The Mali-Federation:
A Pan-African Endeavour?
Reflections on Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in Times of Decolonization

Katharina Wurzer[1]

Abstract

The idea of joint political forces of Senegal and Soudan into a federation to enforce anti-colonial demands in 1959 seems to be the incarnation of pan-African nationalism. Considering the predominance of nation-statist ideas in Franco-African relations post-1945, federating looks like the anti-thesis to nation-statist agitation. I will argue that the two levels of nationalism, the pan-African level and the nation-state level, are not necessarily opposed diametrically to each other in the Mali federation, but are linked inextricably. My analysis focuses on two dimensions: the visionary dimension of the Mali Federation and its concrete political realisation. Initially, the federalist vision of Senegal's Léopold Sédar Senghor and Soudan's Modibo Keita aimed for an AOF-wide federation within the colonial framework. However, in the late 1950s, the pan-African vision became an indispensable tool for achieving national independence. The realisation of the Federation, however, was constrained by the nation-statist level of nationalism, its collapse being a case in point.

There is a widespread understanding of the manifold shadings pan-Africanists and their ideas of "unity" unfolded in many places at different times. Nonetheless, academic debates on pan-African intellectual activism often focus on English-speaking pan-Africanists like Kwame Nkrumah or

[1] Katharina Wurzer, University of Vienna; contact: katharinawurzer@hotmail.com

Marcus Garvey or reduce the influence of French-speaking pan-Africanists to the cultural notion of *négritude* without any political impact on the African continent (see for example Kinni 2015). The formation of the Mali Federation, however, proves that ideas of pan-African political unity were not only present in French-speaking Africa during the 1950s but were brought into action effectually by their proponents Léopold Sédar Senghor and Modibo Keita. Between January 1959 and August 1960, Senegal and Soudan formed a political federation that took "the lead in negotiating 'international sovereignty from France'" and successfully gained independence from France in June 1960 (Wallerstein 2005: 120).

Despite the Federation's short existence of 19 months, it represents a crossroads in West African history. A crossroad along the question of pan-African unity and the nation-state. Retrospectively, the collapse of the Mali Federation substantiates that the nation-state eventually pushed aside ideas of political pan-African unity as the dominant pattern of political organisation (Mährdel 1994: 197). In the late 1950s, however, neither African citizens nor the proponents of the Mali Federation, Léopold Senghor and Modibo Keita, knew "that their future was the nation-state" (Cooper 2002: 49). To the leading politicians of the times, it seemed, as if their pan-African visions for the future of French West Africa were a historical option that could be realised. This paper deals with this tense relationship between the pan-African and the national, "nation-statist" aspects in the making of the Federation and in its politics. My analysis focuses on two dimensions: the conceptual dimension of the Mali Federation, looking at the pan-African visions of the Federation's proponents and, as a second dimension, on the concrete political implementation of this vision between January 1959 and August 1960.

The paper is divided into four main parts. The following introductory section refines the terms of pan-Africanism and nation-statism and links them to French West Africa after the Second World War. The next two sections focus on the pan-African visions of Senghor und Keita, while the last section deals with the political realisation of the Federation and its collapse due to nation-state interests of the newly independent states of Soudan and Senegal.

