INTRODUCTION

It is necessary that the imperialist concept of the nation-state give way definitively to the modern concept of the multinational state.

—*Mamadou Dia, 1955*

The future of the 110 million men and women who live under our flag is in an organization of federative form.

—*Charles de Gaulle, 1946*

Each [territory], in the framework of French sovereignty, should receive its own status, depending on the very variable degree of its development, regulating the ways and means by which the representatives of its French or indigenous inhabitants debate among themselves internal affairs and take part in their management.

—*Charles de Gaulle, 1947*[1]

In the decades after World War II, the colonial empires in Africa gave way to over forty nation-states. How can we think about the manner in which this transformation took place? The words of Mamadou Dia—one of the leading political activists of French West Africa in the 1950s, later Senegal's first prime minister—should make us think beyond the conventional narrative of nationalist triumph. They should make us rethink as well the standard view of global political history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a long and inexorable transition from empire to nation-state. Nation and modernity, we are often told, go hand in hand. Dia was saying that the nation-state was neither modern nor desirable.

Dia's views were widely shared among political leaders in French West Africa. Their politics was firmly anticolonialist, but not nationalist in the ordinary, territorially focused, sense. Almost all agreed that

[1]Mamadou Dia, *La Condition Humaine*, 29 August 1955; Charles de Gaulle, speech at Bayeux, 16 June 1946, reprinted in Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages 1940–1946* (Paris: Berger-Levraut, 1946), 721–27; Charles de Gaulle, speech in Bordeaux, reported in *Le Monde*, 17 May 1947.

the colonies of French West Africa, eight small states with populations ranging from half a million to four million, were doomed to poverty and subordination if they tried to survive as independent nation-states. French West African political leaders sought instead to transform colonial empire into another sort of assemblage of diverse territories and peoples: a federation of African states with each other and with France.

Charles de Gaulle's very name evokes the idea of a strong French state. Yet in 1946 and 1947 he was saying that such a state could not be unitary. It would have to acknowledge the diversity of the territories that constituted it. In calling for a federal state, he did not need to tell his listeners that fewer than half of the 110 million French people he referred to lived in European France.

De Gaulle's federalism was not the same as Dia's. It put more emphasis on the federating state—France—than on the federated states. Neither federalism was classic, for neither posited a fully equal relationship among the federated components. Dia was more interested than de Gaulle in setting a political process in motion—as a movement *toward* the equality of African and European components of the federation. De Gaulle was above all interested in the federation remaining French, even if he recognized that not everyone would be French in the same way.

Why were such views *imaginable* in the 1940s and 1950s, 150 years after the creation of the French Republic as the incarnation of the French nation, at a time when Africans and Asians were seemingly striving for the kind of state Europeans supposedly had? If the basic narrative of transition from empire to nation-state is right, de Gaulle should have been defending a resolutely French France, with colonies as wholly subordinate entities, and Dia should have been claiming national independence.[2] Yet most political activists in French West Africa—from the radical Sékou Touré to the conservative Félix Houphouët-Boigny—sought some variant on the federal theme. Our expectations of what their history should have been are a backward projection of an idealized post-1960 world of sovereign nation-states.[3]

---

[2]Great Britain and the Netherlands were also considering different forms of federation as a response to the crisis of empire at the end of World War II, both to make regional development more manageable and to give a new legitimacy to an imperial polity. Michael Collins, "Decolonisation and the 'Federal Moment,'" *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 24 (2013): 21–40; Jennifer Foray, "A Unified Empire of Equal Parts: The Dutch Commonwealth Schemes of the 1920s–40s," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41 (2013): 259–84.

[3]John Kelly and Martha Kaplan also see the nation-state as a concept that became salient only after World War II, projected backward to fit a narrative that portrays it as natural and modern. "Nation and Decolonization: Toward a New Anthropology of Nationalism," *Anthropological Theory* 1 (2001): 419–37.

We can easily miss the kinds of approaches that political actors were pursuing. We know some turned into dead ends; the people involved did not. This book tells the story of how it happened that in 1960 the political actors of France and French West Africa ended up with a form of political organization that neither had wanted during most of the previous fifteen years.

In France, the colonial past was for some decades marginalized from even the best historical scholarship. By the 1990s, it was reappearing in some fine research, mostly by younger scholars making use of new archival sources.[4] More polemical works were also taking their place in public discourse, turning upside down French self-representations as the people of the rights of man. In such a perspective, colonial exploitation and oppression were not mere sidelights to French history, but an intrinsic part of French republicanism, its evil twin.[5] The critique of France's colonial past brought out anxieties among French intellectuals: about a French population divided between the descendants of "colonizers" and "colonized," about a society made up of multiple ethnic communities.

These debates have raised serious issues and include thoughtful works, but they have become so focused on defending or attacking the concept of "the colonial" or "the postcolonial" that they have moved away from the lived experiences the concept was supposed to elucidate.[6] The best way, to my mind, to move beyond this state of play is to get directly to the point: not the arguments of 2014 but those of 1945 to 1960; not what we now think people should have said in a colonial situation, but what they actually said, wrote, and did; not the supposedly immanent logics of preidentified types of political regimes, but the give-and-take of political actors in a time of profound uncertainty,

---

[4] See for example Raphaëlle Branche, *La torture et l'armée pendant la guerre d'Algérie 1954–1962* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001) or articles collected in the special dossier "Sujets d'empire," *Genèses* 53 (2003/4). Some of the best analyses of colonialism focused on the erasure of the subject from historical memory. See for example Benjamin Stora, *La gangrène et l'oubli: La mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie* (Paris: La Découverte, 1998).

[5] Examples include Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel, and Sandrine Lemaire, *La fracture coloniale: la société française au prisme de l'héritage colonial* (Paris: La Découverte, 2005), and Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, *La République impériale: politique et racisme d'État* (Paris: Fayard, 2009).

[6] This tendency toward abstraction can be found in the contributions to the debate over France and postcolonialism in *Public Culture* 23, 1 (2011). For a French scholar's attack on postcolonial studies, see Jean-François Bayart, *Les études postcoloniales. Un carnaval académique* (Paris: Karthala, 2010). Useful discussions include Marie-Claude Smouts, ed., *La situation postcoloniale: Les Postcolonial Studies dans le débat français* (Paris: Les Presses de Sciences Po, 2007), and Romain Bertrand, *Mémoires d'empire: La controverse autour du "fait colonial"* (Paris: Éd. du Croquant, 2006). On the connections between colonialism and "immigration" today, see Charles Tshimanga, Didier Gondola, and Peter J. Bloom, eds., *Frenchness and the African Diaspora: Identity and Uprising in Contemporary France* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

the words and actions of people who were trying to figure out what they wanted and what they might possibly obtain.

