

Deracializing Imperialism?

Citizenship and Conflict in French Africa after World War II

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Colonialism implied the rule of some people over others; its basic premise, many commentators hold, is the "rule of difference." To officials and white settlers in French or British Africa before the time of World War II, the racial basis of rule was self-evident. Whites in African colonies expected to live in segregated spaces, to be subject to the jurisdiction of different court systems, to have privileged access to offices and jobs, and to have a voice in councils of state denied to indigenous people. The humiliation of colonization reached its apogee in British Africa in colonies of settlement, where Africans were subject to arbitrary arrest for being in areas designated "white" unless they were there to work for white people. In French Africa, humiliation was generalized by the clear-cut distinction between citizen and subject, the latter vulnerable to extrajudicial punishment by the sole authority of a local administrator. During the interwar years, official doctrine looked away from more active versions of the civilizing mission to emphasize that African "natives" or "indigènes" were to be ruled through the structure of distinct tribes, each of which was held to be a natural and unchanging unit of affinity. Anyone not fitting into the schema of ethnic classification was likely to be called "detrribalized native." Such a person had lost his authenticity and should expect no recognition.

It is thus surprising that as World War II was coming to an end, the colonial administrations of both France and Great Britain sent out directives to their lower level officials that specifically addressed the issue of racial humiliation, asking them to insure that Africans

were treated with respect in government offices and public accommodations. The western-educated African, recently scorned for trying to flaunt racial categories, was increasingly portrayed as crucial to the future of colonial governance, replacing the chiefs whose role as the embodiments of African authenticity was just as quickly set aside. France went the furthest and with remarkable alacrity. In a few months in early 1946, the French government abolished the hated separate judicial system, brought elected Africans into the seat of power in the Parliament in Paris as well as into territorial assemblies and passed a law—later enshrined in the constitution—that abolished the distinction between citizen and subject. Instructing his African officials on the meaning of this law in June 1946, the French Colonial Minister wrote that the law "proclaims above all a principle of equality: there are no more subjects; there is no more colonial regime."¹ The Colonial Ministry became the Ministry of Overseas France. All legislation that distinguished between subjects and citizens, *indigènes* and *metropolitains*—would have to be rewritten, and the stakes, and potential costs, of such an equalizing process were so high that arguments over the details preoccupied the French state for the next decade. The new electoral regime and the new recognition of African trade unions and other associations forced officials to work with African interlocutors at every step of the way.

Some post-colonial theorists contrast an era of coloniality, in which the rigidity of the rule of difference reigned—to an era of hybridity afterward, when place, nationality, culture, and the markings of distinction—became disconnected from each other, each subject to contestation in ways not possible before. My argument is for a deeper probing of the colonial era itself and to see the racial conceptions of colonialism itself less as the foil against which postcolonial hybridity is to be unfolded than as a form of thinking that was itself unstable.² If colonialism

represents the dark underside of Europe's claims to be associated with progress, democratization, and rational governance, the inconsistency of this relationship was itself the cause of friction, and ultimately brought into question the plausibility of colonizing ideologies.

My argument is less about what deracialized imperialism was than about how it could be used, within and against a system of imperial authority. I make no claims about the "sincerity" of wishes to end racism, and I do not argue that nonracial imperialism produced an end to discrimination and prejudice, but rather that it opened up space for a different kind of claim making by African political actors. The repeal of the subject-citizen distinction, the cooptation of Africans into French legislative bodies, and the unification of judicial systems were not mere window dressing—they were fundamental to the structural and ideological basis of post-war French imperialism, and for that reason put the French government in the position of having to respond seriously to demands posed within the framework of the empire of citizens. The escalation of claim-making would soon lead France to question what it had long proclaimed to be the most basic: the French empire as unitary and indissoluble.

In looking at imperial citizenship after 1946, we are potentially still within the old French assumption that attributed universality to French cultural and social practices and thereby set the rules by which others had to seek advancement. Indeed, since the 19th century, the citizenship law in Algeria had operated explicitly by making citizenship available at the cost of renunciation of cultural specificity. Muslim Algerians, defined as subjects since the 1860s, could in principle become French citizens, but only if they renounced the application of Muslim law to their civil status, including issues of marriage and inheritance. This was a forbidding price to pay for most Muslims. Few tried to become citizens, and if they did they encountered an administrative

apparatus intent on keeping the entrance to the cité narrow. By the 1930s, the exclusion of Algerian Muslims from citizenship was the sorest of many sore points to Algeria's French-educated elite and to the people who followed their political lead.

So the striking feature of the citizenship law of 1946 is that it specifically says that civil status could not stand in the way of exercising the rights of citizenship. One could, for example, be subject to Muslim law in family matters, vote in a French election, and claim equal wages on an employment contract. As the Overseas Ministry's political bureau concluded, "the legislature wanted to mark the perfect equality of all in public life, but not the perfect identity of the French of the metropole and the overseas French."³ The implications of this were that the French had to set up a singular administration of criminal law, but separate structures to administer civil law.

So French colonial policy, in a short year after the end of World War II, seemed to have become not only egalitarian, but multiculturalist. But it is here that the limits of imperial nonracialism are reached. The multicultural element focused on civil law. But recognizing diversity of marriage and inheritance rules did not negate a singularly evolutionary perspective on social and economic processes. Instead, post-war thinking shifted from using evolutionary notions to mark the superiority of one civilization over another to specifying a state obligation to intervene in social services, economic infrastructure, and investment, all this embodied in another 1946 act that created the Fund for Economic and Social Development. Static hierarchy would become dynamic development.

