**The *loi-cadre* and the colonial mind: reform between discourse, myth and history**

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**Abstract**

 This thesis is an examination of the *loi-cadre* of 1956 and its role in the process of decolonisation in the French Union. It uses the *loi-cadre* as lens through which the colonial past, and ideas about the colonial future, are studied. Its aim in doing this is to further understand the law as an expression of late colonial reform, the colonial discourse, and the colonial mind. Through this examination this thesis continues the reevaluation of the end of the French colonial experience that is underway within scholarship. This newer scholarship attempts to avoid the problem of ‘knowing the end of the story’ by looking closely at ideas and policies in place in what became the latter years of the French Union. I continue this trend by examing how the *loi-cadre* can be used to show the development of historical narratives.

I use a methodology that employs concepts from Critical Discourse Analysis to show the role discourse played in shaping ideas about reform and the *loi-cadre*. In the first three chapters I use this methodology to show how officials conceptualised ideas about reform and made attempts to implement these ideas. Within the last chapter of the thesis I show the changes and continuities in the use of the colonial discourse that followed the superseding of the *loi-cadre* and the end of the French Union.

From its assessment of the *loi-cadre* this thesis shows that closer attention to discourse reveals the provenance and evolution of ideas about reform. It also challenges the positioning of the law as part of a narrative of inevitable decolonisation. In doing this it presents a method of approaching and interrogating events that is designed to overcome problems of positionality that are encountered in studying decolonsation and the end of empire.

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To the memory of G.M.J.

# Introduction

The world of 1956 was very different to the one that we live in today. European empires still covered large parts of the globe. Following the drastic decline of these Empires in the 1960s it is hard to imagine a world in which the French tricolour flew over territorial capitals throughout Africa. From our perspective it could seem inevitable that these structures of power would collapse. However, in 1956 French officials were attempting to reform the key structures that maintained their control over what were then called ‘territoires d’outre-mer’. Since 1946 France and the ‘territoires d’outre-mer’ had been united under the banner of the *Union Française*. In June 1956 a law known as the *loi-cadre* was promulgated in an attempt to reform the structures of political and administrative power in the *territoires*. The campaign to push through the *loi-cadre* was led by Gaston Defferre who had recently been appointed *Ministre de la France d’Outre-mer*. In December 1956, six months after the *loi-cadre* had successfully been approved by the National Assembly, Defferre took part in a television interview responding to questions posed by students studying at *Sciences Po*. On the reasons for why the *loi-cadre* was necessary, Defferre said the following:

Eh bien, il y a une dizaine de mois, quand ce gouvernement a été formé, il y avait un incontestable malaise dans les territoires d’outre-mer. Les Africains avaient la sensation que toutes les promesses, que la France leur avait faites, n’avaient pas été tenues. Les Français étaient inquiets après la guerre d’Indochine et notre départ d’Indochine, après les difficultés que nous connaissons en Algérie, après que l’indépendance ait été accordée à la Tunisie et au Maroc, les Français avaient l’impression que le gouvernement avait l’intention d’abandonner ses territoires. Et c’est pour répondre à ce malaise que la loi-cadre a été présentée au Parlement et qu’elle a été votée, d’ailleurs, à une très forte majorité.[[1]](#footnote-1)

As the interview continued Defferre sidestepped the trickier questions before stressing the importance of the reform and the implementation of universal suffrage within the overseas territories. Returning to the quotation above it reads as if the *loi-cadre* was designed to assure the population of the overseas territories that they would not be abandoned by France. It is curious then that thirty years later Defferre wrote this on the *loi-cadre*:

Face à cette situation, je me suis fixé trois objectifs qui ont inspiré la “loi-cadre” et tous ses décrets d’application:

1. Donner aux peuples d’outre-mer la liberté dans le domaine politique tout en continuant à les aider sur les plans financier, social et technique. Il était nécessaire d’engager un processus irréversible destiné à permettre aux pays africains d’accéder – dans la paix – à l’autonomie d’abord et à l’indépendance ensuite.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Clearly something changed in Defferre’s mind. In fact, something had changed in the minds of many of those people who had been involved in colonial administration. Defferre’s position in 1981 was one example of the shift in the institutional understanding of the *loi-cadre*. Defferre had rewritten his involvement in and understanding of events. This shift in understanding of the *loi-cadre* has also been reflected within scholarship on the *loi-cadre*, although this is currently being re-evaluated. In this thesis I analyse the history, memory, and discourse of the *loi-cadre* in order to understand how its meaning has been shaped and reshaped over time.

This thesis takes its inspiration from the burgeoning re-evaluation of the *loi-cadre* to further our understanding of it, and its role, in the wider process of decolonisation. I analyse how the colonial discourse shaped the law through the study of the presence of key terms and ideas across a set of documents. I also study what the process that created the *loi-cadre* can tell us about the French colonial mind and its legacies. This is achieved through a methodology that employs discourse analysis on documents related to the *loi-cadre* in different contexts. Within its examination of the *loi-cadre* this thesis seeks to find an answer to the question of how colonial knowledge and ideas were formed. The key proposition of this thesis is that in order to understand how the colonial mind shaped ideas about reform the discourse employed by officials must be understood. The colonial mind and the colonial discourse are the two key concepts of this thesis. The investigation that follows is focused on how the *loi-cadre* was framed by discourse before, during, and after its promulgation. I demonstrate the existence of this discourse by showing how a core set of terms and ideas were used and recycled throughout the period of study. Through this examination I undertake a close analysis of the colonial mind, the colonial discourse, and the process of decolonisation with the *loi-cadre* as the focal point from which the study extends.

## The colonial mind

The concept of the colonial mind is key to the analysis in this thesis. This section of the introduction will explore the idea of the colonial mind. It will also bring forward suggestions for other factors that should be considered as part of explanations of the colonial mind. The colonial mind or mind-set is defined as the mode of thinking that officials used and experienced.[[3]](#footnote-3) As explained by Martin Thomas ‘Identifiable commonalities of outlook – the product of education, career background, or lived experience – help us to grasp why those in positions of colonial power acted as they did, whether as governors, as economic overseers, as missionaries, or, conversely, as critics of empire.’[[4]](#footnote-4) The colonial mind developed over the *longue durée* of the colonial experience. Given the context within which the *loi-cadre* came about, the colonial mind was under different pressure than in previous eras. Although violence was a prominent feature of the colonial world, by 1954 this violence had resulted in a serious French defeat in Indochina. At the same time there were prominent individuals and states that were espousing anti-colonial ideas. Because of this the analysis in this thesis is of a late colonial mind, a colonial mind that was attempting to adapt to a world very different to what it been used to.

Exploring and defining the colonial mind allows us to unpack how imperial nations thought *like Empires*. James Scott described the process of states evaluating their citizenship and area of control in terms of a limited ‘optic’ that subsequently informed the states’ approach to development.[[5]](#footnote-5) The colonial mind was engaged in the creation and proliferation of ideas that were based on individuals ‘seeing’ like a colonial state. Therefore, a deconstruction of the colonial mind is key to understanding the *loi-cadre* because it can explain how the law came to look the way it did. This deconstruction can also explain how and why officials expected the *loi-cadre* to work.

In *The French Colonial Myth and Constitution-Making in the Fourth Republic* D. Bruce Marshall identified the colonial myth as being responsible for the inability of French leaders to see the constitution of the Fourth Republic as anything other than a gift.[[6]](#footnote-6) Marshall identified the process by which French officials came to believe in the rhetoric and propaganda created around the ideas of *colonialisme humaniste* and the *mission civilisatrice*. These ideas had been created in order to justify and sell colonialism and in the wake of the end of the Second World War it appears that officials fully accepted them. The result was that in the colonial mind the past was overwritten and all that existed was a process by which French policy had always been to progressively grant rights and autonomy to the populations of the overseas territories. This had a profound effect on the colonial mind, making it almost blind to certain criticism. It is an example of the way in which the colonial mind and discourse functioned together to build a worldview. Within this thesis the colonial myth is shown to have existed in periods that Marshall did not investigate. The colonial myth is shown to be a key part of how officials thought about reform in the period of study.

Colonial studies began to examine the colonial mind following the linguistic turn and the end of the Cold War. Patricia Lorcin identified the importance of changes in the context within which study was being undertaken: whilst the Cold War raged there was a focus on political, economic, and diplomatic explanations for colonialism and decolonisation, whereas after the fall of the Berlin Wall the focus shifted to different questions, including how those involved with colonial practice thought about their world and their actions.[[7]](#footnote-7) The role of officials is important because the *loi-cadre* and its history were influenced by different individuals. These individuals represent a nexus through which we can understand more about the colonial mind. It is for this reason that the corpus analysed in this thesis consists of a wide variety of sources. Whilst most of the sources are from the files of the *Ministère de la France d’Outre-mer* others are used to show the scope of the colonial mind. For example, the last chapter includes sources from the *École Nationale de la France d’Outre-mer* (ENFOM) and the *Centre des Études d’administration musulmane* (CHEAM) which, although part of the purview of the *Ministère de la France d’Outre-mer*, were not a part its day-to-day operations. Through its analysis of this extensive corpus this thesis presents a fuller picture of the colonial mind and highlights its consistencies and contradictions. It will also add understudied but important job titles like *inspecteur* to the list of key roles of the colonial world*.* It is in its study of these other members of the colonial service that this thesis differs from previous approaches. Understanding the intricacies of the colonial mind involves a greater appreciation of the knowledge producers lower down in the colonial service. Key ideas that were part of the colonial mind and implemented by the *loi-cadre* were suggested by members of the colonial inspectorate, by individuals such as Pierre Sanner. These men’s contribution to the *loi-cadre* has gone underappreciated despite their key role in creating the legislation. Their ideas were borne of their education in the institutions of the colonial world and in their experience of war, work and, the colonial world; they are a key component of the colonial mind.

### The colonial mind or official mind?

The idea of a colonial mind existing is mostly one that has been explored in recent scholarship. The two-volume edited collection *The French Colonial Mind* informs a substantial part of the understanding of the colonial mind used in this thesis. However, other scholars have explored the colonial mind and their work has also shaped how the colonial mind is defined in this thesis. One of the earliest examples of an idea similar to that of the colonial mind was made in 1961 by Robinson, Denny, and Gallagher in *African and the Victorians: the Official Mind of Imperialism*. They included a conceptualisation of the ‘official mind’ within their search for an explanation of why Britain had colonised large parts of Africa which it had previously ignored. The novelty of their approach was to draw on governmental papers as they were the site at which ‘all the contingencies making for British expansion in Africa’ were balanced.[[8]](#footnote-8) They explained that ‘The files and red boxes which passed between ministers and officials at the time contain the problem in its contemporary proportions.’[[9]](#footnote-9) Their understanding of how policy was created is also useful and allows room for contingency within conceptualisations of the official mind as they argue ‘[p]olicy-making was a flow of deliberation and argument, of calculation and mediation between differing impulses.’[[10]](#footnote-10) However, their argument that ‘[t]he study of the government’s own reasoning is the obvious yardstick for measuring the urgency of incentives and contingencies at the point of action’[[11]](#footnote-11) is overstated. They reified the concept of official mind and created too strong a boundary between the official world and the world beyond it. For this reason and others their argument has been challenged, notably by Darwin.[[12]](#footnote-12) However, the popularity of the idea of a mentality or worldview shared by colonial officials has increased. The use of official sources as the starting point for understanding the colonial mind is used in this thesis although other sources from within the colonial world are also used.

### The French Colonial Mind

More recently the two collections edited by Martin Thomas reasserted the importance of the idea of the official or colonial mind.[[13]](#footnote-13) The primary use of the colonial mind in this thesis is that it identifies a distinct way of thinking and interacting with the colonial world that was practiced by those working in administrative fields related to it. In the introduction to *The French Colonial Mind* Thomas explored and defined the colonial mind with specific reference to French colonial practices. As noted by Thomas and others it is impossible to define the colonial mind as being a rigid and fixed ideology. There were as many variations of the colonial mind as there were members of the colonial service, overseas deputies, and even members of the national assembly.

Colonial officials were consistently engaged in a process of imagining the future in the colonies and this was a vital part of the justification of imperial practice. The universality of Republicanism fed into this process of imagining as it implied that at some moment in the future all peoples would be equal under a Republic.[[14]](#footnote-14) This was another unique aspect of the French colonial mind. The precise impact of this implication varied and here I will address specifically the act of imagining the colony and its relevance to the thesis. I discuss the implication of republicanism and universalism in other sections of this literature review. In order to understand how the colonies were conceptualised we must understand how official ideas were disseminated. An important aspect of this is the educational establishments that colonial officials attended and also how ideas function within administrative bodies. This understanding is important for our comprehension of how officials developed ideas about the future of the colonies.

Susan Bayly’s study of Paul Mus is an example of the study of the character of the French colonial mind. Her article on Mus takes his scholarship on the situation during the Indochina War and uses it to show how he conceptualised the Vietnamese people in relationship to his own life experiences.[[15]](#footnote-15) In short, it shows the development of Mus’ colonial mind. Although Mus’ entry into colonial administration was not done through the typical educational institutions he still spent time as director of ENFOM; showing the ubiquity of this institution in officials’ lives.[[16]](#footnote-16) Whilst Bayly’s study is of only one individual, this thesis uses an approach that integrates the relationship between individuals and institutions. The colonial mind cannot be reduced to one individual or one single institution. It was based on several centuries of colonial encounters, and multiple institutions, individuals and ideas which are explored in this thesis. So what was the colonial mind and where did it come from?

### Individuals and institutions

This thesis will show that within this nexus that underpinned the colonial mind is the importance of the educational institutions involved in producing colonial minds. A key component of the French colonial system was the network of administrators assigned to the colonies. The process of formalising the education of these men began with the establishment of an *École Coloniale* (later *École Nationale de la France d’Outre-mer* (ENFOM)) by August Pavie in 1885. Armelle Enders argues that ENFOM came to both symbolise and create a colonial mythology. This mythology was born out of the pedagogy of the school and also the way it envisaged/projected the *métier* it was preparing its pupils for.[[17]](#footnote-17) The role played by the school in both World Wars reinforced this mythology. However, by the end of the 1940s the school found itself out of touch with the pace of change within the colonies.[[18]](#footnote-18) In the 1950s its pupils were being turned into teachers of administration, rather than practitioners, as quotas for the number of native administrators were established. Enders’ article presents an interesting case-study of the interaction between individuals and intuitions working in the colonial sphere. Understanding this interaction grants a deeper understanding of how the colonial state functioned, and specifically for the period I study, the role that this institution played in the education of an Africanised civil service is important. A key point shown by Enders is that the school’s mission was growing unclear by the 1950s. However, the officials in charge at the time of the *loi-cadre* had undergone their training in the 1930s and 1940s and were not affected by the malaise at ENFOM.

The second key educational institution was the *Centre des Hautes Études de l’Administration Musulmane* (CHEAM). Created in 1936 by the *Front Populaire*, CHEAM was part of the portfolio of the chancellery of the *Universités de Paris*.[[19]](#footnote-19) It was located on rue du Four in the 6th arrondissement of the city. Its purpose was to provide a place where current administrators could share their expertise with others who worked in fields related to the administration of overseas territories. This included civilian and military personnel, as well as academics working in relevant fields.[[20]](#footnote-20) Although its initial focus was on North Africa this became more general following the Second World War. It ran short courses of three weeks to three months designed as primers for civil servants. The centre also served as a centre for study and documentation; it produced a journal as a resource for its *stagiaires*. One summary of the centre’s activities puts the number of students at 100 to 150 per cohort who were granted continued association with the school as they were an alumnus.[[21]](#footnote-21) This exclusivity led to only a small section of civil servants studying at the school and this group came to be considered as a pool who held superior knowledge to their colleagues.[[22]](#footnote-22) The alumni club allowed access to the library of CHEAM and also provided a forum for officials to discuss the evolving situation in the overseas territories. Publications in the journal of CHEAM covered events as they unfolded. Furthermore, experts from the centre also had contact with external organisations including UNESCO and other ‘development’ agencies.[[23]](#footnote-23) As the *loi-cadre* was an important change in the administration of the overseas territories the centre commissioned pieces from three administrators who then studied and wrote about its effects. This was standard practice at CHEAM with officials in the field taking part in the education of other officials. These officials were Commandant Barthélémy, Pierre Alexandre, and Paul Le Layec. Their writing, examined in chapter four, serves as examples of how those involved in administration in the overseas territories thought about the *loi-cadre* at the time it was in effect and show us what other officials were being told about the *loi-cadre*.

Administrators were also given political roles and politicians were given roles in the education of administrators. This shows that at higher levels within the key institutions there was significant movement of individuals between the constituent parts of the colonial administration. Two examples of this are those of Robert Delavignette and Léopold Senghor. Delavignette moved from a position as a colonial administrator to become head of the ENFOM.[[24]](#footnote-24) In the period of study he was an advisor to the *Ministère de la France d’outre-mer* and played a key part in creating the *Loi Teitgen*, a forerunner to the *loi-cadre*. Delavignette moved from the administrative to the educational and was involved in the political aspect of colonial rule in his role as an expert. Senghor was the deputy for Dakar but also worked at the ENFOM as a chair in African cultures and languages.[[25]](#footnote-25) These types of cross-employment were commonplace and are examined in the thesis. This shows how the colonial mind was self-reinforcing with the same individuals occupying positions in different parts of the system.

### Boundaries of the colonial world

In response to suggestions that the idea of colonial mind may be overstated it is important to note how jealously guarded boundaries of the colonial mind and world were. In an article that examines the policy objectives of one colonial administrator who was not from within the ENFOM establishment, Henri Laurentie, Martin Shipway identifies how administrators were thinking like an Empire. In three sections Shipway sheds light on different aspects of the French colonial system through the lens of Laurentie’s experience of working within the colonial administration from 1944 to 1947. Firstly, Shipway identifies that a clique of ENFOM graduates existed from which outsiders, including Laurentie, were excluded until they forced their way in.[[26]](#footnote-26) This is interesting to note as it shows how administrators formed ideas about themselves and their expertise within their profession. One of Laurentie’s principal concerns was unifying administration of the Empire.[[27]](#footnote-27) At the time Algeria was under the control of the Ministry of the Interior; Tunisia, Morocco and the Levant the Ministry of Foreign Affairs whilst the rest were under the control of the Ministry of the Colonies. Laurentie wanted to break into the ‘closed system’ that had existed prior to the Second World War and sought to undertake serious reform within the colonial sphere. Shipway evaluates Laurentie’s role in attempts at creating a reformed French Union. The results of Laurentie’s efforts were borne out of pragmatism rather than strong direction.[[28]](#footnote-28) The experience of Laurentie as he worked within the colonial system provides a fascinating snapshot of its machinations. The officials who were pushing Laurentie out were attempting to keep a firm grip of *their* version of the colonial mind. This was to such an extent that they were aggressive in their defence of it. Regardless of their efforts Laurentie was able to have an impact on policy although this was tempered by the influence of others within the colonial system. Shipway’s article shows the conservative nature of the colonial mind and how resistant it was to change.

Outside of the colonial administration the boundary was also guarded. Kathleen Keller examined the interaction between colonial administrators and French people on the edges of the colonial state. Using surveillance records of French men and women who arrived in French West Africa (AOF), Keller built a picture of what it was to be the outsider within European elites and how this reflected back on the colonial administration itself.[[29]](#footnote-29) Keller drew on Wilder’s challenge to the dichotomy of metropole and colony used previously and identified with Wilder’s concept of an ‘Imperial Nation-State’.[[30]](#footnote-30) In the interwar years officials attempted to control the status of immigrants from France coming to AOF. For Keller this control denoted a tension felt within administrative circles. This tension was focused on the presence of French people who were deemed to be of a lower class than a French person in the colonies ‘should be’.[[31]](#footnote-31) It is interesting to note the inherent hierarchy within this situation; French officials were superior to their fellow Frenchmen despite being ‘kith and kin’ due to their behaviour and respect for the civilising mission. Keller identified individuals who built their own notion of the civilising mission and operated on the blurred margins of the colonial state.[[32]](#footnote-32) The last example used by Keller was that of a communist within AOF who rectified his communism with his employment as a colonial administrator. [[33]](#footnote-33) This example demonstrates the pervasiveness of ideas about the civilising mission; rather than their communism serving to undermine their views of superiority it is presented as an alternative way of improving the ‘native’. In the conclusion to this article Keller stated that belief in the civilising mission was held throughout white society and that to fully comprehend the colonial state the impact of its laws, proclamations and policies need to be examined as this can shed light on how the colonial world was ‘conceived, understood, reshaped, and practised.’[[34]](#footnote-34)

### Colonialism and the coloniser

Based on the above explanations of how the colonial mind created knowledge and ordered the world it is possible to understand why Fanon characterised the colonial world as one that was ‘divided into compartments’.[[35]](#footnote-35) This thesis examines the ways in which the colonial mind built these compartments using language and practice. Whilst much of Fanon’s analysis focused on the role of violence in the creation of divisions between the colonised and the coloniser this thesis examines other forms of enforcement of these boundaries. The argument in Said’s *Orientalism*, in which he examined how Europeans created knowledge and conceptualisations of other parts of the world, will be used in my understanding of how the colonial world was structured. Said described a process by which:

[A] very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, “mind,” destiny, and so on.[[36]](#footnote-36)

There existed a clear Western discourse and ‘view’ of the world, which was framed by the colonial discourse. Importantly this relationship was built on power ‘[t]he relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony’.[[37]](#footnote-37) This thesis continues the analysis of how officials created their understandings of the world. Specifically, it examines how officials thought about the *loi-cadre* and how it fitted into their worldview. To study how officials conceived of reform and the *loi-cadre* is to study the process that Said refers to as Orientalism in action, albeit in a different timeframe. Therefore, the thesis uses an understanding of how the colonial world created a system of knowledge about the colonies to further understand the colonial mind.

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The colonial mind is central to this thesis and to the period which this thesis studies. This section has shown some of the key ways we can define the colonial mind. Within these ideas the institutions which informed the colonial mind and its conservatism are prominent. This thesis will not argue that the colonial mind is an unmovable monolith. Instead it will show that the decision-making process that led to the *loi-cadre* was being guided by people who thought in similar ways because of their shared experience. Later in their lives these people also wrote and rewrote their versions of narratives of decolonisation. Linking these different periods is the discourse informed by the colonial mind that was used and practised by officials. This thesis will show how the colonial mind shaped policy in the 1950s, and its enduring legacy.

## Colonial discourse

The *loi-cadre* represented part of the colonial mind of June 1956 in praxis. The law embodied ideas that came from within the administrative system and attempted to realise reform on these terms. With this in mind this thesis seeks to find an answer to the question of how colonial knowledge and ideas were formed. Understanding this process is key to unwrapping the significance of the law. This means that the thesis engages with questions about epistemology and how the colonial mind formed ideas. Knowledge about the colonies and, consequently, knowledge about colonial reform emerged from institutions such as the ENFOM, CHEAM, the colonial inspectorate, and other related institutions such as universities and colonial businesses. Together they created an ordered and structured way of understanding not only the colonies but also the actions that officials were taking within them. What came out of this structured understanding was a discourse that reflected and shaped how officials perceived and interacted with the colonies. This has been described as the colonial discourse by scholars such as Spurr.[[38]](#footnote-38) That is not to say that the colonial mind existed before the colonial discourse or vice versa; they developed simultaneously. The colonial discourse developed with specific reference to the experience of Europeans as they theorised and practiced colonial rule. However, its definitions of terms were not fixed. As Spurr wrote,

[w]hat we call the colonial discourse is neither a monolithic system nor a finite series of texts; it may more accurately be described as the name for a series of colonizing discourses each adapted to a specific historical situation, yet having in common certain elements with the others.[[39]](#footnote-39)

Lester defined the colonial discourse more precisely as structured language that reinforced the asymmetric nature of the colonial world. This was done through various appeals to race, exoticism, difference, poverty, genetics, hierarchy, development, and civilisation as all of these are ideas that informed western concepts of the colonies.[[40]](#footnote-40) In the French context the colonial discourse also included a specifically republican version of the ‘civilising’ ideal that grew out of the French Revolution.[[41]](#footnote-41)

Furthermore, this definition of discourse accounts for the semi-closed nature of the colonial mind and world. The boundaries of colonial experience and knowledge were fiercely guarded by administrators who were concerned with maintaining control.[[42]](#footnote-42) At key moments this discourse extended out beyond its usual confines of rue Oudinot and administrative sites in the Overseas Territories. This primarily occurred at the moments when colonial policy was discussed in broader governmental circles. However, overall this discourse had clearly delineated boundary lines. Although terms within the colonial discourse would be used beyond their usual limits their significance was being set by actors within the overseas administration. This specialisation of knowledge meant that as those outside the boundaries of the overseas administration interacted with it their experience was also shaped by the colonial discourse.

