The Evolution and Drivers of US Strategy Towards Francophone West African Countries from Neglect to Strategic Engagement 1946 to 1969

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Abstract: This paper aims to systematically examine the complex trajectory and multiple driving factors of U.S. strategy towards Francophone West African countries during the Cold War. It focuses on tracing and summarizing the phased evolution of strategies under different U.S. administrations towards this region from 1946 to 1969. By integrating factors such as geostrategy, ideology, economic interests, and domestic strategies, it analyzes the inherent historical logic of U.S. foreign strategy and the motivational mechanisms behind its Africa strategy. Based on multi-source literature, particularly the interpretation of primary documents such as the U.S. Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) series, and combined with comparative case studies of Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, this research demonstrates the specific practice of cross-verifying diverse historical materials under a team collaboration model, as well as the reflections and insights gained by team members during the research process. This study not only deepens the understanding of the complexity of the Cold War in the "peripheries" and the pragmatic nature of U.S. strategy towards Africa but also provides a historical perspective based on solid archival analysis for examining contemporary major-power strategies towards Africa.

Keywords: Cold War; U.S. Foreign strategy; Francophone West African Countries; Geostrategy; Archival Research and Team Collaboration

1 Research Overview

1.1 Research Background and Core Questions

The history of international relations during the Cold War (1946–1991) encompasses not only the history of direct confrontation between the two superpowers, the U.S. and the Soviet Union, in core global regions but also the complex history of their political, economic, and ideological infiltration and competition across the vast "peripheral" areas of the Third World. The African continent, particularly its Francophone West African region, was one of the key stages for this "peripheral contest." This region experienced a rapid wave of decolonization from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s. The dissolution of the French colonial empire gave rise to a series of newly independent states. However, independence did not immediately bring full autonomy. These nascent nations generally faced severe challenges in state-building, economic development, and foreign policy orientation. Within the bipolar structure of the Cold War, they became focal points for external powers competing for influence.

For the United States, Francophone West Africa presented a unique and contradictory policy dilemma. On the one hand, as the leader of the capitalist bloc, the U.S. needed to maintain stable relations with its key NATO ally, France. France viewed Francophone West Africa as a crucial base for preserving its global influence, cultural ties, and economic interests and remained highly sensitive to any intrusion by external powers. On the other hand, America's own global strategy required it to contain the expansion of Soviet communism in these new nations, secure strategic resources (such as uranium, oil, and maritime routes in West Africa), and promote the "American model" represented by free markets and political openness. This created a fundamental tension: how to effectively advance America's own strategic, ideological, and economic interests while respecting (or at least not seriously damaging) France's traditional sphere of influence and sensitivities?

In response to this core dilemma, U.S. foreign

policy from the early Cold War to the late 1960s exhibited significant dynamism and complexity. This study aims to systematically investigate the following questions: What was the specific evolutionary trajectory of U.S. policy towards different Francophone West African countries throughout the Cold War period? What were the underlying driving factors that prompted the continuous adjustments and shifts in this policy? How did these factors—including but not limited to changes in global and regional geopolitical landscapes, the demands of ideological struggle, the interplay of domestic political and economic forces, and interactions within the decision-making bureaucracy—intertwine, compete with each other, and ultimately shape the pragmatic and distinctive foreign policy of the United States in this region? How did different countries respond to U.S. foreign policy outputs?

1.2 Literature Review and Research Status

Academic circles, both international and domestic, have produced substantial research on U.S. policy towards Africa during the Cold War, providing a solid academic foundation for this topic while also revealing areas that warrant deeper exploration.

In international academia, relevant research can be broadly categorized into three types. The first comprises macro-general studies. Works such as Peter J. Schraeder's United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis and Change and Herman J. Cohen's US Policy Toward Africa: Eight Decades of Realpolitik systematically outline the overall trajectory of U.S. Africa policy during the Cold War, emphasizing its pragmatic and incremental characteristics as well as its unique crisis-driven patterns. These provide the most fundamental and important analytical framework for this study [1]. The second category focuses on U.S. Africa policy during specific historical periods or presidential administrations. Research like Philip E. Muehlenbeck's work on the Kennedy administration's active efforts to win over African nationalist political movements reveals the conflict between the progressive image and the realistic needs of U.S. policy during the critical phase of decolonization. Works such as Thomas J. Noer's Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948–1968 comprehensively examine the interplay between the U.S. civil rights movement and African

national liberation movements, explaining the domestic motivations and racial considerations in U.S. Africa policy formulation. The third category approaches the topic from specific theoretical perspectives. Scholarship like Odd Arne Westad's research on the global history of the Cold War views the Third World as the core arena for U.S.-Soviet ideological and developmental model competition, observing the concrete impact of major power interventions on the development models and the political, economic, and cultural fields of the "Global South." This provides profound global context and theoretical foundations for understanding U.S. actions in Africa. However, existing research often treats Africa as a monolithic entity or focuses on hotspot regions like Southern Africa. Systematic, long-term studies on the policy evolution towards Francophone West Africa—a relatively distinct sub-region—remain scarce. Such discussions are often subsumed within analyses of U.S.-French relations or individual country case studies.

In domestic Chinese academia, significant progress has also been made. Liang Gencheng's The United States and Africa—U.S. Policy Towards Africa from the End of World War II to the Late 1980s, published in the 1980s, systematically outlined U.S. policy towards Africa. Since the 21st century, contributions include Li Anshan's research on African nationalism in the context of decolonization, and studies by Ha Quanan and Mu Tao on the modernization paths of African countries, examining factors such as Islamic traditional culture, colonial legacies, authoritarianism, and military politics. In recent years, with the development of Cold War international history studies, scholars have increasingly utilized multi-country archives for empirical research and expanded the scope of U.S. Africa policy and African national history studies beyond countries like Egypt and South Africa. These studies provide critical background and valuable experience for our team's research. However, limitations also exist, such as reliance on outdated research materials and relatively insufficient attention paid to Francophone Africa. Comprehensive monographs or extensive discussions focusing specifically on the internal logic and motivational mechanisms of U.S. policy in this region are also relatively rare.

In summary, existing research lays the cornerstone for this project but also reveals clear

research gaps. First, regarding region, there is a need to move beyond the traditional perspective of treating Africa as a homogeneous whole and to focus in-depth on Francophone West Africa as a distinct geopolitical region. Second, methodologically, there is a need to strengthen the empirical foundation based on multi-country archives (especially U.S. diplomatic archives) for detailed policy tracing and motivation analysis. Finally, regarding perspective, there is a need to integrate multi-level analyses encompassing the international order, national decision-making, and regional interactions to reveal the dynamic balancing process of U.S. policy among multiple objectives such as alliance maintenance, containment of expansion, and the promotion of interests. This study aims to fill these gaps by systematically tracing the spectrum of U.S. policy towards Francophone West Africa and constructing a framework of pluralistic motivations, striving to present a more nuanced, dynamic, and historically grounded narrative.

1.3 Research Methods, Team Structure, and Sources

To systematically answer the aforementioned research questions and ensure the rigor of the research process and the credibility of its conclusions, this study adopts a historical analysis method based on multi-source archives and is conducted within a structured team collaboration framework.

This study employs historical analysis as its fundamental methodology. It aims to reconstruct the continuous process of the evolution of U.S. policy towards Francophone West Africa and to discern the causal mechanisms behind it through the critical examination and interpretation of historical materials. This is concretely operationalized at two levels:

First, Diachronic Tracking and Periodization. Based on the obtained literature, a longitudinal tracing of U.S. policy from the Truman administration to the early Nixon administration will be conducted. By identifying significant turning points in policy objectives and discourse, combined with pivotal shifts in the overall Cold War and regional situations, this study will establish a historical periodization. It will divide over two decades of history into two distinct yet logically connected phases to outline a clear evolutionary trajectory.

Second, Motivation Analysis and Mechanism

Construction. A multi-level factor analysis will be conducted within each phase and across different phases. This study attempts to construct an integrated analytical framework, placing four categories of driving factors—geostrategy, ideology, domestic politics, and economic interests—within specific historical contexts to examine how they interacted and ultimately shaped U.S. policy towards this region. Case studies (focusing on Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire) will provide crucial contexts for verifying and refining this framework.

This project is undertaken by a team of five sophomore undergraduate students majoring in History at Dalian University. The team's division of labor is designed to integrate expertise and ensure the systematicity and continuity of the research process. The specific structure and workflow are as follows:

Regarding role division, the team established three core roles. One person is primarily responsible for leading archive and database searches, collecting relevant primary sources and academic works, and performing the initial identification and categorization of key documents. Two people are responsible for the in-depth interpretation of literature related to the region, summarizing and tracing the trajectory of U.S. policy towards the region, and synthesizing the causes. The remaining two are responsible for integrating relevant theories from international relations and history and, in the later stages of the research, leading the construction of the motivational analysis framework and enhancing the theoretical depth of the paper.

Regarding the research workflow, team members follow a pattern of "independent exploration—group discussion—faculty guidance—cross-verification—integrated writing." Based on initial readings of foundational general histories on U.S. Cold War foreign policy and Africa policy, team members regularly hold collective seminars to share materials, raise questions, and integrate opinions. Under the critique and guidance of the faculty advisor, mature viewpoints are formed to guide the thesis writing. All literature materials and preliminary analyses are shared on a team platform for interactive review and verification by members, ensuring objectivity and consistency in the interpretation of historical materials.

The arguments of this study are built upon a

solid, cross-verified foundation of historical sources, which primarily include:

First, Primary Archives. This is the cornerstone of the research. The primary source is declassified U.S. government documents, with the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) series at the core. The team has compiled and organized relevant volumes from the FRUS series pertaining to Africa, France, and foreign aid.

Second, Secondary Literature. This includes relevant academic monographs, journal articles, and dissertations. This literature is primarily used to establish the macro historical context, clarify details of specific historical events and figures, understand different academic viewpoints and debates, and to complement the archival record. The team divides the work to read various types of secondary sources across different fields and periodically provides critical summaries to enrich arguments and narratives.

Through the organic combination of the above methods, team structure, and sources, this study strives to extract objective and credible academic insights from the complex tapestry of history.

1.4 Research Significance and Full-Text Structure

The significance of this research lies in the following three aspects:

First, Filling a Gap in the Research Field of African Cold War History.

This study seeks to break through the simplified narratives prevalent in global Cold War history that focus predominantly on U.S.-Soviet great power rivalry, and in African regional Cold War history that center on Anglophone African countries. It does so by focusing on a systematic study of U.S. policy towards independent Francophone West African states. Through analyzing cases of U.S. diplomatic activities towards various Francophone West African countries, it examines the diversity of the Cold War's manifestation on the African continent. It attempts to analyze the particular forms and operational modes of the Cold War in the Francophone "peripheries," thereby aiming to refine the narrative framework of African Cold War history.

Second, Exploring the Historical Logic and Motivational Mechanisms of U.S. Foreign Policy.

By utilizing sources such as archives, notes, books, and papers, it traces the evolution of U.S. foreign policy towards Francophone West African countries since their independence. It empirically verifies the multiple motivations behind the evolution of U.S. diplomatic thinking through multi-source literature, constructs a phased policy analysis model, and analyzes how the U.S. utilized colonial legacies and the Cold War structure to implement its influence in West Africa. This reveals the deeper logic of U.S. diplomacy towards Africa. Furthermore, by examining U.S. relations with Francophone West African countries, it reflects on the implementation, successes, and failures of U.S. global strategy during the Cold War, thereby tracing the origins of contemporary U.S. policy towards Africa and exploring the contradictions and continuities within U.S. diplomatic history.