Nationalism in French West Africa: Federalism and Territorialisation

Although they seem to be opposed diametrically, ideas of pan-Africanism and nation-statism can be seen as two dimensions of "modern political Africa-nationalism" (Mährdel 1994: 190). Pan-Africanism, as well as nation-statism, express at the core identity and belonging, but differ in scope. For the dynamic years after the Second World War, Christian Mährdel distinguishes three levels of modern political Africa-nationalism, being an emancipatory opposition to foreign domination: a regional level (micro-nationalism), a "colonial-territorial nationalism", which refers to the nation-state, and a supra-national level "macro-nationalism" with a pan-Africanist claim (Mährdel 1994: 190-191). What differentiates this "modern" African nationalism from earlier forms of African nationalism clearly is its "anti-colonial essence" against the colonial state and its administration. This anti-colonial essence, articulated by political elites as well as by ordinary people, gained more and more momentum after 1945 (Mährdel 1994: 195). The joint victory of African and metropolitan soldiers over Nazi-Germany led to a more self-confident articulation of the interests of the colonial world (Genova 2004: 66). At the same time, France's interest in upholding the empire was far from ebbing away. The war efforts have proven to France the utility of the empire, and that it would be of great value to France regarding the costs of post-war recovery (Cooper 2009: 177). The achievement of national independence in Tunisia and Morocco and the violent struggle for it in Algeria made clear (Foltz 1965: 70), that change was necessary: as a prerequisite for upholding the empire in the view of France and as necessary improvement of living standards and wages in the eyes of millions of Africans.

This paper is about political elites in Senegal and Soudan, but to assume that they acted as spearheads in a vacuum, in which their innovative ideas slowly flowed from top to bottom, seems highly inadequate (Schmidt 2005: 193-194). Although I'm focusing on the ideas of Senghor and Keita and their realisation, it should be made clear that they acted in a highly politicized climate, incorporating agitation by student associations, youth organisations and trade unions. In French (West) Africa, change was not only induced by a small political elite, but also by the majority of the population, demonstrating for the anti-colonial cause. A case in point is a strike in Dakar in 1946 that united the whole work force of the city, demanding worker's rights and the improvement of living standards (Cooper 1996: 425). In this

atmosphere of discontent, French West African and metropolitan politicians negotiated the future of Franco-African relations. As a result of this struggle, a series of constitutional innovations between 1944 and 1958 led to a gradual extension of formal political influence and participation of Africans (see Cooper 2014).

In the aftermath of the Brazzaville Conference in 1944, France extended its legal distinctions of *"citoyen"* and *"sujet"* to all its territories in Africa. Formerly exclusively applied in Senegal, these judicial categories differentiate a handful of assimilated *"citoyens"* from the vast majority of African *"sujets"*, guaranteeing French rights to the *"citoyens"*, including the right to vote and the right to being voted into the metropolitan parliament in Paris (Wallerstein 1965: 5; Lakroum 1992: 187). With the promulgation of the *Loi Lamine Guèye* and the entry into force of the Constitution of the 4th Republic of France, only two years later, the distinctive legal categories and the associated unequal treatment of *"sujets"* was abolished (Crowder 1967: 6). Although the right to vote did not immediately become general, the number of voters for elections to the *Assemblée Nationale* in 1946 increased from 45,000 to 130,000 people on the African continent (Cooper 2002: 45). Along with the extension of political participation, these constitutional amendments reframed the political architecture of French West Africa, fostering the territorial level. Not only were the deputies of the newly established territorial parliaments elected along territorial lists, but the few African deputies in the metropolitan parliament were elected by those territorial parliaments. Additionally, the deputies of the *Grand Conseil de l'A.O.F.*, a federal institution of French West Africa, were elected through the territorial parliaments (Foltz 1965: 23-25). However, this federal institution had no legislative or executive competences, being degraded to a mere debate club (Cooper 2009: 101) in charge of coordinating the increasingly important territorial interests of the members of A.O.F. (Seck 2005: 48). The territories, however, had competence over the budget and internal affairs, even though African politicians only had an advisory say, supporting the governor consultatively in his decision-making (Foltz 1965: 16-19). The increasing power of the individual territories in comparison to the federal *Grand Conseil* became manifest in political parties' organisation. With the extension of African participation in the metropolitan parliament in 1944, various interterritorial parties emerged in French West Africa to coordinate the interests of the various colonial territories to confront

metropolitan interests more thoroughly (i.e. *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, RDA,* founded in 1945) (Lisette 1983: 24-26; Wallerstein 2005: 116-117). For some years, their interterritorial, federal claim was not more than a label, as party organization strictly followed territorial borders, uniting the PDCI of Félix Houphouët-Boigny (Côte d´Ivoire) and more radical branches like the US-RDA of Modibo Keita (Soudan) or the PDG of Sékou Touré (Guinea) under one interterritorial umbrella (Schmidt 2007: 96-97).

