was neither supporting the efforts of the legitimate Congolese government nor protecting the independence and territorial integrity of the state. They called on all African governments to recognize the GPRA and to reconsider relations with France in view of the latter’s nuclear testing in the Sahara. The Casablanca group also took a more radical position on institutional unity by announcing that members intended to create a Joint African High Command and an African Consultative Assembly. 41 Its reputation was cemented as the “radical” group.

The consequences of the schism between the Casablanca and Brazzaville groups – and the implications of the type of interest each group was attracting from the outside world – were both obvious and unwelcome to Sékou Touré. His program for African unity had always emphasized unanimity so as to increase the political and economic strength and independence of the entire continent. Moreover, the Brazzaville group seemed to be in the ascendant: its meetings were attracting highly favourable external attention, and not just from France; and, in May 1961, it appeared to score a significant

victory over the Casablanca powers in the struggle to sway the undecided states of Africa.

The initiative for the Monrovia conference of May 1961 appears to have been Senegalese president Senghor’s desire to broaden the membership of the Brazzaville group to include not only uncommitted states but also Senegal’s neighbours in the Casablanca group, in part to dilute Hounhouët-Boigny’s influence over the francophone group.42 Senghor worked with Liberia’s Tubman, Nigeria’s Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and Togo’s Olympio to organize the conference. At first, Guinea and Mali also agreed to help, but ultimately they joined their Casablanca colleagues in refusing to attend the Monrovia meeting. The Casablanca group’s decision was likely motivated in part by Morocco’s ongoing dispute with Brazzaville member Mauritania, and in part by the decision not to invite the GPRA, a full member of the group, to Monrovia so as not to offend the pro-French Brazzaville states. It has also been suggested that the decision of Mali and Guinea was motivated by the provision of financial assistance by Ghana.43

Sékou Touré was uncharacteristically quiet about the Monrovia Conference at first. France’s new representative in Conakry, Ambassador Jean-Louis Pons, reported that the President took neither a hostile nor a favourable position towards it and speculated that this was because he had recently been trying to mend relations with francophone states including Upper Volta and Niger.44 However, he soon realigned himself and Guinea with Nkrumah, who reacted vociferously to being blamed for the continuing failure of Africa to unite.45 In his opening speech to the economic conference of the Casablanca powers held in July 1961, Sékou Touré explained why only the radical powers reflected “the true voice of Africa”. They alone were prepared to reject the “dupes’ bargain” that was being offered to them by neocolonial pressures. Theirs alone was a movement of free African states, rather than a “community of robber and robbed”

42 Walraven, Dreams of Power, 110.
45 Thompson, Ghana’s Foreign Policy, 203-04; Nkrumah article in Ghana Today, 24 May 1961, quoted in Walraven, Dreams of Power, 111.
such as the OAMCE. No doubt, Pons commented acidly, the states which Sékou Touré did not consider to be completely independent felt the sting of his contempt.

Despite his allegiance to Nkrumah and hostility to the Brazzaville group, Sékou Touré had reason to be alarmed at the turn of events in Monrovia. Far from proving itself to be the kernel of the United States of Africa, the Union of Ghana, Guinea and Mali – since 1 July, formally the Union of African States (UAS) – was meeting with increasing hostility from the conservative and moderate states. In September, the Brazzaville states, meeting in Antananarivo, declared their intention to form a mutual defence pact, which it seemed that other Monrovia states – Nigeria, Liberia, Ethiopia and Sudan among them – would join. According to Pons, this so threatened to isolate and weaken the UAS that Sékou Touré was risking the allegiance of the left wing of his own party to quietly test the potential for rapprochement with the Brazzaville and Monrovia states.

What was worse, conservative African leaders were finding in the United States a willing audience for their claims that the UAS was a danger to regional security, as well as a potential source of arms to counter the threat. On his October 1961 trip to Africa, for instance, US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs G. Mennen Williams heard “several … snide references” to the Union from Niger’s Boubou Hama, including the allegation that the three radical states were engaged in a military buildup; Williams reported that he had little doubt that Senegal was genuinely “frightened” by the military efforts of the UAS. In all cases, Williams’ inclination was to offer American military aid of some sort to the non-UAS state. It was becoming apparent to Sékou Touré that the United States would have to be brought to a position of neutrality, if not outright favour, towards the more aggressive vision of continental unity he championed if the project were to succeed in attracting all the states in Africa. No other state could offer sufficient counterweight to France to sway the francophone states. Without American approval, it

47 Pons to MAE, “Éphémères politiques, Mai 1961”, 7 June 1961; Guinée 43, DAL, AMAE.
48 The charter of the Union of African States was agreed by Ghana, Guinea and Mali at a meeting held in Accra from 27-29 April, 1961, and was announced in all three countries on 1 July 1961: “L’Union des états africains (UEA) est née,” Horoya, 4 July 1961, 1.
49 Pons to MAE, “Éphémères politiques, septembre 1961,” Guinée 43, DAL, AMAE.
50 Fort Lamy (Williams) to State (Fredericks), 15 October and 16 October 1961; Dakar (Williams) to State (Fredericks), 16 October 1961; Trips File, January-October 1961; Records of G. Mennen Williams, 1961-1966, RG 59, NACP.
was increasingly clear that the chances of persuading moderate Anglophone states to join any organization being created by Ghana or Guinea would remain very poor.

III. The “United States of Africa” and the United States of America

The president-elect’s Task Force on Africa had recommended the essence of the Kennedy administration’s policy towards African unity at the end of December 1960. The panel, comprising academics, journalists and business people, began their analysis with the observation that “little . . . binds the new states of Africa together except the mystique of the map, their common colonial past, and, south of the Sahara, their color.” Despite this and the “surprisingly little commerce among the various countries of the continent,” it saw pan-Africanism as “a potent force”. Like the Eisenhower administration, Kennedy’s task force recognized that cooperation among African states could serve American interests, notably the goal of “restrain[ing] intra-African disputes.” Unlike the previous administration, which had “given verbal support to the notion of African regional cooperation,” the task force advised Kennedy to take care not to be seen to be imposing policies such as amalgamation on African leaders. 51 There were two main reasons for restraint. First, siding with either group ran the risk of undermining a goal of “cardinal importance”: “maintaining maximum access to all areas.” A second, and related, reason was that the group of states most aggressively pursuing African unity was suspect. The task force attributed to all the so-called radicals the presumption “that the political independence of each territorial state represents only a way-station to the final and legitimate goal – the creation of a pan-African state.” Compounding this over-simplification, the task force quickly identified the threat posed by the radicals: their “natural concurrence of interests” with the Communist bloc, which opened “another point at which [the bloc] may make gains in Africa.” What they considered a greater tendency among the conservative states to unstable regimes gave rise to the fear of “considerable

51 Eisenhower had made a speech to the UN Special Session on the Congo in September 1960 which was supported by an “illustrative resolution.” This resolution expressed hope that “African States will consider … means to maintain their security without dangerous and wasteful competition in armaments, which might include … regional agreements or arrangements.” “Africa: A United Nations Programme for Independence and Development. Letter dated 20 October 1960 from the Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, addressed to the Secretary-General,” A/4515/Add.1, 20 October 1960; POL 1-3, Subject Files, 1960-65, Records of the Bureau of African Affairs, 1958-1966 (Lots 69D328, 69D25, 67D217) (hereafter BAA Subject Files 1960-65); RG 59, NACP.
slippage toward the radical camp;” however, they noted, contestation among the leaders of the radical states for leadership of the movement could undermine their gains.\textsuperscript{52}

The new administration’s policy on the movements towards African unity reflected and even exceeded the task force’s caution by scaling back its support to focus solely on regional economic organizations. The larger political movement was to be downplayed for fear of its supposed Communist connections. Thus even on the fundamental issue of arms control, State simply ignored the task force’s observation that the pan-continental unity movements might be used to induce the African countries to voluntarily limit their imports of armaments. Martin Herz, the African Bureau’s expert on the issue, briefed Williams on 13 February about a proposal floated by State Department counselor George McGhee for a two-part approach to this issue: first, seek agreement with the Soviet Union as well as with NATO members to limit shipments to arms consistent with internal security requirements; and second, actively encourage African states to establish something like the Organization of American States “to settle disputes among themselves and presumably to work out criteria for minimum arms needs.” Herz thought the first proposal unlikely and completely ignored the second. A few weeks later, Herz expanded on his views in a formal briefing paper prepared for Secretary of State Dean Rusk. Herz strongly advocated urging the Africans to agree among themselves to limit arms, starting with Nkrumah, who was expected to visit Washington a few days later. However, he never did address whether and how the unity mechanisms, such as the African High Command announced at Casablanca at Nkrumah’s urging, might be used in this connection.\textsuperscript{53} Similarly, the final version of the proposed policy sent to Under Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric on 3 May 1961 noted that voluntary agreements among Africans would play an important part in limiting the arms race on the continent but then downplayed the importance of the unity movement in


\textsuperscript{53} Herz to Williams, “Arms Control and Arms Supply Policy in Africa,” 13 February 1961; Correspondence File February 1961, BAA 1956-62; Herz, Briefing Paper, “Arms Limitation for Africa”, 7 March 1961; DEF 18-9, BAA Subject Files 1960-65, RG 59, NACP. The proposal was lost in the rush to take advantage of the apparent softening of Nkrumah’s earlier position that all UN troops in Congo must be African. Woodruff Wallner on behalf of Adlai Stevenson to Rusk, “Congo: Points for the President for his Talk with Nkrumah,” 8 March 1961; Correspondence File March 1961, BAA 1956-62, RG 59, NACP.
advancing such agreements, noting only that “encouragement of regional arrangements” was already under way.\textsuperscript{54}

Choosing to ignore the issue that was uppermost in the minds of some of the most vocal African politicians led to some peculiar spectacles when Americans visited the continent. It is hard to know definitively whether the tone-deaf response of the US government to the controversy that erupted on Williams’ very first day on African soil was deliberate or simply ignorant, but it is unmistakably bizarre. At a press conference in Nairobi on 17 February 1961, Williams made some comments that were reported in the local and international press as “Soapy Says ‘Africa for the Africans.’” According to his own recollection, Williams had said nothing of the sort: asked about the new US administration’s policy for Africa, he said “What we want for Africa is what Africans want for themselves.” The controversy was over whether Williams was using “Africans” the way the term was used in nationalist discourse on the continent itself, that is, to refer exclusively to black Africans. He tried to make it clear – and his President subsequently agreed this must have been his intent – that he meant “anyone who lives in Africa, regardless of race or color,” thereby rendering the statement essentially meaningless, even as a declaration that US policy would swing away from European interests and towards African ones. But what seems never to have been addressed, either by Williams, Kennedy, or even Adlai Stevenson, who picked up on the slogan and Williams’ interpretation of it in an address to the Security Council on the same day, was the origins of the phrase and its identification with the pan-African movement at a time when pan-Africanism was most active in the United States.\textsuperscript{55} Instead, the Assistant Secretary specified the form of unity the US favoured when he addressed the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa later that day. Drawing examples from the early post-revolutionary history of the United States, he exhorted the economists to help African nations “find additional strength and greater tangible rewards through

\textsuperscript{54} Bowles to Gilpatric, 3 May 1961; Correspondence File May 1961; BAA 1956-62, RG 59, NACP.
\textsuperscript{55} G. Mennen Williams, \textit{Africa for the Africans} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), 159-60; Penfield to Williams, Telegram, 17 February 1961 (reporting Stevenson’s speech) and Rusk to Embassies in Africa, Circular Telegram, 25 February 1961, Box 16; Earl H. Voss, “President ‘Satisfied’ with Williams Mission,” \textit{Washington Star}, 1 March 1961, Box 15; G. Mennen Williams – Non-Gubernatorial Papers (hereafter GWMN), Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI (hereafter BHL).
increased cooperation, particularly in the economic field, even as you maintain your political independence.”

All indications in February 1961 were that the US was no better disposed towards Guinea itself than towards its highest foreign policy priority. The low point was Sékou Touré’s 14 February 1961 telegram to Kennedy, telling him that Lumumba’s murder “destroys the hope” that African nationalism had placed in the new US government. Kennedy took the State Department’s advice and did not reply directly to the telegram, but matters had not improved significantly by the time Kennedy’s new ambassador to Guinea, William Attwood, arrived in Conakry late in April. Like John Morrow, Attwood was a non-career appointee with very little knowledge of Africa prior to his posting; unlike his predecessor, the new ambassador was closely connected with the Administration, having taken a leave of absence from his position as Look magazine’s foreign editor in January 1960 to write speeches, first for Adlai Stevenson and then, when he became the Democratic nominee, for Kennedy. Attwood approached his new posting as a chance to “win” Guinea back from the Soviet Union, and this simple narrative line would dominate his reporting, both at the time and in his retrospective account of his time in Conakry.

Attwood arrived in Guinea at a time that the US press, and some in official Washington, characterized as a make-or-break moment, adopting the same win/lose framework as the new ambassador. Could the US government prevent Guinea from becoming a Soviet satellite, as many thought it already was? What was really at stake was what the new administration was prepared to do to protect US firms’ investments in Guinean bauxite. If Guinea went to the Soviets, would it expropriate US alumina plants

56 “So that all Africans may walk in strength and dignity”, Message to the Third Session of the U.N. Economic Commission for Africa by G. Mennen Williams, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, February 17, 1961; Box 16, GMWN, BHL.
57 Sékou Touré to John F. Kennedy, 14 February 1961; attachment to Walter J. Stoessel, Jr. to Ralph A. Dungan (White House), 18 February 1961; Correspondence File February 1961; BAA 1956-62, RG 59, NACP.
59 Alphand to Couve de Murville, No. 570/AL, 7 March 1961, Guinée 41, DAL, AMAE, reporting on an article in the Wall Street Journal of the same day.
or otherwise make it impossible for US business to work in the country? Would the Treasury be called upon to indemnify Olin-Mathieson for the Fria works, or Alcoa for the planned work at Boké? On 8 May, Olin-Mathieson president Stanley Osborne appeared before the House Foreign Affairs Committee and put the issue squarely before the Representatives. In his view they must “accept the fundamental fact that [government] must underwrite the political risks of foreign ‘underdeveloped nation’ investments.” To do so, its must “make available financial aid . . . and help establish a close relationship between American Government, American industry, and the foreign countries hoping for development and a better way of life.” Without this, he implied, American industry could not play its part in the “gigantic problem” of “raising the living standards” of people in developing countries.60

The State Department’s response was a new “Guinea Plan,” presented the next day by George Ball, under-secretary of state for economic affairs. Although the plan purported to start from the premise that Guinea had been lost, it fell far short of endorsing Osborne’s call for the US government to insure companies like Olin-Mathieson against political risk. “The US will have to decide very shortly whether to cut its losses in Guinea, or to protect its economic and political stake through a new, more vigorous policy,” it stated, raising the possibility that the US might try “to generate long-term pressures from outside and inside Guinea to bring about a change of regime or policy.” However, US actions were unlikely to come to regime change. Instead, the Department urged the government to advance “sufficient resources” to permit the new Boké consortium to move ahead according to its construction schedule, even though “Guinea may remain a rather hostile, Marxist-oriented state for a long time.” The reason was that the aluminum industry “provides the only program at the present moment upon which the West can hope to build up influence in Guinea.” Even the decision whether to cut US losses was not really irrevocable: the components of the “more vigorous policy” should be considered as “[interim] steps . . . to gain time” while deciding on a long-term policy towards the country.61

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60 Osborne, Statement to HFAC, 8 May 1961; Box 15, GMWN, BHL.
61 Henry Tasca to George Ball, 9 May 1961; Central Decimal Files, 611.70B/9-561; RG 59, NACP.
Optimism and the entrenched interests of the US aluminum industry prevailed, and Attwood was instructed at the end of May to offer the Guineans a limited aid package. The aid was conditional on Guinean cooperation: “If [the] Government of Guinea gives reasonable indication it is prepared to live up to letter and spirit of bilateral agreement, and if satisfactory project plans are developed and agreed, we would then proceed with firm project commitments.” Sékou Touré’s assent was immediate, though unspecific, and by the end of June 1961, Williams’ second in command, Wayne Fredericks, was telling the French that there was now “considerable evidence of good will towards the US” from Guinea. Though the French were dubious—the embassy’s Claude Lebel commented “the Guineans frequently had evinced enthusiasm for aid from the West but never gave conclusive replies”—the Americans were convinced that they were turning a corner in their relations with Guinea.62

By the end of the year, they had what they considered proof. In December 1961, Sékou Touré expelled the Soviet ambassador, Daniil Solod, accusing the Soviet embassy of plotting against him and the PDG. Attwood’s tenure in Conakry was considered a great success as a result, despite the fact that he was out of the country during most of the crisis that culminated in Solod’s expulsion.63 And yet the events were, above all, rooted in domestic Guinean politics. By finding and then exploiting the international ramifications of a domestic challenge, Sékou Touré positioned himself where he needed to be to advance his top foreign policy objective.

At first, the crisis seemed to foreign observers to be the most minor of local affairs. The French monitored it carefully nevertheless, as they did any signs of opposition to Sékou Touré’s regime. The French Bureau de Sécurité in Dakar reported in November that the annual return to school in Guinea was not going very well: because of a shortage of teachers, classes were being merged in some lycées, and the opening of other institutions was being postponed indefinitely. Schools across Guinea were also experiencing more discipline problems than normal. Several students from the lycée in Donka, for instance, were incarcerated for fifteen days in Camp Alpha Yaya, the military

62 Memorandum of Conversation, “Situation in the Congo,” 21 June 1961; Correspondence File June 1961, BAA 1956-62, RG 59, NACP.

camp in the middle of Conakry, because they had “mutinied” in the face of a demand to free up space for the use of the Minister of National Education. The unrest was due to changes to the educational system that Sékou Touré had announced the previous summer and in particular, the abolition of private and religious (both Catholic and Islamic) schools and the substitution of fonctionnaires to teach in the secondary schools. The teachers’ union presented its case in a document dated 3 November, in which it outlined the reductions to the status – and the salaries – of Guinean teachers. The union’s leader, Keïta Koumandian, spoke out against the changes during the Congress of the Confédération nationale des Travailleurs de Guinée (CNTG) on 18 November. Sékou Touré abruptly shut down the Congress session and ejected Koumandian. Five union leaders were arrested two days later and put on trial before a High Court of Justice composed of members of the National Assembly and Party delegates. They were convicted of subversion and sentenced to long periods of hard labour: Koumandian and Mamadou Traoré, known as Ray Autra, drew 10 years each; the historian D.T. Niane, physics professor Bah Ibrahima Kaba and Seck Bahi were each sentenced to five years.

On 23 November, students went out on strike in Conakry and Labé in support of their teachers. The French ambassador described the effect of the news of the arrests as a “thunderclap”: “The instant the sentences were pronounced within the walls of [the colleges and lycées], the blackboards in the classrooms were covered to the floor with words that were injurious to the regime and insulting to the Chief of State: ‘Down with Sékou,’ ‘Sékou you lied to us,’ ‘down with the bourgeois government,’ ‘no more politics in the lycée or its courses,’ ‘free the detainees who are real revolutionaries,’ ‘you can’t feed people with speeches’.” A number of the students – the French estimated 3,000 – were again arrested and incarcerated in Camp Alpha Yaya; the Bureau de Sécurité

64 The “Mémoire sur le statut des enseignants de Guinée” is reproduced as an appendix to Thierno Bah, Mon combat pour la Guinée (Paris: Karthala, 1996), 433-446.

65 Bureau de Sécurité, “Guinée – Ambiance dans les établissements scolaires,” undated; Pons to MAE, “Mémoire sur le statut des enseignants guinéens,” No. 716/AL, 5 December 1961; Dakar – Ambassade, Carton 416, Série AL (Dakar Amb. 416); Centre d’Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN). The sentences were reported in the PDG newspaper Horoya on 28 November 1961. The historical record is a bit confused concerning the eventual fate of the five men and the additional individuals subsequently charged with related offences. French sources thought they would all be summarily executed, which clearly did not happen: Niane, for one, is still alive (July 2008); Ray Autra would be implicated in and punished for his participation in the supposed plot of late 1965; and Bah Ibrahima Kaba survived at least until the supposed plot of November 1970. Horoya reported that their sentences had been extended (28 December 1961); while this may be true, Niane, at least, was free and teaching in 1964.
reported that several were beaten, and all were held in the blazing sun for 36 hours without food or water before being sent home in trucks and in special trains, where many of them continued their protests.\textsuperscript{66}

By early December, the PDG had more or less reasserted control across the country, but the serious business of defining and then excising the causes of this affront against the state’s leadership had just begun. \textit{Horoya} was quick to label the affair a plot, though at first the editorialist who signed himself KEN described it as a purely internal one. The plan was to “profit from the cover offered by union organizations to cause gangrene within the Party, inducing workers to oppose the government.”\textsuperscript{67} However, the PDG party newspaper was quick to add, this was not to take away from the central role that the union movement had played in liberating Guinea from its colonial oppressors. A banner across the first page of \textit{Horoya} for 5 and 7 December quoted Sékou Touré, reminding the audience of the movement’s central importance in Guinean political culture: “The history of our union movement is inextricably linked with the struggles of our people in its fight to rip its freedom from the forces of exploitation and oppression.”\textsuperscript{68} Yet the inconvenient fact remained that a union had questioned the wisdom of the governing party. Help was at hand in the form of an old stand-by: external subversion. Laying the groundwork, the newspaper pointed out that at the same time that Guinea was dealing with its teachers, the country’s partners in the Casablanca group had also sustained “identical” subversive incidents: Morocco, where incidents had resulted in a number of deaths; Mali, where a subversive plot had been uncovered “just in time”; Ghana, where imperialism’s foot-soldiers, “faithful imitators of the French OAS”, had been caught dismantling what the state had been building up (this in reference to Nkrumah’s decision to remove his British military advisers); and, worst of all, the UAR, where imperialism had struck the worst blow by forcing the state itself apart.\textsuperscript{69}

Sure enough, by 11 December Sékou Touré was announcing the discovery of a foreign plot. Its author was not clear at first: the links between the disgraced union

\begin{footnotes}
\item[68] “La vérité sur le complot antisyndical et antinational,” \textit{Horoya}, 5-7 December 1961, 1.
\end{footnotes}
leaders and their students, on the one hand, and exiles in Paris and Dakar, on the other, suggested that once again Paris might be the target of Guinea’s accusations. However, on 13 December foreign news agencies reported that this time, it was certain embassies within the Communist bloc that were thought to be undermining the PDG. Horoya closed the circle on 28 December, attributing to Niane, “that great Marxist theoretician,” the type of clichés about African “congenital laziness”, “mendacious mentality”, “tendency towards theft”, and general incapacity that Guineans were more used to associating with their former colonial masters. The only reason for this behaviour, KEN opined, could be that the historian wanted power, hated the PDG, and was heedless of the “real interests of the masses.”

To the Americans, Guinea’s actions were proof of the validity and superiority of their own carrot-and-stick approach over the offerings of their opponents, even though it was clear that they were surprised. Less than two weeks before AFP and UPI reported that it was now the Soviet bloc that was attracting Conakry’s ire, Claude G. Ross, in charge of the embassy while Attwood was in the US being treated for polio, sent a message listing “several developments [that] were casting disquieting shadows across US-Guinean relations.” By the first week of January, however, American policymakers were quite willing to take credit for a turnaround. In his year-end report to Rusk, Williams described Solod’s expulsion from Conakry as an “important defeat” for the bloc, and opined that the policy of “not setting up short-term tests of conduct and not writing off any African country” had resulted in a small aid program for Guinea, “which may have given Sékou Touré some reassurance in dealing with the Soviets when they over-reached themselves.” Writing his memoir several years later, Attwood attributed Solod’s eviction to a number of factors, listed in the following order: “Soviet

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72 Telegram, Ross to State, No. 310, 1 December 1961; Central Decimal Files, 611.70B/12-161, RG 59, NACP. The developments included a controversy over the behaviour of US sailors ashore from the Solant Amity visit, uncertainty about the future of the Fria development, and the government of Guinea’s attempts to link the teachers’ strike with the actions of the US embassy.
73 Letter, Williams to Rusk, 6 January 1962; G. Mennen Williams State Department Files, Microfilm Reel #22, BHL.
overconfidence” in the depth of Guinea’s antipathy to the West resulting from its unhappy experience upon achieving independence; “Soviet inexperience”, which left their technicians unable to deal with unsophisticated and uneducated Africans; “Soviet cupidity”, which led them to overcharge Guineans for imports from the Soviet bloc; “African suspicion and shrewdness” directed at all white men; “African inefficiency – which is difficult to exaggerate;” and, finally, the steady, generous and practical help offered by the US and West Germany, which “encouraged the serious Guineans, who did not want a break with the West, to assert themselves.”

Attwood’s book, called *The Reds and the Blacks*, was intended for a popular American audience, and his language did nothing to challenge the prejudices of that market: the Soviet Union was malevolent but inept; Africans were sullen, lazy, and as inclined to racism towards white people as whites were towards blacks; and the Americans and their allies, by offering thoughtful, proportionate and expert assistance, had demonstrated the innate superiority of Kennedy’s “free society.” His triumphalism – with its echo of the racism of which Horoya had accused D.T. Niane, probably falsely – became the basis for the standard American interpretation of events.

Naturally, the French interpreted these events quite differently. Throughout the crisis and its immediate aftermath, they attributed it primarily to an internal power struggle, although the MAE did note that Solod’s expulsion was correctly and widely interpreted “in the world and in Africa” as a serious impediment to Soviet policy in Guinea. Months later, when the swing towards the West seemed well-established, Pons attributed the change to the success of France’s policy towards the country. This stick-and-carrot approach had succeeded in isolating Guinea: “Reasonable persons no longer contest that the measures France took after the referendum of 28 September 1958 served effectively as a warning to anyone who might have been tempted to follow Guinea’s example. . . . Guinea worries its neighbours; it ceased to inspire them a long time ago. This is one of the several happy results of the policy that you pursued towards it.”

Guinea’s reorientation had come about because of its isolation, he implied. Pons was

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74 Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks*, 67-68.
75 A very recent example of the tendency to interpret these events as a success in reclaiming Guinea for the West and attribute it solely to effective American diplomacy can be found in Philip E. Muelenbeck, “Kennedy and Touré: A Success in Personal Diplomacy,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 19:1 (2008), 69-95.
unsuccessful in his attempt to persuade his masters at the MAE and, more to the point, in the presidency, that France should now accept the hand of reconciliation that the African state was once more extending towards the former colonial power, but his after-the-fact rationalization of French actions towards Guinea would be taken up by the MAE in subsequent discussions with their American counterparts.\textsuperscript{76}

There was no doubt an element of truth in both the American and the French interpretations, self-serving and contradictory though they were: the events of November and December 1961 were deeply rooted in internal Guinean politics, in particular the ongoing effort to destroy potential rival elites such as the intellectuals who were targeted in the wake of the teacher’s strike; and the relationship between Guinea and its Soviet bloc partners had definitely deteriorated, with fault plausibly attributable to both sides. It is, of course, possible that the government of Guinea decided to expel the Soviet ambassador because it had real proof that the embassy had been involved in a plot to overthrow the leadership of the PDG. It is even possible that the genteel protest of the teachers’ unionists – a document which the French MAE later described as “benign in appearance, perfidious in fact by the allusions it contained to the flaws of the regime” – had real potential, with the support of the Soviets, to oust Sékou Touré and his BPN.\textsuperscript{77} It seems more likely, though, that the Guinean president reacted to the crisis their protest sparked as he had done to instances of instability over the past few years, and as he would continue to do for many years to come. Playing to expectations created in Guinea’s educated elite by school-time stories of the French Revolution, he would seek an outside agent provocateur rather than risking Guinean unity by blaming elements within the country. In December 1961, all the components of his political and economic balancing act – control over domestic sources of opposition, access to badly-needed external aid with as few strings attached as possible, and the quest for African unity as a fundamental objective of Guinea’s foreign policy – came together to suggest that the finger should point, this time at least, towards the USSR.


\textsuperscript{77} Note, MAE/AL, “Situation en Guinée,” 9 January 1962; Guinée 44, DAL, AMAE.
IV. Turning Towards Unity

Dramatic though this action was – and despite its salutary effects upon Guinea’s relationship with the US – there remained one key impediment to the two unity movements working together: France. Late in January 1962, the chiefs of state that had met in Monrovia reunited in Lagos, Nigeria. Once more, Senegal’s Senghor and others worked hard to permit the Casablanca members to join them. The impediment again, as at Monrovia, was the fact that the GPRA was not invited to participate. And once more, it was the majority of the Brazzaville countries that blocked the invitation, with France’s express approval. This caused even greater discontent within the Casablanca group, all the more since the participants in the Lagos Conference went much further towards creating the institutions of a pan-African organization than they had at Monrovia.

France tried to claim credit for the progress at Lagos by implying that it was its own influence that had put the moderates in the ascendant in Africa. The MAE reported to French missions around the world that “reasonable Africa wished to signal in this way that it was better positioned than extremist Africa to achieve concrete progress on the path to unity.” Privately, however, the French acknowledged that it was the structure and limited reach of the Casablanca group, not its extremism, that was inhibiting its ability to lead the unity movement. The MAE identified the key split within the Casablanca group as one between the (white) North African states and the (black) sub-Saharan ones and even acknowledged that their perpetual bête noire, Guinea, had tried to convince the Casablanca group to attend the Lagos meeting. The MAE was also beginning to worry that the United Kingdom accepted the Nkrumah/Sékou Touré thesis that the main difference between the two groupings was the extent of continuing colonial – primarily French – influence over its former colonies. Relevant posts were instructed to remind the British “of the necessity of in no way upsetting the balance and the cohesion of the francophone group which constitutes an essential stabilizing factor in Africa.”

