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The political crisis of 1962 in Senegal and its portrayal in the media^{*1}

Research thesis: Mamadou Dia's early removal from power blocked Senegal's independent development for decades. To verify the above thesis, this article analyzes historical and media sources presenting political events and the key figures who participated in the events of 1962 in Senegal. The relationship between Léopold Sédar Senghor and Mamadou Dia, the causes of the crisis, its portrayal in the media, and the resulting consequences for Senegal were explored. Attempts were made to answer the following questions: What were the causes of the crisis? Who was the protagonist of the conflict? How did the media report on the events of December 1962? How did the crisis affect the fate of Senegal?

Introduction

Despite the fact that Senegal is reputed to be a stable country, it has never been free from political conflict. One of the first political crises took place in 1962. Between the proclamation of independence in 1960 and 1962, Senegal was ruled by two political leaders: Léopold Sédar Senghor, the President of the Republic, and Mamadou Dia, the Chairman of the Government Council, who created a "two-headed" political system. Senghor reconciled the interests of political and diplomatic forces, whereas Dia was responsible for policy and decision-making as the central figure in a parliamentary system. The "two-headed" system governed by two strong personalities led to a crisis in 1962.

* Translation services were co-financed by the Ministry of Education and Science pursuant to agreement No. RCN/SP/0245/2021/1 of 1 November 2022; value of the grant awarded as part of the „Development of scientific journals” program – PLN 80 000.

¹ The publication was written as a result of the author's internship at the Gaston Berger University in Saint-Louis (Senegal), co-financed by the European Union under the European Social Fund (Operational Program Knowledge Education Development), implemented as part of the project Development Program of the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn (POWR.03.05.00-00-Z310/17).

A series of events that began on December 17, 1962 ended the relationship between Senghor and Dia. Senghor accused the Chairman of the Government Council of fomenting a coup d'état, and he ordered parliamentary deputies to back the no-confidence vote against Dia. This event gave rise to a political and legal dispute that significantly affected the development trajectory of the young Senegalese Republic and whose consequences are still felt today. Before the crisis, the two men had worked closely together to win Senegal's independence from France and build a path to social and economic prosperity. Their 17-year-long friendship began after Senghor's return to Senegal.

Senghor, a cultural theorist, poet, creator of the *Négritude*² movement, and political activist, established an authoritarian presidential regime in Senegal between 1962 and 1980. Mamadou Dia was one of the leading architects of Senegal's independence who played a key role in the country's development, despite the fact that his achievements have been eclipsed by Senghor in the historical narrative.

Léopold Senghor and Mamadou Dia – a 17-year-long friendship

Are there any commonalities in the lives of these two men? During an interview for the “La Marche du Monde” program aired by RFI, the French international radio network, Roland Colin, the former cabinet director of Mamadou Dia, noted that Dia had been born to a poor working-class family. Unlike Léopold Senghor whose father was a wealthy merchant, Dia was not a member of the bourgeoisie. At the age of seven, Senghor began his studies in a boarding school ran by Catholic missionaries, where he learned French and Wolof, despite the fact that he was a native speaker of Serer. The exposure to Catholic and French influences deprived Senghor of his cultural background, which he described as his childhood kingdom. The concept of returning to one's own cultural roots played a very important role in Senghor's life. He argued that *Négritude* should be regarded as a return to the self. Senghor moved to Paris in 1928. In 1945, he returned to Senegal, where he met Mamadou Dia, a young teacher fascinated with his African roots. Senghor was inspired by Dia who had started a community group promoting African values. According to Dia, people should not be discriminated based on their religion, and his group warmly welcomed Senghor who was a Christian³.

Mamadou Dia, a graduate of the prestigious William-Ponty School of French West Africa (École Normale William-Ponty)⁴, worked as a teacher in Saint-Louis and Fissel,

² For more information, see: L.S. Senghor, *Liberté. Négritude et Humanisme*, vol. 1, Paris 1964.

³ V. Nivelon, M. Grember, *Mamadou Dia, parle, histoire d'une archive inédite*, 2019, <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20190125-mamadou-dia-parle-histoire-archivée-inédite-senegal-senghor> (accessed: 20.06.2023).

⁴ Prior to Senegal's independence, the majority of teachers, doctors, and civil servants in West Africa, including politicians such as Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Modibo Keita, Hamani Diori, Mamadou Dia, and Abdoulaye Wade, had attended the William-Ponty school (École Normale William-Ponty). The school produced over 2,000 graduates, known as “Les Pontins”. The William-Ponty school was established in Saint-Louis in

and served as a school principal in Fatick in 1943. During that time, Dia was deeply committed to education, and he stayed away from politics. As a candidate to the French National Assembly, Senghor visited Fatick during his election campaign. During a political rally, he was approached by Dia who said: "I don't understand why a young scientist and professor would be interested in running for a political office instead of reforming the African educational system". Despite his initial lack of interest in politics, Dia became involved in an ideological struggle. He wrote articles for the local press, including the "Paris-Dakar" daily newspaper. Dia reported on the problems faced by farmers, their poverty, and difficult living conditions⁵. He commented on economic issues and argued that agricultural cooperatives were the only solution to modernizing the rural environment with long-lasting political implications. Upon the request of Fatick residents, Dia decided to run for the Grand Council of French West Africa. Supported by Senghor, Dia ran for office as a member of the French Section of Workers' International (SFIO, a predecessor of the French Socialist Party) under the leadership of Lamine Gueye.