Pan-African Vision: Federation as Anti-Colonial Agitation

During the 1950s, the future of Franco-African relations was fiercely debated in France and in what was still colonial West Africa. The constitutional amendments of the 1940s entailed an institutional strengthening of the territorial level, which implicated at the same time a weakening of French West Africa as a unity against metropolitan France, the *Union Française* being an "avatar of the French Empire in a renewed France" (Bouche 1986: 477; *"avatar de l'Empire dans une France régénérée"*). Against this background, the opposing, federal vision of united colonial A.O.F.-territories, speaking with one voice against the metropole, supported by Keita, Senghor and Touré, seemed to them to be a revolutionary, anti-colonial remedy for this weakening. The criticism of the *Loi Lamine Guèye* and the powerlessness of the federal *Grand Conseil* did not diminish after 1946, and politicians such as Léopold Sédar Senghor advocated for a more powerful federal body. Senghor proposed that West African territories should be integrated into the *Union Française* as previously united primary federations in order to strengthen the interterritorial links between the territories and their bargaining power vis-à-vis France (Senghor 1971 [1956a]: 180-182). Metropolitan France had to be transformed into "a state like the others, not any more federator, but federated […]" (Senghor 1971 [1956b]: 206; *"un Etat comme les autres, non plus fédérateur, mais fédéré […]"*). While the French Communist Party supported this federalist vision of French West Africa, it was strictly opposed by African politicians like Félix Houphouët-Boigny, but also by the conservative metropolitan party *Mouvement Republican Populaire* (MRP), which advocated for a *Union Française* in which any African territory should negotiate its relation to France individually. With the *Loi Cadre* in 1956, these anti-federal ideas for the reorganization of Franco-African relations were poured into a legal text. While the competences of the federal council were further thinned out, the

parliaments in each A.O.F.-territory were strengthened by the implementation of an executive cabinet, able to draft laws that would be passed by the parliaments (Benoist 1982: 302). The parliaments and cabinets could exercise their newly acquired legislative authority in internal matters, including areas of agriculture, health policy or administration (Crowder 1967: 66). France reserved the right to control foreign policy interests and defense, but the drawing up of the budget and the collection of taxes fell to the strengthened territorial parliaments (Cooper 2002: 77). However, the Federal Council did not have any executive power to advance legislation (Foltz 1965: 74).

For federalists such as Senghor, the *Loi Cadre* would tear apart what in their view undoubtedly belonged together – French West Africa:

> "However, to balkanize the A.O.F. is to artificially divide its eight territories into political, economic and cultural entities that do not ignore the metropole, but ignore each other". (Senghor 1971 [1956a]: 180-181, translation by the author).
> *["Or donc, balkaniser l'A.O.F., c'est diviser, artificiellement, ses huit territoires pour en faire des entités politiques, économiques et culturelles qui n'ignorent pas la métropole, mais s'ignorent entre elles."]*

By continuously framing the *Loi Cadre* as the balkanization of French West Africa, Senghor uses "a basic part of the phraseology" of African nationalists in the 1950s (Neuberger 1976: 523). By referring to the dissolution of the Ottoman and Habsburg Empire and the resulting political disintegration of the Balkan, the use of this term in the political debates of French West Africa alludes to fragmentation by the metropole at the expense of Africa, enforcing small, economically not viable states (Neuberger 1976: 523-527). Based on his notion of *négritude* and the African personality, Senghor underpinned federalism with a shared cultural identity of (French West) Africa (see Senghor 1988; Andrain 1964: 168). Keita did not focus on such a strong philosophical underpinning of federalism, emphasizing far more than Senghor the common experience of colonialism which should be overcome by "[g]iving back to African man his confidence in himself, and forever ridding him of the inferiority complex which colonialism has created in him." (Keita 1962 cited in Snyder 1967: 81) Making anti-colonialism the core principle of federalism, he claimed: "[f]or

this battle, unity is more than ever necessary because the opposition's strength, too, lies in its unity." (Keita 1959 cited in Foltz 1965: 128).