But what was unclear in the postwar decades was who was going to define what equality and progress meant. In the decade after 1946, the French government lost control over the precisely this: who was decide the agenda for development and who would pay the bills? In the

mid-1950s, France faced the worst dilemma in its overseas departments most tightly linked by ties of white settlement, Algeria, where the government could neither make equality a reality nor disengage. In sub-Saharan Africa, the option of disengagement became increasingly attractive by the mid-1950s as the costs of responding to African demands to make equality materially meaningful escalated and the dangers of not responding appeared insuperable as the Algerian war worsened. It is through this episode of deracialized imperialism that one can begin to understand how colonialism at its most militantly interventionist unraveled. French Africa South of the Sahara was decolonized in 1960, non-settler British Africa between 1957 and 1964; in Portuguese Africa and settler colonies where the deracializing agenda was absent or sidetracked, the devolution of power and the abdication of responsibility were slower and more violent.

Let me briefly sketch the background to this story, making one point: neither the vision of French revolutionary ideology as universalistic and egalitarian nor the notion of the colonial subject as immutably distinct and inferior was ever stable. The polarity of citizen and subject was a focus of contention, not a given attribute of French imperialism. Barely had the French revolution begun, when white planters from the leading sugar producing colony of St. Domingue claimed that they had as much right to political voice as the people of Paris; soon a delegation from mulatto planters arrived in Paris to claim that as citizens and property-owners, they too had the same rights, regardless of the color of their skin. In 1791, conflict among slaveowners opened the space for a massive slave revolt, in which information about the arguments in Paris passed to slaves by slave-sailors and household slaves played a critical role. As the chaos in St. Domingue led to a British attempt to seize the island, the French governor combined pragmatism with revolutionary consistency by abolishing slavery in 1793 and trying to incorporate black

citizens into the army, a move extended to other sugar colonies in 1794. Napoleon tried to regain control and reinstate slavery, but lost Saint Domingue in 1804, while including the other islands and their reenslaved populations in his quite different vision of what an Empire was.⁴

When colonial slavery was abolished for good in 1848, in the midst of another revolutionary situation, slaves went directly into the category of citizen; no other category seemed available. But by then, France was already working out in Algeria the invidious distinction between subject and citizen, faced above all with the contradiction of trying to integrate Algerian territory into France itself while confronting a large majority who were Arab or Berber and Muslim. If the people of France's old colonies, including the small ones in West Africa, successfully struggled to keep themselves in the citizenship column, the new conquests in Africa and Asia in the late 19th century produced subjects, with the state proclaiming that as the civilizing mission proceeded, citizenship would open up before its subject, while in fact educational opportunities were tightly constrained and the barrier to citizenship impossibly high. In World War I, the one black legislator from the old West African colonies used the need for African soldiers to protect and enhance the citizenship rights of his constituents, giving rise to a cruelly contradictory situation in which most West Africans saw citizenship as a category in principle open to Africans, but in practice denied to them. The dangers of this were perceived in Paris, and officials in the 1920s tried to minimize the space of citizenship pried open in the war by a consistent policy of emphasizing the "traditional" legitimacy and authenticity of Africa's tribes.⁵

Where did the Africa question stand as World War II was coming to an end? The French defeat by Germany in 1940 had put in power a regime with no scruples about democratic values

and no qualms about racial subordination. Under the Vichy regime, Africans were pawns to be used in what Vichy thought was a rationally planned society, whereas white settlers and commercial firms were seen as corporate groups who were the legitimate interlocutors of the state. The use of forced labor not only escalated, but was talked about openly and without qualms. The Administration of French Equatorial Africa, however, refused to accept Vichy power and cooperated with the Free French. Then, when the Allied reconquest of continental Europe began via North Africa and a Free French government was installed in Algeria, the myth of France being saved from its colonies began to develop. By 1943, with North Africa conquered and French West Africa switching its allegiance to de Gaulle, Free French leaders in a literal sense were viewing France from its empire, and in a political sense realizing that an imperial vision was essential to French survival. Such a vision would have to represent a clear break with the past.⁶

There had been reformers within the colonial establishment since the 1920s, but they rarely got their way against complacent officials associated with settler and commercial interests. Forced labor was practiced extensively by the government for public works and, via winks and nods, for private purposes; discrimination in access to hotels, restaurants, and public services was a given, and even the small elite who had received education—and the infinitesimal elite with higher education in France—faced routine humiliation, worse in the colonies than in France itself. When the Popular Front briefly held power in 1936-38, the tone changed, practice less clearly so. Popular Front leaders themselves developed a conception of Africans as inherently peasant, reflecting a romantic, bucolic image of a France destroyed by industrial capitalism. The Popular Front's African was not quite the African of the previous administration—less a tool to be

exploited at will, less clearly a racial inferior in a genetic sense but still distinct in a cultural sense, as the term race had long been used in France. Some French intellectuals and scholars in the 1930s were developing alternatives to the scientific racism still in vogue, but their interests also lay more in the direction of defending a form of cultural relativism and exploring the particularity of human societies than in challenging the idea of the culture-bound African.⁷ What is most important about the prewar situation was that certain discourses critical of colonial racism were available even if they had not gained ascendancy at the top of the administration, let alone in the day-to-day actions of French officials, settlers, and businessmen.