That the impediment to unity was French neocolonial influence, not Ghanaian and Guinean extremism, became undeniable when the Algerian war finally ended and Algeria

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78 Aide-Mémoire, 20 January 1962; Dakar – Ambassade, Série: DAM (Relations Africain-Malgache), carton 257 (Dakar-Amb. 257); CADN.
79 MAE to posts at London, Washington, Bonn, Dakar and Rabat, Circular Telegram No. 6, 3 February 1962; Dakar-Amb. 257; CADN.
became independent in July 1962. Only then could the pro-French African states, such as Houphouët-Boigny’s Côte d’Ivoire, be seen to be working towards a common position with the Casablanca states. France was quick to give Houphouët-Boigny much of the credit for effecting a rapprochement between the two groups, starting in the summer of 1962, and the Americans were also keen to recognize the contribution this arch-conservative made to unity. Haile Selassie of Ethiopia would exert his considerable diplomatic skill and experience in bringing as many of Africa’s states together as possible in his capital, and Prime Minister Balewa of Nigeria, another moderate, was also very active. But it was Sékou Touré’s efforts that would bring the Casablanca group into the conference that was being prepared for Addis Ababa in May, 1963.

The Guinean president began his campaign in earnest even before Algeria’s independence and the rival Casablanca and Monrovia group meetings of July 1962. In June he met with Haile Selassie to impress upon him the need to avoid a repetition of the Lagos fiasco when the African states met again in Addis the following year. He met with Liberia’s Tubman, Tunisia’s Bourguiba, Nigeria’s Balewa and Tanganyika’s Nyerere to make the same point. He sent Fodéba Keita to Dakar in September to urge Senghor to mend his differences with Houphouët-Boigny over the structure of the UAM before the Addis conference, the better to achieve overall unity. He even tried, with some success, to mend fences directly with Houphouët-Boigny. In November, the Ivoirian president told an American visitor to Abidjan that “the real Touré was revealed in his actions which recently had been well considered.” To the ambassador, he implied that he thought he could bring Guinea into the UAM fold in time for the Addis meeting.

80 A. Guy Hope (chargé d’affaires a.i., Abidjan) to William L. Lee, 30 August 1962; File IC 1-A.1; Country Files, 1951-63 (Ivory Coast); BAA-OWA; RG 59, NACP.
81 Bureau de Sécurité (Dakar), “Addis Abeba Conférence de l’Unité Africaine,” 1 May 1963; Dakar – Ambassade, Série: DAM (Relations Africaines-Malgache), carton 259 (Dakar-Amb. 259), CADN.
82 Bureau de Sécurité (Dakar), 20 September 1962; Dakar – Ambassade, Série: DAM (Relations Africaines-Malgache), carton 261 (Dakar-Amb. 261), CADN.
83 Hope (Abidjan) to State, “Foundation Representative Talks with Houphouët,” No. A-219, 30 November 1962; Central Decimal Files, 611.70M/11-3062, RG 59, NACP.
84 Wine (Abidjan) to State, “Conversation with President Houphouët-Boigny,” No. A-226, 5 December 1962; Central Decimal Files, 611.70M/12-562, RG 59, NACP.
president continued to press his colleagues to reconcile in the name of unity, meeting with the Nigerian and Malian chiefs of state early in 1963.\(^85\)

Sékou Touré’s campaign extended beyond Africa to France, in recognition of France’s ongoing influence over the UAM states and consequently over the UAM itself. Guinean initiatives to improve bilateral relations were met with a distinct lack of enthusiasm in Paris, despite the French ambassador’s support. The word from de Gaulle continued to be that Guinea must be made to beg for French aid and alliance. The response from Guinea was no more compliant than in 1958, despite the marked deterioration of material conditions in Guinea during the intervening years. As in the immediate aftermath of independence, the outcome late in 1962 was the appointment of experts to negotiate a resolution of the outstanding disputes between the two countries. This process would finally bear fruit in May 1963, the day before the chiefs of state met in Addis Ababa, with the signature of three new Franco-Guinean accords.\(^86\)

Guinea’s president also continued to press his case for continental unity in Washington. The Kennedy administration’s evident satisfaction with the changes in Guinea and the progress towards reconciliation between the unity-seeking groups was not enough to overcome Washington’s hostility towards the radicals’ unity project. Following the Lagos conference, the State Department’s Policy and Planning Secretariat produced an extensive analysis of “Regional Groupings in Africa” to provide the basis for a review of American policy towards the groups. The task of writing this analysis fell to Martin Herz. Though Herz anticipated that there would be a “determined attempt to bridge the gap between the two rivaling groupings,” which might occasion a change in US policy, ultimately he recommended that no change need be made. The US should “continue to display sympathy for all-African unity themes while encouraging regional (i.e., subregional) rather than ‘Pan-African’ groupings,” though Herz suggested care should be taken not to give the impression that the US was favouring either of the conservative organizations (the Lagos group or the UAM). Herz noted that Africans had

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\(^86\) Pons, “Note pour la Direction d’Afrique-Levant,” 22 September 1962; Sécrétaire Général pour la Communauté et les affaires africaines et malgaches to MAE (Gillet), 25 September 1962; MAE/AL (Soutou) to Pons, No. 335-38, 25 September 1962; Letter, Couve de Murville to Rusk, 30 October 1962; Guinée 50, DAL, AMAE.
a different objective than did the US: the “great debate” in Africa was over how political unity might be achieved. This, however, was contrary to “the basic Western interest” in the unity movements. To avoid “a multiplicity of poor and stagnating African sovereignties” from endangering Western security, the West should encourage “economic cooperation among African countries [and] thus maximiz[e] their economic and social growth potential.” Economic groupings were “the best basis for the creation of political unity, which in turn serves to shore up the security of African states.”

The unquestioned belief that American-style prosperity would lead nearly automatically to American-style peace and stability, which had guided so much of American foreign policy since the end of the First World War, was still in the driver’s seat in Washington.

Sékou Touré took advantage of his meeting with his American counterpart in Washington in October 1962 to press for more active US support for the unity movement. African governments were “unanimous in their support for greater unity,” he argued. The Americans had nothing to fear: all African leaders agreed that “the terms of unity should respect the institutions and traditions of each country and that cooperation among them should be centered in the cultural and economic fields.” Trying to push American policy along, the Guinean president answered Kennedy’s observation that unity could help African states to play a bigger role in resolving problems like Congo’s by emphasizing how pleased he was “to see that the United States recognizes the need for and favors greater African unity, for a divided Africa would be detrimental to world peace.” Kennedy was apparently content to let Sékou Touré’s interpretation go unchallenged.

An acute threat to world peace arose within two weeks of this conversation. Sékou Touré’s pro-US response during the Cuban missile crisis might not have led directly to a change in American policy towards the Guinean president’s main foreign policy objective of African unity, but it certainly endeared the Guineans to the US administration. Williams called Guinea’s ambassador, Seydou Conté, in on 23 October to ask, first, for Guinean support or neutrality on the Cuban crisis in the UN and second,

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for Guinea’s assurance that it “would not permit the Soviet Union to transport arms, munitions and other implements of war, including atomic war heads, by air to Cuba through or over Guinean territory.” Conté’s assurance that he thought it very unlikely that Guinea would accord the Soviets transit privileges was borne out when Guinea interdicted Soviet flights and refuelling rights at Conakry airport – a facility largely paid for by Soviet aid. In this it acted with Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire, but against Mali, which refused the American request and took what the US ambassador in Bamako described as a “one-sided” view of the crisis. With this decision, Sékou Touré not only cemented his new-found proximity to the US and to the moderate and conservative West African francophone states: he also signalled the distance between Guinea and its erstwhile Casablanca group partners. Guinea was demonstrating, at least to the external audiences that mattered most, that it was a reliable leader for the movement towards African unity.

V. The Addis Ababa Conference

_Blessed soil and happy wideness / Past and future, genius and hand / Full of pride and joy and promise / All our thoughts are with this, our land! / Let our minds be always grateful / Our feeling true and faithful / Let us pray to Lord in Heaven / Father, save your Africa!_ – Africa Nations Anthem, Founding Conference of the Organization of African Unity, Addis Ababa, May 1963

When the Addis Ababa conference finally opened in May 1963, all but one of the independent states in Africa were represented: Togo, whose first president, Sylvanus Olympio, had been overthrown and assassinated in January. Despite its absence, Togo’s dubious distinction as the site of the first military coup d’état in post-colonial Africa, other than Mobutu’s seizure of power in Congo in September 1960, would have an important impact on the conference and on the Organization to which it gave birth.

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89 Memorandum of Conversation, “President’s Policy Regarding Cuba,” 23 October 1962; Classified Records of G. Mennen Williams, 1961-1966 (Lot File 68D8); Frederic P. Bartlett to Williams, 25 October 1962, Central Decimal Files 611.70M/10-2562; Handley (Bamako) to Williams, 5 November 1962, File 1-A.2, OWA – BAA Country Files, 1951-1963 (Mali); Kaiser (Dakar) to State, 20 November 1962, Central Decimal Files 611.70T/11-2062; Williams to Rostow (S/P), 15 November 1962, Policy Planning Staff 1962; RG 59, NACP. It does not appear that Mali took any action beyond failing to support the US position.


91 The best published account of the Addis Ababa Conference, based on OAU archival documents, is Walraven, _Dreams of Power_, 130-147.
The central issue was whether Nkrumah’s vision of the Organization as the first step towards a United States of Africa would prevail over the more conservative position that emphasized state sovereignty. As the months went by leading up to the conference and as more and more states agreed to meet in Addis Ababa, those countries which had already stated their commitment to the latter position were clearly in the majority. The UAM states had demonstrated at their conferences throughout 1962 that they were “above all, concerned to safeguard their own national sovereignty,” according to the analysts at the MAE. But these obviously conservative participants were not the only ones to abandon Nkrumah’s agenda of using the conference to create true institutional unity. In an article published in March 1963, Tanganyika’s Julius Nyerere wrote with characteristic eloquence and poetry about the benefits that African unity would bring:

Indissoluble African unity is the stone bridge which would enable us all to walk in safety over this whirlpool of power politics, and enable us to carry more easily the economic and social loads which now threaten to overwhelm us.

But Nyerere also made it clear that while “nothing short of a United States of Africa should be accepted as our ultimate destiny,” in the initial steps each member must retain full sovereign control of its state. Echoing the doubt to which Paul-Marc Henry had alluded at the dawn of post-colonial independence, Nyerere called it “absurd to imagine African unity coming from the domination of one African country over another.” Moreover, at this stage it was not appropriate to “think in detail of the shape of government in a United Africa”; different parts of the continent “may advance on the road to unity at different speeds,” he argued; some might be able to attain a common market and joint economic planning, others might find “a political association without any real economic integration” to be welcome. At the Addis Ababa meeting, states should focus on creating a forum within which African leaders could meet privately to sort out their differences: “When we are genuinely concerned about the policies of another African state, the right people to address are the leaders of that state – and then in a brotherly spirit. We certainly should not address the world at large.” His conclusion, very much like Sékou Touré’s, was that African nationalism should be new and unlike any past form. Africans should use their national states “as instruments for the

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reunification of Africa, and not allow our enemies to use them as tools for dividing
Africa.”

For all his eloquent commitment to pan-Africanism, though, at base Nyerere’s
article was intended to reassure interested parties both within and outside Africa that the
radicals were not in charge of the push towards pan-Africanism. It was also a warning to
Nkumah and his supporters not to expect too much: it was premature to start talking
about a continental government.

After the Grunitzky coup in Togo, it was nearly certain that Nkumah’s vision
would not carry the day in Addis. Even Sékou Toure abandoned his old friend’s position.
In fact only Milton Obote of Uganda spoke at the conference in favour of the Nkumah
agenda. The reason was simple: Nkumah was rumoured to have supported the coup.
This, of course, triggered all the old fears in Africa about the Ghanaian president’s real
motives in pressing for pan-African unity – and the newer fears in Western capitals about
his dubious neutrality. State Department analysts in Washington thought it unlikely that
the Soviet bloc had had any involvement in the coup, but worried that if Nicolas
Grunitzky were ousted by the military and replaced by his deputy, Antoine Meatchi, the
deputy’s links with Ghana and the rumours that he had been trained in Moscow would
lead to confrontation with the Monrovia states. In March, the rumour circulated that
Guinea, Côte d’Ivoire and Nigeria were all supporting a proposed counter-coup to be led
by Olympio’s son. The UAM states, meeting in Ouagadougou, had split over whether to
recognize the new regime, further undermining Houphouët-Boigny’s leadership over the
francophone group. The division over whether or not to recognize the new regime in
Lomé spilled over to the Addis meeting in May, to which Grunitzky’s government was
not invited on the grounds that having seized power by military-backed coup, it was
illegitimate. Sékou Toure was among the most vociferous critics of the Grunitzky

the nationalism vs. pan-Africanism debate within Anglophone Africa, see for instance Opoku Agyeman,
“The Osagyefo, the Mwalimu, and Pan-Africanism: A Study in the Growth of a Dynamic Concept,”

94 Walraven, Dreams of Power, 143

95 Roger Hilsman (INR) to Secretary, “Soviet Involvement in Olympio Murder Unlikely,” Research
Memorandum RSB-11, 22 January 1963; Hilsman to Secretary, “Impending Togo Inquiry Threatens
Fragile Grunitzky Regime,” Intelligence Note, 30 January 1963; J.G. Dean (AFW) to File, “Status Report
on Togo,” 26 March 1963; File: United States – Olympio Assassination; Country Files, 1951-1963 (Togo);
BAA-OWA; RG 59, NACP; Note, “L’UAM et la Conférence d’Addis-Abéba,” No. 148/DAM No. 1, 22
March 1963; Dakar-Amb. 258, CADN.
regime’s legitimacy, calling from Addis Ababa for a public debate with the new Togolese government during which it would be required to prove “that it truly exercises sovereignty by immediately dissolving the military group.”

96 Agence France-presse, “Déclaration du Président Sékou Touré à Addis Abeba”, 26 May 1963; Dakar-Amb. 258, CADN.
97 Cassilly to State, “Bi-Weeka No. 5,” Conakry A-446, 17 June 1963; POL Guin 1963, Central Subject-Numeric Files, 1963, RG 59, NACP.
99 “As Seen from 19 Cities in Africa, Europe, the United States, and Asia,” Africa Report 9:3 (June, 1963), 3-8.

Guinea would not recognize the new government until 14 June, well after the Addis Ababa meetings were over.

The Addis Ababa Conference itself had two parts. A preparatory conference of foreign ministers took place from 15 to 21 May 1963 but ultimately failed to make much progress on the central issue. After vigorous debate, the foreign ministers contented themselves with the choice of a draft charter put forward by Ethiopia as the basis of further discussion. The summit of chiefs of state and government was held immediately afterwards and culminated, early in the morning of 26 May, with the signature of the Charter of the Organization of African Unity. In the context of the pan-African dream, the Charter was a modest document. Far from preparing the way for Nkrumah’s United States of Africa or Nyerere’s new form of African nationalism, the OAU Charter noted the determination of its signatories to “safeguard and consolidate the hard-won independence as well as the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our states.” Nkrumah himself had to be persuaded to sign the Charter by Ethiopia’s venerable emperor. Not only had the Addis Ababa conference failed to generate agreement on a supranational governing structure for the continent: the resulting Charter was very nearly silent on the organizational and governing structure for the new Organization itself.

Yet the creation of the OAU was widely considered to be a triumph, and nowhere more than within the government of Guinea. As Mali’s Modibo Keita had predicted at the opening of the summit of chiefs of state, “to convene, in a conference at a round table, thirty-one African States still completely involved with that ardent nationalism which led them a few years ago to independence, to organize a co-operation between countries like
ours that are firmly attached to their recently won sovereignty, will be hailed as an event unique in the history of the world.” Sékou Touré began his celebration early. Singer Miriam Makeba, who would live in Conakry from 1968 until the fall of the apartheid regime in her native South Africa, recalled being invited to attend and perform at the Addis Ababa conference. Returning to her hotel room as dawn was breaking in the Ethiopian capital on the morning of 26 May 1963, she was startled by a knock on her door. Two soldiers had arrived to give her a signed copy of the Guinean president’s latest book. Collecting herself, she curtsied and accepted this “wonderful souvenir … for a great event.”

On his way back to Conakry, Sékou Touré stopped in a number of national capitals to speak of the triumph of African unity. From Dar-es-Salaam, he cabled the American president to “inform [him] officially of [the] happy results [of the] great meeting at Addis Ababa.” His next stop was in Brazzaville, the scene of several of Charles de Gaulle’s most memorable pronouncements on African soil. According to the US embassy there, Sékou Touré spoke for one hundred minutes to a “huge receptive crowd listening enchanted” while he “made [a] passionate plea for African unity, local independence for all, [and to] wipe out [the] last vestiges of colonialism and its son neo-colonialism.” He deplored “present divisions on continent, including two Congos which should reunite as in [the] past,” and wondered aloud why Africa could not emulate the USA and the USSR, great nations “built up through unity of people and purpose.”

Sékou Touré also “explained the spirit in which his government” had concluded its recent accords with France. Guinea’s initiative to improve relations with the former colonial power had nothing to do with its present economic distress, he said, and added: “Why would Guinea, which had signed cooperation agreements with thirty countries across both blocs, not also sign them with France?” The MAE’s analyst concluded that the president “does not seem willing to modify his well-known personal ideas nor to make of the accords with France a departure point for a change of Guinean policy, either domestic

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101 Dar es Salaam (Leonhart) to State, No. 869, 30 May 1963; POL 15-1 GUIN, Central Subject-Numeric Files, 1964-1966, RG 59, NACP.
102 Brazzaville (Blancke) to State, No. 478, 5 June 1963; GUIN POL 7, Central Subject-Numeric Files, 1964-1966, RG 59, NACP.
or external.”103 Guinea was not about to re-enter the French fold, nor to soften its position on neocolonialism.

Sékou Touré returned home and spoke to his own people in both French and Susu on 16 June.104 Here, his interpretation of the significance of the Addis Charter was at its most exaggerated and optimistic: not only had the conference resolved intra-African disputes by dissolving all previous, partial federations, but it had also reached agreement on banning all atomic weapons, all foreign military bases from African soil, and the creation of “an African common market and an eventual economic community, rather than depend[ing] upon ties with the European Common Market or the ‘socialist states.’” Most extravagant of all, he characterized the OAU’s decision to create a Committee for the Liberation of Africa as “a new rule of international law: that the peoples of a continent have the right to unite and to use all means to liberate each other,” including, implicitly, military intervention.105

For all that his enormous diplomatic efforts and compromises had paid off in securing widespread agreement to the OAU Charter, Sékou Touré found quickly that his understanding of the extent of African unity could be undermined in an instant. While France and its client states in Africa welcomed the dissolution of the Casablanca group, they reneged on what Sékou Touré thought was a commitment to dissolve the UAM as well. The first sign came from Senghor, who also traveled widely on the way home to West Africa from Addis Ababa. Senghor’s travels took him to Paris and a meeting with de Gaulle. At a press conference on the steps of the Élysée palace, Senghor explained that his conception of African unity, unlike that of Nyerere or Sékou Touré, was the same as “General de Gaulle’s idea of Europe. We must create an Africa of nations. We are too different from one another [to do otherwise].”106 Other UAM members were even more

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103 Note, “Relations franco-guinéennes après les accords du 22 mai 1963,” MAE/AL, 8 July 1963; Guinée 50, DAL, AMAE.


105 Cassilly to State, “Bi-Weeka No. 5,” Conakry A-446, 17 June 1963; POL Guin 1963, Central Subject-Numeric Files, 1963, RG 59, NACP.

106 Agence France-presse, Spécial outre-mers, No. 5084, 31 May 1963; Dakar-Amb. 259, CADN.
blunt in reassuring the French that their allegiance had not shifted just because they had joined the new Organization. Houphouët-Boigny told the French ambassador in Addis Ababa that his speech to the conference in favour of unity had been intended to sway the wavering, not signal his intention to give up either of his existing sub-continental associations (the Conseil de l’Entente or the UAM). The OAU’s Charter “was nothing but a replica of the UAM’s,” and did not require the latter’s dissolution: the UAM was “sufficiently justified as a cultural community,” he told Gontran de Juniac.107

Knowing his francophone colleagues were backing away, Sékou Touré pushed hard to maintain the momentum created at Addis. He rallied various non-UAM countries to pressure Senegal to maintain the schedule established at Addis for the next meeting of the OAU foreign ministers in Dakar; UAM members were proposing the meeting should be postponed on the rather flimsy pretext that their chiefs of state needed to meet to attend ceremonies in Cotonou celebrating the anniversary of Dahomey’s independence.108 He was right to be concerned. Leaving Cotonou, Madagascar’s president Tsiranana stated publicly, “in answer to his friend Sékou Touré who wants all the regional groupings to disappear,” that the OAU was nothing but an assembly within which groups could exist, and one of those would definitely be the union of Africa’s francophone states.109 Much more sinister was a plan of action, apparently drafted within the UAM’s permanent secretariat, to expand, not contract, the range of UAM activities by competing directly with the OAU’s Committee on the Liberation of Africa. The plan called for the UAM states to raise volunteers from among the former French colonial soldiers now repatriated to Africa, maintain training camps in Senegal, Congo-Brazzaville and Madagascar, and contribute money raised by public subscription. Senegal flatly refused to entertain the notion of training camps on its soil, citing concern for its independence, and even the French were dubious about the plan, calling it a “nice theory” from the UAM’s secretariat which would be “a bit more difficult” to implement.110 France may

107 Addis Ababa (Juniac) to Dakar, No. 321-331, 5 June 1963; Dakar-Amb. 258, CADN.
108 Conakry (Cassilly) to State, No. 108, 27 July 1963; POL 3 OAU, Central Subject-Numeric Files, 1963, RG 59, NACP; Dakar (Le Mire) to MAE, 10 July 1963; Dakar-Amb. 261, CADN.
109 Antananarivo (Gauthier) to MAE, No. 530, forwarded to Dakar on 3 August 1963; Dakar-Amb. 261, CADN.
110 “L’UAM dans la lutte contre les derniers colonialistes – projets,” No. /O/782/MG, 12 July 1963; Dakar (Le Mire) to MAE, No. 1206-1207, 15 July 1963; Antananarivo (Gauthier) to MAE, No. 507-509, forwarded to Dakar on 25 July 1963; Dakar-Amb. 261, CADN.
have been backing away slightly from the implications of its military and economic commitments to its African clients, even as former colonial minister Jean-Marcel Jeanneney was preparing the November 1964 report that would recommend that France redeploy its aid and seek new markets beyond the franc zone.\footnote{Gérard Bossuat, “French Development Aid and Co-operation under de Gaulle,” \textit{Contemporary European History} 12:4 (2003), 431-456 at 449; Jean Poirier and Jean Touscoz, “Aid and Cooperation: French Official Attitudes as seen in the Jeanneney, Gorse and Abelin Reports,” in W.H. Morris-Jones and Georges Fischer, eds., \textit{Decolonisation and After: The British and French Experience} (London: Frank Cass, 1980), 224-38.} It was obvious, however, that the UAM states were not willing to give up their association.

The controversy over the UAM spilled into the OAU foreign ministers’ conference which opened in Dakar on 2 August. Pro-UAM and anti-UAM factions formed quickly. The French embassy in Dakar reported that despite Sékou Touré’s very public declarations that the Casablanca group had been fully disbanded in favour of the OAU, discussions “far into the night” during the conference confirmed that its members – other than Ghana – were more united than ever. The Americans, on the other hand, perceived significant hostility to the UAM among Anglophone Africans as well, who considered its linguistic exclusivity and ties to France as “anti-African.”\footnote{Guillemin (Dakar), Note for Ambassador, 5 August 1963; Dakar-Amb. 261, CADN; Dakar (McClelland) to State, Dakar 193, 10 August 1963; POL 3 OAU, Central Subject-Numeric Files, 1963, RG 59, NACP.} The issue infected every matter discussed in Dakar, from the location of the OAU’s secretariat where UAM members voting against Dakar itself were branded “traitors” by Senegalese foreign minister Doudou Thiam, to the nomination of a Secretary General for the new organization. Guinea introduced a resolution calling for all regional organizations to be abolished, specifically naming the UAM, but withdrew it in favour of a UAM-member sponsored resolution advocating the gradual integration of such organizations into the OAU, which was passed. However much the Quai d’Orsay and Foccart’s office might have protested to Americans in Paris that the outcome of this was of little importance to them – “despite differences on timing and nature [of the] coming transformations, officials seem agreed that bases and scope French influence in Africa [are] only superficially affected by changing organizational forms,” cabled embassy minister Cecil B. Lyon from Paris – they were clearly proud of their protégés and the skill with which
they fended off attacks on the UAM and delayed the creation of the OAU’s institutions.\footnote{Paris (Lyon) to State, No. 681, 9 August 1963; POL 3 OAU, Central Subject-Numeric Files, 1963, RG 59, NACP; Bureau de Sécurité (Dakar), “Conférence de l’OUA,” 10-11 August 1963; Dakar-Amb. 261, CADN.}

Despite Sékou Touré’s pleas to his colleagues to put aside their differences in the interests of getting the OAU off to a good start, it would be another year before the Organization had a secretary-general. The decision to host the secretariat in Addis Ababa was based on a provisional decision taken at Dakar. The choice of Guinean Diallo Telli as the OAU’s first administrative secretary-general was hotly contested during the period between the Dakar foreign ministers’ meeting and the summit of chiefs of state, held from 17 to 21 July 1964 in Cairo. Bad feeling and distrust between Guinea and several of its francophone neighbours in the UAM led the latter to oppose Telli’s nomination despite numerous protests from Sékou Touré that he did not want his compatriot to hold the office in any case and certainly not at the cost of delayed progress towards even the limited African governmental institutions to which the states had agreed at Addis Ababa.\footnote{Bureau de Sécurité (Dakar), “Le Président Sékou Touré et l’OUA,” 17 August 1963, enclosing urgent and confidential letter from Sékou Touré to other African chiefs of state, Dakar-Amb. 261, CADN; André Lewin, Diallo Telli: Le tragique destin d’un grand Africain (Paris: J.A. Livres, 1990), 132; Yaoundé (Bénard) to MAE, No. 239, 25 April 1964, and Cairo (Roux) to MAE, No. 795, forwarded to Dakar 16 June 1964, Koenig (Conakry) to MAE/AL, No. 590/AL, 29 July 1964; Dakar – Ambassade, Série: DAM (Relations Africaines-Malgache), carton 260 (Dakar-Amb. 260), CADN.}

It took even longer to resolve the matter of the UAM: it became the Union Africain et malgache de la coopération économique in March 1964 and the Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache, with a mandate expressly limited to economic, social and cultural harmonization, only in February 1965. The francophone states had won: the ties of neocolonialism would endure.\footnote{A.B. Tall, “L’Organisation commune Africaine, malgache et mauritienne,” \textit{Journal of African Law} 16:3 (1972), 304-309.}

The Cairo meeting also represented the last time for a long time that the OAU members would explicitly consider Nkrumah’s alternative to the assembly of sovereign states which they had chosen at Addis Ababa. The proposal was advanced by Sékou Touré, not by Nkrumah himself: the time had come, he argued, to consider the Ghanaian president’s proposal to create a central government for Africa. Different economic and social systems would no doubt complicate the task, but a clear definition of the powers of
the central government would suffice to overcome the challenges. Following Sékou Touré’s speech, Nkrumah spoke for a long time, urging his fellow chiefs of state to put their foreign ministers to work to draft a proposal and, within six months, to choose where the new government would be located. In the end, the best they could do was to have their proposal referred to a specialized commission for further study.

Although Nkrumah’s policy towards African unity and impatience to see a continental government had remained relatively constant, Sékou Touré had once more risked being isolated on the continent as a radical. The record suggests he had two strong reasons for taking this risk: first, he believed he could influence his colleagues in the interests of unity; and second, the Congo crisis had once again flared up. Sékou Touré may have genuinely believed that his years of diplomacy, his willingness to compromise to bring the Addis Ababa conference into being and to reach consensus there on the Charter of the OAU, and his credibility as a leader unequivocally committed to African independence and unity, had overcome the hostility towards him and put him in a position at Cairo where he could lead his fellow chiefs of state into taking the next steps towards an effective Union. Certainly he believed himself to have played an important role in reconciling factions and resolving disputes behind the scenes in Cairo: he said as much to France’s new ambassador in Conakry, Philippe Koenig. Somewhat cynically, Koenig believed that Sékou Touré had spoken in favour of continental government so as to “avoid the abandonment of a theme which is dear to him and also to prevent Ghana’s chief of state from appearing to be the only leader of a united Africa.”

But there was a new urgency to Sékou Touré’s plea for greater institutional unity at Cairo, above and beyond the venerable themes that Koenig addressed in his assessment. It is reasonable to believe that Sékou Touré saw in the record of the previous year and its squabbles a dangerous portent, suggesting that the OAU would never have the institutional strength or resources to act effectively unless its members were pushed towards greater integration. He was also acutely aware that there were increasing calls

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116 Cairo (Roux) to MAE, No. 968-976, 20 July 1964; Dakar-Amb. 260, CADN.
117 Cairo (Roux) to MAE, No. 1033-39, forwarded to Dakar on 26 July 1964; Dakar-Amb. 260, CADN.
on the OAU to resolve conflicts between its members and to intervene in support of the principles expressed in its Charter. In January, Nyerere had asked for an emergency meeting of the OAU foreign ministers to consider how to “Africanize” the armed response to mutinies in Zanzibar; the committee formed to consider the matter, in which Guinea played a role, passed resolutions calling on British troops to leave but giving Nyerere discretion over the timing and composition of the African troops that were expected to replace them.\textsuperscript{120} In July and August, 1964, Congo’s cycle of constitutional crisis and violence erupted again: and this time, Sékou Touré exerted all the influence he thought he had to have the matter entrusted to the OAU for resolution – and to making the OAU the strongest possible institution to take on these crucial tasks.\textsuperscript{121} He was to be disappointed on both scores.