What lies between the "colonial" and the "post"? Not an event, not a moment, but a process. For some fifteen years, people struggled—and sometimes fought—over alternative visions of how to transform the French colonial empire, to make it more durable, to make it more democratic and progressive, or to bring it to an end. Positions changed during this time of interaction and conflict. To see this period in the history of sub-Saharan Africa as the confrontation of an obdurate French colonialism against a resolute African nationalism would be to focus on the positions that were the *least* defended at the time. Even in Algeria, what the French government was defending with extreme brutality was—in the minds of much of the top leadership—France's control of the process of modernizing Algerian society.

This book explores concepts that have abstract meanings—citizenship, nationality, sovereignty. But I examine their specific—ambiguous and changing—meanings given them by actors at the time, and I emphasize the stakes people had in them: whether or not an African would be able to claim as a citizen a right to enter and seek work in European France, whether an African postal worker in Bamako could demand the same rights to sick leave and union representation as a worker from Toulouse, how a politician could assert a claim to state resources and use them to mobilize supporters.

Citizenship, in most contemporary formulations, is a relationship between a state and individuals. Two of its features make it a particularly volatile framework. First, it defines inclusion—in a formal sense of membership in a polity and a more subjective sense of belonging—and therefore it also defines exclusion. Second, citizenship melds a person's rights and his or her obligations to a state, so that a state that wishes to enforce obligations—military service, tax payments, obedience to laws—faces the fact that the same set of expectations and rhetorics on which its power is based also underscore the claims of individuals to certain rights. Such a conception leaves open fundamental questions: On what basis are the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion determined—and what sort of state includes or excludes certain categories of people from the status of citizen? What rights and obligations are associated with citizenship, and what combinations of state authority, judicial institutions, and actions by citizens—be they in the street or the voting booth—shape what those rights will be?

Citizenship is the object of a contemporary critique of liberal or republican governance—not least its entwinement with a history of colonial conquest and repression and of national liberation. If citizenship marks a liberation from forms of monarchical and autocratic government, if a rights-bearing citizen chooses his or her leaders, does the very act of individualistic participation separate people from their

particular social connections and their particular histories, producing anonymous individuals linked to the anonymous state?[7] Does liberation from monarchs, oligarchs, aristocrats, and colonialists also separate politics from community?

If at an abstract level citizenship seems like a relationship of individual and state, in practice citizens act as members of communities and participants in networks, and the men and women whose actions constitute "the state" mobilize and organize their followers in the context of such relations. The notion of "belonging" that is intrinsic to citizenship might crystallize around collectivities that are both smaller—based on ethnic affinity—or larger—notably the possibility of citizenship in an imperial or multinational political entity that is the principal subject of this book.[8]

There is a specifically French dimension to such debates: French constitutions going back to the late eighteenth century proclaim the Republic to be "one and indivisible." Interpreting such a pronouncement is no easy task. Some argue that the Republic cannot recognize any distinction among citizens without threatening the fundamental principle of equality. One version of this argument is a radical defense of the equivalence of all citizens; another is a critique of citizens who seem to willfully refuse to integrate themselves into French society. Communitarianism appears in the latter argument as the current enemy of republicanism. Muslim "immigrants" are the principal target of such contentions.

Whatever the merits and shortcomings of these present-day arguments, the conceptual framework for both the egalitarian and the exclusionary versions presumes a singularity of republican thought that flattens French history. In the quite recent times that are the focus of this book, people actively debated the relationship of equality and diversity. The Constitution of 1946 referred to the "peoples and nations" of the French Union—in the plural—and, after much argument in which African deputies played an active role, it recognized that overseas citizens, within the Republic, could be citizens in different ways. They could vote in elections and have equal rights to education and to positions in the civil service, but unlike the citizens of European

---

[7] Long before the postcolonial and poststructural critiques of modern governmentality, Reinhard Bendix noted that citizenship "involves at many levels an institutionalization of abstract criteria of equality which give rise both to new inequalities and new measures to deal with these ancillary consequences." *Nation-building and Citizenship: Studies of Our Changing Social Order* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977 [1964]), 126. Recent scholarship on citizenship—and its increasing sensitivity to variety and complexity in studying different parts of the world—can be traced through the journal *Citizenship Studies*.

[8] Useful here is the notion of "meaningful citizenship" focused on the uneasy overlap of ethnic and national affinities in Lahra Smith, *Making Citizens in Africa: Ethnicity, Gender and National Identity in Ethiopia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

France, their civil affairs—marriage, inheritance, filiation—did not have to come under the French civil code.

To say that a person could be French in one or in many ways is to make an argument.[9] I am less interested in attempting to pinpoint, attack, or defend an essence of republican citizenship than to understand how such concepts were changed as they were deployed and contested in a specific historical context. One of the great debates of the postwar years among politicians and intellectuals in European and African France was how to reconcile a universalistic, egalitarian conception of citizenship with the particularity of African culture or cultures. This fundamental problem underlay controversies over numerous issues facing the French state: how to write a constitution for a France with metropolitan and overseas components, how to organize political participation and allocate legislative authority between metropolitan and overseas institutions, how to regulate labor or education within a varied and unequal political entity, and how to record the life-course events of citizens who had different conceptions of marriage, family, and inheritance.

In 1945, the demand for an inclusive citizenship in empire was revolutionary. The overwhelming majority of Africans—like Algerians—were then considered French nationals and French subjects but not French citizens. They could become French citizens only if they gave up their personal status under Islamic or "customary" law, accepted the rules of the French civil code over marriage and inheritance, and convinced administrators that they had fully accepted French social norms. Few chose to do so; fewer still were accepted.

But there was a notable exception. In the Quatre Communes (Four Towns) of Senegal the original inhabitants—*les originaires*—had since 1848 at least some of the rights of the citizen, including the right to vote, while keeping their personal and family affairs under the jurisdiction of Islamic courts. This situation was referred to as "citoyenneté dans le statut," a citizenship that recognized the particular personal status of the *originaire*. In these colonial enclaves, dating to the seventeenth century, French and local merchants forged ties to each other, often founding mixed families, and they gave shape to a culture of close interaction within a small world connected by sea to France and the Americas and by land and rivers to a large continent that lay beyond European knowledge and control. For French administrators, ensuring cooperation within the Quatre Communes was more important than defending the boundaries of Frenchness, and flexible

---

[9]As Niraja Gopal Jayal emphasizes in another context, "Every single dimension of citizenship is contested in contemporary India. . . . There are countless ways of being a citizen." *Citizenship and Its Discontents: An Indian History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013), 2, 6.

citizenship provisions made sense. Some French officials considered that the *originaires* were "électeurs" (voters), not "citoyens," with only some of the rights of the citizen. At last, in 1916, the French legislature made it explicit that they *were* citizens. For *originaires*, *citoyenneté dans le statut* made sense in a different way: as a means to defend a specific way of life. The established families spoke both French and Wolof; many were literate. Their status as rights-bearing individuals in French law was a bulwark in defense of a community that was not culturally French.[10]

By the time their citizenship status was secured, the people of the Quatre Communes had become a tiny minority in a large empire, as France conquered more and more of Western and Equatorial Africa. The large majority of conquered people were incorporated into a French imperial polity as subjects. For them—like most of the indigenous inhabitants of Algeria and other parts of the French Empire—the consequences of denial of citizenship were severe: lack of political rights, a separate system of justice known as the *indigénat* that placed arbitrary power in the hands of a local administrator, routine use—overt or masked—of forced labor. Throughout the history of the French Third Republic (1871–1940), some legislators repeatedly argued that a distinction between a citizen and a subject violated republican principles dating to the Revolution. But the distinction was already ingrained in both law and practice before the Third Republic was installed; governing different people differently was what imperial systems did. This book focuses on the last years of what had been an argument over the reach of citizenship—whether national or imperial—that had been going on for a long time, indeed since the French Revolution.