The Free French seemed to begin in 1944 where the Popular Front left off in 1938. Initial policy was to wean the economy away from forced labor over a 5 year period, to begin a development fund that would improve infrastructure and, among other things, reduce manpower needs, to foster peasant production within traditional communities, and—more of a break—to give a wider role to the small number of évolués in the political system of Greater France. But officials confronted the race question and tried to distinguish their position from a repudiated past. René Pleven, the Gaullist colonial spokesman, took note in 1943 of racial incidents in Africa and insisted that "racial prejudices are strangers to the French heart and spirit." The Governor of Senegal issued a circular insisting that racial brutality, the use of racial epithets, and "unacceptable grossness" be punished.⁸ Officials charged with surveillance of African political action noted Africans' concern with such issues, including workplace discrimination, and the Governor General worried about "the current racial malaise which empisons relations between Europeans and natives."⁹

The situation moved not just because of these pious words but because of two related

processes which went beyond policy-makers' intentions and control. One took place in Paris and involved formal politics. In 1945 France allowed a small African electorate in its colonies, in separate colleges for citizens and subjects, to elect 23 deputies to the Assemblée Nationale Constituante. Their presence made it possible for issues to be talked about that would not otherwise have been raised and in close votes, their support could matter. They played a crucial role in writing the Constitution of the 4th republic and in designing the institutions of the empire, now renamed the French Union.

Meanwhile, in Senegal in January and February, a strike movement swept through the port of Dakar, culminating in a 12-day general strike that shut down the city. Throughout the strike, old-time residents, who were citizens, and recent migrants, who were subjects, were on the lines together. Officials in Paris realized the implications of this: the distinction between subject and citizen did not correspond to reality in Senegal, and it offered no help to figuring out how to restore the urban order. Instead, French officials turned to their metropolitan models of settling industrial disputes, and they negotiated with the unions, giving each major concessions until the general strike peeled back, layer by layer. The fiction that African workers were like any other worker, and could be handled as workers were in France, proved far more useful than the fiction of unbridgeable otherness. Further strikes would widen this opening.

What is notable about the racial politics of the 1946 strike is just where the claims of discrimination and the demands for equality were being made: not just by an elite of educated Africans. Rather the slogan "equal pay and equal benefits for equal work" was coming from wage earners, from manual workers in the port to civil servants. The demands were not just for better wages but for equal wages. In the case of civil servants, demands included the benefit with

the most profound social connotations, family allowances. Since 1932 French workers had been entitled to a series of benefits intended to encourage natality and the raising of healthy children, paid as per-child supplements to the wage. Metropolitan workers in the colonies had such entitlements, as well as others to indemnify them against the cost of displacement. All this became issues in the 1946 strike, for officials had heretofore rejected categorically the application of family allowances to Africans on the grounds that their natality needed no encouragement and African families were inherently different—polygamous in some cases, less burdensome, because of children's contributions to a peasant production, in others. In other words, Africans were different, and therefore their needs in the workplace were not comparable.¹⁰

The victory of the civil servants' union in the 1946 strike was thus significant. It was not a total victory for equality, but civil servants did emerge with family allowances across the spectrum of employment categories in the civil service, pegged to either 25 per cent or 50 per cent of the rates for the top category. The victory implied that family needs were comparable and the details would be contested later: in 1950 civil servants would achieve full equality of benefits and in 1956 private sector wage workers would obtain family allowances too.

In the Côte d'Ivoire, the issue in 1945-46 was forced labor. The first ivoriens to organize within the French electoral system were relatively wealthy cocoa planters. Not only were they alienated by a forced labor regime which supplied white planters and not them, but they had, of necessity, developed ties of tenancy and clientage with communities that provided voluntary labor and which laid the basis for an electoral campaign in 1945 in which the forced labor issue was key. The cocoa planters' Société Agricole Africaine became the nucleus of the campaign,

and its leader, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, was elected a deputy. He and fellow African and West Indian deputies soon proposed a law to abolish forced labor. Once the issue came out in the open in Paris, no-one would defend forced labor, and labor, henceforth, was proclaimed to be "free."¹¹ Here we have two instances in the months before May 1946 where the treatment of Africans as peculiar--as outside the norms of French social regulation--blew up in the face of the French government. The experience the government gained in dealing with these issues convinced them that the distinction of subject and citizen was unsustainable in post-war conditions.

The African and Caribbean delegates played leading roles in legislative debates over the new constitution. In the end, old colonies like those of the West Indies became departments just like those of the metropole. African delegates did not win as much autonomy for their individual territories as they sought, but did get representation in the Paris legislature and provisions guaranteeing the civil rights of all. Algerian delegates were the least successful, for reconciling their demands for autonomy, European settlers' insistence on dominance, and French notions of an indissoluble union was all but impossible. For the moderate left and centrist parties in France, the bottom line was French sovereignty, and conceding the principle of equal rights--including abolishing the special judicial regime for colonial subjects--was an acceptable price for bringing colonial representatives on board. The law of May 1946 abolishing the distinction between citizen and subject was passed with no dissent, because the crucial points had already been conceded in the votes on the constitution in April. French officials assumed that citizenship discourse could be kept in bounds as it had been since 1789: France would set the terms by which people would participate in legislative bodies, with decision-making centralized in France

itself; meanwhile, a tutelary ideology implied that the franchise would only expand as people followed a French-delineated path to education, development, and assimilation. One deputy worried that if colonial representation was proportionate to population then France would become "the colony of its colonies." Léopold Senghor, deputy from Senegal, replied that this remark was racist. This clash revealed that discourse had opened, power less so; colonial representatives would remain a minority.¹²

But for all the ambiguity of these discussions, the message of the constitutional debate and the citizenship law was one of equality. Everyone would be under the same legal regime; terms like "indigène" were banned from official publications; any citizen could enter European France and anyone could seek any job within the French civil service; all French citizens were supposed to carry equivalent identification cards.¹³

The citizenship law specifically repudiated the central theme of citizenship debates in Algeria: the linkage of citizenship to renunciation of personal status as a Muslim, and with it the regulation of marriage and inheritance under Islamic law. The French citizen could keep any personal status—Islamic or otherwise—unless he or she decided to repudiate it and come under French civil law. Officials realized that the implications of this—and the need to expand voter lists—meant that the *état-civil*, the registry of births, deaths, and marriages—that the French kept for citizens would not only have to be generalized, but would have to be subdivided into those whose relations of marriage and filiation took place under different regimes.¹⁴ The government never did quite figure out how to redesign the necessary institutions to be universalist and particularist—and above all efficient—at the same time.

