The Nkrumah Factor: The Strategic Alignment of Early Postcolonial Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria*

In stark contrast to the period of the Nigerian Civil War (1967–70), when Ivorian President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, together with France, supported the secessionist Biafran Republic against the Federal Military Government,[1] the early postcolonial relations between Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria were close. This Ivorian–Nigerian entente cordiale also contrasted with the relations between France and Nigeria in the early 1960s. Outraged by the French nuclear tests in the Sahara, Lagos broke off diplomatic relations with Paris upon independence in 1960. It was only in autumn 1965 that diplomatic relations were resumed, notably as a result of the Ivorian president's mediation.[2] Houphouët-Boigny could play this mediating role because, as 'France's man in Africa',[3] he had a substantial degree of influence in Paris, where the large and anglophone Nigeria was seen as a threat to the French sphere of influence in Africa. In traditional French colonialist fashion, General Charles de Gaulle was wary of first British and then American encroachments on francophone Africa through Nigeria. Although the Ivorian president would later come to share fully this interpretation of and hostility towards Nigeria during the Nigerian Civil War of the late 1960s, he initially had a positive attitude towards the First Nigerian Republic (1960–66)[4] and was fond of its prime minister,

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[1] See, for instance, D. Bach, 'Nigeria's Relations with France and Selected Francophone West African States, 1960–1975' (Univ. of Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 1978), *passim*; and A. Konieczna, 'L'Histoire d'une "relation spéciale": Les Relations franco-sud-africaines dans les années 1958–1974' (Sciences Po Paris Ph.D. thesis, 2013), *passim*.

[2] B.A. Akinterinwa, 'The Termination and Re-establishment of Diplomatic Relations with France: A Study in Nigeria's Foreign Policy Decision-Making', in G.O. Olusanya and R.A. Akindele, eds, *The Structure and Processes of Foreign Policy Making and Implementation in Nigeria, 1960–1990* (Lagos, 1990), pp. 275–94.

[3] P. Nandjui, *Houphouët-Boigny: L'Homme de la France en Afrique* (Paris, 1995).

[4] Although Nigeria only abolished the monarchy and became a republic in 1963, the First Nigerian Republic usually refers to the period from Nigeria's independence on 1 October 1960 to the coup of 15 January 1966. For an exhaustive account of the First Nigerian Republic, see L. Diamond, *Class, Ethnicity and Democracy in Nigeria: The Failure of the First Republic* (New York, 1988).

Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. In addition to their friendship, the two West African leaders were both anti-Communist, pro-western, capitalist and in favour of African co-operation instead of integration. This meant that they aimed to remain close to their former metropole, were on friendly terms with and received support from the United States, kept their distance and rejected advances from the Soviet Union and other Communist countries, and co-operated extensively in the pro-western 'moderate' Monrovia group of African states in opposition to the seemingly eastward-leaning 'radical' Casablanca bloc.[5] As leading members of the 'moderates' in the early 1960s, in African affairs, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria adopted what could be considered pro-Western positions on such major regional crises as that in the Congo, opposed Pan-Africanism and the concomitant continental integration agenda, and advocated diplomatic, rather than violent solutions to the total liberation of Africa. As a result, they were decried by 'radical' African states as neo-colonial stooges, at the service of their former metropoles.[6] At the forefront of this radical challenge was the leader of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, the figure who gave the Ivorian–Nigerian relationship its common purpose.

This 'Nkrumah factor', which brought Abidjan and Lagos together in joint opposition to Accra and its regional policies, did not go unnoticed by observers outside west Africa. It was notably detected in autumn 1965 by the French General Secretariat for the Community

[5] The 'radicals' were made up of Ghana, Guinea, Mali, the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (PGAR), Egypt and Morocco, and were also known as the Casablanca group, named after the city in which they had had their inaugural meeting in January 1961. The 'moderate' camp, meanwhile, which originated from the May 1965 Monrovia conference and was thus also known as the Monrovia group, brought together the francophone African states of the African and Malagasy Union (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, Côte d'Ivoire, Dahomey [later Benin], Gabon, Mauritania, Niger, Malagasy Republic [later Madagascar], Senegal and Upper Volta [later Burkina Faso]), with Ethiopia, Liberia, Libya, Nigeria, Togo, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan and Tunisia: see P. Nugent, *Africa since Independence* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 101; G. Migani, *La France et l'Afrique sub-saharienne, 1957–1963: Histoire d'une décolonisation entre idéaux eurafricains et politique de puissance* (Brussels, 2008), pp. 168–9.

[6] Bach, 'Nigeria's Relations', ch. 2; P.E. Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans: John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalist Leaders* (Oxford, 2012), *passim*; R. Legvold, *Soviet Policy in West Africa* (Cambridge, MA, 1970), *passim*.

and African and Malagasy Affairs (hereafter General Secretariat),[7] which was headed by President de Gaulle's notorious *Monsieur l'Afrique*, Jacques Foccart.[8] It was also observed by Africanist scholars of the 1960s and '70s, such as W. Scott Thompson and Daniel Bach,[9] as well as more recently by Matteo Grilli.[10] The works of these scholars have predominantly privileged the political and diplomatic rather than the security perspective, are not based on archival research or—in the case of Grilli—have approached Abidjan's and Lagos's responses to Accra's challenge from a Ghanaian perspective. Security was, however, of central importance in Houphouët-Boigny's and the Balewa regime's perceptions of and responses to Ghana. This was mainly because of what they perceived to be Nkrumah's subversive machinations in West Africa, the Soviet bloc-supported expansion of the Ghanaian armed forces and, later, the guerrilla training offered by the People's Republic of China's (PRC) in Ghana to national liberation forces and African opposition groups. Meanwhile, the moderate Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria were both affected by and had to position themselves in relation to the Cold War and the related rise of non-alignment and Pan-Africanism. In the resulting struggle for Africa's postcolonial future, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria were, as West Africa's economically most powerful and diplomatically most influential countries, key players.[11] However, despite their commonalities, their foreign and security policies could differ because of their respective domestic politics.

[7] Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Archives Nationales [hereafter AN], Archives du secrétariat général des Affaires africaines et malgaches de la Communauté (5 AG F), 5 AG F/2232, Note à l'attention de Monsieur le Président de la République, Les Relations entre le Nigéria et l'Entente, Perrier (Secrétariat Général pour la Communauté et les Affaires Africaines et Malgaches, Secrétariat Général), 19 Oct. 1965.
[8] On Foccart, see, for instance, F. Turpin, *Jacques Foccart: Dans l'ombre du pouvoir* (Paris, 2015).
[9] See, for instance, W.S. Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy 1957–1966: Diplomacy, Ideology, and the New State* (Princeton, NJ, 1969), *passim*; and Bach, 'Nigeria's Relations', ch. 2. For 'bilateral' assessments of Côte d'Ivoire's and Nigeria's relationships and rivalries with Ghana, see J. Woronoff, *West African Wager: Houphouët versus Nkrumah* (Metuchen, NJ, 1972); and O. Aluko, *Ghana and Nigeria 1957–1970: A Study in Inter-African Discord* (London, 1976).
[10] M. Grilli, *Nkrumaism and African Nationalism: Ghana's Pan-African Foreign Policy in the Age of Decolonization* (Cham, 2018), *passim*.
[11] M. Wyss, *Postcolonial Security: Britain, France, and West Africa's Cold War* (Oxford, 2021), *passim*.

Nigeria was constitutionally a democratic and federal state, which was originally organised into three regions. Despite numerous ethnic minority groups in each region, the Yoruba were dominant in the west, the Igbo in the east, and the Hausa-Fulani in the north. The political landscape of the First Nigerian Republic was also divided along these regional and ethnic lines with the Western Action Group (AG), the Eastern-dominated National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), and the Northern People's Congress (NPC). The NPC was the strongest party, partly as a result of Britain's historical constitutional arrangements for Nigeria and preference for the North; partly because of the Northern Region's size and population. In the run up to independence, the three parties initially worked together in a coalition government. Yet, the 1959 elections produced a northern-dominated NPC–NCNC coalition government and pushed the AG into opposition. In repositioning itself, the AG then vociferously challenged NPC Prime Minister Balewa's pro-British policies. In so doing, it counted on strong anti-colonial sentiments within the population. This was especially the case among the youth, notably students, where Pan-Africanism and non-alignment were also becoming increasingly popular. In combination with spiralling political and ethnic rivalries following independence in 1960, the Balewa government's room for manoeuvre was thus constrained.[12] Houphouët-Boigny, in contrast, was firmly in charge of Côte d'Ivoire thanks to the country's presidential constitution, the one-party system of his *Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire–Rassemblement démocratique africain* (PDCI–RDA), as well as his moral and tribal authority. The Ivorian leader was only moderately constrained by popular opinion, notably that of younger Ivorians both within and outside his party, who could be critical of France's continued influence despite formal independence in 1960. Moreover, in his security policy choices, he had to consider his allies from Dahomey, Niger

[12] On the political system and culture of the First Nigerian Republic, see Diamond, *Class, Ethnicity and Democracy*, *passim*.

and Upper Volta within the Council of the Entente.[13] Nevertheless, in response to the perceived Ghanaian threat, the Ivorian president had the power to seek protection from the French, while domestic pressures forced the Nigerian prime minister increasingly to turn away from Britain and seek alternative sources of military assistance. Furthermore, Houphouët-Boigny could remain uncompromising towards Ghana, but domestic politics pushed Balewa eventually to seek improved relations with Nkrumah. Finally, for both Abidjan and Lagos, the Ghanaian threat was also a useful means to garner external support and military assistance, and to strengthen their domestic position. It is thus likely that the regimes of Balewa and, especially, Houphouët-Boigny, painted an exaggerated picture of the threat emanating from Ghana, and particularly of its subversive machinations, which at times seemed more imagined than real. Nkrumah was not necessarily as radical, belligerent and eastern-oriented as he was depicted by his enemies in West Africa's Cold War. Pragmatically, he notably showed a certain receptiveness to John F. Kennedy's overtures to prevent Ghana from becoming too close to Moscow and, despite phasing out British officers in Ghana's armed forces, he continued to rely on British military training through the British Joint Services Training Team (BJSTT).[14]

This article aims to identify the essence of the Nkrumah factor by focusing on the military and strategic levels from the perspectives of the regimes in Abidjan and Lagos. In so doing, it will also be possible to discover regional security dynamics, the linkage between domestic and foreign policies, as well as the interplay and respective influence of (neo)colonial factors and the Cold War in early postcolonial Africa. It will be argued that the