At the time, Léopold Senghor and Lamine Gueye, the first President of the National Assembly, were the key political figures in Senegal. In previous years, the Senegalese political scene was dominated by Blaise Diagne, the first person of West African origin to be elected to the French Chamber of Deputies, who was affiliated with the United Socialist Party between 1914 and 1934. However, the establishment of the African Democratic Rally (RDA) by Félix Houphouët-Boigny during a conference in Bamako in 1946 led to profound political changes in Senegal. Senghor criticized the RDA for its close links with the Communist Party, and he distanced himself from the SFIO which, in his opinion, had sold out to colonial interests. Mamadou Dia was also critical of the SFIO, and he argued that the party "was socialist in name only". His relations with Gueye deteriorated, and he founded the Senegalese Democratic Bloc (BDS) with other members of the opposition, including Senghor who had left SFIO in 1948. The BDS was established during a congress held on April 15–17, 1949 in Thiès. Mamadou Dia and Léopold Senghor became the leaders of the new party. The BDS maintained close relations with religious authorities and trade unions, and it was able to gain support in regions that remained outside the

1903 and subsequently relocated to the island of Gorée in 1913 and to Sébikhotane (near Rufisque) in 1937. The educational reform that was implemented in Senegal following its independence led to considerable changes in the school's profile. The school was regarded by many as a "prestigious" institution and a "breeding ground" for future managers. However, it also attracted criticism for being an ideological tool that "played the same role as colonial armies", "promoted African subservience, compromise, and political balance at all cost", and served as "a cemetery of African intellect". The school undoubtedly played a significant role in the social, cultural, and political life of 20th-century Africa. Source: B. Ly, *Les instituteurs au Sénégal de 1903 à 1945*, vol. 3: *La formation au métier d'instituteur*, L'Harmattan 2009, pp. 61–63.

⁵ M.A. Ba Bal, *Mamadou Dia (1910–2009), un ancien président du conseil du Sénégal, un homme de refus, un nationaliste et mystique*, 2017, <http://sentv.info/actualite-nationale/culture/1148-mamadou-dia-1910-2009-un-ancien-president-du-conseil-du-senegal-un-homme-de-refus-un-nationaliste-et-mystique-par-m-amadou-bal-ba.html> (accessed: 15.05.2023).

SFIO's sphere of influence. The BDS rose to power through political struggle and with the support of two political blocs: the Senegalese Popular Bloc (BPS) and the Senegalese Progressive Union (UPS).

Mamadou Dia became a member of the French Senate in 1951, and he served as a deputy in the French National Assembly from 1956 to 1958. The legal framework of Senegal was changed by the Defferre law of June 23, 1956 which granted universal suffrage to French territories. Senghor's party rose to power, and Mamadou Dia was appointed the Prime Minister of Senegal⁶.

Mamadou Dia regarded nationalism and patriotism as an alternative to colonial and neocolonial dominance. Dia and Senghor, who supported the concept of a French commonwealth of African states, put an end to the SFIO's political hegemony. The struggle for independence obscured the differences in Dia's and Senghor's political views for a long time. The situation changed in 1960 when Senegal gained independence. Mamadou Dia became the Prime Minister, and he implemented Senegal's first long-term development plan to modernize the state administration and promote the development of enlightened Islam. His policies attracted significant hostility and hastened his downfall from power. According to prof. Mamadou Diouf of Columbia University, Mamadou Dia was the author of the only plan aiming to promote the political, economic, and social development of independent Senegal⁷.

The causes of the 1962 crisis

The crisis that erupted in December of 1962 was caused mainly by differences in two leaders' visions concerning the further development of the young Senegalese republic. Mamadou Dia's vision of progress and political and economic independence from France clashed with Senghor's desire to preserve the status quo and protect foreign interests. These differences became apparent already in 1958, two years before Senegal gained independence. The Fourth French Republic collapsed in 1958. General Charles de Gaulle, the founder of the Fifth French Republic, took further steps to decolonize French West Africa. De Gaulle organized a referendum which offered the territories of the French Union a choice between complete independence from France or self-governance within a new French Community ("La Communauté").

Senegal was faced with a difficult choice. Senghor was in favor of retaining French influence, whereas Dia pushed for immediate independence. The two men achieved a compromise by agreeing to join the French Community with a vision towards the

⁶ The framework agreement permitted the government to issue decrees on matters previously within the exclusive purview of parliament. See also: B. Ndiaye, *Francafrigue. Stosunki francusko-afrykańskie wczoraj i dziś*, Olsztyn 2010, pp. 70–71.

⁷ M.A. Ba Bal, op. cit.

achievement of full independence. Senghor approved Mamadou Dia's plan to push for independence in the mid-term perspective that would enable the country to gradually dismantle the colonial economy. Senegal joined the French Community, and Dia became the first autonomous head of state. In 1959, Senegal and French Sudan (Mali) merged to form the ephemeral Mali Federation which was quickly dissolved due to anti-federal sentiments of the former colonizer.

According to Roland Colin, the first four-year development plan implemented by Dia testified to the Prime Minister's progressive and bold vision towards the achievement of full independence. Mamadou Dia campaigned for a rapid divorce from the former colonial power and a gradual departure from the economic model imposed by France. These plans undermined the interests of France and the ruling elite. Dia's opponents formed a coalition composed of three interest groups: international corporations, Senegal's religious leaders, and public administration employees. The coalition's goal was to overthrow the government by the second year's end of Senegal's development plan. Parliamentary deputies who opposed Dia were hoping to achieve this goal by casting a vote of no confidence against the Prime Minister⁸.

The Senegalese philosopher and writer Ngor Dieng emphasized the role of the Marabouts in the 1962 crisis. Mamadou Dia's political and social policies deeply upset religious leaders. The agricultural model envisioned by Dia would free the Senegalese economy and farmers from any external influences, including religious. The coalition formed by the political and religious elites enabled Senegal to base its economy on peanut production. The Marabouts were guided by purely mercantile interests. They exercised full control over Senegal's peanut industry which was the main source of income not only for religious leaders, but also for the entire community. Mamadou Dia advocated for a version of Islam that was not the "opium for the people" and would free the citizens from religious oppression. This explains why Senghor could rely on the support of Senegalese religious leaders when a crisis broke out on December 17, 1962⁹.