World War II created an opening in French politics that Africans were able to pry wider. France's defeat at the hands of Germany in 1940, the installation of a collaborationist regime in France itself, its loss of effective control over Indochina to the Japanese, and the destruction of the war left French politicians with the task of reinventing their country. One part of the empire had refused to participate in the collaborationist regime—French Equatorial Africa. It was no coincidence that that man who became its Governor General, Félix Éboué, was one of few men of color—he was from Guyana—to achieve high rank in the colonial service. His adherence to the government in

[10] Mamadou Diouf, "The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four Communes (Senegal): A Nineteenth Century Globalization Project," *Development and Change* 29 (1998): 671–96; Hilary Jones, *The Métis of Senegal: Urban Life and Politics in French West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013). The other exceptional citizenship regime was also an enclave colony—the French establishments in India. See Damien Deschamps, "Une citoyenneté différée: sens civique et assimilation des indigènes dans les Établissements français de l'Inde," *Revue Française de Science Politique* 47 (1997): 49–69.

exile of Charles de Gaulle provided a symbolic rallying point: France's honor was saved by its empire. Troops from North and sub-Saharan Africa contributed greatly to the reconquest of southern France from the Nazis.[11] As an Allied victory appeared within sight in 1944, the leadership of the Free French knew that they had to inaugurate a new—Fourth—Republic. Writing a constitution meant that the entire organization of the state was up for debate in a situation where the alignment of political forces was uncertain. There, defenders of the old order and advocates of reform—incremental or revolutionary—would collide.

The following pages trace the struggle of African political leaders to turn empire into something else, above all to turn a system of invidious distinction into a polity that was inclusive, diverse, and egalitarian. Remarkably, it was the Senegalese system of citizenship that through heated arguments became the basis of French constitutional law. The citizens of 1946, as they became known, obtained the "quality"—and the rights—of the citizens of 1789, but they did not have to abandon the legal marker of their social and cultural distinctiveness, their personal status.

In 1946, France's African subjects acquired the right to have rights, the right to make claims.[12] African leaders whose activism was critical to the process became icons of liberation. The extension of citizenship overseas became known as "the Lamine Guèye law," the act abolishing forced labor as "the Houphouët-Boigny law." But to what extent could a young generation of African leaders turn citizenship into an effective basis for making wider claims?

The argument was not just over an individual's relationship to a French state that was trying to portray itself as no longer "colonial." It was over what kind of community Africans could participate in. Leading African activists argued that each territorial unit within France should be able to express its "personality." They soon began to insist that territories should become internally self-governing, but still belong to a larger, more inclusive unit that would remain French. Empire would become federation or confederation, and the once-dominated colonies—Senegal, Dahomey, Niger—would become equal partners with European France.

Their arguments ran into practical and subjective objections from metropolitan elites who took their superior mastery of the arts of governance for granted. But these arguments could not easily be dismissed if France wanted to hold together some form of "grand en-

[11] Eric Jennings's forthcoming book on Equatorial Africa and the Free French will shed new light on this episode.

[12] The phrase "right to have rights" originates with Hannah Arendt, who was thinking about stateless people more than the colonized. *Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1951), 177. On the right to make claims, see below.

semble" at a time when the naturalness and justice of colonial rule was being questioned around the world. Would citizenship push Africans into a homogenizing Frenchness, or could it provide them with political tools to make good their claims to a status that was equal but different? And if Africans were to participate in a politics of citizenship, would they do so through the territorial entities—Senegal, Dahomey, and so on—that French colonization had created or as members of a larger collectivity representing what Léopold Sédar Senghor referred to as "Negro-African civilization"? These questions were debated continuously from 1945 to 1960—and beyond.

The citizenship that French West Africans were claiming in the postwar years was not that of a nation-state, but an imperial citizenship—in a composite political entity, built by conquest, governed in a way that had subordinated and denigrated its subjects, but which was, activists asserted, to be transformed into a structure that would ensure the rights and cultural integrity of all citizens.[13] Such a conception both assumed the history of colonization and transcended it.

African politicians were in part thinking in practical terms, that the territories of French Africa were too small (unlike India or Algeria) and too poor to survive as nation-states—one people, one territory, one government. But they also had a deeper conviction of how politics was evolving in their time. They saw themselves as part of an interdependent world. Reformed empire offered Africans the chance to associate not just with a rich country but also with each other. They saw the heritage of France as valuable too, especially the tradition of the rights of man and of the citizen. If African peoples were to find their way in the postwar world, these activists insisted, they needed to develop and synthesize the best of the traditions that France and Africa had to offer.

The imaginations of political actors in French West Africa were far from imprisoned in a "derivative discourse" or a "modular nationalism" stemming from the world's prior history of nation making.[14] The

[13]What Sukanya Banerjee writes about British India at the end of the nineteenth century applies to French Africa in mid-twentieth century as well: "it was the empire, rather than a preexisting prototype of nation, that generated a consciousness of the formal equality of citizenship." *Becoming Imperial Citizens: Indians in the Late-Victorian Empire* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010), 17. See also Jayal, *Citizenship and Its Discontents*, and Daniel Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship: Empire and the Question of Belonging* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

[14]My argument differs from that of Benedict Anderson. I see "imagined communities" in the twentieth century taking on a variety of forms—including ideas of imperial or postimperial communities and that of multinational states—rather than a single modular form originating in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In distinction to Partha Chatterjee's early critique of nationalism as a discourse derived from European sources and his later attempt to locate a specifically non-European (in his case Indian) path to the nation, I stress the original, nuanced, and interactive nature

possibilities debated between 1945 and 1960 were varied. We need to understand what those possibilities were, what different people felt each had to offer, and why, late in this period, those possibilities were narrowed. If we think from the start that we know what citizenship is and where it is located, we might not even look into such issues.