[13] F. Grah Mel, *Félix Houphouët-Boigny*, I: *Le Fulgurant destin d'une jeune proie (?–1960)* (Abidjan and Paris, 2003), chs 49 and 51; J.M. Toungara, 'The Apotheosis of Côte d'Ivoire's Nana Houphouët-Boigny', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, xxviii (1990), pp. 23–54; T. Simonet, 'Les Composantes du pouvoir de Félix Houphouët-Boigny en Côte d'Ivoire (1958–1965)', *Outre-Mers*, xcviii, nos 368–9 (2010), pp. 403–420.
[14] Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, ch. 4; M.E. Landricina, 'From "Our Experiment" to the "Prisoner of the West": Ghana's Relations with Great Britain, the United States of America and West Germany during Kwame Nkrumah's Government (1957–1966)' (Roma Tre Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 2016), pp. 34–5.

perceived threat posed by Nkrumah was a key factor in the cordial relationship and strategic alignment between Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria. Moreover, the article will show that, despite a shared assessment of the threat posed by Ghana, domestic politics had a decisive and diverging impact on the foreign and security policies of Abidjan and Lagos, and that regional rivalries and colonial legacies turned out to have a more significant impact on early postcolonial Africa than the Cold War. This will allow for an alternative perspective to the Cold War-driven historiography of early postcolonial Africa.[15] Informed by postcolonial approaches, this article broadens the analytical focus to include not only the viewpoints of the former metropoles and the Cold War contestants, but regional and local perspectives as well.[16] In so doing, the article sheds light on African agency, and offers an empirically-based contribution to contemporary debates in the field of international relations, which as a discipline has traditionally tended to focus on great powers and failed to recognise the agency of African countries.[17]

In pursuit of this agenda, and based on a critical reading of British, French and, to a lesser extent, Ghanaian and American archival documents, the article will assess, firstly, the emergence of Nkrumah's Ghana as a subversive threat during the transfers of power in Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria; secondly, Abidjan's and Lagos's strategic responses to what they increasingly also perceived as a conventional security challenge emanating from Ghana;

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[15] See, for instance, S. Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War: The USSR in West Africa and the Congo, 1956–1964* (Washington, DC, 2010); Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*; and L. Namikas, *Battleground Africa: Cold War in the Congo, 1960–1965* (Washington, DC, 2013).

[16] See, for instance, D. Kennedy, 'Imperial History and Post-Colonial Theory', in J. Le Sueur, ed., *The Decolonization Reader* (New York, 2003), pp. 10–22; M.P. Bradley, 'The Imperial and the Postcolonial', in P. Finney, ed., *Palgrave Advances in International History* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 247–66; M. Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (Oxford, 2002); H. Kwon, *The Other Cold War* (New York, 2010); T. Barkawi and M. Laffey, 'The Postcolonial Moment in Security Studies', *Review of International Studies*, xxxii (2006), pp. 332, 349; C. Peoples and N. Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction* (London, 2010), ch. 3.

[17] W. Brown and S. Harman, 'African Agency in International Politics', in W. Brown and S. Harman, eds, *African Agency in International Politics* (Abingdon, 2013), *passim*; P.-H. Bischoff, K. Aning and A. Acharya, 'Africa in Global International Relations', in P.-H. Bischoff, K. Aning and A. Acharya, eds, *Africa in Global International Relations: Emerging Approaches to Theory and Practice* (London, 2016), *passim*.

thirdly, their reactions to the supposedly Ghanaian-sponsored assassination of Togolese President Sylvanus Olympio in early 1963 which led to simultaneous, and potentially co-ordinated, plans to intervene militarily in Togo; and, finally, the increasing strategic divergence between the Houphouët-Boigny and Balewa regimes despite their common assessment of the threat coming from Ghana.

I

When Ghana became independent in 1957, Nkrumah embarked on his quest to liberate and unite the whole of the African continent, starting in West Africa. In 1958, Guinea's rejection of the French Community—a federal construct that was supposed to give France's colonies internal autonomy and salvage Paris's imperial position in Africa—and resulting independence provided him with the opportunity to make a first step in this direction by establishing the Ghana–Guinea Union with Guinean President Sékou Touré. The road to further integration in his immediate neighbourhood was blocked, however, by the most influential and economically important colonies of French and British West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria. The Ivorian prime minister wanted to remain with France in the Community, and established, the Council of the Entente together with Dahomey, Niger and Upper Volta. This relatively loose organisation was first aimed at forestalling the federative attempts of Senegal's Léopold Sédar Senghor and the French Sudan's Modibo Keïta, who joined forces under the banner of the short-lived Mali Federation.[18] However, the Entente rapidly came to serve also as a bulwark against the influence of the Ghana–Guinea axis, which, after the disintegration of the Mali Federation in 1960, was joined by Mali (former French Sudan).[19] The Nigerian prime minister, meanwhile, was working towards full

[18] F. Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960* (Princeton, NJ, 2014), p. 340.
[19] V. Thompson, *West Africa's Council of the Entente* (Ithaca, NY, 1972), pp. xx, 38, 41.

independence, but in partnership with the British, on whose political, economic and military support he counted for the period after independence, notably through the planned Anglo-Nigerian defence agreement.

Initially, Nkrumah tried to win over Houphouët-Boigny and Balewa for his Pan-African project through diplomatic means. However, frustrated by their conservatism and lack of interest in his agenda, he increasingly sought to undermine the regimes in Abidjan and Lagos in the run up to Ivorian and Nigerian independence.[20] In so doing, the Ghanaian leader openly criticised Abidjan's pro-western and, especially, pro-French positions, notably on Algeria and atomic tests in the Sahara; and provided refuge to Ivorian opposition groups, in particular the secessionist Sanwi movement.[21] Meanwhile, he irritated the Balewa government by withdrawing from regional institutions set up by the British, appearing to meddle in the neighbouring Southern Cameroons, and deporting some Nigerians from Ghana while welcoming others as political refugees. Moreover, he criticised Lagos for its pro-western and British stance, and began to support opposition groups in Nigeria, not least by decrying the planned Anglo-Nigerian defence agreement.[22] Against the background of a political and economic rivalry for leadership in West Africa with Ghana, Houphouët-Boigny and Balewa thus found common ground in perceiving Nkrumah as a threat to their regimes and countries in the run up to independence in 1960.[23]

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[20] Grilli, *Nkrumaism and African Nationalism*, pp. 2, 113–15.

[21] J. Foccart, *Foccart Parle*, I: *Entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard* (Paris, 1995), pp. 228–9; Bach, 'Nigeria's Relations', p. 41, 54; D. Bach, 'L'Insertion ivoirienne dans les rapports internationaux', in Y.-A. Fauré and J.-F. Médard, eds, *État et bourgeoisie en Côte d'Ivoire* (Paris, 1982), p. 97; J. Baulin, *La Politique africaine d'Houphouët-Boigny* (Paris, 1980), pp. 21–4; Grah Mel, *Félix Houphouët-Boigny*, I, pp. 701–703; L. Koffi Koffi, *La France contre la Côte d'Ivoire: L'Affaire du Sanwi: Du malentendu politico-juridique à la tentative de sécession* (Paris, 2013), *passim*; Nandjui, *Houphouët-Boigny*, pp. 95, 110–11; Grilli, *Nkrumaism and African Nationalism*, pp. 117, 135, 142, 144–6; Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, pp. 88–9.

[22] J. Robertson, *Transition in Africa: From Direct Rule to Independence*, (London, 1974), p. 215; I.A. Gambari, *Party Politics and Foreign Policy: Nigeria under the First Republic* (Zaria, 1980), pp. 50, 68; Grilli, *Nkrumaism and African Nationalism*, pp. 115–16, 142, 149; Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, pp. 78–80; Kew, The National Archives [hereafter TNA], CO 554/2060, Relations between Nigeria and Ghana [hand annotated: Brief for Anglo-French Talks Nov. 59], CO, undated; TNA, DO 35/9344, Prime Minister's Visit to Africa, January 1960, Nigeria (Seen from the Point of View of Ghana), Brief by the Commonwealth Relations Office, 31 Dec. 1959.

[23] Bach, 'Nigeria's Relations', pp. 38–9.

At first, Ghana's relationships with Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria had not been marked by hostility, but largely by courteous competition. Less than a month after Ghanaian independence, in early April 1957, Nkrumah visited Abidjan, where he was received by Houphouët-Boigny, who at the time was also a minister in the French government. During this encounter, it became clear that, notwithstanding their common Akan heritage, the two leaders envisioned their countries' futures differently. Whereas Nkrumah insisted on a fully independent development for Ghana and the whole of Africa, Houphouët-Boigny saw the future of Côte d'Ivoire in a close relationship with France. Eventually, the Ivorian leader made a famous wager that both should pursue their own path towards development, and meet again in ten years to compare the respective outcomes. As confident as Houphouët-Boigny that he would win, Nkrumah accepted the challenge.[24] The sportsmanship in their relationship was soon lost, however. This was evident in the immediate aftermath of the establishment of the Community, which had been heavily influenced and advocated by the Ivorian leader. In late November 1958, he raised his concerns with de Gaulle's adviser Foccart that Africa was exposed to a dual plot: 'that of blind nationalism and that of hardly concealed communism'. Houphouët-Boigny emphasised that not only was he alone in confronting this plot, but he also had 'to reckon with Ghana and its powerful and perfidious means'.[25] In June 1959, in a meeting with the American consul in Abidjan, the Ivorian prime minister also portrayed himself as a bulwark against the radicalism of what had now become the Ghana–Guinea axis and, by extension, communism. He seemed rather confident in this role, because while he expressed his faith in the French-led Community army for the defence of Côte d'Ivoire, he mocked the Ghanaian and Guinean armed forces as parade armies.[26] Houphouët-Boigny's

[24] Baulin, *La Politique africaine*, p. 20; Grah Mel, *Félix Houphouët-Boigny*, I, pp. 687–97; P.-H. Siriex, *Houphouët-Boigny ou la sagesse africaine* (Paris and Abidjan, 1986), p. 163.
[25] AN, 5 AG F/530, Houphouët-Boigny to Foccart, 23 Nov. 1958.
[26] College Park, MD, National Archives and Records Administration [hereafter NARA], Record Group [hereafter RG] 84, Entry 2820-C, Box 3Norland (US Consulate Abidjan) to Herter (Department of State, DoS), 5 June 1959.

mockery of Ghana and Guinea more generally was, the French high commissioner observed in summer 1959, motivated by jealousy of all the international attention Nkrumah and Touré received as a result of their countries' independence. Nevertheless, Yves Guéna also noted that by having chosen France over independence, the Ivorian leader was on the back foot in Africa.[27] Furthermore, back in Paris, Prime Minister Michel Debré shared Houphouët-Boigny's threat assessment that Côte d'Ivoire and 'almost all of French black Africa was threatened by the coalition of independent African countries led by a member of the [British] Commonwealth, Ghana'.[28] Whether or not it was real, the Ghanaian threat served a dual purpose in the Franco-Ivorian relationship during the transfer of power and its aftermath. By playing it up, Abidjan received French attention and support, and Paris made sure that the Ivorian regime looked to the metropole for help.