According to some scholars, the deep political divide within the UPS was partly responsible for the crisis and the events that unfolded on December 17, 1962. Writer Cheikh Hamidou Kane, who directly witnessed these events, emphasized the economic aspects of the conflict. On October 5, 2016, in an interview for the "Enquête" newspaper, Kane commented on political differences which, in his opinion, had led to Dia's arrest and trial. "Senghor's and Dia's relations deteriorated due to rivalry between UPS leaders. The rigorous economic policies implemented by Dia during his four years in office perturbed businesses, contractors, and left-wing politicians who were his rivals. These

⁸ V. Nivelon, M. Grember, op. cit.

⁹ N. Dieng, *Mamadou Dia, Senghor et la crise de 1962. Les origines du mal être politique du Sénégal*, 2017, <https://yeewu.wordpress.com/2017/12/20/mamadou-dia-senghor-et-la-crise-de-1962-les-origines-du-mal-etre-politique-du-senegal/> (accessed: 14.03.2023).

interest groups probably convinced Senghor that Dia was planning a coup d'état, which prompted the president to break his alliance with the prime minister (...)"¹⁰.

Some political commentators have argued that Dia's links with the Soviet bloc also fueled the crisis of 1962. The Cold War divided the world into two antagonistic camps. Senghor supported an alliance with the West, whereas Mamadou Dia was suspected of conspiring with Moscow. Dia's concept of African socialism was too revolutionary for France. As a free and enterprising man who had the authority to decide on Senegal's future policy, Dia visited several Soviet bloc countries to establish collaborative partnerships with their leaders. He visited Yugoslavia to learn more about the concept of a federal government. In June 1962, Dia and Khrushchev signed a bilateral trade agreement between Senegal and the USSR.

Mamadou Dia's voiced his nationalistic tendencies during a speech delivered on December 8, 1962 on the last day of the Dakar Colloquium on the Politics of Development and Different African Ways to Socialism. Dia called on the delegates to support a transformation policy that would free African economies and societies from colonial control. The speech attracted considerable criticism, and on December 14, 1962, Théophile James motioned for a vote of no confidence against Dia's government on behalf of 41 parliamentary deputies. The government and political parties attempted to work out a compromise, but internal negotiations ended in failure. On December 17, 1962, the Senegalese parliament tabled a motion of no confidence according to the provisions of the Constitution and the internal regulations of the National Assembly. Mamadou Dia naively believed that the motion would not be approved because it had been drafted outside the official party structures. However, Senghor was keen on eliminating his troublesome rival, and he called on the National Assembly to vote on the motion of censure.

Mamadou Dia attempted to prevent the National Assembly from meeting in a special session. On December 17, 1962, he ordered military and civilian police to remove National Assembly deputies from the building. Four deputies were arrested, but the motion of censure was approved on the same day at the home of Lamine Gueye, the President of the National Assembly. On December 18, 1962, Mamadou Dia and his supporters were arrested by government soldiers. Dia was tried before the High Court of Justice from 9 to 13 May 1963. He was defended by several lawyers, including Abdoulaye Wade who went on to become the President of Senegal in 2000–2012, but ultimately he was sentenced to life imprisonment in Kédougou.

¹⁰ B.B. Souane, *En vérité avec Cheikh Hamidou Kane*, 2016, <https://www.enqueteplus.com/content/en-verite-avec-cheikh-hamidou-kane> (accessed: 12.05.2023).

Media portrayal of the political crisis

In the 1960s, radio became a political instrument for post-colonial elites in their attempts to build a new nation-state based on the concept of “African socialism”, the official ideology of the ruling UPS¹¹. In those times, radio was a strategic resource that enabled the elites to influence the trajectory of Senegal’s political, social, economic, and cultural development. In contrast, the African press had long remained under colonial influence. The first French-language newspaper was published in 1856 after a printing press had been established in Saint-Louis.

In this article, the media portrayal of the events of December 1962 was analyzed based on the reports of Radio-Dakar and three newspapers: “Dakar-Matin”, “Afrique Nouvelle”, and “Le Monde”. The crisis that divided President of the Republic of Senegal Léopold Senghor and Prime Minister Mamadou Dia put the media in a delicate and often ambivalent situation. Meanwhile, the government was working on a legal and regulatory framework for the media which became an active participant in the process of building the nascent state.

Radio-Dakar and the three newspapers were chosen for the analysis due to their interest in the matter as well as high editorial standards. Radio-Dakar, a state-owned institution, posed a problem for the protagonists of the crisis. “Dakar-Matin”, a pro-government daily newspaper, reported on the crisis with considerable caution, but ultimately sided with Senghor. “Afrique Nouvelle”, a Catholic weekly newspaper that was published in West Africa but reached a wider African audience, offered an impartial narrative on the crisis. “Le Monde” is of particular interest for this analysis because its reports provide valuable insights about the French government’s support for Senghor and its attempts to resolve the crisis.

“Dakar-Matin” and the 1962 crisis

“Dakar-Matin” was the successor of “Paris-Dakar”, a weekly newspaper that was founded in 1933 by Charles de Breteuil¹². In 1936, “Paris-Dakar” became the first daily

¹¹ In 1958, following the breakaway from the French Section of Workers’ International (SFIO), the Senegalese Party of Socialist Action (PSAS) merged with the Senegalese Democratic Bloc (BDS) which was later transformed into the Senegalese Popular Bloc (BPS) and gave rise to the Senegalese Progressive Union (UPS). The UPS was the only Senegalese political party that remained in power for several decades (the UPS engulfed smaller political fractions in a series of agreements).