And if we begin with a premise that sovereignty means a division of the world into distinct and equivalent political entities, we will miss the ambiguities and conflicting conceptions that surrounded the concept in the mid-twentieth century. As James Sheehan points out, "As a doctrine, sovereignty is usually regarded as unified and inseparable; as an activity, however, it is plural and divisible."[15] It was this divisibility of sovereignty that gave both African and French leaders the possibility of dismantling colonial empire without having to choose between French colonialism and national independence, between assimilation and separation.

In positing federalism as a route out of empire, African and French leaders were trying to invent new political forms that would preserve some kind of assemblage while giving a degree of autonomy to the former colonial territories. How much autonomy and how the assemblage could be governed were in question.[16] In two efforts at constitution writing, in 1946 and 1958, political leaders could not agree on what—if any—form of federalism was acceptable in both African and European France. They came up with words—first "French Union,"

---

of the arguments of African intellectuals and politicians. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed, 1986); Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). For a critique of Anderson emphasizing the multiple forms of anticolonial politics, see Manu Goswami, "Rethinking the Modular Nation Form: Toward a Sociohistorical Conception of Nationalism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44 (2002): 770–99.

[15] James J. Sheehan, "The Problem of Sovereignty in European History," *American Historical Review* 111 (2006): 2. Sheehan (3–4) conceptualizes sovereignty as a "basket" of different rights, powers, and aspirations, all components of which are subject to claims and counterclaims. As John Agnew notes, there is nothing new about such conceptions: sovereignty has long been a varied notion with an ambiguous relationship to territory. *Globalization and Sovereignty* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 98–99. For studies of sovereignty that look beyond Europe, see Douglas Howland and Luise White, eds., *The State of Sovereignty: Territories, Laws, Populations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), and Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[16] The entry on "federalism" in the 1937 edition of the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* [ed. Edwin R. A. Seligman and Alvin Johnson (New York: Macmillan, 1937) 5: 169–72] terms it "a tendency to substitute coordinating for subordinating relationships." The author of this entry, Max Hildebert Boehm, thought that, in practice, federalism in international politics offered only a "vague outline," but it was this outline that Senghor and others were trying to fill in a decade and a world war later.

then "French Community"—to signify overlapping goals while allowing arguments over their institutional manifestation to continue. The uncertainty was intrinsic to what political theorists have pointed to as the ambiguity of the federalism concept itself.

What forms of political organization can reconcile autonomy and association? Since at least Samuel von Pufendorf in the seventeenth century political theorists have tried to answer such a question, and it was at the heart of debates over how to unite the former colonies that became the United States of America. Some have pointed to two possibilities: federation, in which only the federal unit is recognized internationally and in which the division of powers between federal and federated units is regulated by constitutional law, and confederation, in which the relationship among the units is governed by treaty and each retains a sense of national identification and international recognition. Among the political actors who worked with this distinction was Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal. Long concerned with reconciling equality and difference within an inclusive political system, he by the mid-1950s refined his argument into a plan for a three-level political structure: individual African territories (Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, etc.) with local autonomy, a federation embracing all the French West African territories (or perhaps a wider federation among Africans) with legislative and executive authority, and a French confederation, in which the West African federation, European France, and whatever other units chose to join would participate as free and equal member states. The middle tier, the "primary" or "African" federation, was for Senghor intended to both express and develop national sentiment among Africans and give Africans a stronger position in relation to European France. Not all African statesmen agreed. Félix Houphouët-Boigny of the Côte d'Ivoire opposed the middle layer. He wanted each African territory, individually, to join metropolitan France in a federation of equals. The dispute between Senghor and Houphouët-Boigny became known in the late 1950s as the battle of federation and confederation.

Both federation and confederation assume in principle the equivalence of their component parts. But that was not the situation that Senghor and other African leaders faced. Not only had France been a colonial power, but it was rich and large, with a well-educated population. And it had the great advantage of actually existing as an internationally recognized state. African states had to be created. The reality of whatever kind of ensemble France and its former colonies created was their inequality in resources and standard of living. Senghor referred to the need for both "horizontal solidarity"—of Africans with each other—and vertical solidarity—of Africans with France. And France was no disinterested, benevolent partner; its elites had their interests, prejudices, and anxieties.

Theorists have been telling us that the distinction between federation and confederation is artificial. If sovereignty is relational, the issue is not whether federated states do or do not have it, but just what the relationship among them is. The point is to recognize that the larger unit should be both "a people" and a plurality of peoples, that rights—including that of maintaining distinct cultural practices—need protection at different levels, that institutions need to balance common and local interests, that sovereignty is itself a bundle that can be allocated and shared in different ways.[17] Both the quarrel of federation and confederation and the euphemisms of Union and Community reflect the importance and the difficulty of imagining and turning into reality a complex political structure emerging out of a history of colonization and the quest for liberation. Senghor, de Gaulle, Dia, and Houphouët-Boigny were not theorists, but they were working with the intellectual and political tools they had—and with their quite different notions of what a Franco-African community should mean and whose interests it should serve.

In the first years after World War II, the question of African federation took a back seat to the immediate aim of virtually all African political actors: to obtain the rights of the citizen. Imperial citizenship was neither an oxymoron nor an unequivocal benefit to those who acquired it. For Africans, citizenship implied a claim on vitally needed resources, but what made the claim powerful was also what made attitudes toward it ambivalent—it was *French* citizenship.[18] And leaders in the French government were ambivalent about the basic characteristics of imperial citizenship—the equivalence of all citizens and the differences among them. They both welcomed and feared the consequences of the social and economic dimensions of citizenship: that Africans would become increasingly productive, useful, cooperative members of a French polity and that they would demand equality with their more affluent metropolitan brethren. They saw that France's recognition of the diversity of its citizens represented its best chance for survival as a world power, but could not quite accept that the different civilizations to which they belonged were on a par.

---

[17] Olivier Beaud, *Théorie de la fédération* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2009); Jean L. Cohen, "Federation," Political Concepts: A Critical Lexicon, www.political concepts.org/2011/federation; Jean L. Cohen, "Whose Sovereignty? Empire Versus International Law," *Ethics and International Affairs* 18 (2004): 1–24; Radhika Mongia, "Historicizing State Sovereignty: Inequality and the Form of Equivalence," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49 (2007): 384–411.

[18] As Sheehan puts it, "A claim is neither a request nor a demand. . . . To make a claim is to appeal to some standard of justice, some sort of right, but it is also to assert a willingness to back up this appeal with some sort of action." "Problem of Sovereignty," 3.