In 1958, only two years after the *Loi cadre* was put into effect, another constitutional reform, the draft for the 5th French Republic, set the stage to negotiate the issue of federalism in Franco-African relations. Senghor, along with Lamine Guèye and Félix Houphouët-Boigny were part of the Constitutional Consultative Committee, but the draft constitution clearly corresponded to the positions of Houphouët-Boigny and the right-wing parties of France. Similarly to the *Loi Cadre*, the federal council was not endowed with any executive powers and the right to independence was not mentioned. The trend of fostering the territorial level was amplified, as every territory in French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa had to vote on the constitutional draft individually in a referendum and got its membership to the *Communauté Française* through an individual treaty with France (de Benoist 1982: 417-420).

In August 1958, General Charles de Gaulle, then President of the Council of Ministers and from November 1958 onwards President of France, visited the A.O.F.- and A.E.F.-territories to promote the constitutional draft. At their meeting in Conakry, Touré vehemently advocated the possibility of building primary federations before entering the community, which de Gaulle harshly rejected (Touré 1959: 80; de Gaulle 1970: 59-61).

Modibo Keita and Senghor both rejected the colonial-territorial nationalism advocated by Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the Ivorian RDA and the French MRP, that was inherent in the draft. The two politicians differed, however, in their vision of future Franco-African relations. Modibo Keita and his party US-RDA were far more radical than Senghor, conceptualising the unity of African territories as a way out of the French Republic and French colonialism (Foltz 1965: 68). Senghor's position lay in between the colonial-territorial nationalism of Félix Houphouët-Boigny and the radical vision of macro-nationalism by Keita and Touré. His conceptualization of federalism "partook of both these senses, and provided a way of safeguarding African unity and 'personality' in close association with France." (Foltz 1965: 68)

Despite their ongoing criticism of the balkanization of French West Africa and French colonialism, Senghor and Keita, as party leaders of their respective parties and leading politicians of French Soudan and Senegal, recommended to vote "yes" in the referendum on 28th September 1958 (Cotte 1992: 100-101). The recommendation to vote for the *Communauté*,

which led French West Africa further away from African unity, can be explained not least by pressure France exerted on the territories. France made clear that a decision against the *Communauté* meant immediate independence. Considering the financial dependence of the A.O.F.-territories on France and the A.O.F.-budget, it becomes clear that the announcement of immediate independence was more of a threatening gesture by the metropole than an anti-colonial achievement or the end of foreign domination. In case of a negative referendum France would cut off any financial grants or credits. Between 1945 and 1954 France reduced investment in Indochina and increased its investment of capital in sub-Saharan French Africa (Marseille 1986: 168). 30 per cent of the money Senegal had at its disposal came from the federal budget. In poorer A.O.F.-states, the federal share accounted for up to 90 per cent of the territory's budget (Berg 1960: 403-404). This economic dependence on France and the uncertainty about the economic future after a "no" illustrate well why Senghor and Keita used their political power to opt in favour of a "yes" in the referendum. Additionally, France exerted political pressure on the country's major parties. Immediate independence meant international isolation, as France would reject any bilateral cooperation. For the UPS in Senegal and the US-RDA in Soudan a no-campaign was also domestically dangerous, because they feared the loss of their inner-territorial power base after a failed no-campaign (for Senegal see Foltz 1965: 93; for Soudan see Hodgkin/ Schachter: 1970 [1964][3]: 240).