Third, Providing an Academic Reference for Contemporary Major-Power Policies Towards Africa.

The research strives to extract historical lessons from important policies implemented by the U.S. towards Francophone West African countries during the Cold War. Through policy examples, it aims to provide historical warnings for China's Africa policy, contribute to optimizing "South-South Cooperation" policies under the "Belt and Road" framework, and promote the further consolidation and strengthening of China-Africa relations under new circumstances through thoughtful analysis. It also holds positive academic significance for China's Africa diplomacy in avoiding historical pitfalls and strategic risks, maintaining and developing the new-era China-Africa comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership, building a closer China-Africa community with a shared future, and promoting common prosperity between China and Africa.

The main body of this paper is divided into four chapters, with each chapter's content interlinked and progressively advancing. Following this chapter (Chapter 1), which clarifies the research questions, academic context, methodological approach, and overall significance, Chapters 2 and 3 will respectively conduct a historical periodization and an analysis of the phase-specific characteristics of U.S. policy in Francophone West Africa across two defined periods. They will present the basic historical trajectory, laying a solid factual foundation, and then provide a detailed discussion of U.S. diplomatic activities in the region. Using

Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire for comparison, these chapters will summarize how the four categories of driving factors—geostrategy, ideology, domestic politics, and economic interests—interacted under different historical circumstances to jointly shape the specific policy practices of the two phases. Finally, Chapter 4 will consolidate and summarize the core research findings, elaborate on their theoretical and historical implications, reflect on the limitations of this study, and propose overall prospects for possible future research directions as well as the applied potential of this historical research.

2. The First Phase (Late 1940s – Mid-1950s)

2.1 Overview of U.S. Policy Towards Africa

The U.S. approach to the issue of African colonies after World War II began at the 1945 San Francisco Conference. The conference proposed an international trusteeship system arrangement for the non-self-governing territories inherited from the League of Nations, which was confirmed in the United Nations Charter. The bipartisan U.S. delegation further stated in Article 81 concerning non-self-governing territories that members designated as administering authorities bearing trusteeship responsibilities should regard the duties of promoting the well-being of inhabitants, advancing self-government, and submitting relevant information to the UN Secretary-General as a "sacred trust." Compared to the positions of China and the Soviet Union, which explicitly demanded that the goal of independence be written into the Charter, the U.S. stance of "promoting self-government" was clearly a compromise solution accommodating the British and French colonial empires [2]. At the first UN General Assembly in London in 1946, the U.S. delegation led by conservative Republican John Foster Dulles further proposed that consideration should be given to requiring the General Assembly to declare that all colonial powers must submit their territories to the trusteeship system, ultimately leading towards self-government [2].

During this phase, the U.S. government, particularly the Truman administration, viewed anti-colonialism as a political tool to strengthen the legitimacy and moral standing of the Cold War. President Harry S. Truman adopted a "moderate middle road" combining routine diplomatic cooperation with white minority regimes, public criticism of their racism, and verbal support for the principle of majority rule, emphasizing that America's goals were national self-determination and democratic self-government. By portraying itself as a defender of freedom and national self-determination, it aimed to convince nationalists across Africa that its declarations were universal and logically supportive of self-government for colonial peoples. However, as the Cold War situation deteriorated, the U.S. stance on decolonization became increasingly conservative. Propaganda about freedom and self-determination focused on Eastern European countries transitioning to socialism, rather than on Africa or Asia [3].

In the late 1940s, the U.S. approach to European colonialism in Africa was constrained by two strategic needs, pushing it further towards supporting the European colonial powers. On one hand, Washington wished to accelerate Western Europe's recovery from the war's devastation by any means possible. This goal led to the implementation of the Marshall Plan and later the creation of NATO. Consequently, Washington was reluctant to pressure Europe to grant independence to colonies prematurely, as these territories were sources of raw materials and areas of preferential trade. On the other hand, the Truman administration viewed the communist bloc as a severe threat to Western security and worried that the Soviet Union was attempting to exploit anti-colonial discontent to subvert the existing order in Asia and Africa. Maintaining effective European control over colonies became seen as necessary for containing the Soviet Union.

Following the 1952 election, the Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower administration continued the tone of the Truman administration but adopted a more cautious and conservative attitude towards African affairs. The Eisenhower administration's approach to the region was deeply influenced by Secretary of State Dulles. Dulles, both a Cold Warrior and a supporter of self-government, expressed his views in a March 23, 1957, conversation with British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd on African issues: he expressed satisfaction that the concept of independence for non-self-governing peoples was finally gaining wide acceptance, but he was concerned about the ability of future independent African states to maintain their

independence [2]. He shifted from his initial strong support for self-government and self-determination after the war, now viewing "premature independence" [3] as a burden for black Africans. He explicitly stated that guiding African decolonization and modernization should focus on cultivating a moderate attitude among the white ruling class, rather than provoking white governments with integrationist policies on racial issues. He believed communist infiltration in Africa might emerge within active trade unions and nationalist movements. Consequently, he organized the State Department, the National Security Council, and intelligence agencies to establish consulates across Africa and dispatch senior officials for on-the-ground inspections to provide the "necessary knowledge base" for formulating policies towards these emerging nations [2].

The Eisenhower administration's primary concerns regarding Africa lay in the areas of energy and shipping. In December 1953, the intelligence community released National Intelligence Estimate No. 83 (NIE-83), titled Conditions and Trends in Tropical Africa, which pointed out that U.S. strategic interests in Africa stemmed primarily from the supply of important minerals, especially uranium, niobium, cobalt, and diamonds. Secondary interests were its sea and air routes in the Indian Ocean, South Atlantic, and Red Sea. To ensure stable supply of these strategic resources, the U.S. should not exert excessive pressure on colonial powers to transition their African territories to independence, arguing that an Africa with fifty independent countries could become an extremely unstable continent. Beyond this, U.S. attention to Africa during this period was generally low. The U.S. foreign policy decision-making echelon, led by Dulles, often viewed Africa within the context of countering the Soviet Union, worrying that while communist strength was weak under colonial rule, "its influence will grow rapidly among young African intellectuals." [2] During this period the United States comprehensive strategic framework for containing the Soviet Union did not incorporate Africas colonies instead it maintained traditional diplomatic relations with only a few African nations such as South Africa Liberia and Ethiopia [4].

2.2 U.S. Policy Towards Francophone West Africa: Alliance Priority and "Indirect Rule"

Specifically regarding Francophone West Africa, the primary manifestation of U.S. policy during this period was acquiescence to French colonial rule and trusteeship status. Although official U.S. discourse contained general support for the principle of national self-determination, in crucial diplomatic practice, its stance clearly favored upholding French authority. Even as issues in Indochina and Algeria severely drained French national strength and sparked international controversy, the U.S. decision-making echelon still viewed the stability of French Africa as a vital asset supporting France as a major power and, by extension, the stability of NATO's European flank. In U.S.-French diplomatic activities and other international forums, the U.S. often avoided or supported the French position on issues concerning self-determination for French African colonies.

U.S. political, economic, and military influence in French West Africa (Afrique Occidentale Française, AOF) was exerted almost entirely indirectly via the "Paris channel." According to records in the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) series, throughout the 1950s, direct high-level diplomatic contact between the U.S. and French West Africa was relatively scarce. Relevant matters were typically coordinated through U.S.-French bilateral channels in Washington and Paris, with direct contact in French West Africa handled by the U.S. Consulate General in Dakar. Regarding economic aid, funds from the European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan) flowed primarily to metropolitan France, allocated by the French government. Some were indirectly used to maintain economic order and infrastructure in its overseas territories. This essentially meant U.S. resources were channeled through France to stabilize its colonial system. The U.S. and France also reached a consensus on security cooperation, with the U.S. relying on the French military presence to prevent unrest in the region. For example, a January 1952 telegram from Consul General M. Williams Blake in Dakar to the State Department mentioned his meeting with Governor-General of Cameroon and Secretary-General of the Government of French West Africa, Camille Bailly. Bailly assured him that "There is absolutely no Communist danger here at the present time... There are a few Communists, most of them French from the Metropole who

had come out to French West Africa in minor Government jobs." [5] He promised they would be expelled from the overseas territories immediately upon discovery. On the topic of race, Bailly noted that "The real danger to the security of French West Africa is the spread from North Africa and the Near East of nationalist and Pan-Islamic ideas." [5] Overall, U.S. policy towards Africa during this period was subordinate to its Europe-centric strategy. In Francophone Africa, this manifested as a sort of "benign neglect," based on the logic that a stable, pro-Western French West Africa was preferable to the regional uncertainty posed by the emergence of multiple independent nation-states in the Gulf of Guinea and Sahel region.

U.S. activities in French West Africa during this period were limited to general investment. In a May 14, 1954, memorandum of discussion on the general economic situation between U.S. and French officials, Jean Jurgensen, then Director of the African Department at the French Foreign Ministry, pointed out key reasons for attracting U.S. investors: French territories showed greater political stability compared to neighboring British Gold Coast and other territories [6]. Combined with France's own policy of encouraging foreign capital participation in. developing its sub-Saharan overseas territories, and the fact that many energy extraction and transportation projects required the financial and technical support of large American corporations, a minor surge of U.S. private capital entering French West Africa occurred in the 1950s. On a basis of equal French capital participation, the American Metal Company (subsidiary of American Metal Climax) took a 49% stake in COMILOG for developing manganese deposits at Franceville in French Equatorial Africa. It also jointly registered companies with British, French, and Canadian capital to develop the Fort Gouraud iron ore deposits in French Mauritania and build surrounding railways [6]. To coordinate investment matters, a May 1954 agreement modeled on the Anglo-American relationship was reached between France and the U.S. to establish lasting university academic cooperation, with the U.S. Foreign Operations Administration (FOA) assisting the Commission for Technical Cooperation in Africa South of the Sahara (CCTA) [6].

Franco-American economic cooperation during this period relied primarily on the "Paris channel." Compared to the often indifferent colonial government authorities towards investment matters, the Foreign Ministry in Paris could undoubtedly provide richer information and resources for investors. Rising service and intermediary fees provoked dissatisfaction among small and medium-sized enterprises and criticism of Parisian "bureaucratic procedures," coupled with U.S. investors' desire to conduct surveys locally, prompted the U.S. State Department to establish relevant agencies across French West Africa to protect investor interests. In a 1954 telegram to the Office of African Affairs, then Consul General C. Vaughan Ferguson in Dakar proposed that with the economic development of Ivory Coast and Dahomey, the number of U.S. citizens and visa applicants there was likely to increase. He therefore recommended establishing a consulate in Abidjan, the capital of French Ivory Coast, with a new consular district covering the Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, and Dahomey territories of French West Africa, as well as the French Togoland trust territory [7]. Ferguson strongly emphasized the importance of the Ivory Coast to the United States. As the only region within French West Africa with substantive trade ties to the U.S., it had a developed export agriculture sector based on cocoa and coffee. The deep-water port of Abidjan was also open to the U.S., and its economic system possessed diversity and development potential. The resources and personnel of the Dakar Consulate General were clearly insufficient to handle the potential future surge in investment and cooperation [7].