The threat from the Ghana-Guinea axis was, according to the Ivorian prime minister and French defence planners, not direct, but subversive.[29] Accra was notably seen to be behind the agitations of the partisans of the Sanwi Kingdom in the Aboisso region, who, based on a treaty of 1843 between one of their former chiefs and a French representative, made a claim for independence from Côte d'Ivoire. As we have seen, Nkrumah did indeed harbour Sanwi refugees, and thus provided them with a safe haven and a platform, yet, in order to avoid an open conflict with his Ivorian counterpart, he did not go as far as to support their calls for the reunification of the Sanwi territory with Ghana on the basis of a common Nzima heritage.[30] Nevertheless, from the perspective of Abidjan and Community military planners in early 1960, and even though they did not seem to have any tangible evidence to

[27] La Courneuve, Archives diplomatiques, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de La Courneuve [hereafter CADC], 324QONT/8, Guéna (Abidjan) to Direction des Affaires africaines et malgaches (DAM), 31 Aug. 1959.
[28] *Documents diplomatiques français, 1959*, II: *(1er juillet–31 décembre)*, ed. Ministère des affaires étrangères: Commission de publication des documents diplomatiques français (Paris, 1995), p. 239 (M. Debré, Premier Ministre, à M. Couve de Murville, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, 26 Aug. 1959).
[29] Vincennes, Service historique de la Défense [hereafter SHD], GR 6 Q 37, Fiches sur les problèmes de défense de la République de Côte d'Ivoire, État-Major Général de la Défense Nationale, Plans et Opérations, 1 Dec. 1959.
[30] Grilli, *Nkrumaism and African Nationalism*, pp. 144–6.

support their claim, Nkrumah's support of the Sanwi was seen to be part of a broader expansionist policy to absorb Togo and the Aboisso region in Côte d'Ivoire.[31] On the eve of Ivorian independence, in late July, Guéna thus reported to Foccart that the relationship between Abidjan and Accra was seriously strained, particularly because of the Sanwi issue.[32] Following a diplomatic initiative by Ghana to improve relations on the occasion of Côte d'Ivoire's independence on 7 August, Houphouët-Boigny met with Nkrumah on 19 September. Instead of resolving their differences, however, the meeting only confirmed and even reinforced them.[33] In contrast to relations between Accra and Abidjan, the deterioration of the Ghanaian–Nigerian relationship was not as steep in the run up to independence. For obvious reasons connected to their shared colonial past Ghana and Nigeria had been historically closer, and the coalition governments and increasing role of the opposition in Lagos produced a more varied and moderate approach towards Nkrumah. Nonetheless, the deterioration in the relations between the Nigerian and Ghanaian leaders was real and significant.

In light of his regional and Pan-African ambitions, Nkrumah took a close interest in Nigeria. On the eve of Ghana's independence, he notably tried to influence and speed up Nigeria's march towards self-government. In early 1957, he advised Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Eastern premier and leader of the NCNC, to push at the upcoming Anglo-Nigerian constitutional talks 'for the very early grant of independence to a unified Nigeria'. 'If … other Regions are opposed to this suggestion', he went on, 'I think you should press for the equally early grant of full independence to "Southern Nigeria"'.[34] Although Azikiwe shared

[31] SHD, GR 6 Q 37, Groupe Communauté, Réunion du 11 Février 1960, EMGDN [État-Major Général de la Défense Nationale], Affaires Générales, Groupe Communauté, 12 Feb. 1960.
[32] AN, 5 AG F/533, Guéna (Abidjan) to Foccart (Communauté), 27 July 1960; Synthèse de renseignement, 26 July 1960.
[33] Grah Mel, *Félix Houphouët-Boigny*, I, p. 704; Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 147.
[34] Accra, Public Records and Archives Administration Department [hereafter PRAAD], Special Collection Bureau of African Affairs [hereafter SC/BAA], RG 17/1/32, Azikiwe to Nkrumah, 4 Jan. 1957.

with Nkrumah both a commitment to the struggle for African emancipation and Lincoln University in Pennsylvania as an alma mater, it is questionable as to whether such a paternalistic intervention strengthened their relationship or, instead, sowed the seeds of future disagreement. More immediately, however, the complications in the Ghanaian–Nigerian relationship were of a more technical nature. In addition to Accra's withdrawal from the corporations and institutions of Anglophone West Africa,[35] Ghana's independence also led to the break-up of the British-led security infrastructure in the region.[36] Nigerian access to the Military Training School in Teshie, Ghana, was no longer guaranteed and, guided by the British governor-general, Sir James Robertson, the Balewa government thus decided to establish its own school in Kaduna.[37] This was also in line with Nigeria's national aspirations and planning for independence, for which London had agreed to set a firm date during the constitutional talks of 1958, after the Nigerians had given their commitment to entering into a defence agreement with Britain.[38] With the prospect of independence, and in exchange for the strategic requirements that they wanted to secure through the agreement, the British provided the Nigerians with increasingly generous military assistance. This attracted the ire and jealousy of Accra, notably when London granted warships to Lagos for the fledgling Nigerian navy. In Ghana, it was argued that the gift was an imperialist means to yoke Nigeria, that Britain was fuelling the enmity between West African countries by arming one against another, that money for the development of Northern Nigeria would have been more appropriate, and that if the British gave warships to Nigeria, they should also give them to

[35] Gambari, *Party Politics*, p. 68.
[36] TNA, DEFE 11/228, JP(57)163(Final), Defence Requirements in West Africa, Report by the Joint Planning Staff, 5 Feb. 1958; C.O.S.(58)42, Defence Requirements in West Africa, Note by the Secretary; Annex to COS(58)42, Defence Requirements in West Africa, 17 Feb. 1958.
[37] TNA, CO 554/2101, Minutes of First Meeting of the Defence Council in the Chamber of the Council of Ministers at Lagos on Tuesday, 26th November at 9.30 A.M., 2 Dec. 1957; Robertson (Lagos) to Eastwood (CO), 9 Dec. 1957; TNA, CO 968/622, Establishment – Nigerian Military Training School, Robertson (Lagos) to Lennox-Boyd (CO), 7 Nov. 1958.
[38] Marco Wyss, 'A Post-Imperial Cold War Paradox: The Anglo-Nigerian Defence Agreement 1958–1962', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, xliv (2016), pp. 982–3.

Ghana.[39] London rejected such criticism outright, and in a letter to the governor-general of Nigeria in early 1959, the colonial secretary emphasised that the gift had to be seen within the framework of the defence agreement.[40] It was thus not surprising that Nkrumah would go on to make use of the Anglo-Nigerian defence pact to attack the Balewa government once his relationship with Lagos had soured and an opposition had appeared in Nigeria.

In early 1959, following a visit by the Ghanaian leader, Balewa expressed to Nkrumah his hope that the relationship between their 'two countries will remain both close and cordial'.[41] However, according to British sources, behind the façade of polite diplomacy Balewa had told Nkrumah in a one-to-one meeting that 'all the leaders of the major political parties in Nigeria were agreed that Nigeria must stand firmly with the United Kingdom', and that '"none of us agrees with your policy of neutrality"'.[42] This was bound to change, however, with the Nigerian elections of late 1959. Whereas the NCNC, as Azikiwe informed Nkrumah, became the junior partner in a coalition government with Balewa's NPC,[43] Obafemi Awolowo and his AG lost the election and ended up in opposition. As a member of the pre-election coalition government, Awolowo had been staunchly pro-western and opposed to Nkrumah's Pan-African agenda. Once in opposition, he adopted a neutralist position, and befriended Nkrumah's Ghana. This did not go unnoticed in Accra, where it was decided in early 1960 to strengthen the presence of the Ghanaian intelligence service in Nigeria to support the growing opposition to the Balewa regime.[44] Moreover, Nkrumah joined in the attacks by Awolowo's AG and other less formal opposition groups against the defence agreement to undermine the close Anglo-Nigerian relationship and, ultimately, the

[39] TNA, CO 554/2060, Accra to Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO), 23 Jan. 1959.
[40] TNA, CO 968/662, Lennox-Boyd (CO) to Robertson (Lagos), 30 Jan. 1959.
[41] PRAAD, SC/BAA, RG 17/1/32, Balewa to Nkrumah, 11 Feb. 1959.
[42] TNA, CO 554/2059, Grey (Lagos) to Eastwood (CO), 16 Sept. 1959.
[43] PRAAD, SC/BAA, RG 17/1/32, Azikiwe to Nkrumah, 31 Dec. 1959.
[44] PRAAD, SC/BAA, RG 17/1/189, Tay (Lagos) to Nkrumah, 3 Feb. 1960; Personal Secretary to Nkrumah to Tay (Lagos), 9 Feb. 1960.

government in Lagos.[45] In addition to the opposition to Ghana's Pan-African agenda, this gave Balewa further common ground with Houphouët-Boigny to join forces against Nkrumah.

The foundation for the Ivorian and Nigerian leaders' strategic alignment and alliance against their Ghanaian counterpart was laid when they met in Abidjan in August 1960. Although Balewa strongly disapproved of French policies in Africa, he informed the British high commissioner in Ghana afterwards that he 'had liked M. Houphouet-Boigny's attitude of continuing friendship towards France, which he had seen as the parallel of his own friendship towards the United Kingdom'. Moreover, he and the Ivorian president 'had found themselves at one in their suspicions of Dr. Nkrumah and had scorned his idea of a Union of African States'. In conclusion, 'there had been a real meeting of minds'.[46] In September, both Houphouët-Boigny and Balewa expressed their mutual appreciation, trust and, especially, opposition to Nkrumah in separate meetings with American diplomats.[47] The Ivorian–Nigerian 'entente cordiale' against Ghana was then cemented during Nigeria's independence celebrations on 1 October, which Houphouët-Boigny chose to attend in person, and to which he brought his fellow Entente leaders.[48] Thereafter, Abidjan and Lagos worked closely together to frustrate Accra's Pan-African ambitions. Meanwhile, because of Nkrumah's increasing radicalisation and rapprochement with the Soviet bloc, fear of Ghana as an external threat began to grow.