This thesis, by borrowing concepts from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), charts how the colonial mind shaped the design of the *loi-cadre* before it subsequently reshaped the meaning of the law. The colonial discourse, the institutional language of the colonial administration, played a significant role in shaping the law. The use of CDA is explained in the methodology chapter that follows this introduction. Through its exploration of the way the colonial mind interacted with the *loi-cadre* this thesis shows that the law was given different meanings by officials and scholars. The thesis uses the *loi-cadre* as a means to explore the colonial mind in what turned out to be the latter years of the French Empire. This law was designed to enable wide-ranging reforms of political, administrative, and economic affairs within the *territoires d’outre-mer* (TOMs) of the French Union.

The sources I use in this thesis were predominantly written by politicians or administrators who worked in the colonial administration. Together the sources are used to demonstrate the character and development of the colonial mind through analysis of the colonial discourse. As chapter one establishes the background to the debates about reform that preceded the *loi-cadre* the sources are used to show key influences on ideas about colonial reform. The first is the text *La mise en valeur des colonies françaises*, a plan for colonial reform written by Albert Sarraut in 1923. The second source in the chapter is a plan for a ‘politique coloniale socialiste*’* written by the then Colonial Minister Marius Moutet in 1936. The third source is a brochure produced by the Colonial Ministry that is a summary of the Franco-African Conference held in Brazzaville, 1944. Chapters two and three use mostly internal documents from within the colonial administration and French political establishment. These reports, memos, letters, and draft laws are used to show how ideas about reform evolved as officials reacted to events and drew on the colonial discourse – the result of this process was the *loi-cadre*. In chapter four I shift my analysis to different representations of the *loi-cadre*. Due to the slightly different focus in this chapter the source base is different from the other chapters. Some texts still fit into the category of internal documents although they are not policy documents or letters. Instead the sources are analysed for how they reperesent the ways in which narratives about the law were shared. Overall the sources are used to explore the colonial mind from multiple angles. For example, in chapter four a speech from President René Coty and essays from students at ENFOM are used to show how the *loi-cadre* was framed at different levels of the colonial system. I show the different ways in which the official mind conceived of reform and then responded to the *loi-cadre*.

## Historiography and history of the *loi-cadre*

The *loi-cadre* is a well-known piece of legislation in the story of the end of the French Empire. It has been seen as a marker on the road to decolonisation as it played a fundamental role in the ‘balkanisation’ of French Africa.[[43]](#footnote-43) It has been included in studies as an essential part of the general narrative of decolonisation where it signals the beginning of the end for the French Empire.[[44]](#footnote-44) More recently the *loi-cadre* has undergone substantial reanalysis in scholarship. Notable examples of this include work by Tony Chafer, Martin Shipway, Alexander Keese, Frederick Cooper, and Andrew Smith – these key examples will be examined in turn here. From its presence in the literature to the recent attention it is receiving it is apparent that the *loi-cadre* is important for understanding the wider events leading to the end of the French Empire.

The *loi-cadre* was created in a volatile period following the end of Second World War. After the cessation of hostilities, France had to come to terms with the rupture caused by the occupation. In the French colonial world, soldiers were sent to Indochina to reassert French rule. At home, a long process saw the creation of a new constitution and a new republic. From the French perspective, wars in Overseas Territories were a major cause for concern. In the international realm there was a growing anti-colonial movement and increasing tensions between the Soviet-led East and the Western world. Globally, European empires were facing crisis. Although the moment of widespread independences took place later, in the early 1960s, by 1948 India had become independent and Indonesia followed suit in 1949. In other parts of European Empires, such as Malaya and Kenya, rear-guard actions were being fought by imperial powers against independence movements. Since the arrival of French troops in Indochina in 1945, France had been engaged in a counter-insurgency war against the Viet Minh. The Indochina War resulted in a French withdrawal in 1954. Later in 1954 the Algerian War started; this war came to have profound effects on French politics. Whilst these events unfolded on the world stage, in Europe post-war reconciliation was leading to accords between former belligerents; at the same time the divisions between Western and Eastern Europe were growing. Although this thesis focuses on the creation of the *loi-cadre*, this context is important to keep in mind as the thesis develops.

It is difficult to draw a line within scholarship on the *loi-cadre* on the moment at which it enters into historical study. From immediately after its promulgation academics wrote articles about its provisions.[[45]](#footnote-45) As the French Union unravelled scholars sought to keep up with the pace of change and tried to explain what was going on. Within the space of three years scholarship turned from explaining the role of the *loi-cadre* as part of the political life of the overseas territories to explaining its role in the impending autonomy of those territories.[[46]](#footnote-46) The pace of events served to quickly change the meaning of the law. Given the proximity of academics to these events and the lasting legacy of the colonial world this is a problem that scholarship of colonialism must face when it confronts these issues and questions. After 1960 there was a marked shift in scholarship on the *loi-cadre* as now it had to be used to explain the end of the French Union.[[47]](#footnote-47) Less than a decade after its promulgation as a measure designed to extend the lifespan of the French Union the *loi-cadre* had become part of the narrative of its downfall.

If we take a step back and look at the evolution of scholarship on the *loi-cadre* what emerges is a picture of changing scholarly priorities. Because of these changing priorities the questions for which answers were being sought were posed differently in distinct periods. If the end of the French Union is taken as the point at which there was a sufficient break with events for the *loi-cadre* to be studied as a historical event then 1960 is that point at which it transitions into history. On one hand this is a supportable position as the *loi-cadre* held little to no significance in the newly independent states. However, the tumult and unforeseen nature of the independences of the late 1950s and early 1960s posed the question of why formal overseas empires had ended. It was out of this quandary that the idea of decolonisation emerged. The *loi-cadre* was not being studied in order to understand it in itself. Instead the law was being studied in order to understand what role it had played in events unforeseen at the time of its writing. Further complicating this picture is that some scholarship on the *loi-cadre* was written by or influenced by people who worked within the colonial system as discussed in chapter four of this thesis. Within this section of the introduction the way that scholarship has been shaped by these discussions will be explored through an overview of current scholarship on the *loi-cadre*. The scholarship on the *loi-cadre* has established that it is an important piece of legislation. Initially it was correctly, albeit partially, understood as leading to decolonisation but this understanding does not tell the entire story. What more recent scholarship has shown is that there is more to understanding the *loi-cadre* than just as a decolonising act.

The process which saw the concept of decolonisation created as a narrative about events in the colonies has been studied by Todd Shepard. Shepard’s argument was that through the ‘invention of decolonisation’ France was able to overcome the trauma of the troubled ending to French control in Algeria. The process that Shepard identified was that ‘French bureaucrats, politicians, and journalists rewrote the history of imperialism and anti-imperialism so that decolonization was the predetermined end point.’[[48]](#footnote-48) This rewriting of history invoked ‘the notion that the historical category “decolonization” was a causal force with an all but irresistible momentum.’[[49]](#footnote-49) Although Shepherd’s focus of analysis was the relationship between France and Algeria the idea that decolonisation had to be invented as a process is relevant for our reading of this historiography of the *loi-cadre*. We can take Shepherd’s idea that decolonisation became the end point for officials rewriting the history of colonials and apply it to the ways in which historians have dealt with the problem of decolonisation and the *loi-cadre*. Here I am not making the argument that scholars have deliberately rewritten the history of events out of a desire to forget or come to terms with them. What I am arguing is that the positioning of the moment of decolonisation as an end point has led to narratives about events being written in order to build up to that moment. This is much the same as Chafer’s point about the history of decolonisation being written teleologically although Chafer did not question the concept of decolonisation as strongly as Shepherd.[[50]](#footnote-50) This thesis borrows and modifies Shepherd’s approach. I argue that the *loi-cadre* has been pressed into a narrative of decolonisation which has led to its original aims being blurred or misread. In this thesis I show that in order to properly understand the *loi-cadre* it must be read as a plan that aimed to continue the French Union. It is only because of the creation of the process of decolonisation that its significance has been misunderstood. I show that officials also rewrote events related to the *loi-cadre* as part of their rewriting of the history of colonialism. Furthermore, I suggest that because officials were so quick to rewrite history, their revisions to the historical record slipped into academic understanding of events. This slippage has begun to be acknowledged by historians.

Most scholarship between 1960 and 2002 was focused on telling the story of how events led to empires falling. A notable example of this was Henri Grimal’s *La Décolonisation: de 1919 à nos jours*. In this study, Grimal identified the roots of decolonisation in the reformist approach to the colonies in the 1920s although he acknowledged that colonial officials were not questioning their position in the territories they controlled. On the *loi-cadre*, which Grimal fitted into a distinct African phase of decolonisation, he wrote that its provisions were quickly outpaced by events stating, ‘ce qui avait paru satisfaisant en 1956, ne l’était plus en 1957.’[[51]](#footnote-51) This framing of the law means that the period following its promulgation is not included in his study. Also, the vital question of why the law was able to be outpaced by events so readily is not addressed. Why were the provisions of the law inadequate? The pace of events is presented as an almost unstoppable and inevitable force. Grimal stated that ‘[l]es partis africains considéraient les décisions comme un pas irréversible dans la marche vers l’émancipation’ which demonstrates how decolonisation has been framed as a movement or force.[[52]](#footnote-52) In Grimal’s study the *loi-cadre* is portrayed as a step towards the end point which was the end of formal European empire. Another example of the *loi-cadre* being presented as an ‘étape’ and being quickly overridden by events appeared in *Histoire de la France Coloniale 1914-1990*.[[53]](#footnote-53) Although some of the background to the *loi-cadre* is studied in this text, the period that followed its implementation is dealt with swiftly and the analysis quickly turns to the events that saw the replacement of the *loi-cadre* in the summer of 1958.[[54]](#footnote-54) In these examples the law is described as a step but there is no examination of why officials were heading in the direction that they ended up taking. A study by Joseph Roger de Benoist on the latter years of AOF used a similar pattern. For de Benoist the *loi-cadre* was unquestionably a step towards independence although he did not use the word decolonisation. De Benoist cited Joseph Ki-Zerbo who wrote that the *loi-cadre* represented ‘une politique de décentralisation qui va déclencher une accélération vers l’indépendance‘.[[55]](#footnote-55) Within de Benoist’s texts we rarely see his own interpretation of events as he relied on quotation from primary and secondary sources. However, it is clear through this analysis he did not question the idea that the *loi-cadre* could represent anything other than a step in the process of the end of the French Union. He published another text that positioned the *loi-cadre* within the ‘balkanisation’ of AOF. Indeed, de Benoist’s analysis is an embodiment of the ways that scholarship approached the *loi-cadre* as part of the narrative of decolonisation. Part of the story of the *loi-cadre* is missing if it is only understood as a step on the march to independence or a part of the process that saw the French African federations divided into territories.

More recent scholarship has opened up the space for the *loi-cadre* to be re-contextualised. Chafer argueed that there had been a tendency to draw a line back from the end of Empires and to identify a series of events that led to that moment.[[56]](#footnote-56) From Chafer’s identification of this problem in studies of decolonisation other scholars have begun to explore more closely the *loi-cadre* and what its objectives were. Here I analyse Chafer’s chapter on the *loi-cadre* before examining some of the scholarship that has begun to re-evaluate the *loi-cadre*. Although Chafer identified a key point about the teleological nature of investigations into decolonisation, his primary focus was to understand the effects of the law and the role they played within decolonisation. In his chapter on the *loi-cadre* Tony Chafer characterised the lead-up to the *loi-cadre* as a period of inertia.[[57]](#footnote-57) If we understand progress or reform as only the passing of legislation this is accurate; however, ideas and discussion were constantly moving. Chafer’s chapter on the *loi-cadre* ended with a discussion of the effects of the law, rather than the law itself, and demonstrated how the law fits with ideas of it being part of the process of decolonisation. Chafer started by outlining the aims of French officials who can be understood as the architects of the law. His view was that the result of discussions was a clear desire for France to retain influence within sub-Saharan Africa through the formation of a Franco-African federation and the key question that remained was how to manage the transition. His source for this was a report from a meeting in late 1955 led by colonial administrator Robert Delavignette about the future of France and the colonies.[[58]](#footnote-58) Chafer also provided some analysis of the effect of the *loi-cadre* on African officials. One of the significant points of this is that some officials saw that the law could empower them; it created a direct link between individual territories and Paris thereby marginalising the capital of AOF, Dakar, which had been steadily growing in significance.[[59]](#footnote-59) This was of particular importance for Félix Houphouët-Boigny in the Ivory Coast as he often disagreed with Léopold Senghor and wanted to push his own agenda. This is one example of how the reactions of African politicians are placed at the forefront of analysis of the law. There are fewer examples of studies that show the reaction of French officials to the *loi-cadre* – this thesis seeks to address this gap.

The second important effect of the law that Chafer identifies is that the new territorial assemblies added a new level to colonial administration. The assemblies linked the populations they represented with Paris in a way that had not existed before. African officials were granted new powers but they were now fully responsible for the policy decisions they made and for colonial employees. Chafer identified this as a key motivation for the way that the law was designed. French officials kept hold of what they saw as important aspects of policy – foreign affairs, defence, police, education – but gave away what they did not see as vital for the ‘integrity of the republic’ such as African social and economic development. This had the effect of making the territorial administrations responsible for unpopular decisions.[[60]](#footnote-60) Importantly, Chafer also stated that the law did not emerge from serious forward planning in French policy-making nor did it deliberately set the agenda for the events that followed in the next few years.[[61]](#footnote-61) Indeed, the architects of the law were a long way off with their predicted outcomes as within two years the law was obsolete. Until 1960 further challenges to the idea of long-term French governance in sub-Saharan Africa emerged along with continued attempts to hold the empire together through reform. Official predictions were proved wrong and there was no clear decolonisation process involved when the law was being designed or when it was implemented. With this in mind it is important to re-evaluate how the reform has been written into narratives of decolonisation. Chafer’s overview of the law is useful but for the most part it does not differ substantially from the way that the law has been understood as part of an inevitable narrative of decolonisation. His identification of the teleological nature of previous studies of decolonisation has, however, enabled steps to be made towards reassessing the law’s significance.

There are essentially two ways of understanding the *loi-cadre*: one is what Chafer does for the majority of his chapter looking at the law more for its direct effects, the other is to use the law as a conduit to understand more about official thinking in this period. The way that Emmanuelle Saada used a provision related to the status of *métis* persons as a starting point for an exploration of other issues is used a reference for my own exploration of the *loi-cadre*. In the same way that the ‘*métis* question became a meeting place for a wide range of anxieties about colonial society…’ the *loi-cadre* was a meeting place for anxieties about reform.[[62]](#footnote-62) The reason why the latter approach is important is because it identifies the colonial discourse. Furthermore, it can provide a basis for explanations of how this discourse began to adapt to the changes taking place in the world. Official thinking was seemingly behind trends and reform was too late. Interrogating why is significant in order to understand how officials changed their comprehension in subsequent years.

In order to understand why this gap between official perceptions and reactions on the ground existed we can interrogate the colonial mind and search for answers. Steps towards identifying what was going on in the colonial mind have been taken by scholars who have started to read the *loi-cadre* beyond it being a movement towards decolonisation. Texts by three scholars Keese, Shipway, and Smith, exemplify an approach to the *loi-cadre* that integrates the thoughts of officials into an understanding of decolonisation. Broadly these texts question the intentions behind the *loi-cadre* rather than studying just the effects of the law; this difference is subtle but key. By questioning what officials thought the law was going to do and including it in studies of decolonisation, space is opened up to examine the thought patterns of the colonial mind. Each of these three texts look at the intentions of officials as well as the outcomes of the law.

A key example of scholarship that shows how an approach which examines the intentions behind and results of the *loi-cadre* was written by Martin Shipway. In his article Shipway supports the argument that in studies of decolonisation looking backwards from an endpoint has led to almost teleological thinking.[[63]](#footnote-63) In his examination the eventual effects of this reform are included as part of the conclusion but the method used in the main body of the article is a useful example of how to undertake a nuanced study of decolonisation. Shipway’s approach to sources and the *loi-cadre* is very similar to the one that will be employed in this thesis and can be used as a basis to build from. That is to situate the sources in their context and identify how the law worked with the discourse. Shipway also hints at some of the longer term ideas that existed within the colonial administration. His article highlights the role of different politicians in the creation of the *loi-cadre* and identified a legacy from the 1944 conference at Brazzaville.[[64]](#footnote-64) An interesting passage noted that the law operated in two directions; the first as a part of process of reform designed to strengthen the French Empire, the second as being the point following which the empire quickly unravels.[[65]](#footnote-65) He navigated this problem by focusing on what administrators were aiming to achieve through the reforms and how they envisaged this process unfolding.

More scholarship has shown that the economic policy that emerged from the *loi-cadre* was designed to extend metropolitan practices into the overseas territories rather than retracting them. Andrew Smith has argued that the *loi-cadre* was not a piece of legislation emerging from an empire in its death throes, rather it was a measure that attempted to reassert control on French terms.[[66]](#footnote-66) Smith reiterated that the law was not designed to facilitate the subsequent transfer of sovereignty and makes the case that the law does not fit into a narrative of an inevitable slide towards decolonisation. He argued that whilst the political reforms represent a localisation or devolution of political powers during the mid-1950s the impact of economic reforms was a strengthening of the relationship between France and the colonies. He saw the reforms as ensuring two main things, first the expansion of French administrative practices to areas that had hitherto existed at the margins of the French Union and AOF’s influence, second, that there was a large area of the globe that would continue to be intertwined economically with France.[[67]](#footnote-67) Smith made the case that in 1956 officials were still thinking in terms of a continuation of the colonial state rather than the creation of a neo-colonial relationship. This article highlighted the importance of a renewed focus on the *loi-cadre* and showed the merit in approaching the subject from the perspective of those making the reforms rather than that of a person looking back at their eventual impact. It also supports a new way of looking at late colonial reform as an examination of the predictions, aims, and hopes of those involved in the administration of the colonies.

Analysis of the effects of the political reforms of the *loi-cadre* on indigenous politicians has shown how the *loi-cadre* was not designed to end French rule over the overseas territories. The argument in Alexander Keese’s article supports the argument that decolonisation was not a major aim of French colonial officials during the early to mid-1950s. Their main objective was reform that was intended to bring African politicians under French influence rather than pushing them away. The end result was the inverse of this; with their new position and powers the so-called *évolués* applied more pressure upon French governors.[[68]](#footnote-68) Keese also argued that the territorialisation, which was the main effect of the *loi-cadre*, represented French officials ‘giving’ African officials and politicians what they thought was wanted rather than it being a metropolitan imposition.[[69]](#footnote-69) Given that the end result was so different from the original intention the merits of a study looking forwards rather than backwards are apparent. Furthermore, closer scrutiny of the sources from the period, with a specific focus on the evolution of language, will shed light on how this process unfurled and bridge the gap between the *loi-cadre* as a piece of reform and the *loi-cadre* as a piece of history.

A further piece from Keese about the development of the ‘neo-colonial’ relationship following the *loi-cadre* also made it clear that its outcomes were not as expected and that the law should not been seen as a deliberate decolonising measure. In a brief overview of the *loi-cadre* he argued that it was a measure designed to prevent conflict breaking out within French sub-Saharan Africa and to prevent African leaders from turning too far to the left.[[70]](#footnote-70) In terms of the official response to the effects of the *loi-cadre* Keese argued that these effects were not fully understood by officials at the time and the predicted relationship between governors and heads of territorial assemblies did not manifest itself. As a result of the *loi-cadre* leaders of territorial assemblies came to hold too much influence over the French governors. It is from here that the ‘balkanisation’ grew. This analysis presented interesting points about how officials reacted to or ignored events as they unfolded, it also highlighted the differences in the perception of the *loi-cadre* from the diverse groups affected by its ratification.

A study of the wider changes and debates in citizenship within the French Union from Frederick Cooper has demonstrated the importance of looking at the ideas of officials within their context and not just as part of a narrative of inevitable decolonisation. Through Cooper’s analysis the range of possibilities that officials thought were possible became apparent. Overall the analysis in *Citizenship between Empire and Nation* shows how much discussion took place regarding citizenship. Cooper’s analysis also shows the potential for a linguistic study of the sources. Cooper studied the *loi-cadre* as part of this monograph on the evolution of citizenship in the French Empire following the Second World War. He outlined the build-up to the *loi-cadre* and how it emerged as a policy out of the debates of the previous years. Cooper argued that part of the reason the reform looked the way it did was because of the influence of officials such as Mamadou Dia and Pierre-Henri Teitgen, as well as Gaston Defferre.[[71]](#footnote-71) He discusses a document from January 1956 entitled ‘*Un programme pour une nouvelle politique française outre-mer*’ that was authored by French and African officials opposed to federalism. This document advocated a much more unified approach to colonial reform that would guarantee ‘justice’ and ‘equality’. In this sense the document was framed in the language of French republicanism. This appeal to a unified approach to citizenship came despite lead author Paul Coste-Floret’s role in previously defining the French Union as being made up by different groups and peoples in the 1946 constitution.[[72]](#footnote-72) This demonstrated a change in the ideas and language of officials who had been affected by the implementation of a universal citizenship in 1946. Some of the embedded quotations within this work hint at what can be found within documents. One example of this is the use of the word ‘independence’ by an African official that Cooper describes as at once reassurance and threat to French officials.[[73]](#footnote-73) Indeed, there are other times when Cooper does look at language but it is not a sustained approach as he is predominantly building a narrative. However, the power of the language and concepts used by politicians during this period is highlighted by this work. In Cooper’s analysis of the effects of the law what emerged is a picture of conflict and division as well as a growing concern about the changes in funding in AOF.[[74]](#footnote-74) The reform had resulted in another debate instead of resolving the one it was designed to. Ultimately, from Cooper’s chapter on the *loi-cadre* it seems that it came to pose more questions than it answered and opened up room for a debate on the nature of the relationship between France and Africa. I expand on Cooper’s focus on language, and the role of officials whilst keeping in mind his point about the negotiation underway in this period.

Keese, Shipway, and Cooper have all argued that the law needs to be understood for its intentions and its outcomes, rather than just the latter, and Smith has shown how the economic impact of the *loi-cadre* led to further entrenchment of France in Africa. These arguments provide a good context within which I will re-evaluate the way that the *loi-cadre* was shaped by the colonial discourse, and can be used to explore the colonial mind. The key objective of this thesis is to undertake a substantial re-evaluation of the *loi-cadre*. The re-evaluation is aimed at asserting the *loi-cadre* links to the *longue durée* of French colonial history as well as showing how the *loi-cadre* worked during its historical moment.[[75]](#footnote-75) On the *longue durée* Braudel wrote, ‘If one wants to understand the world, one has to determine the hierarchy of forces, currents and individual movements, and then put them together to form an overall constellation’.[[76]](#footnote-76) From this, the thesis argues that the official significance and understanding of the *loi-cadre* shifted due to changes in the French Union as individuals negotiated the hierarchy of forces. Scholarship has, until recently, reflected the revised significance of the law that emerged after the *loi-cadre* was superseded and following the independence of most former territories of the French Union.

This thesis argues that the way that the history of the *loi-cadre* has been written, through creation of the narrative of decolonisation and periodisation, has led to its links to the French colonial past being overlooked. I also argue that a short period in which the *loi-cadre* was seen by officials to be working is significant and reflects a moment that, albeit brief, revealed an official vision for the future of the French Union. This thesis is, therefore, a history of ideas and institutions, or perhaps more specifically ideas expressed through institutionalised language. In order to investigate these ideas, institutions and language, this thesis uses a framework built around the concept of the colonial mind and the practice of Discourse Analysis. I do not seek to use this framework of analysis and collection of sources to rewrite the history of the *loi-cadre*. This thesis adds the perspective of the colonial mind on the *loi-cadre* to the wider historiographical revision of the period in which decolonisation occurred. I do not attempt to argue that the ultimate effects of the *loi-cadre* were different to how the historiography has understood them. It is true that the loi-cadre *did* play a role in a series of events that led to the end of the French Union. What I argue is that in order to understand the *loi-cadre* it needs to be viewed in that way that officials at the time saw it. I show that this official perspective on the *loi-cadre* changed depending on the context from which the law was viewed. What linked the different interpretations from officials was the use of the colonial discourse.