¹² In 1932, during a research mission to French West Africa, Charles de Breteuil (1905–1960) was surprised that there were no media outlets in Senegal. His research revealed a high demand for printed press on the Senegalese market, which prompted him to establish the African Advertising and Publishing Company (SAPEF). De Breteuil founded several newspapers, including “Paris-Dakar”, “Paris-Congo”, and “Paris-

newspaper in Sub-Saharan Africa. Following the independence of Senegal, the newspaper was renamed to “Dakar-Matin”, and it finally became “Le Soleil” in 1970. Since its establishment, the newspaper was tightly controlled by successive governments of Senegal.

“Dakar-Matin” reported on the events of December 1962 with considerable caution. The crisis made headline news on December 15, 1962. The headlines read: “The National Assembly tables a motion of no confidence” and “Breaking news: the Government Council and the UPS Political Office convene for an emergency meeting”. However, these headline stories were not developed on successive pages.



Photo 1. Front page of “Dakar-Matin” on December 15, 1962

According to Ernest Milcent, “Le Monde’s” former correspondent in Dakar, the newspapers were ordered to report on the motion of censure without a commentary¹³. After the collapse of the Mali Federation, the Senegalese government proclaimed a state of national emergency on August 20, 1960, and all media outlets became tightly censored by the state propaganda¹⁴. The state of emergency became the sword of Damocles in the

-Tana” in 1936, and “Paris-Bénin” in 1938. Inspired by Jean Prouvost, his friend and publisher of *Paris-Soir*, de Breteuil created a quasi-monopolistic media empire in Sub-Saharan Africa. His media group continued to expand by launching new press titles, including “Abidjan-Matin”, “La presse de Guinée”, “La presse du Cameroun” (presently the “Cameroon Tribune”), “Bingo”, “Dakar-Jeunes” in 1942, and “Afrique-Matin”. Source: *Le groupe de Breteuil: Paris-Dakar, Abidjan-Matin, La presse du Cameroun et Bingo*, 2014, www.entreprises-coloniales.fr (accessed: 10.11.2022).

¹³ E. Milcent, *Au carrefour des options africaines: le Sénégal*, Paris 1965, p. 86.

¹⁴ At a conference held in Bamako on December 29–30, 1958, the representatives of Senegal, French Sudan, Dahomey, and Upper Volta declared their intention to form a federation. The Mali Federation was

hands of the ruling party. Public protests were strictly prohibited with the sole purpose of crushing the opposition and controlling the media.



Photo 2. Front page of “Dakar-Matin” on December 18, 1962

On December 18, 1962, the following headline made it to the front page of “Dakar-Matin”: *The coup d'état attempt fails. President Léopold Sédar Senghor assumes full control of the state.* Additional information about Senghor’s speech, the events of December 17, 1962, the motion of no confidence, the parliamentary vote, and Senghor’s address to the Senegalese people was also provided on the front page. This issue marked a turning point in the newspaper’s position, and cautious reporting was gradually replaced by a clear narrative that recognized the existence of a political crisis. The events that preceded the crisis were analyzed in detail. The newspaper’s decision to back President Senghor and his victory in the parliamentary dispute was an act of political opportunism that marked a paradigm shift in the editorial narrative of “Dakar-Matin”.

ratified by French Sudan and Senegal on January 21–22, 1959. Despite their formal endorsement, Upper Volta and Dahomey succumbed to political pressure from France and did not proceed with ratification. On April 4, 1959, the Federal Assembly revised the federal constitution. Léopold Sédar Senghor was elected President of the Federal Assembly. Modibo Keita was appointed the prime minister, and Mamadou Dia assumed the role of deputy prime minister within the newly constituted federal government. However, the Federation’s dissolution was hastened by political disputes and the leaders’ personal ambitions. It is important to note that the federation’s fate had been sealed long before its creation, because a strong federation did not serve the interests of the formal colonial power. The “divide and rule” still holds true in the contemporary context.

“Afrique Nouvelle” in the face of the crisis

“Afrique Nouvelle”, a weekly newspaper founded in 1947 by a Dakar-based Catholic mission to West Africa, was managed by a Board of Directors representing different member countries. This trans-regional newspaper was circulated mainly in West Africa, but it also reached a wider audience in France, China, the USSR, and the USA (in 1961, the weekly had a circulation of around 15,000 copies). The main strength of “Afrique Nouvelle”, which survived the decolonization period and witnessed the establishment of independent African states, was its objective and unbiased coverage of news stories.

The political crisis that unfolded in December 1962 was a new experience for the Christian weekly. In previous years, the newspaper’s neutral coverage of political events had not attracted criticism from the Senegalese authorities. In October 1962, as political strife mounted within the ranks of the UPS, “Afrique Nouvelle” began to report on the deteriorating relationship between Senghor and Dia: “According to the rumors that have been circulating for two weeks, the split between the party leaders (Senghor, President of Senegal and Secretary General of the UPS, and Dia, Prime Minister of Senegal and Deputy Secretary General of the UPS) would lead to the death, or at least the collapse, of the UPS”¹⁵.

During a meeting of October 20, 1962, the National Council of the UPS did not address the political strife between its general secretaries. “Afrique Nouvelle” cited Senghor who argued that “these false rumors are circulated by the party’s opponents”, but to dispel any doubts, the editors also reminded the readers of Dia’s bold statement claiming that “My tribe is the party”¹⁶. To balance the narrative, the newspaper quoted Dia’s rebuttal to political rumors: “There will never be a quarrel between me and my friend of seventeen years, my brother Léopold”¹⁷.

“Afrique Nouvelle” did not formally acknowledge that conflict was brewing in Senegal’s political echelons, but unlike “Dakar-Matin”, it reported on the final decision of the National Council: “In view of the current political torpor, the National Council trusts that its leaders will attempt to resolve all problems and defuse tensions”¹⁸.