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[45] *Nigeria*, II: *Moving to Independence 1953–1960*, British Documents on the End of Empire, Series B, Vol. 7, ed. M. Lynn (London, 2001), p. 709 (Defence agreement: letter from D.W.S. Hunt to A.W. Snelling reporting on the decisions of the London talks, 24 May 1960); TNA, DO 35/10442, Snelling (Accra) to Hunt (CRO), 27 June 1960.

[46] TNA, DO 195/71,Notes on a Talk with the Prime Minister of the Federation of Nigeria on 27th August, 1960, Snelling (Accra), 28 Aug. 1960.

[47] *Foreign Relations of the United States* [hereafter *FRUS*], *1958–1960*, XIV: *Africa*, ed. H.D. Schwar and S. Shaloff (Washington, DC, 1992), pp. 219–21 (Telegram from the Consulate General at Lagos to the State Department, 5 Sept. 1960 and Telegram from the Consulate General at Lagos to the Department of State, 7 Sept. 1960).

[48] Bach, 'Nigeria's Relations', p. 39.

II

When first Côte d'Ivoire, and then Nigeria became independent in 1960, the Congo Crisis was already fully under way. This crisis and, especially, the rapidly deteriorating position of Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, not only divided the newly independent African countries into the 'radical' Casablanca and 'moderate' Monrovia blocs, but also increased the hostility between Accra and its regional rivals Abidjan and Lagos. Frustrated with the United States's response to and role in the Congo Crisis, Nkrumah entered into a phase of rapprochement with the Soviet Union. Houphouët-Boigny and Balewa, meanwhile, were largely supportive of the Western-driven response of the United Nations in the Congo and were moving closer to Washington anyway during and after the transfer of power. Thus, Ghana on the one hand, and Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria on the other, not only opposed each other in their respective Casablanca and Monrovia blocs, but also found themselves on different sides in Africa's escalating Cold War. This resulted in strong disagreements over the future development and organisation of the African continent, and hostile rhetoric between Accra and Abidjan and Lagos. Simultaneously, an increasingly radicalised and restless Nkrumah reinforced his support for opposition groups in Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria to weaken and, according to official Ivorian and Nigerian narratives, even to overthrow the regimes of Houphouët-Boigny and Balewa. While the former saw Nkrumah's hand behind any real or imaginary move against his rule, the latter's government claimed to have unearthed evidence of Ghanaian subversion in the so-called bomb plot trial, in which Awolowo and other AG leaders were found guilty of plotting to overthrow the regime with the help of Nkrumah in 1962. Allegedly, they had trained revolutionaries in the use of arms and explosives in Ghana.[49] Moreover, Osagyefo (meaning redeemer in Akan)—as Nkrumah liked to style himself—aimed to strengthen Ghana's regional position by developing its armed forces with

[49] On the so-called bomb plot or treason trial, see Diamond, *Class, Ethnicity and Democracy*, pp. 109–112.

substantial Soviet bloc assistance.[50] Consequently, the Ivorian and Nigerian governments came to fear Accra not only as a source of subversion, but also as an external threat. In response, both governments decided to strengthen their defences. Whereas Abidjan did so increasingly in partnership with Paris, Lagos relied decreasingly on London.

In the wake of Côte d'Ivoire's independence, Houphouët-Boigny had originally found himself in a stand-off with de Gaulle over the Entente's postcolonial relationship with France. In response to the disintegration of the Community as a result of the Mali Federation's accession to independence, and in order to burnish his African nationalist and leadership credentials, the Ivorian leader had initially decided to go for a clear break with France without, unlike most other former French African colonies, entering into co-operation agreements with Paris beforehand. After independence, Côte d'Ivoire's and the other Entente states' future relationships with France had thus to be negotiated, and defence and military assistance rapidly became the crux of the issue. Although by spring 1961 Houphouët-Boigny had eventually succeeded in forcing de Gaulle into tailor-made co-operation agreements for the Entente, increasing security concerns drove him to shelter his country, regime and himself behind France.[51] The major source of these concerns was clearly Nkrumah's Ghana. According to French observers, in late January 1961, in the midst of the Franco-Entente co-operation agreement negotiations, Nkrumah continued to use the Sanwi to stir up trouble in Côte d'Ivoire. The Elysée, which was concerned that Ghana, together with Mali, was out to

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[50] Grilli, *Nkrumaism and African Nationalism*, pp. 213–14, 217–18, 248–9; Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, pp. 207, 237–44; B.E. Ate, *Decolonization and Dependence: The Development of Nigerian–U.S. Relations, 1960–1984* (Boulder, CO, 1987), pp. 53, 55, 128–9, 131, 133; Bach, 'Nigeria's Relations', pp. 39, 54–5; Bach, 'L'Insertion ivoirienne', p. 97; J.-P. Bat, *Le Syndrome Foccart: La Politique française en Afrique de 1959 à nos jours* (Paris, 2012), p. 319; Baulin, *La politique africaine*, p. 26; S. Diarra, *Les faux complots d'Houphouët-Boigny: Fracture dans le destin d'une nation (1959–1970)* (Paris, 1997), *passim*; Gambari, *Party Politics*, pp. 65, 68, 70; F. Grah Mel, *Félix Houphouët-Boigny*, II: *L'Épreuve du pouvoir (1960–1980)* (Abidjan and Paris, 2010), pp. 267–9; M. Matusevich, *No Easy Row for a Russian Hoe: Ideology and Pragmatism in Nigerian–Soviet Relations, 1960–1991* (Trenton, NJ, 2003), p. 64; Mazov, *A Distant Front*, *passim*; P.E. Muehlenbeck, *Czechoslovakia in Africa, 1945–1968* (London, 2016), *passim*; E.E. Osaghae, *Crippled Giant: Nigeria since Independence* (Bloomington, IN, 1998), p. 39; J. Peters, *The Nigerian Military and the State* (London, 1997), p. 84.

[51] Wyss, *Postcolonial Security*, chs 2 and 4.

sabotage its negotiations with Houphouët-Boigny, was thereby keen to warn the Ivorian leader about Accra's apparent machinations and to show its support by refusing to engage with the appeals of the supposedly Ghanaian-sponsored Sanwi.[52] Moreover, once the co-operation agreements had been signed on 24 April, the French were eager to demonstrate their relevance in the fields of defence and military assistance by helping with the build-up of the Ivorian armed forces. Within France's embassy in Abidjan, it was argued that this was necessary not only because a permanent French military presence was no longer welcome, but Côte d'Ivoire was also threatened by 'its neighbours, particularly Ghana'.[53]

This threat assessment was shared by the Ivorian regime, which, as a corollary and despite a potential backlash from African nationalists in the region, revised its position on the presence of French forces in Côte d'Ivoire. On 26 September 1961, during the meeting of the Ivorian Defence Committee, Defence Minister Jean Konan Banny raised the issue of Ghana by arguing that following Nkrumah's dismissal of all British officers in the Ghanaian armed forces, Côte d'Ivoire was now almost totally encircled. Therefore, in his view, France's help was 'absolutely indispensable'. This evaluation was then authoritatively reinforced by Houphouët-Boigny, who emphasised that 'Ghana becomes very worrying', arguing that Nkrumah wanted to align all African countries, if necessary against their will and by force, under his Pan-African leadership. Moreover, he implied that this was part of a Communist onslaught on Africa. Consequently, the 'very anti-communist' Côte d'Ivoire had to ask France for help, and it was essential that French forces would move in as rapidly as possible into the bases at Port-Bouët (Abidjan) and Bouaké. Finally, and although he strongly questioned the Kennedy administration's extensive financial support to the Volta River dam

[52] AN, 5 AG F/1787, Note à l'attention de Monsieur le Président de la Communauté, Lettre du "Président du Gouvernement Provisoire du Sanwi", Desmarescaux (Communauté), 26 Jan. 1961; AN, 5 AG F/1156, Note à l'attention de Monsieur le Président de la Communauté, Attitude du Mali et du Ghana à l'égard de la négociation avec les États de l'Entente, Présidence de la Communauté, 1 Feb. 1961.
[53] Nantes, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes [hereafter CADN], 1PO/1/16, Fiche à l'intention de Son Excellence l'Ambassadeur de France, Abidjan, 20 May 1961.

project of Nkrumah, 'the most dangerous man', he maintained that Côte d'Ivoire would have to turn to Washington for the military assistance that Paris could not provide.[54] While mentioning the United States was probably intended to push the jealous French—who received the minutes of the meeting—into action, Houphouët-Boigny's seemingly exaggerated threat assessment was probably also aimed at some of his ministers who needed to be convinced about an ever stronger reliance on France for their country's security. In any event, Abidjan's approach to the former metropole for additional help was welcomed by Foccart's service. In late autumn, the General Secretariat observed that Côte d'Ivoire, as well as two other Entente states, Niger and Dahomey, feared both the military and the subversive potential of the Ghana–Guinea–Mali axis. It was noted with satisfaction that the leaders of these countries wanted to have a strong French military presence in their territories. The General Secretariat saw this request and more generally the rivalry between Houphouët-Boigny and Nkrumah as an ideal opportunity to strengthen France's position in the region, and thereby keep both the Soviets and the Americans out of its own traditional sphere of influence.[55]

Once the Ivorian president had secured the presence of French troops in the Entente by early 1962, he also wanted to strengthen Côte d'Ivoire's armed forces. The focus shifted thereby temporarily from the subversive to the external threat. After Houphouët-Boigny had agreed with Nkrumah in August 1961 to support no longer each other's political refugees, such as the Sanwi,[56] he seemed predominantly concerned by the conventional military

[54] AN, 5 AG F/1787, Procès Verbal du Comité de Défense réuni le 26 septembre 1961 à 17 heures, à la Présidence de la République, 26 Sept. 1961. On the threat posed by Ghana and, by extension, Guinea and Mali, see also L.P.A. Banga, 'L'aide militaire française dans la politique de défense de la Côte d'Ivoire de 1960 à 2002' (Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny–Cocody and École Pratique des Hautes Études Ph.D. thesis, 2014), pp. 46–50.

[55] AN, 5 AG F/1779, Note, Maintien de la présence militaire française dans les États de l'Entente, Desmarescaux (Secrétariat Général), 27 Nov. 1961.

