

# STORMING THE CITADEL: DECOLONIZATION AND POLITICAL CONTESTATION IN GUINEA'S FUTA JALLON, 1945–61\*

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## Abstract

This article examines how contestation between political parties, politicians, and their supporters shaped Guinea's decolonization from 1945 to 1961. The last region to resist the rise of Sékou Touré's PDG, the Fulbe-dominated Futa Jallon – as both a political space and representation of Fulbe culture – was at the center of strategic and intellectual struggles over the shape of the postcolonial Guinean state and society. What resulted from contestation was the general belief that the Fulbe and the Futa Jallon were divergent from the rest of Guinea, a fragment in the making.

## Key Words

Guinea-Conakry, chieftaincy, decolonization, ethnicity, nationalism.

The moment of independence has loomed large over Guinea's twentieth-century history. Guinea's dramatic 'non' in the 28 September 1958 referendum on the constitution of the French Fifth Republic reflected a unique political culture that diverged, at least temporarily, from its counterparts in Senegal, Soudan (Mali), and Côte d'Ivoire. France's vindictive reaction to the outcome of the vote further solidified the country's position as a leader of African nationalism, as well as influencing Guinea's decision to choose non-alignment during the Cold War. Mounting state repression during the 1960s came to cast a pall over independence, but the referendum still stood as a symbol of Guineans' unwavering support for self-determination. The 28 September, as both watershed moment and political symbol, has come to represent both the promise and peril of Guinean nationalism in the decades since 1958.<sup>1</sup> One would be hard pressed to find another historical event so laden with meaning for so many Guineans.

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1 On the legacy of the 'non' in Guinea, as well as its fading salience, see M. McGovern, 'The refusal to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the 1958 NO', in O. Goerg, C. Pauthier, and A. Diallo (eds.), *Le Non de la Guinée: Entre myth, relecture historique et resonances contemporaines* (Paris, 2010), 59–79; and C. Pauthier, 'Le non de la Guinée: un lieu de mémoire national', in Goerg, Pauthier, and Diallo (eds.), *Le Non de la Guinée*, 17–27.

This article, however, steps back from 28 September as the key point of entry for analyzing the process of decolonization in Guinea. Expanding the historical timeframe to the years both before and after formal independence, it argues for the importance of another moment during Guinea's mid-century period of political change – the campaign and elections for the semi-autonomous Territorial Assembly in 1957. That election, which shifted significant powers over local administration from former colonial officials to African representatives, represented the climax of competition between rival groups of African political parties. During the 1950s, three political parties – the *Bloc Africain Guinéen* (BAG) and *Démocratie Socialiste Guinéenne* (DSG) (both led by ethnic Fulbe politicians) and the *Parti Démocratique de Guinée* (PDG) (led by Sékou Touré) attempted to build constituencies and mobilize voters within the context of a rapidly growing franchise and increasing popular participation in the political process. Starting in 1954, Touré's PDG rode a wave of rural discontent to solidify the party's control over most of Guinea. By 1956, attention had turned to the last region to offer a semi-organized resistance to the PDG's spread – the Fulbe-dominated central plateau known as the Futa Jallon. The PDG leadership characterized it as a 'citadel of reactionary forces' within Guinea, recognizing that it was the key to dominance over the territory as a whole.<sup>2</sup> Fulbe elites saw control of the Futa Jallon as critical to their continued political viability.

In the run-up to the 1957 elections, both the PDG and the two Fulbe-led parties engaged in debates over the legacy of social hierarchies in the Futa Jallon, the legitimacy of the 'traditional' chieftaincy, and the function of regional cultural and social practices within a 'modern' Guinea. This symbolic struggle was complimented by different strategies for building political solidarities. The PDG was animated by territory-wide aspirations and a uniform conception of political space, the BAG and DSG by regionalism and a colonial politics of difference.<sup>3</sup> By the time the PDG rode to a sweeping victory in the 1957 territorial elections, the fault lines that would animate much of postcolonial politics in Guinea had been set: from both an internal and external perspective, the Futa Jallon diverged from the rest of Guinea. Independence in 1958 ushered in a temporary détente, but the PDG leadership would continue to view Futa regionalism as a significant obstacle to national unity, and would eventually enact a set of sweeping social, political, and economic reforms to break the Fulbe elite once and for all.

This article's emphasis on political contestation between African parties departs from previous histories of mid-century Guinea. Early characterizations of decolonization cast Sékou Touré as the main engine within a broad-based, anticolonial nationalist movement.<sup>4</sup> More recent historical studies have added nuance, extending the scope of activity beyond the figure of Touré and pointing to the roles of previously marginalized groups – notably

2 P. Koniba, 'La chefferie dit traditionnelle et l'évolution Guinéenne', *La Liberté* (Conakry), 10 July 1956.

3 J. Burbank and F. Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, 2010) 11–13. In contrast, see the concept of 'rule of difference' in P. Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (New York, 1995), 20; and N. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, 2001), 9–10.

4 F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, 1963), 227–35; S. K. Keita, *Ahmed Sékou Touré, l'homme du 28 Septembre 1958* (Conakry, 1977); J. Rabemananjara, Foreword to S. Touré, *Guinée, prélude à l'indépendance* (Paris, 1958), 12–13.

women, students, and the ‘rural peasantry’ – in the PDG’s ascent.<sup>5</sup> By privileging PDG narratives and identifying anticolonial nationalism as the prime force driving territorial politics during decolonization, however, previous scholarship on decolonization in Guinea has given second billing to alternative political movements and imaginaries, casting their competition with the PDG as a minor episode within the larger struggle against colonialism. As such, parties like the BAG and DSG are subsumed in the central narrative of the PDG’s rise, mere hurdles along the path to national independence.

While the defeat of colonialism was the PDG’s professed goal, party leaders and activists also sought to stamp out any signs of internal division – especially those informed by ethnic and/or regional identification – in favor of a unified and presumably strong Guinea. As Mike McGovern and Jay Straker have demonstrated, this political and social program eventually led to repression of regional economic, cultural, and religious practices in the name of postcolonial nation-building, most notably in Guinea’s Forest Region.<sup>6</sup> Given its size, economic power, and seemingly unified group of elites, the Futa Jallon and many of its inhabitants came to epitomize irredentist regionalism to the PDG, and represented the most organized threat to Touré’s domestic political project of making of a new, ‘modern’ nation. The PDG leadership saw the region’s political and ‘traditional’ elite as a force to be broken rather than incorporated into the Guinean nation, by contrast with its attempts to integrate the ‘peripheral’ Forest Region. For their part, many Fulbe politicians and elites thought of themselves as the protectors of the region’s culture and society against yet another intrusive outside power; they offered a vision of a postcolonial Guinea rooted in ‘tradition’ in opposition to the ‘radical’ PDG. The tug of war between these multiple visions of the Futa Jallon – and indeed, of Guinea as a whole – was the rhetorical and strategic focus of Guinea’s political parties beginning in the 1940s. The struggle between ethno-regionalist ‘racism’ (to use the PDG’s language), and the construction of a uniform Guinean national identity structured political discourse. While the defeat of colonialism was central to Guinean political discourse during decolonization, it was only one dimension of a richer discussion of the territory’s past and, perhaps more importantly, its path forward.