“Afrique Nouvelle” was one of the very few media outlets that reported on “bad relations” between Senghor and Dia and published a “chronicle of the Senegalese crisis” on the front page. The chronicle was written by Justin Mendy¹⁹, who gave a detailed account of the events of December 17, 1962: “The first attempted coup d’état in Sub-Saharan

¹⁵ Cf. „Afrique Nouvelle” 1962, No. 794.

¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ Journalist Justin Mendy became Dia’s confidant in the last years of his life, and he helped Dia collect materials for his autobiography, „Afrique le prix de la Liberté”, that was published in 2001.

Africa was a failure: the government remains the rule of law". The chronicle was accompanied by an editorial piece. The editors urged readers to exercise political restraint and pushed the winning party's narrative: "The events that took place on Monday evening on Avenue de la République in Dakar have consequences for all African countries. However, the conflict was resolved, and legal action was taken against those who had erred. We are convinced that Senegal's leaders will not seek to retaliate or settle scores. We have to act with dignity and moderation. Hatred and ill-will would undermine the success we have achieved"²⁰.

Despite the paper's attempts to treat both parties to the conflict objectively, some articles could be seen as biased, especially the editor's use of the phrase "those who had erred". In an attempt to analyze the causes of the political crisis, in January 1963, "Afrique Nouvelle" ran an editorial on the "dramatic hours in Dakar and their consequences". Justin Mendy wrote: "The events linked with the Senegalese crisis were reviewed in the last issue. The review was written as these events were unfolding; therefore, it is not complete. This is not to say that we have a complete picture of the crisis in Dakar – it's still too early for that – but some details that could not be presented for reasons of space, or were simply unknown to us at the time, deserve to be mentioned"²¹.

The editors devoted a whole page to critical events and their consequences. When the crisis erupted in December 1962, the editors had already gained considerable experience in reporting on political issues, which enabled the paper to avoid conflict with the authorities. The weekly's professional and passionate journalists never ceased to report objectively on major news events. "Afrique Nouvelle" always appealed to constitutional legitimacy and refrained from taking sides with any political party. Since its creation, the newspaper had remained neutral and independent of political and religious authorities²².

The political crisis of 1962 and the "radio war"

In 1938, Radio Paris-Mondial (presently the RFI) was created in Essart-le-Roi by the French Ministry of the Colonies to replace Le Poste Colonial. In the same year, Radio Dakar (Radio-Inter-AOF) was established in French West Africa, and it was used by the French authorities as a political propaganda tool to promote the concept of cultural assimilation among colonial subjects.

²⁰ J. Mendy, *Régime présidentiel instauré au Sénégal: M. Senghor est chef de l'exécutif. M. Mamadou Dia et plusieurs de ses ministres arrêtés*, „Afrique Nouvelle” 1962, December, issue 802, pp. 21–27.

²¹ Idem, *Les heures dramatiques de Dakar et leur lendemain*, „Afrique Nouvelle” 1962–1963, December–January, issue 804.

²² See: A. Lenoble-Bart, *Afrique nouvelle, un hebdomadaire catholique dans l'histoire (1947–1987)*, Bordeaux 1996.

Unlike the press, radio remained under strict state control. After Senegal gained independence in 1960, Radio-Dakar (renamed Radio Senegal) was expected to become an instrument of the government to promote national unity and economic and social development. Radio-Dakar had an important advantage over other radio stations in that it broadcast in Wolof²³, the most widely spoken language (*lingua franca*) in Senegal, where French remains the official language. Radio-Dakar reached listeners in both urban and rural areas, so it attracted considerable interest from the Senegalese authorities as a means of promoting the government's four-year development plan.

When the first political conflict broke out in the Mali Federation on the night of August 19–20, 1960, Radio-Dakar enabled Senghor and Dia to turn the crisis into a strategic advantage. On August 20, 1960, the two leaders made a historic speech to the nation calling for the mobilization of the Senegalese military reserves. The speech was delivered in Wolof, the main language of Dakar, where the crisis had broken out. In turn, President Modibo Keita delivered his speech in French. The former speech attracted considerable media attention, which probably tipped the balance in Senegal's favor. This event remained part of the collective memory, demonstrating that radio could play a decisive role in political struggle and in maintaining power.

Radio Dakar also played a key role in the 1962 crisis. The report on the no-confidence vote of December 14 was censored by Alioune Tall, the Minister of Information and a close associate of Dia, suggesting that the Prime Minister did not want this information to reach the public²⁴. On December 17, 1962, after the first failed attempt by the National Assembly to vote on the motion of censure, the authorities had to decide which of the two leaders would deliver the first radio address to the nation. Radio was the preferred means of communication because of the speed of events and the leaders' desire to make a strong impression on listeners. Dia planned to deliver his speech on December 17 to explain the conflict to the Senegalese people and reassure them that the government had taken appropriate security measures. The speech was never broadcast by Radio Dakar. On Senghor's orders, paratroopers surrounded the radio building and removed the military police who sided with Mamadou Dia.

The "radio war", as Mamadou Dia called it, reached its climax during the 8 o'clock news, when a confrontation broke out between two military commanders in front of the radio building²⁵.

²³ Wolof, the language spoken by 43% of Senegal's population, was introduced to the radio in 1947. Wolof was used mainly in radio news and announcements. The first radio programs in Wolof and other local languages were broadcast only after 1960.

²⁴ M.M. Sow, *Crise politique et discours médiatiques au Sénégal. Le traitement informationnel des événements de décembre 1962 à Dakar*, „Revue d'Histoire Contemporaine de l'Afrique” 2021, issue 1, pp. 119–142.

²⁵ M. Dia, *Afrique, le Prix de la liberté*, Paris 2001, p. 210.