[56] AN, 5 AG F/1787, Note à l'attention de Monsieur le Président de la République, Président de la Communauté, Affaire du Sanwi, Desmarescaux (Secrétariat Général), 21 Dec. 1961; AN, 5 AG F/1788, Note à l'Attention de Monsieur le Président de la République, Président de la Communauté, Retour en Côte d'Ivoire des dirigeants de l'ancien mouvement "Sanwi", Secrétariat Général, 5 Apr. 1962.

potential of Ghana and its allies. In January 1962, during the first meeting of the Franco-Entente Regional Defence Council, which had been established by the co-operation agreements, he 'very strongly insisted on obtaining [from France] the modern military material, which would allow him to counterbalance the offensive potential that Ghana, Guinea and Mali henceforth have thanks to Soviet aid'.[57] This request, which went well beyond France's military assistance plans for its former African colonies, was received with much sympathy by a French defence establishment that was concerned with France's position in the African security sector, the defence market and American competition.[58] Even if the armaments in question were not necessarily modern, the Elysée therefore decided to donate additional, heavy military equipment to Côte d'Ivoire to alleviate Houphouët-Boigny's concerns.[59] Paris's perceived need to forestall Washington's involvement in the Ivorian security sector seemed real, because in early 1962 the US Joint Chiefs of Staff were considering giving military assistance to the Entente to counter Ghana, Guinea and Mali, and as an inducement for these countries to move away from the Soviet Union towards the United States.[60] Yet while the French were determined to keep the Americans out of their former colonies, the White House did not follow the advice of its defence chiefs but rather that of its embassy in Abidjan, according to which Ghana was not a real threat and France was responsible for the defence of Côte d'Ivoire.[61] During the Regional Defence Council meeting

[57] AN, 5 AG F/381, Note, Aide militaire à la Côte d'Ivoire, État-Major Particulier (Présidence de la République), 20 Jan. 1962.
[58] SHD, GR 6 T 852, Objet: Renforcement de l'Armée Ivoirienne, Dio to Messmer (both Ministry of Armies), 24 Jan. 1962.
[59] AN, 5 AG F/381, Relevé des Décisions du Conseil pour les Affaires Africaines et Malgaches, réunion du lundi 22 janvier 1962 à 15 heures 30, de Gaulle, 22 Jan. 1962; SHD, GR 6 T 852, Objet: Suite donnée aux questions posées par les États de l'Entente au Conseil de Défense du 8 janvier 62, Division Plans d'Action (EMGDN) to Cabinet Militaire (Ministry of Cooperation), 2 Mar. 1962; CADC, 324QONT/23, DAM (MAE) to Houphouët-Boigny, 8 Mar. 1962.
[60] *FRUS, 1961–1963*, XXI: *Africa*, ed. N.D. Howland (Washington, DC, 1995), pp. 310–14 (Memorandum Prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 31 Jan. 1962).
[61] NARA, RG 59, Entry 3107, Box 1, Memorandum of Conversation, Military Talks with French, Lukens (DoS), 10 July 1962; NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal Files [hereafter CDF] 1960–1963, Box 1806, Hope (US Embassy Abidjan) to Tasca (DoS), 25 July 1962.

of 8 November 1962, Houphouët-Boigny, flanked by his Nigerien counterpart Hamani Diori, thus voiced his concern and irritation in response to French plans to reduce their military footprint in Africa more generally and the Entente specifically, following their withdrawal from Algeria. Unlike the Americans, the Ivorian president claimed that Nkrumah's Ghana was a real threat, and therefore he counted on France's protection both within and on the borders of Côte d'Ivoire.[62] In Nigeria, meanwhile, the threat assessment was largely identical. But the strategic response began to diverge, notably in relation to the former metropole.

Upon independence, Lagos not only came to see Accra as a conventional as well as a subversive threat, but also wanted to strengthen Nigeria's defences vis-à-vis Ghana for reasons of prestige. For that reason, and unlike Houphouët-Boigny's approach, the Balewa government largely refrained from outsourcing its security to the former metropole, while nevertheless, aiming to rely on Britain for the development of its armed forces, at least initially. In a meeting with the British chancellor of the exchequer, Selwyn Lloyd, in late October 1960, Nigerian finance minister Festus Okotie-Eboh expressed his concern about the supply of Soviet aircraft to the Ghanaian air force. According to Okotie-Eboh, this allowed Nkrumah to put pressure 'over wide areas of Africa without Nigeria being in any way able to influence him', because 'Nigeria had no air force at all'.[63] This was a thinly veiled hint that Lagos, seeing itself threatened by and in a regional competition with Accra, was counting on London for the strengthening of its defences. This was strongly encouraged by Whitehall which, in order to help steer the defence agreement through the Nigerian parliament, gave Nigeria generous military assistance, especially when compared to Ghana.[64] In November, during the parliamentary debates in Nigeria about the defence pact with Britain, the Federal government then used the argument of British military assistance to fend off criticism from

[62] AN, 5 AG F/2652, Procès-Verbal de la Réunion du Conseil Régional de Défense 'France–Entente' du 8 Novembre 1962 à 18 H., 8 Nov. 1962.
[63] TNA, DO 177/58, Chief Festus, Hubback to Rickett (both Treasury), 31 Oct. 1960.
[64] TNA, DO 177/20, Keeble (Accra) to Greenhill (CRO), 9 Nov. 1960.

the opposition. In playing on the country's national pride and regional rivalry with Ghana, defence minister Muhammadu Ribadu even emphasised the relevance of Britain's military training and equipment in relation to Nigeria's troop contribution to the United Nations Operation in the Congo: 'Surely, no Nigerian would like to hear in the case that is going on in the Congo to-day that Ghanaian soldiers are better than Nigerian soldiers!'.[65] The governing NPC–NCNC coalition eventually managed to get the defence agreement through parliament with a comfortable majority. The AG was not willing to give up, however, and together with other opposition groups took the fight against the defence pact to the streets in late 1960. This resulted in increasingly violent demonstrations and riots by trade unions, students and youth groups, behind which the Nigerian government saw the hand of Nkrumah.[66]

As a result of what Lagos perceived as subversive activities by Ghana in Nigeria, relations between the two countries had deteriorated further by 1961. According to British observers in both West Africa and London, Nkrumah wanted to drive a wedge between the government and the people in Nigeria, and ultimately get rid of the conservative regime in Lagos. The Ghanaian leader criticised Balewa and his ministers as colonial stooges, whom he considered an obstacle to realising his Pan-African agenda.[67] Increasingly fearful, the Federal government thus aimed to expand and develop the Nigerian armed forces significantly, including the creation of an air force.[68] In a meeting with the Commonwealth secretary Duncan Sandys in July 1961, the Nigerian finance minister stressed both the external and the subversive threat from the Soviet-sponsored Nkrumah, who was building up Ghana's armed

[65] TNA, DO 177/20, Federation of Nigeria, *Parliamentary Debates, First Parliament, First Session, 1960–1961, House of Representatives, Saturday 19th November 1960* (Lagos, 1960), pp. 4–23, quotation at 7.
[66] TNA, DEFE 7/1484, Lagos to CRO, 1 Dec. 1960; TNA, DO 177/2, Fingland (Lagos) to Greenhill (CRO), 1 Dec. 1960.
[67] TNA, DO 177/2, Brief for the Secretary of State's Visit to Nigeria, Apr. 1961, Nigeria's Relations with Ghana, CRO, undated; TNA, DO 195/71, Relations between Ghana and Nigeria, Note of a Discussion between President Nkrumah, Lord Head and Sir Arthur Snelling, 10 June 1961; TNA, DO 177/20, Head (Lagos) to Clutterbuck (CRO), 21 June 1961.
[68] Boston, MA, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Presidential Papers, National Security Files, Countries, Nigeria, Report of the Special U.S. Economic Mission to Nigeria, 17 June 1961, pp. 28–30.

forces with the 'ultimate aim … to attack Nigeria'. Okotie-Eboh therefore argued that Nigeria required an air force, because otherwise it 'might find herself at the mercy of the Air Force which Ghana now intended to create'.[69] Despite the seeming absence of tangible evidence, this threat assessment was shared more widely in the Balewa government, notably by Azikiwe, Nkrumah's former fellow traveller in the fight against colonialism. In a meeting with the Commonwealth secretary in late July, the Nigerian governor-general 'was convinced that Ghana was bent on aggression, as he could think of no other reason for her to spend £12m. on her armed services'.[70]

Driven by its increasing fear of and competition with Accra, by late 1961 Lagos was determined to expand its army and navy, establishing an air force, and starting a military academy. To this end Nigerian policymakers looked mainly to London which, despite concerns over the Federal government's defence priorities, was willing to help in order to retain its strategic interests in Nigeria and prevent it from turning to other suppliers.[71] But in the months and years ahead, while Lagos stuck to its military expansion plans, it increasingly moved away from Britain to other countries for the equipment and training of its armed forces. In response to continued and escalating pressure from Nigerian opposition groups and 'radical' African countries such as Ghana, in early 1962 the British and Nigerian governments decided to abrogate the defence agreement to limit Balewa's exposure to attacks, and thereby protect the close Anglo-Nigerian relationship. Moreover, with the aim of avoiding further accusations of being colonial pawns and living up to their proclaimed foreign policy of non-alignment, Nigerian ministers searched for alternative sources of military assistance. Despite repetitive and ever more desperate British offers, Lagos

[69] TNA, DO 177/20, Note for Record, CRO, 21 July 1961.
[70] Cambridge, Churchill College Archives Centre, Papers of Lord Duncan-Sandys, DSND 8, 18, Talk between the Secretary of State and Dr. Azikiwe at Chatsworth on 29th July, Devonshire (CRO), 31 July 1961.
[71] TNA, DO 195/97, Brief for Anglo-U.S. Talks, Washington, November 1916, Federation of Nigeria–Armed Forces, CRO, 15 Nov. 1961.

approached other Commonwealth and Western countries, and in 1963 would eventually entrust the Federal Republic of Germany with the establishment of its air force and India with that of its military academy.[72] Washington, meanwhile, was not yet ready to militarise its aid policy towards Lagos, even though the US Joint Chiefs of Staff had called in early 1962 (as in the case of Côte d'Ivoire) for military assistance to Nigeria with the aim of influencing the Ghana–Guinea–Mali axis.[73] The Americans not only engaged with Accra, but were also reassured by the still overconfident British that Nigeria was strong enough to stand up to Ghana and it seemed 'quite likely that the days of the Nkrumah regime were numbered'.[74]

Like Houphouët-Boigny, however, the Balewa regime remained strongly concerned and irritated by Ghana, which it saw as a Soviet proxy.[75] But whereas Côte d'Ivoire chose to extensively rely on France for its security in response to the Ghanaian dual threat, Nigeria decided to reduce its defence ties with Britain and instead increasingly relied on other Commonwealth and Western countries. Nevertheless, Abidjan's and Lagos's perceptions of the threat presented by Ghana remained very similar, and in their response to the 1963 coup in Togo their strategic alignment became especially close.

III

On 13 January 1963, the president of Togo, Sylvanus Olympio, was assassinated in a military putsch. This first coup of postcolonial West Africa sent shockwaves through the region, where it was seen by numerous fearful leaders as the result of Nkrumah's machinations.