All this reflects the shock to French confidence of World War II, the simultaneous need

to find a new basis of legitimacy after a war fought in the name of self-determination, and the fear that the biggest threat to France was that parts of the the Empire, Indochina and North Africa first of all, would exit. The constitutional debates reveal that threats of African and Caribbean delegates to boycott the Constitution if principles of equality were not made explicit forced conservatives to make concessions on the principle; this was genuine politics in action.¹⁵

If the government thought that it could control the evolving meaning of citizenship at its own will, it misunderstood the power of this concept. It was in regard to social citizenship that containment rapidly failed. The rhetoric of equality when linked to well organized social movements proved to be more substantive than French leaders probably thought it would be. After May 1946 came an explosion of demands coming from African social movements phrased in the language in which imperial hegemony was now being proclaimed. Trade unionists and political leaders used the notion of equivalence that underlies citizenship to assert that workers in French Africa should have the same wages and benefits as workers in France. More than that, these movements made use of a certain kind of thinking implicit in but also going beyond the citizenship construct: officials hoped that by pretending that the African worker was just like any other worker, that Africans would indeed become the predictable, orderly, productive--and essentially acultural--being that they wished to have.¹⁶ These issues were fought-over in the great railway strike in all of French West Africa, that lasted from October 1947 to March 1948. The principle of a "cadre unique," a single hierarchy for white and black workers, was conceded by management early on, and the strike was over the details of housing, indemnities for relocation, and the distinction between permanent and auxiliary workers, but really over the issue of power, over how much power government, the railway corporation, or the union would

have to regulate the workforce, with issues of equality at the forefront of each issue. The strike ended in a compromise, but the union made its most important point—that it could not be excluded.¹⁷

The labor movement used this conjuncture to demand, above all, the passage of a labor code that would forbid racial discrimination in employment, recognize that African workers had the same rights as French workers, and provide a framework for trade union recognition and collective bargaining. The debate over the Code took six years and was the focus of intense mobilization and strikes, but in 1952, the code was passed. The Senegalese labor movement, via the French communist trade union federation, affiliated with the World Federation of Trade Unions and thus to a kind of proletarian internationalism. This positioning of Africans as an exploited working class, as citizens of France, and as part of an assertive black population within the French system and beyond it reinforced rather than contradicted each other.

In one of the many legislative debates on the code, Léopold Senghor remarked, "As you know, Africans now have a mystique of equality. In this domain, as in others, they want the same principles to be applied from the first in the overseas territories as in the metropole."¹⁸ For officials, the rush of claims phrased in the language of equality, irrespective of race or origin, represented a success and a danger: a success in that the claim-making presumed that the unit in which equality was measured was Greater France.

The social claims seemed to dig Africans deeper into French institutions, for that was where their institutional energy was focused and it was in reference to France and the French standard of living that claims of equality were being posed. For a time, even when things were going badly for France in Vietnam and heating up in Algeria, the institutions of the French

Union seemed to be working well in sub-Saharan Africa. Aside from Cameroun, and for a time the Côte d'Ivoire, conflict focused on legislative institutions, and laws like the Code du Travail of 1952 represented successes of confining politics to seemingly safe places. Some officials thought this was true about the social struggles, noting of the long 1947-48 strike that: "Social peace can only profit from such a crystalization of forces around two poles, certainly opposed but knowing each other better and accepting to keep contact to discuss collective bargaining agreements and conditions of work."¹⁹

But the other side of the story was that the unions and the African political parties were using impeccable logic to show that anything short of complete equality in every sphere of political, social, and economic life was incompatible with French ideology, with the very justification for the French Union.

The French archives reveal that officials were, by the mid-1950s, thoroughly fed up with the demands being made upon them in the language of citizenship. The costs of modernizing imperialism in sub-Saharan Africa were high, and the promised transformation of the African economy was proving a more difficult goal than expected. An influential report on the modernization of colonial territories in 1953, warned of the danger that the process might result in the "exhaustion of the Metropole."²⁰ A French minister in 1956 put it bluntly: citizenship had come to mean "equality in wages, equality in labor legislation, in social security benefits, equality in family allowances, in brief, equality in standard of living."²¹ But if the costs of modernizing imperialism in sub-Saharan Africa were high, in Algeria the costs of not modernizing imperialism were even higher. The defeat of efforts to make citizenship meaningful to Muslim French citizens there left France with no strategy for avoiding or settling the war that

broke out in 1954. In sub-Saharan Africa, French officials were by 1956 looking for a way to back out of the endless demands of an inclusive imperialism without running into a stone wall that could become a second Algeria.

The formula they found was "territorialization." It meant a devolution of power, away from the Assemblée Nationale in Paris, and toward individual colonial territories. It was a strategy of divide and not rule. Each territorial assembly would be elected under universal suffrage and choose a cabinet that would work with a French governor. The leader would be a kind of junior prime minister, and the assembly would have real budgetary authority. That meant that political leaders who depended on the vote of African taxpayers would decide whether to answer demands for higher wages for government workers, for more state schools, for more health clinics, for more paved roads. The framework for the equivalence of the citizen would not be Greater France--whose resources seemed enormous viewed from Africa and limited when viewed from Paris--but the resources of the territory itself. The federation of French West Africa was stripped of much of its power and resources, for it represented a mediating structure, part way between territories and France and a likely unit for aggregating claim-making on France.