In 2000, Yaba Ndiaye, a lieutenant in the military police who had been ordered to arrest Dia, revealed important information: "I led my unit to the radio building to meet Captain Preira. I showed him my documents and said that I had been sent on a mission to free him. It was a military mission, so we had no interest in killing each other, but we had to talk"²⁶.

This incident shows that the radio was not only tightly controlled by the government, but also acted as a mediator in the conflict. The security forces hoped to find a peaceful solution to the problem, even if it meant ignoring the orders of the civilian authorities. Yaba Ndiaye added: "I received an order from Dia to broadcast his speech on the radio. I refused – I'd rather play military music all night"²⁷.

Mamadou Dia recounted the events of the 1962 crisis in his autobiography. "First we heard Senghor's voice saying: »I have arrested members of the armed forces«. Senghor went on to explain that the National Assembly building had been surrounded and that several deputies had been arrested. He added that he was the guardian of the constitution (...). »The regional military commanders must obey my orders«. At this point, Senghor's speech was interrupted. Dia wrote that "serious events forced the government to take special measures provided for in the state of emergency law. We tried to resist this act of subversion (...), but my speech was interrupted and then the radio played military music all night"²⁸.

Finally, shortly after midnight on December 18, 1962, the President spoke directly to the people of Senegal, this time in French rather than Wolof. The speech was recorded on 17 December, but it could not be aired at 8 p.m. because it was interrupted. The speech lasted 2 minutes and 46 seconds, it was broadcast after midnight and repeated many times²⁹.

According to Mamadou Moustapha Sow, the president's solemn and concise speech delivered in French rather than Wolof (Senghor never felt comfortable in Wolof) suggests that Senghor was addressing the political and intellectual elites, civil servants, members of the diplomatic corps, and institutional partners in Dakar. This momentous speech emphasized the gravity of the situation, and it was broadcast by Radio-Dakar. Radio speaker Ousseynou Seck promptly translated the speech into Wolof and provided a commentary to galvanize public support for Senghor³⁰.

These events demonstrate that, in addition to functioning as a news outlet, the radio also plays a political and strategic role in crisis situations³¹. Attempts to control the radio

²⁶ Cf. M.M. Sow, *Mamadou Dia: une figure politique controversée. Extrait Grande enquête*, Dakar 2009.

²⁷ M.M. Sow, *Crise politique et discours médiatiques...*

²⁸ M. Dia, *Afrique...*

²⁹ Source: Service des archives de la Radio Télévision Sénégalaise (RTS), 6B232, Allocution de Léopold Sédar Senghor, président de la République, 2 min 46 s.

³⁰ M.M. Sow, *Crise politique et discours médiatiques...*

³¹ Cf. A.-J. Tudesq, *L'Afrique parle, l'Afrique écoute. Les radios en Afrique subsaharienne*, Paris 2002.

were part of a strategy to win public support. The event marked a pivotal moment in the elite's attitude towards the radio, which underwent a transformation from a neutral to a politicized medium, becoming an instrument for the pursuit and maintenance of power.

“Le Monde’s” coverage of the events

The French press frequently provided coverage of political developments in Senegal. France's interest in Senegalese politics can be attributed to historical relations between the two countries, as well as the fact that Senegal played an important economic and geostrategic role for the former colonial power. Furthermore, the leadership of Senegalese political elites, in particular Senghor, the precursor of the *Négritude* movement and a staunch supporter of France, contributed to a more positive image of Senegal among French politicians and the media relative to other territories of French West Africa. Furthermore, Senegal is a country with the largest European population in Africa, and it continues to generate profits for French businesses³².

The French newspaper “Le Monde” demonstrated the greatest interest in the Senegalese crisis, publishing a total of twenty-two articles on the subject between December 18 and 31, 1962. Ernest Milcent, a correspondent for “Le Monde” (and the editor-in-chief of “Afrique Nouvelle”), posited that the vote of no confidence was the immediate precipitating factor in the crisis³³. He highlighted that the changes in government leadership that occurred in November 1962 contributed to the existing tensions among the Senegalese elites. Milcent posited that the motion of censure had been designed to eliminate Mamadou Dia³⁴. Jean Lacouture, who was appointed head of “Le Monde’s” overseas department in 1957, offered a contrasting perspective. He proposed that the 1962 crisis constituted an attempted coup d'état, which had been orchestrated by Mamadou Dia. According to Lacouture, the purpose of the measures initiated by Senghor was to restore stability and quash the “attacks” from Dia and his cousins³⁵.

Philippe Decraene, the correspondent for “Le Monde” and the former editor-in-chief of the newspaper's African division, supported Senghor and presented a biased account of the 1962 crisis. Decraene was acquainted with the political elite of Dakar and French businesses in Senegal that were opposed to Dia's development plan³⁶. In an interview conducted with Senghor in December 1962, long before the crisis was resolved, the

³² M.M. Sow, *Crise politique et discours médiatiques...*

³³ Cf. E. Milcent, *Une motion de censure contre le gouvernement fait rebondir la crise*, „Le Monde”, December 17, 1962.

³⁴ Ibidem.

³⁵ Cf. J. Lacouture, *Deux Africains*, „Le Monde”, December 19, 1962.

³⁶ Including Henri Gallence, the President of the Chamber of Commerce in Dakar.

journalist claimed that the president was determined to bring the instigators to justice. “Mr. Senghor said: »The Senegalese Prime Minister had attempted to stage a coup d’état. The Senegalese Constitution was contravened. The instigators will be tried by the Supreme Court, and I will make my decision based on the court’s verdict»³⁷.