## Chapter overview

The thesis is divided into four chapters that are linked by period and theme. Following this introduction I outline the methodological approach used in the thesis. Next, chapter one investigates how the colonial mind imagined reform in response to the crisis caused by the First and Second World Wars. The chapter analyses sources from the period 1921 to 1944. What is shown through the analysis of the sources is that a defined set of ideas and practices was established by individuals and events. The ideas of *mise en valeur*, *développement*, and *la plus grande France* were defined in this period. These ideas and practices became the reference point for colonial officials when they were drafting the *loi-cadre*. Chapter two investigates how the ideas that had been established by officials in previous periods were debated and implemented from 1945 onwards. This chapter argues that following a period in which the colonial mind was inundated with proposals and ideas for reform it settled on the concept of *décentralisation* as the most tolerable conduit for change. The ideas established in prior periods were still important and lingered on in the colonial mind. Before accepting *décentralisation* the colonial mind had been threatened by call for reform from unexpected parts of the French Empire. For the colonial mind *décentralisation* was able to address the concerns of people in the overseas territories whilst being a familiar and controllable prospect. Chapter three shows how the *loi-cadre* was a product of the tendencies that are identified and analysed in chapters one and two. The chapter analyses the contents of the *loi-cadre* and its understudied *décrets d’application*. Through this analysis this chapter demonstrates that the *loi-cadre* was built upon concepts of *développement* and *mise en valeur* and sought to implement a policy that distributed administrative responsibilities through *décentralisation*. This chapter shows how the *loi-cadre* articulated a vision for the future that was built on ideas from the past. It argues that this vision for the future was one in which the French Union was supposed to continue. Chapter four shows how changes in the perspective from which the *loi-cadre* is viewed have led to it being interpreted differently from its original meaning. From initially being seen as a success its meaning and intent was adapted to changing situations. This chapter argues that events have shaped narratives about the law and questions how it has been understood as a part of history. The first two chapters of the thesis show the origins of the *loi-cadre* as part of the evolution of ideas about reform in the colonial mind. The third chapter shows how the law attempted to put forward a vision of the future for the French Union. The final chapter shows how official narratives about the law changed within different contexts, identifying distinct periods in which the narrative changed.

# Methodology

This chapter outlines how I conceptualise the notions of discourse, and the methodological approach that will be used in this study. I show the definition of discourse used in this thesis and outline the role of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in the project. As the thesis progresses the uses of CDA become clear, although so do its limits. There is a clear utility to establishing a framework of analysis using CDA but applying it to such a varied corpus is difficult. There are key aspects of the ‘colonial mind’ that do not fit in to the CDA framework. It also proves difficult to integrate the analysis of discourse with the study of individuals. At times the thesis does one or the other but not both. Despite these shortcomings, this thesis shows some of the potential for the use of discourse analysis as a tool for historians. This thesis employs the *loi-cadre* as a lens to study the colonial mind and colonial discourse. The colonial discourse is the way that the colonial mind expressed itself. The discourse represented the limits of approved and accepted ideas. The aim of this thesis is to examine the discourse of the late-colonial period within France and AOF. This thesis is not primarily a study of events; rather, it is a study of the colonial mind, and how the colonial mind influenced, understood, and shaped events. The key areas of study are: 1. an exploration of how officials’ conceptualisations of the colonial past inform their attempts at reform; 2. an analysis of what they thought this reform would achieve; 3. an examination of how the failure of the *loi-cadre* and the subsequent independence of the overseas territories shaped their perceptions of it. The first aim of this thesis is to show how the *loi-cadre* needs to be re-contextualised in the colonial past. The second aim is to show that the colonial mind has influenced how the *loi-cadre* has been written about following independence. In order to begin the outline of this methodology some definitions are needed. I define officials as those who worked within or close to the colonial state and had some relationship to its authority; this can include civil servants and politicians. Within the French administration the colonial discourse was being practised at the time. Before defining the colonial discourse I will set out the understanding of the concept of discourse used here.

### Defining discourse

The analysis in this thesis is based on the interpretation of the language used by officials for its references, allusions, and contradictions. Together these form a discourse used and practised by officials working within the colonial world: this discourse informed the colonial mind which was outlined in the introduction.[[77]](#footnote-77) To analyse this discourse a framework of analysis must be established. The analysis will be built around a form of CDA as outlined in works by Fairclough, Wodak, Reisigl, Meyer, Hodge and Kress with adaptations that account for the timeframe under investigation. Definitions of discourse have varied but overall it is understood as a method of communication that operates within, and is informed by, deep lying structures.[[78]](#footnote-78) Wodak and Reisigl set out a more specific definition of discourse that will be used to inform the approach within this thesis. Their definition of discourse is that it is,

* a cluster of context-dependent semiotic practices that are situated within specific fields of social action
* socially constituted and socially constitutive
* related to a macro-topic
* linked to the argumentation about validity claims such as truth and normative validity involving several social actors who have different points of view.[[79]](#footnote-79)

This understanding of discourse used in this thesis is also based on a definition of the term found in Wodak and Fairclough, and elaborated on in Wodak and Reisigl. The definition of Wodak and Fairclough is as follows:

CDA sees discourse – language used in speech and writing – as a form of ‘social practice’. Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s), which frame it: the discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them.[[80]](#footnote-80)

This definition of discourse means that events and ideas shaped the language used by officials and, in turn, the language used by those officials reflected back on those events and ideas. Within the context of this thesis, discourse is understood as being a form of institutional practice as well as a social practice amongst colonial officials.

### Discourse and power

A discourse reinforces power dynamics among those using it.[[81]](#footnote-81) Although this is not always the case, this is true of the colonial example analysed in this thesis. The thesis will explore the role of discourse in the sources with an understanding of the relationship between language, power and ideology, as outlined by Kress and Hodge, and Fairclough.[[82]](#footnote-82) For Fairclough, power is ‘exercised and enacted in discourse and… there are relations of power behind discourse’.[[83]](#footnote-83) Hodge and Kress take this further in their examination of the power in discourse by including analysis of syntax and grammar; arguing that the ‘facts of the discourse (e.g. positioning of speakers and topics, circulation of meanings and texts) are inseparable from what have been called facts of language (e.g. phonology, syntax, semantics, grammar), and both together are indispensable in tracing ideological forms and processes.’.[[84]](#footnote-84) Using this understanding of the relationship between discourse and the way that the discourse is phrased and expressed, the thesis will make a close examination of how officials express their ideas as well as the ideas that they are expressing.

### Critical Discourse Analysis

To achieve its analysis, this thesis will study the official discourse within official texts, publications, correspondence, and writing from politicians and administrators from France and the overseas territories. To facilitate the examination of discourse and language the thesis is structured into chronological chapters which contain analysis of the topoi, concepts, and ideas of the colonial discourse. These terms and the differences between them are identified below. The methodological approach of the thesis will borrow from critical discourse analysis, in line with the discourse-historical approach (DHA) described by Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl, with some adaptations.[[85]](#footnote-85) DHA is made up three different approaches to the critique of discourse. Of these three the ‘socio-diagnostic critique’ is the most appropriate form of analysis for this thesis. The socio-diagnostic critique is designed to expose the ‘persuasive or ‘manipulative’ character of discursive practices’.[[86]](#footnote-86) In making the socio-diagnostic critique ‘we [researchers] make use of our contextual knowledge and draw on social theories as well as other theoretical models to interpret the discursive events.’[[87]](#footnote-87) In this thesis the ‘discursive event’ is the creation of the *loi-cadre* which functions as a fulcrum for the thesis.

Wodak and Reisigl outlined the types of terms that a discourse is built from; they labelled these terms ‘discursive strategies’.[[88]](#footnote-88) They explained the meaning of ‘strategy’ writing that,

[b]y ‘strategy’, we generally mean a more or less intentional plan of practices (including discursive practices) adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic goal. Discursive strategies are located at different levels of linguistic organization and complexity.[[89]](#footnote-89)

These strategies are defined as ‘nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivisation, framing or discourse representation, intensification, mitigation’. Wodak and Reisigl state that ‘devices’ are used to enact or use these strategies.[[90]](#footnote-90) The list of these devices is substantial but includes items such as ‘tropes’, ‘verbs and nouns used to denote processes and actions’, ‘allusions, evocations, and presuppositions/implicatures’, and ‘topoi’, amongst others. Within this thesis the key devices examined are ‘topoi’ which fall into the strategy of argumentation, and ‘verbs and nouns used to denote processes and actions’ with are part of the strategy of nomination.[[91]](#footnote-91) Topoi are used as part of the ‘justification and questioning of claims of truth and normative rightness’; in this thesis examples of topoi that were used to justify the existence of colonialism are highlighted. The process and actions that were used in the colonial discourse were the directives, policies, ideas, and concepts of the colonial mind; several of these devices are identified below.

The third part of DHA aimed at improving communication will not feature in my analysis, highlighting a fundamental difference between my approach and the DHA. One point at which the use of CDA in this thesis differs from the aims of others in the field is that it is not focused on the idea of criticism in the same way. Whilst practitioners of CDA will have identified an aim of improving or changing communication or society this thesis is interested in the application of CDA in the study of the past, something unchangeable.[[92]](#footnote-92) Although the thesis does identify examples of the legacies of the colonial discourse within the more recent past. This novel approach will show how CDA can be used as a framework in the study of the past. In practical terms this means that the DHA used in this thesis does not include anthropological or investigative elements such as interviews. Instead it is an approach focused only on using CDA-DHA to interrogate an institutional discourse through the study of documents and texts.

Using these definitions borrowed from CDA I will show that there was a continuity for some ideas whilst others became less used during the period. Although not one of the key conclusions of this thesis this aspect is important. The world after independence was shaped by these ideas and understandings. Exploring the institutional history of key concepts and ideas will lead to a greater understanding of their significance in later periods. It has already been shown that the personnel of the colonial administration had an influence after the end of formal colonialism.[[93]](#footnote-93) This thesis will demonstrate further that there was a continuity in colonial ideas after the end of formal colonialism.

One example of CDA in a subject area similar to that of the present thesis is the work of Lene Hansen in *Security as Practice*.[[94]](#footnote-94) In this study Hansen identified the relationship of prevailing public and institutional discourses in shaping policy towards Bosnia during the Bosnian War. Whilst the focus of this thesis is the institutional discourse of the overseas administration in France, Hansen’s use of the concept of intertextuality in creating discourses is useful. Hansen uses this idea to explain one of the key ways in which ideas gained credibility. Hansen wrote that intertextuality ‘highlights that texts are situated within and against other texts, that they draw upon them in constructing their identities and policies, that they appropriate as well as revise the past, and that they build authority by reading and citing that of others.’[[95]](#footnote-95) Intertextuality, therefore, is a key concept in discourse building. Ideas that referenced other established sources were more credible than others. As Fairclough stated, ‘the concept of intertextuality points to the productivity of texts, to how texts can transform prior texts and restructure existing conventions (genres, discourses) to generate new ones’.[[96]](#footnote-96) Within the sources examined in this thesis, those which refer back to prominent examples of policy documents are held in higher esteem by officials than others. The concept of intertextuality will be used as part of the discourse analysis in order to show how ideas within discourses gained traction and importance. Hansen expanded this definition of intertextuality by highlighting the significance of the different ways in which texts reference each other. Texts make either ‘explicit references’ or ‘implicit references’ to other texts. Hansen explained that, in her work, ‘the articulation of concepts such as… “security” and “democracy” rely upon implicit references to a larger body of earlier texts on the same subject.”[[97]](#footnote-97) Conversely, ‘explicit references [are] to older works, in particular when these are constructed as texts with a particular authority, or as classics that have to be assessed and criticized’.[[98]](#footnote-98) Within this thesis this framework of implicit or explicit references will be adapted. In this thesis there are examples of references to concepts that fall more into the explicit references category as their intertextual relationship is with concepts that had recently been redefined or articulated.

The reason for the application of the ideas of implicit and explicit references is because colonial discourse existed on two levels. The explicit references were to specific terms such as *assimilation* or *évolution* whilst there were implicit references to ideas about race, and violence. Official understandings of race, and the role of violence in colonialism underpinned the colonial regime. References to these ideas are therefore made implicitly. Violence was an everyday aspect of colonial rule even with the reforms of the 1940s and 1950s. For example, until 1946 colonial administrators had the power to enact summary justice on those under their authority and the links between the colonial state and the military were strong.[[99]](#footnote-99) At times race was intertwined with ideas about development or evolution but at others it was more of a normalised part of how officials interacted with the colonies.

### Explicit references, key topoi and concepts

Within the discourse at the time of the *loi-cadre* there were explicit references made to policies and concepts. These explicit references form the basis for the topoi and concepts that are analysed in this thesis. Two interlinked examples of concepts are *assimilation* and *association*. *Assimilation* was the idea that through education, and religious practice members of the autochthonous populations would become like the ‘superior’ Frenchmen.[[100]](#footnote-100) This concept was deeply tied up in the universalism of the Republican ideal born during the Revolution. *Association* emerged as an idea in opposition to assimilation. It was the idea that instead of trying to make the colonies like France they should be allowed to function with their own personality. This model was often compared to the supposed British policy of ‘indirect rule’.[[101]](#footnote-101) These widely used terms held specific meaning when they were used in reference to the colonies. Moreover, their definitions changed over time and eventually, as shown later in this thesis, they were replaced by different terms. The fact that they were gradually replaced and eventually no longer used is significant as it shows the links between the approach to reform of the 1950s and that of the 1920/30s. The concepts of, and the relationship between, *assimilation* and *association* have been studied in depth.[[102]](#footnote-102) However, most studies have not continued their analysis into the latter years of the French Imperial project. Studies have identified that the idea *assimilation* was largely discredited at some point between the two World Wars.[[103]](#footnote-103) In terms of the colonial discourse the significance of *assimilation* and *association* is not their perceived meanings, rather it is that they exist in opposition to each other. In essence that is their true meaning. As shown in this thesis, at times ideas that were once thought of as associationist came to be thought as assimilationist. Yet the terms did not fall out of use. This can be explained when it is understood that the dialogue between the terms, rather than their perceived meaning, is their real significance. If a policy was defined as not assimilationist, it was therefore associationist and a better, more tolerant policy. In the 1930s the ideas that were known as *association* were represented by terms associated with *décentralisation*. As time passed *décentralisation* itself became part of a wider debate about political reform within the overseas territories alongside the policy of *déconcentration*. The concept of *décentralisation* was key within the debates leading to the *loi-cadre* and within the law itself. The discourse analysis approach used in this thesis has enabled these links to be demonstrated. Our understanding of key concepts of French colonialism is reassessed in this thesis.

This process shown above is repeated for other terms and concepts. For example, the conceptualisations of *propres affaires,* and *évolution* demonstrated the same semiotic changes. Over the period covered by this study the idea of *propres affaires* became interlinked and interchangeable with ideas about the significance of the term *indépendance*. As the Constitution of the Fourth Republic had firmed up the idea of *propres affaires* this term entered the colonial discourse. From its entry into the discourse it became a difficult subject and other formulations used for it included *s’administrer eux-mêmes* and the more well-known ideas of *indépendance* and *décolonisation*. Moreover, those concepts related to the direction of affairs in the overseas territories by indigenous citizens themselves took on a very different meaning after 1960.

Two key topoi analysed in this thesis are *réforme* and *évolution*. At times *réforme* was linked to ideas about *évolution* and at other times a substitute for it. *Réforme* and *évolution* were two terms used to describe the *loi-cadre*. There was a long historical root of this term and it can be associated with the idea of the category of *évolué* and concepts of modernity. Through its use of CDA this thesis will show the roots of the term *évolution* and will decipher its deeper meaning within the *loi-cadre*. It is important to note that as terms *réforme* and *évolution* have flexible meanings as they are outcome-dependent. For example, *évolution* could mean the evolution of an overseas territory to a stage where it administers its own affairs inside the French Union or it can mean *évolution* to a stage where that overseas territory becomes fully independent.

Related to presence of French Republicanism within the colonial discourse were the topoi of *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité*. As the shorthand way of describing the Republican project they were used in various ways throughout the life of the French Union as its adherents sought to realise their ideas about France’s relationship with the overseas territories. The varied use of these republican topoi is demonstrated in this thesis. These other groupings of phrases make up the remaining explicit references identified through the analysis in this thesis. Their presence and use in the sources is highlighted and interrogated in to order show exactly how the colonial discourse and colonial mind were shaping and interpreting events. As the overseas territories became independent some of these topoi were no longer used whilst others changed their meaning significantly. The analysis of these terms, including topoi, policies and concepts, is the main focus of this thesis.

### Implicit references

Whilst the explicit references make up the key analysis of this thesis there is another key aspect to the colonial discourse that must be addressed. The colonial world was built on the concepts of race and violence. Throughout the entirety of the colonial project, ideas about race informed decisions made in the metropole and the colonies. Unlike the explicit references identified above, implicit references to race varied in their overtness especially in the wake of the constitution of 1946. Because of this the topos of race is not a central part of the analysis in this thesis although its importance should not be understated. The same is true of violence whether it be directed towards the administration or used as a tool by it. The banality of violence in the colonial world is at times difficult to grasp. However, it was a constant in the lives of the administration and citizens of the overseas territories. From the Sétif massacre to the burning of villages that did not pay taxes, violence was frequently lived and experienced. However, officials, especially politicians, were wary of discussing some aspects of violence. The absence of direct reference to violence in the sources that are analysed in this thesis is not a testament to the peacefulness of this period. Instead it is a testament to the prevalence of violence in the colonial world.

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This thesis will analyse the pre- and post- *loi-cadre* discourse for its use of the terms of the colonial discourse. It will also analyse how the discourse was changed as the effects of the law were felt. The analysis will function on two levels, employing the reading of sources as lenses to explore the past that led to the law and the future envisaged within it, and engaging in the reading of sources alongside each other to ascertain how they change. The latter part will draw on ideas of transmission. The analysis in this thesis will take into consideration the influences, intentions, and anxieties of officials. It will draw on DHA in order to facilitate a structured and consistent approach to reading sources, this will enable a contextualised reading of the sources by opening up the language within them to the close analysis that has been outlined above. It is also sensitive to the role that the official interpretation of history played in the *loi-cadre*, whilst acknowledging that this process was also projecting into the future. Through linking the colonial discourses from before and after the *loi-cadre* I will highlight some of the changes and continuities throughout colonial history.

# Chapter one – Preceding and shaping the *loi-cadre*: key reforms 1923 – 1944

Prior to the *loi-cadre* being created there were different attempts at reform that established the framework that influenced the law’s authors. This chapter identifies and examines the significance of key texts that I present as snapshots of French colonial reformism that predated the *loi-cadre*. It is not a complete survey of the period but a history of the creation of ideas that were established by the 1950s. The chapter examines key sources from the period 1923 – 1944 that formed the discourse used by the authors of the *loi-cadre*. These sources are not the sole factor in shaping this discourse but they played an important role in establishing ideas of what reform could have achieved and how it would have been possible to implement it. Each of the texts represents a key part of the colonial mind. The texts were also conceptual reference points for officials. In their historical context the texts represent the response of the colonial mind to different crises; as shown in this chapter these responses were similar. This chapter argues that a significant part of the crisis response of the colonial mind was to partake in a process of reassessing the relationship between the metropole and colony. What this chapter shows is that this reassessment consisted of a dual process that involved officials mythologizing the colonial experience and imagining some level of integration between France and the colonies. Within this chapter I explore the interaction between myths, concepts of modernity, and development in the overseas territories. The use of discourse analysis underpins the study of the terms used by officials. The study of these texts enables an interrogation of the reformism of the French colonial mind.

The links between the different ‘moments’ of reform have been identified by scholars, with similarities of plans for reform being the main subject of study.[[104]](#footnote-104) The examination in this chapter is different from existing scholarship in a key way, in that the role of the colonial discourse and the importance of understanding the colonial mind are given more prominence. This allows the chapter to account for the ways in which colonial officials engaged with ideas beyond simply reproducing them. I also examine how officials engaged with the history of colonialism as part of the colonial discourse. This chapter shows the changes and development of the discourse of reform used by French colonial administrators and politicians and how this reform was related to prevailing colonial discourses. With this established scholarship in mind this chapter enables an understanding of the underlying ideas that fed into the *loi-cadre* in order to situate it properly in a process of colonial reform that had lasted over twenty years. What follows is a study of the ideas and language of reform in the French Empire.

## Background to ideas of reform: the *mission civilisatrice*, and the administrative context

The first serious attempt at developing and deploying the idea of *mise en valeur* was made following the First World War. It took the shock of the violence and destruction of the war to create the impetus for reform. Prior to the First World War most major reform in the colonies consisted of administrative reform following the transition from military to civilian rule. For example, by 1894 the *ministère des colonies* existed and in 1904 an entity recognisable as AOF was in place.[[105]](#footnote-105) Whilst the importance of *mise en valeur* as a concept was established before its use by Albert Sarraut, it was his publication, *La Mise en valeur des colonies françaises,* which popularised the concept and became a foundational text in forming metropolitan approaches to the colonies. The text *La Mise en valeur* was based on a proposal for reform which did not receive government backing.[[106]](#footnote-106) Within this chapter *La Mise en valeur* refers to the text written by Albert Sarraut and *mise en valeur* refers to the concept of colonial reform through investment.

Prior to Sarraut publishing the text there were tentative attempts at colonial reform. An example of these attempts manifested itself in the form of a *Commission des concessions coloniales* which met in Paris and designed plans for the development of French interests in Equatorial Africa. The commission’s attempts to involve private capital in the development in what were recently acquired African territories have been identified as ‘colonisation moderne’.[[107]](#footnote-107) The plans drawn up by the commission were intended to extend beyond Congo, where they were first implemented, but their lack of direction and detail meant this did not happen.[[108]](#footnote-108) In her analysis Elisabeth Rabut highlighted that the plans were drawn up in Paris to be imposed on a colony, meaning that plans were being made far from where the effects would have been felt. She ascribes a mythic value to the idea of the *mise en valeur* and argues that politicians understood that it was significant as a policy, yet she states that this value was based on an idea that lacked content.[[109]](#footnote-109) From the beginnings of its use as a concept within the colonial discourse *mise en valeur* was a phrase to which different ideas could be attached. In some ways its only real meaning was that *mise en valeur* meant a policy designed to improve the economic situation and productivity in the colonies which would then lead to an improvement in conditions within them. Within the colonial discourse these kinds of ambiguous phrases were common. Terms held significance, but individuals or departments were often defining and redefining these ideas. Sarraut’s attempt at defining *mise en valeur* became the cornerstone of ideas about the concept although politicians in later periods had variations in their own definitions.

Within *La Mise en valeur* Sarraut drew on pre-existing ideas and created some new ones. In the first section of the text the idea of the *mission civilisatrice* is significant. As a justification for the expansion of the French Empire the leaders of the Third Republic propagated the idea of the *mission civilisatrice*. In a study of the development of the civilising mission from 1895 to 1930 Alice Conklin charts the evolution of this idea and its reciprocal effects on France and AOF.[[110]](#footnote-110) Conklin argues that the civilising mission was not a fixed proposition but that it evolved within its context.[[111]](#footnote-111) These evolutions reflected changing events within and beyond the French Empire. This resembles how the meanings of *mise en valeur* shifted. This mutability is an important factor and another example of it is the idea of the *mission civilisatrice*. Whilst the *mission civilisatrice* was contingent on events, it was still understood by officials as being *the* civilising mission and as having historical roots that were supported by the purported superiority of French civilisation.[[112]](#footnote-112)

In his text Sarraut used the *mission civilisatrice* as the basis for his justification and explanation for French colonialism. Although Sarraut’s plans never saw fruition, with a lack of funds being the main obstacle, politicians continued to refer to the idea of *mise en valeur* after Sarraut popularised the idea through his text.[[113]](#footnote-113) Sarraut’s framing of the question of how to increase the productivity of the colonies became a key term used to refer to colonial reform. Yet *La Mise en valeur* did more than crystallise proposals for economic reform, it influenced the discourse with which politicians engaged with the colonies and it did this in several ways. The following section analyses *La Mise en valeur* to highlight its use of discourse. Following this the chapter draws out the links between Sarraut’s use of the colonial discourse and later uses. The economic aspect of *La mise en valeur* is its most studied which has led to other aspects of it being omitted from studies dedicated to it; the examination in this chapter will address this oversight. Like the civilising mission the meaning of *mise en valeur* changed depending on wider events but its symbolic value was its most enduring aspect. Sarraut’s text accelerated the development of this legacy.

The key role of Sarraut’s text in defining *mise en valeur* in the colonial mind is acknowledged in a book authored by a collection of former colonial officials including magistrates, administrators and overseas inspectors.[[114]](#footnote-114) In historiography there is a tendency for scholars to approach *La Mise en valeur* from an external perspective and they discuss its significance in terms of events in the world rather than examining how its content constituted a worldview.[[115]](#footnote-115) Here I challenge this and look outwards through the contents of *La Mise en valeur* in order to identify its author’s *Weltanschauung.* Through this I use Sarraut’s text to show how the colonial mind responded to crisisand how Sarraut’s concept of *mise en valeur* influenced later perceptions of colonial reform. What is revealed through the analysis of Sarraut’s text and comparisons with later texts is that the colonial mind had similar patterns in its approach to reform. Reform was usually proposed in response to a crisis, appeals were made to the idea of unity between France and the colonies, and myths about the benevolence of French rule were created. In the midst of this was the colonial mind’s ability to tolerate its own contradictions through dissonance. Examples of these tendencies are given and analysed below.