A Very Brief History of Citizenship

That citizenship has had shifting meanings over the sweep of history is not surprising; that its parameters were still uncertain in the mid-twentieth century is not so obvious.[19] Citizenship was associated with the Greek polis and the Roman Republic, with the notion of belonging to a unit of political solidarity, in which the people—or rather those who were adult, male, and free—would be ultimately responsible for governing that unit. When Rome expanded, citizenship was extended selectively—one did not have to be from the original city-state to become Roman. It entailed obligations—military above all—and rights, including that of being tried, if accused of a crime, in a Roman tribunal. Whether citizens could actually govern the empire was very much in question, but Roman emperors did not have to come from Rome. The empire included a diverse body of citizens, but also noncitizens, who had not desired or had not been accepted to a status that had become increasingly desirable as Rome's power grew. Then, in AD 212, the emperor Caracalla declared all free, male inhabitants of the empire's territories to be Roman citizens. Citizenship did not mean cultural conformity or that Rome was the exclusive focus of people's sense of belonging. One could be a Gaul and become a Roman.[20]

Citizenship was not the only form of belonging—it was precisely the specificity of its application that distinguished some Romans from others and distinguished Rome from other polities. It remained an exclusionary concept—excluding women and slaves within the empire and the "barbarians" without, although barbarians could become Romans and citizens.[21] In the centuries after Rome, citizenship was neither a general characteristic of "Western" polities nor a concept with a fixed meaning.[22] In fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Spain, it was associated with cities. In the France of Louis XIV, it referred to the king's assertion of power over people resident in its territory, not to their participation in governmental functions or decision making.[23]

The citizenship of the French Revolution was thus a major break, because it entailed a specific codification of rights, including the right

---

[19] Dominique Colas, *Citoyenneté et nationalité* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004).

[20] Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[21] Paul Magnette, *Citizenship: The History of an Idea*, trans. Katya Long (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2005).

[22] J. G. A. Pocock, "The Ideal of Citizenship since Classical Times," in Ronald Beiner, ed., *Theorizing Citizenship* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 29–52.

[23] Tamar Herzog, *Defining Nations: Immigrants and Citizens in Early Modern Spain and Spanish America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003); Peter Sahlins, *Unnaturally French: Foreign Citizens in the Old Regime and After* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004).

to elect representatives to an assembly that would represent the will of the people. A republic of citizens implied equality among them, but just who the citizens were and what dimensions of equality it entailed were not so clear.[24] Almost immediately after the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in 1789 the question of the domain of application of citizenship was posed. At home, the Revolutionary assemblies distinguished between an "active" citizen—who had to be male—and a "passive" citizen, whose person and property were protected by the rights regime but who did not participate in politics. It would take until 1944, when the female half of the population got the vote, for universal citizenship to entail universal suffrage.[25]

To some, the French "nation" was a bounded entity located in Europe. But the boundedness of the revolutionary nation was thrown open by events in the empire. In 1789, the white planters of Saint-Domingue—France's richest colony, the world's greatest producer of sugar, and the home to thousands of slaves, mostly African-born, living and working under miserable conditions—sent representatives to Paris to insist that the rights of the citizen applied to them. Moreover, they should have the right to govern their own colony, since the conditions of a slave society were not familiar to metropolitan legislators. Next came a delegation from the "gens de couleur," property-owning, slave-owning people born in most cases of French fathers and mothers of African descent; they too claimed that they should have the full rights of citizens. The assemblies in Paris could not make up their mind about these demands. Then, in 1791, a slave revolt erupted in Saint-Domingue, and among its complex strands was a demand by slaves for freedom and citizenship. The revolutionary government was threatened by royalist reaction, by the invasion of rival empires (British and Spanish), and by the slave revolt. It was for pragmatic reasons—not just revolutionary rigor—that the Republic decided to grant citizenship rights to free gens de couleur in 1792 and finally, in 1793, to free the slaves and make them citizens. It hoped to create an army of citizens to defend the revolution. The revolution, like most social movements that advance very far, brought together people across social categories in a complex struggle. Not everyone fought for the same goals, but an important part of the leadership sought to make France into a different sort of polity from what it had been, an

---

[24] David Diop, "La question de la citoyenneté dans l'*Encyclopédie* de Diderot et de d'Alembert: de l'irréductibilité de l'individualisme 'naturel' dans la société civile," in Claude Fiévet, ed., *Invention et réinvention de la citoyenneté* (Aubertin: Éd. Joëlle Sampy, 2000), 137–53.

[25] Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le sacre du citoyen: Histoire du suffrage universel en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).

empire of free citizens. The great hero of the slave rebellion, Toussaint L'Ouverture, became for a time a Commissioner of the Republic.[26]

Empire citizenship was ended by Napoleon, who reinstated slavery in 1802. At that point the revolution in Saint-Domingue turned from remaking France toward exiting from it. Napoleon's army was defeated by a combination of rebel armies and tropical microbes.[27] The proclamation of the independent republic of Haiti in 1804 was the flip side of Napoleon's restoration of slavery in other French colonies in the Caribbean.

France itself was ruled by people calling themselves king or emperor for three-quarters of the postrevolutionary century. Under monarchical or republican government, the line between a national France and an imperial France was frequently blurred. In 1848, the definitive abolition of slavery in French colonies turned an entire category of people of African descent into citizens rather than slot them into an intermediate category. It was in 1848 as well that the *originaires* of the Quatre Communes of Senegal obtained much of the rights of French citizens without giving up their personal status under Islamic law.

But by then, the course of colonization was moving in a different direction. After the conquest of Algeria, beginning in 1830, French officials, initially claiming to respect the arrangements of the previous imperial ruler—the Ottoman Empire—insisted that Muslims could keep their status under Islamic law. But as the conquest of the region proceeded with escalating violence and as the government promoted the settlement of peoples of Christian confession from around the Mediterranean to create the nucleus of a settler society under French control, recognition of difference turned into invidious distinction.

The colonization of Algeria was initially the work of the monarchies that ruled France from the fall of Napoleon until 1848. The republic that briefly followed the revolution of that year, while also making citizens out of the slaves of the Caribbean, declared Algeria to be an integral part of the Republic, without making clear what that meant for its diverse peoples. It was the Second Empire (1852–70) that brought a kind of clarity to the situation—in the terms of a frankly self-proclaimed empire. Napoleon III famously said, "Algeria is not a

[26] See the classic text of C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (New York: Vintage, 1963 [1938]), and the more recent books of Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), and *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787–1804* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

[27] Likewise, both the North and South American revolutions were struggles within the British and Spanish Empires before they became struggles against empire. The Spanish Constitution of 1812, with its attempt to sew together an imperial polity on both sides of the Atlantic, can be compared to the French Constitution of 1946, which will be discussed in this volume. See Jeremy Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

colony, properly speaking, but an Arab kingdom. The natives like the settlers have an equal right to my protection and I am as much the emperor of the Arabs as the emperor of the French." Napoleon III had no qualms about defining distinctions among the people he ruled, and the rationale for differentiating among them drew on the notion of personal status.[28]

From the Second Empire onward, Muslim Algerians were considered French nationals and French subjects, but not French citizens.[29] The idea that personal status could preclude citizenship applied to Jews as well until 1870, when a new decree placed them collectively under the civil code and in the category of citizen. Muslim Algerians would have to apply as individuals—renouncing their "Islamic" personal status—if they wished to become citizens. The "colons"— settlers of European origin—of Algeria made full use of their own status as citizens to keep Muslim subjects a clearly demarcated—and denigrated—population.