\textit{VI. Conclusion}

Sékou Touré’s diplomatic efforts to create the institutions of African unity had achieved several positive results. For one thing, Guinea’s relations with both the United States and France were much more cordial in 1963 and into 1964 than they had been in 1960 and 1961. When John Kennedy was assassinated in November 1963, the Guinean leaders were distraught; Guinea distinguished itself by being the first foreign state to issue a commemorative stamp early in 1964, bearing a drawing of the American president and the entreaty in his inaugural address to “Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.”\textsuperscript{122} Americans attributed the reaction to the “African” taste for personal diplomacy, as they had the success that Kennedy had enjoyed with Sékou Touré; they did not consider whether there might be a tinge of the same outrage and fear that the death of Congo’s Lumumba and Togo’s Olympio had sparked in the Guinean president.

For another, there was the unmistakable success of Guinean foreign policy in favour of pan-Africanism. The Organization of African Unity was a reality, albeit one

\textsuperscript{120}“Between Dar and Lagos,” \textit{West Africa}, 22 February 1964, 199.
\textsuperscript{121}Letters, Ahmed Sékou Touré to Lyndon Johnson and Averell Harriman, undated (late August, 1964); Box 10, GWMN, BHL.
\textsuperscript{122}Letter, Loeb (Conakry) to Williams, 13 February 1964; Letter, Karim Bangoura (Ambassador of Guinea to the US) to Williams, 17 February 1964; Box 10, GWMN, BHL.
whose promise of greater collective action and integration in the interests of improving
the lives and the security of the people of the continent was undermined by institutional
weakness, lack of material resources, and, likely, the terms of its own Charter, which
emphasized state sovereignty at the expense of effective action. Though history has, for
the most part, obscured the role that Sékou Touré played in this achievement, his
contemporaries, from Nyerere to Houphouët-Boigny and the analysts in Paris, recognized
his contribution.\(^{123}\)

The OAU’s weaknesses reflected the nature of power in the post-colonial state, as
well as the ambiguities of the sovereignty each OAU member had recently re-claimed.
Thomas Hughes of the State Department’s Intelligence and Research branch observed in
1963 that rather than a “first step toward a continental political union,” the OAU
“represents the legitimization of the state system inherited from colonial rule.”\(^{124}\) The
movement for African unity had to contend with the vanity of Africa’s politicians and
their inability, or unwillingness, to act collectively in the interests of the people they
purported to represent when the alternative promised access to international sources of
power and wealth and, with them, the wherewithal to perpetuate their control over the
nations they were trying to establish. Sékou Touré was no less vulnerable to the
temptations of sovereignty than were his neighbours. Whether his decision to back the
majority at Addis Ababa was a tactical judgment about how best to achieve his long-term
strategy or an outright change in that strategy towards the traditional state sovereignty
model, the result was the same.

From its origins, pan-Africanism made certain fundamental assumptions about the
nature of the sovereignty it claimed. When the independent states of Africa entered the
community of nations – politically, legally and economically – they did so on the basis of
a shared, if vague, understanding of sovereignty that was based on the European model.

\(^{123}\) C.O.C. Amate believes that Ghana’s diplomats deserve the most credit: *Inside the OAU: Pan-
Africanism in Practice* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986). Diało Telli, writing as Secretary General of the
OAU in 1965, credited “the eminent personality of the Emperor of Ethiopia”: Diało Telli, “The
other hand, Nyerere credited Sékou Touré and Haile Selassie above all in conversation with the US
ambassador, William Leonhart: Dar es Salaam (Leonhart) to State, No. 690, 9 January 1964; POL 1 Guin,
Central Subject-Numeric Files, 1964-1966, RG 59, NACP.

\(^{124}\) Thomas L. Hughes, “Prospects for African Unity: The Addis Ababa Conference and Its Impact,” INR
Research Memorandum RAF-48, 22 October 1963; Policy Planning Council (S/PC) and Policy Planning
Staff (S/P) Subject and Country Files, 1965-1969, Box 310, RG 59, NACP.
Because of the dominant influence of positivist approaches to international law, the assumptions on which that understanding of sovereignty were based were themselves well-buried, so much so that neither the Europeans nor Americans dominating that community of nations, nor the Africans joining it, were necessarily aware of the normative implications, the universalization of specific Western historical experiences, that underlay the concept. From this perspective, it might have been inevitable that pan-African unity was defeated by the demands of what it took an African country to qualify as a member of the community of sovereign states. The dream of African unity, of a single continental government rather than the economic or other limited-purpose supranational organizations that were increasingly important in Europe, posed such a challenge to the givens of the international system – alliance and allegiance systems, bilateral and multilateral aid directed to the governments of sovereign states which were then expected to distribute it according to western norms – that it would be overwhelmingly difficult to realize. The degree to which African states were dependent upon the champions of those givens ensured that their unity remained nominal. The nation-state also answered to one of the central problems that had spurred pan-Africanism in the first place. If Africans chose to identify themselves with discrete nations, it was more difficult to essentialize all of Africa and its inhabitants.

In all these circumstances, even nominal unity was a significant accomplishment. As Hughes pointed out, building a “framework for facilitating cooperation” was “no mean achievement for a community of nations most of which have been sovereign for only three years.” He might have added that the achievement was even more extraordinary in view of how vulnerable those nations were to the actions of far more powerful states, including the US and France, taken for reasons that often had little to do

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125 Anghie, *Making of International Law*, 74-82. In this context, Anghie provides the following definition: “Positivism claimed to provide, through a precise examination of state behaviour, and the employment of a comprehensive and carefully articulated system of classification, a precise answer to any legal problem with which it was confronted. … Positivists grandiosely claimed that while their system was based on empirical science, it nevertheless remained autonomous from the messy world of politics, society and history that it imperiously and decisively ordered.”
with Africa, and with little thought to the interests of African peoples whose dreams of sovereignty were nearly as old as their own political revolutions.\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{126}Thomas L. Hughes, “Prospects for African Unity: The Addis Ababa Conference and Its Impact,” INR Research Memorandum RAF-48, 22 October 1963; Policy Planning Council (S/PC) and Policy Planning Staff (S/P) Subject and Country Files, 1965-1969, Box 310, RG 59, NACP.
Chapter 5.  “An Unfortunate Allergy to Economics”: The Challenge to Development

Now that both the body – the national economy – and the blood which flows in the body – the currency – are under the sovereign control of our free Nation, it is up to us to see that the evil genius of colonial exploitation is superseded by the genius of human liberation. – Ahmed Sékou Touré, December 1962

The events of 1963 and 1964 spelled the defeat of Sékou Touré’s vision that a common ideology of African unity could induce newly independent African states to orient their economies towards continental ties and break the neocolonial bonds between new African states and their former colonial masters. Instead, many of the new states – and nearly all of the francophone countries, with which Guinea should have had the closest links of trade, communications and transportation – opted to perpetuate the economic structures of imports and exports to their former colonial masters, either individually or through the European Economic Community (EEC), as well as the political allegiances that these structures entailed. The creation of the Organization of African Unity had symbolic value and potential as a forum within which Africans could work to resolve African problems without overt external interference, but it brought no economic relief to Guinea.

On the other hand, Guinea’s 1961 decision to expel the Soviet Union’s ambassador, however temporarily, and seek improved relations with the US had some positive effects in Guinea. From 1962 until 1966, when Guinea and the US themselves came very close to breaking off diplomatic relations, Guinea was the recipient of a surprisingly high level of American foreign aid. The roughly $70 million in bilateral assistance provided by the US between 1958 and 1966 was only a small proportion of its African budget, itself the tiniest segment of US aid spending. Moreover, nearly half of the total was made up of surplus agricultural commodities shipped to Conakry under Public Law 480, the “Food for Peace” program. By the Americans’ own reckoning, the

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countries of the Soviet bloc and the People’s Republic of China had provided
“considerably higher” levels of aid over the same period, and more of that aid took
crude form instead of the largely ephemeral benefit of food aid. Guinea’s own foreign
policy of positive neutrality dictated that it seek, and accept, aid from all willing sources,
bilateral and multilateral, Western and otherwise. Even so, France and its closest allies in
West Africa were convinced by the mid-1960s that only American aid prevented the
overthrow of Sékou Touré’s regime.²

The conjunction of the United States as aid donor and Guinea as aid recipient in
this period should have resulted in a satisfactory relationship for them both. The early
1960s marked a high point in bilateral US aid to Africa, frequently justified to the US
Congress and public as a support for the independence of African states. It also
coincided with an unusual degree of consensus in Washington that aid could help best by
stimulating the economic development that would, in theory, lead inexorably to rapid
modernization of underdeveloped countries. For its part, Guinea’s independence was
frequently cited as an example of the benefits of US aid. Moreover, the country did not
have either of the main impediments that seemed to stand in the way of US-led
modernization through economic development. First, its repudiation of so-called
traditional structures, such as allegiances to ethnic and religious elites, in favour of the
“modern” nation-state, was more thorough than that of any of its neighbours. Second, its
political and economic separation from France had been so complete that it should have
been past the “stage” of the “preconditions for take-off”, which Walt Whitman Rostow
described as a time when the society “is prepared by external forces for sustained
growth.”³ The Guinean leadership also shared with American modernizers an
understanding of economic history that inclined to mechanical models, supporting the

² G. Mennen Williams (Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs) to Thomas C. Mann (Under
Secretary of State for Economic, Energy and Agricultural Affairs), “United States Aid to So-called
‘Radical’ and ‘Moderate’ African Nations – Information Memorandum,” 24 November 1965; AID 1;
Subject Files, 1960-1965; Records of the Bureau of African Affairs, 1958-1966 (Lot 69D328, 69D25,
67D217) (hereafter BAA 1958-66); State Circular Telegram No. 2422, 7 June 1966; Douglas MacArthur II
to Congressman Charles E. Bennett, 13 June 1966; AID US-GUIN 1/1/65-66, Central Subject-Numeric
Files, 1964-1966 (hereafter SN 1964-66); Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59 (RG 59),
National Archives at College Park, MD (NACP).
Cambridge University Press, 1990), 17.
idea that the infusion of just the right sort of aid at just the right time would set an underdeveloped economy on an unstoppable trajectory towards greater prosperity.

American observers were well aware of the significance Guinea attached to its independence and recognized its commitment to building a “modern” economy. In January 1966, the US embassy in Conakry urged the State Department to “get to the realities beyond the clichés” about Guinea to appreciate why the “special relationship” between the two countries was so important:

The Touré regime represents a valid experiment in the African quest for genuine national independence and modern national development … the probabilities of [its] success are significantly reinforced by the regime’s internal political and social stability and the substantial national consensus it enjoys.

The success of Guinea’s experiment was important as a beacon for the “evolution of other African states.” Its very independence made Guinea’s evolution “compatible with the broad lines of US interest in Africa in the foreseeable future,” the paper argued, “ultimately strengthen[ing] US moral and psychological influence in the mainstream of African radicalism.” A “continued American presence and the maintenance or strengthening of present levels of economic assistance” was justified by the contribution it would make, not only to the Guinean “revolution,” but also to achieving US cold war objectives by denying the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China “an effective African base of operations.”

Yet despite this convergence of interests, Guinea’s aid relationship with the US was always rocky. In the year that US chargé d’affaires Pierre R. Graham provided his assessment of Guinea’s modernity and independence, US bilateral aid was reduced to the bare minimum that the Americans believed to be necessary to ensure ongoing access by US-based firms to Guinea’s bauxite deposits. Many factors contributed to these problems, but most related, in one way or another, to the different interpretations and emphases that the political elites in Guinea and the United States attached to the concept of Guinean independence. For Sékou Touré and his government, independence meant freedom from colonial and neocolonial control and freedom to determine economic as well as political matters according to their own interests and advantages. The project of

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modernization in Guinea foundered in the gap between theory and the reality that economic development programs required the recipient to give up far more control over the local economy than the Guinean leadership would ever accept.

As the Kennedy administration’s optimism about the potential for modernizing development in Africa gave way to greater scepticism under Johnson, and as the State Department tried to cope with the strain on political and economic resources that resulted from US escalation of the war in Vietnam, appeals to recognize Guinea’s consonance with US principles of national independence and “modern economic development” increasingly fell on deaf ears. The stage was set by late 1966 for a confrontation over the divergent meanings that Guinea and its major foreign donor assigned to these important abstractions. The outcome would raise serious questions as to whether independence, as defined by this beacon of African modernity and self-determination, was truly compatible with development, as defined by those in a position to help.

I. From Colonial Exploitation to Development

On 2 April 1963, US president John F. Kennedy delivered a Special Message to Congress, defending the “quiet instead of dramatic” contribution that seventeen years of American mutual defence and assistance programs had made to “the struggle to preserve freedom” around the world and prefacing his request for foreign aid funds for the coming fiscal year. When it came to Africa, Kennedy equated freedom with independence: “Africa is stirring restlessly to consolidate its independence and to make that independence meaningful for its people through economic and social development,” he observed. On the surface, the connection between independence and development seemed obvious. Beneath the words, however, lay a debate about whether the US should be expending public funds to help African countries at all. Kennedy administration optimists believed that aid not only was altruistic but also strengthened ties with African states that would benefit the US in ways ranging from position in the Cold War to access to natural resources. Arrayed against them were adherents to an ever-present current of

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thought that saw the value of post-colonial development efforts primarily as a way to ensure that independent African nations continued to contribute economically to the health of Western Europe.

Even among the administration’s optimists, there was reluctance to recognize the continuity between colonial and post-colonial development efforts, much less to grapple with the challenge of formulating aid that was genuinely conducive to post-colonial independence. One who perceived the problems was economist John Kenneth Galbraith, whom Kennedy appointed ambassador to India in 1961. In an article published in April 1961, Galbraith attacked the dominant assumption of development economics in the 1950s: that the greatest gap in developing economies was the limited availability of capital. Among the problematic effects of this focus was that post-colonial development aid continued “to provide the one thing that colonialism provided.” In turn, this resulted in the perpetuation of colonialism’s “unviable structure” and exposed the US to “some of the discredit and dislike which accrued to the colonial powers.” Galbraith described as “convenient illusion” the idea that “economic development was simply a matter of external aid.” Though he doubted that many believed this to be true, he suggested the facile equation continued to dominate foreign policy thinking about development because “once we admit that it is not the case, we become entrapped in a succession of grievously complex problems.”

The two solutions that Galbraith proposed for this problem represented a liberal challenge to the conservative economic and political orthodoxy that had prevailed through the 1950s in the US. The economist advocated that the US take a more activist, planning-oriented approach – the “Positive Development Plan” – which would set firm, but achievable and measurable, goals to address not only the recipient’s lack of capital, but also lower than desirable levels of literacy and education, social justice, and often serious deficiencies in the apparatus of government and public administration. The participation of recipient-country officials in the development planning process would address the fourth crucial gap that Galbraith diagnosed in the circumstances of “most poor countries”: “a clear and purposeful view of what development involves.” The

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diplomat in Galbraith noted that recipients of aid would still likely be concerned with the “invasion of sovereignty” attendant on ceding control of the planning and execution of the development process to a US-based agency. To this problem he responded that as US intentions were not actually imperialistic, what was required was simply to dispel the myth by offering reassurance to the recipient that it, and its “most competent national,” were increasingly in charge of the process.\(^7\)

Galbraith’s article identified both the major problem with economic development efforts as far as African states such as Guinea were concerned and the sleight of hand with which both donor and recipient would try to disguise it. The connection between development and colonialism was deeper than exclusive reliance on providing capital infusions. The idea of development itself was closely related to colonial goals of the “civilizing mission” and the French concept of *mise en valeur*. Both concepts were deliberately vague. It was rarely made clear, for instance, whether the prime beneficiary of efforts to bring out the value of a colonized territory was to be its own population or the economic health of the metropole. The question rarely arose until the Second World War; though Africans were to be “civilized” through contact with Europeans, the economic connections were frankly intended to benefit the metropole. During and after the War, European states started to use the term development to describe the benefits colonial rule was bringing to their colonial possessions in Asia and Africa. In the case of the British Empire, the sign of this change was the *Colonial Development and Welfare Act*, passed in 1939 to replace the *Colonial Development Act* of a decade before. For the French, it was the 1946 creation of the Fonds d’investissement pour le développement économique et social (FIDES), which for the first time would dedicate metropolitan resources to the development of infrastructure in the colonies.\(^8\)

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sought to stimulate capital investment in their empires by creating imperial funds to subsidize it; and both European empires were trying to gain political support in their colonies as well as in other influential countries around the world by adding a benevolent face to their colonial economies.\(^9\)

The sleight of hand came from what Nick Cullather has called the “court vernacular” of the Kennedy administration.\(^10\) Modernization theory offered a way for donors and recipients alike to ignore the implications of the connections between colonialism and development. In its most influential incarnation, the theory posited that all societies moved through a common and inexorable path of development from “traditional” to “modern”, the latter defined by “progress in technology, military and bureaucratic institutions, and the political and social structure” of the primary unit of analysis, the nation-state, when measured against the standard of the United States.\(^11\) The best-known proponent of this theory, Walt Whitman Rostow, was also the most centrally positioned, as Director of the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff, to advocate its application to American foreign policy. The nexus between theory and policy was the idea that US bilateral foreign aid, applied at just the right stage of an underdeveloped country’s evolution, would accomplish two key goals. First, it would stimulate the economy’s “take-off” into self-sustaining growth. Second, it would pre-empt communism, which Rostow called “a disease of the transition,” thereby ensuring that the state developed towards the Western model of modernity which would culminate in liberal democracy, capitalism and the circumstances of plenty that Rostow dubbed the stage of “high-mass consumption”, rather than pursuing the path of communism towards the alternative form of modernity epitomized by the USSR.\(^12\)


The theory elided the colonial connection by treating it as a neutral element in a developing country’s path towards capitalist modernity. Colonial rule and capital investment were simply necessary external factors in establishing the preconditions for economic “take-off.” 13 Modernization ignored the fact that the colonial economy which most underdeveloped countries had inherited, more or less intact, was the product of investment decisions made by individuals and companies, taken within the politicized context of a capital-exporting state, and therefore both influenced by and influencing the political and diplomatic decisions of that state. As Bruce Miroff observed in 1976, “ignoring the facts of Western penetration into the Third World” permitted Rostow to avoid having to explain how a nation could initiate “decisive economic growth . . . when foreign corporations determined the rate of investment in its major sectors” and carried most of the profits from those sectors back to the advanced economies where they maintained their headquarters. 14

However much liberals and social scientists inside and outside the Kennedy administration might want to deny the connections between economic development and colonialism, in the early 1960s the US discourse concerning aid still included the notion that Africa was useful to the US mostly for its potential to buttress the prosperity and therefore the stability of the former colonial powers in Western Europe. This point of view lay behind one surprisingly strong challenge to the very idea of US bilateral aid programs in Africa. On 10 December 1962, President John F. Kennedy appointed General Lucius D. Clay to head up an inquiry into whether the scope and distribution of US military and economic assistance programs was “contributing to the optimum security of the United States and political stability in the free world.” 15 According to Arthur Schlesinger, Kennedy appointed the “blue-ribbon panel of bonded conservatives” believing that its favourable report would contribute to increasing support for the foreign

13 Rostow, Stages of Economic Growth, 6-7, 17-35, 112.
15 Committee to Strengthen the Security of the Free World, “The Scope and Distribution of United States Military and Economic Assistance Programs,” Report to the President, 20 March 1963 (hereafter Clay Committee Report); Box 15, G. Mennen Williams – Non-Gubernatorial Papers (GMWN), Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI (BHL).
aid program following successive cuts to the aid bills he had presented in 1961 and 1962. If so, the committee’s report, delivered on 20 March 1963, would disappoint.

The State Department’s Bureau of African Affairs learned just how ill-disposed the committee was towards existing US aid programs in Africa when Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs G. Mennen Williams met its members in an executive session late in January 1963. From Clay’s first questions it was clear that Williams and Edmond C. Hutchinson, Assistant Administrator for Africa in the Agency for International Development (AID), were going to get a rough ride. The general began by asking what would happen to French aid programs if the US were to terminate its own assistance in former French colonies. Hutchinson tried to reassure the committee that the aid position of the US was “very much subsidiary to that of France” in the former French colonies in Africa. However, he argued, some US aid was justified even there for two reasons: first, because the recipients were “politically unhappy [at] having to rely entirely on French assistance”; and second, because there were some former French colonies – unnamed, though he was obviously alluding to Guinea and other so-called radical states such as Mali – “where the French had not been as active as the U.S. desired.” Williams added that US aid to these countries was necessary because “the alternative to our assistance was [Soviet] Bloc aid.” Committee member Eugene R. Black, who had stepped down from the presidency of the World Bank only weeks before, challenged Williams. Ignoring the issue of Guinea and Mali altogether, Black asserted that France would continue to provide francophone Africa with substantial aid regardless of whether the US pulled out. Moreover, he argued, the bloc was far from the only alternative. Not only was “substantial international assistance” available, said Black, but also enough multilateral funds were available that “it was doubtful if the US could find worthwhile capital projects” if it were to continue to channel aid to Africa on a bilateral basis as well. Clay was even more dubious than Black of the justifications Williams advanced for bilateral US aid in Africa. As long as France provided funds, he thought, recipient countries would not turn to the bloc. In any case, events in Africa that Williams cited as proof that aid was advancing American strategic objectives, such as Guinea’s refusal to

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permit Soviet aircraft to refuel at Conakry during the recent Cuban missile crisis, were “irrelevant” to the Soviets’ decisions and actions – just as, for the most part, they were to the US.\(^\text{17}\)

Clay closed the executive briefing session with a prepared statement in which he distinguished the African nations from countries that were in “direct physical contact” with the Soviet bloc and states that added to “free world” military strength. US aid to Africa, therefore, could only be justified if it “prevent[ed] Bloc political penetration which could result in the Bloc obtaining bases which might be a security threat.” The main burden of aid to Africa should be carried “by the former metropole, chiefly France and the UK,” though US aid could be justified “in a few more stable countries capable of economic development and exerting a political strength in the area favorable to free world security.”\(^\text{18}\) For General Clay and his committee, it was as though there had been no change to the relationships among the US, its European allies, and their African colonies since the first stirrings of independence in the late 1950s: the US should act only where Europeans could not control a site of possible significance.

The committee’s report, issued on 20 March 1963, contained few surprises. As expected, the committee thought that Western Europe should “logically” bear most of the aid burden across all of Africa. Bilateral aid should be severely curtailed, even to African states where the US maintained military bases and to countries considered to have the potential for anti-communist economic development and political influence, such as Nigeria. The committee explicitly defined “independence” as being outside of the Soviet or Communist Chinese spheres of influence, and implicitly rejected the argument that US aid was preventing the opposition from gaining footholds in Africa. It went further to suggest that American aid should only go to places, and projects, which were ideologically congenial: “we believe the U.S. should not aid a foreign government in projects establishing government-owned industrial and commercial enterprises which compete with existing private endeavors,” it stated. Although the US “cannot insist upon the establishment of our own economic system,” American aid should always be

\(^{17}\) Herbert Adelman, “Report of Executive Briefing of Clay Committee,” 23 January 1963; Clay Committee; Records of the Economic Advisor, 1962-1963 (Ec-Ad 62-63); Bureau of African Affairs Office of Inter-African Affairs (BAA OIAA); RG 59, NACP.

\(^{18}\) Adelman, “Report,” 23 January 1963; Clay Committee; Ec-Ad 62-63; BAA OIAA; RG 59, NACP.
consistent with US “beliefs, democratic tradition, and knowledge of economic organization and consequences.”

Yet for all that it expressed many of the common conservative reservations about foreign aid, the Clay committee report did leave the door open for a more liberal conception of aid for economic development to extend its influence across the entire US aid enterprise. In its final paragraph, the report endorsed helping “those nations which are seriously striving to promote their own development . . . to create and maintain the conditions conducive to steady economic progress and improved social well-being within the framework of political freedom.” Even Williams approved of this statement, believing that it left room for “an argument to be made for an appropriate program.” He was quick to exploit this opening, urging speechwriter Theodore Sorensen to add a paragraph to his draft of the President’s Special Message to Congress stating “economic development with Western help is the need and expectation of peoples on this great continent [Africa] and indeed is required for these nations to achieve sound political and social structures.” In the speech as delivered, Kennedy backed away from this narrow focus, preferring the studied ambiguity of the connection between independence and economic and social development. Talking about independence, rather than economic progress, allowed Kennedy to bridge the gap between the straightforward meaning the Clay Committee assigned this crucial term – freedom from a new “master” in the form of the Soviet Union or communist China – and the meanings it was acquiring on the African continent itself, chief among them being the full exercise of national sovereignty and freedom from colonial and neo-colonial control.

In defending bilateral US aid to Africa from the attacks of the Clay committee, the State Department’s Bureau of African Affairs was forced to articulate why it was important to have an American aid presence, not only in countries like Guinea where France was not active, but also in places that had a more congenial relationship with the

19 Clay Committee Report, 5-6.
20 Clay Committee Report, 22; emphasis added.
21 Williams to Rusk, “Clay Committee Report,” 8 March 1963; Reel 22, G. Mennen Williams – State Department Files, BHL.
22 Williams to Sorensen and David Bell, Administrator, AID, “President’s Aid Message,” 28 March 1963; Clay Committee; Ec-Ad 62-63, BAA OIAA; RG 59, NACP.
former metropole. This in turn permitted Bureau analysts to identify a significant reason why American bilateral aid, even when it was tied to the purchase of goods and services from the US, was distinct from colonial and neocolonial aid. There was no real quarrel with the objective of using African resources to support Western Europe; as Williams put it late in 1964 in an attempt to defend Africa’s claim on the dwindling AID budget, one of the “pressing areas of US interest and concern” served by AID was “to add to the efforts of the West, especially Europe, in Africa, since the strength of Europe is dependent on Africa to a large extent and Europe’s strength is basic to Western strength.”

There were, however, some differences over whether states like France were using appropriate means to achieve this objective.

In a series of papers he wrote in August 1963, William F. Kling, the Bureau’s resident expert on foreign aid, returned to a theme he first developed in response to the Clay Committee earlier that year. While the US was generally happy to take a back seat to French coopération in Africa, it was less pleased with the trade policy such aid was perpetuating. France’s “special position” in the states of the Union Africaine et malgache (UAM), he noted, “is based on an exchange of benefits – French economic assistance is offset by the quid pro quo of preferential trade and other arrangements and the former will not be given without receiving the latter.” Yet the taint of colonialism should not condemn the whole enterprise of French coopération, he concluded. French support “is necessary for the stability, well being, and western orientation of the UAM countries.” Kling also believed that France’s increased attention to building schools, hospitals and so on in the UAM states excused the former metropole from the charge of neocolonialism.

Unconstrained by the need to justify American reliance on French aid, Joel Biller, an analyst in the Department’s European Bureau, pointed out that the issue of neocolonialism was more fundamental than simply the metropole’s choice of which projects to fund. Kling’s papers had not fully addressed a more important question: in the long run, would African recipients benefit more from continued reliance on France, or from “policies designed to promote a more rational use of resources and a broader base of

political ties with the West?” Biller noted that it would be easier for the US to push France for the elimination of its trade preferences if the trade flows between France and its former colonies were more or less even, signifying that they were primarily political in motivation, than if the flows benefited France, as he implied was the case. It would be harder to argue for the elimination of the preferences if the resulting relationship were commercially profitable.26

Typically, the State Department analysis of the problem of neocolonialism focused on the intentions of the (European) donor, not the effects upon or perceptions of the (African) recipient. That there was a distinction became clear in connection with Guinea, whose rejection of neocolonialism was close to absolute. It was obvious that if Guinea had to rely on aid from its former metropole alone, it would have been very short indeed on Western help. Even as Franco-Guinean relations improved in 1963, few in the State Department held out hope that France would offer to renew economic assistance, especially so long as Guinea refused to re-join the CFA franc zone. Alan Logan, the country officer, recommended that the new Country Assistance Strategy that State and AID were developing early in 1963 should pressure Guinea to “re-establish new relations” with France and Western Europe. His boss, William C. Trimble, provided a more sober view, advising that US aid to the country should be maintained at current levels. US aid was more likely than French coopération, he implied, “to encourage Guinea’s assumption of a more moderate and less anti-West doctrinaire role.”27

The problem was not merely pride and long memories in Guinea. It was increasingly clear that France had no intention of following up the three new accords it signed with Guinea in May 1963 by extending aid to its former colony. French president Charles de Gaulle dictated that France’s attitude towards Guinea remained “ni illusions, ni effusions” – neither illusions as to Guinea’s intentions, nor effusive outpourings towards Conakry. Accordingly, de Gaulle denied his aid minister, Raymond Triboulet, permission to send a representative to Conakry in the summer of 1963. Jacques Foccart, the French president’s Secretary for African affairs, explained to Triboulet that as Paris

believed Conakry was using the agreements solely as a façade behind which to hide its own economic difficulties, there was no reason to take any action that could be interpreted as initiating an aid relationship.\textsuperscript{28}

Reluctance to take the initiative soon turned to adamant refusal. The pretext was a parade held in Conakry to mark Guinean Army Day on 1 November 1963, to which the Guinean authorities invited French ambassador Jean-Louis Pons as well as visiting dignitaries such as Mokhtar Ould Daddah, president of Mauritania. Pons stormed away from the reviewing stand when a group passed by purporting to show how far the Guinean army had come since Guinean soldiers had had their “dignity mocked” in the old days of the French colonial army. As Pons described the scene, “A detachment of twenty or so men, wearing chéchias [caps], barefoot, partly clothed in summer uniforms from the 1930s, muskets on their shoulders and led by a bugler playing an old French military march, filed past the reviewing stand.” Outraged, Pons asked Minister Maurice Couve de Murville to consider whether this did not suggest that the Guinean government’s actions “in general . . . smacked of infantilism and were stained with irresponsibility,” which would justify a harsher reaction to this “foolishness” than simply an ambassadorial démarche. Four days later, Pons was instructed to let his host government know that since the insult demonstrated there had been no change in Guinea’s attitude, “there could be no question of resuming aid to Guinea.”\textsuperscript{29}

It is doubtful the Guineans ever thought there could be. Not only had there been no visible change in de Gaulle’s attitude or in the tight control over francophone African matters that Foccart exercised on his behalf: the Guineans knew that even if the May 1963 accords succeeded in resolving most of the outstanding debts and claims between the two governments, France could not achieve its trade objectives as long as they refused to re-join the franc zone and become associated with the EEC.\textsuperscript{30} The State Department, in turn, knew that Guinea would not accede to these conditions. Meeting with Guinea’s ambassador to the US in Conakry on 30 October, Kling asked Karim

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\item Conakry (Pons) to MAE, No. 470-73, 1 November 1963; MAE/AL (Soutou) to Conakry (Pons), No. 608, 5 November 1963; Guinée 50, DAL, AMAE.
\item Note, “Relations franco-guinéennes,” No. 11/AL, 4 June 1963; Guinée 50, DAL, AMAE.
\end{enumerate}
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Bangoura about the availability of aid from sources other than the Soviet bloc or Communist China. As US ambassador James I. Loeb put it, Bangoura was “categoric and contemptuous in stating no French aid [is] desired.” While the US believed there was a slight possibility that Guinea might eventually accept association with the EEC, there was no chance that Sékou Touré’s government would abandon its independent currency and return to the French-backed regional CFA franc.