## Sarraut’s response to crisis: colonial experience and mythmaking

From his position as a politician with personal experience of the French Empire Sarraut envisaged an Empire that would benefit the metropole and develop the colony. He created his own narrative about the history of French colonialism that supported this vision. He was engaging in a process of mythmaking in order to justify France’s role in the colonies and to explain why reform had not already taken place. This section shows that Sarraut’s interpretation of the past was steeped in a colonial ideology. Sarraut’s career as an administrator and politician began in France before he served in Indochina as a *résident général*. Following the First World War he switched position several times between serving as minister of the interior and minister of the colonies.[[116]](#footnote-116) *La Mise en valeur* was published in 1923 and it constituted a lengthy examination of the condition of France’s colonies; it was a continuation of his attempt in 1921 to introduce a law to the National Assembly that would enable large-scale infrastructure spending in the French colonies.[[117]](#footnote-117)

Sarraut’s writing of history is an example of how a French politician engaged in their own mythmaking. In his study of Charles de Gaulle, Hazareesingh highlighted the importance of mythmaking and symbolism.[[118]](#footnote-118) Whilst the myth of de Gaulle arose almost in opposition to the colonial myth the process of myth creation was similar in both contexts. This mythmaking played a key role in forming metropolitan politicians’ perceptions of the empire beyond France, or perhaps Paris. Myths also impacted the policy decisions of colonial officials. An example this was the relationship between irrigation schemes and the idea of Africa being empty.[[119]](#footnote-119) Ertsen’s main premise was that the perception of vast swathes of Africa being empty led to radical schemes that were designed to irrigate the apparently empty, but fertile, land; this irrigation would create a ‘modern, and rational environment’.[[120]](#footnote-120) His analysis highlighted another aspect of the colonial mind in that the intervention of officials in the colonial hinterland was often conceived of in terms of extending order or rationality. Thus, Sarraut’s creation of his own colonial myth, which borrowed extensively from prevailing ideas about the relationship between French republicanism and colonialism, established a basis upon which other politicians and officials worked. The following analysis shows how Sarraut created his myth which lived on through colonial reformism.

*La Mise en valeur* begins with an essay that showed Sarraut’s views on the history of French colonialism. Throughout this part of his text his choice of language created a space between the actions of those he identifies as colonisers, and the politicians of his era who had to confront the realities of empire. On France’s acquisition of colonies Sarraut described a ‘geste colonial’ that was the result of independent actions made by ‘quelques hommes de l’Etat, de quelques chefs militaires’.[[121]](#footnote-121) The colonies, he wrote, were presented to the French government as a ‘fait accompli’ and there had not been a preordained plan in place to seize control of particular areas.[[122]](#footnote-122) Sarraut’s narrative ignored the widespread debate about the *mission civilisatrice* and France’s role within it that, as shown by Conklin, had been ongoing from the 1870s.[[123]](#footnote-123) Although there were instances of military officers or colonial governors acting on their own initiative, in Indochina especially, the idea that the French Empire was entirely built on this kind of informal colonisation is dubious. For example the French governor, Admiral Pierre de La Grandière, signed a treaty of annexation with the Khmer king Norodom a year before the decision to endorse the annexation was made in Paris.[[124]](#footnote-124) In a similar vein Sarraut went further and stated that the acquisition of colonies was achieved despite it being un-French ‘elle l’a eu malgré elle’.[[125]](#footnote-125) Whilst France had not intentionally gained an Empire, powers such as Britain had done so. Sarraut stated that Britain was inherently more inclined to Empire and it was within the British character to colonise whereas this was not the case for France.[[126]](#footnote-126) The idea that there was a natural aversion to colonialism within France is paradoxical for a power that had first established colonies alongside the other major colonial powers during the seventeenth century.[[127]](#footnote-127) What Sarraut was trying to do here was to create a narrative in which France had not deliberately acquired territories. I argue that Sarraut created this narrative in order to absolve France of the negative connotations of colonialism. Sarraut borrowed this concept of a benign or accidental colonialism from British historian Robert Seeley. What was created, and Sarraut defined his own thoughts on this in the rest of his text, was a version of colonialism that could excuse itself from the brutal excesses perceived in other empires through a series of devices and ideas.

We have seen the first of these outlined above, his history of France’s colonial project created a gap between the actions of a colonial power such as Britain and the actions of France allowing France to be *different*. Interestingly, the idea that an Empire could be acquired ‘accidentally’ or without serious intent was first applied by a British scholar in a study of the British Empire. Seeley’s *The Expansion of England* is known for its statement that Britain had ‘conquered half the world in a fit of absence of mind.’[[128]](#footnote-128) It is apparent that Sarraut had encountered Seeley’s work as later in the text he quoted Seeley. Sarraut ‘borrowed’ Seeley’s idea and applied it to France, which had the effect of contradicting Seeley’s proposition which applied this idea to the acquisition of the British Empire.[[129]](#footnote-129) However, the distinction created by Sarraut held symbolic and mythical importance. For Sarraut, if France had been a true colonising power there would have been a directed process of colonisation. However, Sarraut created a narrative that there had not been a plan so the idea of France being an accidental colonial power is upheld. This is one way that he reconciled the existence of a French Empire with the ideals about liberty and democracy that he held, and he achieved this through the creation of the myth of a benign colonisation.

### *Miroir de sa conscience*: Sarraut’s new colonial policy

Sarraut sought to define a new colonial policy that would be able to deal with the implications of the previous French colonial policy. His efforts at this further demonstrate the colonial mind’s engagement with dissonance. Sarraut attempted to deal with the contradiction between a history of colonial exploitation and his new policy through his rewriting of the past. He argued that what had occurred before was not a ‘true’ representation of French character. Although in the third chapter of *La mise en valeur* Sarraut was supposed to be defining his vision for ‘Une Politique Coloniale’ he was still focused on putting forward his understanding of the past.

Sarraut’s vision for his *politique coloniale* extended further than the economic reform that makes up the main focus of his work.[[130]](#footnote-130) Sarraut’s *politique coloniale* was ‘la mise en valeur d’ensemble’ in which there was to be an improvement within the moral, intellectual, political spheres as well as within the ‘matérielle’ sphere.[[131]](#footnote-131) The affirmation of this policy would define ‘une fois pour toutes, le caractère, l'esprit et les buts de la politique coloniale française’.[[132]](#footnote-132) After he declared the significance of his plan Sarraut hinted at his thoughts on the failure of previous French administration of the colonies,

[c]’est un point fondamental, sur lequel une explication précise et complète n’est pas superflue, surtout dans les temps que nous vivons. S’il faut, en effet, marquer fermement le sens de cette politique, c’est pour cette raison nécessaire et suffisante qu’un grand pays comme le nôtre, où qu’il aille et qu’il agisse, doit pouvoir dire et se dire que, partout, il reste fidèle à lui-même. **C’est qu’il doit pouvoir regarder même sa politique “coloniale” bien en face, comme un miroir de sa conscience, et ne pas avoir honte ou remords d’une contradiction choquante**, d’une antinomie brutale entre ce qu’il fait au loin et ce qu’il fait dans sa métropole. C’est qu’enfin il doit franchement envisager et accepter les conséquences logiques des principes selon lesquels il conduit l’entreprise extérieure dont il a pris la responsabilité.[[133]](#footnote-133)

It is clear that Sarraut thought that there were negative aspects of French colonial rule, and he very nearly acknowledged them specifically, but he stopped short of making an unambiguous statement decrying the actions of previous regimes. At the moment he was close to acknowledging explicitly the negative aspects of French colonial rule he paused and imagined instead a new policy where principles would be the basis of colonial rule. Sarraut’s new and more equal colonial policy overwrote the prior failure to have a policy that was more equal. This excerpt shows that Sarraut was aware of the paradox within his own text. When he wrote that colonial policy should serve as a mirror through which the contradictions of colonial rule must be confronted it was apparently only an activity to be enjoyed at an unspecified point in the future. This point was reinforced when, in the next paragraph, he wrote ‘où se retrouvent les grands traits de la tradition nationale’.[[134]](#footnote-134) Sarraut defined these ‘grands traits’ which included ‘agir dans le droit et pour le droit, de civiliser au sens plein du mot’.[[135]](#footnote-135) This phrase was another of Sarraut’s attempts at trying to overwrite the transgressions of previous French administrations. Despite his unambiguous calls for colonial policy to serve as a mirror to the French, to enable a form of self-reflexion, Sarraut did not engage fully with this self-reflexion. Clearly, he did not like what was looking back at him in the *miroir*, so his reaction was to look past what confronted him and then obscure it with his vision of the future. Sarraut had to do this in order to overcome the contradictions between his advocacy for colonial reform and the reality of the French colonial past.

### Morality, dissonance, and colonial humanism

Sarraut stated that this new policy will reverse the ‘pacte colonial’ that had existed previously, and again failed to remark on the contradiction between the history of French colonialism and the necessity of a new policy for the colonies.[[136]](#footnote-136) He described the ‘pacte colonial’ as a process by which the colonies were treated as exclusive markets and the French doctrine had been ‘coupe[r] l’arbre pour avoir le fruit, et ne le replante[r] pas’.[[137]](#footnote-137) However, in this passage he never referred directly to any specific colonial power, and did not refer to directly to France. When Sarraut did refer to France it was done with the disclaimer that a doctrine that challenges the unequal manner of the ‘pacte*’* must come from ‘une nation comme la nôtre, qui porte partout […] une tradition morale’.[[138]](#footnote-138) Furthermore, he did not confront the contradiction between the simultaneous existence of a ‘pacte colonial’ alongside the French ‘mission humaine’; I argue that by their very nature these ideas are mutually exclusive. France could not have been engaged in the *mission humaine* whilst also practising the ‘pacte colonial’. Through his rewriting of France’s actions in acquiring colonies Sarraut was sanitising the past.

Sarraut went further with his explanation of his version of the past. In this past, France was still not the same as the grasping colonial powers such as Britain and there had been higher purpose to the actions of his predecessors. To support his version of history in which France engaged in a kind of benevolent colonialism he wrote that there had been a guiding force behind the actions taken during French colonialism which he described as ‘ferments moraux’.[[139]](#footnote-139) Sarraut explained that

Ces ferments moraux, en effet, ont toujours plus ou moins incorporé aux buts politiques et utilitaires de toute expansion française une action d’humaine justice, une volonté de civilisation, un réflexe de cet idéalisme libéral et bienfaiteur dont notre patrie a été l’apôtre dans l’univers.[[140]](#footnote-140)

The presence of ‘ferments moraux’ that represented the inherent humanism of French politics also enabled a process of forgetting and obscuring. A series of powerful linguistic and rhetorical devices were employed in order to overwrite French colonial history. Sarraut’s image of invisible ‘ferments’ guiding the policy of previous generations of French politicians had a faith-like quality which appeared again with his use of the term ‘apôtre’. This is a key demonstration of the creation of a colonial myth. Sarraut imagined a natural force guiding the actions of his predecessors. Through the existence of a guiding hand Sarraut was able to absolve all sins committed in the name of Empire and managed to transform them into righteous humanist actions done in the name of civilisation.

Although it is unlikely that a politician would have directly acknowledged the murky past of colonialism, and instances of violence were not often paraded around by colonial ministers, officials were aware of them and had to reconcile with them. To do this they do what Sarraut did in *La Mise en valeur*. Sarraut knew that France did not have anything that could be understood as an equal relationship with the colonies. When he wrote about a process of ‘“exploitation”, dans le sens péjoratif du mot’and the creation of exclusive markets he recognised that France did this.[[141]](#footnote-141) However, Sarraut did not accept the logical extension of this; that France built the unequal relationship. Even if Sarraut had accepted that France had built the unbalanced relationship with the colonies, the inequality would not matter in Sarraut’s future as *mise en valeur* would address the needs of the overseas territories. As the colonial mind accepted the ideas within Sarraut’s text it is interesting to ponder the implications of this. Other officials who read Sarraut’s text and were convinced by it thereby absorbed the contradictions contained within. The ability of the colonial mind to deal with contradiction through dissonance is a key ability.

### Dealing with dissonance: the power of the *patrie* and the relationship to the *mère-patrie*

A further example of the contradiction within Sarraut’s text is found in his use of the concept of *patrie* and *mère-patrie*. In his text the terms *patrie* and *mère-patrie* are used to avoid the contradiction of the people in the colonies having been conquered but later having a loyalty to France. The *patrie* was responsible for the expansion of France whilst the *mère-patrie* was the focus of loyalty for the colonised. The use of these terms shows that well as the past being malleable, in *La mise en valeur*, Sarraut’s use of language was flexible. With a poetic turn of phrase Sarraut summed up the process of colonisation up to the time of writing; the Empire was ‘acquis par la persévérance de la Patrie, pacifié par sa justice, fertilisé par sa science’.[[142]](#footnote-142) Later in the text he wrote that the inhabitants of the French empire were all invested in the future of the ‘mère-patrie’.[[143]](#footnote-143) This poses the question of whether the ‘Patrie’ whose ‘perseverance’ led to the growth of the French empire was the same *mère-patrie* that Sarraut mentions later in the text. The latter *mère-patrie* was the ideal for which the colonies had made huge sacrifices during the First World War. The use of these terms in contradictory contexts demonstrates the duality of colonialist thought. Within the text the *patrie* was the thinly-veiled conqueror whilst later the *mère-patrie* was the object of such adoration that the colonised peoples freely chose to give their material wealth and lives for. Notably, Sarraut used the term ‘patrie’ when discussing the contributions, and numbers, of colonial troops who fought in the First World War.[[144]](#footnote-144) Within Sarraut’s mind the addition of *mère-patrie* allowed him to navigate the difficult proposition of the colonised being loyal to the *patrie* that had conquered them. However, he did not feel the need to make this distinction when discussing military matters.

The divided nature of colonialism is often described by scholars of the colonial world and usually the divide is understood to be between the coloniser and the colonised.[[145]](#footnote-145) For Fanon the distinctions were imposed by force and the divisions between the world of the colonised and the world of the coloniser were stark.[[146]](#footnote-146) The manner in which Sarraut wrote of the conquest of the colonised through the perseverance of the *patrie* then subsequently wrote of their loyalty to the *mère-patrie* is another form of duality within the colonial world and can be described as dissonance. This duality, unlike the one identified by Fanon, exists predominantly in the mind of the coloniser. Memmi referred to the ‘inherent contradiction’ of colonisation; the dissonance shown here reveals that there was an inherent contradiction in Sarraut’s writing. [[147]](#footnote-147) This duality enabled contradictions to be overlooked and for violence or brutality to not undermine the civilised rule of France. The role that this ‘overlooking’ had in French politicians’ approach to Empire grows in importance throughout the period of reform. When discussing reform, the ability to accept dissonance allowed officials to blinker themselves to the lack of previous action and to plan for the future. When this ability was combined with the mythmaking which highlighted, invented or exaggerated small gestures towards progress, the colonial mind had a significant tool that enabled it to continue in the colonial endeavour.

### Different times, different traumas

The fact that Sarraut’s response to the crisis of the First World War was to envisage reform was based in part on his understanding of French history. This highlights the importance of education in the colonial mind and shows how Sarraut created a pattern when he was thinking about reform. As nearly all officials were highly educated they were constantly drawing on the things they had learnt. For example, Sarraut used his knowledge of the events that followed the Franco-Prussian war in 1870 as a reference point for his own response to the crisis following the First World War. The trauma of the war led Sarraut to directly compare France of the 1920s and the France of 1871 as it recovered from the shock of invasion. In 1921 Sarraut could still identify the effects of a war that had damaged France’s main industrial regions. The effects on what had been some of the richest and most productive regions in France were devastating. Following defeat in the Franco-Prussian war France had undergone a period of introspection after which it reasserted itself as a global power, in part through its imperial expansion. France acquired numerous colonies during the 1880s including Indochina, and expanded into West Africa. Sarraut identified the reaction to the Franco-Prussian war as an example of how France could rebuild and reassert her status as a global power. The construction he used to make this comparison conveyed the sense of disaster that he perceived as taking place following the defeat of the French:

A cet égard, aujourd'hui comme après les jours sombres de 1871, c'est la même obligation qui commande au Gouvernement français de réparer les pertes matérielles énormes de la guerre par le vigoureux épanouissement des facultés et des énergies créatrices de la nation.[[148]](#footnote-148)

This use of history shows the importance of knowledge for the colonial mind. It also shows how officials searched for reason and patterns within events. This led to the similar reactions to crises and trauma that were repeated after both World Wars and later in the 1950s. Within the quoted text Sarraut’s use of the term 'obligation' showed the prevalence of the idea of a mission and duty that those in power must perform, whilst his use of ‘la nation’ blurred the boundaries between metropolitan France and the colonies. This is an example of Sarraut linking the idea of ‘la plus grande France’ with events in French history through his loose use of the term ‘nation’. In *La Mise en valeur* he outlined his plan for the future of France and the French colonies; he wrote extensively about his plans for infrastructure and investment so ‘la nation’ refers to both France and the French colonies. The invocation of the post Franco-Prussian war recovery was done with the idea of a far larger ‘France’ in mind, as this time a recovery was to involve the colonies.

Sarraut was extending French history into the colonies in a way that had not been possible before. He hailed the manner in which France restored its position in the world post-1871 through the construction of railways, roads, and large-scale investment in metropolitan infrastructure; Sarraut wanted to instigate the same process within the colonies.[[149]](#footnote-149) Sarraut derived inspiration from the process of renewal that France had undergone following this defeat and lauded it as being the catalyst for France’s global expansion. Furthermore, his employment of a traumatic period of French history in order to further his project was a gesture towards those metropolitan politicians who had little sense of the colonies and thought of them as a place far removed from hexagonal concerns. Sarraut wanted to frame events in the colonies in a way that metropolitan officials could understand. More importantly, Sarraut had identified that following the Franco-Prussian War France expanded its empire regaining prestige. Now, following the First World War he looked to improve the economies of the recently acquired colonies through *mise en valeur* which would be beneficial for France; Sarraut was establishing the pattern of colonial reform.

### Assimilation or association?

In the context of a debate about ‘la plus grand France’ the policies of *assimilation* and *association* were key. These policies were debated at length within the French administration. Sarraut’s criticism of the policy of *assimilation* was based on essentialist ideas. This demonstrated that even at times when officials were critiquing ideas they thought were outdated, their opinions were limited by constraints of the colonial mind. In Sarraut’s text he was disapproving of the ideas behind *assimilation*, describing them as ‘l’ancienne erreur’.[[150]](#footnote-150) For Sarraut the reforms that he put forward would have signalled an end to *assimilation*; he was forthright in his desire to end the debate on these policies once and for all. The battle between these two ideas had been longstanding within some French political circles and claims that it had been resolved occur in this source as well as the ones dealt with later.

Traditional historical understandings of what *assimilation* and *association* meant have defined them as being diametrically opposed ideologies.[[151]](#footnote-151) *Assimilation* was designed to bring the colonies closer to France through a cultural, political, and social programme of reform. *Association* has been described as closer to the British model of ‘indirect rule’ where colonies were not encouraged to become closer to the ‘mother-country’ and local variations were given more consideration.[[152]](#footnote-152) More recent interpretations have identified that this distinction is not representative of how the policies were conceptualised at the time.[[153]](#footnote-153) It is true that these terms were defined and redefined by officials throughout the period covered by this thesis. One thing that is certain is that the debate about these policies often appeared when there were discussions of reform.

In *La Mise en valeur* Sarraut wanted to be clear that his reforms were not *assimilation* yet some of his propositions would not be out of place in a proposal that was advocating *assimilation*. To support his criticisms of this policy he cited several prominent politicians for their views on the policy. Sarraut first quoted Jules Ferry who wrote in 1892 ‘’L’assimilation législative s’effrite, il faut aux Gouvernements coloniaux plus d’autonomie’’. As we shall see presently, the *loi-cadre* proposed increasing the powers of colonial governments showing the long-lasting nature of the debate. Sarraut also cited *ministre des Colonies* M. Georges Leygues who made a more general criticism of the idea of *assimilation* and stated ‘L’assimilation fut une erreur funeste; il faut y renoncer pour toujours’.[[154]](#footnote-154) Certainly, Sarraut’s hostility to the idea is legitimate yet his lack of articulation of what he meant by *assimilation* poses questions about what significance these terms had. Further to this, one of his criticisms of *assimilation* was that it did not account for the variety of people living in the French Empire. This criticism was based on essentialist ideas and shows the prevalence of colonial interpretations of ethnicity. Although Sarraut would have felt that he was respecting the different peoples of the French Empire. Sarraut used examples of different groups from within the same colony to demonstrate diversity. For Senegal he compared an urban *évolué* to a forest dweller from *l’Afrique Equatoriale Française* who was only three-quarters as evolved as his town-dwelling equivalent, he made a similar comparison using the example of an evolved or civilised person from Annam and a ‘kha’ from Laos to demonstrate his understanding of difference in Indo-China.[[155]](#footnote-155) These references to race were clear representations of the scientific justifications of colonialism that were based on ideas of European superiority that Conklin states were important in influencing French views of the colonised.[[156]](#footnote-156) Here Sarraut used essentialist visions of race and civilisation which, despite his protestation regarding his desire for greater equality, shows the lingering presence of colonial stereotypes and prejudice.

One final aspect of *La Mise en valeur* that shows further inconsistency is where Sarraut includes Algeria within the section on ‘Africa’ in his plan for *La Mise en valeur* thereby ignoring the distinction that saw Algeria as an integral part of France. Although this is not hugely remarkable his later description of the process by which Algeria did not fall under the purview of the Department of the Colonies as the result of ‘errements’ demonstrates Sarraut’s view of the colonial situation.[[157]](#footnote-157) Furthermore, a map he placed within the book also showed no distinction between France and any of the colonies.[[158]](#footnote-158) In most cartographical representations of Empire, colours or a pattern are used to denote the difference between metropole and colony, or even metropole, colony, territory etc. His use of a map that makes no distinction evidences that his conceptualisation of the relationship between France and the colonies was not as a distinct separation between the two; for Sarraut it was a far more fluid relationship. However, despite a cartographical representation of an empire without distinctions the ideals within *La Mise en valeur* were still steeped in colonial ideas about race, and identity.

### The colonial present and myth of the future: the limits of colonial imagination

The above section has shown how Sarraut engaged with the contradictions of the past through the creation of myth. Another key part of Sarraut’s text was his articulation of the future of the colonies. Within this section further contradictions appear. The first part of Sarraut’s text contained the justification for why *mise en valeur* was necessary whereas the second section of the text focused on the actual proposals to make it happen. This resulted in a contrast between the first and second sections of the book. Topics covered in the first section vary from histories of French colonialism to explorations of the colonies’ contributions to the war effort whilst the second is closely focused on the projects that will engender *mise en valeur*. Missing from the second section were the rhetorical flourishes that are prevalent in the explanatory chapters; it was far more ‘business-like’. Despite this change in tone the content of the second section provided further evidence of Sarraut’s colonial imagination. Sarraut examined the effects of the First World War on the colonies and identified that a new colonial policy was needed. Earlier in his work he wrote that for many in France ‘Les colonies, c’est quelque chose de très loin, là-bas, en plein soleil’.[[159]](#footnote-159) Although he noted that this comment was made in jest he lauded the effect the colonial exposition in Marseille of 1922 had on perceptions of the empire. For Sarraut this exhibition was a turning point and enabled French politicians to reimagine the future of the colonies. What Sarraut identified was a process by which the understanding of the boundaries of France was shifting and the parameters of the colonial relationship were changing. Although the efforts of the colonies during the First World War had begun this process, Sarraut was inspired by the public reaction to the exposition. He perceived that the timing was right for renewed attention on the colonies; therefore he created his plan for reform.

Analysing the second section of Sarraut’s text reveals more contradictions and concepts of the colonial mind. Through the plans for development in the colonies Sarraut showed how he perceived them as places to be moulded in order to engender *mise en valeur*. It also shows the limits of colonial imagination. The second section of Sarraut’s text is focused on the plan for the colonies; it analysed the current state of infrastructure, and socio-economic conditions. Within the sphere of education the difference becomes clear. In *La Mise en valeur* the promise held by the reformed education policy within the first section of the text is gone. In the first section Sarraut wrote that ‘[i]nstuire les indigènes est assurément notre devoir: c’est une obligation morale’.[[160]](#footnote-160) In the second section Sarraut turned to more practical matters regarding the construction and maintenance of school buildings.[[161]](#footnote-161) Following this analysis of the conditions for implementing *mise en valeur* the final section of his work turned to suggestions for how to approach the colonies in future.[[162]](#footnote-162) This section it was given the subtitle ‘Programme général de mise en valeur’. This is a key source for showing the imagination of an individual in the colonial administration. Whilst the ideas behind *La Mise en valeur* drew from a number of sources and spanned a wide range of potential methods of execution, the concrete proposals within the text were focused on physical construction projects.[[163]](#footnote-163) Another example of this imagination can be found the section on AOF which is divided into eight sections; ports and river, railways, road, water purification and conveyance, medical aid, education/teaching, administrative buildings, and irrigation.[[164]](#footnote-164) Most of these sections detailed construction plans such as the expansion of port facilities or repairs to a bridge. The content of this section shows that officials struggled to translate their ideals of reform through into practical measures. For all his talk of a ‘nouvelle politique coloniale’ Sarraut struggled to look beyond infrastructure projects as reform. It is in this way that the high-minded ideological nature of the first section is lost within the second section. Sarraut struggled to make both aspects of the plan work together.