In the 1880s and during World War I some deputies in the French legislature argued for extending "citoyenneté dans le statut" to Muslim Algerians. They failed.[30] More successful during the Great War were the efforts of Blaise Diagne, the first black African to sit in France's legislative body, the Assemblée Nationale. Promising to foster the recruitment of his constituents on the same basis as other French citizens, Diagne convinced the Assemblée to pass a law that made clear that the *originaires* of the Quatre Communes did not simply have certain rights of the citizen but *were* French citizens, even though they kept their Islamic personal status.[31] This law was not the work of jurists working with abstract notions of citizenship and status, but a political act, overcoming the opposition of politicians who did not think that

[28] The quotation is from Napoleon III's letter to his Governor General, 1863, http://musee.sitemestre.fr/6001/html/histoire/texte_lettre_a_pelissier.html. On status and citizenship in Algeria, see Laure Blévis, "Sociologie d'un droit colonial: Citoyenneté et nationalité en Algérie (1865–1947): une exception républicaine?" (Doctoral thesis, Institut d'Etudes Politiques, Aix-en-Provence, 2004). A forthcoming dissertation for Université de Paris I by Noureddine Amara will shed new light on the notions of nationality and citizenship in Algeria in relation to the succession of empires, Ottoman and French.

[29] That all the inhabitants of French colonies were French nationals is attributed by some jurists to Napoleon. Roger Decottignies and Marc de Biéville, *Les nationalités africaines* (Paris: Pedone, 1963), 15n1.

[30] Blévis, "Sociologie d'un droit colonial"; Alix Héricord-Gorre, "Éléments pour une histoire de l'administration des colonisés de l'Empire français. Le 'régime de l'indigénat' et son fonctionnement depuis sa matrice algérienne (1881–c. 1920)" (Thèse de doctorat, European University Institute, 2008). Emmanuelle Saada, focusing on people of mixed origins, provides an insightful analysis of law, culture, status, and citizenship in the broad sweep of French history. *Empire's Children: Race, Filiation, and Citizenship in the French Colonies*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

[31] G. Wesley Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal: The Struggle for Power in the Four Communes, 1900–1920* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971).

originaires, as a collectivity, were worthy of the title. The reforms did not go beyond the Quatre Communes, an indication that France, like most empires, was engaging in a politics of distinction making, deciding which people had which rights.

In the 1920s, the politics of imperial citizenship shifted in the direction of exclusion.[32] As military veterans of North and sub-Saharan African origin asserted that they had paid the "blood tax" and deserved the pensions and other benefits of French citizenship, the government tried to emphasize that colonial subjects were firmly immersed in their own cultures and that citizenship was not only inappropriate but detrimental to their cultural integrity.[33] Officials proclaimed France's genius in recognizing the diverse cultures of its empire as they strove through "traditional" authorities to keep subjects in their place—socially, politically, and geographically.[34] Meanwhile, the government rejected proposals to take a more active role in the economic development of the territories, not just because they did not want to face the costs but because they feared disruption of the colonial order.

In this imperial context, some African intellectuals—including Senghor from Africa and Aimé Césaire from the Caribbean—argued that people of African descent all over the world should recognize their shared cultural heritage—their "négritude"—and the contribution their civilization brought to humanity. They developed such ideas in both poetry and political writing, but they were running up against a widely held view that difference implied a lesser sort of Frenchness.[35] The Minister of Colonies, in 1931, was explicit about the status of

[32] Mahmood Mamdani's book *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) has much to say about subjecthood but little about citizenship, and its attempt to explain current problems on the basis of "colonialism" leapfrogs over the changes and conflicts of the period discussed here. For critical discussion of Mamdani's book, see the section "Autour d'un livre," in *Politique Africaine* 73 (1999): 193–211, with commentaries by Ralph Austen, Frederick Cooper, Jean Copans, and Mariane Ferme and Mamdani's response.

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

[34] From the early 1900s through the 1930s, suggestions were made in the Ministry of Colonies and the Assemblée Nationale either to admit more Africans into citizenship or to create new categories intermediate between subject and citizen. Such proposals were rejected on the grounds that Africa was too diverse or that citizens might pose too many challenges to colonial rule. See Ruth Dickens, "Defining French Citizenship Policy in West Africa, 1895–1956" (PhD diss., Emory University, 2001).

[35] Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). Although I am not persuaded by Wilder's characterization of the interwar French colonial state, his interpretation of négritude usefully puts it in the context of the colonial situation and leads into the book he is now completing on the political thought of Senghor and Césaire, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World*. See also the biography of Janet Vaillant, *Black, French, and African: A Life of Léopold Sédar Senghor* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).

subjects who did not come under the civil code: "They are French, but 'diminuto jure' French," that is, of diminished juridical status.[36]

Extending citizenship to certain categories of Muslim Algerians was considered again under the Popular Front (1936–38), only to be blocked by lobbying from settler interests and other defenders of the colonial status quo. The Popular Front also considered applying to French West Africa some of the social legislation—including the forty-hour week and the expansion of trade union rights—it had implemented in the metropole, but local officials and business interests pushed back, insisting that Africans were too backward to benefit from such provisions. Even these limited initiatives disappeared along with the Popular Front in 1938. Forced labor was soon revived, the very idea of applying social legislation to Africans ridiculed.[37] Then came the war. French West Africa came under Vichy rule, while French Equatorial Africa, thanks to Félix Éboué, proclaimed its loyalty to the Free French of Charles de Gaulle.