As a symbol of Guinea’s independence, the Guinean franc was unsurpassed. It was even called the syli, the Susu word for elephant, also the symbol of the PDG and Sékou Touré’s own nickname. The timing of its adoption was also highly significant, both to its symbolic value and to its abiding weakness. In part to stem the extraordinary flight of private French capital that followed the colonial state’s abrupt withdrawal from Guinea and persisted throughout 1959, Sékou Touré announced the new currency on 1 March 1960. This was less than three months after Charles de Gaulle signalled France’s willingness to negotiate “international sovereignty” with its remaining African colonies, but before any of them actually acceded to independence and took the fateful decision to remain within the ambit of the CFA franc. In other words, Guinea adopted its independent currency at a time when its leaders still hoped that its francophone neighbours would opt for economic as well as political independence from France, following its own example. Instead, Senegal, Mali and Côte d’Ivoire all opted initially to remain in the franc zone. Only Mali left the shelter of the French franc-backed currency and banking institutions in 1962, but re-joined in 1968 after the military coup that overthrew President Modibo Keita.

The ongoing isolation of Guinea’s independent, unconvertible currency had significant consequences, both for the structure of Guinea’s economy and for its quotidian operation. On a day-to-day basis, it was impossible to prevent Guineans who lived near porous borders from trying to sell produce and other assets, including the more portable of Guinea’s rich mineral resources such as diamonds, in neighbouring countries that used harder and more valuable currencies. The ties of family, language or culture

31 Conakry (Loeb) to State, No. 456, 31 October 1963; POL 7 GUIN, SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.
32 Memorandum of Conversation, “EEC Fears Concerning Africa,” 29 October 1963; MemCons 1963; Classified Records of G. Mennen Williams, 1961-1966 (Lot 68D8), RG 59, NACP.
background that linked many Guineans with Senegalese, Ivoirians, Malians, Liberians and Sierra Leoneans facilitated this smuggling. Trying to block Guineans from giving in to the temptation of harder currency would form a significant part of Guinea’s efforts at economic reform in 1963 and 1964. The syli also exacerbated Guinea’s foreign exchange problems. Because Guinea would not permit the syli to be traded or converted to foreign currencies, stocks of the currency could not normally be used by government or private entities to purchase essential inputs, such as oil, from outside the country. The need to convince the Guinean government to expend precious foreign exchange to secure fuel made the negotiations for Guinean participation in the foreign-controlled alumina production facilities at Fria and Boké more difficult and complex.

Both France and Guinea stood to benefit if the African country swallowed its pride and joined the members of the 1963 Yaoundé Convention as an associated state to the EEC. Associates were not only eligible for EEC aid; they were also entitled to trade to and from any member of the Common Market at preferential tariff rates. In February 1963, the MAE’s legal service advised that unless Guinea did become an associate, France would have to impose the standard tariff on imports of Guinean bauxite for the first time since Guinea’s independence in order to comply with its Common Market obligations. This could create significant cost increases for French aluminum producers, who were still relying on Guinea for about thirty per cent of their bauxite imports. Yet neither country would budge. Sékou Touré reserved particular scorn for the EEC’s associates, characterizing the relationship as “the community of robber and robbed” because of its perpetuation of colonial-era trade ties. For its part, France seems to have been prepared to sacrifice the interests of its aluminum producers to de Gaulle’s *ní illusions, ni effusions* policy.

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35 Conakry (Loeb) to State, No. 1092, 4 June 1964; Conakry (Loeb) to State, No. 1095, 5 June 1964; AID (US) GUIN 1/1/64; State to Conakry, AIDTO No. 572, 18 April 1966; INCO GUIN 1/1/64; SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.


As hope faded in Washington that France might resume aid to Guinea, only one route seemed open to pushing the West African state along the path to self-sustaining economic growth: modernization through development. From late 1963 until the middle of 1966, Guinea and the US would engage in a mutually frustrating exercise that demonstrated that when it came to aid, broad agreement on goals – economic development – and a shared understanding of how they might be brought about – stimulating economic change to the point that “take-off” was inevitable – would not prevail in the face of fundamental differences over the scope of political action the recipient of a US development program was to enjoy.

II. “It is not easy to help Guinea”

In December 1963, a high-level ministerial delegation, visited Washington, led by Sékou Touré’s brother and economic development minister, Ismaël Touré. Summarizing the visit, the State Department reassured the embassy in Conakry that discussions of US aid had been positive both in substance and in tone. Though the US agreed to help meet Guinea’s “priority needs” in the short term, State emphasized that its own priority was “participating in [Guinea’s] long-term development program.” To this end, the Guineans were encouraged to define the “precise role of US programs which we mutually agreed were designed [to] tie in with Government of Guinea development objectives and help Guinea become self-sufficient.” The State Department seemed convinced that its visitors were in accord.38 Yet even though both sides agreed that modernity was the best outcome for Guinea and an economic development program was the appropriate means to achieve it, the US aid program in Guinea was characterized by false starts, frequent changes of direction, and a great deal of frustration for all concerned. As Loeb observed, “it is not easy to help Guinea.”39

The US had been encouraged by a series of economic reforms that Sékou Touré announced in October 1963, in part to address the country’s smuggling problem. In effect, the measures were an effort to address persistent and serious shortages of food and

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other essential commodities by liberalizing trade and markets and by lifting some restrictions on private participation in the economy, including foreign trade. They were also intended to meet the requirements of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, both of which institutions Guinea had joined late in September under considerable pressure from the United States. At the same time, the Guineans awarded US-based Harvey Aluminum Company the concession to develop the bauxite deposits at Boké, which the State Department believed to be “the largest and richest in the world.” The US Embassy’s year-end assessment hailed the reforms as signaling a shift “from rigid state socialism to a mixed economy.”

Encouraging signs from Guinea were important to the Americans, not only for Guinea’s own sake, but also because of the influence the State Department believed Sékou Touré exerted over his neighbours. US policy-makers sought to capitalize on two associations: the link that Kennedy had expressed between American aid and African independence; and the identification that Guinea had tried to create between true African independence and the reality of its own experience and choices. If Africa believed that Guinea stood for independence, and Guinea was seen to choose the American path towards (non-Communist) modernity, then, the thinking went, it would influence other non-aligned African states to follow. Assuming that Guinea enjoyed as much influence as the US thought it did, sending development aid to Guinea would be a relatively low-cost way to reduce Communist influence across the continent.

40 “Guinea’s Turn to the West,” Enclosure to Memorandum for McGeorge Bundy (White House), “Call of Guinean Delegation on President – Background Papers,” 11 December 1963; POL 2-3 GUIN, SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.
Soapy Williams invoked Sékou Touré’s influence in December 1963 when he urged Secretary of State Dean Rusk to take seriously the Guinean ministerial delegation’s visit in the days following Kennedy’s assassination. “If President Touré decides that the atmosphere [in Washington] remains basically sympathetic, his impression could have a steadying influence on other African leaders,” suggested the assistant secretary. At issue was the concern, expressed by African leaders across the political spectrum from Sékou Touré to his much more conservative neighbour, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, that new US president Lyndon B. Johnson would not prove to be such a good friend to the continent as Kennedy had been. Williams thought that generous offers of US aid would make the most “tangible” impression on Sékou Touré, but warned that his ministers would no doubt also communicate to him “many intangibles” from their trip.\(^{43}\) The selection of the delegation also contributed to Washington’s hopes. Not only were Ismaël Touré, Alassane Diop and Fodeba Keita “some of the Ministers who are closest to Sékou Touré”; according to Guinean ambassador Karim Bangoura, “the Ministers who came on this mission were the last ones who needed convincing” that the “best road for Guinea and for Africa is through cooperation with the United States.” The new president himself was encouraged to receive a courtesy call from the delegation: “such a meeting would be widely and favourably noted in Africa,” Rusk advised, and would “provide a suitable occasion to reiterate our support for the aspirations of the people of Africa for freedom and progress.”\(^{44}\) Johnson agreed and met the delegation on 12 December.\(^{45}\)

Washington’s high hopes for the political dividends to be derived from its Guinean aid program were ironic, because from the point of view of Ambassador Loeb in Conakry the most serious impediment to the implementation of the program was that Sékou Touré was seeking political gain, not sound economic discipline, from the Americans. Loeb seemed particularly intent upon treating economic criteria as being

\(^{43}\) Williams to Rusk, “Visit of Guinean Ministerial Delegation – Action Memorandum,” 3 December 1963; POL GUIN 1963, Central Subject-Numeric Files 1963 (hereafter SN 63); Trimble to Williams, “Meeting with Philippe Yacé,” 26 November 1963; Country Files 1951-63 (Ivory Coast); BAA-OWA; RG 59, NACP.


\(^{45}\) State to Conakry, No. 8651, 17 December 1963; GUIN POL 7; SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.
divorced from political considerations, and then on setting up his embassy as a source of technical assistance on economic matters. James Moceri, a public affairs officer with the US Information Agency whose tenure in Conakry overlapped with Loeb’s for several months, later observed: “the ambassador seriously had entertained illusions of being a *de facto* financial advisor to President Touré, indeed was hopeful that an official announcement to that effect would soon be made. Loeb certainly did not know or understand his man.” Moceri emphasizes that Sékou Touré, with his experience and his stature as a chief of state, was not “going to take any instruction from a lowly foreign ambassador,” which is undoubtedly true. But there was more to it than that. Loeb’s assessment that Sékou Touré had an “allergy to economics” was based on his observation that “all economic problems are . . . decided politically.” Loeb acknowledged that the Guinean president’s “instinct,” rather than his understanding, often served him well, as, for instance, in tough negotiations with the international firms and consortia to which he had issued concessions to mine and refine the country’s bauxite deposits. What Loeb could not see, perhaps because of his own belief in the infallibility of social scientific constructs like economics itself, was that it was Sékou Touré’s political acumen that led to such positive results.

An incident from May 1964 illustrates the gulf between the often-frustrating experiences of State and AID personnel in Conakry and Guinea’s political utility as perceived from Washington. In an apparent challenge to the embassy’s ideas about how US aid could help develop Guinea, the local government demanded that a number of ongoing AID projects be cancelled and replaced with what Sékou Touré described as “aid consistent with the means of the country.” Initially concerned that this meant the recipient government was unhappy about the entire AID program, Loeb urged State and AID to remedy one of his own great frustrations by reducing the delays between Guinean request and American delivery of commodities, including food, required to meet short-

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term needs. Within days, Loeb and his local AID director, Curtis Campagne, had changed their tune. “Elimination or phasing out of some projects from the first AID program in Guinea [is a] perfectly natural evolution,” they observed; a new, better program could now be constructed on the basis of projects that responded more closely to ideas advanced by Sékou Touré and Ismaël Touré that focused on improving agricultural production. State and AID concurred. In a bizarre twist on the more familiar Rostovian rhetoric of take-off points, E. F. O’Connell wrote that the AID program in Guinea had reached the “turnabout point”. It was now time to expand on development loans, perhaps targeting the telecommunications sector, and technical assistance should “provide some encouragement to [the] private sector.”

The turnabout – mostly an American one – reflected an unusually high degree of optimism about the nature of Guinea’s influence in Africa. It appeared, at least to the Bureau of African Affairs, that the US was making headway in its grand design for Guinea as a beacon of US-friendly independence. The State Department was particularly happy that Sékou Touré had sent his UN ambassador, Achkar Marof, to Zanzibar to mediate in the crisis caused by Zanzibar’s January revolution. The US ambassador in Dar-es-Salaam, William Leonhart, described Marof’s visit as “a brilliant success in bringing home to Zanzibar leaders Guinean experience in dealing with Soviet and threats to non-alignment and independence of one-sided dependence on ‘Easterners’,” particularly effective because of Guinean “prestige” and Sékou Touré’s “great authority.” In mid-May Williams thanked the Guinean president for his “statesmanship”, noting that Marof’s mission “had probably been an important factor in arresting Zanzibar’s drift toward the East,” and expressing US “satisfaction” that the crisis had resulted, on 26 April, in the creation of the United Republic of Tanzania. The timing and outcome of Guinea’s intervention in the Zanzibar crisis likely contributed to Williams’ ringing endorsement of the African “character” in a speech he gave to the NATO Defense College in Paris on 14 May. One outstanding characteristic African

49 Conakry (Loeb) to State, No. 1075, 26 May 1964; AID (US) GUIN, SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.
50 Conakry (Loeb) to State, No. 1086, 1 June 1964; AID (US) GUIN, SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.
51 Joint State/AID Message to Conakry No. 1246, 11 June 1964; AID (US) GUIN, SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.
52 Dar es Salaam (Leonhart) to State, No. 1769, 17 April 1964; POL 1 – GUIN-US, SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.
nations shared, he said, was their “attachment to their independence and their immediate revulsion from any attempts to limit that independence.” This character “has militated, and will continue to militate, against communist encroachments,” he predicted.54

Something more fundamental was at stake here than Loeb’s personal ambitions and the natural – albeit frustrating – effects of the fact that senior levels in a government bureaucracy tend to overlook the day-to-day concerns of those closest to a problem in their efforts to balance the department’s emphases and manage the expectations of its political masters. From Guinea’s point of view, its American benefactors seemed to be overlooking a very important aspect of independence: the right to allocate available money, including foreign aid, within the state as its government saw fit. One indication of this view was Guinea’s reluctance to provide USAID representatives, as well as IBRD and IMF personnel, with the detailed government accounts information they demanded before they would release promised funds. Another was the insistence of Keita N’Famara, minister-delegate to the presidency in charge of cooperation and economic affairs, that the foreign exchange crisis in Guinea in June 1964 was “consciously brought about by action of the Guinean Government” to “gain advantages next year and during subsequent years,” and his determination to keep USAID personnel away from his government’s new seven-year plan until the time was ripe.55

Even more important to the Guineans – and irritating to their would-be economic advisers in the US embassy – was the independence of their currency. True to form, Loeb downplayed its symbolic significance in November, when Sékou Touré announced his own loi-cadre, reversing the liberalizing reforms of the previous autumn and asserting even greater government control over all aspects of economic activity, especially imports and exports. In a meeting with the diplomatic corps, the Guinean president explained that the decision to crack down on trade arose in part from the discovery that “60 percent [of] exportable Guinean products [are] not accounted for, while exports of same products from neighboring countries correspondingly increased.” Commodities such as food provided through the PL-480 program slipped away across Guinea’s borders, even as

they remained scarce within the country. Loeb’s comment on the president’s speech was that though Sékou Touré’s candour and humility were clearly in evidence, “he [is] unable to admit even to himself that ‘conditions’ [of] human happiness and economic progress (which he says state must create) include laws which normal citizens can obey without undue strain [on] their spirit of selflessness. Thus no mention of [foreign exchange] problem as principal basis [of the] current wave of corruption.”

Loeb made the connection between the economic crackdown of the loi-cadre and Guinea’s insistence on its own independence, but the logic was so bizarre that it confused even his colleagues in the State Department. The loi-cadre was intended primarily to address an internal problem, he thought, one “with more tribal significance than international political implications.” Even so, it seemed possible that Guinea’s deepening economic crisis would force its government to “turn to West, and specifically to US.” Loeb implied that a turn to the US would be only natural in view of the superior economic assistance and advice Guinea could get from the Americans, though it would present the US with difficult choices if it were accompanied by “impossible demands for bailing out assistance.” Judging from the comments and question marks pencilled in the margins of Loeb’s dispatch, its most confusing aspect was the ambassador’s warning that such a turn would be heralded, not by pro-Western statements on international events or even by anti-Soviet or anti-Chinese positions, but “by public attacks on imperialism and counter-revolution” so that the Guineans could maintain the illusion of geopolitical neutrality.

The interpretation that Guinean expressions of disapproval of American actions elsewhere in Africa and in the world was just a smokescreen to disguise a “turn to the West” shows a breathtaking solipsism. Yet the loi-cadre did signal a shift in Guinea’s political orientation. Guinea was increasingly horrified by the Johnson administration’s military activities in other post-colonial states. At first, Guinean disapproval had been muted. Initial reports of August’s Tonkin Gulf incident in the Party newspaper Horoya were confined to summarizing the analyses of other French-language media, not only from the left (Libération, Combat) but also from the right (Figaro), leaving no more than

56 Conakry (Loeb) to State, No. 340, 11 November 1964; POL 15-1 GUIN, SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.
57 Conakry (Loeb) to State, No. 354, 14 November 1964; POL 15-1 GUIN, SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.
“an impression that the US bears the greater responsibility for the trouble.”

But in November, Horoya commented more directly on the news that the US was increasing its military assistance to the new government of former Katanga secessionist Moïse Tshombe in Congo, and was also engaging in more covert efforts to induce Belgium to send troops to help him suppress the so-called Simba rebels and, when that failed, to fund his mercenary army. Still, initial government and news response to the deteriorating situation in the Congo was remarkably mild and measured, given past Guinean involvement in the ongoing crisis in central Africa and Sékou Touré’s view that Tshombe was “morally unacceptable to most Africans and their leaders.” Sékou Touré wrote to President Johnson late in August, expressing “apprehensions” that American military assistance to Tshombe could be exploited “by certain parties” and urging Johnson to pay attention to the OAU’s position on the Congo situation. This diplomatic tone persisted even in the first official Guinean reaction to the 24 November raid by Belgian paratroopers from US planes to free rebel hostages in Stanleyville (Kisangani), which Loeb described as “cool but correct . . . toward American, Belgian and British diplomats in Guinea.” It was not until the end of the year that US diplomats began to read Guinean media attacks on the US for its support of Tshombe’s mercenaries and the Stanleyville raid as a sign that “for the first time our motives and our good faith were seriously questioned. Guinea completely discounts our humanitarian motive.”

The Stanleyville raid occurred just two days after Edmond Hutchinson had concluded a visit to Conakry at which, once more, AID’s assistant administrator for Africa emphasized Washington’s desire to shift Guinea away from the short-term support of PL-480 food and commodity programs and towards a program intended to stimulate long-term development. As they had the previous December, Guinea’s president and designated economic commission consented “enthusiastically” to the proposed shift,

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61 Ahmed Sékou Touré, Letter to Lyndon B. Johnson, undated (late August 1964); Box 10, GWMN, BHL.
63 Loeb, “Year-End Assessment,” 29 December 1964; POL 2 GUIN, SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.
despite the fact that it meant they would be required to share even more sensitive economic information with the US AID team in Conakry. The Guineans may have underestimated the intrusiveness of the “closer dialogue with deeper US understanding of such sensitive economic factors as balance of trade, price structure, monetary problems, overall planning, etc.” that Hutchinson was demanding in exchange for development aid; or they might have agreed to the US demands, knowing their inability to deliver would be unlikely, in itself, to scupper the deal.\(^{64}\) Hutchinson left Conakry satisfied with the agreements that were signed and the new projects AID had agreed to initiate. Loeb, however, was less optimistic. In a letter he wrote to Williams the day of the raid, the ambassador now qualified his prediction about Guinea’s necessary turn to the West as being contingent on Congo being “pacified and today’s excitement . . . passed over.” Despite Hutchinson’s “superb” work, Loeb was discouraged at the delays, failures, miscommunications and disappointments that had dogged a number of AID projects in Guinea. Feasibility studies that had raised Guinean hopes for projects like the introduction of electricity in nineteen towns, the reclamation of ricelands and the development of telecommunications systems, were subsequently rejected by AID in Washington. Loeb’s favourite project, a civic action program that would send US military personnel to train Guineans to build roads, continued to languish nearly a year after Fodéba Keita had requested it on the December 1963 visit to Washington. The “biggest project of all,” Harvey Aluminum’s Boké plant, to be built with loans from AID and from the World Bank, was essential to keeping Guinea on the US’ side: “We have to pull that one out of the hat or give up the ballgame,” he wrote, adding “If you can suggest any other way to mix metaphors, I will gladly add them.”\(^{65}\)

Loeb’s misgivings about the impact of the Stanleyville events proved more prophetic than Hutchinson’s rather technocratic belief that it would be possible to “carry [. . .] out a meaningful aid program as well and as expeditiously as possible given the circumstances which exist in Guinea.”\(^{66}\) By the following May, Loeb was pleading with

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\(^{65}\) Loeb to Williams, 24 November 1964; G. Mennen Williams – State Department Files, Microfilm Reel #14, BHL.

his superiors in Washington to recognize, and accept, that as a “revolutionary, thus ‘radical’, nation” Guinea could not accept US government policies in circumstances like Congo and, increasingly, Vietnam. Yet he still urged Washington to avoid attaching “overt political conditions” to US development aid and to maintain relations with radicals, “especially those such as Guinea with inclination to moderation,” in view of their likely persistence on the African scene.⁶⁷ Loeb, together with other US ambassadors in Africa, had begun to fear that the US had changed its policy towards the non-aligned without their having been informed. At a chiefs of mission conference held in Lagos later in May 1965, the field participants put the question squarely to State Department representatives from Washington. Had State abandoned the policy, set in the context of Guinea, “that the US would aid a country if it fundamentally was seeking to establish its independence despite considerable differences in other fields?” After some efforts to deny a shift, the Washington contingent admitted that “circumstances had changed and emphasis shifted.” Increased anticommunism in Washington, as evidenced by the escalation in Vietnam and the invasion of the Dominican Republic, was going to translate into intolerance of criticism from Africa. Eventually, State admitted to its representatives in the field that “the US in effect was working towards ‘committed non-alignment’ on important issues.”⁶⁸

The shift had an almost immediate impact in Guinea. Within the week, Loeb and Campagne were promising to “point out to President Touré at this crucial time the necessity for GOG to become genuinely non-aligned” even as they delivered the good news that the US government had raised the amount of its investment guarantee to Harvey Aluminum for the Boké project by up to $20 million.⁶⁹ In mid-June, reporting “another Guinean crisis,” Loeb squared the circle: the result of the increasing volume of verbal attacks on US policies in Congo, Vietnam and the Dominican Republic and Sékou Touré’s ongoing opposition to post-OAU groupings of francophone African states such

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⁶⁷ Conakry (Loeb) to State, “Future of USG-GOG Relations,” No. 879, 11 May 1965; Central POL 1 – GUIN-US, SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.
⁶⁸ “Minutes of Meeting on African Radicalism,” Chiefs of Mission Conference, Lagos, 29 May 1965; Bureau of African Affairs, Office of the Director, 1966 (Lot File 69D328); RG 59, NACP.
as the newly formed Organisation commune Africaine et Malgache (OCAM), had been, he argued, “the almost complete isolation of Guinea in a small declining group of radical states all of whose economies are in desperate circumstances.” For the first time, Loeb suggested that Sékou Touré’s government might fall. This would relieve the US of its own contradiction: if Sékou Touré had no influence, and might disappear from the scene anyway, the US could continue to aid his country without fear that Guinean independence meant the audible assertion of independent views on matters of pressing African, and global, concern.  

Why did it matter that the US continue to provide aid to Guinea? The most satisfying answer is also the most cynical: to protect US companies’ access to the country’s rich bauxite deposits. Olin-Mathieson’s investment in the Fria consortium and Harvey’s Boké project had attracted increasingly large investment guarantees; providing economic assistance to Guinea was seen as the price of access. The desire to protect both mining companies and investment guarantees is also visible in the distinction that the Departments of State and Defense seemed willing to draw between Congo, where the troops of Belgium and other members of the European Community were apparently considered an acceptable proxy for US interests, and Guinea, where it was decided that West German military assistance for road-building was not going to meet US needs, either for “intelligence” about Guinea’s army or for “a basis for US influence” over its commanders. The lengths to which the US appeared willing to go in order to protect these assets were not lost on France or its African clients, any more than they were on Guinea.

II.

A Corrupting Influence

Chargé d’affaires Pierre Graham’s January 1966 assessment of Guinea made one last attempt to define Guinean independence in a way that would attract and justify

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71 Sara Lorenzini emphasizes the connection between the generosity of West German aid to Guinea and its own private investment in the country’s bauxite resources: Due Germanie in Africa: La cooperazione allo sviluppo e la competizione per i mercati di materie prime e tecnologia (Firenze: Edizioni Polistampa, 2003), 158-59. Williams and Loeb made the case for direct US investment in road-building (as opposed to leaving this to West Germany) in support of Loeb’s civic action program in Wayne T. Fredericks to John T. McNaughton (ASD/ISA0, 30 December 1964; Conakry (Loeb) to State, No. 443, 12 December 1964; State to Conakry, No. 798, 5 February 1965; DEF US-GUIN, SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.
American economic and political interest. “In a continent burdened by turbulent change and fragile political and social structures,” he wrote, “the continuing success of the Guinean revolution will, in the foreseeable future, have a deep impact on the evolution of other African states and will enhance the authority and prestige of President Touré as a force in African political development.” The US should support Guinea’s “valid experiment” to sway this influential state away from America’s enemies, particularly the Chinese Communists.72 By July 1967, when the State Department finished revising its National Policy Paper for the country, it had decided that Guinea was “a restless, destabilizing factor in West Africa” with which “the US should attempt to maintain a diplomatic presence with a reduced Embassy and a minimal aid program.”73 The intervening eighteen months attested to hardening US attitudes towards non-alignment, already perceptible in May 1965. But the change was also attributable to the resurgence in Washington of “someone else’s problem” approaches to assisting Africa and to a loss of faith in modernization.

By the beginning of 1966, there was no chance at all that France could be induced to pick up the burden of providing aid to Guinea. When French ambassador Philippe Koenig left Conakry on the night of 16 November 1965, he triggered a breach of diplomatic relations between the two states that would persist for a decade. This had been triggered by yet another so-called plot against Sékou Touré’s government. The first sign of trouble came in September with a rumour that a distant relation of Sékou’s, Mamadou “Petit” Touré, had filed the necessary documents to create a new political party, the Parti de l’union nationale Guinéen, pursuant to the provisions of the Guinean constitution that guaranteed freedom of association. “Petit” Touré was a merchant, described by the French ambassador as “ambitious but unknown before 1958 and devoid of political associations.” His courageous, or foolhardy, decision to set up an opposition party likely began as a response to the November 1964 loi-cadre. The French ambassador was caught off guard by Sékou Touré’s reaction to the new party. Instead of quietly suffocating the new, and legal, movement, the Guinean president treated it as “an

affair of national importance,” signaling a new, mysterious and far-reaching plot. On 15 November, Leon Maka, president of Guinea’s National Assembly and of its newly-created Revolutionary Committee, announced that the Committee had discovered both the objective of the plot – the assassination of Sékou Touré – and its origin: a meeting, supposedly held in Paris the previous July, between the presidents of Côte d’Ivoire, Niger and Upper Volta, and the prime minister of Congo, Moïse Tshombe. The plotters, led by Côte d’Ivoire’s Félix Houphouët-Boigny, were then said to have contacted French ministers Triboulet and Louis Jacqu, then responsible for France’s overseas departments and territories, who pledged financial support. Koenig himself was said to have helped Houphouët-Boigny to set “Petit” Touré up as the head of the subversive efforts within Guinea. Having tried, but failed, to protest his innocence at a private meeting the next day with Guinean minister of foreign affairs Louis Lansana Béavogui, Koenig sought and received instructions not to attend a meeting to which Béavogui called the entire diplomatic corps, even if the consequence was his expulsion from the country. He left the same evening, though not before protesting France’s innocence both directly to the Guinean government and to all the other members of Conakry’s diplomatic corps.