Photo 3. Front page of “Le Monde” on December 19, 1962. The headline reads: “Mr. Senghor appears to be in control of the attempted coup d’état by Mr. Dia”

From December 21, 1962, Philippe Decraene commenced a series of articles on President Senghor’s endeavors to rebuild the country. However, he chose to overlook the dire situation of Mamadou Dia and his supporters in prison. This approach appears to be part of a narrative designed to deflect attention from the crisis and redirect it towards Senghor’s political agenda. In an article published on December, 25, Decraene openly lauded Senghor’s actions, stating that the president had not supported deputy Théophile James’ motion of no confidence, which had been backed by some of his political allies³⁸. In 2001, Decraene acknowledged that his initial assessment of the situation had been erroneous, stating, “I believe that my perspective on the crisis would be more critical today. This is not an apology, but an explanation of the influence Senghor’s theories had on me during my time in Dakar”³⁹. In an article published on December 19, 1962,

³⁷ M.M. Sow, *Crise politique et discours médiatiques...*

³⁸ Cf. P. Decraene, *Les principales péripéties du “coup de force” de Dakar*, „Le Monde”, December 25, 1962.

³⁹ Cf. A. Ly, *Entretien avec Philippe Decraene, 13 février 2001*, cité dans les annexes, *Le Sénégal dans la presse française 1956–1968. Un traitement privilégié?*, Paris 2003.

Jean Lacouture's evident bias towards Senghor is apparent. "Léopold Senghor, the lyrical poet, artist, and the great 'tenor' of Senegalese politics, represents a stark contrast to the harsh Mamadou Dia and his cold and stifling policies; the Prime Minister, teacher and graduate of the renowned William Ponty school in Dakar, rejected the arguments put forth by the President of the Republic and the esteemed professor"⁴⁰. The French journalist thus juxtaposed Senghor, who was regarded as conciliatory, with Dia, who was perceived as harsh. A significant number of "Le Monde's" correspondents in Dakar had close ties with Senghor, and the daily's coverage of the events of December 1962 was biased to protect French interests in its former colony.

The consequences of the 1962 crisis

Senghor appointed a new cabinet and conducted a constitutional reform to strengthen presidential authority. The office of prime minister was abolished. Political opponents were prosecuted and forced to leave the country, including Cheikh Hamidou Kane, a well-known writer, and Amadou Maktar Mbow, the future Director General of UNESCO. In 1968, severe repressions against protesting university students led to the death of Oumar Blondin Diop (1946–1973). Dia's close allies were imprisoned, among them Valdiodio Ndiaye (1923–1984), the Minister of the Interior, and Ibrahima Sarr (1915–1976), the mayor of Koalack and former general secretary of a trade union of railway workers in French West Africa, who was not pardoned by the president and died in prison after a long illness. Ibrahima Sarr led the strike movement between October 10, 1947 and March 19, 1948⁴¹.

Mamadou Dia served his prison sentence in deplorable conditions; he was separated from his five supporters, and had no contact with them for twelve years. He lived in complete isolation and was allowed to have a visitor only once every quarter. He was released after many years. The 1962 crisis not only brought an end to the political career of Mamadou Dia and his allies, but also resulted in the formation of two opposing political camps within the country. One camp supported Dia, while the other supported Senghor. This division significantly undermined the capacity of the nascent state to govern effectively. Mamadou Dia was ostracized for his political vision and leadership. Despite the efforts of global leaders⁴² to mediate the situation, Senghor remained unwavering in his decision for twelve years. Senghor pardoned Dia only on March 26, 1974, and he granted complete

⁴⁰ Cf. J. Lacouture, *Deux Africains...*

⁴¹ M.A. Ba Bal, *Mamadou DIA (1910–2009)*...

⁴² The most influential Western leaders and intellectuals, including Jean-Paul Sartre, François Mauriac, René Cassin, Aimée Césaire, and Pope John XXIII, called on Senegal's authorities to release Mamadou Dia. Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the first president of Ivory Coast, indicated that his official visit to Senegal was contingent on Dia's release from prison.

amnesty to political prisoners in April 1976. In 1976, Senghor amended the constitution to promote a multi-party system, which at the time was limited to four political ideologies (socialist, liberal, Marxist, and conservative).

Mamadou Dia was a man of deep faith, and he did not seek retribution after his release. He forgave his opponents both morally and spiritually, and he regarded his imprisonment as a metaphysical test of humanity, a mission on behalf of his nation. Dia spent his time in prison meditating, reflecting, reading, and writing. Upon his release, he requested an audience with Senghor. Dia approached Senghor with open arms and inquired, “Won’t you kiss me, Léopold?”. During the ensuing political conversation, Dia argued that a civic society should be more engaged in the promotion of participatory democracy. He informed Senghor of his intention to establish a pan-African movement for development. The foundation was established in 1975, but its operations were subject to considerable government control, and it ceased to exist two years later⁴³.

Dia returned to the political arena several years later. The former prime minister drew upon his experience to provide commentary on political events in Senegalese media. History had come full circle: as a young teacher, Dia had embarked on his political career by writing articles for the press. General Jean Alfred Diallo, who had replaced General Amadou Fall and played a pivotal role in the events of 1962, exonerated Dia of all charges. On December 17, 1992, thirty years after the crisis, General Diallo stated that “Mamadou Dia never conducted a coup d’état against Senghor. The charges were entirely fabricated. Senghor, the individual who exercised complete authority over the country, was the sole beneficiary of the purported coup d’état”⁴⁴. This conspiracy had a profound impact on the trajectory of Senegalese sovereignty. Philosopher Babacar Diop said: “The true victims of the 1962 crisis were the people of Senegal, rather than Mamadou Dia and his allies in the Kédougou prison. The consequences of the painful and brutal split between Léopold Sédar Senghor and Mamadou Dia are still discernible. Senghor and Dia formed a team that garnered trust and instilled hope throughout Africa. Senegal would be a different country today if, similarly to Pelopidas and Epaminondas, the political partners of ancient Greece, Senghor and Dia had been able to consolidate their political views”⁴⁵.