Subsequent sections provide more evidence of the colonial mind’s idiosyncrasies. The section on administrative buildings reveals an imperial mind-set about how the primary city of a colony ‘should’ be. One of the proposals included is the building of a ‘hôtel des postes à Dakar’.[[165]](#footnote-165) Sarraut’s belief in the significance of a capital city is made clear in this section. He wrote:

La capitale de l’Afrique occidentale française n’a pas d’hôtel des postes. Le service des postes et télégraphes est installé très à l’étroit dans un bâtiment de fortune d’aspect vétuste, qui ne répond plus à l’importance d’une grande ville devenue une escale importante de l’Atlantique et qui produit la plus fâcheuse impression sur les étrangers qui passent à Dakar.[[166]](#footnote-166)

The lack of a dedicated post office was a grave situation and the rectification of this was a pressing priority for Sarraut. However, the reasons why this was a problem demonstrated the contradictions of *La Mise en valeur*. Sarraut gave two reasons that are linked; the importance of Dakar as a city becoming a port of call on the Atlantic coast and the negative impression that foreigners passing through the port would get from the poor state of the building. Neither of these reasons were related to the indigenous inhabitants of the colonies. There was a vast gap between the visions of reform within the differing sections of *La Mise en valeur*. This neglect of the needs of the colonised and a focus on the perceptions of foreigners from other colonial powers revealed the inability of the colonial mind to put the colonised people high on its list of priorities.

*La Mise en valeur* expanded on and explained a law that Sarraut had put forward to the chamber of deputies on 12th April 1921; this *projet de loi* in included in *La Mise en valeur*. The contents of the *projet* show that the colonial mind was caught between strengthening metropolitan control over the colonies and decentralising power to assemblies in them. A similar phenomenon is present at the time of the *loi-cadre* and explored in chapter three. Sarraut’s *projet* contained provisions that gave the French assembly substantial powers over policy in the colonies. However, within *La Mise en valeur* Sarraut advocated for greater decentralisation to the overseas territories.[[167]](#footnote-167) The law was intended to give almost exclusive rights for Parliament to determine the course of development within the colonies, this was at odds with Sarraut’s later appeals for *décentralisation* of power to assemblies within the colonies and shows the centralising tendency of the colonial mind and its inability to imagine substantial change in the colonies. The *projet* did include provisions for local governors to undertake public works that were to be funded by their own budgets but the power for large-scale planning would have remained in the hands of politicians in Paris as local budgets could not hope to approach similar levels to the metropolitan budget. As we shall see this is strikingly similar to what occurred during the implementation of the *loi-cadre*.

Over the following years the ideas and plans contained within *La Mise en valeur* and the *projet de loi* were pushed to one side as metropolitan concerns took centre-stage. However, the importance of this document in subsequent years marks it out as a vital source for understanding the colonial mind’s approach to reformism. It is significant not only for the popularisation, within political circles, of the idea of *La Mise en valeur* but also its contradictions. The contradictions within the text are numerous and reveal a conflict within the colonial mind. In one example of a contradiction, Sarraut stressed that the reform was not just a series of economic measures yet the measures in the *projet de loi* were restricted almost entirely to infrastructure developments.[[168]](#footnote-168) Furthermore, the reform was not designed to solely enrich France but throughout Sarraut referred the potential benefits to the *mère-patrie*. Lastly, *La Mise en valeur* was not part of a policy of assimilation but part of the project of reform involved political and cultural policies. Read as a whole, the document is confused; this confusion was the consequence of a long history of lack of clarity about the relationship between France and the colonies and, more fundamentally, the relationship between French republicanism and colonialism. Despite the confusion within *La Mise en valeur* it became a reference point for officials. It also serves a purpose as a source that reveals the ways in which an influential colonial official thought about reform.

## *La mise en valeur* and colonial policy

It must be stated that *La Mise en valeur* did not have a substantial direct impact on conditions within the colonies whereas the *loi-cadre* did. However, Sarraut’s text and ideas did have an impact on the colonial mind. The significance of his proposed reforms was highlighted in a history text written by ex-overseas administrators. In their recollection the unrealised reforms proposed in 1921 and 1923 were the forebear of subsequent reform.[[169]](#footnote-169) Although they acknowledged the turn towards an economics-based approach to reform they did not interrogate this further. They did not state that the ideals and language of *La Mise en valeur* shaped their own discourse although it is argued in this thesis that the colonial discourse was shaped by Sarraut. The way that *La Mise en valeur* penetrated the colonial mind is shown by the continued use of the concept by trainee administrators who studied at ENFOM in the 1950s. Conklin described how after Sarraut wrote *La* *Mise en valeur* government support for the policy rose ‘dramatically’.[[170]](#footnote-170) This large-scale intervention is precisely what the *loi-cadre* sought to enable. There are burgeoning ideas in *La Mise en valeur* that appeared later within the post Second World War world and also within the text of the *loi-cadre*. The idea of a more egalitarian relationship between France and the colonies is sustained following the *La Mise en valeur*. Attempts at defining and creating this relationship led to the idea of a 'plus grande France’. Despite his appeals for this more equal relationship one of the main contradictions of Sarraut's work is that he talked of a France of one hundred million Frenchmen but still referred to this large parts of this 'plus grande France' as colonies.[[171]](#footnote-171) The transition in the terms used to refer to the colonies only ended with the change from Empire to Union following the Second World War.[[172]](#footnote-172) The origins of the reform in post-Second World War France can be found in Sarraut’s text. The next question is how were these ideas transmitted from Sarraut’s text to officials working in the later periods?

## Marius Moutet’s ‘politique coloniale socialiste’ and the colonial mind

Continuities in the colonial discourse can be demonstrated using sources from later periods. This section analyses a document produced by the colonial minister of the Front Populaire Marius Moutet and contrasts the vision of reform contained within it with Sarraut’s vision. I find similarities in the vision for colonial policy espoused by Moutet and Sarraut. This is significant as it comes from the government of the Front Populaire which is held up as a moment that a new approach to the colonies was created. What emerges through the analysis of this document are key similarities between the two visions of reform despite the supposed ideological differences between Sarraut and Moutet.

The election of the *Front Populaire* came thirteen years after *La Mise en valeur* was published. The *Front Populaire* was a government made up of the *Parti Radical*, the SFIO, and the *Parti Communiste français*; within each party or grouping there were a wide variety of opinions towards the colonies. The PCF for example had, in 1927, called for the formation of national liberation movements within all colonies.[[173]](#footnote-173) On the other hand, prominent members of the SFIO and the Radicals had only expressed a desire to reduce the repressive aspects of French colonial rule. When the Radical and SFIO officials spoke of liberation they did not mean independence, they meant a degree of self-government.[[174]](#footnote-174) This tendency to use the term liberation to mean anything but self-government is key and repeated during the debates about the *loi-cadre*. This shows that the colonial mind was developing a specific definition of what terms like independence meant well before the question of genuine African independence was asked. Within some parts of the *Front Populaire* there were anticolonial sentiments that were far stronger than within mainstream opinion although these were tempered when the *Front Populaire* was in government. Colonial minister Marius Moutet explained that the policy of the *Front Populaire* would not be to end colonialism and abolish the French Empire; instead it would reform the colonial relationship.[[175]](#footnote-175)

Moutet explained his views on colonial policy in a letter to a colleague titled ‘Quelques réflexions sur une politique coloniale socialiste’.[[176]](#footnote-176) The letter marked a key moment for colonial policy and shows a continuity of ideas from *La Mise en valeur*. The ideas in the letter borrowed from Sarraut’s text, yet they were also informed by socialist politics. Given Moutet’s influence on colonial policy throughout the 1930s, 1940s and early part of the 1950s, analysing his ideas shows the development of colonial reformism. Early in the letter the ideas that Moutet expressed were reminiscent of those in *La Mise en valeur.* These ideas were ‘un effort de développement économique’ and ‘développement humain’.[[177]](#footnote-177) He stated that both forms of development were linked together in a similar way to how Sarraut had discussed colonial reform. Moutet felt that this focus on development set apart a socialist colonial policy from a non-socialist colonial policy. However, in *La mise en valeur* Albert Sarraut was very clear about the importance of there being a real benefit for the indigenous people in the colonies. The distinction that Moutet sought to make between his policy and that of the past was not as clear as he stated. In the paragraph that follows Moutet’s statement that he was proposing a new colonial policy he mirrored Sarraut. In *La Mise en valeur* Sarraut argued that colonialism was something that happened and France had to accept it. Moutet made a very similar statement and accepted the inevitability of colonialism,

Le colonialisme étant accepté comme un fait et comme un fait dont la brusque disparition, à l’heure actuelle, engendrerait plus d’inconvénients et de dangers que d’avantages*…*[[178]](#footnote-178)

Here Moutet used the context of rising extremism as justification for the continuation of the French Empire. Through making the justification external he removes any responsibility for the decision from the French government and created another fait accompli, similar to the situation that Sarraut created in his opening section of *La mise en valeur*.[[179]](#footnote-179) Furthermore, this shows how the colonial mind justified the continuity of colonial rule; the other option was too dangerous to accept. The basic ideas that underlined Moutet’s position were the same as those that formed the foundation of Sarraut’s plan.

Differences began to appear within Moutet’s plan in terms of execution and how he framed the necessity of colonialism. After identifying the possibility of a socialist education for indigenous people Moutet hailed the potential for the development of individualist capitalism as a necessary step in the ‘évolution’ of the colonies.[[180]](#footnote-180) The application of a Marxist reading of the stages of economic development is not a surprise but it is important to note as it clearly shaped Moutet’s plans for the colonies. However, Moutet was still invoking the topos of *évolution*. His theoretical understanding of the world led him to make equivalencies between the situation of colonial inhabitants, and metropolitan inhabitants. This is a departure from Sarraut who did not compare the metropolitan population to the colonial population and kept a clearer distinction between the two. For some colonial subjects Moutet found their situation to be similar to those in the metropole. Although he did not state it explicitly he was writing about the urbanised population in the major towns within the French Empire. He drew links between the different populations within the French Empire thereby showing that he held a more universalist approach to both metropolitan citizens and colonial subjects. However, Moutet then described the potential threats to the socialist colonial project; he stated,

[i]l faut prendre garde au déchaînement de forces incontrôlables, à la situation confuse instable, impropre à toute construction positive, qui pourrait sortir d’une action ou de notions mal digérées de lutte des classes, certains fanatismes religieux, la nature émotive des Africains, la dissimulation islamique et asiatique, et toutes sortes d’influences souterraines se rencontreraient en des réactions complexes et imprévisibles.[[181]](#footnote-181)

Moutet fell back on essentialist ideas about the colonised population despite his earlier nod towards a slightly more progressive position. It is striking how he invoked colonial ideas such as the need for *évolution* and the above description of colonised peoples; this demonstrates their prevalence in the colonial mind. He did not identify the threat of anti-colonialism or agitation for self-rule. What is more striking is how he squared so readily socialism with colonialism and used it to argue in favour of an interventionist colonial policy. Given the content of this letter it is not surprising that Moutet had made it clear that he felt the colonies could enjoy the benefits of French colonisation and was a proponent of the civilising mission.[[182]](#footnote-182) Despite it being a supposed evolution in French colonial policy there were substantial similarities between Sarraut’s policy and Moutet’s plan.

A point of departure from *La mise en valeur* for the new socialist colonial policy is the manner in which it would be achieved. Moutet envisioned a far less centralised version of reform that was based around the formation of ‘organisations coopératives’.[[183]](#footnote-183) The lingering effects of the Great Depression expressed themselves in his plan. He stated that the use of financial aid would be temporarily necessary and only in certain conditions.[[184]](#footnote-184) This approach initially seems very different to the centrally planned infrastructure projects envisioned by Sarraut. However, when Moutet elaborated on his plan it was still based on metropolitan expertise. He wrote ‘dans la plupart des pays de caractère colonial le mouvement coopératif ne peut pas se construire comme dans les pays de civilisation occidentale, sur un effort spontané venu d’en bas*.*’[[185]](#footnote-185) His plan for the creation of cooperatives was based on the idea of creating a cadre of ‘conseillers ou inspecteurs de la coopération’ who would foster the development of cooperative organisations throughout the French Empire.[[186]](#footnote-186) Moutet’s vision for the future of the French Empire was still one in which France played a paternalistic role and served as a guiding hand for the colonised peoples. The job description for the *conseillers de la coopération* specified the need for young candidates who were familiar with and sympathetic to the needs of the indigenous peoples.[[187]](#footnote-187) Moutet also envisaged the *conseillers* travelling to see examples of working cooperatives in other countries before undertaking a voyage across the French Empire to see what could be done there.[[188]](#footnote-188) The interplay between the local and global within Moutet’s plan was one of its more striking aspects. Despite the lingering paternalism of his plan and belief that the indigenous peoples of the French Empire were incapable of forming their own cooperatives, he did seek to create a system that engaged with as many people as possible. Contrasted with the construction-focused plan in *La Mise en valeur* Moutet’s idea was far more about people. Between *La Mise en valeur* and Moutet’s reflections a turn towards an empire of individuals had taken place despite lingering paternalistic colonial attitudes.

The *Front Populaire* did enjoy successes in reforming the colonies with various freedoms, including freedom of the press and the right to unionise being extended overseas.[[189]](#footnote-189) However, attempts at reform were often frustrated by colonial governors with a prominent example being the refusal of the Algerian Governor-General to allow Arab Algerians free travel to France.[[190]](#footnote-190) The most prominent example of the reformism of the *Front Populaire* was the Blum-Violette plan. The plan was designed to liberalise citizenship rights allowing Algerian Muslims to become French citizens whilst maintaining the right to be subject to Islamic law. Following unrest amongst French settlers in Algeria that plan never saw the light of day.[[191]](#footnote-191) This impasse was avoided in West Africa where the settler population did not disrupt attempts at reform although the reforms that were enacted were limited in scope.[[192]](#footnote-192) Despite the failure to implement large-scale reform Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch argued that the colonial policy of the *Front Populaire* had a lasting legacy. The main legacy was a more human-focused colonial policy that sought to improve human conditions by improving the economic situation.[[193]](#footnote-193) In part this was because of members of the government of May 1936 were still involved in politics post Second World War, with their opinions shaped by their experiences of 1939-1945. Marius Moutet was a prominent example of this, as his career as a politician started in 1914 and lasted beyond the *loi-cadre* and into the Fifth Republic.

Despite the new policy attempted by the *Front Populaire* the most radical attempt at reform, the Blum-Violette plan, met with failure. The failure of the Blum-Violette plan was a key factor in shaping the rise of Algerian nationalism and discussions about whether it could be passed via a decree foreshadowed the way in which the *loi-cadre* enabled the government of the Fourth Republic to legislate without parliamentary consent. Leon Blum discussed the possibility of passing the law by decree prior to taking it to parliamentary scrutiny, although he ultimately decided it was not appropriate to pass the law in that way.[[194]](#footnote-194) The architects of the *loi-cadre* had no such scruples and the debate about the constitutionality of the law granting to right to legislate by decree was quickly resolved. This discussion about passing the law by decree combined with Sarraut’s attempt at controlling the long-term direction of policy within his *projet de loi* showed a tendency in the colonial mind to attempt to subvert democratic structures when dealing with colonial affairs.

What emerges then from the comparison between the policies of the *Front Populaire*, the words of Marius Moutet, and *La Mise en valeur* were strong links expressed in terms of language, ideas, and policy. It comes as little surprise then that Algerian socialists expressed dismay at the lack of progress made since the days of Laval and Tardieu.[[195]](#footnote-195) Looking at the form that the *loi-cadre* took it is clear that attempts were made by left wing politicians to address some of the failures of the *Front Populaire* in terms of colonial policy. Ultimately the *loi-cadre* was promulgated under a SFIO government and so it is important to understand the how left-wing political parties approached colonialism and colonial reform when in power. The history of the French left and colonialism is a nuanced and complex and policy underwent revisions and reversals over many years. In an article that focuses on the left and the ‘problème colonial’ in between the World Wars, Manuela Semidei charts the various ambiguities and vagaries of this relationship.[[196]](#footnote-196) Within her analysis are implications for the situation that confronted the leaders of the SFIO in the post Second World War world. However, before reaching the post Second World War stage of reform our attention must turn to the Brazzaville conference which established the ground rules for post Second World War reform. Prior to the *loi-cadre* the strongest expression of a ‘left’ colonial policy came with the accession to power of the *Front Populaire*. Expressions of colonial policy from members of its three constituent parties provide context, and further understanding of how colonial reform developed. Despite some difference between the visions of reform articulated by Sarraut and Moutet the ideas expressed in their writing show a continuity of approach. The ideas of both men were also expressed using the terminology of the colonial discourse; an example of this is the use of *évolution* by both men. The next source shows further continuities in the colonial mind in another time of crisis for the French Republic.

## 1944 - The Brazzaville Conference: contradictions in France’s new colonialism

The next step in the development of French colonial reformism came during the Second World War. The conference of representatives of France and some African colonies was held in January and February 1944 in Brazzaville, capital of *L’Afrique Equatoriale Française*. This section of the chapter analyses a pamphlet that was an official summation of the events at Brazzaville. The analysis of the pamphlet highlights the continued formation of the colonial discourse within the political realm. Within this analysis the use of concepts and topoi of the colonial discourse are highlighted to demonstrate how they were being recycled and created within the context of crisis. Amongst the concepts discussed at Brazzaville were unity between the metropole and the colony, and *assimilation* and *association*. This section also highlights the use of *évolution* by a politician involved in the conference. At the time of Brazzaville France was yet again facing a national emergency although, in some ways, the disaster of the Second World War was greater than that of the First. The discussions at Brazzaville further demonstrated the colonial mind’s habit of reacting to crisis by imagining colonial reform as Sarraut had done in the wake of the First World War. However, at Brazzaville African delegates had a prominent role in the discussions of reform; a key difference to when Sarraut wrote *La mise en valeur*. The proclamations of the African delegates can be used to show how the colonial mind functioned in the minds of officials whose background was not typically metropolitan. More generally the proceedings at Brazzaville represented a kind of survey of official thoughts and opinions about the Empire. Therefore, the record of Brazzaville can be analysed for the presence of the colonial discourse to show what state the colonial mind was in.

The importance that the Brazzaville Conference had in creating the conditions for post-war reform was recently highlighted by Martin Shipway. Shipway noted that when Gaston Defferre, chief architect of the *loi-cadre*, presented the law to the National Assembly for its first reading he quoted Charles de Gaulle’s speech from the opening of the Brazzaville conference; for Shipway this was in part a shrewd rhetorical gesture designed to placate Gaullist *députés* within the assembly. Significantly, this nod towards Brazzaville also represented Defferre creating a link between his address in 1956, the Brazzaville Conference, and the series of reforms that had been implemented in the intervening years.[[197]](#footnote-197) However, there are other links between Brazzaville and the *loi-cadre* that Shipway did not explore, specifically the continuities in language and ideas between the two moments. In another article Shipway identified the legacy of a concept of ‘reformism’ established pre-1945 by the *Front Populaire* and its influence on the Brazzaville Conference; in this article he also hints at the influence of Sarraut’s reformism.[[198]](#footnote-198) For Shipway it comes as no surprise that there are links between the *Front Populaire* and the Brazzaville Conference; there was a legacy in terms of personnel so it follows that there would be a transfer of ideas.[[199]](#footnote-199) However, Shipway argued that despite links to the *Front Populaire* there was no clear reference made to the *Front Populaire* at the conference as the focus was innovation.[[200]](#footnote-200) Using the investigations already made by Shipway the following analysis shows the role that the Brazzaville conference had in shaping the colonial discourse and influencing the colonial mind. This section of the chapter links the Brazzaville Conference into the history of reformism that was inspired by Sarraut’s *La Mise en valeur*.

### Shaping the narrative about the conference

The Brazzaville Conference can be linked to what came before and after it through an examination of the ideas and language within a brochure that was published by the French government in order to provide a resource for members of the public who were interested in what was discussed.[[201]](#footnote-201) The topoi of *évolution* and reform, and the concept of democracy were key ideas referenced at the conference. This analysis reveals the ways in which the colonial mind was expressed at the conference.

The pamphlet was entitled *La Conférence Africaine Française, Brazzaville: 30 Janvier 1944 – 8 Février 1944* and published by the Colonial Ministry in 1945. The one hundred and fifty pages of the pamphlet contain details of who attended the conference, speeches from those present, a list of recommendations, extracts from the official minutes, and two items added in from after the conference; one is an extract of communications between the commissioner of the Colonies and the provisional government assembly, the other is a list of decrees that implemented the recommendations of the conference. The inclusion of additional sections not actually from the conference was a gesture intended to demonstrate the tangible effects that the discussions at the conference had. The person responsible for compiling the brochure made a clear statement of intent within the *avant-propos*,

[t]el est l’objet qu’on se propose ici. Les discours officiels, le programme… la somme enfin des recommandations présentées par la Conférence sont intégralement reproduits. On a ajouté, pour donner au lecteur l’atmosphère de la Conférence, un certain nombre de documents annexes tels que le procès-verbal d’une séance : l’esprit qui animait la Conférence et le sens profond de ses recommandations n’en seront ainsi que mieux éclairés*.*[[202]](#footnote-202)

The brochure was the official, and public record of the conference and it was designed to convey a particular understanding of what took place at Brazzaville. The author of the *avant-propos* wanted to demonstrate two things to the reader; the first was the ‘spirit’ of unity that underlined the conference, the other was that the outcome of the conference was a progressive colonial policy. This new approach was to spread ‘French’ democracy but it was still framed in the language of the *mission civilisatrice*. This was the contradiction of the Brazzaville conference where the agenda was to democratise the Empire but the colonial mind still conceptualised the colonies as places that needed to be civilised.

On one level the document is purely rhetorical, it contains transcripts of speeches from members of the provisional government including Charles de Gaulle. However, it also contains concrete proposals that were translated into legislation. One of the proposals that emanated from the Brazzaville Conference included within it a recommendation that stated,

[t]out projet de réforme qui tendait seulement à améliorer le système de représentation existant au 1er septembre: députés et sénateurs coloniaux au Parlement métropolitain, Conseil supérieur de la France d’outre-mer, paraît inadéquat et condamné à la stérilité.[[203]](#footnote-203)

Although this recommendation was limited to reform of representation it was made in very strong terms and unquestionably broke from the past. It shows that the author was concerned that reforms had not done enough to address the lack of political representation for the colonised peoples. The acknowledgment of the failure of the political system that governed the colonies continued after it was identified at Brazzaville. This acknowledgement of failure and that reform was needed was very different from the way that the past was engaged with in *La Mise en valeur* in which Sarraut employed a way of owning past failures by obscuring and ultimately ignoring them. Within the context of a France that was reeling from the trauma of occupation the affirmation of democratic ideals was a response to the contradiction between continuing colonialism within territories that months before had liberated France. Robert Gildea’s cynical assessment described the process as being intended to ‘give the impression of liberation at the hands of France.’[[204]](#footnote-204) Given the tendency of officials to find ways of ignoring the contradictions within which they found themselves I would challenge this line of thinking. Some officials did not have to give the impression they were liberating the Empire, they fully believed that they were.

### Similarities and differences with Sarraut’s *La mise en valeur*

There are parallels between the content of the pamphlet from Brazzaville and Sarraut’s text. Within the written-up speeches and some of the surrounding text the same topoi, concepts, and ideas that were in Sarraut’s text appear. The topos of evolution, the question of unity between the metropole and the colonies, and the concepts of *assimilation* and *association* can be shown in both texts. The continuity of ideas is not necessarily surprising. However, politician Fily Dabo Sissoko’s unquestioning use of some of the colonial discourse is. This section argues that the colonial discourse can be seen spanning both texts despite the new ideas being discussed at Brazzaville.