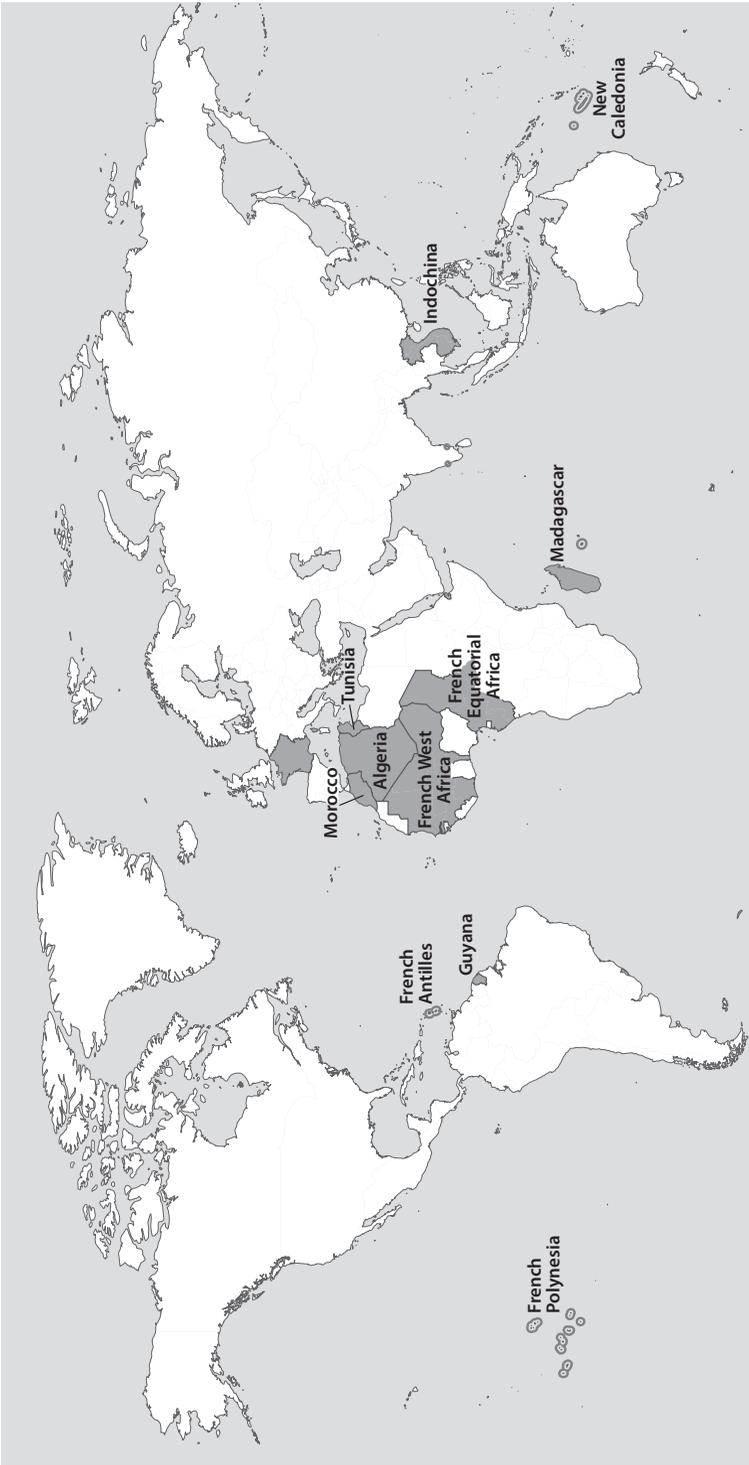## Empire in the 1940s: Governing Different People Differently

Well before the chronological focus of this book, citizenship was a permeable barrier, and the question of who would pass through it was not simply a juridical but a political question—hence one that was and would continue to be debated.[38] But could Africans have a say in the debate? And could the debate advance far enough to put an end to the invidious status of "sujet" or "indigène" (native)? The terms in which those questions were debated in 1945 and 1946 reflect the uncertain and fungible quality of concepts most French people think they understand—nationality and sovereignty.

Africans' status as French subjects and potential citizens should be considered in relation to a broader spectrum characteristic of empires. With the establishment of French protectorates from the 1860s over parts of Indochina, in 1881 over Tunisia, and in 1912 over Morocco, another category became an important part of the imperial frame: the fiction of protection implied the submission of the sovereign (the Prince of Cambodia, the Bey of Tunis, the Sultan of Morocco, and so

[36] Minister of Colonies, Circular to Governors General and Commissioners, 7 September 1931, B/20, SRAD.

[37] Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), chap. 3.

[38] The importance today of different trajectories in constructing citizenship regimes was emphasized in the pioneering work of Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992). For a more recent perspective, see Patrick Weil, *Qu'est-ce qu'un Français? Histoire de la nationalité française depuis la Révolution* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005).

New Caledonia

Indochina

Madagascar

Tunisia

French Equatorial Africa

Algeria

Morocco

French West Africa

French Antilles

Guyana

French Polynesia

Map 1. The French Empire, ca. 1945.

on) to French control over governmental affairs, but not the renunciation of sovereignty or nationality. An inhabitant of Morocco—other than a person of metropolitan origin resident in that territory—was a Moroccan national. France tended to act like a colonizing power in protectorates—that was what its administrators knew how to do—but it was constrained by the fact that other European powers had already established binding relations with the sovereign and that the juridical status of protected persons was distinct from that of colonial subjects.[39]

After World War I, the victorious empires added yet another category to their repertoires of power: the mandate. In Africa, colonies of Germany (Tanganyika, Togo, Cameroon, Rwanda, Urundi, and Southwest Africa) were assigned to Britain, France, Belgium, and South Africa. The international community—represented by the League of Nations—was supposed to ensure that certain standards of governance, in the interest of the indigenous population, were maintained.[40] The day-to-day administration of mandates was in most respects assimilated to that of colonies, but France neither assumed sovereignty over its mandates nor conferred its nationality on their people. Someone in Togo or Cameroon had a Togolese or Cameroonian nationality-in-the-making.[41]

The existence of multiple forms of imperial governance added flexibility to the French government's potential strategies, but it also posed the danger that one form might contaminate another. The international statuses of protectorates and mandates might reflect back on colonies. Indeed, during World War II, arguments for international trusteeship over all colonies surfaced, including in the U.S. State Department. Such ideas were greeted with consternation in London and Paris. The advocates of this proposition soon pulled their punches—fearing uncertainty and disorder—but the juridical status of mandates gave the idea some plausibility.[42] That the "normal" status of colonial

[39] Mary Dewhurst Lewis, *Divided Rule: Sovereignty and Empire in French Tunisia, 1881–1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

[40] Susan Pedersen, "Back to the League of Nations," *American Historical Review* 112, 4 (2007): 1091–1117.

[41] Syria and Lebanon, Ottoman provinces mandated to France after the war, were classified differently by the League and considered closer to self-government. By the 1930s, its inhabitants were considered Syrian and Lebanese citizens. Elizabeth Thompson describes the claims that activists made in the name of citizenship and the tensions between those claims and the paternalist ethos of French administrators and Syrian and Lebanese elites. *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

[42] W. R. Louis, *Imperialism at Bay: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire, 1941–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

empires was beginning to be questioned in international opinion lay in the background as French leaders considered the rewriting of their constitution in 1946.

The takeoff point for debates on the status of individuals and territories in overseas France after World War II was thus a complex polity in which different territories were governed differently and in which multiple juridical statuses were possible. Multiple statuses for territories and individuals implied the possibility of shifts among them. Could sovereignty be considered an absolute when some people who had it (the Sultan of Morocco) could not exercise it and a power that acted like a sovereign was not (France in Cameroon)? And if some French nationals in overseas territories possessed the rights of the citizen—consistent with the interests of the French Empire—could not those rights be extended further, in the interest of reforming and perpetuating the empire?