Compared to its economic attention, the U.S. level of political attention towards French West Africa was not high. The region occupied a peripheral position in the U.S. global strategic layout, lacked core interests, and was not deemed worthy of significant diplomatic resources to establish direct influence independent of France. The U.S. was relatively satisfied with French rule in French West Africa. In a September 16, 1953, telegram to the State Department, Consul Robert F. Corrigan in Dakar praised the general stability of French West Africa under France's "paternalistic rule," noting significant changes in relations between local whites and Africans [8]. To some extent, this view had its rationale. Since the promulgation of the 1946 Constitution, all indigenous people had become French citizens with voting rights. Moreover, in the Federal Assembly in Paris, 17

of the 20 deputies from French West Africa were black. Africans held a majority in the French West Africa Grand Council and several territorial councils. While these bodies had primarily advisory functions, they still had a say in managing territorial finances and other affairs [8]. Therefore, a very small number of the indigenous people in this part of the French Republic indeed had practical influence in French political life and the governance of French West Africa. Corrigan also supported France's policy of cultivating moderate, pro-French political elites like Léopold Sédar Senghor, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Silvandre, and Conombo, strengthening cultural identity and claims for autonomy among the electorate, and promoting the strategy of integrating French Africa as part of the political community of the French Union [8].

Furthermore, there were few U.S. citizens active locally. According to 1954 consular immigration records, there were 53 U.S. citizens in Ivory Coast, 68 in Upper Volta, 20 in Dahomey, and 6 in Togoland, most of whom were missionaries [7].

However, the optimism regarding the West African region under French rule was gradually replaced by concern and heightened attention triggered by the deepening development of African independence movements. Corrigan's correspondence also pointed out that "racial tolerance" in French West Africa was built upon a clear class hierarchy and de facto segregation among races [8]. The lower social and economic status of black people confined them to traditional agriculture and low-end manufacturing. Outside the assemblies, few Africans held positions in important institutions like courts or customs, and no Africans had prominence in commerce or industry. The upper classes of business owners and large landowners remained predominantly white. In Dakar and the major federal cities, almost all urban apartments and modern housing were occupied by whites (French or Lebanese). It could almost be said that there was no social interaction between local French people and the indigenous population, regardless of the latter's degree of "civilization," and interracial marriage was widely viewed as an intolerable transgression [8].

During the 1950s, the U.S. lacked official connections with French West Africa. The U.S. diplomatic corps possessed extremely deficient expertise on Africa, particularly Francophone Africa. Beyond relatively developed Senegal and Ivory Coast, the U.S. State Department was "ignorant" of marginal areas like Togoland. For instance, Ferguson complained in the same telegram about the Dakar Consulate General's difficulty in tracking developments in Ivory Coast, such as the independence movement led by Félix Houphouët-Boigny's Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire and disturbances organized by local communist groups. They were forced to rely overly on official statements and news materials for information [7]. Most U.S. diplomatic personnel in the region also pessimistically predicted that the racial transformations occurring in British Africa's Gold Coast and Nigeria would sooner or later appear in this region. They stated that if the increasingly widespread racial problems were not addressed, future U.S. influence in French West Africa would be "disappointing." They appealed for the narrow attitudes of official and commercial representatives towards this part of the world to be replaced by broader, more tolerant, and more realistic perspectives.

In conclusion, although the implementation of the "indirect rule" policy in French West Africa maintained NATO unity and Franco-American cooperation in the short term, its inherent contradictions and long-term costs gradually became apparent. First, it created a vast chasm between America's anti-colonial ideals and its actions supporting the colonial status quo, damaging its moral prestige in the Global South, particularly among emerging Asian and African nations. Second, it completely tied U.S. policy to the fate of French colonial rule, failing to establish any meaningful connections with or understanding of the nationalist forces gestating within African societies. When the wave of independence for French Africa became irresistible, the U.S. found itself lacking independent information channels, political connections, and response experience in this region, forcing a hasty policy adjustment.

3. The Second Phase (Late 1950s – Late 1960s)

3.1 Overview of U.S. Policy Towards Africa

In March 1957, the former British Gold Coast territory (now the Republic of Ghana) declared independence. This event led President Eisenhower and his senior advisors to clearly

realize that the British and French colonial systems in West Africa and across the continent were unsustainable, and the wave of independence was unstoppable. The U.S. government thus began adjusting its policy direction, shifting from supporting limited self-government under the old colonial order to preparing for the impending widespread independence and formulating systematic policies to establish relations with emerging African states. An early outcome of this strategic shift was the National Security Council Report 5719 (NSC 5719), drafted under the leadership of the Department of Defense and the National Security Council on August 23, 1957. As the first official document comprehensively defining U.S. policy towards Africa, this report systematically reviewed U.S. actions in sub-Saharan Africa since the Cold War and explicitly stated that its core interests and tasks were: to ensure the supply of important strategic minerals and the security of surrounding sea and air routes, and to prevent the spread of communist influence among the new generation of African political elites [2].

As the independence of African nations became a fait accompli, a new issue emerged: rapid independence might lead to widespread violent turmoil and governance failures within the emerging states, imposing a heavy burden on the United States attempting to intervene in African affairs. In response, the NSC 5719 report clearly delineated the boundaries of U.S. responsibility: the United States was not responsible for solving the internal problems of sub-Saharan African countries. It would provide basic economic assistance only within the overall framework of supporting European recovery and would not use aid to weaken Europe's leading role in Africa's independence process. Instead, the U.S. encouraged former colonies to maintain close political and economic ties with their metropoles and hoped Europe would continue to play a leading role after African independence [2]. This report laid the cornerstone for U.S. policy towards Africa from the late 1950s to the late 1960s—continuing to support European nations in playing a key role while assisting emerging states in achieving an orderly and stable transition. During this process, the U.S. would cautiously expand its own influence, prevent severe unrest in Africa, and avoid further military and economic drain on the U.S. and other NATO countries [9].

Within this framework, the Eisenhower administration gradually established "permitting African countries to maintain a neutral or non-aligned stance" as a basic policy. Influenced by the domestic civil rights movement and the upsurge of global national liberation movements, its second term began engaging with African independence movements and newly independent states with a more moderate posture. Vice President Richard Nixon's multi-country visit to Africa from February to March 1957 was a typical marker of this shift. Nixon proposed programmatic suggestions for overall Africa policy, advocating that the Department of Defense and the International Cooperation Administration should strengthen their attention to Africa and prepare to aid newly independent nations. As an internal government "liberal" on racial issues, he opposed Secretary of State Dulles's hardline stance demanding that African countries "take sides in the ideological struggle" of the Cold War, and debated him in 1958. Nixon believed that African nationalist leaders fought for independence and similarly desired to maintain their autonomy. The U.S. should encourage and guide this neutral tendency, rather than simply viewing them as potential supporters of the Soviet bloc [2]. President Eisenhower ultimately endorsed Nixon's view, believing it necessary to win the support of non-aligned African countries through education and economic aid. As an embodiment of organizational adjustment, the State Department formally established the independent Bureau of African Affairs on August 7, 1958, and appointed career diplomat Joseph Satterthwaite as the first Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs.

Simultaneously, pressure from the domestic civil rights movement, labor organizations, and Democratic liberals also pushed Africa policy towards a more positive adjustment. Represented by figures like Connecticut Governor and former Ambassador to India Chester Bowles and Democratic presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson, the "Africanists," motivated by humanitarian and strategic considerations, called on the government to cease supporting white minority rule and instead ally with African nationalist movements. They advocated adjusting policy to support independence and majority rule and criticized U.S. toleration of the South African Republic's strengthening of apartheid and suppression of black protests.

Labor leaders like United Auto Workers President Walter Reuther also actively voiced support for the organizational rights of African black workers, demanding that the U.S. change its relevant position in the United Nations. These combined domestic and international calls prompted U.S. Africa policy to exhibit a more enlightened posture [3].

Another important legacy of the Eisenhower administration was the standardization of the paradigm for intervening in African affairs. He opposed direct military intervention by the U.S. or NATO, advocating instead for authorizing and commanding multinational peacekeeping operations under the UN framework [2]. This concept was practiced during the 1960 Congo Crisis. On July 14, 1960, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 143, demanding Belgian troop withdrawal and authorizing the Secretary-General to provide military assistance to the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This decision facilitated the deployment of a nearly 20,000-strong UN peacekeeping operation in January 1961 when the situation in Congo further deteriorated. This action helped Congo avoid full-scale civil war, maintained its territorial integrity, and laid a relatively good foundation for its smooth transition.

Overall, the Eisenhower administration constructed a basic framework for U.S. post-war Africa policy that would last for decades. Its core elements included: acquiescing to emerging nations adopting non-aligned positions; avoiding direct and public intervention in African internal affairs; prioritizing the safeguarding of economic interests such as strategic resources and maritime routes in Africa; and fully containing the influence of the Soviet Union and other socialist forces. Although this framework underwent partial adjustments and questioning in subsequent administrations, its fundamental logic and direction persisted. In contrast, the Africa policy pursued by the succeeding John F. Kennedy administration more clearly revealed the inherent tension between idealistic aspirations and the constraints of realpolitik in U.S. foreign policy: on one hand, it attempted to use liberal, progressive idealist discourse to win over emerging African nations; on the other hand, its policy core remained constrained by the practical needs of Cold War anti-communist ideology and containment strategy. The interaction between these two delimited the ideal

boundaries of U.S. Africa policy and also highlighted the profound contradiction between its ideological propaganda and geopolitical reality.

As early as when he was elected Senator from Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy publicly expressed limited support for national liberation movements. In November 1956, during a speech in Los Angeles aimed at garnering votes for the Democratic Party, Kennedy called on the American people to transcend the East-West bloc struggle, to pay attention to the "nationalist revolutions in Asia and Africa," and to support their determination to break free from colonial rule and take control of their own destiny [10]. Starting from the 1960 election campaign, Kennedy frequently indicated he would adopt a significant shift in Africa policy, incorporating it into the political agenda of the "New Frontier." During Democratic primaries and the national campaign, Kennedy emphasized his support for the domestic civil rights movement and called for bold initiatives abroad to rejuvenate American power and prestige. Kennedy's eagerness to express support for the domestic civil rights movement, pledge to appoint more black officials, and promote strong civil rights legislation contrasted sharply with Republican candidate Richard Nixon's passive handling of civil rights issues during the campaign, and with the Eisenhower administration's attempt in its final days to replace Africa sympathizers in diplomatic posts with a large group of soon-to-retire senior diplomatic establishment figures as ambassadors to newly independent states [3].

Kennedy's policy shift was first reflected in key personnel appointments. Out of commitment to the rapidly growing African American electorate and as compensation to liberals who had supported Hubert Humphrey or Adlai Stevenson in the primaries, he appointed several liberals to the foreign policy system: Chester Bowles as Undersecretary of State, Adlai Stevenson as Ambassador to the United Nations. The most far-reaching was the appointment of outgoing Michigan Governor G. Mennen Williams as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, granting him the privilege of reporting directly to the President. Williams, an early supporter of Kennedy's campaign, had no diplomatic experience but was known for his outspoken support for civil rights and advocated strongly supporting African independence movements.

Concurrently, a group of young and aggressive ambassadors were posted to nascent African states. These "Africanists" advocated for the U.S. to adopt a more active posture in supporting global national independence and the civil rights wave, assuming responsibility for black liberation both at home and abroad, opposing oppression by white colonial regimes, and actively aiding the development of newly independent nations [3]. However, although Kennedy achieved some success in raising Africa's profile and improving America's image, this did not signify a fundamental transformation in policy. Kennedy and his appointed "Africanists," while showing more sympathy and willingness to engage with African nationalism tactically, their fundamental goal remained combating the Soviet Union in Africa and winning the Cold War, which was not essentially different in strategic objective from the earlier "Cold Warriors." Yet within the government existed an influential "establishment" or "Europeanist" faction, represented by Secretary of State Dean Rusk and George Ball, who succeeded Bowles as Undersecretary of State. Mostly senior State Department bureaucrats with deep defense and intelligence backgrounds, they had long dominated foreign policy decision-making since the Truman era. They insisted on "Europe First," were skeptical of supporting black majority rule in Africa, advocated toning down criticism of white minority regimes, emphasized maintaining close cooperation with former colonial powers, and prioritized consolidating the Atlantic Alliance with NATO at its core [3].