Like the Asante of Ghana and the Kel Tamasheq of the Malian Sahara, elite Fulbe in the Futa Jallon positioned themselves against what they saw as an intrusive nationalist movement; however unlike these two contemporaneous movements they did not construct an alternative nationalism.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, politicians and activists in Guinea grappled with

5 A. Diallo, ‘Sékou Touré et l’indépendance Guinéenne: déconstruction d’un mythe et retour sur l’histoire’, *Outre-mers*, 96:358–9 (2008), 267–88; C. Pauthier, ‘Tous derrière, les femmes devant! Femmes, représentations sociales et mobilisation politique en Guinée (1945–2006)’, in O. Goerg (ed.), *Perspectives sur le genre en Afrique* (Paris, 2007), 219–38; E. Schmidt, *Mobilizing the Masses: Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Nationalist Movement in Guinea* (New York, 2005), 1–3; E. Schmidt, ‘Top down or bottom up? Nationalist mobilization reconsidered, with special reference to Guinea (French West Africa)’, *The American Historical Review*, 110:4 (2005), 975–1014; E. Schmidt, ‘Anticolonial nationalism in French West Africa: what made Guinea unique?’, *African Studies Review*, 52:2 (2009), 1–34.

6 See M. McGovern, *Unmasking the State: Making Guinea Modern* (Chicago, 2013), 167–94; and J. Straker, *Youth, Nationalism, and the Guinean Revolution* (Bloomington, 2009), 107–32.

7 J. Allman, *The Quills of the Porcupine: Asante Nationalism in an Emergent Ghana* (Madison, WI, 1993); B. Lecocq, *Disputed Deserts: Decolonisation, Competing Nationalisms and Tuareg Rebellions in Northern Mali* (Boston, 2010).

deeper questions about the legacy of social hierarchies in a post-slavery society in addition to the memory of exploitation rooted in the territory's more recent colonial past in ways that resemble the Tanzanian case.<sup>8</sup> In his influential article and subsequent monograph on mid-twentieth century political change in Africa, Frederick Cooper emphasizes attempts to shape and remake ideas of citizenship and political community within the framework of imperial reform.<sup>9</sup> The history of Guinea presented below, like those of Mali, Ghana, and Tanzania, demonstrates that politicians and parties regularly searched for solidarities and made claims at levels that did necessarily correspond with established colonial boundaries. They built their parties in reaction to local circumstances and histories that were shaped but not solely determined by colonial rule. These types of layered belonging existed both below and beyond the more familiar analytical frame of the territory-nation. Despite their diminished visibility in the decades following independence, they are still integral to understanding how individuals and groups thought of themselves as members of political communities ranging from former slave villages in the Futa Jallon to citizens in the French post-empire. Ultimately, politicians and activists in Guinea grappled with fundamental questions about belonging and community in a time of rapid political change. The unsatisfying resolutions around which communities coalesced both before and after Guinea's 'non' gave rise to dynamics that have continued to shape Guinean politics well after independence.

## SETTING THE FIELD

For the first decade following the Second World War, the majority of political organizations in Guinea took the form of regional and ethnic organizations. Each of the four regions of Guinea – the Susu-dominated Basse Côte, the Fulbe-dominated Futa Jallon, the Maninka-dominated Haute Guinée, and the ethnically diverse Forest Region – hosted its own organization that relied upon networks of kinship and cultural similarities to build party-like structures.<sup>10</sup> There are several possible explanations for the early regional orientation of Guinean politics. Most immediately, organizations in Guinea, like those throughout French West Africa (AOF), were shaped by the pre-1945 prohibition on explicit political activity that was at its most severe under the Vichy regime. Cultural and ethnic associations, therefore, often functioned as fora for semi-private political discussions and early organizing.<sup>11</sup> The regional bent of organizations within Guinea may also have resulted from the French colonial administration's attempt to 'chop Guinea in four', with each region corresponding to a single ethnicity.<sup>12</sup> Such an argument is most

8 J. Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* (Bloomington, 2011), 92–4. On similar debates in Dar es Salaam, see J. Brennan, *Taifa: Making Nation and Race in Urban Tanzania* (Athens, OH, 2013), 122–8.

9 F. Cooper, 'Possibility and constraint: African independence in historical perspective', *The Journal of African History*, 49:2 (2008), 167–96; F. Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960* (Princeton, 2014), 4–12.

10 S. K. Keita, *Les Elections en Guinée Française (1945–1958)* (Paris, 2011), 36–50.

11 R. S. Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa* (Oxford, 1964), 18, 176–83.

12 O. Goerg, 'Couper la Guinée en quatre ou comment la colonisation a imaginé l'Afrique', *Vingtième siècle*, 111 (2011), 73–88.

compelling as an explanation for the *Union Forestière* in the Forest Region, which sought to group together a number of smaller ethnic communities into a viable political party. Other regional organizations in Guinea – most notably in the Futa Jallon and Haute Guinée – imagined themselves as reflecting precolonial political formations and offering a mode of political activity with roots prior to colonial intervention. Whether rooted in the more recent colonial or distant precolonial past, these early attempts at creating political movements established ethno-regionalism as a central organizing principle in early postwar Guinean politics.

The most influential political organization in the Futa Jallon during this early period was the *Amicale Gilbert Vieillard* (AGV), established in 1943 by a group of Fulbe students at the William Ponty School outside Dakar.<sup>13</sup> At first envisioned as a cultural organization, the AGV soon branched out into politics by promoting Fulbe candidates during Guinean elections.<sup>14</sup> The group sought to thread an ideological needle, advocating political and social reform while respecting the cultural and religious roots of the Futa Jallon. Its policy of measured change was reflected in its position towards the colonial chieftaincy, an office AGV leaders thought should persist but be brought in line with ‘modern’ forms of governance through gradual professionalization. Members also promoted the ideal of an African youth movement that did not take European formations as its main reference; as one member put it, they should set aside the cultural influences of the young African *évolué* (‘suits ... sunglasses ... cigarettes ... the *rumba*’), as well as those of the ‘Western savant’, ‘who knows little’, and the colonially educated African, ‘who barely [has] two diplomas, and knows even less’. Instead, the new generation of political, religious, and cultural leaders in the Futa must be rooted in its homeland, not formed for the sole purpose of serving in the colonial administration.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to articulating a unique, although still somewhat ambiguous vision of a ‘modern’ Futa Jallon, the AGV also served as an incubator for young Fulbe politicians. The group’s first leader, Yacine Diallo, was Guinea’s most prominent African politician until his untimely death in 1954.<sup>16</sup> Barry Diawadou, his successor as the political representative of the Fulbe establishment, also served as president of the AGV and led a conservative putsch within the organization in 1951. The third prominent Fulbe politician of the 1950s, Ibrahima Barry better known as ‘Barry III’, was not officially affiliated with the AGV, yet still had close ties to the more leftist members of the organization. Notably, the Fulbe politicians reflected the establishment roots of the organization; all three were the sons of colonial chiefs, and Barry Diawadou belonged to one of the two families that had ruled the precolonial Futa Jallon state. At the same time, all had also been educated at Ponty before entering the colonial civil service. These dual influences – one

13 The organization’s namesake, Gilbert Vieillard, was a French administrator and ethnographer who undertook several studies on the Futa Jallon. See C. Malon, ‘Gilbert Vieillard, administrateur et ethnologue en Afrique occidentale (1926–1939)’, *Cahiers de sociologie économique et culturelle*, 33 (2000), 107–31.

14 Archives Nationales de Guinée (ANG) 2Z17, ‘Publication de déclaration d’associations’, 18 Oct. 1946; interview with El-Hadj Ibrahima Caba Bah, Labé, 28 Feb. 2013.

15 Archives Nationales de Sénégal (ANS) 17G140, letter from Abdoulaye Diallo to Alfa Barry, 8 Apr. 1945 (intercepted by the AOF postal service), 14 Apr. 1945.

16 ‘Yacine Diallo, député de la Guinée, est décédé’, *La Guinée Française* (Conakry), 15 Apr. 1954.

‘traditional’, the other ‘modern’ – shaped the ideological bent of the organization as a whole, which saw itself as having more political legitimacy than either the colonial chiefs in the Futa or the African labor union leaders on the coast.