Criticism of territorialization came from civil servants' unions who realized that the territorial treasury would be much less able to meet their pay claims than the French one and most powerfully from Senghor, who realized that territorialization would imply "balkanization"--the division of Africa into units too small to challenge European states. But it was a losing struggle, for the resources which the law devolved on the territories were real, and in each case--Senghor's Senegal included--the first generation of elected politicians quickly adapted

themselves to the possibilities which this sort of access gave them. The reality of territorialization, however, was that it destroyed precisely what the French Union was intended to make invincible: the notion that France was the only unit in which real power was vested and toward which aspirations could be directed. Territorialization was—although no official admitted this—the decisive step toward decolonization. Either citizenship, with its premises of equivalence, or empire would have to go, and it was empire that went.

If imperial citizenship was too much citizenship for France, it was too imperial for many Africans, a humiliation for some who saw the French reference point held up before them, irrelevant for others who saw no equivalent to anything metropolitan in their conditions of life. This is not an historian's hindsight: there were vigorous debates at trade union meetings, political gatherings, and in newspapers over these issues. People later termed "fathers of the nation," such as Senghor and Houphouët-Boigny, were among the most notable for continuing to assert French citizenship, while Sékou Touré, shifted from a position of demanding equality with a Greater France to one which specifically repudiated such demands in favor of national assertion. If in 1946, the idea of national independence was to French leaders anathema and the politics of citizenship a game they were willing to play, by 1956 the costs of social and economic equivalence had become so threatening that the alternative of claims to national autonomy was greeted by French officials with something akin to relief.

I have spoken so far about political structure and ideology in an empire, and especially the unintended consequences of an incorporative logic. What such an analysis does not imply is that institutions and official ideology actually reformed the informal behavior and subjective attitudes of whites and blacks in West Africa. On the contrary, the new institutional

arrangements brought into the open racial tensions that were buried in the normality of the rule of difference in an earlier age. In 1948 and 1949, for example, the consultative assembly for overseas France was the site of a series of discussions about practices of racial discrimination in the colonies. Elected parliamentarians repeatedly cited their own experience in public accommodations of prejudicial behavior and sought to get the Administration to use its authority, existing laws on defamation, and specific legislation on prejudicial behavior to remedy the situation. Top officials insisted that this was their policy—and French law went and still goes much further than American in curtailing racially inflammatory speech.²² But the point remains that the new regime did not end the daily inflictions of humiliation in what remained a deeply divided social system, and from 1945 to the end of the colonial era one reads repeatedly in political reports fear that one or another sort of conflict was in danger of becoming a racial one. And if an Algerian-style conflict did not emerge south of the Sahara, the politics of a Sékou Touré reflected the continuing agonies of life in a colonial situation.

Nor did structural inclusiveness play out the same in all colonies. The West African case contrasts with the Algerian one. The West African colony with a significant white settler population, Cote d'Ivoire, experienced political tension through 1950, but by then settlers were marginalized, economically as well as politically, and the French government was quite well aware that the future lay in African cash crop producers and African political actors. In Cameroun, French officials tried to draw the line against a political movement, the UPC, that went too far in a radical direction, opened the door toward independence too wide, and they drove the movement underground and into a guerrilla conflict. The limits of the politically possible could themselves be the object of struggle. But in Algeria, administered as a part of

metropolitan France, neither the state nor Algerian activists could manipulate the citizenship construct in a supple way. The institutions of citizenship had long been coopted by white settlers and had been systematically used to keep Muslims from acceding to them. The generalization of citizenship to all colonials in 1946 was met with one strategy after another to minimize its significance, and by then it was probably too little too late for a significant portion of the Muslim Algerian population, some of whom were already articulating an Islamacist political alternative, others a radical form of anticolonial nationalism, although the argument for expanding French citizenship remained significant for the middle class, as did the communist trade union movement among Muslim and non-Muslim Algerians.²³ In any case, the settlers and the French army forced a reracialization of the Algerian situation; the war pushed the reracialization to heights of brutality. Neither the economic costs of deracialized empire in sub-Saharan Africa nor the political costs of reracialized empire in Algeria were sustainable within the French polity's imperial vision.²⁴

The logic of incorporation had its effects on the official imagination even after decolonization. People born in ex-colonies, including Algeria, before the date of independence had privileged entry to France and to the acquisition of French citizenship. These rules were only repealed with the curtailment of immigration in 1974. In that sense, France only became "national" 14 years after it gave up its sub-Saharan colonies, 12 years after the end of the Algerian war. And even the increasingly national conception of France has to be qualified by France's attempt to manipulate notions of francophonie—cultural as well as strategic connections—among its ex-colonies, and by rulers of those ex-colonies to manipulate such connections to obtain foreign aid or political support from France.

France's national framework shaped the forms of the reracialization of the French far right, which escalated in the 1980s. If imperial racism implied that colonized subjects had to be held within the polity, so as to be useful, and held in a position of inequality, nationalism racism implied exclusion. Lepennite racism drew on die-hard attitudes of settler and military experience in the Algerian war—now definitively separated from the object of their zealotry—but also on a tradition of "little France" xenophobia, Catholic, antirepublican, antisemitic and the sense of loss of a French community that had probably never existed. One cannot understand Lepennism simply as an imperial hangover; it emerges out of a national reconfiguration of French politics.