Except for Guinea, all territories in French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa voted overwhelmingly in favour of the *Communauté Française.* With Guinea's rejection of the *Communauté*, France made the threatening gesture of immediate independence a political reality (Suret-Canale 1970: 172). France quickly withdrew from Guinea and refused any bilateral rapprochement in order to make an example of Guinea (Touré 1959: 193).

Mali Federation: Pan-African Unity for National Independence
In December 1958, a macro-nationalist vision of a primary federation became more and more concrete when the Senegalese politician Gabriel d'Arboussier set the initiative for a federation of all A.O.F.-states within the *Communauté.* Soudan (present day Mali), Senegal, Upper Volta (Burkina Faso) and Dahomey (Benin) were interested in this pan-African project and

drafted a federal constitution (Ndiaye 1980: 57-58; Lakroum 1992: 189). It provided for a federal level endowed with far-reaching competences, including a powerful executive and a federal parliament (Foltz 1965: 99-103).

But before the constitution was put into effect, France and Côte d'Ivoire exerted great pressure on Dahomey and Upper Volta to prevent them from joining the federation (Cotte 1992: 102). In Dahomey's case, this pressure was accompanied with the promise to build a port in Cotonou. Upper Volta, too, was prevented from joining the federation by political influence. A new high commissioner was transferred to Ouagadougou to defend French interests and Houphouët-Boigny also pointed out the unclear consequences for Upper Volta's thousands of migrant workers in Côte d'Ivoire in case of federation (Foltz 1965: 108-111; Ansprenger 1961: 336-337). After the withdrawal of these territories, the Mali Federation with its two remaining members, Senegal and Soudan, was established in 1959. Although they were federated in the Mali Federation, Senegal and Soudan were still members of the *Communauté Française* (Gandolfi 1960: 884-885).

Forming the Mali Federation as a primary federation to amplify the bargaining power of the member states vis-à-vis France and to oppose the vision of territorial nationalism that metropolitan and African forces had in mind for the A.O.F.-territories, it can be seen as a form of anti-colonialism by means of macro-national federation. The demand for independence, however, was not made until 22th September 1959 when Senghor and Keita formally applied for independence of the Mali Federation (Foltz 1965: 167). Until then, anti-colonial demands could be made and innovative concessions could be wrung from France within the still colonial framework between 1944 and 1959 (Akpo/Joly 1986: 488-492; Cooper 2002: 45-46, 78-79). This holds true for politicians who saw the future of French West Africa in a pan-African federation as well as for colonial-territorial nationalists like Félix Houphouët-Boigny, who "made use of French institutions and French rhetorics to make important demands. He only became interested in independence for the Côte d'Ivoire when it was practically a fait accompli." (Cooper 2002: 46). Despite his radical anti-colonial critique, Modibo Keita hesitated in demanding independence. At a party congress in 1958, Keita himself excluded a radical party delegation demanding immediate and unconditional independence. After their exclusion, the still present sections

of the RDA agreed on the demand for internal autonomy with the right to independence in the future (Foltz 1965: 83-84).

In July 1958, Senghor made wild speculations about immediate independence even before September 1958 in order to appeal to militant sections of his party Union Progressiste Sénégalaise. Only two months later he back-pedalled on his decision and recommended a "no" in the referendum on the *Communauté Française.* Moreover, at a congress in July 1959, only two months before he and Keita applied for independence, he declared:

> "It would not be honest nor effective to talk about 'immediate independence'. This, general de Gaulle offered to us on 28th September, we didn't take it. [...] We thought, we still think, that the *Communauté* [...] is the ideal framework and the means of an efficient coalition: an association." (Senghor 1971 [1959]: 269, translation by the author)
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> [*"Il ne serait ni honnête ni efficace de parler d'indépendance immediate". Celle-ci, le général de Gaulle nous l'a offerte le 28 septembre. Nous ne l'avons pas prise. [...] Nous pensions, nous continuons de penser que la Communauté [...] est le cadre idéal et le moyen d'une coalition efficace: d'une association."*]