There was one important exception to the ethno-regional model used by early Guinean political organizations. As the Guinean branch of the AOF federal *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (RDA), the PDG was at the time the only party with territory-wide ambitions. The party’s membership differed radically from the AGV, drawing primarily from workers and civil servants in Guinea’s major cities. Reflecting its labor roots, early influences on the RDA leadership came from the study groups led by the French Communist Party (known as *Groupes d’Études Communistes* or GEC).<sup>17</sup> Free and open to all Africans living in Conakry, the GECs provided a framework for political action and debate. These courses also influenced the tactics that the PDG would later use to spread into the Guinean interior. GEC handbooks promoted an easily replicable system of ‘cells’ or local party organizations to be led by a core group of dedicated activists who would then leverage rural discontent with the colonial chiefs to spread into the interior. Through such a process, GEC leaders believed, the organization would move beyond its urban base to include the much larger rural population in a common struggle against colonialism.<sup>18</sup> This was a strategy that the PDG would come to adopt nearly wholesale.

A young Sékou Touré, then a low-level postal clerk, was a fixture in the Conakry GECs during the 1940s. By 1950, Touré had risen up the ranks of African labor unions in Guinea, and following a series of anticolonial labor strikes in the early 1950s became the unquestioned leader of the PDG. Despite repression at the hands of the colonial administrators, even after the federal RDA had severed ties with the French Communist Party, the PDG continued to grow in popularity, especially in cities in the coastal hinterland.<sup>19</sup> The 1954 special election to replace the recently deceased Yacine Diallo as Guinea’s representative in the French Union Assembly established the PDG’s position as Guinea’s most prominent party, and Touré as the territory’s top politician. Although Touré narrowly lost to Barry Diawadou, who counted both French officials and chiefs as supporters (and possibly co-conspirators), widespread accusations of fraud and a series of popular protests in favor of the PDG led to a marked increase in the party’s popularity in the interior, especially in rural areas.<sup>20</sup>

The PDG’s rise pushed Fulbe politicians to organize their own political parties. Barry Diawadou established the BAG, which was supported by a group of colonial chiefs and, PDG leaders claimed, prominent members in the Guinean colonial administration.<sup>21</sup>

17 Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 225.

18 J. Suret-Canale, *Groupes d’Études Communistes (G.E. C.) en Afrique Noire* (Paris 1994), 110–11, 118–27.

19 E. Schmidt, *Cold War and Decolonization in Guinea, 1946–1958* (Athens, 2007), 34–43; interview with Sidiki Kobélé Keita, Conakry, 8 Feb. 2013.

20 ANS 17G586, Commissaire Centrale Conakry to Commissaire Divisionnaire Guinée-Française, ‘Incidents au quartier Coronthie’, no. 76 S/P, 7 Sep. 1954; Centre des Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer (Aix-en-Provence, France) (CAOM) 1AFFPOL/2144, Pruvost, ‘Incidents de 1954–1955 en Guinée’, 11 Mar. 1955, 9–15; ‘Tentative d’assassinat à Conakry [sic]’, *La Liberté*, 26 Oct. 1954; ‘Encore des incidents sanglants à Conakry et à Tondon’, *La Liberté*, 13 Feb. 1954.

21 CAOM 1AFFPOL/2143, Lieutenant-Gouverneur Guinée to Gouverneur Général AOF, ‘Réclamation relative aux élections partielles de la Guinée – scrutin de 27 juin 1954’, no. 320/APAS, 7 Aug. 1954.

Barry III created the DSG, which was affiliated with the metropolitan Socialist Party (SFIO). The two parties were self-consciously styled after the PDG, even adopting some of the reforms the PDG had called for in the late 1940s. They diverged from the PDG, though, in courting the support of the Futa Jallon's most prominent elite families, in particular the two that had ruled the precolonial Futa state in alternation.<sup>22</sup> Barry III, sensing an opportunity to win over more reform-oriented members of the AGV and the Futa elite, would soon criticize the chieftaincy as a corrupt institution in need of drastic reform.<sup>23</sup> Yet, despite his rebuke of the chiefs – one that signaled an ideological shift towards the PDG – Barry III continued, along with Barry Diawadou, to present himself as the rightful representative of those elites within the Futa Jallon who were open to reform yet still rooted in the cultural politics of the Futa.

Such an approach was effective at first. In the early 1950s, the franchise was still limited in the AOF to tightly defined groups ranging from mothers of two or more children to those literate in Arabic.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, even as the right to vote expanded, the Futa chiefs still held some sway over the region's non-elite and slave status communities. The French administration in Guinea enacted *de jure* abolition in 1905, but former masters continued to own the majority of the region's fertile land, restricted access to places of worship and associated prestige to former slaves, and dominated the political, social, and cultural life of the region well into the 1950s.<sup>25</sup> The chiefs could be counted on to deliver enough votes in these early elections, and as long as Barry Diawadou and Barry III counted on Futa votes to build winning coalitions they would have to collaborate with the Futa's 'traditional' elites.

Thus, the PDG and the Fulbe-led parties were based upon different models for building political solidarities. The question of which model was better suited for a rapidly changing political terrain would soon be put to the test. The PDG quickly consolidated its hold over most of Guinea save for one region: the Futa Jallon. It became clear to the PDG leadership that the greatest impediment to the party's domination of Guinea as a whole was the Fulbe elite of the Futa Jallon and their political representatives in the BAG and DSG. As long as former masters and colonial chiefs held sway over former slaves and their votes, PDG

22 Interview with Thierno Oumar Barry, Conakry, 17 Feb. 2013; interview with Alpha Barry, Conakry, 14 Feb. 2013; CAOM 1AFFPOL/2143, Henri Bernard, 'Note sur l'élection partielle à l'Assemblée Nationale', 21 June 1954.

23 ANS 17G586, 'Renseignements, réunion publique à Labé de la Démocratie Socialiste de Guinée', 7 Jan. 1955; CAOM 1AFFPOL/2143, 'Motion, les Chefs du Foutah-Djallon, réunis le dix juillet 1955 à Mamou, sous la Présidence de l'Almamy Ibrahima Sory Dara Barry, Chef de Province, Grand Officier de la Légion d'Honneur, Grand Conseiller de l'A.O.F., Chef religieux du Foutah', 10 July 1955.

24 The latter provision of the voting code had been shepherded through the French National Assembly by Yacine Diallo, who was no doubt aware of the history of Islamic scholarship amongst the Futa Jallon's elite. Loi no. 47-1606, *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 28 Aug. 1947.

25 For precolonial hierarchies in the Futa, see W. Derman, *Serfs, Peasants, and Socialists: A Former Serf Village in the Republic of Guinea* (Berkeley, 1973), 7–56; T. Diallo, *Les Institutions Politiques du Fouta Djallon au XIXe Siècle* (Dakar, 1972), 101–13; and J. E. Harris, 'The Kingdom of Fouta-Djallon' (unpublished PhD thesis, Northwestern University, 1965), 49–73, among others. On the durability of these hierarchies, see R. Botte, 'Stigmates sociaux et discriminations religieuses: l'ancienne classe servile au Fouta Jaloo', *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, 34:133/135 (1994), 109–36. On the concentration of land resources in a small number of Fulbe elites through the colonial period, see M. Diop, *Réformes foncières et gestion des ressources naturelles en Guinée: Enjeux de patrimonialité et de propriété dans le Timbi au Fouta Djallon* (Paris, 2007), 87–113.

leaders reasoned, the party could not consolidate its position as the dominant territory-wide political organization. Therefore, in the run-up to the 1957 elections for a new semi-autonomous territorial assembly, the PDG shifted its focus to storming the ‘citadel’ on the high plateau.