Looking back on the post-war decade, the emergence of the fiction of equivalence among all citizens in a indissoluble empire was very important for enabling French leaders to imagine how they could give up the empire. At first glance—and indeed in many academic accounts of French decolonization—the strength of French assimilationist doctrine is seen as an obstacle of devolving power, compared, say, to the ruling fiction of the British empire, that each territory was on its road to self-government.²⁵ In actuality, the distinction was not so neat. Both imperial regimes had to convince themselves that it was imaginable that Africans could govern themselves, and in both cases such an imaginative leap was inconceivable from the ideological perspectives clearly articulated by both regimes before and during World War II. The fiction of the modernizing African, brought into "modern" political and social institutions, was crucial for the reimagination of possibilities, to make it conceivable that Britain or France could have positive trade and diplomatic relations with post-colonial African states. The fiction of the formal equivalence of sovereign nations would help to get France out of the of the social and

economic implications of the equivalence of citizens.

But the last point gets us to an important reconfiguration of hierarchy in colonial discourse after the war. Racial discourse, as is well recognized now, depends on a combination of phenotypical and cultural distinctions; it is not uniquely genetic. But it leans heavily in the direction of stressing the immutability of distinction. The idea of a civilizing mission—given the penury of educational facilities, the marginalization of even those Africans who passed through them, and the fetishization of African "tradition" in colonial discourse—hardly challenged such premises.

In the post-war years, evolutionary views turned from a marker of superiority and inferiority into an active policy. It placed equal emphasis on the backward nature of African culture and on the potential of the African to achieve equality—under the right conditions. In some regards, such as labor policy, officials most often acted as if assuming that the African was an acultural working man would make it easier for him to become that. Officials hoped that separating the milieu in which workers lived and raised families from the backward countryside and the slums to which recent migrants came would enable a modernizing working class to evolve. A special office was created to study workplace behavior and teach new norms, and its director responded to the key question, "Is the black man maleable?" by saying "Yes, and at times marvelously so."²⁶

In other regards, officials stressed the opposite. The language of one French governor was typical, when he insisted in 1954 that one had to press development projects in the face of a population that remained "frozen in anachronistic and archaic concepts and does not see the necessity to participate by a voluntary and reasoned effort in the progress of their country."²⁷

Indeed, a major reason why officials were so intent on a policy of "stabilizing" wage workers and willing to argue for family allowances that would enable them to raise children without non-wage sector resources was to separate a working class from the supposed backwardness of village Africa.²⁸ In some ways, the opening of officials' minds to the malleability of the African led to a bitterness and severity toward those who chose not to follow this path and accounts for some of the excess in French repression of revolts in Madagascar in 1947 and Algeria after 1954.

The holding open of a "modern" future before Africans against a "traditional" present was to become one of the defining features of post-World War II social science, implicit in most analyses of social and economic development and explicit above all in modernization theory. The first modernization theorists, however, were in colonial bureaucracies, not in university departments.²⁹ The teleology and eurocentrism of modernization theory has been much criticized since the 1970s, and with good reason. But the other side of the concept of modernization is its repudiation of the immutability thesis. The world was hierarchical—arranged from primitive to modern—but the primitive could become modern, and indeed it was incumbent on those who already were to aid those trying to get there. Such a language had considerable influence, at least through the 1980s, when interventionist approaches to economic development came under a cloud and when the notion of modernity reverted in influential circles to its old form of static hierarchy rather than program of change.³⁰

But that is getting away from my central focus here, which has been a peculiar moment in French imperial history, when a regime explicitly tried to remain imperial while repudiating racial distinction. My goal has been to probe the nature and the limits of thinking like an empire. Thinking like an empire is not the same as thinking like a nation-state, and to think in terms of a

sharp divide between a nation's people and those outside, whom it may subordinate to national purposes, doesn't quite get at the complexity of how difference is articulated in imperial contexts. Imperial thought means combining a logic of incorporation with a logic of differentiation. Incorporation implies a series of possible strategies, in which France's long attempt to distinguish citizen and subject represents one and the 1946 decision to generalize citizenship another. Differentiation does not necessarily imply dichotomous distinction, but rather gradations of difference and distinct ways in which subimperial collectivities can relate to the state.

At the core of the attempt to revitalize imperialism for a democratic age was the older idea of citizenship: a citizenship that would mark both the definitive identification of all French people with the French imperial state and an attempt to portray that inclusion as something other than subservience. French leaders thought they could control the modalities of citizenship. They did not anticipate the power of the claim to equivalence in the context of the post-war moment, when the taken-for-grantedness of colonial systems fell apart, when ideas of national self-determination were much discussed, when the combination of growing export economies and extreme inequality in Africa energized labor movements, when the colonial wars in Vietnam and Algeria revealed the dangers of obstruction and delay in extending imperial citizenship, and when coalition governments in France sought allies among colonial legislators. The years 1946-56 witnessed an explosion of demands for equivalence—social and economic as well as political—whose legitimacy could not be contested and whose implementation would be the object of struggle.

The attempt by France to make imperialism non-racial between 1946 and 1956 reveals

the instability of empire when pushed to one pole of the incorporative/differentiating continuum. Meanwhile, the attempt to restructure empire revealed the ambiguity of racial ideologies, as the markers of hierarchy became imperatives for actively promoting social evolution, at a cost that soon became too high to bear. Unraveling the strange career of non-racial imperialism is crucial to understanding how the French elite convinced itself that it both could and had to give up colonies and how demands for economic and social equality were and still are posed within an unequal world system. To think through this moment helps us to comprehend the limits of power and of imagination within empires and the peculiarities of national ideas as well.