The French and their closest African allies were at a loss to explain how these events had come about. Koenig thought perhaps the People’s Republic of China was behind them; Houphouët-Boigny denied all involvement and hinted darkly that Ghana’s Nkrumah might have something to do with the matter, as he had been in Conakry shortly before Guinea took action against “Petit” Touré and his alleged co-conspirators. Niger’s president Hamani Diori repeated the Nkrumah theory but also speculated, more realistically, that Sékou Touré might have chosen to accuse outsiders of fomenting opposition to him as preferable to conducting “massive [numbers of] arrests” within his own Party, administration and army so as to bring the situation once more under his

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75 Conakry (Koenig) to MAE/AL, No. 730-33, 736-40
76 Conakry (Koenig), No. 736-40, 741-42, 751, 752, 16 November 1965; MAE/AL (François-Poncet) to Conakry, No. 541, MAE/AL (Soutou) to Conakry, Telegram No. 542, 16 November 1965; Guinée 37, DAL, AMAE.
control. The Americans were equally bemused: noting that the accusations had “effectively destroyed any possibility that may still have existed for rapprochement with France and the Entente states,” the embassy in Conakry opined that the plot was never a real threat, but would give Sékou Touré an excuse to “make several personnel changes in the government and the party.”

The ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany may have been closest to the mark. In a conversation with France’s chargé d’affaires in Conakry on 19 November, Walter Haas relayed the veiled apology of the Guinean presidency. The circumstances of Koenig’s departure from Conakry reflected Guinea’s inexperience with international diplomacy, and were never intended to cause a breach in relations; Guinea would welcome a French initiative to appoint a new ambassador. As the chargé observed, the Guineans may not have foreseen the consequences, though they were acutely aware that if they maintained relations with France they would be unable indefinitely to postpone repayment of pre-Independence debt, as they had agreed in May 1963. They also knew how unlikely it was that France would boost the positive side of the ledger by resuming aid.

Perhaps the more interesting question is why France acted so quickly and decisively to permit the situation to escalate to the point of diplomatic breach. Relations between the two states, though never cordial or characterized by trust from either side, had withstood plenty of previous provocations, including accusations of French support for plots against Sékou Touré and his government. Why did the former metropole allow breach now? The answer is likely that Paris believed it had achieved what it could in Guinea and saw little point in trying to patch over the crisis in 1965. Back in 1960, the MAE had produced a lengthy analysis of Guinea that focused, in part, on why France

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77 Conakry (Koenig) to MAE, No. 743-49, 16 November 1965; Abidjan (Raguenet) to MAE, No. 1198-99, 19 November 1965; Niamey (Treca) to MAE, No. 622-24, 19 November 1965; Guinée 37, DAL, AMAE.
79 Conakry (Rey-Coquais) to MAE, No. 762-63, 19 November 1965; Guinée 37, DAL, AMAE.
80 Conakry’s alacrity in seeking to reverse the breach with France also suggests that it was less than usually confident in its allegations of French involvement in the so-called “Petit” Touré plot. Very little evidence of such involvement exists. Sidiki Kobélé-Keita, Y-a-t-il eu des complots contre la Guinée entre 1958 et 1984? (Conakry: Éditions universitaires, 1993), combed French-language sources for evidence that such plots had, indeed, existed. Despite his enthusiasm to dispute the judgment that the plots were all figments of Sékou Touré’s paranoia, Kobélé-Keita was able to find little specific support for Guinea’s 1965 allegations, by contrast to the plots of 1959 and 1960.
should escalate its diplomatic representation to ambassadorial rank, as the US had been pushing it to do for more than a year. The note identifies two French goals that only an ambassador in place could accomplish: resolving the outstanding economic and financial issues between the two states; and closely monitoring the role that Guinea, as a “collectivist and totalitarian” regime, would play to influence the alliances and allegiances that were so much in flux in francophone West Africa at that time. By November 1965, the French were satisfied that they had pushed Guinea into a satisfactory resolution of the remaining economic disputes. They were also reassured that Sékou Touré, and his vision of economic and political unity among Africans taking priority over links with Europe, had been neutralized as an influence in francophone Africa. With these issues resolved, and with no improvement in General de Gaulle’s attitude towards Guinea, the French government took advantage of the opportunity afforded by the Guinean government’s attack on two of the general’s old comrades to cut its losses.

France’s departure left the United States as the single largest Western source of foreign aid to Guinea. The embassy’s pleas to recognize Guinea’s potential as a beacon for independence in Africa, however, ran up against a growing impatience in Washington, both with Guinea specifically and with the slow rate of progress in Africa as a whole. Policies towards the state, the West African region, and the continent were all being revised; and the drift away from Kennedy-era policies of engagement, even with difficult cases such as Guinea, accelerated with Williams’ resignation on 23 March 1966.

Williams first circulated a draft “Strengthened African Program” for comments in September 1965. Independence had pride of place as the first element of what he described as the basic US policy towards Africa. Existing and new programs, he argued, “help develop genuinely independent nations in Africa, increasing in political and economic strength and resistant to Communist subversion.” In Williams’ document, the US had “deep interest” in “political, social and economic evolution” in Africa. The language of modernization was muted; the Alliance for Progress was identified as a program of the “New Frontier”, now surpassed by the quest for a “progressive,

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81 Note, “Guinée,” MAE/AL, 3 October 1960; Guinée 43, DAL, AMAE.
82 Guinean reliance on the US and the Federal Republic of Guinea was exacerbated the following month when Sékou Touré’s government expelled the United Kingdom, as well, this time in protest at the UK’s failure to intervene militarily to reverse Ian Smith’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Rhodesia.
responsive concept of our relations with Africa . . . appropriate [to] the Great Society.” The new program did, however, recommend “more attention to African military forces as potential modernizing, nation-building institutions,” reflecting the shift taking place in theoretical discussions of modernization around the same time as well as the wave of military coups d’état overthrowing nationalist governments in several African states.83 Perhaps the most substantive new element in the Strengthened Africa Program came from Walt Rostow, who argued that the US had “a major interest” in helping African states “to work together and to strengthen the forces of moderation and creativeness within their various regional and sub-regional institutions.” Strengthening regionalism should be a major focus of US bilateral diplomacy, he argued. Based on the experience of the Alliance for Progress and the new Indo-Pakistani consortium, he noted, “I have a feeling that our capacity to generate aid resources from the Congress on a stable basis for economic development in Africa hinges on movement in this direction.”84 Rostow’s “feeling” was somewhat disingenuous. Throughout 1965, his Policy Planning staff had been pushing an approach that would not only reward regional economic cooperation but also coordinate aid through regional organizations such as the UN Economic Commission for Africa in an explicit attempt to defuse African hostility towards the US.85 Rostow’s intervention was successful, and the version of Williams’ proposal that went to the president on 14 October listed as one of seven basic policy elements assisting African continental and regional initiatives “compatible with United States objectives.”86

The phrase obscured a growing debate about the extent to which the US could rely exclusively on such regional initiatives. In February, Williams tried, one last time, to get his department to acknowledge that US interests required attention to individual countries, and not just those where the draw was obvious. Responding to a paper on

83 Rusk to Johnson, “Strengthened Africa Program,” 14 October 1965; File: Africa, Subject and Country Files 1965-1969; Policy Planning Council (S/PC) and Policy Planning Staff (S/P); RG 59, NACP; Gilman, Mandarins, 228-234 (on Samuel Huntington’s conservative critique of modernization and its overlap with the theory proper), 249-250 (on the role of the Vietnam War in undercutting the modernization consensus).
84 Rostow to Williams, “Strengthened African Program,” 16 September 1965; Africa, Subject and Country Files 1965-69, Policy Planning Council & Policy Planning Staff (Lot 72D139), RG 59, NACP.
86 Rusk to President, “Strengthened African Program,” 14 October 1965; Africa, Subject and Country Files 1965-69, Policy Planning Council & Policy Planning Staff (Lot 72D139), RG 59, NACP.
Africa prepared by Edward Korry, US ambassador to Ethiopia, Williams urged: “we should not become too complacent or self-righteous in judging the fledgling nations of Africa.” Korry’s recommendation that US bilateral aid should be concentrated – very similar to the Clay committee’s views of three years before – described *de facto* US policy, which was already directing most US aid to Tunisia, Nigeria, Congo, Morocco, Ethiopia and Liberia. Moreover, “while we recognize that all of the nations in Africa are not of equal importance to the US, those of lesser importance are not trivial, as implied in Ambassador Korry’s paper.” It was important not to be “defeatist” with respect to the radical states of Africa: hanging on could “turn the tide as we did in Guinea.”

But it was in Washington that the tide was now turning. Others in the State Department and in Washington were enthusiastic, perhaps even relieved, at the possibility of refocusing both the source and the destination of the African aid program to the multilateral level. On 23 April, Arthur J. Goldberg, Johnson’s ambassador to the UN, wrote to the president to enthuse about a “‘Johnson plan’ for the economic development of Africa.” The time was right, not just because “responsible and moderate governments have increasingly assumed control of one [African] country after another,” but because a “new and constructive initiative in foreign policy” would “attract those who are most disquieted about Vietnam.” Goldberg’s idea, which he had discussed with World Bank president George D. Woods, was that the new economic development plan should be multilateral at the recipient end, focusing on strengthening transport and communications links within the continent and developing a “continent-wide plan for power generation and distribution” and “mass education for the African people.” It would also take the political and financial heat off the United States by making extensive use of multilateral institutions at the donor end: “I see it as being completed and financed by an international consortium . . . initiated through the IBRD and the [International Development Agency] and . . . executed through the African Development Bank,” he noted. World Bank participation in planning and financing would “protect . . . against

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87 Williams to U. Alexis Johnson, “Ambassador Korry’s Views on Africa (Addis’ A-446)”, 11 February 1966; G. Mennen Williams – State Department Files, Microfilm Reel # 22, BHL.
poorly planned programs.” Under these conditions, even the Soviets could be invited to participate, although they would be unlikely to take up the invitation.88

Johnson’s new African policy was finally announced two months after Williams resigned from the State Department. On 26 May 1966, the White House held a reception for African ambassadors to Washington to mark the third anniversary of the founding of the OAU. The president’s speech reaffirmed US support for African self-determination but laid much greater emphasis on US economic goals for Africa: America’s vision of a right, just, non-racial and collaborative world “requires ever-increasing economic and social opportunity,” he noted. The core of the speech was the announcement that US aid policy was going to shift away from bilateral aid and towards some form of regionalism. The projects Johnson alluded to – strengthening regional economic activities through the African Development Bank, improving education and training on the continent, helping to build “a modern communications system to meet regional requirements”, even developing regional power grids – owed a great deal to Goldberg’s list. In a final signal that the Williams era was over when it came to US policy towards Africa, Johnson announced that implementation of his new plan had been entrusted to none other than “our Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ed Korry.”89

In principle, Johnson’s themes of self-determination and support for regional initiatives should have had great appeal to Sékou Touré and his government. In reality, although the language was close to the Guinean president’s, it was now being used in a way that signalled a shift away from Guinea’s interests. As Johnson phrased it, US support for “self-determination” entailed at least tacit approval of the February 1966 coup in Ghana that had deposed President Kwame Nkrumah. It was widely believed in Guinea that US support for the Ghanaian coup was more than tacit. Although the US has never admitted that there was any truth to rumours of CIA involvement, it is indisputable that the US saw in that coup (and several others in 1965-66) a real opportunity “to enhance US tactics and strategy aimed at attainment of policy goals” in the affected countries and across Africa. Post-Nkrumah Ghana also suddenly became a “priority” country for US

88 Goldberg to Johnson, 23 April 1966; POL 1-3 New Initiatives (Working File), Subject Files 1960-1965, BAA 1958-66, RG 59, NACP.
economic assistance. Sékou Touré reacted to the coup by demonstrating a fierce loyalty to Nkrumah: Guinea not only offered him refuge in Conakry but also made him co-president and co-secretary general of the PDG. Loyalty to Nkrumah, however, alienated Guinea even further from its neighbours, making regional aid cooperation less likely. Côte d’Ivoire’s president was, as usual, Sékou Touré’s most vocal opponent, and wasted no time in declaring that with Nkrumah deposed, the only problem states in West Africa now were Mali and Guinea. Characteristically, this long-term, rabid anti-Communist described both states as “Chinese Communist strongholds.” Less characteristically, Houphouët-Boigny began to campaign for regime change in both, but particularly in Guinea.

Houphouët-Boigny began with a direct approach. He appealed to France and the US for financial and military help to overthrow Sékou Touré. He also encouraged a group of expatriate Guineans that called itself the Front de Libération nationale de Guinée (FLNG) to mount a coup inside Guinea. This phase of his operation was fairly short-lived: neither the US nor France would agree to help, and the US took pains to instruct its representatives across West Africa to tell any representative of the FLNG who approached them that “we will not associate ourselves with or support such measures” and to reassure the Conakry government to this effect. So Houphouët-Boigny turned to a campaign of public diplomacy designed to embarrass the US into eliminating aid to Guinea.

The Ivoirian campaign against US aid to its neighbour enlisted media across West Africa, most of it state- or ruling party-controlled at this time, as well as French newspapers and, most effective for reaching US legislators, American columnist Drew

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92 Abidjan (Morgan) to State, No. 650, 5 March 1966; POL 23-9 GUIN, SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.
93 State (Rusk) to Abidjan, No. 1136, 8 March 1966; POL GUIN-US; Paris (Bohlen), Telegram No. 6040, 19 March 1966; POL GUIN-A; Fredericks to Under Secretary, “Guinea and West Africa – Situation Report as of COB, Thursday, April 7, 1966,” 7 April 1966; State to Conakry, No. 04001, 7 April 1966; POL 23-9 GUIN; SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.
Pearson. Pearson’s argument was simple: the US was fighting a war against the People’s Republic of China in Asia, but in Africa it was providing significant levels of aid to the state that was friendliest to its Asian foe. The only explanation he offered was the political influence he alleged that Harvey Aluminum Co. exercised in Democratic Party circles. Another version of the Ivoirian argument claimed it was just wrong that the US should provide more aid to a state hostile to its interests than to those, such as Côte d’Ivoire and Senegal, which were clearly pro-Western in their economic and political orientation. FLNG and the Ivoirian government, as well as US ambassadors in other West African states, explicitly made the more dubious claim that underpinned both arguments: without US assistance, the Sékou Touré regime itself would fall. To all these charges, State and USAID personnel patiently responded: the relatively high level of aid paid out in the 1965 fiscal year was an aberration caused by timing, since several projects that had been under consideration for some time finally started that year; the US level of assistance to Guinea was higher than to its francophone neighbours mostly because the US was now the major Western donor there, whereas the neighbouring states continued to benefit from high levels of French and EU coopération; and foreign assistance was designed to help people, not governments. Still, the campaign stung.

Simultaneously, State Department personnel in Washington and Conakry were trying to revise US aid to Guinea in line with the financial constraints imposed by Congress as well as their own evolving policy for development aid. Bureau of African Affairs and AID representatives including Administrator David Bell met on 13 June to review the Country Assistance Strategy for Guinea. Bell opened the meeting with two stark propositions. First, US aid efforts in Guinea had to be recognized as political, rather than developmental, since Guinea “has shown little inclination to work closely with us.”

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95 Abidjan (Morgan) to State, No. 887 and 897, 4 May 1966; AID (US) GUIN, SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP. This argument was taken up by French newspapers from the political left, including Le Monde, and the right.
96 Douglas MacArthur II to Congressman Charles E. Bennett, 13 June 1966; Memorandum of Conversation (Bangoura, Trimble, van Oss, Erdos), 17 May 1966; AID (US) GUIN, SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.
97 Erin Black addresses the reasons for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee’s increasing opposition to political aid in “‘One of the Most Vexing Problems of American Foreign Relations’: The Senate Foreign Relations Committee’s Consideration of the Aid Program, c. 1960s,” paper presented at the SHAFR Annual Meeting, 21-23 June 2007.
Second, he believed there was now general agreement “that our relations with Guinea are sufficiently distant so that the US should seek to reduce the overall amount of its assistance.” The discussion was so sensitive that the full report, reflecting formal decisions taken after months of trying to get agreement between State and AID, does not appear to have been sent to the Embassy in Conakry. 98

Despite the lack of information flowing to Conakry, the government of Guinea also knew that both the nature and the amount of US aid were in jeopardy. They reacted, increasingly, by stressing that their goal was food self-sufficiency. But even this modest and inoffensive goal did not mollify the Americans. In a memorandum to Assistant Secretary Palmer written in July 1966, months before he was appointed ambassador to Conakry, Robinson McIlvaine summed up one ongoing US frustration in dealing with the country. Referring to a Guinean economic commission report on US aid, McIlvaine noted that Ambassador Karim Bangoura “stressed that the recent report provides program opportunities for the US, thus again implying that the GOG was doing us a favor by letting us work in Guinea. (The report conveys the general Guinean philosophy that we should be working for them and not with them.)” 99

It was in this atmosphere that the single greatest crisis developed in the relations between Guinea’s First Republic and the US. On 29 October 1966, security officers and armed police in Ghana’s capital of Accra boarded a Pan American Airlines flight on a stopover and arrested a number of travellers from Guinea, taking them and their luggage off the flight and moving them to an interrogation camp. Such an aggressive act would have been noteworthy even had the Guinean travellers all been private citizens. What made it an international incident was that the detainees included the foreign minister, Louis Lansana Béavogui, and all the rest of Guinea’s delegation to the meeting of the OAU due to start the following week in Addis Ababa. The first that anyone in Conakry heard about this incident was a news bulletin carried by the Voice of America radio service early in the morning of 30 October. The government of Guinea reacted swiftly and harshly: Radio Conakry repeated two communiqués at fifteen-minute intervals

throughout the 30th, one of which stated that the United States – not Ghana – “bears ‘total responsibility’ in the affair, which is a ‘vulgar insult to the dignity of the Guinean people’.”

By about 11:15 a.m., US ambassador Robinson McIlvaine, who had only been in Conakry for about two weeks, was under house arrest and urgently requesting that Washington forward to him “all possible info” concerning the events at Accra so that he could pass it along to his host government. Summoned and escorted to the Foreign Ministry, McIlvaine was presented with a communiqué that declared the “illegal and premeditated act by the Ghana authorities [was] the complete responsibility of the US Government,” proved “irrefutably” by the fact that neither the US nor PanAm had notified the Guinean government of the incident, when the US clearly knew about it since the Voice of America broadcast the news.

Guinea’s Bureau de Politique nationale (BPN) issued a communiqué on 2 November that distinguished between legal and political responsibility and offered an important clue to their interpretation of both concepts. Legal responsibility rested with the US; political responsibility rested with the OAU. The reasoning for both these attributions was the same: only the US could intervene with Ghana to redress the illegality of the government’s seizure of diplomatic personnel from a US-registered aircraft; and only the OAU could sanction Ghana for the action, which was so obviously contrary to both letter and spirit of the fraternal charter both states had signed. In other words, responsibility lay with the party in the best position to redress each issue – not with its author.

Behind this reasoning lay the belief that the new Ghanaian government was a creature of the US. Since Lt.-Col. Joseph Ankrah’s regime was clearly uninterested in negotiating with Guinea, directly or through the OAU, only its American masters could get results.

Guinea was not the only West African state with such beliefs, though most were more polite in expressing it. Several of Guinea’s neighbours urged the US to intervene with the authorities in Accra to resolve the problem, and many pressed the Americans for

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100 Conakry (McIlvaine) to State, No. 981, 30 October 1966; POL 23 GUIN, SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.
101 Conakry (McIlvaine) to State, No. 971 and 972, 30 October 1966; POL 29 GUIN, SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.
explanations of Guinea’s assertion that the US had guaranteed the safe delivery of its delegation to Addis.\textsuperscript{103} On the facts as they eventually emerged, Western law would also have given short shrift to Guinea’s allegation of US “responsibility”, although the Guineans can be forgiven for believing that PanAm’s actions were the responsibility of the US government since one important component of official US bilateral aid was a civil aviation program for Guinea to be carried out by the airline.\textsuperscript{104} There is no evidence that the US actually supported Ghana’s action. For one thing, the US had nothing to gain. For another, there is plausible evidence that Ankrah’s hostile action was an impromptu response to an unforeseen opportunity to strike back at Guinea.\textsuperscript{105} Even in Guinea, the legal argument was soon dropped. Instead, officials at various levels, including the president himself, gave speeches at intervals over the next six or seven weeks that sought to justify Guinea’s attack on its aid benefactor. Physical retaliation was minimal: the ambassador’s residence was invaded by a mob of militants on 31 October, and though there was some damage to the building no one was hurt. Guinea expelled five US embassy employees and all the Peace Corps volunteers in the country. Rhetorical attacks were another matter, and here the political and the economic mingled freely. At a stadium rally held on 8 November to honour the OAU delegation on its safe return, Sékou Touré accused the US of an “imperialism policy” which “is against the development of Africa.” “Americans,” he went on, “have much money which they spend lavishly in bars and dance halls and corrupt Guineans.” Moreover, he said, “the blackmail of reducing aid to Guinea and emphasizing the importance of aid to Guinea will not work; Americans overlook Guinean dignity, and Guinea cannot be bought.”\textsuperscript{106}

These themes were repeated in the speeches of Béavogui and other officials, and it was this that brought the US and Guinea closest to a breach in relations. The embassy interpreted the situation as an internal power struggle, with US-friendly moderates in the

\textsuperscript{103} Bamako (Moore) to State, No. 1021, 1 November 1966 and No. 1028, 2 November 1966; Addis Ababa (Korry) to State, No. 1643, 2 November 1966; State to Conakry, No. 79227, 4 November 1966; POL 29 GUIN; Cairo (Battle) to State, No. 2370, 2 November 1966; POL 23 GUIN, SN 1964-66; RG 59, NACP.


\textsuperscript{105} Accra (Williams) to State, No. 1215, 2 November 1966; State to Conakry, No. 83626, 11 November 1966; POL 29 Guin, SN, 1964-66; RG 59, NACP.

\textsuperscript{106} Conakry (McIlvaine) to State, No. 1119, 9 November 1966; POL GUIN-US, SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.
BPN lined up against hard-line Chinese sympathizers, and Sékou Touré flip-flopping between hostility and conciliation. In fact, it seems most likely that Sékou Touré was using the Ghanaian provocation as he had many incidents in the previous years to demonstrate to the Party and the public his own power, dignity and independence – his ability to embody the national character and to withstand any possible challenge to his rule. The record seems clear that he was ready to accept breach with the US and knew, from his experience with France one year before, that it could result.

In the end, it was the US that chose not to be pushed. State confined itself to recalling the ambassador for consultations.\textsuperscript{107} While McIlvaine was in Washington, \textit{chargé} Charles S. Whitehouse sought with only limited success to impress upon the Guineans that it was up to them, not the Americans, to move to repair the relationship. Whitehouse also realized how the Americans could benefit from the situation. By characterizing aid alternately as “a corrupting influence” and “blackmail”, Sékou Touré and his government had painted themselves into a corner: they could no longer admit they needed anything from the US. Therefore, he reasoned, “this takes [the] onus of termination [of] any activity off the US Government and makes it possible [to] cause [the] Government of Guinea to take full responsibility for termination or non-delivery [of] USAID projects and commodities.”\textsuperscript{108} Separating aid from the general question of relations would allow the US to cut back drastically and thereby satisfy Congressional pressure, yet stay in Conakry to provide a stabilizing, anti-Communist influence and, not incidentally, to protect the interests of the US companies involved in bauxite operations in the country.

\textit{IV. Conclusion}

When the State Department completed its new National Policy Paper for Guinea in July 1967, it advocated a reduced, but not fully eliminated, aid relationship. The present bilateral AID program should be completed; future assistance would be “within

\textsuperscript{107} Conakry (McIlvaine) to State, No. 1142, 9 November 1966; State to Conakry, No. 82414, 9 November 1966; POL 29 GUIN, SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.
\textsuperscript{108} Conakry (Whitehouse) to State, No. 1578, 8 December 1966; AID (US) GUIN, SN 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.
the framework of multilateral and regional programs,” plus Food for Freedom aid. By then the Department and its representatives in Africa knew the extent to which they were expected to retreat from bilateral assistance to multilateral donor arrangements, though they could not yet appreciate the cost of such a move in terms of lost influence on the continent.

The new Strengthened African Program that Johnson announced to the African ambassadors at the White House in May 1966 bore a significant resemblance to many of the recommendations of the 1963 Clay committee report. Ambassador Korry’s implementation report was approved on 22 August but not made public on the grounds that it made “suggestions relating to international organizations and other countries.” It endorsed development over other objectives, multilateral donor arrangements with Africa’s former colonial metropoles and others, and a narrow focus on both the countries in which aid should be concentrated and the projects it should fund. Korry recommended that US aid be concentrated on “functional sectors of fundamental importance” like transportation, communications and power, and more of it should be funneled through multilateral institutions. He recommended that the World Bank be given “a role of greater leadership and involvement” because African institutions were “still too fragile to assume the pre-eminent role, because the US has greater influence in the IBRD and because the IBRD has proved its competence in carrying out its broad development writ.” Bilateral aid should be concentrated in specific African countries selected on the basis of a combination of economic and political factors, where it should “aim specifically to strengthen the local private sector.”

There was not much talk of modernization in Korry’s report. Nor did it waste time exploring whether independence might mean anything to an African state other than the economic development that the US and the World Bank assumed they could deliver.

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through projects targeted to infrastructure, agricultural and rural development. The shift in emphasis from regionalism, as the central feature to distinguish aid-worthy efforts, to multilateralism of decision-making (chiefly in the World Bank) ultimately undermined regional development efforts because the Bank’s structure required its aid recipients to be sovereign national governments, not regional organizations. As for aid to Guinea, it was a program with a “purely and explicitly political basis,” and therefore could not possibly meet the new criteria.

The sharp reduction of US aid after 1966 did not leave Guinea without foreign assistance, but as relations with the West deteriorated between 1965 and 1970, its most reliable source was, increasingly, China. Yet Washington’s loss of faith in the inexorable process of modernization through economic development was not mirrored in Conakry. The idea of economic “take-off” had made its way into Sékou Touré’s lexicon. As the years passed, though, he used it in contexts that would have horrified Walt Rostow. There were mounting signs that Guinea’s president believed his country could and should emulate China’s economic progress to the point, in the summer of 1968, that Sékou Touré announced that Guinea would undergo a Chinese-style “Cultural Revolution” to “eliminate the bourgeois mentality” that was holding his country back. Worse still, in the dark days of 1971, Sékou Touré told a Togolese journalist: “in 1973 we are going to take off, first with exploitation of the Boké bauxite deposits, which will bring in between 50 or 60 billion [CFA francs] a year.” However, Western states, far from playing a stimulating role, were now conspiring with Guinean traitors to prevent it from happening. Supported by France, West Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom and Portugal, “[the conspirators] do not want to allow us to meet that deadline,” he complained. Modernization’s rhetoric had proved to be all too easily separable

112 Conakry (McIlvaine) to State, No. 2011, 2 August 1968; POL GUIN; McIlvaine (Conakry), “The Guinean Pendulum May be Swinging Back to the Left,” A-271, 15 October 1968; POL 1 Guin; SN 1967-69, RG 59, NACP.
113 Polycarpe Johnson, “President Touré Discusses Plot, Arrests,” Presse Denyigba (Lomé, Togo), 10 August 1971; in United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), Daily Report: Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa, V. 1 September 1971, W1-W4 at W3; translated by FBIS.
from the “non-Communist manifesto” that popularized it within the Kennedy administration.
Chapter 6. “Le Complot permanent”: The Challenge to Justice

And so the enemy, with the skill and ingenuity of a spider, has spun and woven an absolutely flawless web whose threads cover everything... The conspirators were] secretaries of state, a dozen or so officers – most of them members of the general staffs of the Guinean People’s Army, high officials, merchants, and technical cadres. And one fine day they woke up to find themselves enlisted in the shameful counter-revolutionary army of the anti-people class. By reason of the key positions they held in the functioning of the Guinean state [no] system operating according to the capitalist concept of government, characterized by an elitist line and confronted with such odds could possibly have held out for a single second against the destructive might of these corrupt elements. The outcome would have been fatal to any elite culture, to any other than a people’s system. – Ahmed Sékou Touré, 10 August 1971

Early in the morning of Sunday, 22 November 1970, people all over Conakry were awakened by the sound of gunfire. “Small hand-grenades,” thought one listener; “automatic weapons, exploding shells, grenades, bazookas,” thought another. The deputy chief of mission at the United States embassy, Donald R. Norland, woke around 3:30 a.m. to the red glare of fire about a half-mile away in the part of the city known as Bellevue, where the president’s guest house was located; Norland later told his family in the US, “we sat on our patio watching in rather hypnotized fashion as the fire burned and the shooting continued, often spectacularly.” Though nobody was quite sure what was happening, there was no doubt of the violence. Conakry was under attack. After their initial panic subsided, Sékou Touré and his cabinet were also certain they knew who, and what, should be held responsible for the invasion. The president spoke to his people over the radio, the “Voice of the Revolution”, at 9 a.m., telling them: “Since 2 a.m. this Sunday 22 November, you have been the victim, in your capital of Conakry, of aggression from imperialist forces... This aggression is part of the plan of foreign powers to reconquer the revolutionary countries of Africa. Portuguese

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colonialism is the bridgehead for this aggression.”

Twelve years after independence, Sékou Touré’s rhetorical invocation of an imperialist plot against Guinea was hardly unusual. What was different this time was that the Guineans were able to convince the international community both that Guinea was under attack and that Portugal was involved. Within hours of the attack, Sékou Touré had cabled U Thant, requesting the UN secretary-general to send “airborne United Nations troops” to help the Guinean army to root out the remaining “Portuguese mercenaries” and to chase their supporting ships out of Guinea’s territorial waters. The Security Council, convening that evening in New York, decided that a more suitable response was to send a special mission to investigate. When the mission reported on 4 December, they had no hesitation in concluding that Portuguese forces had commanded the troops and the ships used in the attack.

The ensuing Security Council resolution “strongly” condemned the government of Portugal for the invasion, and appealed to all states “to render moral and material assistance to the Republic of Guinea to strengthen and defend its independence and territorial integrity.”