## STORMING THE CITADEL

The PDG leadership decided that criticizing the chieftaincy would be an effective strategy to turn rural communities in the Futa Jallon against local elites opposed to the party, and the chiefs, supposedly the most entrenched and powerful in Guinea, became the main targets of the new PDG attack against the exploitation of colonial rule. If the PDG was able to undermine them, so the party leadership reasoned, the chieftaincy as an institution stood little chance of surviving. In turn, the parties the chiefs supported would eventually wither away. Beginning in 1955, the main PDG newspaper, *La Liberté*, focused on exposing cases of canton chiefs and local religious leaders ‘pillaging’ persons of former slave status to expose the corrupt nature of the colonial African elite. Notably, examples of exploitation were drawn almost exclusively from the Futa.<sup>26</sup>

One of the most effective PDG critics of the Futa chieftaincy, Saïfoulaye Diallo, had an intimate knowledge of the region and its elites. Diallo’s father, a canton chief in the Futa Jallon, belonged to one of the most prominent families in the Labé region. Upon graduation from the William Ponty School in 1942, Diallo joined the colonial civil service and worked as an accountant in Niamey, where he broke with his conservative family by joining a GEC and assuming a leadership position in the Niger branch of the RDA.<sup>27</sup> While posted in Conakry between 1947 and 1949, Diallo quickly struck up a close relationship with Sékou Touré, left the civil service, and in 1952 joined the PDG bureau.<sup>28</sup> Drawing upon his fluency in the cultural and religious language of legitimacy in the Futa, Diallo became an effective critic of the region’s elites. His crucial step was to sever the colonial chieftaincy from its precolonial predecessor. In an article in *La Liberté*, Diallo argued that the precolonial Futa chiefs had enjoyed widespread legitimacy, serving as both political and religious leaders in the Futa while ruling with the advice and consent of councils of notables. As such, this inclusive political system served as an early model of democracy in precolonial Africa. Following French conquest, the chieftaincy was a threat to the nascent colonial administration; the colonial victors therefore dismantled the precolonial system, giving chiefs significant administrative powers but stripping them of their religious and civil authority. Any attempt to simply reform the colonial chieftaincy was doomed to failure, Diallo argued, as the chiefs had corrupted the institution ‘by making themselves the servile instruments of power against the ongoing interests of the population’.<sup>29</sup> Previous PDG critiques of the chieftaincy had focused on reform. What he proposed was nothing less than the elimination of the institution altogether.

26 S. Moricandian, ‘Touré Sékou à Mamou’, *La Liberté*, 1 Feb. 1955; S. Lamine, ‘L’éveil de Dalaba’, *La Liberté*, 11 June 1956; P. Koniba, ‘La chefferie dit traditionnelle’; C. Sory, ‘Ils nous trompent’, *La Liberté*, 18 June 1958.

27 Interview with Franco Diallo, Conakry, 21 Feb. 2013.

28 S. K. Keita, *Un homme de conviction et foi: Saïfoulaye Diallo, 1923–1981* (Conakry, 2003), 26–7.

29 S. Diallo, ‘Chefferie administrative ou chefferie traditionnelle?’, *La Liberté*, 5 June 1956.



PDG attacks on the chieftaincy often bled into broader commentary about Fulbe society as a whole. One writer in *La Liberté* remarked that the ‘Fulbe masses’ lagged ‘behind’ their Susu, Maninka, and Forestière counterparts in joining the PDG’s campaign for greater representation and modern governance in Guinea.<sup>30</sup> The Fulbe divergence, others argued, sprung from the particular history of the Futa Jallon that supported a strong feudal aristocracy.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, years of repression, political manipulation, and dire economic straits caused by colonial rule had pushed the Fulbe to create ethnic organizations.<sup>32</sup> To PDG leaders, the solution lay in the region’s precolonial past; the ‘democratic’ system of the nineteenth-century Futa Jallon state, which supposedly sought broad-based consent from elite and non-elite alike, could provide a basis for a return to democracy in the region.<sup>33</sup> In turn, the message of revival and emancipation from feudalism became a rhetorical mainstay during party rallies in the Futa and surrounding areas. PDG leaders touted early signs of support for the party in the Futa as proof that even in the most conservative reaches of the territory the progressive march of history represented by the PDG-directed anticolonial movement was unstoppable. And as long as majority of the Futa’s inhabitants could embrace the party’s message, so PDG representatives argued, the Fulbe could join the rest of Guinea in making a new and modern society.<sup>34</sup>

The largely effective anti-chieftaincy campaign served as a wedge between the region’s ruling class and the majority of Futa society that did not enjoy the prestige and material benefits of elite status. The PDG then took advantage of the space opened through attacks on the chiefs by organizing and mobilizing new players in Guinean politics. The PDG divided its efforts into urban and rural strategies. In the towns, the party used groups of ‘outsider’ non-Fulbe civil servants and their wives to form neighborhood committees. The party’s inability or unwillingness to recruit urban Fulbe civil servants was reflected in membership lists; the cabinets of local PDG branches in Labe and Pita, both major centers in the heart of the Futa Jallon, contained few Fulbe last names.<sup>35</sup> Instead, many of the early party leaders in the Futa were civil servants from other regions of Guinea assigned to local towns by the French administration.<sup>36</sup>

PDG women’s branches, integral to the party’s spread throughout Guinea, also constituted nodes of political activity in the Futa. The BAG and DSG memberships were nearly wholly male – archival documents do not list any women involved in their day-to-day operations, either as party activists or auxiliaries – and the PDG sought to exploit its rivals’ neglect by establishing organizations comprised and directed by women in Labé, Mamou,

30 D. B. Couyate, ‘Le Fouta face à la démocratie’, *La Liberté*, 28 Dec. 1954.

31 ‘Autour de la chefferie traditionnelle du Fouta’, *La Liberté*, 22 Mar. 1955.

32 Tibou, ‘Halte du régionalisme rétrograde’, *La Liberté*, 12 Feb. 1957.

33 R. D. A. Pita, ‘L’ingrate fonction de chef de village’, *La Liberté*, 30 Aug. 1955.

34 ANS 17G586, ‘Renseignements, réunion publique RDA à Labé’, 28 Apr. 1955; ANS 17G586, ‘Renseignements a/s passage à Kindia du député Diallo Saïfoulaye et compte-rendu de mandat de ce parlementaire’, 17 July 1956; ANS 17G586, ‘Renseignements a/s réunion publique d’information tenue le jeudi 30 août 1956, par le Député Diallo Saïfoulaye, à Conakry, salle de cinéma “Vox”’, 31 Aug. 1956.

35 In the Futa Jallon there are four *yettore*, or cross-rank groupings, that are often used as family names and mark the bearers as being Fulbe: Diallo, Barry, Sow, and Bah. See Derman, *Serfs*, 17–18.

36 ‘Constitution de bureau’, *La Liberté*, 26 Oct. 1954; ‘Composition s/section Pita’, *La Liberté*, 15 Dec. 1954.

Dabola, and Pita, the Futa's major towns.<sup>37</sup> The women's groups' membership in the Futa was limited, however, and reflected that of the main party branches, meaning that they were mostly comprised of wives of 'outsider' civil servants and in some cases women of former slave status.<sup>38</sup> While women's and youth cadres would play an integral role in post-colonial social and political reform in the Futa, in effect serving as the PDG government's shock troops, pre-independence branches suffered the same hurdle as their main party counterparts: the PDG apparatus as a whole was largely shunned by the significant number of free but not elite Fulbe in the Futa Jallon. Unwilling to associate themselves with persons of former slave status and suspicious of the Susu, Maninka, and Forestière outsiders, they chose instead to join one of the Fulbe-led parties or, most often, to not actively participate in politics at all.