On January 6, 1961, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev delivered a speech publicly stating that the socialist camp would support "wars of national liberation" in Asia and Africa. This action heightened the Kennedy administration's concerns about Soviet ideological infiltration into Africa, prompting the U.S. government to pay greater attention to military preparedness and thus objectively strengthening the core position of NATO and Europe in its global layout [3]. This shift indirectly led to the marginalization of the "Africanists" within the foreign policy system. It also profoundly revealed that the symbolic reform within the Kennedy administration, attempting to improve the Cold War situation by employing liberal discourse and practice in Africa, was destined to be difficult to achieve. Ultimately, U.S. policy towards Africa always served the supreme strategic objective of containing the Soviet Union, and therefore often was directly pulled by the European situation, difficult to attain truly autonomous policy space.

Beyond personnel arrangements, Kennedy also sought to demonstrate high concern and enthusiasm for African affairs through personal diplomacy. Unlike Eisenhower's aloofness towards black leaders at home and abroad, Kennedy alone received eleven African leaders in 1961 and performed exceptionally well in such meetings. His confident, young, and vibrant image, his emphasis on African issues, and his knowledge reservoir about various countries left a deep impression on visiting African heads of state and other dignitaries.

In terms of policy instruments, a distinct characteristic of the Kennedy administration was its emphasis on soft power diplomacy, the most far-reaching being the establishment of the Peace Corps in 1961. This concept first appeared in the campaign platform of progressive Democrat and Minnesota Senator Hubert Humphrey during the 1960 Democratic primaries, advocating sending volunteers to less developed regions in the form of "youth service teams." [11] After John Kennedy assumed the presidency, a resolution to establish such an organization was put on the agenda, handled by his brother-in-law Sargent Shriver and former presidential civil rights assistant Harris Wofford. The Peace Corps was assigned three goals: to provide skilled manpower to interested countries; to promote a better understanding of Americans among the people served; and to promote a better understanding of other peoples among Americans [11]. Although supporters like Shriver and Undersecretary Bowles hoped it would become a "true experiment in international partnership" rather than a Cold War tool, this idealistic proposal ultimately accepted compromise suggestions from the White House and then Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson and was organized as a semi-autonomous unit under the newly created Agency for International Development (AID) within the State Department, operating independently through the free recruitment, training of volunteers, and management of projects [12]. During Kennedy's term, over half of Peace Corps volunteers worked in Africa on education projects, with the rest involved in community development, healthcare, and agriculture programs, becoming

an important channel for disseminating American values and cultural influence [11].

In core areas of Africa policy, the Kennedy administration inherited the pragmatic framework from the Truman and Eisenhower eras. Kennedy viewed foreign aid as a necessary component of U.S. national security and a key policy tool. For those African countries that were wavering or had pro-Soviet leanings, foreign aid aimed to prevent them from completely "tilting" towards the Soviet bloc; for countries deemed "safe" and "stable," continued resource investment ensured their long-term pro-Western orientation. To this end, the Kennedy administration established the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to begin centralized management of foreign aid programs. During Kennedy's tenure, Africa's proportion and status in U.S. foreign aid steadily rose. A March 1963 National Security Council memorandum detailed U.S. aid to Africa, showing that in FY1963, the African region received $262 million in aid, with 75% of the funds flowing to eight countries: Sudan, Tanzania, Libya, Ethiopia, Liberia, Morocco, Tunisia, and Nigeria [2]. U.S. foreign aid became a core element in U.S.-Africa relations, its influence persisting to this day.

Kennedy further developed the U.S. perception of "neutralism" and encouraged this diplomatic stance in Africa [13]. He believed the Republican administration's negative attitude towards African nationalism in the 1950s was the main reason for U.S. losses in the competition for Africa. Therefore, Kennedy and his advisors rejected Dulles's traditional argument that neutralism was an "immoral and short-sighted concept" and a "transitional stage to communism," proposing instead that within the "New Frontier" policy, there existed an acceptable form of neutralism characterized by: balanced criticism of Eastern and Western blocs, a mixed economy, tolerance for political dissent, and the maintenance of domestic stability [11]. This definition aimed to distinguish it from a left-leaning neutralism sympathetic to the Soviet Union that might "ally with Moscow," thereby expanding U.S. diplomatic space in Africa. Kennedy believed that with sufficient patience and effort to accept African nationalism and moderate neutralism and encourage its diverse political existence, emerging nations could be ensured to "reject the kind of submission required by communism" [11], ultimately achieving diplomatic victory by preventing the infiltration and control of the socialist camp in the region.

As the renowned historian and political commentator Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., summarized, "Kennedy nowhere in the Third World did more to set precedents than in Africa." [3] Kennedy's sympathy and high-level attention to African affairs, and his bold, innovative style in personnel appointments, indeed played a certain positive role in reversing) Washington's long-standing indifferent image of not caring about Africa and not supporting black liberation. Overall, Kennedy's Africa policy was essentially a form of "constrained idealism." It manifested as the packaging and refinement of realpolitik needs with liberal discourse, exhibiting significant openness and initiative at the rhetorical level and in secondary areas. However, once core strategic interests were involved, its policy core quickly reverted to the pragmatic framework and "moderate middle road" established by the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, with concern for black civil rights at home and abroad being merely electoral strategy rather than a primary concern [14]. Its definition of "acceptable neutralism" and the use of political organizations like the Peace Corps were not a departure from Cold War logic but rather a pragmatic strategic upgrade adopted under the fundamental premise of "anti-communism first" to more effectively win over and shape emerging independent nations. Therefore, examining Kennedy-era Africa policy and indeed his overall foreign policy thought must be considered within the macro-context of Cold War confrontation and the continuity of geopolitics, and should not be simplistically viewed as an isolated practice or fundamental transformation of liberal internationalist ideals.

Lyndon Johnson, who succeeded the assassinated John F. Kennedy as president in November 1963, basically inherited his predecessor's Africa policy framework, while placing particular emphasis on maintaining and shaping America's progressive image on racial issues both at home and abroad. On July 2, 1964, the Civil Rights Act was enacted. Together with the Voting Rights Act passed the following year, it legally ended racial segregation in the United States. This series of domestic legislative advances generated enthusiastic response in Africa. U.S. Information Agency Director Carl T.

Rowan reported to the President in a July 21 memorandum that the Civil Rights Act had become the dominant topic at the Cairo annual summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and the overwhelming majority of African opinion was highly positive [2]. In the November 1964 U.S. presidential election, Johnson, relying on) the solid support of the New Deal Coalition, defeated Republican candidate and conservative Cold War hawk Barry Goldwater with an overwhelming margin of 486 electoral votes to 52 [15]. This result was also unanimously welcomed by all African leaders.

The Johnson administration then extended the concept of its signature domestic reform agenda—the "Great Society"—to the diplomatic arena, attempting to extend the domestic model of eradicating poverty and inequality through government investment and public programs to underdeveloped regions globally, including Africa. The core of this extension combined the New Deal capitalism and liberal internationalism long championed by the Democratic mainstream. Through technocratic large-scale social engineering, it aimed to showcase the vision of development and prosperity that America could offer, distinct from the communist path, thereby winning the "hearts and minds" in the Cold War competition for the Third World and fundamentally eliminating the soil for revolution. A typical example was the Smallpox Eradication Program (SEP) announced by Johnson on May 18, 1965. Led by USAID, the program aimed to establish a unified prevention and control system across 18 countries in West and Central Africa, planning to mobilize about 150,000 health workers to go deep into grassroots communities to conduct health education and implement vaccination. Its ultimate goal was to control measles and completely eradicate smallpox in the region [16]. Such programs vividly embodied the extension of the "Great Society" concept: setting ambitious overall goals, relying on transnational systematic planning and technology expert leadership, emphasizing deep grassroots intervention. It was an attempt to apply the logic of domestic social reform to global development challenges. Although constrained by factors like the Vietnam War and inflation, many similar plans remained at the conceptual or preliminary stages. They clearly marked a unique path in U.S. diplomacy towards Africa during the Johnson era, one that combined domestic reform ideals with Cold War strategic reality.

As most African colonies achieved independence and the anticipated large-scale turmoil did not materialize, the Johnson administration also decided to shift Africa policy towards routine operational work. In October 1964, a memorandum from then Undersecretary of State and Democratic foreign policy expert Averell Harriman to the President offered an overall optimistic forecast for Africa's prospects: Politically, the primary U.S. objective in Africa—"that none of the emerging African states succumb to communist rule"—was largely achieved; despite a few military coups, most countries remained stable. Economically, Africa entered a commodity boom, with significant economic growth in Liberia, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Nigeria, and countries maintaining close ties with the Western world in crude oil production and industrial mineral exports. These substantive factors gave him sufficient reason to express optimistic expectations for the future [17]. The Johnson administration shifted the focus of its Africa policy to Southern Africa, which was still under white colonial rule. During this period, the U.S. focused attention on the South African Republic's aggression against the South West Africa mandate and the political crisis triggered by the unilateral declaration of independence by white settlers in British Southern Rhodesia [2].

However, fundamental changes in the two major factors—the Cold War and the domestic civil rights movement—completely altered the strategic priority order of U.S. diplomacy towards Africa. As the Vietnam War escalated, Johnson became increasingly mired in direct military confrontation with the socialist camp in Indochina. Resources and political capital were increasingly poured into Southeast Asia, and Africa's status on the U.S. foreign policy agenda significantly declined. After Johnson assumed the presidency, civil rights demonstrations gradually pointed towards deeper objectives like employment equality, racial integration, and opposition to white racism. Leadership shifted to radicals advocating "Black Power," levels of violence significantly increased, and the movement alienated white supporters who had previously backed peaceful demonstrations and limited integration [3]. Consequently, the Johnson administration had to make compromises in its Africa policy, abandoning active support for African "black liberation."

The changes in the nature of the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement, coupled with the overall optimistic situation in Africa, led the Johnson administration's Africa policy to exhibit two characteristics: strategic retrenchment and reinforced pragmatism. On one hand, Washington relegated Africa back to its traditional marginal position in U.S. foreign policy. Distractions from more urgent global and internal problems weakened U.S. investment in diplomacy towards newly independent nations. On the other hand, policy goals focused on short-term results and realities. The Johnson administration tended to use "crisis management" and "political stability maintenance" as yardsticks for Africa policy, showing gradually decreasing patience in dealings with radical or internally chaotic states, and leaning towards adopting covert intervention methods or supporting proxies to prevent situations from escalating or tilting towards the Soviet bloc at minimum cost. The Johnson administration's "turn" marked the beginning of the fading of U.S. attention to Africa and the return of U.S. Africa policy to the "moderate middle road," laying the foundation for the comprehensive retrenchment and "realist" policy of the subsequent Nixon-Ford administration.