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[72] M. Wyss, 'The Challenge of Western Neutralism during the Cold War: Britain and the Build-up of a Nigerian Air Force', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, xx, no. 2 (2018), pp. 99–128.
[73] *FRUS, 1961–1963*, XXI: *Africa*, pp. 310–14 (Memorandum Prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 31 Jan. 1962).
[74] TNA, CAB 163/54, Outlook for Nigeria, Report by the Joint Intelligence Committee, Stephenson (Joint Intelligence Committee), 6 Mar. 1962; NARA, RG 59, Entry 5235, Box 2, Mathews (Office of Eastern and Southern African Affairs) to Williams (Bureau of African Affairs, AF), 7 Dec. 1962(quotation from this document).
[75] NARA, RG 84, UD 3050, Box 7, Foreign Minister's Views on Various International Problems, Palmer (US Embassy Lagos) to Department of State, 28 Nov. 1962.

While there is no proof of an annexationist agenda, the Ghanaian leader had indeed set his sights on Togo before. In the 1950s, he had encouraged French Togo to join, like the UN Trust Territory of British Togoland, his country upon independence, and thereafter sought to draw Olympio into a union. The Togolese leader, however, resisted such Ghanaian approaches. Despite Olympio's ideological proximity to Nkrumah, Accra thus began to work against Lomé, not only diplomatically, but also through financial support to the opposition in Togo and military training to its members in Ghana. When the news of the Togolese president's assassination spread like wildfire in early 1963, it was thus not surprising that many African leaders saw Nkrumah behind it. This was particularly the case in Abidjan and Lagos, where Houphouët-Boigny and Balewa saw themselves threatened by Ghana's increasing military power and seemingly escalating subversion of their domestic authority. Contemporaneous to the events in Togo, the Ivorian leader moved against supposedly Ghanaian-sponsored plotters in Côte d'Ivoire, and the Federal government claimed it had found ever more incriminating evidence against Nkrumah in the bomb plot trial. Within West Africa and the Monrovia bloc more generally, the Ivorian and Nigerian leaderships thus led the diplomatic response to Olympio's assassination, through which they aimed to blame and ultimately ostracise Nkrumah within the emerging Organisation of African Unity (OAU). Simultaneously, however, Abidjan and Lagos also considered military options.[76].

Tensions were already running high in West Africa on the eve of the Togolese crisis. In early January 1963, Balewa informed the British general officer commanding the Nigerian armed forces, Major-General Christopher Welby-Everard, that there were 'strong rumours that Ghana was likely to attack Togo'. If this happened, the Nigerian prime minister told Welby-Everard, 'he was determined that Nigeria should give the Togolese military aid'. The

[76] Ate, *Decolonization and Dependence*, pp. 137, 141, 144–6; Bach, 'Nigeria's Relations', pp. 66–7; Grah Mel, *Félix Houphouët-Boigny*, II, p. 106; Grilli, *Nkrumaism and African Nationalism*, pp. 117, 247–8, 267–8; Nandjui, *Houphouët-Boigny*, p. 190; Thompson, *West Africa's Council*, p. 54; Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, pp. 315–16, 333.

prospect of Nigeria being 'involved in a fight against Ghana' raised concerns in the UK High Commission, not least because of the seconded British combatant officers who would thus have to be withdrawn.[77] Two days before the coup in Togo, Balewa told British High Commissioner Antony Head that while he accepted that no seconded British officer could be used in the field, he had given his 'categorical assurance' to Olympio that if Togo was attacked by Ghana he would come to his assistance. Pushed by Head on whether he thought that Ghana would actually attack, Balewa 'said that if a normal man were in charge he would think it most unlikely but that Nkrumah was now so swollen-headed, surrounded by sycophants and over-excited by bombs, that he might do anything. He therefore thought it quite possible that he might take such lunatic action.'[78] In light of this prior assessment, it was thus not surprising that Lagos saw Accra behind Olympio's assassination, even though there was no direct attack or visible trace of Ghanaian involvement.

Against the background of the contemporaneous bomb plot trial in Nigeria, during which it was alleged that Ghana had helped the plotters in their plans to overthrow the Nigerian government, the Togo coup was the final proof for Balewa of Nkrumah's 'widespread subversion' in the region, and together with the other Monrovia powers he seriously considered 'collectively sever[ing] diplomatic relations with Ghana'. Moreover, he told the British high commissioner in Lagos that 'many of his colleagues in the Cabinet wanted to start up Nigerian subversive activities in Ghana directed against Nkrumah'. Although Balewa voiced moral concerns against such a move, Head believed it was probable that the Nigerians would infiltrate the Bureau of African Affairs in Accra, the source of Ghana's subversive activities.[79] Meanwhile, in Côte d'Ivoire the coup in Togo provided Houphouët-Boigny with a pretext to unleash a premeditated wave of repression against,

[77] TNA, DO 195/71, Head (Lagos) to Lintott (CRO), 4 Jan. 1963.
[78] Ibid., Lagos to CRO, 11 Jan. 1963.
[79] Ibid., Head (Lagos) to Lintott (CRO), 30 Jan. 1963.

depending on the narrative, a communist conspiracy or Nkrumah-backed plotters who had planned to assassinate him.[80] Following that, at the Council of the Entente meeting of February 1963, the Ivorian president linked Ghana's embassy in Abidjan to the supposed plot against him, and 'formally accused the Ghanaian president of having … organised the plot that led to the assassination of president Olympio'. In so doing, he succeeded in rallying his fellow Entente leaders, who agreed to intervene militarily if one of them was threatened by subversive action. Finally, Houphouët-Boigny declared that he envisaged extending this principle of mutual assistance at the African level, and would therefore suggest it at the founding conference of the OAU in Addis Ababa in May.[81] Abidjan's and Lagos's response to the Togolese crisis went, however, beyond diplomatic initiatives. Both governments simultaneously considered intervening militarily in Togo, and there is even some, albeit limited evidence, that they made attempts at joint planning.

At the beginning of March 1963, Houphouët-Boigny requested a face-to-face meeting with Jacques Raphaël-Leygues, France's new ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire, who had just arrived in Abidjan. The Ivorian leader raised a number of political issues in Africa, such as the Congo and the Portuguese colonies. Unsurprisingly, however, his main focus was on Togo and Ghanaian subversion, and thus on 'Nkrumah, who was playing the game of the Russians and "sinks into the communist mud"'. In so doing, he handed the French ambassador a letter to be personally and immediately delivered to de Gaulle.[82] In this letter, Houphouët-Boigny cryptically hinted at a plan to intervene alongside Nigeria in Togo. In referring to the threat of international communism and Ghana's related subversive activities,

[80] AN, 5 AG F/1789, Note à l'attention de Monsieur le Secrétaire Général, Au sujet du 'complot' découvert en Côte d'Ivoire, Secrétariat Général, 1 Feb. 1963.
[81] CADN, 1PO/1/78, Conseil de l'Entente, Le Conseil de l'Entente et la stabilité africaine, Abidjan, 18 Feb. 1963.
[82] AN, 5 AG F/1789, Note à l'attention de Monsieur le Président de la République, Président de la Communauté, Au sujet du premier entretien de M. l'Ambassadeur Raphael-Leygues avec le Président Houphouët-Boigny, 4 Mar. 1963.

he presented his dual aim in response to the Togo affair: to discourage military coups and dictatorships in a Latin American or Middle Eastern fashion; and to allow Nicolas Grunitzky, who without playing a role in the assassination had been installed as Togo's president, the opportunity to establish a stable government and to rule without fear. He fully shared this agenda with the Nigerian leadership which, as he emphasised, did not pursue any hegemonial ambitions despite its vast size and population. The Ivorian president thus aimed to intervene together with Nigeria in Togo on the invitation and in support of Grunitzky, and sought his French counterpart's approval for this plan.[83] De Gaulle's blessing seemed indeed to be crucial, because France not only had been suspected, like Ghana, of playing a role in Olympio's assassination, but also remained the strongest military power in the region, on which Houphouët-Boigny and the other Entente leaders ultimately relied for their security.[84] The French president's response was clearly negative, but also less cryptic in its identification of the military nature of Houphouët-Boigny's plans. De Gaulle was clearly opposed to any such intervention in Togo, and did not share at all the Ivorian president's positive assessment of Nigeria. Although in his response de Gaulle expressed his sympathy for Houphouët-Boigny's motives, he argued that a military intervention without a prior attack by Ghana could unleash an escalatory process transforming Togo into a Cold War battleground. Moreover, he did not want to see a potentially regionally dominant Nigeria, with its extensive means and armed forces commanded by British officers, intrude into Francophone West Africa. However, in order to reassure the Ivorian president, he promised that France would assist Côte d'Ivoire and all those other former African colonies with which it had defence and security agreements.[85] This was a welcome reassurance for Houphouët-Boigny, who did not

[83] AN, 5 AG F/535, Houphouët-Boigny to de Gaulle, 2 Mar. 1963.
[84] Ate, *Decolonization and Dependence*, pp. 140, 145.
[85] AN, 5 AG F/535, de Gaulle to Houphouët-Boigny, 3 Mar. 1963.

dare to question seriously the French president's wisdom, and even less to discard his instructions.[86]

While de Gaulle's rejection of Houphouët-Boigny's plan rendered any simultaneous intervention by Ivorian and Nigerian forces in Togo impossible, at the same time Lagos's bellicosity was also held in check by the British. In line with their response to Nigeria's sabre-rattling on the eve of Olympio's assassination, in early March 1963 they remained concerned that the sending of Nigerian troops to Lomé could bring seconded British officers into direct confrontation with the armed forces of Ghana, another Commonwealth country. Moreover, they did not believe that Lagos had the capacity and capability to deploy its armed forces efficiently and effectively in Togo, and that Accra would mobilise more quickly.[87] The Nigerian prime minister was willing to listen to the UK high commissioner. On 6 March, Head informed the Commonwealth Relations Office that he had obtained Balewa's commitment that no seconded British officers would be used in the event of any Nigerian military intervention.[88] Moreover, Nigeria did not seem willing to go it alone (having probably been informed that Côte d'Ivoire was no longer likely to be involved). According to British assessments, the Nigerian armed forces were clearly inferior to those of Ghana. Painfully aware of this and without a military ally, Lagos thus abstained from a military adventure in Togo, and instead chose to further expand and strengthen its armed forces to match Nkrumah's military power. However, even if the Nigerians could have matched the Ghanaians militarily, the Togo crisis had 'demonstrated', according to Whitehall, that 'the French still held the whip hand'.[89]

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[86] Ibid., Note, Raphaël-Leygues (Abidjan), 6 Mar. 1963; CADC, 324QONT/12, Raphaël-Leygues (Abidjan) to MAE, 7 March 1963.
[87] TNA, DO 195/97, Head (Lagos) to Garner (CRO), 4 Mar. 1963.
[88] Ibid., Head (Lagos) to Garner (CRO), 6 Mar. 1963.
[89] Ibid., Ghana and Nigeria, Significant differences in current defence strengths, CRO, 1 May 1963; Lagos to CRO, 6 May 1963; Extract from 'Notes on a Meeting Held in CRO', Thursday 30th May. (Quotation in the last document).