Despite its limited appeal to many within the Futa Jallon, the PDG was able to establish a core cadre in the region's urban centers. PDG activists then spread into rural areas by organizing party branches in communities populated primarily by persons of former slave status known as *dume* (sing. *runde*). According to Tiala Gobaye Mountaye, an early PDG activist, teacher, and an ethnic Coniagui 'outsider' based in Labé, the PDG policy of organizing the rural areas served a double purpose, harnessing the growing electorate and undermining chiefly power at the same time. PDG activists encouraged former slaves to use their votes as a form of political agency, rejecting the social hierarchies that had structured Futa political culture for the previous two centuries.<sup>39</sup> Political organizing in the *dume* neglected by the Fulbe-led parties proved a promising strategy. Once the franchise was extended to all citizens within the French Union in 1956, thousands of previously neglected voters were ripe for the picking.<sup>40</sup>

In the January 1956 elections for Guinean representatives to the French National Assembly, the PDG list of candidates received more votes in the Futa than either the BAG or DSG. In the November 1956 municipal elections, combined BAG and DSG candidate lists won a majority in the Futa cities of Labé and Dalaba, but the PDG prevailed in the southern Futa city of Mamou, where Saïfoulaye Diallo was elected mayor.<sup>41</sup> Faced with a string of PDG victories, some of the Futa elite began to hedge their bets. Almamy Sory Dara Barry, the most prominent chief in the Futa, continued to publically support Barry Diawadou and the BAG. Signaling a possible rapprochement between the PDG and the Futa chiefs, though, Sory Dara Barry's son Mody Oury resigned from the BAG and joined the PDG because, he claimed, 'everyone is [PDG] now'.<sup>42</sup>

37 For one Fulbe woman's perspective, see Schmidt, *Mobilizing the Masses*, 124–5.

38 ANS 17G277, 'Renseignements, comité propagande Barry Diawadou à Labé', 25 Aug. 1954.

39 Interview with Tiala Gobaye Mountaye, Labé, 1 Mar. 2013.

40 On the expansion of the franchise, see T. Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France's Successful Decolonization?* (New York, 2002), 147–52; F. Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge, 1996), 526, fn 27; and Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 55–6.

41 Keita, *Les Élections*, 162–9.

42 ANS 17G613, 'Renseignements a/s vie politique à Mamou', no. 169 C/PS.2, 5 Jan. 1957; ANS 17G613, 'Renseignements a/s adhesion au R.D.A. du chef de quartier Barry Mody Oury, fils de l'Almamy de Mamou', 9 Jan. 1957.

Competition between the parties reached a crescendo during the campaign for the March 1957 elections for the Guinean Territorial Assembly. The 1956 Loi Cadre established semi-autonomous governments with partial control over the budget and internal administration of overseas territories.<sup>43</sup> The 1957 elections for territorial assembly representatives, therefore, would accord the winning party control over many aspects of territorial policy, including its rural administrative structure. Battles between rival groups of activists broke out in most of the Futa's main cities, although the battle lines were not drawn in a predictable manner; in Pita, for example, the DSG and PDG joined forces to attack the 'pro-chief' BAG supporters. The temporary détente between the leftist parties signaled a possible formal alliance, but the closer relationship was scuttled by violence between the two parties' supporters in Conakry.<sup>44</sup>

Saïfoulaye Diallo spent the month before the elections traveling throughout the Futa, while other PDG leaders organized mass meetings to display the growing power of the party in the region. One such public rally held in Timbo, the capital of the precolonial Futa state about 40 km northeast of Mamou, brought together 1,500 PDG members hailing mostly from neighboring *dune*.<sup>45</sup> The intended symbolism was clear: precolonial and colonial social hierarchies were giving way to the organized might of universal suffrage.

On the election eve, only the outcome in the Futa Jallon was in question. The election results offered a clear answer. Of the sixty seats up for vote, the PDG won 56. The DSG won the three seats representing the Pita region, and the BAG won none.<sup>46</sup> The PDG took control of the new semi-autonomous Guinean territorial government, and in May the PDG-dominated territorial assembly elected Saïfoulaye Diallo as the body's President and Sékou Touré as the Vice-President of the executive Government Council.<sup>47</sup> Bolstered by a landslide victory, the party enacted an ambitious set of reforms. One of the first projects taken up by the new government was the complete reorganization of the local administrative structure, achieved through the elimination of the canton chieftaincy and the selection of village chiefs by popular vote.<sup>48</sup> The move made political sense. Supporters of the chieftaincy were few and far between, and the drastic reform or outright elimination of canton chiefs had been the lynchpin of the PDG's rural strategy since 1954. The chiefs had even lost the support of their erstwhile colonial backers; at a 1956 Mamou meeting of French commandants posted in Guinea, most in attendance argued that the institution was ill-suited for modern governance and should be phased out.<sup>49</sup>

Although the Guinean territorial government was at the forefront of the reform movement, similar debates about the role – or even continued existence – of the chieftaincy

43 Cooper, *Decolonization*, 424–30.

44 ANS 17G586, 'Renseignements a/s prochaines élections municipales', no. 2072 C/PS.2, 9 Oct. 1956; J.-P. Alata, 'Editorial', *Le Populaire de Guinée* (Conakry), 15 Oct. 1956; 'Evènements tragiques à Conakry', *Le Populaire de Guinée*, 15 Oct. 1956.

45 ANS 17G613, 'Renseignements a/s vie politique dans l'intérieur du territoire', no. 426/191 C/PS.2, 22 Feb. 1957.

46 Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 246; Keita, *Les Élections*, 181; Schmidt, *Cold War*, 121.

47 Keita, *Les Élections*, 182–3.

48 Archives of the Fondation Charles de Gaulle (hereafter FCG), Guinée II, RPF 676/677, Territoire de la Guinée Française, 'Communiqué du Conseil de Gouvernement', 24 Aug. 1957.

49 A transcript of the meeting is contained in Touré, *Guinée*.

within postcolonial administrative structures were playing out throughout the AOF, a growing threat that the chiefs fully recognized. Working in tandem with other ‘customary’ leaders in the AOF, Sory Dara Barry had played a role in establishing the *Union Fédérale des Syndicats des Chefs Coutumiers* at a November 1956 meeting in Dakar. The organization sought to both define and confirm the chiefs’ role within the colonial administration, and more specifically their salaries, benefits, and authority to collect taxes.<sup>50</sup> As Gregory Mann argues, the creation of the union also reflected the colonial chiefs’ argument that they were both ‘traditional’ and administrative, in effect denying the division that Saïfoulaye Diallo had previously established. The chiefs sought to confirm these dual positions in law, although up to 1957 their efforts had failed, opening up the institution to attacks by hostile local governments.<sup>51</sup> Men like Sory Dara Barry, therefore, faced the prospect of having their positions eliminated before they were ever explicitly defined.

Realizing that their time was limited, several canton chiefs met from August 25–7 inside the private concession of Almamy Sory Dara Barry in Mamou to discuss a plan of action. A month earlier, the Fulbe chief had invoked the 1897 French treaty of protectorate with the precolonial Futa Jallon state that had promised to ‘respect the customs’ of the Fulbe in order to demand that the French government intervene and save the institution of the chieftaincy.<sup>52</sup> By the August meeting, Barry and the other canton chiefs requested only that the chieftaincy be gradually phased out by attrition.<sup>53</sup> Their last-ditch pleas fell on deaf ears. On 26 December, decree no. 57–231 reorganized local administration in Guinea, structuring the territory into a uniform system of administrative posts, urban communes, and villages, the first two governed by civil servants and the last by local elected councils. Decree no. 57–233, issued five days later, formally eliminated the chieftaincy.<sup>54</sup>

Ultimately, the end of the chieftaincy in the Futa and elsewhere in Guinea resulted from a wave of popular discontent combined with the chiefs’ inability to adjust to a growing franchise. The chiefs had discovered that even in the ‘citadel of reactionary forces’ that was the Futa Jallon their influence over local communities was eroding, in part due to longer-term social and economic trends. In a Guinea marked by universal suffrage, they became an increasingly marginal political force. Just as importantly, though, the chiefs had no place in the ‘modern’ administrative system dictated by the PDG. Futa chiefs had for decades negotiated *ad hoc* jurisdictions along with hierarchies of titles and compensation with the colonial administration, and had relied upon a mixture of fealty and force to maintain order and collect taxes. Such a strategy was reflected by the ‘chiefs’ party’, the BAG, which cobbled together loosely affiliated regional elites but had largely failed in systematic grassroots organizing and had eschewed any attempts to appeal to the rural masses. Such coalitions

50 Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 333.