At the end of 1945, the new government repudiated the name "French Empire" in favor of "French Union," a recognition that the future of a complex and unequal polity depended on reconfiguring the relation of its components. These relations did not easily dichotomize into colonizer and colonized, but fell into six categories.

1. The metropole (European France)
2. Algeria, divided into Muslim non-citizens, and non-Muslim citizens
3. Old colonies, mainly in the Caribbean, but also the Quatre Communes of Senegal, where citizenship had been extended along with the abolition of slavery in 1848
4. New colonies, including most of French Africa, as well as Pacific islands, where most people remained subjects

All four of these forms were considered part of the French Republic and their inhabitants were considered "Français."

5. Protectorates—Morocco, Tunisia, the states of Indochina
6. Mandates—Togo and Cameroon

Such a structure is typical of the composite—and often flexible—structure of empires.[43]

French West Africa (AOF) and French Equatorial Africa (AEF) not only occupied a particular place in this composite structure, but were themselves composite. They were often referred to—misleadingly—as federations. They were in fact administrative units, established in 1895 and 1910 respectively, grouping separate colonies with the aim of coordinating economic policy and facilitating efficient governance. AOF consisted of Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan, Mauritania, Guinea,

---

[43] Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

Map 2. French Africa.

Upper Volta, Niger, and Dahomey, while AEF incorporated Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, Chad, and Ubangui-Chari. Each "federation" was headed by a Governor General, a powerful figure in the French colonial hierarchy, while each colony was administered by a senior official termed at different times Lieutenant Governor, Governor, and Chef de Territoire. African elites were affected by the experience of working within these two units. Some of the people who appear in the story told here—including Mamadou Dia of Senegal and Modibo Keita of Sudan—had attended the school, the École William Ponty, aimed at educating a small coterie of Africans who would bring French ways and their own esprit de corps to the different regions of AOF. Civil servants and teachers were often posted to different territories within AOF or AEF. And some had spent time in Paris.

AOF provided a model for Africans who were thinking beyond the level of the individual territory—if only an administrative unit could be turned into a political one, governed democratically, pooling resources, and expressing Africans' "horizontal" solidarity with each other. But not all West Africans experienced life in AOF in the same way. Its headquarters was in Dakar, in Senegal, but the territory with the best agricultural resources was Côte d'Ivoire. Landlocked territories like Niger and Sudan were poorer than their coastal neighbors and dependent on transportation links through them. Political activists would thus have to confront not only the differentiated nature of imperial governance, but the different levels of connection within French Africa.

Not just the best educated elites circulated around AOF or the empire. There were major streams of migrant agricultural labor—from Sudan to Senegal, from Upper Volta to Côte d'Ivoire—and dockers, seamen, clerical workers, and others moved about too. Military service imparted a wider experience of empire, for Africans served in other parts of the empire and on different fronts during two world wars. And while educated Africans had for some time been meeting up with people from across the empire in Paris, labor migration was picking up in the years after the war. Mobility defined a set of connections to something larger than the individual territory.[44]

Algeria, the North African protectorates, the Indochinese states, and the sub-Saharan colonies would all follow different paths through the transformation of empire and eventually out of it. France's lack of sovereignty over Morocco and Tunisia turned out to be an obstacle to its attempt to include them in a new order, but rendered less painful their eventual exit from empire. That Algerian territory and some of its

[44]This point is consistent with Anderson's contention (*Imagined Communities*) that the "circuits" of people shape the way they imagine communities, but those circuits were not specifically "national."

people were fully integrated into the French Republic made Algeria's path especially violent and traumatic. Sub-Saharan Africa was part of the Republic, but not an equal part. African political leaders were conscious of the weaknesses—especially poverty and territorial divisions—with which colonization had left them, and they understood that they had something to gain if they obtained the quality of citizen and made good on claims to equality with their fellow citizens. They did not face such a determined veto group as did their fellow ex-subjects in Algeria, but their own assertion of citizenship would mean no more than what their political actions could make of it.

We trace in the following pages the attempts of political and social activists in AOF to insist on the social and economic—as well as political—equivalence of all citizens and at the same time to seek recognition of cultural distinctiveness and the right to political autonomy within a wider French community. European France was an essential reference point for such claims: for what full political participation should mean and what a decent standard of living included. Africans, Senghor said in 1952, had a "mystique of equality." By the late 1950s, African leaders were also referring to a "mystique of unity" among themselves and a "mystique of independence," and the relationship among these objectives was far from clear. For French leaders, the question was whether they could reconfigure the multiple components of the French Union—including changing their juridical status and adjusting rights regimes—to give overseas citizens incentives to stay within the system, while retaining enough control in Paris to make the Union's preservation worthwhile. By the mid-1950s, they were caught in a dilemma: too much resistance to demands from sub-Saharan colonies risked opening a second anticolonial movement alongside the war in Algeria, but too full a response to demands for equality would lead to enormous expenses, as the people of impoverished former colonies sought equality with other French citizens in the era of the welfare state in Europe.

For Africans, the question of changing their relationship with France was made more complex by the uncertainties of their relationships with each other. In trying, in Senghor's terms, to conjugate "horizontal" and "vertical" solidarities, African leaders recognized that their mutual connections were based not only on a perceived common experience as Africans, but on relationships that passed through Paris and experience in French institutions, from schools to the Assemblée Nationale to the administrative structures of AOF. And they were acutely aware how much all these institutions—not just the formal structures of rule—had to be transformed if Africans were to have meaningful political voice in France in their territories, to achieve social and economic progress, and to ensure Africa's place among world civilizations.

That the power of the French state—and of the other western European powers—was badly shaken after World War II led African political leaders to believe that they could alter the power relations of empire. Before the war, some French Africans—relatively well educated and well traveled—had participated in networks of activists from around the world who challenged colonialism. On the ideological level, they had raised doubts about the seemingly ordinary nature of colonial empires, but their visions of a more just world ran up against the hard realities of imperial power. At war's end, the broad scope of internationalist anti-imperialism was becoming less salient, for the basic reason that political movements in different regions were achieving a degree of success, place by place. The colonial state was a moving target, deploying new strategies in response to pressures put on it and leading political movements to focus on goals that seemed increasingly attainable.

To understand how the ending of colonial domination was experienced we begin with the places where different people and territories stood in the complex and composite structure of French Empire at the end of World War II. We explore a dynamic of claims and counterclaims and of attempts to mobilize followers and shape the terms of debates—from the streets of Dakar to the legislative chambers of Paris. We need to set aside our assumptions of what a story of national liberation should be in order to understand the openings, closures, and new possibilities as people perceived them and in terms of which they sought to act. We explore what different people meant by citizenship, nationality, sovereignty, and state, and what they meant by France, Africa, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and other categories of political belonging.