For Senghor the central motive for the Mali Federation at no time was immediate or unconditional independence from France as an end in itself, even if this was the most important demand of most of UPS party members at that time. Political independence, to him, was of little meaning without economic stability and a path to economic independence. Part of Senghor's critique on the balkanization of French West Africa was based on the assumption that little territories could not survive economically after independence and should thus seek forms of exchange through which they could complement each other. Mamadou Dia, federal Minister of Defence, emphasized this in saying,

> "Mali's great opportunity is the complementarity of the two economies, Senegalese and Sudanese, which, although both predominantly agricultural, are structurally different. Thus, the duality of structures, far from being a competitive factor, is therefore an element of association and a reason for cooperation." (Dia 1960: 108, translation by the author)

["La grande chance du Mali c'est la complémentarité des deux économies, sénégalaise et soudanaise, qui, bien que toutes deux à prédominance agricole, sont structurellement différentes. […] Ainsi la dualité des structures, loin d'être facteur concurrentiel, […] est […] par conséquent, élément d'association et motif de coopération."]

In Senghor's vision, the pan-African federation became a means to ensure Senegal's path to economic, and therefore real independence and prosperity, without giving up close ties to France (Senghor 1971[1959]: 270). Keita, in contrast, was not concerned with close association to France, but rather with real territorial-national self-determination. Federating a single colonial territory into a unified bloc became an indispensable means for claiming independence, because the bargaining power of the Federation was much higher than the bargaining power of a single territory could be. To Keita a pre-independence federation seems also reasonable from another angle. He drew attention to the danger of nation-statist interests once nation-state independence was gained,

"We have first preferred to pass through the stage of unity before taking up the stage of independence, because it is difficult for countries who have won their independence by their own efforts to renounce this independence […]. It is in taking into account these realities that we have thought first to bring about a great ensemble which, politically and economically viable, would accede to its independence." (Keita cited in Foltz: 129-130)

The entanglement of the two levels of nationalism, macro-nationalist and colonial-territorial, becomes crucial in enabling and sustaining independence. Another functionary of the US-RDA pointed to the necessity of federal unity for independence in stating that "only [federal] UNITY is the safeguard for INDEPENDENCE" (Diarra cited in Foltz 1965: 132). In June 1960, independence through federal unity became a political reality, making Senegal and Soudan the first independent states of French West Africa after Guinea.

"Utopia Today, Flesh and Bones Tomorrow"[2]: Pan-African Vision and Nation-State Realities

While Keita's and Senghor's vision of the Mali Federation was pan-African in scope, initially including all A.O.F.-territories, the nation-state level increasingly assumed significance in the course of its political realisation. The collapse of the Federation after only 19 months is a case in point for the failure of the pan-African project against the dominance of the colonial-territorial nation-state. Mamadou Dia is also aware of this dominance, saying retrospectively about the pan-African moment in the Mali Federation: "[…] we believed that it would be enough to condemn territorialism and its natural product, micro-nationalism." (Dia 1960: 140; *"[...] nous avons cru qu'il suffirait de condamner le territorialisme et son produit naturel, le micro-nationalisme."*).

That vision and political reality did not match seems to be obvious in the demand for independence. Keita and Senghor applied for the Federation's independence, but what they gained in June 1960 was independence as single nation-states, linked by a loose and de facto meaningless add-on in the treaty, alluding that those newly independent nation-states are "groupées au sein de la Fédération du Mali" (Gandolfi 1960: 884-885), i.e. grouped within the Mali Federation. The two levels of nationalism are linked inextricably, as macro-nationalist federation was an important means to ensure independence as nation-states.