The author of the *avant-propos* referred to the unity of feeling and action at the conference. The second paragraph highlighted the different people who assembled for the first time at a conference on colonial soil. The fourth – quoted above – mentioned the ‘atmosphère’ and the ‘esprit’ of the conference.[[205]](#footnote-205) Here the author was seeking to show that there was a general consensus amongst metropolitan and African officials that they were in favour of profound reform. The author was attempting to convince the metropolitan reader that there was support for reform in the overseas territory at a time when there had been an anti-colonial rising in Indochina. The final paragraph confirms this using the concept of democracy.

‘c’est l’unité qui règne parmi les administrateurs coloniaux, en faveur d’une politique coloniale progressive, généreuse et pleinement conforme à l’idéal démocratique du peuple français’.[[206]](#footnote-206)

The author was also attempting to link the metropolitan reader to events in the overseas territories in a way that Sarraut had attempted in his text.[[207]](#footnote-207) Sarraut had addressed the fact that there was a separation between the metropole and the colony and called for greater links between the two. In the Brazzaville pamphlet the same appeal was made. This showed the repetition of thought across the two texts. In Sarraut’s text he discussed the importance of getting members of the public interested in the Empire and a similar idea appeared in the *avant-propos* of the Brazzaville pamphlet. In the later text the idea of imperial unity is less novel and the appeal is made more subtly but the basic idea appears in both texts. Furthermore, the idea of a ‘nouvelle politique coloniale’ appeared within *La Mise en valeur* and the author of the *avant-propos* proposed a ‘politique coloniale progressive’. In the colonial mind there were limitations in the ideas of reform and the ways in which they were expressed.

A later section within the brochure contained a discussion on the effects and philosophy of colonisation whilst another contains what it refers to as ‘opinions africaines’. Despite this section of the pamphlet being dedicated to the opinions of Africans the fundamental ideas and discourse were drawn from the colonial mind. The key topos of evolution and the concepts of assimilation and association were used throughout a report delivered by an African politician. Within this section is a report of an address given by Soudanese deputy Fily Dabo Sissoko who later became a prominent leader in independent Mali. Sissoko was a graduate of *l'Ecole normale d'instituteurs de Saint-Louis du Sénégal* and the *l’Ecole Normale William Ponty,* and entered French colonial politics as the *chef de canton* of Niamba, Mali.[[208]](#footnote-208) His address was titled ‘L’évolution et la colonisation en A.O.F.’.[[209]](#footnote-209) Sissoko began his report with the statement ‘[l]a tâche essentielle de la colonisation est d’aider à l’évolution du ou des groupements ethniques dont elle a charge devant l’Histoire’.[[210]](#footnote-210) He was using the topos of evolution which was prevalent in the colonial discourse although his use was slightly different. French officials were more likely to use a construction that implied they had control over the *évolution* but Sissoko stated that the aim should be to help this *évolution*. Despite this he did not question the idea of *évolution*. The policies that Sissoko explored as the tools for helping the *évolution* of the colonised were *association* and *assimilation*.

Within his report Sissoko described the heterogeneity of AOF and listed the variations within the bloc ‘[d]isparité de races, de langues, de coutumes, de religions. Disparité plus grande de niveaux évolutifs, d’âges mentaux’.[[211]](#footnote-211) He then compared different groups in the Sahel region to support his point about there being more evolved and less evolved groups within AOF. He identified a group, such as the ‘Nioniossé’ and invited the reader to compare their level of evolution with that of a ‘disciple de Cheick Sidia’.[[212]](#footnote-212) He made another comparison between different groups before later using a metaphor that invoked the imagery of Rome versus the barbarians.[[213]](#footnote-213) As shown earlier when Sarraut did this he compared different groups in Indochina where he had been posted. Sissoko chose examples he knew better but made the same argument. The address from Sissoko showed the penetration of colonial ideas and how they could still be called upon in a more progressive setting such as Brazzaville. It also shows that African elites educated within the French system thought in the same terms as their French counterparts. The statements in the pamphlet from the Brazzaville conference demonstrate that Sissoko subscribed to some of the same ideas about the relative evolution of Africans within the French colonies. These ideas were built around the relationship between civilisation and the lack of civilisation, and of the gap between the urban and rural spaces within the colony.

Fily Dabo Sissoko’s role as an indigenous participant in the colonial regime was highlighted by Catherine Atlan and Jean-Hervé Jézéquel. Their argument situated Sissoko as a young agitator turned savvy politician who used the French predilection for their own propaganda about Africans to further his career. This is an interesting argument that is based on an understanding of Sissoko as being a member of the anti-colonial elite. Unfortunately, despite it being fundamental to their argument, Atlan and Jézéquel do not cite the 1927 article that is the basis of their argument for Sissoko being anti-colonial in his early years. The authors did quote Sissoko with what they described as a key sentence, ‘The Black must remain Black, in both life and development’.[[214]](#footnote-214) In the brochure from Brazzaville, Sissoko quoted an excerpt with those words in. He quoted,

 [e]t voici nos conclusions dans « Le Soudan Français ». Il conviendrait que:

le Noir reste noir, de vie et d’évolution;

le Blanc essaie par tous les moyens appropriés de faire évoluer le Noir selon sa ligne d’évolution propre noire.[[215]](#footnote-215)

Sissoko cited the above quote from a text called *Le Soudan Français*. This was not a text attributed to Sissoko. Atlan and Jézéquel take their citation from Sissoko’s contribution to the *Congrès International de l’Evolution des Peuples Coloniaux*. Sissoko quoted the above text from *Le Soudan Français* within a report in which he discussed *assimilation* and *association*. He used the quotation to support his argument that *assimilation* was not the correct policy to be pursued in the overseas territories.

Atlan and Jézéquel’s article is an example of ‘knowing the end of the story’; knowing that decolonisation took place and looking backwards to find an explanation. If we take the alternate position that politicians were not vying for power in a state approaching independence and that they were working within a system they expected to continue, then the words and actions of politicians make more sense. In the case of Sissoko he wanted to continue the policy of *association* as he perceived that it promised benefits for him and other members of the colonised peoples. His main criticism was that *assimilation* was not allowing Africans in the French Empire to develop on their own terms but continued association would enable this to happen. Moreover, Sissoko identified himself as part of an *évolué* elite who were to play a role in furthering the policy of *association*.[[216]](#footnote-216) Sissoko’s acceptance of his status as an *évolué* showed that he was using parts of the colonial mind. The more explicit essentialist ideas used by Sissoko and their selection by the compilers of the brochure show how deeply ingrained these thoughts were within the colonial mind. Criticism of *assimilation* was a theme within all three of the documents analysed in this chapter despite the differences between them and the different objectives they were designed to address. The similarities between Sissoko’s and Sarraut’s approaches to the debate about assimilation and association is another example of how the colonial mind focused on a few specific issues.

## Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the colonial mind’s approach to reform in the period 1921 – 1944 using key examples of individuals articulating their own ideas of reform. The chapter has identified that there are patterns to the ways that the colonial mind approached reform. Officials proposed the most radical reform in the aftermath of the crisis of the First World War and during the occupation of the metropole in the Second World War. The reforms proposed between these two moments by Marius Moutet was an adaptation of Sarraut’s earlier ideas with left-wing political ideas. In response to a crisis officials examined the possibilities of reform. Sarraut’s *La mise en valeur* and the Brazzaville conference are key examples of this. The examples used within this chapter show that there was an official way of thinking about colonies that despite different times and contexts was, at least in part, based on similar ideas and terms. This broad spectrum included colonial humanism, the topos of *evolution*, the concepts of *assimilation* or *association*, and economic and social development. It was underpinned by a belief in the ideals of French republicanism and that they could be extended into the colonies. All of the sources included in this chapter, despite all of their differences whether it be author, political party, timeframe, draw on similar ideas and collectively defined a vision for reform that was for the most part shared by officials. The framing of reform took place between the First and Second World Wars; in this period the colonial discourse settled on a set of ideas about the role of France in the colonies.

Within the moments where reform was considered, a similar train of thought which was in part expressed with the colonial discourse emerged. Officials made appeals to a mythical humanitarian colonialism that France had brought to the colonies. Sarraut phrased this in terms of a ‘mission humaine’ or a ‘tradition morale’. By the time of Brazzaville Sissoko had accepted that the mission of colonialism was to help the ‘évolution’ of colonised peoples. This demonstrated the proliferation of ideas of a colonial mission. Following the acceptance of the role of the French in the colonised territories officials then turned to imagining how reform would be enacted. For Sarraut reform was primarily economic and involved infrastructure projects. For Sissoko from his position as an *évolués* politician in the French colonial administration, the policy relating to indigenous people in the colonial system was the most important. He foresaw a policy similar to *association* that allowed the colonised people to find their own route to *évolution* with the help of the French and évolue politicians. The pattern of colonial thought here is clear. Following a crisis, officials created a vision of reform that was bound up in myths of the past and visions of the future. However, the key contradictions and dissonance of thought of these two positions were ignored. This was the function of the colonial myth in the colonial mind, it allowed for contradictions to be overcome. The process by which the ideas about reform were written was built upon the selective memory of prominent officials who displayed an ability to pick and choose key aspects of colonial history in order to build a convenient narrative. This ability enabled the gap between ideal and reality to be bridged; e.g. the insertion into the preamble of the constitution of the Fourth Republic in October 1946 that stated;

Fidèle à sa mission traditionnelle, la France entend conduire les peuples dont elle a pris la charge à la liberté de s'administrer eux-mêmes et de gérer démocratiquement leurs propres affaires ; écartant tout système de colonisation fondé sur l'arbitraire, elle garantit à tous l'égal accès aux fonctions publiques et l'exercice individuel ou collectif des droits et libertés proclamés ou confirmés ci-dessus.[[217]](#footnote-217)

The process by which officials became further steeped in the colonial way of thinking, despite gestures to move away from it, is explored in the next chapter.

# Chapter two – Linking post-war reform and the *Loi-cadre*

Chapter one has established the interlinked nature and the patterns of the colonial mind’s approach to reform. It also showed the growth and importance of the myth of French colonialism within the administration. This chapter argues that, with these patterns set and the myth established, the colonial mind undertook a process of reform that began at the end of the Second World War and continued to the *loi-cadre*.[[218]](#footnote-218) Through this process the colonial mind was integrating the myth into the day to day function of colonial administration. On a political level the results of the reform were a new constitution and laws that sought to create a more equal colonialism. At the bureaucratic level the effects were different as reform was inspired by the ideals espoused in the constitution but took on a more bureaucratised form. As they thought about reform, administrators invoked the constitution but their reform was more focused on addressing organisational concerns. The idea that fitted both the idealistic level of reform and addressed the day to day concerns of officials was *décentralisation*. This chapter shows how *decentralisation* emerged out of the myth of benevolent colonialism after the Second World War and became a key part of the reforms proposed by the *loi-cadre*.

The first article of the *loi-cadre* reads;

Sans préjuger la réforme attendue du titre VIII de la Constitution, afin d’associer plus étroitement les populations d’outre-mer à la gestion de leurs intérêts propres, des mesures de décentralisation et de déconcentration administratives interviendront dans le cadre des territoires, groupes de territoires et des services centraux relevant du ministère de la France d’outre-mer.[[219]](#footnote-219)

This chapter analyses the process that led the policies of *décentralisation*, and later, *déconcentration* to be featured so prominently within the final text of the law. It explores how these policies were seen as being the way in which ‘les populations d’outre-mer’ would be allowed more control of ‘leurs intérêts propres’. ‘Propres affaires’ had emerged as a key concept of the colonial discourse at the end of the Second World War and was codified as part of the preamble of the constitution of the Fourth Republic. In order to undertake this analysis this chapter examines attitudes to reform within the years that led up to the *loi-cadre*. What emerges through the analysis is that there was a complex process underway. This process balanced the importance of control and pragmatism with more idealistic thinking. The pragmatism was built around the need to reform but in a controlled manner whilst the idealism was based on a belief in a reformist myth. The history of reform after the 1789 revolution within the French republic was also important for shaping how officials viewed the reform they were undertaking in the overseas territories. The analysis of how officials envisaged reform in the post-Second World War period shows the ways in which the colonial mind responded to the desire for reform. In a similar way to how Sarraut created a myth about France’s colonial past in the 1920s, myth was used to justify reform after the Second World War. This chapter shows how the colonial mind accepted the myth as part of its way of managing reform in the overseas territories; myth became a key part of the colonial worldview. However, from the creation of a myth about the principled rule of the French in the overseas territories there was a turn towards a more conservative approach and bureaucratic concerns as the question of reform filtered through the colonial administration. As the process developed the concept of *décentralisation* came to be considered as the main conduit for reform. This chapter shows how the reformism that followed the Second World War came to represent a key moment in the French administration’s conceptualisation of its own history of reform and how this influenced the approach to reform contained within the *loi-cadre* later in the period. This reformism was not restricted to the colonial world and a wider process of renewal had been embarked open by the French government in the wake of the Second World War.

This chapter shows the interplay between colonial discourse and ideas about reform in the period between the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the government of Guy Mollet in 1956. In this period the changes in the colonial discourse that had begun with the propositions of Albert Sarraut, explored in chapter one, were consolidated. This chapter argues that, between 1945 and 1955, reform was met by resistance from within the colonial mind. It shows that eventually the colonial mind came to settle on administrative reform as the main means through which reform could be realised. Unlike chapter one, which shows the older roots of ideas about reform, this chapter shows the more immediate history of ideas that were prominent directly before the *loi-cadre* in 1956. Chronologically the sources analysed in this chapter span the years 1946 – 1955. This period saw an initial burst of reform that slowed after 1946, although debates continued and ideas were still being formed. Importantly, the reforms achieved by the end of 1946 allowed a myth to be written about France’s mission in the overseas territories. However, by autumn 1954 the situation in the overseas had changed dramatically. The war in Indochina had resulted in a dramatic reverse for the French and they had to come to terms with the Vietminh.[[220]](#footnote-220) Later, In November 1954 the FLN began their fight for Algerian independence. These events gave renewed impetus for reform and changed the tone with which it was discussed in administrative circles. However, the content of the reform remained the same.

The chapter begins by analysing how attempts at reform led to resistance by the more conservative elements of the colonial mind. Despite the implementation of laws that were designed to challenge the uneven nature of colonial rule it was the more conservative elements of colonial administration who were primarily influencing reform. Next, the chapter analyses two reports from members of the colonial administration who were lower down in the system and were reporting on the possibilities for administrative reform in the overseas territories. Through this analysis this chapter will show how the key concepts and topoi of the colonial discourse were deployed within a French Union that was in a period of reform and re-evaluation. After establishing how the ideas expressed in these reports came to set the agenda for reform I show how they shaped the *Loi Teitgen*, which was a key reference point for the authors of the *loi-cadre*. The reports, from Chauvet and Sanner, helped shape the content of the *Loi Teitgen* which in turn shaped the *loi-cadre*. Alongside the analysis of these reports is a section that examines a more problematic report from the same dossier in the ANOM. This report is used to show how officials were building narratives based on their ideas about the benevolence of their reform which the thesis refers to as the colonial myth. The report is from historian Charles-André Julien who was at the time of writing the report a member of the SFIO and a *conseiller de l’Union Française*. In this chapter his report is used to show the perspective of someone from within the colonial system despite Julien later being known as an anti-colonial agitator. The final source studied in this chapter is the draft *projet de loi* created by Pierre-Henri Teitgen during his term as *Ministre de la France d’Outre-mer*. This *projet de loi* was a direct inspiration for the *loi-cadre*.

Each of the sources analysed in the chapter through studying the ideas and discourse present within them are used to demonstrate how the colonial mind developed a vision of reform by 1956. The reports and documents show the colonial mind investigating and shaping its views on reform. The text from Julien shows how the colonial mind thought about its ‘successes’ and formed the colonial myth. The draft *projet de loi* from Teitgen shows an iteration of how the colonial mind thought it could solve some of the problems facing the French Union and represents the colonial mind beginning to solidify its approach to reform. The concepts that feature predominantly in this chapter are *décentralisation* and *déconcentration*. The chapter shows how these ideas became entrenched as the main conduit through which reform could be achieved. Importantly they were terms French politicians were with comfortable as they were part of the discourse of republican reformism established in the wake of the French revolution. Alongside these main concepts, other ideas and topoi were present and signified acknowledgements of the continuity of thought within the colonial mind. For example, officials also used the topos of civilisation in order to resist undesired implications of reform. Another report referred mostly to the idea of reform whilst also engaging in a discussion about the concepts of *assimilation* and *association*. As identified by Shipway, Defferre linked the *loi-cadre* to the Brazzaville conference.[[221]](#footnote-221) This chapter shows some of the other mechanisms by which this occurred at different levels of the administration. This chapter serves to link more precisely the ideas about reform created between c.1920 and 1944 to the reforms that were implemented in 1956.

## Reform and resistance in 1946

This section shows how officials were fighting to maintain control of colonial reform during a period when reform had happened on an unprecedented scale. It highlights the key reforms of the immediate post war years and argues that they show a tension between the colonial mind’s desire to reform, and the desire to maintain control. Martin Thomas characterised this tension as being,

‘between those advocated economic development to contain local pressure for political change and those convinced that colonial nationalist opposition could be repressed only by force.’[[222]](#footnote-222)

This thesis argues that there was more to this tension than shown in Thomas’ interpretation. There was also a tension between the different visions for reform put forward by different members of the administration. This tension expressed itself as resistance to reforms that were rolled out through the overseas territories.

With the ‘spirit of Brazzaville’ flowing through the corridors of power in Paris and AOF, the end of the Second World War saw officials engaging with reform of the Empire. As the end of the fighting edged closer Free-French politicians began to discuss how the Empire could be changed. Consequently, the post war years saw a series of reforms that were aimed at altering the foundations of the French Empire. Major advances in the form of a new constitution, and the repealing of the forced labour laws and the summary justice law known as *l’indigénat*, all came within two years of the end of the Second World War. Along with the new constitution came new designations for the constituent parts of the French republic; *L’Empire Français* was replaced with *l’Union Française*, and the *colonies* became *territoires d’outre-mer*. There also followed discussions about further reforms to citizenship status and representation at local and state levels. However, this reform was met with different forms of resistance. The violence between Algerians and French settlers at Sétif was a forewarning of events to come, although at the time it would have appeared little different to previous instances of colonial resistance and oppression. When violence erupted in the French Union and the pressure for reform grew French politicians fought to maintain control of the character and pace of reform.

### With reform comes resistance: the *lois Houphouët-Boigny* and *Lamine Guèye*

Whilst the *gouvernement provisoire de la République française* (GPRF) debated their ideas for the new constitution, two laws were promulgated which foreshadowed the character that the constitution would take. These pieces of legislation became known as the *loi Houphouët-Boigny* and the *loi Lamine Guèye* and were responsible for the reform of the use of forced labour and granting equal rights of citizenship for all citizens of the overseas territories, respectively. The implementation of these laws shows the extent to which reform was taking place. Furthermore, because the *loi Lamine Guèye* extended equal rights to justice for all inhabitants of the colonies the *code d’indigénat*, which had been the method by which justice was administered in the colonies for six decades, was superseded. However, the reaction of the colonial mind to the implications of the reforms reveals internal resistance to change. Ultimately this resistance was transformed into the application of concepts of reform that were more clearly controlled by French officials.

Félix Houphouët-Boigny led the repeal of the ability for colonial administrations to use forced labour. The *loi Houphouët-Boigny* or ‘Loi N° 46-645 du 11 avril 1946 tendant à la suppression du travail forcé dans les territoires d’outre-mer’ was a key part of the period of reform of the colonial system. The issue of forced labour had been raised at Brazzaville and was seen as an important symbol of the unequal nature of colonial rule. The *Loi Lamine Guèye* or ‘Loi no 46-940 du 7 mai 1946’ was another continuation of the agenda that was set by the Brazzaville conference. The law stated ‘tous les ressortissants des territoires d'outre-mer (Algérie comprise) ont la qualité de citoyen, au même titre que les nationaux français de la métropole et des territoires d'outre-mer’.[[223]](#footnote-223) The *loi Lamine Guèye* also meant that the ability of colonial officers to enact summary justice on the inhabitants of the colonies was withdrawn. Now all inhabitants of the overseas territories were subject to French law. Previously, under legislation first established in 1881, all inhabitants of the colonies came to be subject to an ad hoc system of administration and justice based upon a varied structure involving the local colonial service. Gregory Mann described the *indigénat* as being a system that ‘provided legal cover, however scant, for colonial coercion until after the Second World War.’[[224]](#footnote-224) With an illuminating metaphor he highlighted the difficulty of defining the *indigénat*; ‘like a black hole, the indigénat generated obscurity and ordered the space around it.’[[225]](#footnote-225) In a similar way to the manner in which officials used vague terms the *indigénat* was a vague piece of legislation. The repeal of the *indigénat* came within the post-Brazzaville reformism and shows that there was a desire to break with past policy. The colonial mind was comfortable with the scale of changes that were underway and this series of reforms became the foundation upon which a myth of benevolent colonialism was made. However, despite recent legislation, old habits died hard and the results of the reforms were mixed.

### Unmet expectations: the uncomfortable implications of the *Loi Lamine Guèye*

Within two years of Brazzaville forced labour was no longer permitted in the overseas territories, and all inhabitants of the overseas territories had been granted the quality of French citizenship on an equal level with those in the metropole. This latter change should have had the effect of rendering the *code d’indigénat* obsolete. However, despite the *loi Houphouët-Boigny*, the use of forced labour continued for at least another year.[[226]](#footnote-226) In the face of this desire for change on a political level there was resistance to the changes at the bottom rung of the colonial system, within the *cercle*.[[227]](#footnote-227) The resistance to the repealing of the *code d’indigénat* and forced labour is unsurprising and does not reveal too much about the colonial mind – administrators were being stripped of some of the powers they had enjoyed. However, the colonial mind’s resistance to the implications of universal citizenship was more significant.

Whilst the *Loi Lamine Guèye* had extended citizenship rights to inhabitants of the colonies there were caveats. Marshall wrote that the law ‘declared them to be “citizens on the same basis as French nationals of the metropole” but provided for special laws to determine how the rights of citizenship were to be exercised’.[[228]](#footnote-228) Within the colonial administration the law had the effect of making the African civil servants entitled to the benefits enjoyed by their metropolitan counterparts. The implications of this equality presented a problem for members of the colonial administration. Following an investigation into the question Dr Aujoulat reported to the *Haut-Commissaires* and *Commissaires* throughout overseas France.[[229]](#footnote-229) His report attempted to weigh up the implications of the *Loi Lamine Guèye* against the imperatives of the law, the constitution and France’s international treaty obligations. The report reveals how the colonial mind struggled with the implications of reform and sought to soothe its concerns through the colonial myth. Despite the differences between European and African societies Aujoulat was convinced that the inevitable *évolution* of African society would overcome those discrepancies. Within his report he described how the family functioned with French and African societies:

Pour la famille de type européen, on est en présence d’un Etat-Civil rigoureux, d’un régime de monogamie, d’un ensemble de mœurs familiales constituées historiquement sous l’influence du christianisme, enfin d’une structure de la famille orientée vers la formation et l’avenir de l’enfant.

Dans la famille de type africain, par contre, on constate l’absence, ou à tout le moins la large insuffisance de l’Etat-Civil aggravé par la similitude des noms, la polygamie installée dans une part importante de la population, des mœurs traditionnelles en vertu desquelles est souvent pratiquée la dévolution coutumière des enfants, enfin le régime de la dot qui fait que les filles sont très souvent, non une charge, mais une source de revenus.[[230]](#footnote-230)

The differences that Aujoulat identified show a typical view of African societies from within the colonial mind although he later acknowledged that the differences were not as stark as he had presented them. Aujoulat argued that these differences were in the process of being overcome and invoked the topos of *évolution* in doing so. He wrote,

Les quelques réflexions ci-dessus découlent de la considération initiale des deux types de Société actuellement coexistants. Il va sans dire que dans les faits on ne les trouve pas si nettement tranchée et que l’évolution en cours conduit et conduira sans doute de plus en plus la Société Africaine à se rapprocher du type européen.[[231]](#footnote-231)

The use of the topos of *évolution* within this document shows the colonial mind framing the ‘European-type’ society as the inevitable result of the *mission civilisatrice*. This discussion is an insight into the perseverance of colonial ideas, and the reaction to the implications of the *Loi Lamine Guèye* revealed the colonial mind in action. In this period the colonial mind was attempting reform but was hampered by its more conservative components and belief in certain ideals. However, the myth of a progressive process of *évolution* was employed in order to soothe concerns about the implications of giving benefits to African members of the civil service.

The *loi Lamine Guèye* and the *loi Houphouët-Boigny* were pioneered by African politicians from the overseas territories and both were met with different forms of resistance from the more traditional parts of the colonial administration. This shows that there were conflicts within the colonial administration and that different sections of it were competing against others in order to assert control of the pace of change. This resistance can be identified during the drafting of the constitution where despite the struggle over reform the colonial mind was able to convince itself of the benefits of its work in the colonies.