51 G. Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel: The Road to Nongovernmentality* (Cambridge, 2014), 68–9.

52 ANS 17G622, ‘Renseignements a/s voyage à Conakry de l’Almamy de Mamou, Ibrahima Sory Dara Barry, ex-grand Conseiller et Conseiller Territorial’, 23 July 1957.

53 ANS 17G622, ‘Renseignements a/s réunion privée tenue par l’Association des Chefs Coutumiers de Guinée, à Mamou, les 25, 26 et 27 août derniers [sic] et ayant trait à la suppression de la chefferie guinéenne’, 30 Aug. 1957.

54 Keita, *Les Élections*, 191–3.

proved to be both fragile and unable to organize a territory-wide campaign. When measured against the PDG's 'modern' form of political mobilization, the chiefs' and BAG's approach to marshaling support was found wanting, eventually leading to their demise.

By the end of 1957, the PDG had eliminated the most visible representations of elite-based regionalist politics. Yet the results of the PDG's eventual victory in the Futa Jallon extended beyond the elimination of the chiefs as the local administrators of Guinea. The nature of the party's spread into the region meant that the 'modern' Fulbe elite – namely, those who had, like Barry Diawadou and Barry III, been educated in colonial schools but who also held sociocultural cachet in the region – had been broken but never integrated into the PDG. Furthermore, while positioning the Fulbe chiefs as corrupt shadows of their precolonial counterparts, PDG rhetoric also cast the whole of Fulbe society as inherently conservative and resistant to the widespread change the party sought to enact throughout Guinea. Although the PDG's victory was clear, the fault lines between it and other influential sections of Fulbe society would only harden as Touré and other party leaders sought to solidify their hold over territorial politics.

## CONSOLIDATING CONTROL

While the March 1957 elections heralded the arrival of PDG dominance in Guinea, its opposition did not simply fade into the background. In February 1958, a group of non-RDA parties created the AOF-wide *Parti du Regroupement Africain* (PRA). Barry Diawadou and Barry III soon established the Guinean branch and positioned their movement as a regionalist revolt against the newly empowered PDG government.<sup>55</sup> During a public meeting in Labé, Barry III's comments signaled growing discontent with Conakry, claiming that the PDG ministers in the newly formed government were sapping the Futa's resources to line their own pockets. In doing so, he offered the PDG leadership a warning: 'they take us for naïfs and dim-witted, but those who pretend to lead us must realize that we hicks [*rustres*] will unite and act if need be'.<sup>56</sup>

Barry Diawadou's attacks at another PRA rally in the Futa tapped into historical narratives of external threats to Fulbe sovereignty and culture. Playing upon Sékou Touré's claim that he was the grandson of Samori Touré, the famous resistor to French conquest and for a time enemy of the Futa chiefs, the Fulbe politician claimed that 'what the Almamy Samory could not do, his grandson will accomplish today if you let yourselves be dominated: to reduce the inhabitants of the Futa to a state of slavery'. According to Barry, the PDG also sought to undermine the foundations of Fulbe culture by controlling mosques and by banning polygamy.<sup>57</sup> Thus, to Barry, the rise of the PDG was an existential threat

55 On the creation of the PRA, see Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 310–11; J. R. de Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française de la Conférence de Brazzaville (1944) à l'indépendance (1960)* (Dakar, 1982), 354–61; and Chafer, *End of Empire*, 210–11. On the Guinean branch, see ANS 17G622, 'Renseignements a/s déplacement de personnalités B.A. G. et M.S. A. dans le Cercle de Mamou', 13 Feb. 1958.

56 CAOM 1AFFPOL/2292, 'Renseignements a/s Passage des personnalités B.A. G. et D.S. G. à Labé', 20 Feb. 1958.

57 CAOM 1AFFPOL/2292, Molle, Commandant la Brigade de Gendarmerie de Mamou, 'Rapport sur le passage dans le cercle de deux personnalités politiques locales', 10 Feb. 1958.

to Fulbe society itself. Forced into a position of weakness, opposition forces lashed back with an explicitly anti-centralization critique of an emerging PDG-dominated Guinean political system.

Renewed conflict between the PDG and the revived opposition came to a head in April 1958. After the PRA held a rally that drew 3,000 supporters to Yacine Diallo's tomb in early March, as well as a party congress that led to increased organizing, on the night of 29 April sporadic fighting broke out between the rival PRA and PDG partisans in Conakry.<sup>58</sup> What began as political jostling eventually spread to over a week of open conflict, leading to arson and murder that were motivated by ethnic identification as much as political allegiance.<sup>59</sup> On 4 May, French security forces put a halt to the protests and riots, but the capital had suffered significant damage. Over the course of 8 days, 22 people were killed, 16 of them Fulbe, and scores of houses and market stalls burned.<sup>60</sup>

While the PDG-led government's incident report argued that conflict was not animated by ethnic animus, popular discourse implied otherwise.<sup>61</sup> Authors in the PDG's own newspaper wrote that the PRA had recruited 'uprooted' Fulbe migrants in Conakry 'from the gutters' to wage a "'Djihad" (Holy War) against the R.D. A., against the Susu, and for the Futa Jallon!'<sup>62</sup> The use of the term '*jihad*' was not incidental; it harked back to the founding of the precolonial Futa Jallon state, while also playing upon the popular perception of Fulbe as religious fanatics and former conquerors. Saïfoulaye Diallo also alleged that PRA activists were involved in a counter-revolutionary plot orchestrated by a cabal of colonialists, mining companies, and sections of the French military. These same forces, he claimed, were sending agents recruited in Senegal into the Futa Jallon with arms to incite a rebellion against the PDG government.<sup>63</sup> According to reports from the PDG-controlled police, the PRA leadership sent a delegation to the Futa spreading word of the attacks and 'inviting the Fulbe to avenge their dead and wounded by killing an equal number of Susu and looting their property'.<sup>64</sup> The reaction on the Fulbe side was equally unequivocal. Whether or not PDG leaders or their PRA rivals had stoked ethnic violence, parts of the Fulbe community in Conakry decided that they were no longer safe in the capital. In the weeks following the riots, an estimated 1,750 Fulbe living in Conakry returned to the Futa.<sup>65</sup>

58 CAOM 1AFFPOL/2143, 'Rapport de Monsieur le Secrétaire Général Masson, Incidents de Conakry (29 avril au 4 mai)', 1958.

59 Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de la Courneuve (CADC) 51QO/9, Marcel Boyer to Ministre de France d'Outre-Mer, 'Incidents en Guinée', 4 June 1958; CAOM 1AFFPOL/2143, 'Rapport de Monsieur le Secrétaire Général Masson, Incidents de Conakry (29 avril au 4 mai)', 1958.

60 CAOM 1AFFPOL/2143, 'Rapport de Monsieur le Secrétaire Général Masson, Incidents de Conakry (29 avril au 4 mai)', 1958.

61 CAOM 1AFFPOL/2143, 'Livre Blanc: la vérité sur les événements de Guinée', 6 May 1958.

62 S. Touré and S. Diallo, 'Le Complot', *La Liberté*, 16 May 1958.

63 Diallo also placed the Conakry incidents within a larger narrative of anticolonial struggle, claiming that they were the 'last cry of a colonialism that has been defeated in Lebanon, Indochina, Madagascar, Syria and Africa'. See S. Diallo, 'Échec à la contre-révolution', *La Liberté*, 16 May 1958; CADC 51QO/9, Marcel Boyer to Ministre de France d'Outre-Mer, 'Incidents en Guinée', 4 June 1958.