3.2 U.S. Policy Towards Francophone West Africa: "Cautious Optimism" and Differential Engagement

The tension and boundaries between idealist discourse and realist action in U.S. Africa policy are also evident in French West Africa and the post-independence Francophone West African region. Following the 1956 French parliamentary elections, the center-left Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO), which supported territorial autonomy on colonial issues, regained control of the Ministry of Overseas France. French policy towards French West Africa and its African territories as a whole entered a period of rapid change. To avoid repeating the scenario of rapid independence seen in Algeria, then Minister Gaston Defferre presided over a series of legislative activities in 1956-1957 that established the basic framework and guidelines for autonomy reforms in the overseas territories. These laws were collectively known as The Loi-cadre (Framework Law). The law adopted a territorialist principle, transferring powers originally belonging to the Dakar Governor-General to territorial assemblies,

which were responsible for legislation, elections, and budgeting. Each territory, following the Togoland model, established government councils. The law delineated 'Services d'Etat' (State Affairs) and 'Services Territoriaux' (Territorial Affairs). Key policy areas in the territories, including foreign affairs, defense, police (except municipal and rural police), customs, and other areas deemed crucial for 'maintaining the solidarity of the elements comprising the Republic', such as finance, communications, media, and higher education, remained under the direct jurisdiction of the French government. All other public services were classified as 'Services Territoriaux'. The promulgation of the Loi-cadre objectively reduced the Paris government's financial burden of maintaining overseas territories, advanced the autonomy agenda in territories like Togoland, Ivory Coast, and Dahomey, and abruptly accelerated the independence process in French West Africa. However, France retained sovereignty-related domains in the region, such as foreign affairs, defense, and monetary policy, to maintain its dominant position [18].

In 1958, the outbreak of the Algerian crisis prompted the long-retired Charles de Gaulle to return to politics. He was elected Prime Minister with a high vote in parliament on June 1 of that year and granted special powers for constitutional reform. Shortly after taking office, de Gaulle met with leaders from French West African territories, as well as the two main cross-regional political groups in French West Africa—the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA) and the newly formed Parti du Regroupement Africain (PRA)—to begin discussions on establishing a Communauté française (French Community). De Gaulle advocated for the creation of a new federal or confederal structure for the French Union based on consultations with the overseas territories, while granting full internal autonomy to territories within the Community (while retaining the executive power of the French President as Chairman of the Community's Executive Council). De Gaulle presented the territories with three basic options: internal autonomy within the Community, temporary retention within the Community while seeking future independence, or immediate independence. A referendum on the new constitution was held on September 28 [18]. The referendum results clearly favored the 'oui' (yes)

camp supporting the new constitution and Community autonomy. Among the eight territories of French West Africa, only Guinea, under the leadership of Ahmed Sékou Touré, rejected the new constitution and became independent on October 2, becoming the first Francophone West African country to break away from the French system, an act seen as a direct challenge to France. The other seven territories all decided to become states within the Community, maintaining direct links with France, with over 80% of voters casting yes votes; in Ivory Coast, this figure reached 99.98% [18].

Within the Community, stimulated by Guinea's successful independence, Senegal's Léopold Senghor and the federalists within the PRA began seeking to establish a unified federation spanning the former French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa territories, aiming for eventual independence. This proposition gained support from Dahomey, Upper Volta, and Niger. From September to October 1959, the territories successively requested independence from France, promising to continue guaranteeing close bilateral cooperation post-independence. De Gaulle acquiesced to this mutually beneficial political vision, recognizing that maintaining France's sphere of influence in West Africa was not incompatible with granting political independence to these countries. In a November 10 press conference, he stated that France recognized their right to self-determination and would place no obstacles in the way of those wishing to gain independence 'in friendship with France' [18]. In 1960, seven countries from the former French West Africa region—Mauritania, Senegal, Niger, French Sudan (now Mali), Ivory Coast (now Côte d'Ivoire), Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), and Dahomey (now Benin)—achieved formal independence.

Amid the wave of decolonization, a temporary power vacuum emerged in the region due to the decline of French influence. The Soviet Union also began to closely monitor the local situation. Following the 20th Congress of the CPSU, the Soviet Union entered the "Thaw"(оттепель) period and adopted a more flexible and conciliatory "peaceful coexistence" line in its foreign policy. Khrushchev advocated expanding socialism to regions beyond the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe through non-war means, and Africa became a crucial component of this new strategy. The Soviet

Union provided economic and technical assistance to countries inclined towards it, such as Guinea under Sékou Touré, to "demonstrate that Soviet policy stemmed from the noble principles of 'fraternal solidarity and internationalism,' in contrast with the colonial powers of the West." [19] Through peaceful institutional competition, it sought to gradually win recognition for the socialist development model and secure support for Moscow in international affairs. This clearly sparked fears within U.S. diplomatic circles of losing the regional competition to the socialist bloc [20]. For the United States, the 'African Year' in Francophone West Africa marked the formation of a new, diverse, and uncertain political stage, forcing the U.S. to re-evaluate each independent state and formulate targeted policies. Washington's core challenge was: how to simultaneously contain France's 'post-colonial' interests, effectively prevent the nascent Francophone West African states from tilting towards the Soviet and socialist blocs, and establish and expand America's own influence in this region? Therefore, U.S. policy towards Francophone West Africa during this period often reflected cautious optimism and a pattern of selective engagement based on the specific circumstances of different countries. That is, under the overall guidance of anti-communist ideology and a pragmatic framework, differentiated diplomatic strategies were implemented based on political and economic assessments of each regime. This study will use the cases of Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire from independence to the late 1960s for a comparative analysis of U.S. policy propositions and diplomatic practice in Francophone West Africa during this period.

The U.S. viewed Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal as exemplary cases of 'moderate neutralist' regimes and key development targets in Francophone West Africa. The post-independence leaders of these two countries (Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal and Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire) were both political elites from the French West Africa era. The former implemented a so-called 'democratic socialist' policy, creating a stable and internally digestible participatory authoritarianism, and adopted a typical mixed-economy development model. The latter established a one-party authoritarian rule domestically, suppressed leftist opposition, adopted a firm pro-Western stance externally,

and achieved rapid capitalist economic growth. Despite their different ideologies and development paths, both countries were seen by the U.S. as rational, stable partners in Francophone West Africa capable of effectively resisting communist influence. In a May 28, 1963 circular from Secretary of State Dean Rusk to U.S. missions in Africa, African leaders were categorized by their international role, with Senghor and Houphouët-Boigny listed together as 'senior statesmen with reputations' [21].

U.S. support and aid for Senegal needs to be examined starting from Senegal's history and Senghor's unique political thought. Senegal developed trade with France as early as the mid-17th century. Since the French government established the Senegal colony as a French permanent possession in 1840, Senegal became the center of French rule in West Africa. The two capitals of French West Africa, Saint-Louis and Dakar, were both located on Senegal's northwestern coast. As the administrative capital of all French West Africa, Senegal and its capital Dakar remained deeply influenced by France before and after independence in 1960 [22]. Senegal was the only colony in sub-Saharan Africa where France attempted to implement an assimilationist precept. This policy aimed to completely integrate the indigenous population into the cultural and political system of the French nation by inculcating fundamental French values (such as reason, liberty, Catholicism, and republicanism) and cultural education, disseminating France's and Europe's cultural mission. This policy enhanced the Senegalese adaptation to French culture. French and Wolof are both official languages. A large number of French expatriates worked in Senegal's administration, finance, and cultural education sectors. A new middle-class stratum also emerged among the indigenous black population. French cultural customs and daily lifestyles were widely accepted by residents of major cities like Dakar. Senegal gained partial electoral rights to send representatives to the National Assembly in the early 20th century, enjoying a higher degree of autonomy compared to other territories [23]. The assimilation policy and relatively lenient political system gave French-ruled Senegal a high degree of Franco-European cultural identity, fostering a political environment of political pluralism and competitive elections, with relatively harmonious race relations. In a May

31, 1961 memorandum of conversation between Kennedy and de Gaulle in Paris, both the U.S. and French sides agreed with the assertion that Senegal, 'with its long and continuous contact with the West,' was more likely to employ moderate diplomatic means in handling relations with Western countries [24].

Senghor's personal attributes and statecraft resonated with U.S. strategic needs in the Cold War context. As an intellectual educated in the French higher education system, his 'wisdom and steadiness' led policymakers in both the U.S. and France to regard him as an African nationalist with whom one could engage in rational dialogue and cooperation. Senghor's political philosophy was rooted in his theory of 'Négritude', which advocated that the black race possessed spiritual qualities distinct from other ethnic groups, including a sense of community, a gift for imagination, and a gift for rhythm. These endowments constituted the complete value system of African civilization. While emphasizing the reconstruction of black identity, Senghor did not deny the existence of a cultural universality and a spirit of reconciliation among the world's peoples [23]. He advocated for a broad reconciliation between Africa and Europe based on the acknowledgment of their mutual differences, and that Senegal still needed to maintain friendly cooperation with France and other Western nations. This philosophical foundation made its foreign policy naturally inclined towards pragmatism and dialogue rather than confrontation.

In political practice, Senghor explicitly opposed the highly Soviet-style economic nationalization and strict one-party socialism implemented in Guinea and Mali. He proposed a distinctive 'democratic socialism' program. This 'socialism' combined his 'Négritude' theory, Catholic humanism, and the idea of African unity, promoting participatory democracy and political diversity. Its core was to 'bring the Senegalese people maximum social progress with maximum freedom' and he believed socialism was essentially 'an art of governing men of a given society by organizing their relations harmoniously' [23]. Senghor's democratic socialism combined the Western-prized respect for social freedom and civil rights with the African political consultation tradition of 'palabre', resonating ideologically with the modernization path promoted by the United States.

Therefore, under Senghor, Senegal, while formally a one-party state dominated by the Union Progressiste Sénégalaise (UPS), was flexible at its core. Senghor's tenure saw virtually no intense political abnormalities like presidential dictatorship or military coups. Power operation was relatively stable, and the state focused on economic development and domestic construction [23]. During the Cold War, Senegal consistently adhered to pragmatic neutralist diplomacy, avoiding direct conflicts with neighboring countries while actively keeping its distance from pro-Soviet states like Ghana and Guinea. It was precisely these traits—its relatively close post-colonial links with France [23], reconciliatory and realist diplomatic inclination, moderate 'democratic socialist' ideology, and de facto pro-Western stance—that led the U.S. to assess Senegal as a trustworthy 'moderate,' thus making it a core target for consolidation and demonstration through means like material aid and cultural exchange.

The Kennedy administration used Senegal as a window to showcase the 'New Frontier' spirit in Francophone West Africa, providing economic support through agencies like USAID and the IMF, and engaging in cooperation in cultural education, healthcare, and refugee resettlement. In 1962, the IMF assessed Senegal as a 'large small country' with a quota of $25 million [25]. At the military aid level, the U.S. intended to integrate Senegal into its regional security architecture for Francophone West Africa. A January 28, 1962 Joint Chiefs of Staff memorandum explicitly categorized Senegal as one of the 'friendly, pro-Western' countries in West Africa. The document argued for accelerating the fulfillment of its military aid requests and expanding the U.S. presence there to enhance the country's 'viability' and enable it to play a role in regional security—namely, to contain the political alliance of so-called radical states formed by countries like Ghana, Guinea, and Mali, and to exert a moderating influence on these 'unstable' nations [26]. To achieve this strategic objective, the meeting specified in its concrete aid planning that the U.S. should, in Senegal and other friendly countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria, 'create, train, and equip forces for internal security and border and coastal patrol to include appropriate air and naval elements,' thereby systematically enhancing their indigenous defense and self-defense capabilities [26].