With its pre-positioned and superior forces, Paris jealously guarded its sphere of influence in Africa, and thereby also prevented Abidjan from aligning too closely with Lagos, despite Houphouët-Boigny's praise for Balewa. The simultaneous consideration and, potentially, even joint planning of a military intervention in Togo nevertheless represented the culmination of Côte d'Ivoire's and Nigeria's strategic alignment. Thereafter, and despite holding similar views of the threat presented by Ghana, the two countries' existing strategic divergences increased even further.

IV

The Monrovia bloc's response to Nkrumah's political radicalisation, as well as his alleged subversive machinations decreased, rather than increased, his influence in African affairs. In 1963, the OAU was set up along more conservative, inter-governmental lines, and Ghana was excluded from its Liberation Committee. These were major blows for the Ghanaian president, who had not only wanted to unite Africa, but also to lead its complete liberation. In reaction, Accra promoted itself as an alternative centre for liberation movements. Ghana thereby not only reinforced its role as a safe-haven and training ground for radical movements fighting colonial or white supremacist oppressors, but also for groups aiming to bring down African governments of already independent countries. Moreover, while Moscow's influence in Accra was waning, Nkrumah moved closer to Beijing. Spurred by the Sino-Soviet split and resulting rivalry with the USSR, the PRC (People's Republic of China) readily supported his struggle for Africa by providing guerrilla training in Ghana to 'freedom fighters'. This further irritated the conservative African states, as well as the Western powers—notably the United States and Britain—and led them to unite against Nkrumah. As a result, towards the middle of the 1960s the Ghanaian leader was ever more isolated in Africa. In combination with

escalating domestic economic and political challenges, this led Nkrumah to rely again on diplomatic means to salvage his African role and the 1965 OAU summit in Accra.

Both Abidjan and Lagos played key roles in the regional responses to Nkrumah's revolutionary and diplomatic agendas. Nevertheless, despite their shared perceptions of the threat of Ghana, their strategic choices diverged further in the wake of the Togo affair. Whereas Houphouët-Boigny stubbornly clung on to France for the protection of his country, regime and, especially, himself, the Balewa government chose to reduce Britain's role in its security sector to an absolute minimum and to rely instead almost entirely on alternative Western and Commonwealth sources of military assistance, including eventually the United States. Furthermore, in response to Nkrumah's return to diplomacy, the Ivorian president chose to rally the Francophone African countries against Ghana and to boycott the OAU summit in Accra, while the Nigerian prime minister adopted a more conciliatory attitude to the Ghanaian president in order to overcome the divide between moderates and radicals in Africa. Balewa was forced to adapt his foreign policy because of domestic politics, which were increasingly marked by political, regional and related tribal tensions, leading to a stand-off with President Azikiwe and serious unrest in 1964. Houphouët-Boigny, meanwhile, reigned supreme in Côte d'Ivoire and with an iron fist, if he thought necessary.[90] Consequently, unlike his Nigerian counterpart, the Ivorian leader was free to choose how to respond to the perceived Ghanaian threat.

Following the Togo affair, Ghana remained the single most important challenge from the perspective of Abidjan, where the spectre of Nkrumah was also seen as a useful means to extract French concessions. In summer 1963, ironically before his downfall in one of

[90] Grilli, *Nkrumaism and African Nationalism*, pp. 261–2, 273, 288–9, 308–28; Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, pp. 365–71; Bach, 'Nigeria's Relations', pp. 71–81; Bach, 'L'Insertion ivoirienne', pp. 98, 108–109; Baulin, *La Politique africaine*, pp. 30–39; J. Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2015), pp. 120–21; Gambari, *Party Politics*, p. 71; Nandjui, *Houphouët-Boigny*, pp. 120–21, 171–3; CADN, 1PO/1/6, Audience du Président de la République (6 novembre), Raguenet (Abidjan) to DAM (MAE), 12 Nov. 1964.

Houphouët-Boigny's purges that was officially also aimed at alleged Ghanaian subversion, Ivorian defence minister Konan Banny told French military planners that 'the menace from Ghana has … to be taken seriously'. While the possibility of Ghanaian subversion was real, he went on, a military attack in support of previously launched subversion could not be excluded.[91] Thereafter, and despite repeatedly purging his regime in 1963, the Ivorian president continued to paint vividly the threat emanating from Nkrumah. In early 1964, he notably told France's chargé d'affaires in Abidjan that Accra was carrying out 'a deliberate subversive campaign against the neighbouring Francophone countries and, more particularly, against Côte d'Ivoire'.[92] Since Houphouët-Boigny had reconnected with Sékou Touré and Modibo Keïta, and the threat from Guinea and Mali had thus disappeared, he saw Ghana as the only remaining danger to his country.[93] This assessment was largely, though less dramatically, shared by the French, on whose protection the Ivorian leader counted against Nkrumah.[94] Consequently, when later in 1964 Paris announced that it planned to reduce its military presence in Africa in general and the Entente in particular as a consequence of its defence reforms and heavier reliance on the nuclear deterrent, Houphouët-Boigny feared for his security and emphasised the Ghanaian threat in order to obtain additional military assistance and retain French forces.

During the latter half of 1964, the Ivorian president voiced his concerns about France's planned force reductions in light of the persistent threat from Ghana first bilaterally with the French secretary of state for foreign affairs, Michel Habib-Deloncle, and then

[91] SHD, GR 10 T 655, Bulletin de Renseignements, Objet: Point de vue du Ministre de la Défense de Côte d'Ivoire sur les problèmes de défense de son pays, Délégation pour la Défense de la Zone d'Outre-Mer N° 4, État-Major–2° Bureau, 3 Aug. 1963.
[92] CADN, 1PO/1/40, Opinion du Président Houphouët-Boigny sur l'activité politique des pays d'influence anglaise en Afrique, Raguenet (Abidjan) to DAM (MAE), 26 Feb. 1964.
[93] AN, 5 AG F/2652, Passage délégation Institut des Hautes Études de la Défense Nationale, Raphaël-Leygues (Abidjan) to DAM (MAE), 19 Feb. 1964.
[94] SHD, GR 9 R 473, Rapport de Détail relatif à l'Assistance Technique Militaire Française en Côte d'Ivoire, Corps du Contrôle de l'Administration de l'Armée (Ministry of Armies), 5 Feb. 1964.

multilaterally within the Franco-Entente Regional Defence Council.[95] The French took these concerns seriously, not only to placate their key partner in the region, but also because they were aware of Côte d'Ivoire's military deficiencies and themselves saw Nkrumah's Ghana as a threat to their sphere of influence in Africa. They were thus open to Abidjan's demands for additional military assistance in compensation for France's reduced military presence, and to plan the rapid deployment of French metropolitan troops to reinforce Ivorian defences in case of Ghanaian aggression.[96] However, when, in 1965, France's defence reforms became ever more far-reaching and it transpired that a complete withdrawal from Port-Bouët was planned, an alarmed Houphouët-Boigny played all his cards in trying to safeguard at least a modicum of a French military presence in Côte d'Ivoire. Increasingly fearful of Chinese-sponsored Ghanaian subversion, he thus flirted with the Americans, with whom he shared the concern about China's interference in Africa, so as to attract not only potential support from the US but also to arouse France's jealousy.[97] Yet, although he succeeded in pushing the Elysée's obsession with American competition in Africa to an increasingly paranoid level, towards the end of 1965 he had failed to secure Port-Bouët. In a meeting in November with the overseas deputy to the chief of staff of the French army, General Le Porz, he insisted that the projected closure of the base would play into Nkrumah's hands.[98] It required, however, a wave of coups, which began in late December 1965 in Dahomey (later Benin) and ended in February 1966 in Ghana, to convince the French to stay in Côte d'Ivoire.[99] By that time, not only had

[95] CADN, 1PO/1/38, Rapports Franco-Ivoiriens, 15 July 1964; Abidjan N° 22, Du 1er au 15.9.1964, Abidjan to DAM (MAE), 15 Sept. 1964.
[96] AN, 5 AG F/2654, Rapport d'Inspection en Zone d'Outre-Mer N° 1.2.4, du 19 Octobre au 1er Novembre 1964, Coste (Inspection des Troupes de Marine, Ministry of Armies), 13 Nov. 1964; SHD, GR 12 S 627, GENEDEF Abidjan to GENEDEF Dakar, 1 Dec. 1964; AN, 5 AG F/1792, Raguenet (Abidjan) to MAE, 20 Mar. 1965.
[97] AN, 5 AG F/1790, Raphaël-Leygues (Abidjan) to MAE, 9 Dec. 1964; NARA, RG 59, Entry 5235, Box 79, Memorandum of Conversation, Morgan (DoS), 25 May 1965.
[98] SHD, GR 12 S 627, Compte-Rendu de la Mission du Général le Porz auprès du Gouvernement de la Côte d'Ivoire (12–17 Novembre 1965), le Porz (Ministry of Armies), 17 Nov. 1965; SHD, GR 6 Q 42, Raphaël-Leygues (Abidjan) to MAE, 17 Nov. 1965.
[99] SHD, GR 6 Q 38, Maintien d'éléments des forces armées françaises en Côte d'Ivoire et au Niger, DAM (MAE), 14 Apr. 1966.

Houphouët-Boigny's foe Nkrumah lost power, but his ally Balewa had also been assassinated in a bloody putsch in January 1966—as had the Nigerian finance minister and the premiers of the Northern and Western Regions.