The invasion of 22 November 1970 and its aftermath was the apotheosis of Guinean independence, and not just because the UN Security Council responded with such an unambiguous statement in defence of the Republic’s sovereignty. This international incident, and the Guinean government’s inability to take direct action against its acknowledged external foes, triggered a savage attack inside the state on those who were said to be working with them to bring down Sékou Touré’s government. The purges of 1971 were no secret, either within the country or outside of it; nor did they come as a surprise to those who had been in a position to observe the increasing violence of Guinean political repression since 1969. As the regime’s pursuit of its enemies, real or imagined, escalated over the course of 1971, it made less and less pretence of judicial fairness. Though its victims were mostly Guineans, they included a number of foreign nationals and individuals, such as Conakry’s archbishop, with significant ties to foreign powers. Yet no external power could do a thing to diminish the brutality of the PDG’s

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5 Findings of the United Nations Security Council mission to Guinea quoted in USUN (Yost) to State, No. 3350, 4 December 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
purge, and several, including the United States, chose not to try. The right of a sovereign state to govern its internal affairs trumped humanitarian concerns as well as more practical worries, such as the impact on the economy of the government of Guinea’s overwhelming focus on security and defence.

In the year that Idi Amin overthrew Milton Obote in Uganda, Joseph Mobutu renamed Congo to Zaire so as to mark it his own personal fiefdom, and Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda named himself President-for-Life in Malawi, Guineans were far from the only Africans to be forced to submit to new levels of authoritarian, often violent, rule. The relationship between Sékou Touré’s international profile and his hold on power within Guinea, however, demands a closer look at how the Guinean authorities conducted their purge and how the international community responded. The major powers had demonstrated over the course of the 1960s that they would not hesitate to try to limit the degree of sovereign control that Guinea could exercise over its own economy or its foreign policy in the name of the “interdependence” of the modern world. When independence was used as a shield for the persecution of a state’s own people, however, those same powers held themselves powerless to intervene. Limiting themselves to moral support instead of demanding justice, they enabled an outcome that was neither moral nor just.

I. **An International Incident**

Meeting with the State Department’s acting assistant secretary for European Affairs two days after the invasion, the vice-president of the French National Assembly’s foreign affairs committee, Xavier Deniau, commented that he found the UN’s response to the invasion affair “very interesting”: “He was fascinated by the fact that the Secretary-General had been able to give orders while lacking any precise information about the situation.” Deniau’s snide comment contained an element of truth: the Security Council and secretary-general had acted with unusual speed to investigate Guinea’s complaint, apparently presuming that the UN had jurisdiction despite the rote response of the other

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7 “United Nations, Guinea, Canada, Quebec,” Memorandum of Conversation, 24 November 1970; POL 1 GUIN, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
state involved that the “matter complained of . . . does not concern Portugal.”

That the UN moved so quickly reflects three factors: first, foreign diplomats in Conakry were quick to confirm the government’s story that the capital was under attack by a foreign force; second, it was easy to sympathize with Guinea as a poor, and poorly-defended, post-colonial state; and third, Portugal’s denial was so improbable this time that even its staunchest Western allies could not defend its actions, inside or outside of the UN.

The American embassy in Conakry played a particularly important role in getting Guinea’s message to New York via Washington. There was no repeat of the problems that had magnified US-Guinean tensions in 1966: this time, US ambassador Albert W. Sherer, Jr. mobilized his staff, including the “patient communicators” who were the only people located in the embassy itself, to ensure that the State Department was well informed of events. Early in the afternoon of 22 November, the American ambassador reported Sékou Touré’s second broadcast appeal. The president urged Guineans to “crush the aggressors”; asked the “people and trade unions of Africa” to raise their voices in support of Guinea’s cause; and invited the diplomatic corps in Conakry to join the “‘united front’ defending justice and dignity.” In a separate cable, Sherer noted that his own information and observations supported the Guinean president’s contentions both that the fighting was continuing and that it involved “invading forces and Guinean units.”

Sherer also lent his embassy’s resources to the UN’s local representative, Polgar, who sent a telegram via State to the secretary-general, confirming the invasion. Polgar was careful to qualify his message: he made clear that he was writing at the Guinean government’s request and that it was the government, not the UN representative himself, which had described the invading force as “Portuguese.” However, Polgar also told U Thant that the “situation [is] very serious justifying your personal consideration.”

A *bona fide* invasion by external forces, verified by foreign diplomats in Conakry, provided Sékou Touré’s government with an unsurpassed opportunity to exploit global

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8 USUN (Yost) to State, No. 3321, 23 November 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
9 Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 1855, 22 November 1970 (marked 11-11-70); POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
10 Conakry (Sherer) to State, Nos. 1846 and 1847, 22 November 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
11 Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 1854, 22 November 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
sympathy and press its case that Guinea was a brave, progressive state under constant threat from hostile, reactionary neo-colonialist and imperialist forces. Although the Guinean government’s agenda was clearly visible in the communications of Conakry-based diplomats, its political objectives were not the only ones being served. The invasion presented foreign governments with an opportunity to support Guinea’s independence at no cost to themselves, either diplomatically or materially. Sherer was quick to perceive how important it was that his government join the chorus of foreign states protesting the violation of Guinean territorial sovereignty. Noting even as the fighting continued that “this is clearly a case of raw aggression,” Sherer expressed the hope that his government should quickly join other Western voices, including those of the Federal Republic of Germany and Italy, in condemning it. “I hope this can be done at highest possible level by US Government, with text repeated as often as possible by Voice of America,” he went on.\(^\text{12}\)

Sherer’s enthusiasm was not fully shared, either by his masters at State or by the “highest possible level” of his government. The State Department’s first circular to African posts noted that the government of Guinea had appealed “officially” for “unspecifed US Government support, including [a] public statement condemning invasion,” but State seemed content to limit its support to the forum of the UN. The American representative in New York was instructed “to indicate US Government has information strongly suggesting [the] possibility of outside involvement without naming any particular country, to state US Government would condemn aggression against Guinea, and to call for dispatch of UN representative to Conakry to investigate.”\(^\text{13}\) President Richard Nixon eventually did send Sékou Touré the personal message of support he so fervently desired, but not until 30 November, and not before Sherer had made an even more forceful request, citing Radio Conakry’s repeated broadcasts of the “more vitriolic and frequent blasts against ‘Portuguese colonialism and American imperialism’ by top level officials of bloc and non-aligned countries” which were overwhelming the official US message of support. The ambassador’s subsequent telegram of thanks noted that Nixon’s message had been broadcast over the “Voice of the

\(^{12}\) Conakry (Sherer) to State, Nos. 1846 and 1847, 22 November 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.

\(^{13}\) State to African Posts, No. 191992, 22 November 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
Revolution” on the evening of 1 December, the only words from a Western chief of state to be accorded such treatment.\(^{14}\)

Sékou Touré’s telegrams to his African neighbours and to heads of state around the world, drawing their attention to the invasion and asking for their support, resulted in a large number of sympathetic messages — but, with a few notable exceptions, not much more.\(^{15}\) Washington’s caution in responding to Sékou Touré — its desire to work, as much as possible, through the United Nations and to limit UN intervention in investigation; its attempt to satisfy Guinea with a State Department press release, rather than a full-blown presidential message — may have reflected official attitudes to what was, after all, a brief incident in a minor African state and one whose allegiance to the West was unreliable at best. However, it also reflected a shrewd sense that the Guinean regime was unlikely to be satisfied with a statement alone. Others were not so cautious. The People’s Republic of China announced that it was placing the sum of $10 million at Guinea’s disposal.\(^{16}\) Sherer’s reaction to this announcement was to urge his government to send a “modest symbolic gift” of items such as binoculars, search lights and inflatable rubber boats, “perhaps . . . from US military stocks or surplus in Europe,” which would acknowledge Guinea’s concern that it felt under threat from the sea, but not involve the US as deeply as China nor establish it as a supplier of lethal arms.\(^{17}\) Nigeria’s General Gowon, evidently grateful for Sékou Touré’s steadfast support of the federal side during the recent Biafran War, pledged Guinea “any assistance . . . military or otherwise,” and sent two planeloads of arms to Conakry on 27 November.\(^{18}\)

The identity of the aggressor was the final factor contributing to the UN’s decisive recognition that the November 1970 invasion was a breach of Guinea’s territorial sovereignty. The evidence for Portuguese involvement, much of it based on American eye-witness accounts, was so overwhelming that even the invader’s most loyal

\(^{14}\) Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 1957, 28 November 1970; State to Conakry, No. 195048, 28 November 1970; Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 1981, 2 December 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.

\(^{15}\) Conakry published many of the responses, as well as declarations in support of Guinea from the People’s Republic of China and the USSR, in its Livre Blanc: 14-64.

\(^{16}\) Message from Beijing, Livre Blanc, 57-58; reported Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 1901, 24 November 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.

\(^{17}\) Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 1916, 25 November 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.

\(^{18}\) Intelligence Note, Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) (E.M. Scott), “Guinea: Invasion Unifies the African Continent,” RAFN-58, 27 November 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
Western allies, the US, UK and France, could not plausibly deny it, and Portugal’s actions were so clearly a violation of the UN Charter as to be indefensible. The UN’s fact-finding mission concluded that the Portuguese raid had three objectives. First, Portugal wanted to free its own prisoners, captured in Guinea-Bissau by the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) and held at Camp Boiro on the PAIGC’s behalf. Second, it sought to weaken the PAIGC by assassinating its leader, Amilcar Cabral, as well as by cutting off its rearguard and supply chain. Finally, the mission found enough evidence to support the Guinean government’s contention that Portugal was trying to help Guinean dissidents to kill Sékou Touré and overthrow his regime.19

Guinea’s support for the PAIGC was nearly as old as Amilcar Cabral’s struggle against the Portuguese in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde. Cabral established his headquarters in Conakry about 1960 and gained Sékou Touré’s material and diplomatic support from at least 1962, even though it was given, as Basil Davidson describes it, with “an air of condescension.”20 There was no secret about this connection: even the US State Department used its embassy in Conakry to assess Cabral and his chances of becoming “respectable enough to allow of our communicating with him one day.”21 By 1963, when the PAIGC was recognized by most of independent Africa as the foremost liberation movement in the area, French diplomats were referring to it as “Amilcar Cabral’s Conakry gang.”22 From May 1965, Conakry was also the port through which Cuba supplied the PAIGC with arms, food, medicine and, eventually, with volunteer military and medical personnel. 23

Portugal’s aggression posed no great challenge to the foreign policy of most of the Communist and non-aligned countries in the UN. Portugal’s wars to retain its

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19 UN (Yost) to State, No. 3530, 4 December 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
21 Dumont to Attwood, 17 April 1962; File 1A1 Correspondence with Chief of Mission, Country Files 1951-1963, Guinea, Office of West African Affairs, Bureau of African Affairs, RG 59, NACP.
22 Dakar (Olivier) to MAE, No. 913-22, 21 May 1963; Agence France-Presse, “Le PAIGC s’affirme seule organization existant à l’intérieur de la Guinée-Bissau”, 23 May 1963; Dakar – Ambassade, Carton 258 (Dakar-Amb. 258), Série Relations Afriques-Malgaches (DAM), Centre D’Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN).
colonial control over Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mozambique had been underway for nearly a decade by the time of its raid on Conakry – a decade which, in the assessment of a State Department analyst, “have shown the Portuguese establishment to be almost impervious to outside exhortation, no matter how voluminous.” \(^{24}\) This made it easy for African and other self-consciously anti-imperialist states to agree with Guinean propaganda that the invasion was the work of “Portuguese at the vanguard of imperialism.” \(^{25}\)

For the United States, the matter was somewhat more complex. As it had been since British and French colonial rule began to retreat from Africa in the mid-1950s, the US was still caught between its desire to build relations with the new African states and its loyalty to obstinately colonialist Portugal as a NATO partner and, more crucially, as landlord of US air force bases in the Azores Islands and, since 1966, home to NATO’s naval facilities. \(^{26}\) Its refusal to repudiate Portugal or even to attack its colonial policy left the US vulnerable to accusations of hypocrisy and worse in Africa and elsewhere in the post-colonial world. The aftermath of the invasion of Conakry occasioned a new outbreak of such attacks. For instance, China issued a bulletin in Conakry on 26 November that went beyond its support for Guinea’s government. “If Portugal, that colonial empire, rotten to the bone, dares launch such a flagrant and aggressive attack against Guinea, it is solely because it [Portugal] is supported by American imperialism,” alleged the cultural section of the Chinese embassy: “That the United States, bastion of neo-colonialism . . . acts in collusion with Portugal, old colonialist country with a sad reputation, is not a sign of colonial strength: it merely points out that the day is not far away when all these plagues – colonialism, monopolistic capital, imperialism and neo-colonialism – will be thrown into the garbage pail of history.” \(^{27}\)

By 1970, the American response to such rhetorical flights was well practised, if not always effective. The day after the Chinese bulletin was disseminated, Sherer telephoned the Guinean foreign ministry to protest, asking his host government to “act

\(^{24}\) Intelligence Note, INR (Gardner), “Portugal Will Not Be Moved by Exhortation to Leave Africa,” REUN-94, 8 December 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.

\(^{25}\) Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 1926, 26 November 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.


\(^{27}\) Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 1948, 27 November 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
immediately to halt distribution of defamatory statements re: US,” though he did note, “there is no indication [the bulletin] has received required stamp from Government of Guinea.”

28 In other circumstances, the US protest was more specific and legalistic. For example, on 4 December State instructed its UN representative that it should respond to similar charges by focusing on the “particulars [of the] US Government arms embargo on Portuguese territories, pointing out that we do not control export practices” of other NATO members. Furthermore, the UN mission was urged to emphasize that “any assistance Portugal may get from NATO partners is result of bilateral, not NATO decision.”

29 The responses of both Sherer and UN representative Charles W. Yost were factually correct and procedurally appropriate, but neither changed the fact that the US relationship with Portugal was still putting the United States on the defensive in its relations with other African states.

28 Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 1944, 27 November 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
29 State and Defense to USUN, No. 198288, 4 December 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
30 Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 1926, 26 November 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
32 State to Geneva, No. 73562, 22 November 1967; POL 13 Guin, SN 1967-69; RG 59, NACP.

From the viewpoint of American diplomats in Conakry, Portugal’s denial that it had anything to do with the 22 November raid was “completely untenable.” To believe Portugal that the invasion was a purely internal affair, Sherer wrote, one would have to assume that “anti-Touré exiles had suddenly and secretly acquired [a] mini-navy for surprise assault on the regime.”

30 Given the limited resources and diffuse nature of the various groups of exiles opposed to Sékou Touré’s rule in Guinea, this was patently absurd. The single biggest group, the Front de Libération nationale de Guinée (FLNG), was well enough organized to lobby Congress in 1966 and 1967 to withdraw US support from Sékou Touré’s regime and, in 1969, to use the Voice of America transmitter in Liberia to broadcast into Guinea.

31 The State Department’s assessment, however, was that its “internal dissensions and personal rivalries” and, most importantly, the lack of an organization within Guinea itself made it “an ineffective opposition group.”

32 Whether they were members of the FLNG or “mercenaries,” as an eyewitness account of the raid
described the Guineans who took part, it was clear that the Portuguese, not the Guineans, were directing the invasion and controlling the ships that were used.\textsuperscript{33}

True to form, Washington continued to extend its NATO ally all possible benefit of the doubt for as long as it could. Meeting with Portugal’s ambassador to the US on 29 November, Assistant Secretary for European Affairs Martin Hillenbrand responded to Ambassador Garin’s continued denials merely by pointing out that the US might be placed in a “very difficult position” when the Security Council had to respond to the report of its fact-finding mission, particularly if Portugal continued to offer no defence in the Council. It was not until the American ambassador in Lisbon, Ridgway Brewster Knight, expressed his skepticism that the Portuguese prisoners released from Conakry had managed to escape without Portuguese involvement in the raid that the State Department changed its tune, advising its African posts that “Portuguese involvement [is] no longer in doubt.”\textsuperscript{34}

Though the US definitely was not going to proclaim Portugal’s innocence in the Security Council, just what it was going to do was less apparent. A legal analysis issued on 4 December observed that “a logical position for the United States would be to support condemnation of Portugal [in the UN] and a call for Portugal and the PAIGC to sit down to discuss effective implementation of self-determination and a call on all concerned to refrain from resort to force while such discussion goes on.”\textsuperscript{35} But as seemed to happen so often when it came to US relations with Portugal, the logical approach was ignored. Instead, Yost was left to push for precise instructions based on speculation concerning the form the anticipated resolution condemning Portugal would take. Finally, on 7 December Knight chimed in from Lisbon, urging the US to consider abstaining on the resolution no matter how it was worded, in the interests of its bilateral relationship with Portugal. Secretary of State William P. Rogers agreed and so, evidently, did the White House. On 8 December, the US, together with the United Kingdom, France and Spain, abstained on the African-Asian bloc’s resolution. Even as


\textsuperscript{34} Lisbon (Knight) to State, No. 3443, 30 November 1970; State to African Posts, “Attack on Guinea Roundup,” No. 196036, 1 December 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.

\textsuperscript{35} George A. Aldrich to Robert C. Moore, 4 December 1970; POL 23-9 Guin, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
he announced the US abstention, Yost sought to influence its interpretation by the
Security Council, noting that the US believed the resolution “does not constitute a finding
that a Chapter VII situation now exists, nor could it commit the Council to taking action
under Chapter VII in any future situation.”36

As far as the official US view was concerned, the international incident had
resolved itself fairly neatly. The US had expressed moral support for Guinean
sovereignty while avoiding having to extend either material or diplomatic assistance to
Conakry. Portugal’s actions had been condemned, but the manoeuvring and, ultimately,
the abstention of the US and its European allies meant that the resolution was effectively
toothless and the UN could not be forced to act to defend Guinean sovereignty. Already,
though, there were indications that Guinea was far less satisfied with how the
international community had responded. Anyone with experience of Guinean affairs
should have been able to predict that its dissatisfaction would have international, as well
as domestic, ramifications.

II. “Le Complot est Permanent”

The theory of national sovereignty might have made a clear distinction between
international and domestic matters. In Guinea, though, the line was blurred. The
international incident of November 1970 soon gave way to domestic repression on a scale
unprecedented in Guinea’s history, which in turn had significant repercussions for
Guinea’s international relations. The mechanism was the “permanent plot” against
Guinea: Sékou Touré’s thesis, first expressed in May 1960, that the Republic was
“perpetually threatened by external intrigues.”37 By 1970, even the Americans in
Conakry were taking the permanent plot seriously – not as a realistic threat against the
PDG regime, particularly since it had “reduce[d] the armed forces (and especially
officers) to a sluggish and demoralized state” in the wake of yet another plot in the spring
of 1969, but as a factor in the political character of the regime. The conceit of the

36 Lisbon (Knight) to State, No. 3498, 7 December 1970; Secretary of State to President Nixon, “Security
Council Meeting on Guinea,” 7 December 1970; State to African Posts, “Guinea Resolution,” No. 199978,
8 December 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
37 Siraud (Conakry), “Situation intérieure,” No. 532/AL, 28 May 1960; Guinée 43, Direction Afrique-
Levant (DAL), Archives du Ministère des affaires étrangères, Quai d’Orsay, Paris (AMAE).
complot permanent was behind “the repeated and undiscriminating denunciations by the President (and his Ministers) of even the slightest hint of foreign involvement,” wrote Sherer in September 1970. Its very familiarity, together with “the fact that [Sékou Touré] defines all opposition to his concepts and policies as counter-revolutionary activity,” enabled the US ambassador to take a rather bemused and condescending tone. The complot permanent was an abstraction, one tainted by the absurdity of Guinea’s self-proclaimed “revolution” with its overtones of heated Communist rhetoric. Yet the plot was no laughing matter. By the end of the year, the PDG’s denunciations of foreign involvement were beginning to rack up flesh-and-blood victims.

The arrests began immediately after most of the invading force returned to the Portuguese ships off Conakry’s harbour. At first attention was concentrated on Portuguese-speaking fighters captured during the invasion itself. The UN fact-finding mission reported that the Guineans claimed to have captured eighty prisoners, but the mission interviewed only eight. All were black, spoke “Creole or a Portuguese patois,” and showed the “physical marks of ill-treatment.” The ultimate fate of the Portuguese prisoners is not known, though the fact that there is no record of their release suggests they were executed. Portugal apparently washed its hands of them: they did not have the value of the white prisoners the raid had freed in Conakry, whose liberation the Portuguese chargé d’affaires at the UN judged to be “worth another Security Council condemnation.” With Portugal having neither the opportunity nor the inclination to make diplomatic or military efforts to free the prisoners, none of its allies seems to have been moved to act on their behalf, either.

Officials both inside and beyond Guinea hoped that its president would stop there. In 1977, Jean-Paul Alata, a white man of Corsican-French origin who had lived in Guinea since 1955, claimed that until around 10 or 12 December 1970, he held out hope that Sékou Touré would take the high road:

[T]o say ‘the aggression is purely external,’ magnify the resistance – symbolic – that built up around the Party’s cadres, try to suppress the fact that the political cadres had hidden and dishonoured themselves, and solder national unity around

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39 USUN (Yost) to State, No. 3465, 2 December 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
40 USUN (Yost) to State, No. 3484, 3 December 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
the PDG by this success, while asserting that no Guinean had acted as an accomplice, that everything was Portuguese.\footnote{Anne Blancard, “Entretien avec Jean-Paul Alata,” \textit{Politique Africaine}, 07 (1982), 17-39 at 27.}

Alata’s claim that he believed Sékou Touré might confine his response to condemnation of the Portuguese may have been disingenuous. By 1977, Alata was himself the subject of a degree of scandal in France, and the interview in which he made this claim reads as an attempt to justify his condemnation of Guinea and its president. In late 1970, Alata was one of the first Guineans to be arrested.\footnote{Alata had repudiated his French citizenship in 1962. It was restored to him in 1975 when he was freed from jail and went to live in France.} African-born, Alata had moved from Senegal to Guinea in 1955 out of unionist solidarity and socialist conviction and had been a member of the opposition Démocratie socialiste de Guinée party before independence. By 1970, he had risen to become Sékou Touré’s “super-minister” as the presidency’s Director General of economic and financial affairs. As a senior member of Sékou Touré’s circle whose white skin meant that he was still perceived as a foreigner, despite his protestations that he identified himself completely with the PDG’s revolution in Guinea, Alata’s testimony about the foreign-based conspiracies against Guinea would carry a great deal of weight. With a young wife in Conakry, pregnant when his imprisonment began, Alata was also extremely vulnerable to the pressures the regime placed upon him. The French scandal began in October 1976, when Alata’s prison memoir, \textit{Prison d’Afrique}, was banned from “circulation, distribution and sale” in French territory. The French Interior Minister, Michel Poniatowski, used a law dating to 1881 that permitted him to act “against French-language . . . texts from overseas.” Questioned in Parliament, Poniatowski explained that the book had been banned on the grounds that it was “of a nature likely to compromise the diplomatic relations which have only recently been forged between France” and Guinea.\footnote{Jean-Paul Alata, \textit{Prison d’Afrique: Cinq Ans dans les géôles de Sékou Touré} (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1976); Index on Censorship, 6:1 (1977), 50; 6:5 (1977), 61-62; Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman, \textit{L’Affaire Alata: Pourquoi on interdit un livre en France} (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977).}

If Alata’s retrospective hope that Sékou Touré would be reasonable seems somewhat faint, it was shared at the time by US observers in Conakry. Sherer focused on the enormous boost the invasion had given Guinea’s president: “Sékou Touré’s hand and voice have been strengthened beyond his own fondest dreams,” he wrote on 26
November, implying that he need go no further.\textsuperscript{44} A week later, however, the US ambassador advised State of “continuing security concerns and enhanced precaution,” which suggested to him that the president would choose to take more direct action to press his advantage domestically by purging “doubtful elements, i.e. . . . any suspected or potential political or personal adversaries of those in power.”\textsuperscript{45} One worrisome sign was the broadcast, on 2 December, of the confession of João Lopez, one of the captive fighters. Lopez’ allegation that the 150 Guineans in the invading party carried green armbands “to enable them to make contact with collaborators in Conakry,” made local involvement both public and undeniable.\textsuperscript{46}

Sherer’s fears of a purge were well founded. When the Guinean president decided to follow this path, he moved quickly. Two days after the UN mission report vindicated Guinea’s allegations of foreign invasion, and even as the Organization of African Unity’s Council of Ministers was meeting in Lagos to decide what action the OAU should take, Sherer reported that “a new wave of arrests and interrogations” was in progress. The victims were people suspected of “less than 100 percent loyalty to the Chief of State,” from police officers through middle-level functionaries and up to the level of secretaries of state. Guineans were uneasy and nervous, observed the American ambassador, particularly those who had contact with Europeans and American embassy personnel. The sense of unease increased, at least among foreigners, when Radio Conakry announced six days later that Sékou Touré had written to U Thant to ask the secretary-general to cancel the visit of a new UN mission, authorized by Security Council resolution to evaluate the material damage the invasion had inflicted on Guinea. “The moral and material damage of the invasion cannot be translated into financial terms,” he asserted. Local UN representative Polgar observed to Sherer that the Guinean cabinet had settled on the notion of “moral damage . . . as a way to prevent outsiders from ‘prying around’ and discovering how relatively little material damage” had been caused. Sherer interpreted the Guinean president’s move as a “cool calculation,” designed to keep up the “momentum of the current wave of unprecedented solidarity and support he is now

\textsuperscript{44} Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 1926, 26 November 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
\textsuperscript{45} Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 2000, 4 December 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
\textsuperscript{46} Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 1985, 2 December 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
enjoying.” He missed its much colder connotations: that the PDG wanted to be unobserved while it began to cast blame for its troubles.\textsuperscript{47}

Two days later, Western diplomats began at last to see the outlines of the latest stage in the permanent plot. On 18 December, Sékou Touré sent US president Richard M. Nixon a letter alleging that he had “material proof” of the Central Intelligence Agency’s involvement in the previous month’s invasion. The same day, Guinean police arrested a West German citizen named Hermann Seibold, accusing him of collaborating with the Portuguese invaders. The Guinean president’s reaction to Nixon’s immediate, and categorical, denial of American involvement in invasions past or planned was that he “stood by his information and his source, which he would not reveal without ‘killing him,’” yet remained “friendly” to the US and to its representatives in Conakry.\textsuperscript{48} Neither Seibold nor the Federal Republic of Germany would prove to be so lucky.

Hermann Seibold was the expert-in-chief at a training centre operated in Kankan-Bordo by Christliches Jugenddorfwerk Deutschlands (CJD), a German religious and educational charity. According to the Federal Republic’s government, Seibold, who joined CJD in 1948 shortly after it was founded by Pastor Arnold Dannenmann, fully disclosed his past – including his membership in the National Socialist Party and his war service with the Nazi SS in occupied Denmark – to Sékou Touré when he first started work in Guinea. The Guinean president said he appreciated Seibold’s honesty and took it as a sign of his trustworthiness.\textsuperscript{49} Now the Guineans were alleging, not only that Seibold had been a spy and an agent of Guinea’s “imperialist enemy” within Guinea, but also that he had learned how to create a “fifth column” as a member of the Gestapo and staff member of the central bureau of the Third Reich’s security service.\textsuperscript{50} West Germany’s foreign office was able to refute all of the evidence Guinea eventually disclosed of its case against Seibold to the satisfaction of German critics as well as the Americans and

\textsuperscript{47} Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 2093, 16 December 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, Box 2342, RG 59, NACP.
\textsuperscript{48} Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 2107, 18 December 1970 and No. 2111, 19 December 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Livre Blanc}, 413-14.
others. However, both evidence and refutation came too late for Seibold himself, who died in Guinean custody sometime in late December or early January. The Guineans announced on 19 January that he had committed suicide. What seems more probable, in light of the experience of other political prisoners such as Alata and Alpha-Abdoulaye Diallo, is that Seibold died under torture. The West German government’s efforts, at first to gain access to Seibold to offer him consular services, and later to get the government of Guinea to issue an official death certificate listing his cause of death, were all in vain.

The difficulties between Guinea and West Germany were not limited to the Seibold affair. The day before Seibold’s arrest, Sékou Touré wrote to German President Gustav Heinemann, requesting the recall of Ambassador Christian Lankes on the grounds that he, too, had contributed to the success of the 22 November invasion. In the days following Seibold’s arrest, Guinea made it ever clearer that it was determined to cast blame on West Germany: a second German citizen, Adolf Marx, was arrested on 29 December and about a hundred German experts working on aid projects throughout Guinea were expelled. Bonn recalled its ambassador, but registered its regret that the Guinean government had not disclosed its accusations against Lankes in any detail, nor permitted the West Germans to refute them. No wonder: Alpha-Abdoulaye Diallo, still free and the minister of state for youth and sports, told an American diplomat in Nairobi that the case against Lankes – and the trouble with West Germany – amounted, in fact, to no more than a vague complaint that Bonn’s ambassador had engaged in “undiplomatic

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52 Embassy of Federal Republic of Germany (Lankes) to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Guinea, Note Verbale No. 242/70, 23 December 1970; Embassy of FRG (Lewalter) to MFA, Guinea, Note Verbale No. 3/71, 6 January 1971; Letters, Lewalter to Sékou Touré, 9 January and 23 January 1971; Embassy of FRG (Lewalter) to MFA, Guinea, Note Verbale No. 7/71, 13 January 1971; Referat IB3, B 34, Vol. 812, AA. Alata and Tchidimbo were both convinced that Seibold had been tortured to death: Alata, Prison d’Afrique, 139; Raymond-Marie Tchidimbo, Noviciat d’un évêque: Captivité sous Sékou Touré (Paris: Fayard, 1987), 164. On the other hand, André Lewin cites the testimony of an unnamed Guinean minister from the post-1984 period that Seibold carried with him a poison capsule and the comment of Ismaël Touré in the late 1970s that no-one regretted Seibold’s suicide more than he did since the German died without having disclosed all “the facts and useful revelations.” André Lewin, “La Guinée et les deux Allemandes,” Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains 2003/2, No. 210, 77-99 at 94.
53 Embassy of FRG (Lewalter) to MFA, Guinea, Note Verbale 243/70, 26 December 1970; Referat IB3, B 34, Vol. 812, AA.
54 Embassy of FRG (Lewalter) to MFA, Guinea, Note Verbale 4/71, 8 January 1971; Referat IB3, B 34, Vol. 812, AA.
behavior.”  