Notes

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1. Minister to Governor General, 14 June 1946, Archives of the Government General of French West Africa (AGGAOF), 17G 152.
 2. Partha Chatterjee sees the "rule of difference" at the center of colonialism, but I would argue that it is more fruitful to think of a politics of difference, for the relationship of incorporation and differentiation in colonial systems was contested and unstable. See Partha Chatterjee, The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 16, and for an alternative perspective Frederick Cooper, Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming 2005).
 3. AOF, Directeur Général des Affaires Politiques, Administratives et Sociales (Berlan), note, July 46, AGGAOF, 17G 152.
 4. On Haiti, the classic account remains C. L. R. James, The Black Jacobins (New York: Vintage, 1963; orig. pub. 1938).
 5. Alice Conklin, A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Ruth H. L. Dickens, "Defining French Citizenship Policy in West Africa, 1895-1956," Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 2001; 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.
 6. For the establishment's political thinking see the articles by influential governors Henry Laurentie, P.-O. Lapie, and Paul Emile Viard and the leading Gaullist René Pléven in Renaissances October 1944. See also Robert Lemaigen, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Prince Sisowath Youtévong, La communauté impériale française (Paris: Eds. Alsatia, 1945).
 7. Alice Conklin, "Civil Society, Science, and Empire in Late Republican France: The Foundation of Paris's Museum of Man," Osiris 17 (2002): 255-90. More generally, see Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, eds., The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).
 8. Circular from Journal Officiel of Senegal, 30 September 1943, Commissaire des Colonies to Governor General, 1 October 1943, AGGAOF, 17G 122; Commissaire to Governor General, 3 July 1944 (also citing Governor General's report of 14 June 1944), AGGAOF, 17G 127.
 9. Governor General to Minister of Colonies, 7 December 1944, AGGAOF, 17G 132.
 10. For an early expression of the call for equal benefits—decrying the "clearly racist inspiration"

of a regime that distinguished between French and African civil servants—see the petition presented by Lamine Guèye to de Gaulle, 21 January 1944, 17G 127. In a confidential memo on this petition, colonial officials were clearly troubled by the demand for equal family allowances, and could not refute the claim to equality among civil servants except by insisting that paying Africans on such a basis would create "a privileged class" in regard to the ordinary African taxpayer who would have to pay the bills. Note confidentielle au sujet du personnel africain, 23 February 1944, *ibid.* On the working out of this issue in the 1946 strike, see Frederick Cooper, "The Senegalese General Strike of 1946 and the Labor Question in Post-War French Africa," Canadian Journal of African Studies 24 (1990): 165-215

11. On the debates over forced labor in French Africa, see Frederick Cooper, "Conditions Analogous to Slavery: Imperialism and Free Labor Ideology in Africa," in Frederick Cooper, Thomas Holt, and Rebecca Scott, Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 107-50.

12. Edouard Herriot and Léopold Senghor, Assemblée National Constituent, Débats, 27 August 1946, 3334..

13. Minister of Interior circular letter to Commissaires de la République and Préfets, 20 February 1946, CAC 770623/83 on identify cards; Decrees of 23 December 1945, 20 February 1946, and 30 April 1946 on suppression of restrictions on personal liberty and of separate judicial regime. On the administrative difficulties of organizing a unitary penal system and multiple civil systems, see "Situation de la Justice en Afrique: Rapport de M. le Président Sedille, Membre du Conseil Supérieure de la Magistrature," 1952, CAC 940167/7.

14. Garde des Sceaux to Ministre de la Population et de la Santé Publique. 2 Jan. 47, CAC, 250236/24; Dir Generale de l'interieur, service des AP, note, sur l'extension et la reorganisation de l'état civil en AOF, Aug. 51. 23 G 33. There is considerably more correspondence on the long saga of establishing multiple versions of the état-civil in CAC 950236/2 and 23G 33.

15. Bruce Marshall, The French Colonial Myth and Constitution-Making in the Fourth Republic (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973)

16. Much of what follows is treated in detail in Frederick Cooper, Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

17. Frederick Cooper, "'Our Strike': Equality, Anticolonial Politics, and the French West African Railway Strike of 1947-48," Journal of African History 37 (1996): 81-118.

18. Assemblée Nationale, Débats 22 November 1952, 5502-5. Senghor used the phrase in print as well (Marchés Coloniaux 375 [17 January 1953]: 124) and the Governor General of French West Africa used it as well to tell officials of the central passion to which they had to accommodate themselves; so too did a leading French jurist, who saw this as basic to Africans'

attraction to the rule of law. "Allocution prononcée par Bernard Cornut-Gentille, Haut-Commissaire, à la séance d'ouverture de la deuxième session 1954 du Grand Conseil de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, 13 Octobre 1954, p. 20; P. F. Gonidec, "Une mystique de l'égalité: le code du travail des territoires d'Outre-Mer," Révue Juridique et Politique de l'Union Française 2 (1953): 176-96.

19. "La vie syndicale en A.O.F.," 31 January 1949, AP 3406/1.

20. Commission de modernisation et d'équipement des Territoires d'Outre-Mer, "Rapport général de la sous-Commission de l'intégration métropole Outre-Mer," 1953, PA 19/3/38.

21. Pierre-Henri Teitgen, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, 20 March 1956, 1072-73.

22. Assemblée de l'Union Française, Débats, 30 June 1948, 622-24, 1 July 1949, 852-58, 5 July 1949, 861-77; Minister of France d'Outre-Mer, circular to Hauts Commissaires and Commissaires, 15 December 1947, 17G 152.

