

The Postcolonial Setting

1. The Decolonisation Process

- October 1946: Fourth Republic. French citizenship for all (*sujets* → *citoyens*). Abolition of the *indigénat* → access to courts and legal rights.
- 1950s: "high point of nationalism" (Crowder 1984: 636)
- 1956: *Loi-cadre*: universal adult suffrage
- 1958: Fifth Republic. The African colonies could choose between total independence and the status of an autonomous republic with the French constitution and economic, technical and administrative support. Only Guinea chose total independence.

"Independence came as a shock to moderate and radical leaders alike. The brief period of reforms, following the comparatively short period of colonial rule, had not prepared them or their people for sovereignty" (Crowder 1984: 636).

2. Political situation after Independence

- The belief in modernization, economical success and an African Unity disappeared relatively fast
- Difficulties of nation-building: artificial boundaries, lack of a national conscience and a common language, ethnical conflicts, difficulties to reach the rural population
- Centralization of the state, increasingly authoritarian leaders, clientalism ("politics of the belly")
- One-Party-System with "parallel structures": workers/trade unions, youth movements, women's associations
- Many military coups, military regimes
- Most West African states were and are still trying to re-establish civilian governments, democratic institutions and a multi-party system → "transitional democracies"

3. Economical and social situation

- The African élite with French education was the ruling force after independence. This political class based its power in particular on controlling the economic resources of the state. *"In francophone Africa, as in many other Third World countries, a political class has emerged which has 'appropriated the surplus and disposed of it relatively freely'" (Ziemer 1995: 97).*
- The gap between governing élites and the rest of the population grew → high taxes, agricultural difficulties, diseases, mass urban migration, unemployment, corrupt bureaucratic administration
- Cash-crop farming → dependence on changing prices at the world market, erosion of the subsistence agriculture → dependence on import goods. 1970s: high import prices due to the oil crisis, falling cash-crop prices, inflation in France passed to Franc-Zone African states
- High debts, failing of the western development programs (modernization theory, top-down-planning), dependence on foreign aid
- Structural Adjustment Programs: imposed by international donors → implementation of democratic institutions, rule of law, good governance
- Cultural dependency

4. International relations

- New diplomatic contacts: Anglophone tropical Africa, South Africa, UK, Germany, USA, Russia, Japan, China, India
- Access to multinational institutions (e.g. UN)
- The relations with France remained predominant, but the budgetary assistance from France slowly declined and the West African states tried to attract investment from other countries and from multi-national corporations
- Cooperation between West African States after independence was weak → Federations such as the Mali Federation or the Ghana-Guinea-Mali Union broke up after a few months
- 1960 Brazzaville conference: all West African francophone states, the equatorial states, Cameroon and Madagascar formed the "Union Africaine et Malgache" (UAM)
- 1963 Addis Abeba: "Organization of African Unity" (OAU), formed by the UAS (former Ghana-Guinea-Mali Union) and the UAM
"These moves towards cooperation among the francophone tropical African states were hardly wholehearted, however, and were in reality not very effective, since there was little follow-through of their plans, and there were often squabbles among member states" (Crowder 1984: 671).
- 1975 Lomé Convention: preferential treatment in the European market
- 1975 Economic Community of West African States ECOWAS

5. The states since Independence

Republic of Senegal: Together with the French Sudan (later: Mali) independent as Mali Federation in 1960. The union broke up after a few months. First president was Léopold Sédar Senghor, his Socialist Party ruled Senegal for 40 years. In 1962 Prime Minister Mamadou Dia tried a coup; the result was a new constitution in 1963 with more power for the president. In 1980 Senghor stepped down, his successor was Abdou Diouf. 2000 the current President Abdoulaye Wade was elected. In 1982 Senegal joined with Gambia to form the nominal confederation of Senegambia. The planned integration of the two countries was never carried out, and the union broke up in 1989. Since the 1980s the Movement of Democratic Forces in the Casamance (MFDC) fights for separation. A Peace Agreement was signed in December 2004, but the situation is still instable.

Republic of Guinea: In 1958, Guinea was the only French Colony which decided to become completely independent from France. Sékou Touré was the first president, in the following years he established a military government, followed by Lansana Conté in 1984. First democratic elections took place in 1993; Conté then was elected president of the civilian government and reelected in 1998 and 2003. Several military revolts and general strikes took place under his government.

Republic of Mali: In 1960 independent as Mali Federation together with Senegal, then followed a socialist regime under Modibo Keita. 1968 bloodless military coup, leader Moussa Traoré governed until 1991, when he was overthrown by another military coup led by Amadou Touré. In 1992 new constitution, first democratic elections. Alpha Konaré was elected president, followed by Amadou Touré in 2002.

Republic of Cote d'Ivoire: Felix Houphouët-Boigny was first elected president, but he set the democratic principles de-facto out of order. The multi-party-system was dominated by his *Partie Démocratique de la Cote d'Ivoire* (PDCI). Houphouët-Boigny died in 1993, followed by his deputy Henri Konan Bédié. Military coup in

1999, Junta leader Robert Gueï came to power. He accepted free elections in 2000, but did not accept Laurent Gbagbo (Front Populaire Ivoirien) as winner, until he was forced to under public pressure. Failed coup attempt in September 2002, rebel forces took over the northern part of the country. Cease-fire in October, but it was broken shortly afterwards. Peace Accord in January 2003: unity government with rebel forces. They left it again in March 2004. New Peace Accord in March 2007.

Burkina Faso (former Upper Volta): Repeated military coups during the 1970s and 1980s. Renamed as Burkina Faso in 1984. In the 1987 military coup, current President Blaise Compaoré came to power. First multiparty elections in 1991.

Republic of Ghana: Formed out of the former British colony Gold Coast and the Togoland Trust Territory (former British Togoland). First independent Sub-Saharan country in 1957 under Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah. Long series of coups. 1992 democratic multiparty constitution under Jerry Rawlings. In 2000, the actual president John Kufuor was elected.

Togolese Republic: French Togoland became Togo in 1960; first head of state was Sylvanus Olympio. In 1967 military ruler Eyadéma Gnassingbé came to power. Under the facade of multiparty elections instituted in the early 1990s, the government continued to be dominated by President Gnassingbé and his party, the *Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais* (RPT). Gnassingbé died in February 2005 and was succeeded by his son Fauré Gnassingbé. A few weeks later he stepped down under international pressure. In April he was again elected president.

Republic of Benin (former Dahomey): Succession of military governments until 1972, when Mathieu Kérékou established a government based on Marxist-Leninist principles. 1991 first free elections, Nicéphore Soglo was elected president. Kérékou returned to power by elections in 1996 and 2000 and stepped down in 2006, succeeded by Thomas Yayi Boni.

Republic of Niger: Hamani Diori was first president. 1974 he was overthrown by a coup, military rule until 1991. Transitional government until democratic elections were held in 1993. Mahomane Ousmane was elected president. 1996 coup led by Ibrahim Barré Maïnassara. In 1999 he was killed in a military coup. A few months later democratic elections. Mamadou Tandja was elected president, and again in 2004.

6. References

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