64 ANS 17G622, 'Renseignements a/s envoi d'une délégation de Foulahs du P.R. A. dans le Fouta', 10 May 1958.

65 CAOM 1AFFPOL/2143, 'Statistique concernant l'exode des Foulah lors des événements de Conakry, rapport de Monsieur le Secrétaire Général Masson, incidents de Conakry (29 avril au 4 mai)', 1958.

Attention soon shifted to the political disarray in France with the fall of the Fourth Republic and Charles de Gaulle's politicking for the referendum on the constitution of the Fifth Republic.<sup>66</sup> Although the final text of the document was not yet determined in the 1958 rainy season, de Gaulle's August visit to Conakry clarified the political stakes. Voting 'yes' would mean participation in a reformed French community: a collection of semi-autonomous but unequal territories with metropolitan France determining matters of defense and diplomacy. Rejecting the constitution would, famously according to de Gaulle, bring about immediate independence and 'its consequences'.<sup>67</sup> The PDG leadership's position towards the referendum was ambiguous up to the final weeks, with Sékou Touré claiming that crucial amendments had to be adopted before the party could throw their support behind a 'yes' vote.<sup>68</sup> The Guinean branch of the PRA, on the other hand, had quickly come out against the new constitution and reached out to Bakary Djibo's Sawaba party in Niger to coordinate a common front in support of immediate independence.<sup>69</sup> The opposition members used their new position as a rhetorical cudgel against Touré and the PDG, claiming in a PRA newspaper that the PDG leaders were 'a SELLOUT to the Whites, to the power of money, [and] to colonialism'.<sup>70</sup> The former handmaidens of colonialism, it would seem, had become more radical than the now establishment PDG.

As the vote neared, articles in the PDG newspaper *La Liberté* hinted that the PDG leadership would come out in favor of a 'no', but still allowed room for Touré to tack back and support the constitution.<sup>71</sup> Immediately following a territorial PDG conference, and in response to pressure from youth and women activists, the party leadership came out definitively against the constitution on 14 September.<sup>72</sup> Given the unlikelihood of Touré's requested reforms being adopted, as well as the embarrassing attacks from the PRA and growing pressure from within the party, the PDG's about-face was probably inevitable. Two days later, Touré and Saïfoulaye Diallo met with Barry Diawadou and Barry III to discuss forming a common front, and the PRA leaders agreed to join the PDG in campaigning against the constitution.<sup>73</sup> Even Almamy Sory Dara Barry, the former champion of French rule and the quintessential colonial chief, told 'all those who give credit to my voice' to vote 'no' in order to 'preserve the unity' that Guinea had recently enjoyed.<sup>74</sup> On 28 September, 94 per cent of voting Guineans did just that.

66 de Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 409–14; Chafer, *End of Empire*, 173–80; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 308–22.

67 Cooper, *Citizenship Between Empire and Nation*, 316–17.

68 S. Touré, 'L'Afrique et le Référendum', *La Liberté*, 25 July 1958.

69 Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*, 303–23; K. van Walraven, *The Yearning for Relief: A History of the Sawaba Movement in Niger* (New York, 2013), 186.

70 'Tour d'Horizon', *La Voix du Peuple* (Conakry), 6 June 1958.

71 'Sur le projet constitutionnel', *La Liberté*, 1 Sep. 1958; S. Touré, 'Le P.D. G. contre l'intimidation', *La Liberté*, 10 Sep. 1958.

72 'NON! à la constitution, OUI! à l'indépendance', *La Liberté*, 14 Sep. 1958; A. Lewin, *Ahmed Sékou Touré (1922–1984), Président de la Guinée de 1958 à 1984, Volume II (1956–1958)* (Paris, 2009), 130.

73 Kéïta, *P.D. G.*, 143; Lewin, *Ahmed Sékou Touré II*, 131; Schmidt, *Mobilizing the Masses*, 191–2.

74 Kéïta, *P.D. G.*, 144.

Accounting for Guinea's resounding rejection of the French community – the only former French colony to do so – has been a central interest in the territory's historiography. Recent studies argue that the outcome of the vote reflected either the mobilization of newly empowered groups of activists within the PDG or a growing soviet-style electoral control wielded by the party leadership.<sup>75</sup> Other interpretations, including those from the post-independence PDG party leadership, focused on the higher number of 'yes' votes in the Futa as compared to the rest of Guinea and point to the results as representative of region's inhabitants' desire to remain within the French post-empire.<sup>76</sup> Local election results, however, demonstrate that the PDG's ability to influence all of the territory was still uneven, whether emanating from the top or bottom of the party hierarchy, and only partial in the Futa Jallon in particular. In most polling places in the Futa, abstention rivaled or outpaced those voting for or against the constitution, whereas most other regions in Guinea saw mass mobilization for the 'no'. In Labé, where 'yeses' were 40.1 per cent of the total, 39.6 per cent of registered voters sat out the referendum. Rather than signaling the growing power of either PDG activists or leaders, therefore, results in Futa reflected a more general sense of ambiguity on the high plateau. By the time the voting started the only groups supporting continued association with the French state were portions of the chieftaincy, particularly those in the Futa, and former soldiers afraid of losing their French government-paid pensions, both of whom were undermined by waning influence and internal division.<sup>77</sup> At the same time, the PDG's reach within the region was uneven. PDG activists, and most importantly the party's youth and women's wings, were the main groups mobilizing voters for the 'no' throughout Guinea and in the Futa Jallon.<sup>78</sup> In urban centers and *dune*, their appeals were effective. But large swaths of the Futa, especially in the Labé region, either lacked local PDG structures or ignored activists' arguments. The 1958 referendum, in other words, signaled an incomplete conquest. No longer beholden to the chiefs but at the same time not attracted by PDG rhetoric, many in the Futa simply decided to remove themselves from the political process.

Following the vote, the PDG government turned to consolidating its position in Guinea. De Gaulle made good on his August promise (or threat), and by the end of 1958 all official French governmental presence in Guinea had ended, including the cadre of civil servants who had previously run much of the territorial administration.<sup>79</sup> Many Guinean civil servants posted to other French territories returned home to help build their new nation. Others, including several still serving in the French armed forces, chose to stay abroad, later constituting the foundation of the exiled opposition. Barry Diawadou and Barry III faced a decision of their own. The September agreement between the PRA and PDG had

75 For the former, see Schmidt, *Mobilizing the Masses*, 5–6; and for the latter, see Cooper, *Citizenship Between Empire and Nation*, 317.

76 In only six administrative regions in Guinea did support for the 'yes' comprise more than 5 per cent of the total votes cast, and all were in the Futa Jallon. Results from local polling places, upon which the following numbers are based, can be found in CAOM 1AFFPOL/3517.

77 The latter group's concerns proved to be well founded. See G. Mann, *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, 2006), 41–4.

78 Schmidt, *Cold War and Decolonization*, 163–6.

79 *Ibid.* 171–2; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 74.



only temporarily suspended competition in order to present a common front, and a multi-party system had been enshrined in the first constitution. However, the two politicians realized that an effective opposition movement was unlikely to succeed. Barry Diawadou eventually joined the government as the Minister of National Education, although according to his family he never joined the PDG.<sup>80</sup> Barry III also joined the government as secretary of state in charge of economic affairs, but likewise was not integrated into the party.<sup>81</sup> Thus, the incorporation of Fulbe elites into the PDG was only partial. The Fulbe leaders abandoned their opposition and became government ministers, but because several PDG activists suspected their motives, the former opposition leaders were never included in the party's politburo. The two would remain at the margins of Guinean politics until their deaths at the hands of government security slightly more than a decade later.