After President Lyndon Johnson succeeded, U.S. attention and aid to Senegal weakened compared to before. This shift was closely related to Senegal's deeply entrenched pro-French inclination and its pursued 'active neutralist' foreign policy. In a June 8, 1966 memorandum from NSC staffer Ulric Haynes to Presidential Special Assistant Walt Rostow, he reported on the resignation of U.S. Ambassador to Senegal Mercer Cook over criticism of U.S. aid policy towards Senegal [27]. Haynes noted in the memo that Senghor was clearly closer to France than the United States in diplomacy. The memo also expressed U.S. dissatisfaction with Senegal's subpar management and utilization of American aid [27]. President Senghor's own diplomatic philosophy further reinforced this distance. He maintained an attitude of detachment and restraint between the two Cold War blocs, refusing to adopt any rhetoric or actions that might intensify Cold War confrontation in Africa. As he himself stated: 'in the struggle of the blocs, the conflict of ideologies . . . we must keep a cool head and an attentive heart.' [23] This insistence on neutrality meant Senegal's strategic value significantly declined under the Johnson administration's logic shift towards seeking clear Cold War allegiance and low-cost control of situations, subsequently consistently occupying a secondary position in U.S. diplomacy towards Francophone West Africa.

Compared to a pragmatic neutralist regime like Senegal, analyzing the case of Côte d'Ivoire reveals another successful paradigm of the U.S. 'differential engagement' strategy. This involved providing almost unreserved and more meticulous economic and political support to a regime that openly adhered to a pro-Western stance and implemented authoritarian rule and free-market capitalist policies domestically, thereby establishing it as the 'Ivoirian Miracle' countering the socialist development model.

Côte d'Ivoire's firm pro-Western stance was rooted in its unique historical and socio-cultural background. In the pre-colonial period, the region was not deeply influenced by Islam like the Sahel belt. Since the 16th century, the continuous entry of French colonizers and missionaries gradually shaped a Catholic culture in the southern coastal areas closely linked to mainland France. A more critical influence came from the French colonial ruling system. After

France gradually occupied the region in the 1880s and formally declared it a colony in 1893, it implemented a governance strategy aimed at thoroughly reshaping the social structure to achieve direct rule: traditional village and tribal units were systematically dismantled to eliminate the base of local ruling elites; a direct, highly centralized administrative system was established by the Paris-appointed colonial governor. Concurrently, the colonial authorities implemented a strict 'indigénat' legal system, establishing separate legal systems for French citizens and their subjects. At the governance level, only a small number of highly educated, highly assimilated indigenous elites were co-opted into administration, while the vast majority of the indigenous population was completely excluded from the policy-making process [23].

This series of institutional arrangements produced two profound consequences. First, colonial Côte d'Ivoire maintained exceptionally close political and administrative links with France. Second, an elite stratum of mainly coastal Catholics, cultivated and supported by France, emerged, acting as intermediaries for the Abidjan colonial administration's rule. This elite deeply identified with French norms and values. Their status and interests were directly tied to maintaining Western influence in Africa, thus strongly resisting any changes that might alter their relationship with France and the West at large [23]. Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the first president of the independent Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, was a typical representative of this elite. The roots of Côte d'Ivoire's firm pro-Western line can be traced to its political choices before independence. As early as the 1940s, Félix Houphouët-Boigny and his RDA, though they had closely cooperated with the French Communist Party (PCF) in the immediate post-war period, jointly pushing for equal rights and autonomy agendas for overseas territorial residents in the French National Assembly, the RDA quickly established a clear pro-French, pro-Western political stance and gradually distanced itself from its leftist allies. At the RDA coordinating committee meeting from July 8 to 12, 1955, Houphouët-Boigny and other key leaders decided to formally sever all political ties with the French Communist Party and organizations like the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), and to expel party branches insisting on a pro-communist stance from the party. The Nigerien Democratic Union, Senegalese Democratic Union, and Union of the Peoples of Cameroon were all expelled for refusing to comply with the new line [28].

Post-independence, the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire established a de facto one-party system politically. While not explicitly outlawing other parties by law, strict electoral restrictions allowed the ruling Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) to monopolize power long-term [23]. The one-party system further consolidated the paternalistic authoritarian rule centered on Houphouët-Boigny. His regime co-opted senior officials, military generals, and local leaders through patronage and privileges, constructing a political machine supported by extensive patron-client networks and systemic corruption, thereby maintaining long-term superficial stability domestically.

In stark contrast to its political conservatism, Houphouët-Boigny was openly and firmly committed to free-market capitalism economically. Due to weak domestic capital accumulation and high dependence on the international market, his government chose an export-oriented economic development strategy, focusing on producing and exporting primary products like cocoa, coffee, bananas, and timber [23]. This strategy was deeply dependent on the capital, technology, and market connections provided by France. To this end, Côte d'Ivoire actively integrated into the French-led neo-colonial economic system. It accepted extensive financial and market support from the French government and investors, used to finance local enterprises and support the national banking and credit system. In return, Côte d'Ivoire joined the Franc Zone centered on the African Financial Community (CFA), pegging its currency, the West African CFA franc, to the French franc. A series of economic cooperation agreements signed between the two sides maintained a mercantilist special relationship between Paris and Abidjan: France obtained stable raw material supplies and a preferential market position to develop its aviation, nuclear, and arms industries; Côte d'Ivoire restricted imports from other countries, making France the main supplier of its medium-to-high-end products and services, with French trading companies and industrial enterprises thus dominating local import-export trade and manufacturing [28].

In the view of U.S. foreign policy

decision-makers, Côte d'Ivoire's development model proved that capitalist economics and close Western ties could achieve prosperity and stability in Africa. This provided a highly persuasive practical example for the U.S. to counter the 'socialist path' promoted by the Soviet Union in the Third World. Consequently, the U.S. attached great importance to political and economic ties with this newly independent, pro-Western republic. Côte d'Ivoire actively sought U.S. development support from the outset of independence. Merely twenty days after independence, President Houphouët-Boigny wrote to the U.S. Ambassador in Abidjan, stating: 'Desirous of devoting its efforts to building with [the] greatest speed [the] economic power of state and thereby to reinforce its political independence, Government of Ivory Coast has [the] honor to solicit aid from [the] US [. . .] to contribute to development.' [29] The U.S. responded positively. The State Department dispatched an International Cooperation Agency (ICA) survey mission to Côte d'Ivoire the following month to assess its development needs and provide planning suggestions for modernization. This attention stemmed from clear strategic assessment. In a May 13, 1961 memorandum to Presidential Special Assistant for National Security Affairs McGeorge Bundy, Deputy Special Assistant Walt Rostow explicitly recommended that the U.S. should concentrate 'all brainpower and resources' and provide ample development aid in areas like Ivory Coast where 'positions of potential political stability and strength exist'.

Based on this understanding, U.S. support for Côte d'Ivoire had a distinct character of political reward and developmental demonstration. Agencies represented by USAID focused aid and cooperation on key areas underpinning its 'economic miracle': export agriculture modernization, infrastructure construction, and encouragement of foreign investment. Among these, cooperation in the electric power sector can be considered the microcosm of bilateral economic relations during this period. The development of the power grid in French West Africa had long lagged. It was not until the late 1940s that major cities like Dakar, Abidjan, and Bamako had rudimentary power plants. In Côte d'Ivoire, pre-independence electricity supply relied entirely on the French colonial authorities, with energy confined to traditional steam and thermal power. Not until 1952 did the colonial

authorities plan to utilize hydraulic resources like the Bia River, completing the region's first hydropower station—the Ayamé I—in 1959 [29].

Post-independence Côte d'Ivoire viewed electrification as the 'most essential task for the social and economic progress of their country' [29] and actively sought U.S. financial and technical support. Starting from 1963, U.S. grants and loans for Côte d'Ivoire's energy, transportation, and other infrastructure accumulated to over $40 million. Among these, a $1.9 million market-rate loan from the US Export-Import Bank in February 1963 was specifically for expanding the Abidjan thermal power plant [29]. This move marked the U.S. factually breaking through France's monopolistic advantage in Côte d'Ivoire's power sector, becoming a typical example of its strategic penetration in Francophone West Africa through development aid.

Contrary to the Johnson administration's reduced attention to Senegal, U.S. cooperation with Côte d'Ivoire became\increasingly close in the mid-to-late 1960s. The formally launched Kossou Hydropower Station project in 1969 further demonstrated the deepening presence of the United States in Côte d'Ivoire's electrification plans. As the first major water conservancy project built after independence, the dam was constructed on the upper reaches of the Bandama River, Côte d'Ivoire's largest river, with an annual electricity generation capacity exceeding 5 billion kWh. The Ivoirian government chose to fund the project through international aid from the U.S., Canada, and Italy. The U.S.-based Kaiser Engineers, recommended by the Export-Import Bank, ultimately won the bid for the dam construction. Compared to the direct grants or loans of the early independence period, by the late 1960s, the U.S. was attempting to introduce the model of technocrat- and corporate-led public works engineering formed since the New Deal into the country. The Kossou project adopted the famous Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) management model. As project coordinator, then chairman of the French National Commission on Regional Planning, Philippe Lamour, strongly advocated applying the TVA's land-use management doctrine to the Kossou project, emphasizing it would drive comprehensive economic transformation in the Bandama River valley and the entire north-central region. This move was

highly congruent with the U.S.'s underlying motive of establishing Côte d'Ivoire as a beacon of capitalist development in Francophone West Africa and across the continent [29].

The depth evolution of U.S. aid policy towards Côte d'Ivoire can be seen as a political practice of Walt Rostow's 'stages of economic growth' theory. The theory divided economic development into stages and adjusted aid policy accordingly: providing technical assistance and small grants in the 'precondition stage'; providing 'as much capital as they could absorb on favorable loan Terms' in the 'takeoff stage'; and encouraging recipient countries to turn to the open market for capital in the 'stage of self-sustaining growth' [29]. U.S. loan support for the Kossou dam indicated that, in the view of U.S. decision-makers, Côte d'Ivoire was approaching the self-sustaining growth stage and possessed the economic potential to repay development loans.

U.S. economic aid was aimed not only at containing communism and countering the appeal of the Soviet model but also at weakening the neo-colonial influence of former metropoles led by France. This was particularly evident in the Kossou project. During the bidding phase, the loss of the European Development Fund, which had French capital backing, caused French dissatisfaction. French business circles accused Houphouët-Boigny of distancing himself from Paris and becoming 'an American agent'. In response, President Houphouët-Boigny wrote to U.S. President Lyndon Johnson inviting U.S. participation in the Kossou project, while the new Minister of Economy and Finance, Henri Konan Bédié, issued an administrative order barring France from direct participation in Bandama River development projects [29].

By supporting signature projects like the Kossou dam, the U.S. successfully shaped its image as a partner selflessly helping African nations achieve energy independence and modernization, in stark contrast to the former metropole France, which had monopolized the colony's energy system. A January 12, 1968 post-state visit report from then Vice President Hubert Humphrey to President Johnson confirmed this strategic intent. The report stated: 'Some 320 million African people in 39 nations cannot be left solely to the care of the former colonial powers, who often lack the necessary understanding and financial resources to help them.' Humphrey advised: 'Within our means,

the United States must play an active, imaginative, and well-conceived role in African political and economic affairs.' [30] In specific suggestions, he explicitly advocated continuing to encourage Côte d'Ivoire to play a leadership role in West African and African affairs 'in a low-key way, and on the record only when necessary,' promoting coffee and cocoa export agreements, and providing approximately 40% of the funding and technical support for the Bandama Dam's hydroelectric and irrigation project [30].