Even if, as it has been argued,[100] Nkrumah had a hand in the Nigerian coup, it was a regime change largely fomented in Nigeria itself.[101] Nevertheless, from Lagos's perspective, as in the case of Abidjan, Ghana remained the main, if not only threat to the country's internal and external security after the Togo crisis.[102] Nigerian policymakers, such as foreign minister Jaja Wachuku, were clearly hostile towards Nkrumah's Ghana and, according to UK high commissioner Francis Cumming-Bruce, this had allowed Nigeria 'to establish a position of leadership of the moderates' in Africa.[103] In light of Britain's rapidly declining influence in the Nigerian security sector, leading elements in Whitehall tried to take advantage of Nigeria's fear of and antipathy towards Ghana to promote British military assistance. In a meeting with Balewa in October 1964, the chief of the defence staff, Louis, Lord Mountbatten, notably drew comparisons with the Ghanaian armed forces and, probably in referring to the BJSTT, their use of British officers, in an attempt to reverse Lagos's decision to more rapidly replace British with Nigerian officers.[104] Mountbatten was frank with the now Nigerian commanding officer of the Nigerian army, Major General Johnson T.U. Aguiyi-Ironsi. In May 1965, he told him that the Nigerianisation of the army had been too fast and its

[100] Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 387.
[101] See, for instance, Diamond, *Class, Ethnicity and Democracy*; and R. Luckham, *The Nigerian Military: A Sociological Analysis of Authority and Revolt* (Cambridge, 1971).
[102] TNA, DO 195/114, Fowler (Lagos) to Price (CRO), 3 June 1963; NARA, RG 59, Entry 5235, Box 79, Scott (US Embassy Lagos) to Bolen (Office of West African Affairs, AFW), Enclosure: Military Assistance Planning Reference Book, 36 pages, copy number 9, prepared in Mar. 1965 (SECRET). Document undated, 30 Apr. 1965.
[103] TNA, DO 195/311, Visit of Governor Harriman, Moreton (Lagos) to Cumming-Bruce (Lagos), 31 Mar. 1964; TNA, DO 195/321, Despatch No: 17, Nigerian Foreign Policy, Cumming-Bruce (Lagos) to Sandys (CRO), 29 Sept. 1964 (quotation from this document); NARA, RG 59, Entry 5235, Box 79, Sloan (AFW) to Scott (US Embassy Lagos), 27 Sept. 1965.
[104] TNA, DEFE 4/175, Extract of Conversation between the Prime Minister of Nigeria, Alhaji the Rt. Hon. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, and the Chief of the Defence Staff while Driving alone Together in a Car to Lagos Airport at 0830 on 15th October 1964.

efficiency was very low in comparison to that of Ghana, which had retained a considerable number of British instructors.[105] However, in the case of Aguiyi-Ironsi, such a 'rough line' was rather likely to put him in 'a pretty anti-British mood', and the Nigerian government remained undeterred in its quest to strengthen its armed forces with as little British help as possible and by relying on alternative sources of military assistance.[106] Unlike Abidjan, with which it had a common threat assessment, Lagos was thus clearly unwilling to put its security in the hands of the former metropole to protect itself against Ghana.

Meanwhile, and also in contrast to Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria was 'reluctant to gang up with the moderate francophones' against Ghana.[107] Instead, towards the middle of the 1960s, the Nigerians began to adopt a more flexible stance with regard to Nkrumah, starting with President Azikiwe, who seemed to rediscover his common educational background with the Ghanaian leader in light of a planned Lincoln University alumni reception.[108] More significantly, in late summer 1965, Balewa was receptive to a diplomatic approach by Nkrumah, in which he asked the Nigerian prime minister to support the forthcoming OAU summit in Accra.[109] In line with previous efforts to save the summit and even the OAU, Balewa was willing to come to Nkrumah's rescue. As it turned out, however, his attendance in Accra and prior diplomatic support was contingent on the Ghanaian president's agreement to expel the Nigerian fugitives, to whom he had granted refuge in the wake of the bomb plot trial.[110] In a domestically driven foreign policy, Balewa thus aimed to overcome the divisions between radicals and moderates in Africa, as well as the enmity with Nkrumah, while simultaneously furthering Nigeria's domestic security.

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[105] TNA, DO 195/306, Hawley (Lagos) to Greenhill (CRO), 20 May 1965.
[106] Ibid., Larmour (Lagos) to Greenhill (CRO), 13 July 1965.
[107] TNA, DO 195/317, Despatch No. 14, Acting High Commissioner (Lagos) to Bottomley (CRO), 15 Sept. 1965.
[108] PRAAD, SC/BAA, RG 17/1/298, Azikiwe to Nkrumah, 23 Mar. 1965; Nkrumah to Azikiwe, 31 Mar. 1965.
[109] Ibid., Nkrumah to Balewa, 25 Aug. 1965; Nkrumah to Balewa, 30 Aug. 1965.
[110] Ibid., Balewa to Nkrumah, 11 Sept. 1965; Nkrumah to Balewa, 14 Sept. 1965; Balewa to Nkrumah, 6 Oct. 1965.

The Nigerian prime minister's conciliatory approach did not, however, allow him to save the First Nigerian Republic. In commenting on Balewa's very recent assassination to the French ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire in early February 1966, Houphouët-Boigny said that if the Nigerian leader had, like him, put his security into the hands of the former metropole, he would still be alive and in power.[111] Independently of whether Britain had actually been willing to act as the guarantor of his regime, this had not been an option for Balewa. Domestic politics had forced Lagos to reduce its security ties with London and instead rely on alternative providers of military assistance. Moreover, the reasons for the brutal ending of the Federal government were also to be found in Nigeria itself, rather than in Ghana.

V

In January 1966, Houphouët-Boigny had to mourn first the loss of his fellow Entente leader Maurice Yaméogo of Upper Volta (later Burkina Faso), and then that of Balewa.[112] The assassination of the Nigerian prime minister was probably more significant, however, than the downfall of the president of Upper Volta. Balewa had become a friend for the Ivorian president, and together they had promoted a conservative, inter-governmental vision for Africa and, especially, responded to Nkrumah's Pan-Africanist agenda and subversive machinations. The mutual esteem between the two leaders, as well as their common anti-communist worldview and African policies were important premises for the Ivorian–Nigerian friendship. However, the backbone of the entente cordiale between Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria was, as argued by Daniel Bach, their shared animosity towards Ghana.[113] It was the emerging rivalry with and increasing fear of subversion by Ghana that brought Houphouët-Boigny and Balewa together, and cemented the entente cordiale between their countries during the

[111] SHD, GR 1 R 221, Raphaël-Leygues (Abidjan) to Messmer (Ministry of Armies), 4 Feb. 1966.
[112] Baulin, *La Politique africaine*, p. 40.
[113] Bach, 'Nigeria's Relations', p. 98.

transfer of power. After independence, as a result of Nkrumah's radicalisation and pursuit of military expansion with Soviet assistance, they also came to perceive Ghana as an external threat as well as a subversive threat to internal stability. Yet already at this stage, there was a degree of variation in how Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria responded to this threat assessment. Whereas both aimed to strengthen their defences, Houphouët-Boigny chose to put his personal security and that of his country and regime into French hands, whereas the Balewa government reduced its defence ties with Britain and sought alternative providers of military assistance in the wake of the abrogation of the Anglo-Nigerian defence agreement. In contrast to the Ivorian president, the Federal government had to contend with an opposition which could draw on strong anti-colonial sentiments in the population. This did not prevent Abidjan and Lagos, however, from simultaneously and possibly even jointly planning in late winter 1963 to intervene militarily in Togo following what both governments perceived as a Ghanaian-sponsored coup and meddling in Lomé. Although de Gaulle deterred Houphouët-Boigny from undertaking any such intervention and from working too closely with Nigeria, and the Balewa government had neither the ability nor the stomach to intervene on its own, it was nonetheless the culmination of Côte d'Ivoire's and Nigeria's strategic alignment. Thereafter, both the Ivorian and the Nigerian governments remained very concerned about Ghana's machinations, especially with the PRC reinforcing its revolutionary potential. But, despite an overall strategic convergence, the divergence in how each country responded to the threat emanating from Accra continued to increase. Houphouët-Boigny tried to manipulate the French into retaining their military base in Port-Bouët and led a Francophone African diplomatic onslaught against Nkrumah. In contrast, the Balewa government persisted in its efforts to further reduce the remaining British influence on its defence establishment, and agreed to help the Ghanaian leader to salvage the 1965 OAU summit in Accra in exchange for expelling Nigerian fugitives. Nevertheless, the Ivorian–Nigerian entente cordiale

remained intact, and only broke apart when first Balewa—Houphouët-Boigny's ally and friend—was assassinated, and then Nkrumah, its common denominator, was removed from the equation, following the violent overthrow of his government while he was away on a peace mission to Vietnam.

In the wake of the premature and bloody ending of the First Nigerian Republic and, especially after the downfall of Nkrumah, relations between Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria went rapidly downhill. Eventually, Houphouët-Boigny would end up on the side of the secessionist Biafran Republic against the Federal Military Government during the Nigerian Civil War (1967–70). In so doing, the Ivorian leader was, in addition to purported humanitarian concerns, driven by geopolitical considerations and ambitions, as well as increasing concerns about British and American influence and a potentially dominant Nigeria. This also helps to explain why he did not warm to the more conservative and pro-western military regime that seized the reins of power from Nkrumah.[114] The early post-independence period, during which the Ghanaian leader brought his Ivorian and Nigerian counterparts up against himself, was marked by regional rivalry. The foreign and African policies of Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria were certainly fuelled by the Cold War and its main protagonists, including the USA, the USSR and China. The main causes and drivers of the Ivorian–Nigerian entente cordiale against Ghana were, however, clashing visions for the political organisation of postcolonial Africa and rivalries for leadership in West Africa and the continent more generally. Moreover, Accra, as well as Abidjan and Lagos, were conditioned by and responded to their colonial past: Nkrumah wanted to completely rid his country and Africa of any remaining colonial legacies; Abidjan actively sought a neo-colonial arrangement with France; and Lagos was forced to respond to anti-colonial sentiments among the Nigerian population. Whereas this allowed France to influence Côte d'Ivoire's strategic response to the perceived

[114] Baulin, *La Politique africaine*, p. 43.

threat of Ghana, Britain was relatively powerless in the case of Nigeria. Consequently, the Ivorian–Nigerian strategic alignment in response to Nkrumah reveals that post-imperial West Africa, and potentially the continent more generally, was framed primarily by regional rivalries, the colonial experience and legacy of empire, rather than by the Cold War. Finally, and in line with the arguments advanced by such scholars as Lesley Blaauw and Jo-Ansie van Wyk, it demonstrates that African agency is not only relevant for understanding international relations and even a superpower-dominated international system, but also that such agency is not of recent vintage, and has manifestly existed since independence.[115]

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[115] L. Blaauw, 'African Agency in International Relations: Challenging Great Power Politics'; J.-A. van Wyk, 'Africa in International Relations: Agent, Bystander or Vicitm?', in Bischoff, Aning, and Acharya, eds, *Africa in Global International Relations*, pp. 86–107; 108–120.