Guinea formally announced its breach of diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany on 29 January 1971, and the West Germans reluctantly arranged to have their interests in Guinea looked after by the Italian Embassy in Conakry.

The Federal Republic of Germany had little choice but to accept that Guinea had broken diplomatic relations, unlike France in 1965 which had permitted its diplomatic representative to be expelled, or the US in 1966, which had chosen not to interpret Sékou Touré’s actions and statements as requiring diplomatic breach. Therefore, the question in 1971 was why Guinea had taken this step. It is possible, of course, that there was some truth to the accusations that German citizens such as Seibold, Marx, or Ulf von Tiesenhausen, who was killed on the night of the invasion, imported and distributed arms to support the Portuguese raid. It is more likely, however, that Sékou Touré lighted upon the Federal Republic while casting about for a foreign enemy with enough of a presence in Guinea to make a plausible scapegoat, but whose subsequent absence from the local scene would not cause too much diplomatic or practical difficulty. When evidence turned up that seemed to implicate West Germany in the invasion, Guinea apparently chose to accept it uncritically. Guinea went to some trouble to assure other governments, including the US, that its “investigation … has proven that … the Portuguese invaders were in flagrant collusion with German accomplices” in Guinea. However, there was good reason for thinking, as the Federal Republic’s foreign office did, that much of this proof had been fabricated in, and provided to the Guineans by, the new embassy of the German Democratic Republic in Conakry.

In a way the government of Guinea had made its choice between West and East Germany the previous September, when Sékou Touré and Paul Verner, a senior member

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55 Nairobi to State, No. 119, 11 January 1971; Pol 2 Guin, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
56 “Communiqué der Präsidentschaft vom 29. Januar 1971. 13.30 Uhr”; Note, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Damantang Camara) to Embassy of FRG, No. 159/MEAF/AP/71, 30 January 1971; Referat IB3, B 34, Vol. 812, AA.
57 Both cases are discussed in Chapter 5.
58 Letter, Saïfoulaye Diallo (Minister of State for Foreign Affairs) to William P. Rogers (Secretary of State), 2 February 1971; POL 15-1 Guin, SN 1970-73; RG 59, NACP.
59 Though he notes than in the absence of documentary evidence from the East German side it is impossible to state definitively that its State Security service provided the information on which Guinea based its case, André Lewin suggests this is likely on the balance of probabilities: Lewin, “La Guinée et les deux Allemagnes,” 95-96.
of the Democratic Republic’s Politburo, suddenly announced that its trade mission in Conakry was being upgraded to an embassy. This is not to say that Guinea was forced to choose in the autumn of 1970, as it might have been had it recognized the Potsdam regime in 1960. Although West Germany’s acknowledgment that Guinea had recognized its Eastern rival was not enthusiastic, in the era of Ostpolitik its diplomats in Africa were given the rather lukewarm instructions “to prevent other African states from being led to believe, by the absence of any spectacular measures [taken by us] against Guinea, that their recognition of the GDR would be risk-free.”

Despite this, Guinea appears to have construed the circumstances as offering it a choice between the two German states, with Portugal’s partner in NATO being a more suitable target for the government’s wrath following the invasion.

Guinea’s failure to extend to the West Germans the basic rules of natural justice, let alone the privileges due to diplomatic representatives, was the least of the regime’s violation of legal and ethical standards in pursuit of the fifth column. On 11 January, Sherer reported that the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Saïfoulaye Diallo, had informed him that the rule of law, both domestic and international, had been suspended in Guinea, to be replaced by “the law of the state of siege.” Yet when Norland asked Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Damantang Camara for a copy of the new law, the latter “had never heard of it.” Sherer observed that this meant “an ordinary citizen, either Guinean or foreign has no guarantee that his fundamental rights as a human being will be respected,” and warned of “cruel and bloody verdicts” when sentence was passed on the PDG’s political prisoners towards the end of the month.

He was right. Even before constituting “revolutionary tribunals” to judge and sentence those in custody, Sékou Touré renounced his presidential right to exercise clemency. The Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal – in reality the Guinean National Assembly, meeting in extraordinary session – was convoked on 18 January. Sékou Touré’s address to the Tribunal was fairly conventional, rehearsing the usual charges against “imperialism” as the enemy of Guinea’s revolution and ending with the exhortation to “bid adieu to the traitors.” The innovation came the next day, when Ismaël

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60 Lewin, “La Guinée et les deux Allemagnes,” 96 n. 18; Eger to Diplogerma Conakry (Lankes), 23 September 1970; Referat IB3, B 34, Vol. 812, AA.
61 Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 76, 11 January 1971; POL 7 Guin, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
Touré and Mamadi Keita took to the microphone to read the report of the “Commission of Inquiry” they headed. They “held their audience of National Assembly members, Party groups, diplomats and journalists spellbound” as they accused West Germany, operating through Seibold and Marx, of building and maintaining an elaborate spy network which they labeled the “Nazi SS” ring. More common culprits were not overlooked: France was once again accused of spying on Guinea, this time through Jean-Paul Alata, whom they claimed had admitted to acting on behalf of a network established and run by Jacques Foccart, French president Charles de Gaulle’s African secretary.

After two and a half hours of this, the speakers claimed that the Commission had successfully dismantled the fifth column, “all the networks, all links in the chain.” They then listed the individuals whose guilt the Commission had established. The guilty were divided into four categories: Portuguese soldiers; mercenaries of various nationalities; “principal actors” responsible for the conspiracy; and “accomplices” whose guilt was demonstrated by their “moral or material corruption,” their participation in the “propaganda of intoxication and of systematic denigration of the regime,” or their “traffic in currency or sabotage of the national economy.” The Commission proposed to release a further thirty people, and to expel the wives and children of sixteen of the foreign-born convicts.62 The Revolutionary Tribunal delivered its verdicts on 24 January: fifty-eight death sentences plus thirty-six sentenced to death in absentia; sixty-eight sentences of life imprisonment with hard labour; and all the proposed expulsions.63

There was innovation, too, in the manner of execution. To the horror of Guineans, on 25 January they found four bodies hanging from the bridge that joined Conakry’s two sections. The four were all high-profile prisoners: Barry Ibrahima, known as Barry III, ex-minister of financial control; Ousmane Baldé, ex-president of the financial court; Magassouba Moriba, ex-director of the cabinet; and police commissioner Keita Kara. To convey the effect across the country, at least two prisoners were hanged in each of Guinea’s twenty-eight other administrative divisions. Other prisoners were shot, including Mme. Loffo Camara, minister of social affairs, and several other

63 Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 210, 24 January 1971; POL 29 Guin, SN 1970-73, RG 59 NACP.
government ministers and former ambassadors. The rest, including Marx, Alata and the Catholic archbishop of Conakry, Raymond-Marie Tchidimbo, remained in abject conditions of torture, deliberate starvation and neglect in a series of army camps around the country, including the notorious Camp Boiro in Conakry, in some cases for nearly a decade.

In this atmosphere, where even senior government ministers who had been close to Sékou Touré since before independence were subject to arrest and execution for reasons that were opaque at best, there was little likelihood of widespread protest from Guinea’s terrified population. This left two options to end the terror: the overthrow of the regime by internal elements, which seemed impossible (as it was no doubt meant to appear); and intervention by the international community. Several countries did try to intercede, especially on behalf of their own nationals or of individuals, such as Archbishop Tchidimbo, with powerful institutional allegiances. The West German government backed up the direct pleas of its diplomats in Conakry on behalf of Seibold and Marx through several other potential avenues of persuasion. Social Democratic Party secretary-general Hans-Jürgen Wischnewski, who had visited Guinea early in March 1970, sent a telegram to Sékou Touré on 31 December, and wrote again in August to renew his pleas for Marx’s life and freedom. In Paris, the Federal Republic’s ambassador Ruete met with Bruno de Leusse of the MAE, who pointed out that in the absence of direct French representation in Guinea, and with Guinean suspicions of French allies Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire at such high levels since the invasion, there was little France could do to help; he undertook, however, to check for any private channels that might reach the Guinean president. Bonn’s representative at the UN, Alexander Böker, discussed the matter with U Thant on 18 January. The UN secretary-general agreed to get in touch with Guinea’s UN representative but not to appeal directly to Sékou Touré. U Thant claimed that his earlier intervention had been met with an invitation from Guinea’s president to send an observer to the “trials”, an invitation he

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declined on the grounds that he would then be obligated to “send observers to similar trials throughout the world.”

Italy also sought to rally international opinion to act on behalf of West Germany and its citizens in Guinea, as well as of Archbishop Tchidimbo, reflecting pressures brought to bear on Rome from the Vatican. On 1 January 1971, Italy’s ambassador to NATO called his colleagues together to discuss the German case. The West German chargé argued, convincingly, that the basis of Guinea’s case against Lankes, Seibold and Marx was forged documents provided by the embassy of the German Democratic Republic in Conakry. Even so, the American ambassador to NATO observed that the organization had decided to restrict discussions on the topic to private talks among the ambassadors rather than taking it to its council, thereby making “consultations ‘unofficial’ as far as NATO is concerned.”

State concurred: the Italians “have not presented convincing case for formal or informal Allied consultations in NATO context on this subject.” Therefore the Department instructed Sherer to explain to his Italian counterpart “that we would prefer consultations on subject [to] continue on [a] bilateral basis in capitals.”

The Pope’s direct appeal to Sékou Touré to spare the lives of all the accused including that of his “beloved son” Tchidimbo was no more successful: the Guinean president responded that his state’s severe condemnation of the “aggressors and their accomplices” reflected over two hundred innocents dead in Portugal’s invasion attempt.

The US State Department’s objection to having NATO discuss or take up the issue of the excesses being committed in the name of Guinean justice was not solely that the forum was inappropriate. The US would not take any steps, in any setting, to intercede on behalf of the victims; and the evidence suggests that the decision to do nothing was made at the highest levels within the State Department or in the White House itself.

Certainly Sherer thought the US should contribute to international efforts to pressure Sékou Touré to halt or divert the process he had initiated. On 13 January, he

67 USUN (Yost) to State, No. 163, 20 January 1971; POL 29 Guîn, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
68 NATO (Robert Fred Ellsworth) to State, “Discussion of Situation in Guinea,” No. 18, 5 January 1971; POL Guîn-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
69 State to US-NATO, No. 3970, 8 January 1971; POL Guîn-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
70 Pope Paul VI’s message, and Sékou Touré’s response, are reprinted in Livre blanc, 563-65.
wrote to encourage “any influence that can be brought to bear on President Touré by fellow Africans,” emphasizing the likely consequences for both African and international opinion of imposing the death sentence on political prisoners. Although he agreed that any direct approaches by Westerners would be “counterproductive,” he thought the US should back a planned French démarche to Liberia and should “consider similar approaches” to other African governments, pointing out that Nigeria might be a “particularly effective channel as they are on excellent terms” with Guinea. At first it seemed as though the Department was willing to give this a try. Acting Assistant Secretary Moore advocated on 14 January that both the French and the Italians attempt an approach through other African heads of state. But later that night, the Department issued unequivocal instructions: “While USG deeply sympathetic plight of foreigners, we do not see realistic possibility of being helpful through third party. If fact our intercession became known to Touré, it [is] possible US citizens and interests would be endangered. Consequently, Department has decided not [to] attempt [to] persuade Africans [to] become involved in this matter.”

It was clear that in Washington’s estimation, ensuring that there would be no threat to American lives or economic interests in Guinea was more important than being seen to be making an effort to save the lives of Sékou Touré’s victims. Those interests – and the extent to which US public resources had been pledged to them – were substantial: by the end of 1970, the US government had guaranteed nearly $200 million of investment by Olin Mathieson and Harvey Aluminum Company in Guinea’s bauxite. In addition the embassy estimated that between the employees of private companies, missionaries, Peace Corps volunteers and the embassy itself, there were 1,645 American citizens in Guinea, plus a further hundred potential evacuees. American diplomats in Conakry and Washington were also well aware that since most bilateral aid to Guinea had ceased in 1966, their government enjoyed little potential leverage in the Guinean capital. But

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71 Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 113, 13 January 1971; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
72 State to Conakry, No. 6846 and State to Paris, No. 7077, 14 January 1971; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
74 Intelligence Brief, INR (Ray S. Cline) to Secretary, “Guinea: Touré’s Opponents Strike by Sea,” INRB-210, 24 November 1970; POL 23-9 Guin, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
75 Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 1913, 25 November 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
Sherer, obviously unhappy that he was not even allowed to register disapproval, identified a further risk in Washington’s decision to play it safe. Though he agreed that the prospect of changing the course of events was slim in any case, he warned of possible “severe and lasting effects” on other US political interests in Guinea and for his country’s relations with the entire continent. What was “crucial,” in the ambassador’s view, was that the US get its views “clearly on the record prior to sentencing so that after the event we can say we explored every possible alternative.” Those views, he stressed, should be that clemency was being sought “for all detainees … based on broad, humanitarian grounds.” What was paramount was that they avoid giving the impression that “interventions are undertaken on behalf of Westerners or Europeans alone.” For if the US were not on the record in support of the most basic of human rights in Guinea, did it not risk being made complicit in their violation?76

As Sherer may have foreseen, the execution of prisoners at the end of January was not the end, either of the terror in Guinea or of Guinea’s attempts to implicate the United States in its repression. After a few months of relative calm, the cycle began again in mid-May with allegations by Guinea’s president and senior officials that Portugal was planning another invasion. Sékou Touré wrote to Nixon on 14 May, asking him for aid “for the protection of our independence.” Support from the US, with all the “vast” means it had at its disposal, would surely “suffice to discourage any who might wish to make attempts against our freedom.”77 If there was any room for doubt that Sékou Touré wanted more than moral support, it was dispelled in a discussion the Guinean president had on 7 May with Rudolph Aggrey, head of the State Department’s Office of West African Affairs. Past US help “in the educational, agricultural and industrial sectors” had been appreciated, he told Aggrey, but “such matters pale in significance compared to the protection of Guinea’s independence and security.”78 Still trying to avoid being drawn into Sékou Touré’s “with us or against us” worldview, the White House put off its reply until 26 June. When it did come, Nixon’s message merely reaffirmed his February statement to Congress, which had identified “the inviolability of African borders and the

76 Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 136, 15 January 1971; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
78 Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 978, 10 May 1971; POL 7 Guin, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
integrity of African states” as a “cardinal point of American policy.” The US would not get involved.

This time, the arrests extended even deeper into Guinean society. Alpha-Abdoulaye Diallo, himself arrested on 3 August 1971 and held in Camp Boiro until 22 November 1980, described the method of the second wave of arrests. First, he said, Sékou Touré would suggest an arrest to one of the organisms of the Party, such as its always-enthusiastic regional organization in Conakry II. Before moving against an individual, the regime’s seers performed a set of occult rituals to paralyze the target and “kill” his or her will. Finally, even as one member of a family and ethnic group was being arrested, another would be promoted, so as to sap the family group’s own cohesion and ability to act. There is significant consistency in the survivors’ account of what happened next. Once arrested, each prisoner would be held without food or water for several days, then invited to sign a confession. If signature was not forthcoming, he or she would be sent to the cabine technique and tortured, usually with the application of electrical current to the body. Torture sessions would be interspersed with further opportunities to sign the statement prepared for that individual and presented to him or her by the Commission of Inquiry, usually in the person of Ismaël Touré or Mamadi Keita. The prisoner was often invited to elaborate on the prepared confession by adding his or her denunciation of a specified number of additional people. Once the prisoner agreed to sign, he or she would be recorded reading the confession aloud. The resulting tape would then be broadcast over the national radio system, and the cycle would begin again with the newly named victims. The results of this “trial by radio” were ultimately ratified by a series of Party meetings in late September and early October. Many of the detainees were shot on the night of 17 October 1971; others joined the survivors of January to live, or die, in jail.

80 Diallo, La Vérité du Ministre, 33-36.
81 See Alata, Prison d’Afrique, 30-45,106-10; Diallo, La Vérité du Ministre, 48-66, 67-114; and Archbishop Tchidimbo, Noviciat d’un évêque, 163-74. The published accounts accord with a contemporary record that
arrested, executed or imprisoned over the course of 1971. Alpha-Abdoulaye Diallo named at least one hundred Guineans who died as a result of the purge, and an equal number of Guineans and foreigners who survived their imprisonment. Jean-Paul Alata estimated there were five hundred political prisoners with him in Camp Boiro alone, with at least two thousand more in jails around the country.82

Entreaties continued to be made to the US government – by this time, with the Italians, one of only two Western powers to maintain full embassies in Conakry – to speak out on behalf of at least some of the individuals subjected to this treatment. The detention of Karim Bangoura, who had been Guinea’s ambassador to the US from 1963 to 1969, raised particular concern. Yet although State’s explanation for its decision not to intervene varied depending on its audience, nothing could force it to change its policy. At the height of the second wave, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs David Newsom explained to Senator Edward Kennedy that the Department had decided that American intervention on behalf of individuals such as Bangoura “might not be helpful,” and tried to discourage former US ambassadors William Attwood and James I. Loeb from publishing an opinion piece in the New York Times, warning that their action could “shift [the] present delicate balance heavily against [the] US.” Loeb responded that Bangoura’s relatives were urging them to speak out, “since silence has produced nothing.”83 State’s stubborn insistence that what was at stake was real American interests was indeed making the US complicit in the violation of human rights in Guinea, just as Sherer had feared.

III. “La Vérité du Ministre”

Prohibited from trying to intervene to stop the purge in Guinea, but constrained to remain in the country in the interests of the US aluminum firms still operating in the Fria and Boké ventures, US embassy personnel were reduced to two major pursuits: defending the reputation of the United States and the CIA whenever Guineans alleged

Norland described as the first “inside information” about the means used to obtain confessions: Conakry (Norland) to State, No. 649, 18 May 1972; POL 29 Guin, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
82 Diallo lists and classifies the dead and imprisoned in La Vérité du Ministre, 237-57; Alata’s estimate of the number of political prisoners is in Blancard, “J.-P. Alata,” 17-18.
83 Telegram, State to Conakry, No. 158666, 27 August 1971; Telegram, State to Conakry, No. 198652, 29 October 1971; POL 29 Guin, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
American involvement in the increasingly all-encompassing conspiracy against them; and trying to discern a logic, or at least a pattern, to the purge’s targets.

In their efforts to decipher the logic of the purge, Americans in Guinea suggested many possibilities. These ranged from ethnic-motivated violence, to a new insularity, to the expulsion of those opposed to totalitarianism. Most of the explanations said more about the beliefs and prejudices of the interpreters than they did about the objectives of Sékou Touré’s government, and for good reason: as the purges wore on, it became increasingly evident that if there was any logic, it was known only deep inside the regime. To the rest of Guinean society and to the world at large, it was simply political theatre.

One early explanation was that the target was Guinea’s formerly dominant ethnic group. Journalist Graham Hovey, writing in the *New York Times* in late January 1971, deployed the common trope of African “tribal” strife, seeing in the first wave of repression a signal that Sékou Touré had “allowed” his alliance with Fulbé leaders “to disintegrate.”84 State passed along similar reports from Olin Mathieson employees traveling in the Fulbé stronghold of the Fuuta Jaloo region.85 Yet the thesis that Fulbé had been targeted – and with it the underlying hope that Sékou Touré’s actions would spur an ethnic-based backlash that might oust the president, as the French had wished from the moment of independence – crumbled in the face of the evidence that the purge affected all the major family and ethnic groups in Guinea. There was no serious indication that Sékou Touré was about to abandon one of the foundations of his rhetoric and his state, which US embassy staff had characterized in the wake of the Biafran War as “the denouncing of tribalism as a political and social force.”86

More serious attempts from within the US embassy to understand why certain ministers had been targeted betrayed the influence of the us-or-them logic of the Cold War which had dominated State Department analysis of foreign affairs for a quarter-century. In May 1971, Sherer and his team noted the government was split between “hardliners” – ministers who shared their president’s apparently exclusive attention to

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85 State to Conakry, No. 2616, 7 January 1971; POL 23-9 Guin, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
matters of security and to the quest to eliminate all traces of the fifth column – and the increasingly embattled minority still trying to run the government efficiently. They attributed the hard-line position both to ideological conviction that one-man dictatorship was necessary and to sycophancy in view of the president’s determination “not simply to stifle and discourage individual initiative but to eliminate any opposition, suspected and real, actual and potential.”

A Washington-based analyst thought he perceived a related thread: “Many of those currently being purged from the party or thrown in jail for fifth column sympathies are people engaged in suspect commercial transactions,” he noted. The point was to increase the regime’s ability to thwart Western-style economic development and assert control over Guinea’s economy.

But as the second wave grew bigger in the summer of 1971, even the US embassy abandoned its efforts to read Sékou Touré’s intentions from the evidence of an increasingly absurd and nightmarish theatre of arrests and confessions. Norland commented at the beginning of August that “the process of investigation-confession-arrests is getting out of control,” affecting “consistent pro-Chicoms” as well as “pro-Western ministers” such as Bangoura. “In this climate, we suspect that much of what is going on is matter of investigating commission members who now hold the upper hand, settling old scores,” he observed.

Even the dawning realization that what was going on was vendetta masquerading as judicial inquiry – “classic police-state tactics,” as Norland described them, echoing an observation made by French chargé d’affaires Pierre Siraud more than a decade before – did not fully capture how far the regime was willing to go. In their memoirs, both Alata and Diallo recalled being told that their written confessions were to contain, not the truth in the conventional sense of a record of what had happened, when and to whom, but “la vérité du Ministre” – the truth according to Ismaël Touré. Alata, evidently still a political animal even in jail, cast about for any association or event from his past that might have left a lingering resentment in the memory of Sékou Touré, as “prodigious and

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89 Conakry (Norland) to State, No. 1488, 2 August 1971; POL 29 Guin, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
90 Siraud (Conakry), “Situation intérieure,” No. 532/AL, 28 May 1960; Guinée 43, DAL, AMAE.
91 Alata, Prison d’Afrique, 138; Diallo, La Vérité du Ministre, 95.
rancorous” as his namesake elephant, and came up with his pre-Independence allegiance to the unfortunate Barry III and his short-lived Démocratie Socialiste de Guinée party.\textsuperscript{92} Diallo, who had trained as a lawyer in France before joining Sékou Touré’s government in 1959, perceived a deeper truth in the Commission of Inquiry’s lack of regard for due process in its prosecution of individuals. The danger went beyond evidence of old scores: even the potential for disloyalty to the regime was enough to end your career, ruin your family, even forfeit your life.\textsuperscript{93}

As the second wave of the hunt for the fifth column crested in the summer of 1971, so did the element of spectacle in the trials of its alleged members. The PDG had used the medium of radio to publicize its victims’ confessions in connection with earlier plots, such as the 1969 attempted coup d’état which resulted in the execution of Army Deputy Chief of Staff Kaman Diabi, long-time minister Fodéba Keita and others.\textsuperscript{94} This time, however, the regime went further. Beginning on the evening of 29 July 1971, Radio Conakry broadcast confessions for nearly two months until Sékou Touré himself took to the airwaves on 26 September to announce the process by which the “people” would pronounce sentence on “those who have betrayed the sacred cause of your freedom and your right to manage your own destiny in dignity and sovereignty.”\textsuperscript{95} There was no judicial purpose to the broadcasts: the people were not involved in trying the facts of these cases, merely in endorsing sentences proposed by the commission of inquiry once it had established guilt by extracting confessions. And yet the PDG took no chances in ensuring large audiences for them. In addition to promoting the broadcasts with what the US embassy called “unprecedented advance publicity,” local organizers and militants were instructed to form “listening groups so that the people could pass judgment in full knowledge of the cases in hand.”\textsuperscript{96} The procès des ondes, or trial by radio, was political theatre: a “staged event, intended to create the greatest possible public impact.”\textsuperscript{97}

Analysis of the intended audiences, the text presented, and other explanations from the principals helps to explain what Sékou Touré and the PDG sought to accomplish

\textsuperscript{92} Alata, Prison d’Afrique, 75.
\textsuperscript{93} Diallo, La Vérité du Ministre, 218-19.
\textsuperscript{94} State to Conakry, No. 75479, 13 May 1969; POL 29 Guin, SN 1967-69, RG 59, NACP.
\textsuperscript{95} FBIS, Daily Report, MESSA, V. 28 September 1971, W1.
\textsuperscript{97} Nigel J. Ashton, “Cold War Political Theater,” Diplomatic History 33:3 (June 2009), 535-538 at 536.
with the purge. The audiences were both internal – the people collected into “listening groups” – and external. The US Foreign Broadcast Information Service was picking up the broadcasts from its West African listening post in Kaduna, Nigeria, nearly 2500 kilometres away. The extensive reach of Radio Conakry was no coincidence: even the decision to broadcast the domestic service in French, rather than vernacular languages, signified an intention to reach audiences across and beyond Guinea. Guinea had built its broadcasting station, equipping it with a 100-kilowatt transmitter early in 1960, with technical and material help from the Czech, Soviet and East German governments. Its purpose was to “educate public opinion [and] raise the political consciousness of the people” in the face of broadcasts from foreign sources. Neither the French nor the Americans had been in any doubt, then or since, that Sékou Touré wanted the high-power transmitter to broadcast propaganda “against neighbouring states.”

The content of the broadcast confessions furthers the impression that they were intended to be heard both inside and beyond Guinea. Though the details varied, there were some common elements. All the prisoners specified to which of the foreign spy networks operating in Guinea they had belonged, explained when they had joined, who had recruited them and how, which of the plots against Guinea and its chief of state they had known about or participated in, and, crucially, how much they had been paid for their cooperation. This last element was particularly unbelievable. The sums involved were vast – inconceivably so to an impoverished population, whose standard of living had not increased since independence. For instance Karim Bangoura, the former ambassador to the US, claimed to have received a salary of $2,000 per month from the French secret service, which he said he had joined in 1958, for a total of 79.5 million CFA francs, plus 8.15 million CFA francs for “special services.” In addition, Bangoura claimed to have received $5,000 a month from the CIA, which he had joined in 1964; together with a membership allowance and bonuses for special services, Bangoura had pocketed $657,000 from US sources. Even this was not enough. The former ambassador also confessed to joining the West German spy network in July 1966 and receiving payments of $335,250 for services rendered to the Federal Republic. Conveniently, Bangoura’s

98 Kaduna (Stephan) to State, No. 1404, 7 December 1970; POL Guin-Port, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
99 Conakry (Siraud) to MAE, No. 63, 22 January 1960; Siraud, “Informations en Guinée,” No. 847/AL, 10 October 1960; Washington (Alphand) to MAE, No. 566-68, 4 February 1960; Guinée 41, DAL, AMAE.
confession added up these sums: “From 1958 to 1970 I received from the three secret networks a total of $1,373,850, the equivalent of 343.5 million Guinean francs,” he noted. These incredible amounts were meant to convey several messages. First, Guineans were being told to be suspicious of anyone with wealth, while being reassured that only the traitors were well off. Poverty was no guarantee of safety, but it was an indication of loyalty. Second, listeners in neighbouring countries were being assured that Guinea, with all its natural resources, was a prize that justified these extraordinary investments by hostile powers. Third, listeners in North America and Europe were being told that whether or not the PDG could prove its allegations did not really matter. What counted was that they were believed – or at least impossible to refute – within Guinea.

Sékou Touré addressed the outlandishness of these claims in an interview he gave to Togolese journalist Polycarpe Johnson that was published in Togo on 10 August 1971, as the procès des ondes was getting under way. The Guinean president’s commentary on the proceedings provides some important clues to his state of mind at the time. At least as presented here, the orator is unusually incoherent. Asked “But Mr. President, do they really pay one all that much money?” Sékou Touré responded by explaining his grief and shock at a particular case. A question about allegations of economic sabotage drew a similar response, emphasizing the president’s own hurt that people such as Camara Bana Fodé – a “brother”, part of the president’s “family community” – had turned against him. Sékou Touré’s personal disconnection from what was being done in his name is corroborated by a number of sources. Both Alata and Diallo reported the bizarrely warm and sympathetic messages they received from the president even as they were being tortured on the orders of his brother. Although in some instances, such as his decision to renounce clemency in January 1971, this appears to have been a tactic to maintain some shreds of his reputation, in others it suggests that the president had genuinely lost or ceded control over the process to more bloodthirsty elements within the PDG, beginning with his brother Ismaël. Such an explanation is consistent with the view that the purge originated in frustration that Guinea could not strike back directly against Portugal or induce the UN or OAU to take active measures on its behalf: for Sékou Touré to maintain his position as undisputed head of the PDG, it is plausible that he needed to

allow his close associates to take out their frustration by punishing others, rather than by overthrowing the president who could not deliver international action.