U.S. decision-makers viewed the rapid economic growth and political stability under Houphouët-Boigny's leadership as the most powerful proof of capitalism's viability in Africa. Therefore, supporting Côte d'Ivoire was not only about consolidating an ally but also about producing and exporting a success narrative of capitalism in Africa, to win over the 'hearts and minds' of the entire Third World. Its depth of intervention far exceeded that for a typical country, involving large-scale investment and technical support focused on key infrastructure like electricity. These projects not only promoted local modernization but also became geopolitical levers, consciously challenging and diluting France's unequal advantage in the economic lifelines of newly independent nations. The cases of Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire clearly delineate the different paths of the U.S. 'differential engagement' strategy towards Francophone West Africa during the Cold War. Although both countries were seen by the U.S. as 'moderate' and cooperative partners, based on differences in their regime characteristics, ideological orientations, and strategic value, the modes, depth, and goals of U.S. engagement differed significantly, yet both jointly served the overall objectives of containing the Soviet Union and shaping a pro-Western order.

U.S. engagement with the two countries was based on perceptions of their respective regime natures and ideologies. Senegal was seen as a 'moderate model' at the political level. The U.S. valued the 'democratic socialist' thought represented by the 'philosopher-president' Léopold Senghor, which fused African nationalism and conservatism. Its 'active neutralist' diplomatic posture was seen as a rational force that could play a certain stabilizing role regionally. Thus, U.S. support for Senegal focused on consolidating this unique political model. Côte d'Ivoire was positioned as an

'anti-communist/pro-American bridgehead' at the economic and strategic levels. President Houphouët-Boigny's openly pursued authoritarian capitalism and the resulting 'economic miracle' were seen by the U.S. as the most powerful practical argument against the Soviet development model. U.S. engagement aimed to deeply bind and vigorously promote this 'successful model'.

Based on the above perceptions, U.S. aid methods showed clear distinctions. Engagement with Senegal was more symbolic and of limited practical effect, primarily focused on cultural education, economic aid, and military training aimed at maintaining internal security and regional balance. Its purpose was to sustain the pro-Western inclination within Senegal's 'neutralism' and use it as a morally attractive political symbol. Engagement with Côte d'Ivoire was more substantive and assertive. Through large-scale and targeted infrastructure investment, public works construction, and export economy modernization, the U.S. directly deeply penetrated its development lifelines, strengthening its economic dependence on and cooperation with the United States.

This differential engagement was ultimately reflected in the deep logic of U.S. diplomacy towards Africa. In Senegal, the U.S. role was closer to an ambiguous external supporter. Its basic approach was to consolidate an existing, relatively independent moderate regime, respect its neutrality, and cooperate with this regime where possible. Even when attention declined later due to unclear benefits, its basic characterization remained unchanged. In Côte d'Ivoire, the U.S. played the role of an active shaper and co-builder. Its policy was to guide the country's development path. Through support and cooperation on key projects (like the Kossou dam), it consciously challenged France's traditional advantage in the region, integrating Côte d'Ivoire more deeply into the U.S. economic system and sphere of influence, developing it into a 'strategic pivot' for U.S. political and economic penetration in the region.

4. Conclusion, Reflections, and Implications

4.1 Core Research Findings

Through a systematic review and case analysis of U.S. policy towards Francophone West Africa between 1946 and 1969, this study draws the following core conclusions:

First, U.S. policy towards Francophone West Africa exhibited a phased evolutionary trajectory from "indirect rule" to "differential engagement."

From the late 1940s to the mid-1950s, the United States pursued an "alliance priority" strategy, placing its relationship with France first and exerting influence indirectly through the "Paris channel," effectively acquiescing to and even supporting French colonial rule in Africa. During this period, U.S. diplomatic activities in the region were highly dependent on France, its own direct presence was weak, and it lacked clear interest ties with French West Africa. Policy was subordinate to its overall Europe-centered strategy. As African independence movements reached their climax in the late 1950s, U.S. policy entered a second phase. Faced with a proliferation of emerging states, the United States adjusted its diplomatic strategy, adopting an attitude of "cautious optimism" and implementing "differential engagement" towards independent countries. This involved selective and differentiated diplomatic contacts and economic assistance based on the political orientation, economic model, and strategic value of each regime, aiming to contain Soviet influence, expand its own presence, while cautiously managing relations with France and establishing a U.S.-centered neo-colonial system. The cases of Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire clearly illustrate this differential intervention logic.

Second, the evolution of U.S. policy was driven by the complex interaction of four factors—geostrategy, ideology, economic interests, and domestic politics—with the dominant factors varying across different phases. Throughout the entire study period, geostrategy consistently remained the primary factor and rigid constraint dominating U.S. policy towards Francophone West Africa. Its core objective can be summarized as: containing the expansion of the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc at the global level, and at the regional level, a dual task—both maintaining the unity of key NATO ally France and ensuring the security of strategic resource supplies and critical transportation routes. Geostrategy delimited the basic framework and boundaries for U.S. policy, serving as the overarching premise for other factors. When other objectives conflicted with it, they often had to concede.

Ideology exhibited significant contradictions and

instrumentality. Anti-Sovietism was the consistent ideological bottom line. Value discourses such as "anti-colonialism," "national self-determination," and "liberal democracy" were selectively employed depending on their compatibility with geostrategy and domestic politics. They primarily served as diplomatic rhetorical tools to legitimize U.S. strategic interests and enhance its international image, used to boost America's international standing when costs were low, but often shelved or downplayed when core strategic arrangements were involved. Thus, ideology demonstrated highly contextualized and instrumentalized characteristics, essentially serving as a flexible tool subordinate to strategic realities.

The importance of economic interests gradually increased following African independence, becoming a critical lever for the U.S. to deeply engage in the region and build long-term dependencies with emerging nations. Its content evolved from early-stage objectives of securing stable supplies of strategic minerals and shipping routes, indirectly maintaining economic interests through France, to progressively expanding into opening commodity markets and investment opportunities for American capital. Through aid, loans, and project cooperation, the U.S. directly participated in shaping the economic structures of recipient countries and deliberately weakened the monopolistic privileges of former metropoles in the economic sphere.

Compared to the preceding three, domestic politics was a relatively secondary yet cyclically influential modulating variable. Its impetus stemmed mainly from presidential inclinations, internal contestation within Congress and the bureaucracy, and social pressures from the civil rights movement. While these factors could scarcely alter the fundamental strategic direction, they could cause U.S. diplomatic policy towards Francophone West Africa to exhibit periodic fluctuations between "liberalism" and "conservatism" within the overarching Cold War framework, thereby influencing the specific manifestations of policy and the prioritization of certain issues.

These four factors constitute a motivational mechanism model for U.S. policy towards Francophone West Africa. The four factors are not simply juxtaposed but form a dynamic "core-periphery" combination across the two major phases of the study period.

In the first phase (late 1940s – mid-1950s), U.S. policy towards Francophone West Africa can be categorized as a "strategy-alliance" dominant model. In this phase, geostrategy was the absolute core, particularly emphasizing the logic of alliance priority. This manifested as: the strategic need to preserve the U.S.-French alliance and support European recovery restrained the already vague anti-colonial discourse within ideology, strictly adhering to the "moderate middle road." Concurrently, domestic politics paid low attention to African issues, its influence was weak, and the U.S. government and businesses lacked core economic interests in the region. Under this motivational structure, policy output ultimately manifested as "indirect rule" and "benign neglect": exercising influence through France, avoiding direct deep engagement itself, yet attempting in the later period to break through the "Paris channel" and develop direct political and economic ties with the colonies.

Entering the second phase (late 1950s – late 1960s), as Francophone West African countries successively achieved independence, the policy model evolved into a more complex "compound-differential" driven model. Although the fundamental objectives remained unchanged, the means of achieving them became more intricate due to the multidimensional situation: the U.S. had to maintain the anti-communist bottom line while cautiously balancing two goals: respecting French interests and expanding its own presence. Concurrently, the agency of other factors significantly increased: the instrumental role of ideology became prominent, used to court emerging nations and resonate with the domestic civil rights movement; the weight of economic interests rose, becoming a key link to replace French influence and forge close ties with emerging states; domestic politics also became more active with the ascendance of Democratic liberals and the rise of the civil rights movement, injecting stronger idealist coloration and initiative into the traditional "moderate middle road." These factors intertwined, collectively giving rise to the basic strategy of "differential engagement": the U.S. selectively combined tools such as economic aid, political co-optation, and limited security cooperation based on its assessment of each regime's characteristics, resulting in distinctly different policy configurations in Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire.

This motivational model can be summarized as

follows: under the rigid constraints of the macro-Cold War framework, U.S. policy towards Francophone West Africa was the joint product of instrumentalized ideological discourse, gradually escalating economic interest demands, and periodic shifts in domestic politics. These three factors interacted within the policy space provided by geostrategy. Their specific combinations and weight allocation dynamically adjusted according to changes in the international decolonization process, the characteristics of local African regimes, and the U.S. domestic political climate. This ultimately externalized into concrete policies exhibiting phased and country-specific differences. This model not only explains why U.S. policy evolved but also why its evolution exhibited a particular trajectory and form, providing a middle-range analytical framework for understanding the special form of Cold War in the "peripheries" and the intervention logic of the U.S. during this period.

Third, case studies demonstrate that U.S. "differential engagement" in Francophone West Africa was essentially the regional-level application of its global Cold War strategy.

In Senegal, the U.S. valued the affinity embodied by Senghor's regime—"democratic socialism" and "active neutralism"—viewing it as a usable symbol of stability and a moral example. Support measures focused on limited, symbolic assistance. In Côte d'Ivoire, by contrast, Houphouët-Boigny's regime, with its openly pro-Western stance and free-market capitalist modernization path, made it a "strategic pivot" for the U.S. to counter the socialist model and penetrate France's traditional sphere of influence. By providing deep economic support, the U.S. aimed to strengthen its dependency and mold it as a development model. The two cases jointly reveal that U.S. support for Francophone West African states was fundamentally aimed at serving its overarching goal of containing the Soviet Union and shaping a pro-Western regional order. The mode of engagement varied according to the specific national conditions of the target country.

Fourth, U.S. policy consistently faced tensions and compromises among multiple objectives, with its most fundamental dilemma being the balance between obligations to the European alliance and strategic expansion in Africa.

The core dilemma of U.S. policy towards Francophone West Africa was rooted in the irreconcilable tension between its mutually contradictory dual strategic objectives: on one hand, as leader of NATO, it had to consider and preserve the traditional sphere of influence and special interests of its key ally, France; on the other hand, as a global Cold War superpower, it needed to contain Soviet expansion, promote its own model, and in this process, establish and expand U.S. influence itself. The inherent contradiction between obligations to the European alliance and strategic expansion in Africa constituted the basic thread running through the entire study period.

The entire historical process demonstrates that the U.S. never fully resolved this contradiction. Instead, it constantly sought a fragile, context-dependent precarious equilibrium. Its policy consequently exhibited significant vacillation and opportunism, often adjusting in real time according to the intensity of the global Cold War, the stability of France itself, and the strength of African nationalist forces. This fundamental contradiction and strategic oscillation directly led to the profound and common disjuncture between rhetoric and action, between idealistic claims and realpolitik interests within U.S. policy.

4.2 Theoretical and Historical Implications

At the theoretical level, through its examination and analysis of U.S. policy in Francophone West Africa, this study yields the following insights with extended significance.