Mamadou Dia died on January 25, 2009 at the age of 99.

Final remarks

The 1962 crisis was short-lived, but for sure intense and abundant at information level. The events of December 1962 were widely reported in the radio and printed media,

⁴³ V. Nivelon, M. Grember, *Mamadou Dia, parle, histoire d’une archive inédite*, 2019, <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20190125-mamadou-dia-parle-histoire-archivée-inédite-senegal-senghor> (accessed: 20.06.2023).

⁴⁴ N. Dieng, *Mamadou Dia, Senghor et la crise de 1962...*

⁴⁵ Cf. B.M. Diop, *Le feu sacré de la liberté. Mon combat pour la jeunesse africaine*, Paris 2010.

including Radio-Dakar, “Dakar-Matin”, “Afrique-Nouvelle”, and “Le Monde”. The crisis undoubtedly reinforced the role of Radio-Dakar as an instrument enabling the government to exercise control over the nascent state. The radio station directly witnessed the escalation of the conflict between Senegalese leaders, and it provided Senghor with a platform for delivering his famous speech on December 18, 1962. The press offered a variety of interpretations of the crisis and the underlying political interests. The pro-government “Dakar-Matin” newspaper reported on these events with considerable caution, supporting Senghor and participating in the establishment of an authoritarian presidential regime. In the midst of the crisis, “Afrique Nouvelle” demonstrated its independence by maintaining a neutral stance with regard to the two political camps, which reinforced its reputation as an independent media outlet. “Le Monde”, whose local correspondents had close ties with President Senghor, reported on these events with a notable degree of bias, with the objective of preserving French interests in the former colony. The presidential regime introduced by Senghor following the referendum of March 1963 significantly curtailed the freedom of expression in the media.

The political crisis of 1962 was a momentous event in Senegal’s history. According to some commentators, the crisis was caused by friction within the UPS, the ruling party, whereas others have argued that it was fueled by an internal battle resulting from differences in Senghor’s and Dia’s approaches towards building a new state. Moroccan historian Maâti Monjib posited that the crisis was precipitated by political and diplomatic machinations of the former colonial power⁴⁶.

The legacy of Mamadou Dia’s should be rehabilitated, and Dia should be remembered as an independence fighter in colonial Africa and an unwavering activist for change. The government administration building was named after Dia, but this gesture does not fully reflect the extent of his achievements.

Senegal is still grappling with the consequences of the 1962 crisis which was in fact a response to the choice of different economic models for the country’s development. Mamadou Dia’s rigorous long-term plan would have enabled Senegal to achieve significantly higher levels of economic and social growth. This model could have changed Senegalese citizens’ attitudes towards the abuse of state power. It would have also prevented France from exerting significant control over Senegal’s economy and political life.

⁴⁶ M. Maâti, *Mamadou Dia et les relations franco-sénégalaises (1957–1962)*, „Horizons Maghrébins” – Le droit à la mémoire 2005, No. 53, pp. 40–53.

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The political crisis of 1962 in Senegal and its portrayal in the media

Summary: Research thesis: Mamadou Dia's early removal from power blocked Senegal's independent development for decades. To verify the above thesis, this article analyzes historical and media sources presenting political events and the key figures who participated in the events of 1962 in Senegal. The relationship between Léopold Sédar Senghor and Mamadou Dia, the causes of the crisis, its portrayal in the media, and the resulting consequences for Senegal were explored. Attempts were made to answer the following questions: What were the causes of the crisis? Who was the protagonist of the conflict? How did the media report on the events of December 1962? How did the crisis affect the fate of Senegal?

Keywords: Senegal, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Mamadou Dia, politics, crisis, media

Die politische Krise im Senegal 1962 und ihre Darstellung in den Medien

Zusammenfassung: Forschungsthese: Die sehr frühe Entmachtung von Mamadou Dia hat die unabhängige Entwicklung Senegals für Jahrzehnte blockiert. Um diese These zu überprüfen, analysiert der Autor historische und mediale Quellen, die die politischen Ereignisse und die Hauptakteure der Ereignisse von 1962 im Senegal darstellen. Die Analyse befasst sich mit folgenden Themen: die Beziehungen zwischen Léopold Sédar Senghor und Mamadou Dia, die Ursachen der Krise, die politische Krise in den Medien und die Folgen der Ereignisse für Senegal. Der Autor versucht Antworten auf folgende Fragen zu geben: Was waren die Ursachen der Krise? Wer waren die Protagonisten des Konflikts? Wie haben die Medien über die Ereignisse im Dezember 1962 berichtet? Welche Auswirkungen hatten die Ereignisse auf das spätere Schicksal Senegals?

Schlüsselwörter: Senegal, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Mamadou Dia, Politik, Krise, Medien

Kryzys polityczny 1962 roku w Senegalii i jego wizerunek w mediach

Streszczenie: Teza badawcza: Wczesne odsunięcie Mamadou Dia od władzy blokowało na dziesięciolecie niezależny rozwój Senegalii. Aby zweryfikować powyższą tezę, w artykule dokonano analizy źródeł historycznych i medialnych, przedstawiających wydarzenia polityczne oraz kluczowe postacie, które uczestniczyły w wydarzeniach 1962 r. w Senegalii. Zbadano relacje między Léopoldem Sédairem Senghorem i Mamadou Dia, przyczyny kryzysu, jego wizerunek w mediach i wynikające z tego konsekwencje dla Senegalii. Próbowano odpowiedzieć na pytania: Jakie były przyczyny kryzysu? Kto był

bohaterem konfliktu? Jak media relacjonowały wydarzenia grudnia 1962 r.? Jak kryzys wpłynął na losy Senegalu?

Słowa kluczowe: Senegal, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Mamadou Dia, polityka, kryzys, media