Hidden within Sékou Touré’s non sequitur responses to Polycarpe Johnson’s challenges are some significant messages. Discussing Camara’s case, Sékou Touré emphasized “there is nothing biological between us: our quarrel is ideological.” Guinea’s president was presenting a rationale for his government’s actions that centered on the concept of Guinea as a “people’s state”. An “elite culture,” he noted, would have crumbled had so many people in such positions of power proved to be traitors. By contrast, Guinea’s strength was its “people’s system.” The logic is convoluted: but it is not inherently irrational, particularly to an audience primed to compare the “capitalist concept of government,” complete with social elites, to an ideological alternative that was popular and revolutionary in tone.101

The theatre of the procès des ondes served at least two objectives. First and foremost, it was intended to terrify Guineans. Listeners were being told to fear, not only what the regime could do to dissidents within Guinea, but also the intentions and actions of foreigners, especially Westerners. The message was that Guineans had better comply, both in action and in thought, with the directives of the PDG, even if the Party had failed to protect them from foreign invasion. Any disobedience – including the failure to alert the Party to dissent, or a possible plot against the president and the leadership – would be discovered and punished. Neither was emigration a viable escape route: the outside could not be trusted, and as a “people’s state” all Guineans were complicit in the actions of the Party in power.

Second, the spectacle was intended to develop and publicize a rationale for yet another shift in Guinea’s pursuit of non-alignment, albeit one that would send a strong signal that Guinea wanted to be considered both revolutionary and socialist. Sékou Touré made the shift explicit in May 1972. After 25 years, the PDG had “learned the rules and methods that should govern our relations with the outside world,” he told a Conakry audience:

Actively militant, confident relations of solidarity with countries and organizations engaged in the struggle for democratic revolution; open and

fraternal relations with the peoples of Africa and of the world; vigilant relations with the imperialist and neo-colonialist states.\textsuperscript{102}

In his interview with Polycarpe Johnson, Sékou Touré both forewarned of this shift and tried to explain it. He concluded the interview by providing an explanation for why all these Western spy services had been so eager to undermine Guinea’s sovereignty and subvert its cadres. “In 1973,” he predicted, “We are going to take off, first with exploitation of the Boké bauxite deposits… And so you see our present difficulties will be resolved in 1973. And that is what our enemies cannot bear to see.”\textsuperscript{103}

IV. Conclusion: The Triumph of Sovereignty

By the end of 1971, Guinea’s isolation was nearly complete. Most of its African neighbours considered Sékou Touré’s regime to be worrisome; its case was not advanced when, in March 1971, Guinea sent troops to prop up Siaka Stevens’ government in Sierra Leone, even as it complained that it needed to defend its own territory against continued imperialist plotting.\textsuperscript{104} Officials in states within reach of Conakry’s powerful radio transmitter reacted with disgust and disbelief to the broadcast confessions they heard, and assured American diplomats that they believed the statements to be, as the US chargé d’affaires in Mali put it, “unnecessary, fraudulent, and indicative of paranoia on part of Guinean leaders.”\textsuperscript{105} Relations with Senegal were particularly poor, as Sékou Touré attacked Senegalese president Léopold Sédar Senghor personally, accusing him of aiding and supporting the Guinean dissidents involved in the November invasion. Senghor responded by expelling the Guinean ambassador, arresting a former ambassador who was legally a Senegalese citizen, and threatening to expel thousands of Guineans who were living in Senegal.\textsuperscript{106} Even those of Sékou Touré’s counterparts who remained diplomatic in their comments about and dealings with the regime were dubious about its intentions to

\textsuperscript{102}Translated and reported in Norland (Conakry), “Guinea Foreign and Domestic Policy,” A-25, 5 June 1972; POL 1 Guin, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.


\textsuperscript{104}Conakry (Sherer) to State, No.761, 6 April 1971; POL 15-1, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.

\textsuperscript{105}Bamako (Katzen) to State, No. 1995, 21 September 1971; POL Guin-US, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP. State received similar messages from its posts in Sierra Leone, Ghana and Liberia.

improve relations with its neighbours. Guinea agreed to Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie’s offer to add Guinea’s differences with Senegal to the agenda of the OAU Committee of Ministers for January 1972. However, the Ethiopians were sceptical about whether Sékou Touré really did want improve relations with Senegal’s Senghor, and noted that the OAU could make little progress even if the meeting did go ahead, since the Guinean president was not in a position to leave his capital for more than a day.  

The socialist states of Eastern Europe and Asia were somewhat more pleased with Guinea, but even their assessments bear the taint of faint praise. The German Democratic Republic had likely gained more than any other foreign state from the hunt for Guinea’s fifth column. Yet even its assessment was lukewarm: “Since the imperialist aggression of 1970, Guinea’s path, both in words and in practical politics, has been oriented more strongly towards the socialist world-system, including the USSR,” reported the East German ambassador in 1972.  

Guinea was truly alienated from Western Europe. Among the casualties of the invasion and purge was the prospect of repairing Guinea’s relations with France. In November 1970, as General de Gaulle was dying, Guinea and France had once more been trying to restore diplomatic and economic relations when the Portuguese invasion took place. Although the French made some efforts to avoid aggravating the situation, for example by cancelling naval exercises planned with Senegal that same month, the efforts to restore diplomatic relations had nowhere near the momentum they would need to survive Sékou Touré’s rhetorical assault on France and imprisonment of a number of its citizens.  

It was not until 1975 that the two states resumed relations, ten years after their breach. Likewise Guinea only restored its relations with the Federal Republic of Germany in 1975.  

The US embassy remained in Conakry throughout this period of Guinean isolation, keeping a low profile both by choice and by virtue of the many restrictions.
placed on embassy staff by their host government. By 1971, almost no illusion remained in the State Department about why the US stayed in Guinea, or about what they might hope to accomplish there. A new policy planning paper for Guinea, released in June, listed the US objectives in the country for the next five years:

1. Protect U.S. equity investments in bauxite mining projects.
2. Access for U.S. investors to other mineral and natural resources.
4. Assist Guinea’s development efforts and contribute to the social and economic evolution of the country.
5. Offset Soviet and Chinese Communist influence by maintaining a low-profile, quietly effective U.S. presence.\textsuperscript{110}

That American objectives with respect to Guinea’s international and domestic politics had been so diluted marked the ascendance of \textit{realpolitik}, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger’s philosophy of how the United States should conduct its foreign relations. But it also tacitly acknowledged Guinea’s isolation and lack of influence in the region and in world politics generally. The hope that American diplomats such as Pierre Graham had expressed five years before, that Guinea’s insistence on true independence could be a model for other African states, had now completely evaporated.\textsuperscript{111}

There was only faint hope that the embassy’s low profile would be “quietly effective” against communist influences and as a support for private US interests in Guinea, but even that was misplaced. At the end of 1971, Sherer pleaded with his masters in the Department to make a statement out of his early recall to Washington. Even the American companies in Guinea were distancing themselves from the embassy, he argued, so there should be no ill effects from a reduced presence; on the other hand, a minimal embassy with no ambassador would communicate US displeasure to its Conakry hosts.\textsuperscript{112} Yet Washington had no stomach even for this minor, largely symbolic, gesture. The interval between Sherer’s departure from Conakry in December 1971 and the arrival of his successor, Terence Todman, was only a few weeks longer than the gap between Robinson McIlvaine’s departure and the date on which Sherer had presented the Guineans with his own credentials. Though by no means entirely responsible for its lack

\textsuperscript{111} Conakry to State, “U.S. Policy Assessment”, No. A-130, 26 January 1966; POL 2-3 Guin, Central Subject-Numeric Files 1964-66, RG 59, NACP.
\textsuperscript{112} Conakry (Sherer) to State, No. 2092, 30 November 1971; POL Guin-US, SN 1970-73, RG 59, NACP.
of influence in Guinea, Nixon’s government was making no visible efforts to improve matters.

Trying to explain Guinea’s isolation and economic failure in a December 1971 opinion piece in the *New York Times*, ex-ambassadors William Attwood and James I. Loeb suggested that the reason might be that “President Sékou Touré’s concept of independence was so total … that it became both unrealistic and artificial in this modern world of interdependence.”¹¹³ The two Kennedy appointees were right to identify independence as a central element of both the state and the nation that Sékou Touré built. But by blaming Guinea’s isolation and poverty entirely upon its president’s defence of the privilege of the sovereign state to manage its own affairs and dictate its economic and social policies, Attwood and Loeb deflected their readers’ attention from the role the outside world had played in the country’s sorry history. Far from being a fixed, stable concept whose content was clearly and impartially applied across all members of the international community, the meaning of sovereignty varied depending on the circumstances, the history, and the power each sovereign state exercised. Likewise, as Guinea’s example showed all too clearly, justice and human rights remained concepts that were contingent on the time and place in which they were invoked, and profoundly vulnerable to the will of those in positions of power. For all that Guinea’s independence had been defined as a matter of stature and membership in the international community, neither the community as a whole nor its individual components cared enough to challenge the regime’s power to terrorize its own citizens.

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Conclusion

Guinea’s First Republic came to an end in April 1984. The president died on 26 March 1984 in Cleveland, Ohio, after medical evacuation from Conakry by the US government. He was mere weeks shy of assuming a term as chair of the Organization of African Unity. His successor, Prime Minister Louis Lansana Béavogui, served as president for less than a week before being overthrown in a military coup led by Colonel Lansana Conté on 3 April. Though the coup leaders promised to “lay the foundations of a true democracy, avoiding in the future any personal dictatorship,” new president Conté followed in Sékou Touré’s footsteps in many respects: even if the plot against Guinea was no longer permanent, the plots against the new president were frequent, and were repressed nearly as savagely as those against his predecessor. Conté introduced nominally multiparty elections in the country in 1993, and was re-elected for successive five-year terms, although allegations of electoral fraud accompanied each election. His prediction that his rule would continue until his term expired in 2010 proved incorrect when he died, on 22 December 2008, likely of the diabetes from which he had suffered for many years. Twelve hours later, ex officio interim president Aboubacar Somparé was himself overthrown by a military coup, led by Captain Moussa Dadis Camara. Though Camara has promised to hold presidential elections in Guinea and hand over power to civilian rule by the end of 2009, there is little optimism that the government of the Third Republic will prove to be any more responsive, accountable or effective than either of its predecessors.¹

For the most part, the international reputation of the First Republic, most often personified in its president, remains profoundly – and rightly – tarnished by the savagery it inflicted on its citizens as Sékou Touré and the PDG fought to stay in power for twenty-six years. The US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs was

told in March 2007 that five thousand people died in Camp Boiro between 1961 and 1980.² Amnesty International estimated that over the course of Sékou Touré’s presidency a further one million Guineans had fled, most on foot, to neighbouring countries to escape political or economic conditions in their country.³ Given that the total population of Guinea was estimated at 2.3 million in 1956, this extraordinary exodus attests to how intolerable living conditions must have been.⁴

But there is another side to Sékou Touré’s legacy, even among members of that huge diaspora. It is expressed in songs such as Malian star Salif Keita’s “Mandjou,” a praise-song for Sékou Touré which exhorts him, “do not cry – for there is no one like you, and no one has done what you did for your people.”⁵ The late Miriam Makeba paid homage to the president of the country in which she spent sixteen years with songs such as “Touré Barika” (“Thanks to Touré”) and “Sékou Famaké” (“Sékou the Mighty Ruler”).⁶ Cultural critic Manthia Diawara, himself exiled from Guinea with his parents in 1964, calls Sékou Touré “an ambiguous modern hero” and provocatively positions him at “the beginning of our [Africans’] history” because of his embrace of modernity. In Africa, he argues, modernity is found in the fight for independence, the defiance of archaic traditional taboos, and the attempt to define nation-states – all epitomized by the agenda Sékou Touré claimed as his own. The ambiguity, of course, arises from the Guinean president’s signal failure to contribute to a fourth element of modernity: Africans’ desire for freedom and better lives.⁷

Clearly there is both nostalgia and a strong cultural resonance across West Africa to the independence that Sékou Touré proclaimed, defended, and sought to establish as

the basis of a new national culture in Guinea. That in itself justifies efforts to understand what it meant, and whether it really did represent a departure or merely a smoke-screen for the totalitarianism that many Westerners believed, with the unnamed official in France’s colonial ministry in 1958, to be “the African conception of power.” It is undeniable that national sovereignty in Guinea, as in many other states in Africa and around the world, permitted autocratic governments to terrorize, impoverish and demoralize their populations in the name of seizing and holding power, free of sanction from the wider community of states. More debatable is the question whether these effects have occurred on a scale of magnitude that is truly removed from what African people experienced under colonial rule or at the hands of certain pre-colonial rulers such as Samori Touré, of whom Sékou was said to be a direct descendant. The methods of international history provide useful tools to interrogate the crucial, but under-researched, issue of how the attributes of independence and sovereignty facilitated such autocracy.

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Did Guinea’s conception of independence have any discernible influence on the course of events in the wider world? It seems clear that Guinean independence, as conceived and orchestrated by its political elite, had a significant impact upon the pace and the nature of decolonization, at least in what remained of the French empire. Guinea was not, in itself, of central importance to France in 1958. Nor did it matter much to Charles de Gaulle’s efforts to ensure that his beloved country remained a power of the first rank in a world that was clearly changing rapidly. Unlike Algeria, it was not even worth fighting for. Nevertheless, its audacity in taking France at its word and its effective performance of sovereignty – its survival, despite France’s best efforts to undermine the hold of the political elite – influenced other African colonies, first in the francophone world and then across the continent, to take the leap into independence. Guinea’s performance also disproved the myth that sovereignty had to be conferred on a former colony by the fully sovereign state that had appropriated it in the first place.

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8 “Note d’information: Sékou Touré”, No. 82/BE, Ministère de la France d’Outre-Mers (MinFOM), Directorate of Political Affairs, 10 January 1958; Fonds Jacques Foccart, Fonds “Privé” 197, Archives Nationales de France (AN/AG5(FPR)/197).
Rather than waiting for France to decide how, when and how much sovereignty it was prepared to transfer to Guinea, as Britain had done in Sudan in 1956 and in Ghana the following year, Sékou Touré’s state demonstrated that even an African polity could demand sovereignty and function effectively in the world of nation-states over the objections of the colonial power that neither colony nor colonizer was ready.

It was far more difficult for Sékou Touré to parlay the independence of Guinea as a nation-state into what he believed to be the next necessary stage of Africa’s liberation process: African unity. The essential step was to reorient neighbouring states away from the former colonial power and towards the continent itself. At the level of rhetoric, this was not difficult: the ideological appeal of pan-Africanism and of its francophone counterpart of négritude was so obvious, and so deeply-rooted in the same traditions of thought that gave rise to nationalism, that even states whose leaders were inimical in nearly every respect to Sékou Touré and Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah, his fellow-champion of unity, could not speak against it. At a practical level, it was far more challenging. Even states such as Liberia which had never been formal colonies had colonial economies: trade was oriented to the export of raw materials and the import of finished goods, with both destination and source limited by various techniques, including tariffs, quotas and currency control, to one wealthy partner. In Liberia’s case, it was the United States; in the case of most of the states that surrounded it and Guinea, it was Britain or France. Sékou Touré’s dream of an African common market was already explicit in December 1958 when he addressed the All African Peoples’ Conference in Accra:

We have said it already, it is neither Guinea only, or Ghana only, or Liberia only that could have an influence upon the market of these products. Guinea, like Ghana or Liberia, suffers the law of the buyers. Now, imagine an African market for bauxite, iron, gold, oil products, cocoa, coffee, etc. … The law of offer would be, then, as important as the law of demand. Let us think a little of what might represent a market of this scale, the needs of which would be as enormous as the riches.  

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This dream may be even further from reality now, more than half a century later. Perhaps it was impossible; perhaps there were too few people in power in Africa with the political will and the economic sophistication to effect such a profound reorientation; perhaps it was always a cynical disguise for a strategy of extraversion, as Bayart defines it.\footnote{Rent-seeking behaviour that profits from the dependency of Africa: Jean-François Bayart, “Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion,” \textit{African Affairs} 99 (2000), 217-267.} But Sékou Touré’s project for African economic independence was also blocked at every turn by France. Even if, as Jacques Marseille demonstrated twenty-five years ago, many within the French industrial, administrative and intellectual elite recognized that, far from supporting the French economy, autarchic trade with its colonies was a brake on economic efficiency, diversification and, ultimately, growth, neither France nor its African allies were willing to risk the loss of support from entrenched interests, or public opinion, that attended disturbing colonial patterns.\footnote{Jacques Marseille, \textit{Empire colonial et capitalisme français: Histoire d’un divorce} (Paris: Albin Michel, 1984).} Instead, the French \textit{patronat} played a central role in crafting the policy of \textit{coopération} that perpetuated its privileges in compliant African post-colonies and in promoting the association of those new states with the European Economic Community.\footnote{Catherine Hodeir, \textit{Stratégies d’Empire: Le grand patronat colonial face à la décolonisation} (Paris: Belin, 2003), 256-68 and 294-301.}

Against the power of neocolonialism, the increasingly isolated and impoverished Guinea had little chance, even with the appeal of pan-Africanism on its side. Continuity and inertia, in the form of existing economic links, monetary arrangements and infrastructure designed primarily to support colonial trade, militated in favour of maintaining economic ties with former colonial powers. Though sovereign, the new post-colonial states still had little power to reverse Sékou Touré’s “law of the buyers”. Neocolonial ties were also favoured by the economic and political power of the former colonizers and their Western allies – and by many African leaders’ ideological attachment to capitalism, a crucial factor just as it seemed that the Cold War might spread to Africa. As the tragedy of Patrice Lumumba in Congo demonstrated, it was all too easy to characterize neutralists with radical ideas about how to run the economies of African states as communists and then to harness the hostility of the Cold War to the project of their destruction. Even as American policy-makers gently raised the question of whether
ongoing overwhelming dependence on trade and aid with France and its partners in the EEC was really in the long-term interests of African people, the US did nothing to counter such neocolonialism. In Congo’s case, the US enthusiastically backed United Nations intervention, ostensibly to support Lumumba’s elected government, but in reality to preserve stability. Stability in turn depended on maintaining the economic status quo ante independence of Belgian, US and British private sector access to Congo’s mineral resources and a political configuration that would not upset that access or block further inroads by US-based companies. The explicit objective was to keep Congo’s resources out of the control of the Soviet Union. In practice, this meant eliminating local authorities who demonstrated dangerous openness to Soviet assistance and propping up efforts to preserve a former colonial power’s economic privileges – and its ability to countermand the political choices made by a now-sovereign people. Sékou Touré was profoundly shocked at the murder of his Congolese counterpart, and equally deeply disillusioned with the apparent complicity of the US and UN in preserving European economic privileges on African soil.

Sékou Touré’s pan-Africanism owed more to his fear that independence in Guinea and elsewhere in Africa would be fatally compromised by neocolonialism than it did to any desire to cede the privileges of sovereignty in favour of continental government. The challenge that Guinea’s independence posed to efforts to unify the continent was, accordingly, complex and contradictory. Guinea’s advocacy of African unity was genuine in its insistence on locating sovereignty in all African people, and in its desire to eliminate all remaining infringements on that sovereignty by colonial rule and neocolonial economic and political influence. However, at the crucial moment when pan-Africanism took institutional form in the Organization of African Unity, Sékou Touré made a tactical decision. He decided that it was more important to get the agreement of African states across the Cold War-amplified divide of radical vs. moderate to create a single new organization and abandon previous groupings, including organizations that helped perpetuate French influence, than it was to get agreement to an end-result of political unification. The strategy worked in the short term: the OAU was created in May 1963. Its creation brought some stability to the continent, and, over its nearly forty-year existence, it had several significant successes, including the resolution
of conflicts among its members. But it did little to combat neocolonial influence, and even less to build common economic or political institutions among African governments. The pan-African project foundered on its own internal contradictions: how could the common sovereignty of all African people be made compatible with the specific sovereign rights of the nation-states that had been so successful in forcing the retreat of formal colonial power so quickly? Even by 1963, the practical powers of the nation-state were proving themselves to be more successful than a notional continental identity as a tool for fighting the racial essentialism that the international community of the 1950s and 1960s had inherited from previous centuries. The pan-African and négritude movements that fought against that racist view of black people accordingly fell prey to the lure of independence on the nation-state model.

Even after these setbacks, Guinea’s conception of independence continued to challenge developing patterns of interaction between the international community and African states. As foreign aid, not trade or investment, came to dominate economic relations between the developed North and the developing South, bilateral and multilateral donors came to have more and more influence over the economic decisions of individual recipient states. For a state built around a political elite with a near-monopoly over power, such as Guinea, this international intervention implied a degree of interference that was unacceptable. Guinean responses to French efforts in 1959 to attach political strings to technical assistance should have provided a clue: attempts to bind Guinean foreign policy to French objectives prompted Guinea simply to walk away from the promise of assistance. In the years from 1964 to 1966, it was the Americans’ turn. The Johnson administration grew more and more sensitive to criticism of its escalating war in Vietnam as it came under increasing pressure to show results from its foreign aid efforts. In turn, its tolerance diminished for Guinea’s brand of independence, which entailed the right to express dissenting views on matters such as American interventions in Vietnam and the Congo. The politicization of the bilateral aid relationship meant that by 1966, neither the US nor Guinea foresaw any realistic possibility of modernizing the Guinean economy through US assistance. A collision sparked by Guinean suspicions that the US had been involved in, or at least supported, the coup that overthrew Nkrumah
in February of that year eventually provided both countries with a convenient exit from
the relationship.

The independence of their state had its most devastating impact on Guineans
during the paroxysm of state terror that began in 1969 and continued at intervals for most
of the 1970s. It was not until years later that the nature of the political interaction
between the West and postcolonial African states came to be dominated, at least at the
rhetorical level, by concerns about good governance and the violation of human rights by
sovereign governments. However, it is tempting to search for connections between this
developing agenda and Guinea’s demonstration that sovereignty gave it the right to
persecute its own citizens to serve the ends of its political elite. Even the most
international of Guinea’s crises, the hunt for the so-called fifth column in the aftermath of
the Portuguese invasion of November 1970, could not stimulate an effective international
response to curb unjust and immoral acts by an autocratic – but sovereign – government.

Both of Guinea’s challenges to the emerging pattern of Western interaction with
African states suggest fruitful avenues for further research. Guinea failed in its efforts to
harness US aid to deliver the modernization that the recipient wanted, on its terms, within
its control and without hindering its freedom of expression or action on matters of foreign
policy. Mutual disillusionment coincided with major shifts in aid policy on the donor
end. Starting in 1966, the US tried to depoliticize crucial decisions about the amount and
the policy goals to be served by giving aid to Africa, choosing to back away from
bilateral aid programs that were affected by actual and potential US relations with each
recipient. Instead, the US made a decision to act through multilateral bodies, especially
the Washington-based International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, believing
it could rely on the World Bank’s expertise in evaluating the viability of projects to
reassure Congress and voters that aid money was not being wasted.

Though bilateral US aid – and the institutions that dispense it, chief among them
the US Agency for International Development – survived this shift, it has taken a back
seat to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. This was especially
apparent during the years of the IBRD’s focus on structural adjustment programs. James
Ferguson has considered the depoliticizing effect of multilateral aid and lending,
suggesting a link between such aid flows and Africans’ loss of influence over their own
governments. More recently, Dambisa Moyo has made a similar point in a more popular vein, arguing that this form of aid, in particular, undermines responsible government. Historical research in the form of case studies or comparative examinations could test these theories and provide important contextual information about the role of local political cultures in producing the provocative effects these scholars observe.

We could also usefully ask whether the shift actually had a depoliticizing effect at the donor’s end of the transaction. The existing historical literature on Western involvement in foreign aid – itself quite limited – has concentrated on tracing the effect of known political goals upon a state’s foreign aid program. Thus, for instance, Sara Lorenzini and Heide-Irene Schmidt have debated the extent to which the Hallstein Doctrine determined West German aid policies. Historians have not investigated the impulse of US governments, starting with Johnson’s, to move aid to arm’s length agencies like the World Bank on the assumption that as their lending policies were subject to significant influence from Washington this would alleviate political scrutiny from bilateral aid practices. The intent to depoliticize aid applies at both donor and recipient ends of the transaction. The US and Guinean experience of the early 1960s suggests that it might be equally impossible at both ends.

Another avenue for further inquiry suggested by the focus on Guinea’s independence as a challenge to the evolving Western orthodoxy about foreign aid is to compare Guinea’s Western experiences with the effects of aid from the People’s Republic of China. China’s role in Guinea grew over the course of the 1960s. The French and US archives suggest that this was because Chinese technical experts were more tolerant of poor living conditions in Guinea than their French, American or Eastern European counterparts. In 2009, China’s supposedly more business-like, and less judgmental, attitude to aid and investment in Africa is cited as one reason that Chinese activity is viewed with favour by African governments and even by individuals surveyed

Further research is required to validate this claim and to place it in a historical context of China-Africa relations. If this is true of Chinese investment and aid today, was it also the case in the 1960s? If not, when and why did the change occur? Similarities between the violent excesses of China’s cultural revolutionary period and its counterpart in Guinea in the late 1960s and early 1970s suggest that there might have been some political influence of the donor on the recipient, at least at the level of a transfer of repressive technique. It would also be valuable to investigate the impact of US recognition of the PRC upon its aid relationships with African states. Did recognition change Chinese attitudes to Guinea or other African states? Did it change China’s reception in those states?

Chinese aid to twenty-first century African states is said to be popular because, unlike Western aid, it is not accompanied by demands to improve the quality or transparency of local governance, or the protection of the economic, social or civil rights of inhabitants of recipient countries. The origins of this governance and humanitarian agenda is obscure, and further research is needed to ascertain how, for instance, the United States’ State Department changed from an institution that forbade its diplomats in Conakry from intervening to try to moderate the PDG’s purges in 1971, to one whose 2008 mission statement committed its representatives to “helping to build and sustain a more democratic, secure, and prosperous world composed of well-governed states that respond to the needs of their people.” Whether this represents a change in the focus of US diplomatic activities or merely a rhetorical shift is, of course, a highly contested question. But even as a rhetorical shift, it signals the rise of the idea that government responsiveness is a value that can, and should, be transferred somehow from the United States to countries with which it has diplomatic relations.

There is also compelling evidence that Africa, and the horrors to which Africans have been subjected over the past two decades, is driving some of the most significant developments in international humanitarian law. It was the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) at Arusha, Tanzania, which first convicted an individual, Jean-Paul Akayesu, of committing genocide. The ICTR was also the first court to

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17 Moyo, Dead Aid, 109-110.  
recognize rape as a crime against humanity and act of genocide, and to convict a woman, Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, of this crime on the principle of superior responsibility. The Tribunal was the first ever to convict a head of government, Jean Kambanda, of genocide. The Special Court for Sierra Leone, established to try those considered most responsible for crimes against humanity and war crimes during Sierra Leone’s decade-long civil war, has also set precedents, among them the recognition that the act of recruiting combatants under fifteen years of age is a war crime. Efforts to extradite and try sitting heads of state for their roles in humanitarian catastrophes in Sierra Leone (Charles Taylor of Liberia) and Darfur, Sudan (Omar al Bashir) are also pushing the boundaries of international law, not only the law governing criminal acts but fundamental expectations about the privileges of sovereignty. In fact, all four of the maps that currently illustrate the International Criminal Court’s website, inviting the reader to investigate the Court’s activities in respect of conflicts in those locations, are of African states (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, Uganda and Sudan).

That so many recent precedents of international law have been set in the aftermath of African conflicts raises a number of uncomfortable questions. Just as the law of sovereignty developed by contrasting the sovereign nations of Europe, which had rights, against non-sovereign peoples in order to define the permissible extent to which the latter could be exploited by the former, the developments in international criminal law in the 1990s and 2000s bear the taint of imperial hauteur. Efforts to charge, extradite and prosecute sitting heads of state occasion significant degrees of outrage – not just from African heads of state, but also from academics concerned with the perpetuation of colonial concepts such as the mission civilisatrice. To the liberal cosmopolitan argument that human rights are somehow universal even though they originated in the West, some would oppose a critique, dubbed “communitarian,” that rights “have to be grounded in the particular cultural and communal sources that interpret the ‘good.’” Others would propose to examine the process of “universalizing” human rights for the insights this

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19 Information about the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and the International Criminal Court’s indictment of al-Bashir may be found from the following websites: [http://69.94.11.53.default.htm](http://69.94.11.53.default.htm) (ICTR); [http://www.sc-sl.org](http://www.sc-sl.org) (SC-SL); and [http://www.icc-cpi.int/Menus/ICC/Situations+and+Cases/Situations/Situation+ICC+0205/](http://www.icc-cpi.int/Menus/ICC/Situations+and+Cases/Situations/Situation+ICC+0205/) (Case The Prosecutor v. Omar Hassan Ahmad al Bashir).
offers into historical and current practices surrounding the assertion, protection and denial of such rights.\(^{20}\)

There is no conclusive proof that the PDG’s implicit assertion that Guinean sovereignty gave it the right to prosecute, and persecute, enemies of the regime without foreign interference is connected to either the development of the governance and humanitarian agenda on the part of individual Western states, the United Nations, and permanent and *ad hoc* courts of international criminal jurisdiction. The suggestions of connections, however, are tantalizing. For instance, Amnesty International sounded the alarm about conditions inside Guinea within a few years of the organization’s founding in 1960.\(^{21}\) The role of this and other non-governmental organizations in raising the international profile of concerns for civil and other human rights seems like an important contributor to the new focus on governance and rights. Another tantalizing possibility is offered by the post-Guinea career of US ambassador Albert W. Sherer. From Guinea, Sherer went to Czechoslovakia and then to the negotiation of the Helsinki Accords (the results of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe), which recognized “the universal significance of human rights and fundamental freedoms … [as] an essential factor for the peace, justice and well-being necessary to ensure the development of friendly relations and co-operation among … all States” as a principle alongside “sovereign equality [and] respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty” as though there were no tension between them.\(^{22}\) Guinea’s experience – and that of many other African states since their independence – shows, if nothing else, that such tension exists. Listening to African voices – on this and so many other issues – would be an effective way of identifying the unacknowledged, often uncomfortable, hypocrisies and convenient silences in the history of international relations.


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