First, the study validates and deepens the discourse on the complexity of the "peripheries" within Cold War historiography. The situation in Francophone West Africa during the study period was a unique field where colonial legacies, nationalist aspirations, intra-capitalist bloc contradictions, and global Cold War contestation intertwined. The evolution of U.S. policy in the region reveals that superpower intervention in the Third World was not a simple, unidirectional output along a fixed path. Rather, it was a highly contextualized, gradual adaptation that had to accommodate local political structures, economic dependency formations, and socio-cultural contexts. This understanding helps move beyond traditional Cold War narratives centered on Eurasia or overly emphasizing U.S.-Soviet bipolarity, thereby fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the differentiated manifestations of the Cold War in its

geographical and political peripheries.

Second, the study highlights the continuity of realism and pragmatism as the fundamental logic of U.S. foreign policy. Although the Kennedy-Johnson era infused more idealistic rhetoric and soft power tools, the core of its policy consistently adhered to the pragmatist principle of being fundamentally oriented by strategic interests. So-called "constrained idealism" did not, in essence, depart from the "moderate middle road" inherited from the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. Rather, it represented a upgrade in legitimizing packaging and intervention means to achieve containment objectives amidst intensified Cold War competition. This finding suggests that in analyzing the history of U.S. foreign policy, we should pay more attention to the sustained strategic calculus behind its actions, rather than being easily misled by its periodic rhetorical shifts.

Third, through the analysis of driving factors, this study demonstrates the effectiveness and necessity of a middle-range analytical framework in understanding the evolution of U.S. foreign policy. By incorporating the four dimensions—geostrategy, ideology, economic interests, and domestic politics—into a unified analytical purview, we are able to transcend single-cause explanations and more systematically and comprehensively elucidate why and how policy dynamically adjusted in response to changing internal and external conditions. This analytical approach is applicable not only to historical cases of U.S. foreign policy towards other world regions but also holds referential value for understanding the intervention logic of contemporary major powers in developing areas.

At the historical level, by tracing U.S. policy evolution in Francophone West Africa, the study yields the following three interrelated historical insights:

First, the U.S. experience in the region demonstrates that superpowers intervening in regions with long histories of colonialism often suffer from a structural "path dependency." The political-economic systems and dependency relationships molded by colonial rule did not immediately dissolve with formal independence. Emerging states remained closely bound to former metropoles in terms of political institutions, economic ties, and information channels, making it difficult for the U.S. to

escape the Paris-centric indirect intervention model in its policy choices. Not until the wave of independence was already a fait accompli did Washington realize its own lack of independent intelligence sources and policy tools in the region, thus falling into a passive position and forced to hastily adjust its strategy, shifting from complete reliance on France to attempting to establish direct bilateral relationships. This process reveals the inherent historical constraints faced by great power intervention in the post-colonial era.

Second, the evolution of U.S. policy clearly exposes the profound fragmentation between idealist discourse and realist action within its diplomatic narrative. Although official U.S. rhetoric consistently emphasized support for the principles of anti-colonialism and national self-determination, in actual decision-making these principles were repeatedly ceded to two more urgent strategic demands: maintaining NATO unity and containing global communist expansion. This sustained divergence between principle and interest not only highlighted the pronounced utilitarianism and opportunism characteristic of U.S. foreign policy but also meant its policy often, in practice, perpetuated and even consolidated unequal external control and economic dependency patterns, thus bearing distinct neo-colonial hallmarks. The consequence was a severe erosion of the moral prestige the United States had accumulated after World War II, deepening doubts and distrust regarding its double standards, particularly among emerging African nations eagerly seeking genuinely autonomous development.

Third, the comparative case analysis of Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire reveals that although the Cold War structure imposed severe) external constraints on small states and caused significant sovereign impairment, their domestic and foreign affairs were not entirely manipulated by great powers. The ideological orientation of local regimes, the political philosophy of their leaders, and their approach to managing relations with former metropoles constituted important variables in the foreign policy of newly independent states, enabling them to actively influence the intervention strategies and modalities of external powers. Senegal, by advocating "democratic socialism" and "active neutralism," shaped itself as a respected dialogue partner, thereby attracting limited U.S. support. Côte d'Ivoire, leveraging its openly pro-Western

stance and export-oriented capitalist development model, successfully established itself as a strategic pivot worthy of U.S. investment and support in the region. The starkly contrasting development paths and international trajectories of these two countries demonstrate that, under systemic diplomatic pressure, independent African states could still, through subjective political choices, conduct strategic maneuver within limited space, thereby securing international standing and development opportunities for themselves.

4.3 Limitations and Future Prospects

Reflecting on the research process and methodology, this project still contains several aspects worthy of further consideration and refinement:

First, regarding the historical source base. Although this study primarily utilizes the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) series as its main archival source and references a relatively rich body of English-language secondary literature, the use of primary and secondary materials from Francophone countries such as France, Senegal, and Côte d'Ivoire remains insufficient. This has, to some extent, constrained the research perspective and explanatory dimensions. In particular, observations regarding the motivations and reactions of the other party in policy interactions—namely Francophone West Africa and France—still rely heavily on American records. Incorporating multi-country, multilingual archival cross-verification in future research would help construct a more complete and credible historical picture and enhance the persuasiveness of the argumentation.

Second, regarding case selection. This study primarily focuses on Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, two countries generally regarded as "moderate" or "pro-Western." In contrast, "radical" countries such as Guinea, which pursued non-capitalist development paths and maintained tense relations with the U.S. and France, are only briefly mentioned as background or counterpoints. While this choice facilitates in-depth analysis of the U.S. cooperation model with certain Francophone West African states, it may also lead to a simplified understanding of the full spectrum of U.S. policy in the region. Future research that systematically incorporates comparative cases with different political orientations—such as Guinea, Mali, and Burkina

Faso—would more comprehensively reveal the policy flexibility and limitations of the United States when confronting such a highly heterogeneous region.

Third, regarding team collaboration. Through eleven months of cooperative research, each member of our team recognizes both notable achievements and significant room for improvement. Although the group established a basic research framework through division of labor and regular discussions, there remains potential for enhancement in the integration of perspectives. Differences among members in understanding historical materials and in viewpoint preferences led, during the construction of a unified analytical framework, to instances of narrative coherence lacking fluency or certain arguments resting on insufficient evidence. Furthermore, during the final collective writing process, balancing individual research expertise with the consistency of the overall argument was a persistent challenge. Establishing a more structured internal review and revision mechanism in future projects would help improve academic collaboration capabilities and the quality of research output.

Fourth, regarding our own capabilities. As second-year undergraduate history students, our team members remain in the preliminary stages of accumulating proficiency in foreign-language archival reading, historical contextual understanding, and the application of theoretical tools. When confronted with the extensive volume of diplomatic telegrams and policy documents within primary archives, while able to conduct basic information extraction and organization, we face challenges in distilling viewpoints and constructing arguments. Moreover, employing interdisciplinary research methods to organically integrate historical materials with international relations theory requires not only familiarity with the theories themselves but also the capacity to critically apply them within specific contexts. This undoubtedly constitutes the most challenging academic competency encountered by our research group in this study, and the one requiring the most sustained cultivation. This demands that the author and team members strengthen their reading proficiency in multilingual materials, systematically undertake coursework in U.S. history, Cold War history, and international relations history, and enhance

our knowledge reservoir and disciplinary literacy in future study and research.

Based on the above reflections, the research group believes that future research can be further developed in the following directions:

First, longitudinal extension. The temporal scope could be extended downwards to the 1970s and 1980s, the mid-to-late Cold War period, to examine whether U.S. policy towards Francophone West Africa exhibited landmark shifts under new contexts such as the impact of the oil crisis, the entry of U.S.-Soviet relations into a period of détente, and the independence of Portuguese African colonies. This would reveal the continuities and distinctions in policy logic compared to earlier phases, as well as the linkages between this region and other African hotspots.

Second, horizontal comparison. Comparative research could be conducted on the differences between U.S. policy in Francophone Africa and Anglophone Africa. Alternatively, the intervention modes, discourse strategies, and influence mechanisms of different external powers—such as the U.S., Soviet Union, Britain, and France—within the same region could be compared. This would, from a broader perspective, reveal the pluralistic logics and distinctive forms of great power competition in Africa during the Cold War.

Third, thematic deepening. Specific policy instruments, such as particular programs within development assistance (e.g., the Peace Corps), could be selected for narrowly focused empirical research. This would entail in-depth analysis of their formulation processes, on-the-ground practices, and actual effects. thereby enriching, from a micro perspective, the multi-layered and multi-faceted understanding of U.S. policy towards Africa during the Cold War.

Fourth, contemporary relevance. Although the Cold War has ended, many of the institutions, relationships, and modes of thinking it shaped continue to exert profound influence on the contemporary world. By integrating newly declassified archives with contemporary U.S. Africa policy documents, one could trace how policy legacies, institutional setups, and strategic frameworks formed during the Cold War have been adjusted, perpetuated, or reconstructed under new global and African circumstances. This would provide historical reference points for understanding contemporary great power interactions in Africa.

4.4 Epilogue: Historical Mirror and Applied Prospects

This study, through a systematic examination of U.S. policy towards Francophone West Africa between 1946 and 1969, has revealed the complex dynamics and internal logic of great power intervention in the African periphery during the Cold War. This history demonstrates that external powers' actions in Africa were never unidirectional impositions. Rather, they constituted an ongoing process of trade-off, adjustment, and repositioning within a multi-constraint network co-constituted by global strategic posture, regional realities, and colonial historical legacies. The evolution of U.S. policy in the region was precisely such a dynamic practice of continuously seeking equilibrium between idealistic claims and realpolitik interests, between alliance responsibilities and self-expansion.

This research also provides historical reference points for understanding contemporary international relations and major power policies towards Africa. It suggests that any external power engaging in African affairs must fully recognize the diversity of African nations in terms of historical trajectories, social cultures, and development paths, and must respect their sovereignty as subjects of international relations. Hegemonic political logics predicated on sovereign violation, disregard for diversity, transplantation of development models, and zero-sum games often prove ill-suited to the genuine needs of these countries and may even repeat the predicaments encountered by historical great power interventions. For China, in the process of promoting the construction of a new-era all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future, it should consistently adhere to principles of mutual respect, equality, and mutual benefit; be supported by deepening cooperation, openness, and inclusiveness; and be oriented towards long-term win-win outcomes in its development. The historical experiences illuminated by this study—such as respecting African nations' autonomous development paths, emphasizing the equity and sustainability of cooperation models, avoiding the trap of exclusionary competition, and cultivating truly trusting partnerships through extensive people-to-people and cultural exchange—can provide, from past practice, both warnings and inspiration for the continuous optimization of the

comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership between China and Africa under the Belt and Road framework.

The significance of historical study lies not only in recovering the past but also in providing intellectual depth and decision-making foundations for the present. It is hoped that this research can contribute a modest effort to scholarly discussions on the complexity of great power-Africa relations during the Cold War and the distinctive forms the Cold War assumed in the peripheries, and that it may stimulate more high-quality academic outputs grounded in multi-archival, critical perspectives, and comparative methodologies. Only on the basis of reflecting on history and engaging closely with the present can we jointly advance the formation of a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable international order and achieve genuine common development.

Finally, the research group hopes that this preliminary study may serve as a starting point for our professional careers rather than an endpoint. It has not only helped our members understand and examine a specific historical period but has also enabled us, through collaborative exploration, to viscerally experience the rigor and profundity of historical research. We look forward to gradually progressing towards more independent and substantive scholarly exploration under the guidance of our mentors and through engagement with our peers.

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