## The October constitution: the embodiment of a progressive or conservative colonial policy?

At the same time as the laws discussed above were being created the GPRF started planning for a new constitutional settlement that would come into force after the cessation of hostilities. There was a long process of debate that led to the constitution of October 1946. The debates about the constitution and its eventual form show the tension between resistance and reform. Moreover, the constitution served to crystallise key concepts and ideas of the colonial mind; one was the idea of a ‘Greater France’ which was linked to the concept of *assimilation*. The *mission civilisatrice* was another idea that was endorsed in the constitution and continued to serve as a justification for the actions of colonising powers within the colonial mind. *Assimilation* was a key concept of the colonial discourse and the *mission civilisatrice* was a key myth.

There was tension between reform and resistance within the drafting of the constitution. Whilst the October constitution of the Fourth Republic was drafted in a large part by a committee headed by Alexandre Varenne, who had served as the Governor General of Indochina from 1925 – 1927, there were also other drafts put forward.[[232]](#footnote-232) One draft known as the *Constitution Senghor* was disliked by convservative officials who did not support its more radical colonial reform.[[233]](#footnote-233) The *Constitution Senghor* was rejected in a referendum in May 1946.[[234]](#footnote-234) This shows how the agenda for reform was being influenced by more conservative elements in the political system. James Lewis has established how different groups in the political system at the end of the Second World War influenced the tone of reform. His main conclusion was that the more conservative elements of the colonial administration had seized the initiative and were setting the agenda.[[235]](#footnote-235) This fact meant that the overriding influence on reform were older members of the colonial service whose ideas had been established in the pre-war period. Lewis does not say exactly which ideas these were, this thesis offers some suggestions in chapter one, but that they were key. He also argues that the newer members of the colonial service, entering their training after the Second World War, found that the ideas of their more senior counterparts were old-fashioned.[[236]](#footnote-236) This is significant as it shows that key parts of the agenda for reform were established prior to the Second World War, and that this reform was being set by established individuals within the colonial service. What also emerges from this is that colonial civil servants were seen as the experts in colonial affairs, not African politicians. As a result, the constitution of October 1946 did not contain radical reforms for the overseas territories and instead only provided some changes in the relationship between metropole and overseas territory. This meant that reform would be needed later and led to the *loi-cadre* taking the form that it did.

### The constitution and the ‘colonial myth’

The conflicts over the form that the new constitution was to take are covered in scholarship by Fred Cooper and D. Bruce Marshall. Cooper highlighted the fact that during a meeting to discuss the constitution a right-wing French politician doubted whether the indigenous population were ‘ready for universal suffrage’.[[237]](#footnote-237) Cooper went on to conclude that African politicians understood that the constitution was the beginning of a process and that more reform would continue.[[238]](#footnote-238) Marshall stated that the constitution that was produced from the constituent assembly was a severe disappointment for many of the African politicians in the French Empire. He argued that the failure of the constitution to meet the needs of the interested parties led to the breakdown of the ‘colonial myth’.[[239]](#footnote-239) However, the conclusions he made posed more questions than they resolved. The main question is that if the colonial myth died in 1946 why did the French continue to expend large amounts of energy and effort on defending their colonial position and why did officials continue to keep faith in the idea of reform? Marshall did not explain exactly why he ended his study in 1946 instead of with the *loi-cadre* or with the end of formal colonisation in 1960. However, despite this slightly problematic conclusion the way that Marshall approached the creation of the constitution of the Fourth Republic is a useful examination of the relationship between an idea or mythology, and policy-making. Early in the text he acknowledges the problem of writing about the colonial period when using the recollections of those personally involved in the events.[[240]](#footnote-240) In addition to Marshall’s argument here it should be added that the strength of the colonial idea within the minds of those that lived and enacted it must be accounted for when engaging with memoirs or recollections.[[241]](#footnote-241)

Within the constitution and the discussions around it key changes in language, meaning, and discourse occurred. The wording of clauses in the constitution could, and did, have long-lasting effects. There was extensive debate about the significance of how the constitution defined citizenship for those people who resided in the overseas territories.[[242]](#footnote-242) The reluctance of French politicians to grant unreserved citizenship to those in the overseas territories was expressed with the term ‘qualité d’être citoyen’, which was the same wording used in the *loi Lamine Guèye*.[[243]](#footnote-243) This reluctance was an expression of the latent racism that underpinned the colonial mind. However, despite their reluctance the belief in the colonial myth led officials to be convinced that their reforms were sufficient and appropriate. This ability to overcome criticism or doubt was important for the colonial mind.

Despite the seizure of the reins of reform by conservative elements in the administration there were gestures towards a more egalitarian system. One outcome of the constitution was that the nomenclature of the colonial system was to be abolished. Through *Titre VIII* of the constitution the French Union was established and the designation ‘Territoire d’Outre-mer’ replaced ‘colony’.[[244]](#footnote-244) This development was related to one of the key ideas of the colonial mind; *assimilation*. The colonial mind’s assimilationism was demonstrated through Titre VIII and saw the idea of *la plus grande France* given official sanction. The text of the constitution read, ‘Titre VIII: L'Union française est formée, d'une part, de la République française qui comprend la France métropolitaine, les départements et territoires d'outre-mer, d'autre part, des territoires et Etats associés.’[[245]](#footnote-245) Until this moment the idea of ‘Greater France’ had been discussed by politicians and theorists but now the French Union was ‘one and indivisible’.[[246]](#footnote-246) Because of this the constitution has come to be viewed as the high point of the policy of assimilation by some scholars and, as shown in chapter four, also members of the French administration in power at the time of the *loi-cadre*. The change in terminology also led to new understandings of the relationship between France and the overseas to develop.

In a practical sense what emerged from this new reality was competition between different agencies that were now authorised – through the constitution – to involve themselves in affairs that had previously been the purview of the Ministry of the Colonies.[[247]](#footnote-247) Chafer attributed the slow pace of reforms to the fact that the administration of the colonies was opened up to other departments. He goes on to characterise the period that followed the constitution as one of inertia; however, this chapter will show that although there was little done in tangible reform, the ideas and discourse of the colonial mind continued to be shaped.

Despite the conservative reaction to the reforms of 1946 French officials were able to convince themselves of the efficacy of their reform regardless of limitations that were obvious to African politicians. D. Bruce Marshall argued that during the writing of the Constitution of the Fourth Republic French officials managed to convince themselves that the constitution realised the aspirations of the colonised people. He argued that the reason for the officials’ incorrect assumption was that they had come to believe in what he termed ‘the Colonial Myth’. This myth was a refiguring of the *mission civilisatrice* that had justified the actions of French colonisers in the preceding years of French Imperialism. Marshall argued that in 1946 officials became convinced that the constitution realised the goal of spreading liberty that had always been a key aim of the French colonial project. This was in spite of the authoritarian nature of colonialism. This chapter agrees with some of the conclusions drawn by Marshall; however, I argue that this ‘myth-making’ was still going on much later than Marshall states. Marshall located the moment at which African deputies lost their own faith in the colonial ideal as being during the drafting of the constitution. He wrote ‘[o]nce they [the native leaders] discovered that the institutions of the French Union were to be forced upon them largely against their will and did not offer either freedom or equality within the framework of a generous republic they gradually abandoned their faith in the institutions and in France.’[[248]](#footnote-248) The next section of this chapter will argue that rather than finishing in 1946 the process of officials deluding themselves continued into the discussions that led to the *loi-cadre*.

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Beyond the concerns about polygamy and the resistance shown to progressive measures, such as unlimited equality of citizenship, there was a latent sentiment that French officials wanted to set the limits of reform and to be able to react to unplanned events. The desire to set the agenda for reform and to be able to react in a quick way were two of the key aspects that led the *loi-cadre* to take the form that it did. In an attempt to continue the reform of 1946 officials shaped the discourse in a way that restricted how reform could be expressed. In the period that preceded the *loi-cadre* officials established that the best conduit for change was administrative reform. After the great promise offered by the flurry of reform between 1944 and 1946 the pace of change slowed drastically. However, an official memory of the reforms of the 1944-1946 period was being formed. This memory shaped the discourse that followed it within the 1950s. The constitution became a reference point for officials as it expressed the idea that the French were guiding the overseas territories to a more civilised future. This memory was connected to the proliferation of the colonial myth and underpinned by the colonial discourse. The next section explores how attempts at reform continued within this context. These attempts were being framed by the ideals expressed in the constitution but those individuals who were outlining attempts at reform became fixated on resolving institutional problems. The effects of this are shown through the following analysis of a report on administrative reform written in 1948.

## Report from Chauvet: reform becomes bureaucratised

By 1948 further attempts at reform were beginning to stagnate and frustration was growing. However, within the administration of AOF there were still plans being drawn up to implement reform. The plans being made in this period became a basis of the reform that the *loi-cadre* was designed to enact. The belief in these ideas lasted throughout the period of reform so examining the varying definitions is important. In late May 1948, the High Commissioner of the Republic in AOF, Paul Béchard wrote a letter to the governors of each territory and the directors of the services of the *Gouvernement Général* in order to outline his plans for reform in AOF. He linked this reform to the constitution of 1946:

Conformément à l’esprit et aux prescriptions de la constitution de l’Union Française, j’envisage de réaliser progressivement en A.O.F. une décentralisation administrative comportant notamment l’allègement des service centraux du Gouvernement Général.[[249]](#footnote-249)

This represents a moment at which the colonial myth and the colonial bureaucracy came together and produced ideas about reform. The ‘prescriptions de la constitution’ to which Béchard referred was the section related to the overseas territories that stated ‘la France entend conduire les peuples dont elle a pris la charge à la liberté de s'administrer eux-mêmes’[[250]](#footnote-250) The idea of the overseas populations administering their own affairs was the justification for Béchard’s ideas about reform. A response to Béchard came on the 28th May 1948 from the *Inspecteur Général des Affaires Administratives*,Paul Chauvet.

Chauvet’s report on *décentralisation* in AOFdemonstrated the line of communication between different levels of the administration and the connections between Governors and the cadres in their charge. At this stage Chauvet used the term *décentralisation* as an umbrella term for different types of reform that involved different measures. He provided his own definitions of four forms of *décentralisation* in what he described as a ‘sens juridique’: *décentralisation législative*, *décentralisation administrative*, *déconcentration administrative*, and *décongestion bureaucratique*. Later in the period, and in the *loi-cadre* itself, officials understood *déconcentration* as being more distinct from *décentralisation* and it was not referred to under the umbrella of *décentralisation*. It is worthwhile noting and exploring his definitions:

La Décentralisation législative, qui consiste à transférer, en certaines matières, le droit de légiférer et de réglementer du Gouvernement ou du Parlement aux autorités ou aux assemblées fédérales ou locales.

La Décentralisation administrative, qui consiste à transférer certains pouvoirs de décision ou de contrôle en matière de gestion administrative du Gouvernement métropolitain ou du Gouvernement fédéral à des Assemblées délibérantes de l’échelon inférieur.

La Déconcentration administrative, qui consiste à transférer certains pouvoirs de décision et de gestion en matière administrative, du Gouvernement métropolitain ou du Gouvernement fédéral aux autorités des échelons inférieurs.

La Décongestion bureaucratique, consiste à éviter que dans le cadre des pouvoirs législatifs et administratifs existants, les autorités administratives supérieures ne soient saisies de questions qui ne relèvent pas expressément de leur pouvoir et dont le caractère purement local n’appelle pas examen sur ce plan supérieur, ou n’évoquent elles-mêmes des questions de cette nature*.[[251]](#footnote-251)*

Chauvet defined *décentralisation* as the transfer of power from one government body to another; this is consistent with other definitions of the process. In the first three versions of *décentralisation* the powers were to be transferred from the metropolitan or federal (e.g. AOF) levels to individual territories. This shows that in 1948 there was an understanding at the level of French administration that the constituent territories of AOF were the correct format for governing the overseas territories. Later the decision to increase the competences of the territories was criticised by Léopold Senghor amongst others as creating a balkanisation of French West Africa.[[252]](#footnote-252)

Notably, his addition of *décongestion* as another part of the process hints at the overriding problem within French colonial administration, that of the sluggish progress of reform and decision-making.[[253]](#footnote-253) The tendency to centralise decision-making apparently led to decisions being referred to authorities that were not required to oversee a decision. The deep-seated problems of administration were certainly known to those working within it yet attempts at rectifying them never seemed to solve the problem. Chauvet noted the tendency of different levels of administration to extend their competence: ‘Si on remarque enfin que les assemblées, comme les administrations centrales, ont une tendance naturelle à étendre sans cesse leur compétence’.[[254]](#footnote-254) Chauvet then outlined six proposals to address this problem through ‘décentralisation législative’; firstly, he suggested that the ‘Ministre de la France d’Outre-Mer [sic] s’interdise de soumettre au Parlement des projets de loi concernant des questions d’intérêt purement local’, the use of *s’interdire* implied that the ministry would have sole responsibility for policing its own actions.[[255]](#footnote-255) Chauvet’s second suggestion was that parliament should be prohibited from discussing problems that were also purely local in nature; he described a debate in which the national assembly deliberated on rent and living conditions within AOF.[[256]](#footnote-256) The next two suggestions were that the minister for overseas France and the high commissioners try to avoid the use of decrees and instead attempt to extend the role of local assemblies in decision-making within the overseas territories.[[257]](#footnote-257) Chauvet described the tendency for centralised decision-making, with decisions referred to the ministry or high-commission unnecessarily as the ‘vice centralisateur’.[[258]](#footnote-258) His final suggestion reiterated the necessity for any referral of a decision to higher echelons of administration to be only done when completely necessary and for any decision unnecessarily referred to the high echelon to be handed back. Chauvet finished his section on *décentralisation législative* with an outline of a legal plan to enable this. *Décentralisation administrative* was largely a similar process. Chauvet wanted to ensure that decisions regarding the management of administration were made at the correct level and within either the federal or local assemblies within AOF, having previously been the responsibility of the Governor General operating on behalf of the Government.[[259]](#footnote-259)

Chauvet’s reasons for wanting *décentralisation* were largely based on a desire to streamline the decision-making processes within the administration of AOF. Unlike later reforms, which stressed the need for local bodies to decide on their own issues for reasons of democracy and liberty, Chauvet’s vision of reform was largely a pragmatic response to a system that did not work quickly. This distinction is interesting when taken in the context of Chauvet’s appeal to the constitution of October 1946 as the justification for his plans for reform. In the constitution the *décentralisation* of decision-making to the territories was based on a desire to see peoples in the French Union administering their ‘propres affaires’ because this was how a free people should be allowed to operate. Chauvet’s reasons seemed to be less high-minded and were borne out of a frustration at government practice.

This frustration is most apparent in Chauvet’s section on *Décentralisation Administrative*. Here he identified what he felt was the cause of the poor administration in the colonies. This frustration originated in the lack of clarity in determining which colonial service had jurisdiction over which aspect of legislation. Here Chauvet did not hold back on his criticism of the lack of clarity with which the colonies had been administered:

[l]es rapports entre échelons administratifs seront fixés empiriquement au hasard des textes particuliers, sous la polarisation constante de notre structure coloniale assimilatrice et centralisatrice. Jamais aucun texte organique n’a essayé de délimiter exactement les pouvoirs respectifs du Ministre, des Gouverneurs-Généraux et des Gouverneurs, non pas seulement au point de vue législatif et réglementaire, mais administratif.[[260]](#footnote-260)

Within the next section of this paragraph the origins of the *loi-cadre* become clear. More important is the fact that the terms that were to enable this reform are the concepts of *décentralisation* and *déconcentration*.

Et si on a toujours admis que toutes les attributions de l’Etat qui n’étaient pas réservées explicitement ou implicitement au Gouvernement métropolitain, appartenaient au Gouverneur-Général, qui partage lui-même certaines de ses attributions avec les Gouverneurs, peu à peu la centralisation naturelle de notre structure a repris ses droits à un triple point de vue législatif, réglementaire et administratif, et les pouvoirs des Gouverneurs-Généraux se sont, en fait, constamment rétrécis : la souplesse des contours qui avait favorisé, au début, la décentralisation et la déconcentration a joué ensuite, de plus en plus, non seulement en faveur de la centralisation législative, mais de la concentration administrative ; et la décentralisation administrative qui vient d’être opérée avec la création des Grands Conseils, si elle restreint les pouvoirs des Gouverneurs-Généraux n’entraînera pas, pour autant, la déconcentration administrative.[[261]](#footnote-261)

Chauvet’s interpretation of the development of colonial administration reveals a muddled system in which efforts at delineating administrative boundaries were limited. However, he did not make any effort to identify who was responsible for this process, instead leaving it within the domain of the system or ‘structure’. This unwillingness to make clear statements and instead rely on allusions is repeated in other documents focused on colonial reform. It shows a tendency within the administration’s approach to the colonies to not directly address a problem, rather to make inference that there is a problem and that a solution must be found. By this logic the French colonial administration was not made up of autonomous individuals who were responsible for their actions; instead the system overrode individual action. For Chauvet, only strong legislation could be the solution for this problem. Chauvet wanted this legislation to take the form of measures leading to *décentralisation* and *déconcentration*. Through these two policies the problems of colonial rule could be addressed. The end result of their implementation would be a policy approaching ‘association’; this is not stated explicitly within the text but it is inferred when Chauvet linked ‘centralisation’ with ‘assimilation’, the default position for the French colonial system. Finally, the imprecise reference made to an ideal past, where he writes ‘la souplesse des contours qui avait favorisé, au début, la décentralisation et la déconcentration’, is interesting. It is difficult to know which period Chauvet was referring to; although, it is not impossible to imagine that his preferred epoch of colonial rule was prior to the greater intervention in colonial affairs by the metropole seen prior to the Fourth Republic.

In the post-war period the colonial regime was under greater scrutiny and more pressure to govern efficiently so Chauvet’s desire for *décentralisation* and *déconcentration* may have originated from a slightly selfish position. This idea is supported later in the text when he again criticised the metropolitan government’s intervention in the colonies; *‘*mais ces pouvoirs organiques [of governors and service within the colony], eux-mêmes, ont subi des empiètements constants du Gouvernement métropolitain’.[[262]](#footnote-262) Following this criticism of metropolitan influence in the colonies, Chauvet did hint at a potential problem within the colonies when he referred to the tendency of administrators to ‘gérer des activités que les textes ne réservent pas à la compétence de leur échelon’.[[263]](#footnote-263) This habit, Chauvet went on to explain, was a ‘tendance renforcée par le réflexe instinctif de “se mettre à couvert” de*s* bureaucrates investis de fonctions de commandement’.[[264]](#footnote-264) In other words, the current colonial system allowed for the metropolitan government to extend its powers whilst administrators on the ground attempted to set their own boundaries. The language that Chauvet used to describe the impact of the metropolitan government on the colonial administration invoked an image of malevolence. The colonial governors and administration were almost trampled by the encroachment of metropolitan actors onto colonial areas of competence. This passage shows how the colonial system was linked from top to bottom through competition over competences and the use of loose legislation. It demonstrates the value of understanding the French colonial administration as a whole, rather than from one vantage point. These behaviours were endemic but they were also learned and an important part of the structure of administration, and that despite the system being intended to function as one there were difficulties between each part of the service.

The system, Chauvet explained, was in need of fundamental reform from top to bottom. Any reform that did not address all levels of the colonial administration would lead to repetition of the very same problems that the colonial service was riddled with. Chauvet certainly had faith in the ability of the colonial system to succeed at reforming itself despite the situation which it found itself in. Before outlining his plans for how to address the problems of the colonial service Chauvet discussed the problem of *congestion bureaucratique*. This was again a question of a lack of clarity regarding the processes of colonial administration. Chauvet decried the way that documents were passed around several different services for unnecessary signatures from people whose approval was not needed:

En dehors des règlements, des décisions et des ordres, circule le flot des correspondances et des transmissions administratives, souvent plus ou moins inutiles, des approbations et des “couvertures”, des renseignements demandés à un échelon non compétent qui donnent lieu à des cascades de lettres et de réponses, etc.[[265]](#footnote-265)

The seemingly endless paper trail created by the colonial service will be familiar to any researcher who has dared to delve into a dossier from the *Archives d’outre-mer*. The reason, according to Chauvet, that this collection of letters, circulars, demands for opinions or clarifications existed was because within the colonial administration roles and processes were poorly defined. Beyond the muddy working practices the offices of the colonial administration were responsible for congestion,

Il est nécessaire de faire observer, en effet, que les bureaux pléthoriques en personnel sont les agents les plus efficaces de la congestion paperassière et de la concentration administrative, comme les assemblées nombreuses à pouvoirs mal limités et longues sessions, sont les meilleurs organes de la centralisation législative et même de la concentration administrative et de la congestion bureaucratique [[266]](#footnote-266)

The solution that Chauvet proposed is made more apparent in this quotation.The main thrusts of reform of the overseas service needed to be twofold. Reform needed to be focused on the reduction of personnel and the proper delineation of roles and responsibilities.

If we return to the phrasing of Béchard’s letter requesting ideas for reform and compare it with the vision explored by Chauvet we can see how idealism quickly turned to pragmatism. There was a contrast between the idea of reform as part of a process of respecting or using the constitution and the more pragmatic reform of the colonial bureaucracy that Chauvet had in mind. From a desire to conform to the prescriptions of the constitution Chauvet wrote about the paper trails and the wrangling for influence of the colonial administration. Understanding the variations between the ideas of officials on different levels of the administration and the interplay between the use of discourse shows an important aspect of how the colonial administration functioned. This process saw the high-minded desire to respect and act on the constitution resulting in the more mundane process of staff reduction and decrees about the responsibilities of different services. Chauvet was using terms that were instantly understandable to any person reading his report. As a concept *décentralisation* was a comfortable proposition for metropolitan officials and could be readily adapted to fit the colonial context. The following section argues that *décentralisation*, through its links to the French revolution was a concept officials could support with little trepidation. Following Béchard’s request and Chauvet’s report the concept of *décentralisation* grew in popularity.

## The dissonance of the colonial mind: C.A. Julien writes from 1949

In order to show how the concept of *décentralisation* was favoured by officials and how it came to replace *association* the following section analyses a report from a member of the French elite. By 1949 French politicians were beginning to take stock of the changes that had taken place following the end of the Second World War. One such politician was Charles-André Julien, a celebrated journalist and historian. He was also a member of the SFIO and was elected to the *Conseil de l’Union Française* following 1945. He wrote a report that summed up the major reforms that had taken place. His report is an important example of the way in which the colonial mind linked the concepts of *assimilation* and *association* and *décentralisation*. Julien positioned *décentralisation* as a replacement for *assimilation*. He also demonstrated its historical significance as part of a narrative of progress towards liberty stemming from the French Revolution. The links that *décentralisation* had to the history of administrative reform in metropolitan France helped officials see it as a suitable method of reform.

Julien represents a problematic personality to study as the prevailing understanding of him is as an anti-colonial academic.[[267]](#footnote-267) However, from the election of the Popular Front until his resignation from the SFIO in 1958 in protest at French actions in the War in Algeria, he was involved in the political processes of the French Empire and French Union. He also taught at the ENFOM, helping to educate would-be administrators.[[268]](#footnote-268) A piece published by Julien is included within a file dealing with reform in the French Union. It is described as appearing in the 4th October 1950 edition of the journal *International Affairs*. However, unlike the journal article it is in French and does not reflect the content of the journal article.[[269]](#footnote-269) Its content and the fact that it was written by a *Conseiller de l’Union Française* makes it a useful source for understanding how those close to the French ruling elite thought about their efficacy of their attempts at reform. Julien’s writing demonstrates the way in which officials thought about and framed their attempts at reform. He wrote a narrative about reform between 1944-1946 that indirectly placed *assimilation* and *association* as key concepts. This shows the pervasiveness of these ideas. Importantly, he also linked the policy of *décentralisation* to the post-revolutionary period of the French Republic. The following analysis shows that at key points Julien, despite being positioned as an anti-colonial intellectual, was being influenced by the colonial discourse. I argue that Julien’s writing at this time is a key example of the use of the colonial discourse and that it is representative of the colonial myth.