Another example of the dominance of colonial-territorial nationalism lay in the institutional settings of the Mali Federation. After the withdrawal of Upper Volta and Dahomey, the constitutional settings of the Federation had to be adapted to the new circumstances. The Federation provided for a federal parliament and government. As the Senegalese and Soudanese institutions continued to exist, the federal institutions seem to be an addition to the already existing political institutions. On the federal level each of the two remaining members was to have 20 instead of 12 members in the federal parliament, and the federal government was to consist of four ministers from each country. This parity of institutional structures led to plural office holding in the institutions of the Federation and the territorial institutions (Ansprenger 1961: 339). Keita, for example, became Prime Minister of the Mali Federation and Mamadou Dia Deputy Prime Minister

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[2] "Utopia aujourd'hui, chair et os demain" (Ndiaye 1980: 167).

and Minister of Defence in order to balance the competences between the states. In the newly founded interterritorial party, the *Parti de la Fédération Africaine* (PFA), Senghor also became President and Keita Secretary General (Foltz 1965: 162-163). Through this parity, the individual organs of the Mali Federation have lost large parts of their power and effectiveness: "It is clear that in a two-party system majority [means] unanimity." (Ndiaye 1980: 166; *"Il est clair que dans un système à deux, majorité = unanimité."*)

Since the PFA party was also strictly organized according to national affiliation and thus was another playground for the conflicts of the Senegalese UPS and the Soudanese US-RDA and their leaders, there could be no spill-over effects for political cooperation. The Senegalese and Soudanese deputies strictly voted along national lines. Getting a majority in any issue meant therefore, getting unanimous support. If no agreement could be reached, insoluble stalemate in committees on all levels was the consequence, as the persons involved in different levels were the same (Foltz 1965: 163-164). The Mali Federation was unable to find solutions for resolving political conflicts and therefore plunged the Federation into political paralysis (Kurtz 1970: 420).

In addition to this institutional setting, the relation between Keita and Senghor was marked by mutual mistrust. Without discussing the matter with his Senegalese colleagues in the Council of Ministers, Modibo Keita publicly advocated the recognition of the Algerian GPRA by the UN, launched the idea of a currency unit with France or strongly condemned the French nuclear tests in the Sahara (Ndiaye 1980: 121-122). Non-accorded statements like these undermined the confidence of Senghor in Keita as a trustworthy political partner. Furthermore, the Soudanese US-RDA actually attempted to draw radical members of the Senegalese UPS to its side to find a majority and end paralysis (Foltz 1970 [1964]: 27).

In this climate of institutional paralysis, personal animosities and mistrust, the election of the Federation's president escalated and led to its dissolution. In order to overcome the inefficiency and paralysis of the Federation, Modibo Keita wanted to merge the offices of the Federation's Prime Minister and Defence Minister. Senghor firmly rejected this initiative, supposing a hidden seizure of power by Keita. Senghor stuck to the principle of parity, which would entitle a Senegalese to this office. After Keita agreed in April 1960 to keep the offices separated, it was decided that the president should be elected by a congress of Soudanese and Senegalese

members and the federal parliament. Senghor ran for presidency, but Keita and the US-RDA rejected his candidacy (Foltz 1965: 168-174). On the night of 19th to 20th August 1960, the night before the electoral congress, the Mali Federation dissolved.

Considering the insurmountable mistrust and the rejection of Senghor's candidacy by the US-RDA, Senghor and d'Arboussier had already considered leaving the Federation on 8th August 1960. In the days leading up to the electoral congress, Senghor was convinced that Keita was planning a coup d'état against him. Keita gathered information about the size of available military forces stationed around Dakar, where the electoral congress was supposed to be. Keita's request was, according to the legal procedure, passed on to Mamadou Dia, Federal Defence Minister. It seemed clear to Senghor and Dia that Keita was planning a coup d'état during the night of 20th August 1960. The Senegalese leaders felt compelled to mobilize rural sections of the UPS as militias and brought them to Dakar. Facing militias and a supposed coup d'état by Senegal, Keita convened a spontaneous special session of the Federal Council of Ministers, at which only one Senegalese minister appeared. For Keita this was further proof that a coup d'état was planned by Senegal. Due to his absence, Mamadou Dia was removed as Minister of Defence, Keita imposed the state of emergency (Foltz 1965: 180-182). In a nocturnal session of the Senegalese parliament, Senegal decided to reclaim the competences transferred to the Federation and declared itself independent (Ndiaye 1980: 147).