In November, Sékou Touré set off for his first visit as head of state to Liberia and Ghana in order to signal Guinea's leadership in a growing movement of African nationalism. At home, though, rumors of resistance to the new government began to circulate. According to French intelligence services, the first signs of discontent started in the Futa. Veterans in Labé protested against the government due to unpaid pensions. Following one policeman's beating of a truck driver with an overloaded rig, a mob in Pita attacked the commissariat and chased all of the Susu policemen out of town. At the level of the party leadership, a group of 'Marxists' and 'radicals' in the PDG attempted to overthrow Sékou Touré in favor of Saïfoulaye Diallo.<sup>82</sup> Challenges to the independent country only grew over the course of 1959. The nation's economy deteriorated rapidly, not surprisingly given the disruptions of divorce from the metropole as well as the French government's covert attempts to destabilize its former colony through sabotage. Meat and fish shortages plagued the capital while Sékou Touré blamed market manipulation and speculation by traders and smugglers.<sup>83</sup> In response, the government instituted price controls and restrictions on foreign trade, but the new policies were largely ineffective.<sup>84</sup>

The January 1961 elections for the President of the Republic of Guinea, the first of its kind, took place in such an unsettled political and economic climate. The results were never in doubt, as Sékou Touré was the only candidate. Yet Touré and the PDG leadership still mobilized all available resources to ensure his overwhelming victory, perhaps hoping that the vote would silence growing discontent. Furthermore, the election was an opportunity for the party to consolidate control over areas of Guinea that had resisted its spread, especially the Futa Jallon. In fact, Touré's campaign in the Futa made specific reference to pre-independence opposition and divergence from the rest of Guinea. The party branch in Labé exhorted the region's voters to 'repair the shame of its 27,000 "yeses"' in the 1958

80 Interview with Tierno Oumar Barry.

81 Interview with Alpha Barry.

82 CADC 51QO/11, 'Renseignements sur la Guinée', 17 Nov. 1958; CADC 51QO/11, 7e Régiment de Parachutistes Coloniaux, 'Bulletin de renseignements no. 4', 15 Nov. 1958; CADC 51QO/11 'Éventuelles manoeuvres au sein de Gouvernement', 17 Nov. 1958.

83 CADC 51QO/43, Ambassade de France en Guinée, 'Éphéméride politiques, août 1960', no. 749/A.L., 8 Sep. 1960.

84 CADC 51QO/43, Ambassade de France en Guinée, 'Éphéméride politiques, octobre 1960', 3 Nov. 1960; CADC 51QO/43, Ambassade de France en Guinée, 'Éphéméride politiques, mars 1961', 6 Apr. 1961.

referendum by voting *en masse* for the ‘architect of independence’.<sup>85</sup> On 15 January 1961, Touré received 99.37 per cent of the vote, and would be reelected as Guinea’s president with similarly showy results in 1968, 1975, and 1982.<sup>86</sup>

Fulbe leaders realized by June 1958 that a drastic reconfiguration of the relationship between the former colony and metropole was on the horizon. What shape the relationship would take between Futa society and outside political powers (be they seated in Conakry, Dakar, or Paris) was far from clear, even after the referendum’s results severed formal ties between Guinea and the French community. Similarly radical changes were unfolding within the Futa Jallon itself, where the power of entrenched elites was unraveling in the face of increased participation of previously marginalized groups like youth, women, and most importantly persons of former slave status in the political process. Given imperfect knowledge of a muddled situation, Fulbe leaders and their followers accepted the PDG’s rise and sought to find some sort of accommodation. Yet, the fault lines that emerged between the PDG leadership in Conakry and their Fulbe rivals in the Futa Jallon did not disappear with an uneasy reconciliation following independence. Nor did the 1961 presidential election and the political consolidation the PDG wanted it to represent bring an end to discontent with the central government amongst segments of Futa Jallon society. Those debates and battles were simply pushed underground, only to resurface over the following 23 years that Guinea’s First Republic existed.

## CONCLUSION

After the first era of multiparty politics came to a definitive close in 1961, conflict between rival politicians shifted to internal PDG putsches or to the exiled opposition. The previous decade and a half of political contestation, however, had left its mark. A tradition of opposition to Conakry in the Futa had taken the form of an ethno-regionalist rebuke against outsiders, even if there were many on the plateau who embraced the PDG’s plan, while the PDG’s vision of a new postcolonial Guinea was dependent upon the foil of a ‘backwards’ regionalist other, represented in the figure of the Fulbe elite. Regionalism among Fulbe elites grew from the same sorts of conversations about Futa exceptionalism – or divergence – that had preoccupied Barry Diawadou, Barry III, and Saïfoulaye Diallo, discourses that tapped into a history of social hierarchies, colonial rule, and Fulbe culture. To talk about the particular history of the Futa Jallon, for both Fulbe and non-Fulbe alike, was also to imagine what aspects of ‘tradition’ would continue in a ‘modern’ Guinea. More generally it was to ask whether there was even a place for the Fulbe in the postcolonial nation at all.

That tension between the Guinean nation and its Fulbe fragment would re-emerge not two decades after the PDG’s rise to power. Starting in 1957 and picking up steam through the 1960s, the government worked to close, with varying levels of force, regional and ethnic fault lines through a policy of sweeping social and political reform combined with the cultural construction of the Guinean nation. By 1976, though, the Guinean government

85 CADC 51QO/43, Ambassade de France en Guinée, ‘Éphéméride politiques, décembre 1960’, 7 Jan. 1961.

86 CADC 51QO/43, Ambassade de France en Guinée, ‘Éphéméride politiques, janvier 1961’, 9 Feb. 1961.

was willing to call its efforts to integrate the Fulbe a partial failure at best. On the night of 22 August, Sékou Touré announced that security forces had uncovered a plot by opposition members in exile and Fulbe elites within Guinea to overthrow the PDG government.<sup>87</sup> The most troubling development, Touré warned, was that the mass of non-elite Fulbe had stood passively aside while its most prominent members plotted away, or even worse, perhaps actively supported what Touré called the ‘fifth column’ of internal Fulbe traitors. In accounting for the Fulbe treason, he harkened back to the same language of entrenched ‘feudalism’, particularism, and (neo)colonial collaboration found in *La Liberté* during the 1950s. The government soon enacted a series of policies meant to deal with the Fulbe threat, ranging from the arrest of Fulbe politicians and restriction on students studying abroad to, as Touré warned in his speech, ‘all of Guinea ris[ing] up again, blade, hammer, and rifle in their hands, to bury them’. According to PDG rhetoric, anticolonial struggle and postcolonial nationmaking had forged a strong Guinean nation that could overcome the resurgent threat of particularism. Party leaders were not willing to publically recognize, though, that the incomplete conquest of the Futa Jallon that had signaled the PDG’s rise to power had also cauterized ethno-regional identification.

In the years since Touré’s 1984 death and the fall of the PDG regime shortly thereafter, some have wondered whether the postcolonial government’s efforts to forge Guineans out of the Fulbe – and the Susu, Maninka, and Forestière – were genuine or even possible. Current debates over the legacy of the Touré regime demonstrate that in the context of post-Second World War Guinean political history, the linking of ideas about political community to ethnic identification has proved to be just as important as the anticolonial nationalism that supposedly surmounted ethno-regionalism. A tight focus on the moment of independence, and on Guinea’s temporarily divergent path from other AOF territories, does not allow space for consideration of how competing postcolonial imaginaries of the Guinean nation and its fragments have shaped this postwar trajectory. While they are not well known, the phrases ‘citadel of reactionary forces’ and ‘we *rustres* will unite and act if need be’ are an integral part of the vocabulary of Guinean political history, for they set the terms of debate well before that iconic date so full of promise and peril: 28 September 1958.

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87 The text of the speech is printed in S. Touré, ‘Enterrer le racisme peulh’, in S. Touré, *Unité Nationale* (Conakry, 1976), 178–92.