23. One implication of formal equality for Muslim Algerians—exacerbated by the harsh conditions in Algeria—was that Algerians were free to migrate to metropolitan France, and did so in large numbers after the war. Officials noted that Algerians possess "total liberty." Haut Comité de la Population et de la Famille, "L'emigration des musulmans algériens en France." By Jean-Jacques Rager, Typed, nd but c. 1954, CAC 860269/3. The Algerian war is at last becoming a major focus of study. See for example Matthew Connelly, A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), and Benjamin Stora, La gangrène et l'oubli : la mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie (Paris: La Découverte & Syros, 1998).

24. The variations within French imperial system were even more complicated than this. Algerians, Muslim and non-Muslim, had French nationality as well as citizenship, but different civil statuses, since marriage, inheritance, and other civil status issues were regulated by the Civil Code for some and Islamic law for others. Metropolitan French people had a common citizenship, nationality, and status. Vietnamese (up to 1954), Moroccans, and others had come under French rule via protectorate status rather than full-blown colonization, and while this by no means excluded the most repressive aspects of colonial rule, it implied that these people had their own nationalities even when they had French citizenship, and post-World War II law recognized the multiple nationalities among such citizens, all of whom had the right to vote, to enter and settle in metropolitan France, the same civil liberties. Their civil status could vary. West Indians were just like metropolitans, and their territorial units after 1944 were departments, just like those of Burgundy or the Rhone. Subsaharan Africans were in overseas territories, not departments, but their original societies were not considered national, unlike Morocco, say, and hence when they became citizens of the French Union they acquired French nationality by default. The citizens of Togo and Cameroon, because they were UN mandates, had no nationality at all, but after 1946 they too were voting in French elections and had the rights of citizens. For the confusing state on the eve of decolonization, see Note for Secretary General of

the Community by Directeur des Affaires Politiques, Section d'Etudes, 16 January 1959, CAC 940167/4. More generally, see Patrick Weil, Qu'est-ce qu'un Français? Histoire de la nationalité française depuis la Révolution (Paris: Grasset, 2002).

25. For the conventional argument about the brittleness of French decolonization, see Tony Smith, "Patterns in the Transfer of Power: A Comparative Study of French and British Decolonization," in The Transfer of Power in Africa: Decolonization 1940-1960, edited by Prosser Gifford and Wm. Roger Louis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 87-155).

26. Interview with Raoul Durand, head of Office d'Etudes Psychotechniques, Combat 24 December 1954, clipping in K 418 (144).

27. Governor General Bernard Cornut-Gentile, "Memoire sur l'exécution du plan d'équipement en Afrique Equatoriale Française pendant les exercices 1947-48 et 1948-49" (Brazzaville: Imprimerie Officielle); M. Moreau, from Togo, to Conférence d'Etudes des Plans, 29 November 1950, Compte Rendu, AE 169; "Observations et conclusions personnelles du Gouverneur Roland Pré, Président de la Commission d'Etude et de Coordination des Plans de Modernisation et d'Equipement des Territoires d'Outre-Mer," May 1954, mimeograph in library of ANSOM, emphasis in original. Others complained about African "agricultural nomadism," archaic cultivation methods, and lack of initiative among African farmers. AOF, Inspection du Travail, Annual Report, 1951; Senegal, Rapport Economique, 1947.

28. See Cooper, Decolonization and African Society, esp. chapter 7.

29. Some of the earliest and most influential works that spelled out the modernizing ideology, Wilbert Moore's and later Clark Kerr's, drew on the reports of officials at the forefront of the effort to separate an industrial working class from rural Africa. Wilbert E. Moore, Industrialization and Labor: Social Aspects of Economic Development (Ithaca: Cornell University Press for The Institute of World Affairs, 1951); Clark Kerr, John T. Dunlop, Frederick Harbison, and Charles A. Myers, Industrialism and Industrial Man (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960).

30. This reversion has been eloquently described in an unpublished paper by James Ferguson, "Decomposing Modernity: History and Hierarchy after Development," 2002.

The Rise and Transformation of American Militarism and Imperialism after World War Two. Geopolitics. Global Atlanticism. 06.01.2016. Joaquin Flores. Part I: Europe After World War Two. World War Two caused unprecedented material destruction, and it took an appalling toll in human life. It also led to the first nuclear holocaust, triggered by the arbitrary decision of the government of the United States to test-drop recently built atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 [i]. Huge territories subject to colonial-imperial control in the Middle East, Africa and Asia, gradually became independent nations-states; while the United States of America volunteered to take up "the burden of empire" from former colonial masters: Britain, France, the Netherlands, or Japan. Africa and global markets: Sub-Saharan Africa, one of the last regions of the world largely untouched by "informal imperialism", was attractive to Europe's ruling elites for economic reasons. During a time when Britain's balance of trade showed a growing deficit, with shrinking and increasingly protectionist continental markets due to the Long Depression (1873-96). The expansion of national sovereignty on overseas territories contradicted the unity of the nation state which provided citizenship to its population. Thus, a tension between the universalist will to respect human rights of the colonised people, as they may be considered as "citizens" of the nation state, and the imperialist drives to cynically exploit populations deemed inferior began to surface. In World War II, French West Africa (Afrique occidentale française, AOF) was not a major scene of major fighting. Only one large-scale action took place there: the Battle of Dakar (23-25 September 1940). The region remained under the control of Vichy France after the fall of France (25 June 1940) and until the Allied invasion of North Africa (8-16 November 1942). French Gabon, the only colony of French Equatorial Africa not to join Free France after the armistice, fell to invading Free French Forces...