The events and decisions in these last hours of the Mali Federation show the tense political climate and the fear of a military conflict between the units of the Federation. Apart from this almost exploded tinderbox consisting of armed Senegalese party members and military forces at Dakar in this night, the dissolution of the Mali Federation did not trigger any mass protests. Even though Radio Mali broadcast the whole night, promptly informing the population about every new communiqué, there were no voices for upholding or reviving the Federation. In contrast to the referendum on the *Communauté* with the opportunity of immediate independence, that brought the masses to the streets in 1958 (Seck 2005: 49), the "Mali Federation" was a vague, elitist political concept to many people (vgl. Ansprenger 1961: 349-351; Foltz 1965: 150).

The political project was "[a] path that offered itself as a direct road to African unity, but led to a dead end" (Ansprenger 1961: 356, translation by

the author; *"Ein Pfad, der sich als direkter Weg zur afrikanischen Einheit anbot, führte in eine Sackgasse."*) Although the proponents of the Federation initially saw it as a way of ensuring political independence and economic prosperity for Senegal and Soudan, the collapse of the Federation clearly shows that the pan-African vision of the Federation could not grasp its institutions. Mamadou Dia reflected on the collapse of the Federation:

> "The Federation, […] is not an end in itself. It is a means, and like any means, it can only prove its value by its effectiveness. We cannot worship it blindly, making us deaf to the lessons of history. We have been defenders of federalism, it is not necessary to be its fanatical spectators, when everything proves that its time has not come, [...].“ (Dia 1960: 143, translation by the author)
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> [*"La federation, pas davantage que les autres formes de regroupement, n'est un fin en soi. C'est un moyen, et comme tout moyen, il ne peut s'imposer que par son efficacité. Nous ne saurions pas lui vouer un culte aveugle qui nous rendrait sourd aux leçons de l'histoire… Nous avons été les défenseurs du fédéralisme, il n'est pas nécessaire d'en être les spectateurs fanatiques lorsque tout prouve que son heure n'est pas venue, […]."*]

Conclusion

In this article, I understood pan-Africanism and nation-statism as two coins of the medal of modern political Africa nationalism with an anti-colonial orientation. During the 1950s, the future of French West Africa was debated along this line. When constitutional reforms in West Africa fostered the territorial level, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Modibo Keita opposed it fiercely by criticizing the balkanization and the supposed weakening of French West Africa. The vision of a macro-nationalist federation founded by Africans to speak uniformly and powerfully to France seemed to be a historical pan-African option. The withdrawal of Upper Volta and Dahomey from the federation project set a first backstroke to this pan-African endeavour. Nonetheless the pan-African federation of Senegal and Soudan served as an important safeguard for national independence. The vision of future political unity and economic cooperation made the claim for independence possible. The pan-African and the nation-state level got linked inextricably in the fight for independence.

The political realisation of the Federation and especially its collapse demonstrate, however, that for the leading politicians of the federation, the nation-state level eventually became the dominant pattern of political organization. Paralysing institutional parity, a climate of mistrust and non-communication and the refuse to transfer national competences to the federal level illustrate that the recently gained national sovereignty outweighed the pan-African ideals among the political elite.

The Mali Federation was in the vision of its proponents a pan-African option within reach, whose merit lays more in the enabling of stronger anti-colonialist agitation through unity and less in the realisation of a strong pan-African Federation, able to tackle the challenges of the newly gained independence.

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