The piece of writing was signed by Julien as being from September 1949 and was an essay that covers the pre-war situation within the colonies and the subsequent attempts at reforming it following the Second World War. In a similar vein to that of Albert Sarraut in *La Mise en Valeur* Julien decries previous colonial policies, although he omitted any reference to *La Mise en Valeur*. The piece is fascinating because it occupies a strange position of being written by an associate member of the ruling elite about a system of which he was critical. However, at this stage it is clear that Julien was a proponent of colonial reform and of a continued relationship between France and the overseas territories. His criticism of the results of the Brazzaville Conference demonstrate this,

Au total, la vieille conception unitaire et assimilatrice continue à dominer. La Conférence de Brazzaville est la dernière manifestation du règne des Administrateurs, qui traitent les affaires coloniales comme une spécialité et avec une mentalité qui s’adapte difficilement aux transformations radicales du problème colonial, en dépit de leur bonne volonté.[[270]](#footnote-270)

Clearly Julien favoured a policy that would challenge the assimilationist tendency of French colonial rule. He did identify some policies made by the provisional government in 1944-45 as positive steps towards a less assimilationist approach. One example of this was the declaration made by GPRF Colonial Minister Paul Joseph Marie Giacobbi upon the restoration of French rule in Indochina that declared: ‘La Fédération indochinoise formera avec la France et les autres parties de la Communauté une Union française (1) dont les intérêts à l’extérieur sont représentés par la France. Les ressortissants de la Fédération indochinoise seront citoyens indochinois et citoyens de l’Union Française…’.[[271]](#footnote-271) The note marked by the (1) highlighted that the phrase ‘Union française’ first appeared within this declaration, showing that the post-war political arrangement was one borne out of pragmatism underpinned by a long history of colonial rule. Julien wrote that in this period the GPRF issued conflicting declarations; he referred to other declarations on Tunisia and further territories. He specified that some of the declarations were inspired by assimilationist ideas, and others were based on ‘tendances autonomistes’.[[272]](#footnote-272) The way that these declarations did not make clear reference to the ideas of *assimilation* or *association* yet Julien integrated them into that narrative demonstrates the pervasiveness of these ideas within colonial thought. What Julien did next was to integrate the process outlined above into the colonial myth by linking the colonial reforms to the post-revolutionary reforms.

Julien’s understanding of French history shaped how he interpreted the drafting of the constitution of October 1946. In the draft of the constitution proposed, and later rejected by referendum, on 19th April 1946 Julien saw the provisions regarding the relationship between metropolitan France and the overseas territories in terms of a conflict between what he described as ‘federalist’ and ‘Jacobin’ tendencies.[[273]](#footnote-273) The federalist thought process led to article 41 in the draft constitution reading ‘La France forme avec les Territoires d’Outre-Mer d’une part, et avec les Etats Associées d’autre part, une Union, librement consentie’.[[274]](#footnote-274) However, Julien contrasted this article with a later one ‘La République Française une et indivisible reconnaît l’existence des collectivités territoriales intégrées à la France et soumises à la loi nationale’.[[275]](#footnote-275) The term Jacobin refers to the post-revolutionary period in French politics. The Jacobins were a group formed after the French revolution and are widely attributed with beginning the reign of Terror and forming a strong government that resisted incursions from regimes hostile to the revolution. However, what Julien inferred by his use of the term, not one used by those involved in the drafting of the constitution, was that the Jacobin faction held centrist and assimilationist ambitions. The way that Julien positioned a debate that was taking place in 1940s and 1950s France demonstrates the wider framing of that debate within the legacy of the French revolution. This is the same process by which the reform of the government in the colonies was linked to the French revolution through the policy of *décentralisation*.

Julien referred to the process of the French Empire moving towards a French Union as a revolutionary process:

Elle (the constitution) a posé des principes nouveaux, de portée révolutionnaire, sur lesquels on ne pourra pas revenir: octroi des droits de l’Homme et du Citoyen; droit à la citoyenneté sans restriction du Statut personnel; création d’Assemblées locales. Pour marquer la rupture avec la politique d’avant-guerre, on modifiait la terminologie. Il ne serait plus question d’empire mais d’Union Française de Colonies mais de Territoires d’Outre-Mer, de protectorats mais d’Etats Associés.[[276]](#footnote-276)

Julien viewed the changes in terminology wrought by the constitution and the new post-war policies as significant. The idea of reform being a revolution also occurred later in the period. Despite these changes, a memo from 1951 in which the colonial administration reminded its staff to stop using the word ‘colonial’ in official correspondence showed that the mind-set of the *avant-guerre* was still strong.[[277]](#footnote-277) However, he was describing the colonial myth.

The close analysis that Julien undertook of the constitution is interesting as an academic exercise; his identification of different ideologies within the same document illuminates the process of the drafting of the constitution. It is within this section that Julien blurred the lines between historian and journalist and active participant in the colonial regime. Julien’s writing shows one version of how the colonial myth was formed in the mind of a French politician. Given how other members of the administration of the overseas territories used the constitution to justify their attempts at reform it is apparent that the myth was a key validation for the reforms being considered. As Julien’s text shows another thing which helped officials to rationalise reform was the relationship of *décentralisation* and *déconcentration* to the Republican ideal and the French Revolution. Despite Julien’s ambiguous position within the colonial system his analysis of the post-war reforms is an insight into how the colonial mind created myths and thought about its past.

## Framing *déconcentration* and *décentralisation*:Republican ideals and Revolution

Taking its lead from Julien’s framing of *décentralisation* and *déconcentration* this section argues that through its praxis *décentralisation* was closely associated with the Republican ideal in French politics. After the report from Chauvet the concepts or policies of *déconcentration* and *décentralisation* were prominent within the discussion about reform. However, they were not novel concepts: *décentralisation* was, for example, mentioned by Albert Sarraut as part of his proposition for renewal in the French Colonial Empire.[[278]](#footnote-278) As the *Empire* turned into the *Union* the policies of *déconcentration* and *décentralisation* were key tools through which reform was to be realised. This argument is based on the fact that the earliest incarnations of *décentralisation* took place in the aftermath of the French revolution.[[279]](#footnote-279) In this early form of *décentralisation* the objective was the transfer of power from Paris to the different regions of France. Thus as well as being a political reform *décentralisation* was also a gesture of liberation and freedom. It follows then that in the period following the Second World War, when there was a drive towards acknowledging the uneven nature of colonial rule, politicians would employ these key ideas. In doing so they were assuring themselves of the continuation of the republican ideal: to deconcentrate or decentralise was to invoke the memory of the revolution. However, as examined below in a similar way to the ideas of assimilation and association, *déconcentration* and *décentralisation* were loosely defined terms to which politicians attached their own interpretations and meanings.

*Décentralisation* has a long history of a part of French political discourse and is still in use in contemporary politics. One government department has identified its origins in the decree of 4th August 1789 that abolished the feudal regime.[[280]](#footnote-280) Scholars have identified it starting in earnest in the late 1940s.[[281]](#footnote-281) The origins of the term engender an understanding of it as something that is strongly tied to the Republican project.[[282]](#footnote-282) Its use recalls ideas of the liberty and freedom that are fundamental ideas in the long history of French republicanism. *Décentralisation* is similar to the idea of devolution that is used in English. The first use of the idea of *déconcentration* can be found in the mid-nineteenth century, with the concept firmly entering into the lexicon of the state through an imperial decree of 26th March 1852.[[283]](#footnote-283) The differences between these terms are and were ambiguous and at times they were pitched as opposites whilst at other times, as in the *loi-cadre*, they worked together as part of reform.[[284]](#footnote-284) The process of defining these is something that was ongoing for officials within the French political system, as evidenced by the document discussed below. Mirroring this lack of clarity, even the authors of the *Que sais-je?* on *déconcentration* start their definition of what it is with a series of things that it is not. The list of things it is not includes *décentralisation*, *délocalisation*, and the opposite of *centralisation*.[[285]](#footnote-285) Their definition includes the disclaimer that ‘la déconcentration est avant tout un processus contingent, toujours inscrit dans un contexte historique et politique.’[[286]](#footnote-286) However, the study of *déconcentration* found in this introductory text does not discuss the idea within the context of the French Empire, Union, or Community and its analysis is limited to the concept applied to metropolitan France.

The ideas of *déconcentration* and *décentralisation* have not undergone close scrutiny within secondary literature on reform of the French Empire but they have been mentioned by some scholars. Frederick Cooper echoes the argument made by Tony Chafer – that overseas territories were now obliged to use the same rules as those in metropolitan France. Cooper links the ‘universalisation’ of rules regarding administration with the pressure on colonial officials to address the problems of overbearing centralisation within the French colonial administration. Cooper cites the report from Paul Chauvet, examined above, and identifies that it highlighted the problem of ‘bureaucratic decongestion’.[[287]](#footnote-287) Later he cites another report that appears in the files of the Ministry of Overseas France warning of the dangers of the splintering of AOF and raising the possibilities of smaller federations of territories in AOF being created. However, he does not link these ideas to earlier or later reform. The exploration of *décentralisation* and *déconcentration* within this chapter charts the genesis of these ideas and argues for the need for a more integrated view of reform. I also look closely at the authors of ideas about reform and how they as individuals shaped and are shaped by the colonial system. The main focus of Cooper’s analysis is the political side of reform of citizenship; this is why he does not probe the project of administrative decentralisation. He does point out that Léopold Senghor had argued that decentralisation was primarily a political problem before French officials realised this was the case. My own conclusions support this argument; French officials saw the answers to the questions posed by the pressure for independence as bureaucratic or administrative measures. This viewpoint, for some officials learnt in the corridors of the Colonial or Overseas school, led to reforms being off the mark and not addressing the true grievances in the overseas territories.

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The reports published between 1948 and 1955 played a fundamental role in shaping the law. The analysis of these documents also clearly links the reforms of 1946 and 1956, demonstrating a continuity of thought within certain cadres of the French colonial system. It is clear that reform was tied closely to the colonial myth as the myth served as an explanation and justification of reform. Within my analysis I argue that the ideas present in these documents link the reform underway to the wider ideals of Republicanism and that the thread of these ideas runs through all concepts of reform made by colonial officials and politicians. This thread links reform through the 1920s to the 1950s. Although analysis of these concepts is lacking they have been included in the history of how French politicians reimagined the future of the French union.

## The shock of 1954: a change in tone but no change in policy

The files in the *Archives d’Outre-mer* are organised in such a way that the series of files on the drafting of the *loi-cadre* contain material from up to four years before the law entered the statute books. It is likely that this organisation was carried out by the archivist responsible for the file rather than the offices that produced the documents within. Regardless of the origins of this structure to the archival material there is a clear thread in the use of the terms *décentralisation* and *déconcentration*. The terms are at the forefront of a series of inspection missions carried out in AOF in 1953 and 1954. The resulting report from these studies was published in summer 1954 by *Inspecteur* Cauet.[[288]](#footnote-288) The reports examined in detail the potential for reform in AOF and more *déconcentration* was identified as an objective in the opening lines of the report. The ‘objet du rapport’ identifies :

une étude des possibilités d’une réorganisation administrative, tendant à une plus grande déconcentration, et d’une modification éventuelle, dans le même sens, de la répartition des ressources et des charges entre budget général et budgets locaux, en A.O.F.[[289]](#footnote-289)

The key aspects of this *objet* are how it envisaged reform being undertaken and the effect that this reform would have. It was aimed at preserving AOF in a new form through the redistribution of administrative responsibilities, and resources within AOF’s constituent territories. The author of the *objet* situated the reform with previous official documents by citing a despatch from March 1954. Part of the letter reads ‘cette réforme compte tenu des pouvoirs attribués aux Assemblées Territoriales au lendemain de la Libération et des perspectives d’évolution raisonnables.’[[290]](#footnote-290) There is a clear appeal made in the letter to the ideal and memory of the liberation. There are several reasons why this appeal was made and why it was significant. As part of their project of creating a new history of France and the overseas territories, officials linked their activities in the Union to the memory of the liberation and the renewed freedom experienced in the French state. The expression ‘au lendemain de la Libération’ reflects the opening of the preamble of the Constitution of the Fourth Republic, ‘Au lendemain de la victoire remportée par les peuples libres’.[[291]](#footnote-291) The liberation represented a watershed for a new kind of politics and a renewed France. Officials added the myth of the liberation to the already established myth about progressive colonial reforms.

The effects of the occupation on French national consciousness have been studied at length.[[292]](#footnote-292) These studies examine the effects of the Vichy on French identity. However, following the liberation the memory of Vichy was supressed and a ‘myth’ of liberation was created; as Gildea wrote the myth of liberation overrode the violence practised in Algeria.[[293]](#footnote-293) Connected to this myth were many of the ‘rulers’ of Empire who were ex-resistance members who then took up posts in the colonial service. These resistance members believed in the myth of the liberation. Even officials who were not members of the resistance joined in with the new way of looking at the empire. A nameless official is cited by Cohen as denying that the ‘colonial administration’ had ever existed and that the only administration had been the ‘overseas administration’, pressing the enquirer as to whether they understood the difference.[[294]](#footnote-294) Therefore, to use the term ‘au lendemain de la libération’ was to tap into a discourse that was practised by officials who attempted to re-invent the colonial relationship to an equal one where the main goal was the proliferation of universal human rights. This discourse did not acknowledge the uneven nature of colonial rule, nor was it concerned with the prior brutality of colonialism. Instead it allowed for officials to speak of the Union as a vocation for the French, with the ultimate end point being a more equal system of government. This demonstrates that the colonial myth continued to adapt during this period and that it was still informing approaches to reform.

### Colonial rear-guards?

Cauet’s report was published in the summer of 1954 with some elements of the report being published on the date of the withdrawal of French forces from what had been French Indochina.[[295]](#footnote-295) The autumn of 1954 saw the outbreak of violence in Algeria.[[296]](#footnote-296) Two events that profoundly shook the French political system. The results of this are seen in the production of more reports about the future of AOF. French politicians and colonial administrators saw that reform was now imperative. The differences in the form, content, and tone of reports on *déconcentration* and *décentralisation* demonstrate this. The colonial myth was being undermined by the failure in Indochina and the recent outbreak of violence in Algeria. From a report in August 1954 that referred to the glorious past of France’s liberation by free peoples a move took place to a starker and troubled vision of the future of AOF. Given the sudden and unforeseen violence in Algeria and the shockwave that this sent through the French political system, the main reason for the change in tone and urgency is apparent. However, was Algeria the sole reason for the change in tone, or, as French officials learnt more about the situation in AOF, did they also come to fear the future more? Reports from more overseas inspectors can shed light on this question.

A note from inspector Pierre Sanner reiterated *why* reform of the system of government and administration in the overseas territory was necessary. Writing in July 1955 he painted a picture of widespread problems in AOF. In the opening of the report Sanner established his vision of AOF. In prose that approaches poetry he describes AOF as miserable, economically primitive yet political over-developed, too heavy, ineffectively administrated, and economically stagnant. He writes that this is the image projected onto ‘l’écran de l’Avenir’.[[297]](#footnote-297) Sanner leaves the reader on a cliff-hanger by posing the question ‘Si il est temps encore, peut-on y porter remède?’.[[298]](#footnote-298) In comparison to the report that had been published only a year before, the tone of this new report from Pierre Sanner was underpinned with fear.

In his role as *Inspecteur-général de la France Outre-Mer*, Pierre Sanner took a line of analysis that was more critical than his peers. Sanner did not mince his words when he was identifying the problems in the French Union. In order to address the misery and stagnation in the colonies Sanner proposed three solutions. The first solution was ‘Déconcentration and décentralisation dans le cadre de la structure actuelle’.[[299]](#footnote-299) Sanner wrote that this solution would maintain the ‘péréquation fédérale’ and deconcentrating and decentralising could lead to each territory being responsible for its own development.[[300]](#footnote-300) He cuttingly wrote that this solution was often presented but its demonstration was yet to be seen. However, he also wrote that the creation of a report on the general budget of AOF demonstrated the potential of a transfer of responsibility. His note highlighted that members of the colonial service identified the shortcomings in this policy when they explored the ideas and potential application in their own departments. Director of Public Works in AOF, Roger Lantenois, completed a report on the feasibility of *déconcentration* within his area of control. He did this ‘avec entêtement’ and stated it produced ‘des résultats décevants’.[[301]](#footnote-301) Mirroring the sentiments expressed in Lantenois’ report, Sanner did not rate the prospects for success for this policy highly; the measures would be difficult to apply in poor territories and not sufficient for the rich ones. His solution was to propose some ‘retouches de détail’, without which there would be no possibility for *déconcentration* or *décentralisation* within what he terms the ‘Fédération’. The use of the word ‘Fédération’ is reflective of the ongoing debates about the nature of the union between France and the overseas territories and perhaps belies Sanner’s personal perspective on how the French Union would evolve over the coming years.[[302]](#footnote-302) Despite Sanner’s reservations about *déconcentration* and *décentralisation* it was these polices that were ultimately implemented through legislation.

### The other proposals

Although this chapter is focused on *déconcentration* and *décentralisation*, and will make the links from Sanner’s pessimistic prediction for the prospects for these two concepts and events that followed, the other options identified by Sanner are relevant. An examination of these other options will demonstrate how policy evolved and, in part, explain the ambiguity and mutability of official thinking. Understanding why these were not chosen is a vital part of the wider project of this thesis for understanding official decision making during the late colonial period. Alongside his evaluation for the possibility of *déconcentration* or *décentralisation* Sanner proposed two other ideas. Sanner’s second suggestion, after measures of *déconcentration* and *décentralisation*, consisted of the replacing of the General Government in AOF which would lead to an increase of autonomy of each of the individual territories. The third was the possible constitution of ‘autonomies viables’, this would see AOF broken up into smaller units with territories of a complementary nature grouped together with some inter-territory services and governance.[[303]](#footnote-303) Similarly to the first measure that Sanner proposed the other two also had negative aspects. The problems posed by removing the general government of AOF were that, in Sanner’s opinion, it would lead to anarchy. Each individual territory was not capable of sustaining itself without begging France for funds.[[304]](#footnote-304) Anticipating criticisms that would be directed France’s way as the *loi-cadre* was being debated Sanner warned that France could be accused of creating a situation that would balkanise AOF in order to ‘mieux maintenir […] l’asservissement’.[[305]](#footnote-305)

Sanner’s third option was to divide the territories in West Africa into entities that he referred to as ‘viable’. He began his outline of this ‘solution’ with a clear appraisal of a problem he saw in AOF, ‘En bref, l’A.O.F. est trop grande et le territoire trop petit.’[[306]](#footnote-306) He outlined that, assuming the ‘personnalités’ could not be erased, the groupings would be made: Senegal, Mauritania, French Sudan and Guinea; Ivory Coast and Upper Volta; and Dahomey and Niger, with the possibility of Togo being integrated later.[[307]](#footnote-307) By creating these *‘*groupements’the problem of creating weak entities, unable to sustain themselves, would be avoided and the over-developed weight of the structures of AOF would be removed from the shoulders of individual territories. This suggestion and the concepts of *décentralisation* and *déconcentration* were revisited in legislation put forward by Pierre-Henri Teitgen as part of his attempt at reforming the French Union.

## From *loi Teitgen* to *loi-cadre*

This section of the thesis will analyse the links between Pierre-Henri Teitgen and the *loi-cadre* and the significance of Teitgen’s role in the process of reform. It argues that Teitgen’s reform was based on a policy of *décentralisation* and *déconcentration* in line with that which had been discussed in the reports by Chauvet, Cauet, and Sanner. In response to the problems identified in Sanner’s report *au* *Ministre de la France d’Outre-mer*, Pierre-Henri Teitgen took steps to legislate for change. Teitgen’s *projet* was significant as it marked the first moment that the concepts of *déconcentration* and *décentralisation* were expressed as legislation. This draft law preceded the *loi-cadre* but influenced what was contained within the later law. There can be little doubt that the *loi-cadre* was to a substantial extent a product of Gaston Defferre’s predecessor, Pierre-Henri Teitgen. During his tenure as Colonial Minister Teitgen enabled the drafting of a *projet de loi* that was aimed at reforming colonial governance. Teitgen drew upon the preceding years’ reports when drafting his *projet de loi*. This draft was used as a basis by Gaston Defferre when he came to address the issue of reform at the start of his own tenure as Colonial Minister.[[308]](#footnote-308) A comparison between the two shows the transfer of ideas that took place between different administrations within the Fourth Republic. Rather than being an inspirational idea and moment in French colonial history, with Gaston Defferre as its figurehead, the *loi-cadre* was borne out of debates that had taken place over the course of France’s colonial history. In a similar way to the *loi-cadre* becoming known as the *loi Defferre* it appears that the proposition made by Teitgen came to be associated with his name. The files used in this section are from Gaston Defferre’s personal archive from the municipal archive in Marseille. There is little doubt that Defferre consulted these documents and annotations on the documents were most likely made by him personally. In the copy of this document from Gaston Defferre’s personal archives the provisions regarding the new territorial institutions are underlined and highlighted in the margin by lines bordering the paragraphs.

### Teitgen’s décentralisation and déconcentration

The ‘Avant-projet de loi du 30 Novembre 1955 relatif aux institutions des territoires de l’Afrique Occidentale Française’ was proposed by Teitgen and published in a brochure titled ‘bilan d’un Gouvernement’.[[309]](#footnote-309) By identifying the key provisions within the *projet de loi* it is possible to evaluate whether it influenced the *loi-cadre*. The ‘avant-projet’ outlined Teitgen’s two main objectives. These objectives were: ‘I – Supprime[r] le groupe de territoires de l’Afrique Occidentale Française et le remplace… II – Détermine[r] les institutions territoriales et leurs attributions’.[[310]](#footnote-310) I will examine these proposals in more detail. Teitgen proposed that the *groupe de territoires* of AOF was to be replaced by a ‘haut commissaire’, ‘trois unions d’intérêts économiques’, and ‘des ententes interterritoriales entre deux ou plusieurs territoires’. Each of these three parts of the potential replacement of the *groupes des territoires* was elaborated on within the document.

The *haut-commissaire* would be responsible for a wide range of services in the territories including defence and foreign relations. Importantly the *haut-commissaire* would be the ‘dépositaire des pouvoirs de la République pour l’ensemble des territoires of the ‘ex-A.O.F.’[[311]](#footnote-311). The use of the term ‘dépositaire*’* in place of *représentative* denoted that the responsibilities of the appointee were to protect the interests of the Republic and AOF. This speaks to the idea that, try as they might, politicians struggled with the integration of the overseas territories into the Republic. Here the ‘dépositaire des pouvoirs de la République’ inferred that the interests of AOF were not the interests of the Republic proper.[[312]](#footnote-312) The rest of the explanation of the role of the *haut-commissaire* details what are termed ‘services de l’Etat’ including a ‘haut autorité sur les gouverneurs et administrateurs de la France d’outre-mer’.[[313]](#footnote-313)

The proposal to create three economic unions was to be realised through a council that would meet once a year. The precise format of the unions was not specified in the document. There was a precedent for this kind of idea within colonial administration. As we have seen, Pierre Sanner had written about the idea of replacing AOF with three economic unions within the report from an inspection mission he led. The reason behind this proposition was to ensure that the individual territories would not be left too weak to function economically. It would also limit the brewing conflict between the two principal countries within AOF, Senegal and Ivory Coast. Sanner felt that grouping the territories along these lines would lead to the stronger territories helping the weaker ones to grow. The ‘similarities’ between ethnicities within the proposed unions was also a factor that led to them being deemed appropriate entities.

The second part of Teitgen’s proposal foreshadowed the long discussions that took place after the *loi-cadre* was promulgated. The new territorial institutions suggested by Teitgen were similar to those that emerged during discussions and the decrees stemming from the *loi-cadre*. Teitgen proposed that the new territorial institutions and their remits would consist of a governor, an executive council, and a territorial assembly. Teitgen envisaged that the Governor would be the representative of both the state and of the territory. The third part of the proposal proffered the creation of ‘ententes interterritoriales entre deux ou plusieurs territoires’.[[314]](#footnote-314) This aspectof the proposal was vague although it was aimed at the facilitation of inter-territorial infrastructure projects managed by the territories that were affected. This last aspect of the proposal to replace the *groupe de territoires* opened up space for reform but the terms of which would be set later via decree; this was similar to provisions in the *loi-cadre* that allowed the use of decrees in administrating the colonies. Teitgen’s attempts to reform the structure of the French Union were described as a ‘spectacular federal project’ by Alexander Keese but he argues that Teitgen failed to offer any realistic plans.[[315]](#footnote-315) Pragmatism led Teitgen to rein in his proposals for reform and rely on the older tropes of the French colonial mind. Although, to a certain extent, the idea of federation had begun to enter into the lexicon of French politics it was at this point ill regarded. More important was that the term ‘federation’ was yet to be defined clearly. As such it was far easier to rely on more established concepts when proposing reform.

Clearly demonstrating the persistence of the ideas of *décentralisation* and *déconcentration* and their transition from suggestions from inspectors to the Colonial Minister is Teitgen’s use of these terms when discussing the reform of *titre VIII* of the constitution in the assembly of the French Union. A summary of some of his statements is included in a file relating to Teitgen’s reforms. The problem of *titre VIII* had been lingering throughout the reform period. African delegates called for reform of this section of the constitution as it defined the relationship between France and the overseas territories within the umbrella of the French Union. When Teitgen spoke before the assembly of the French Union he did not speak about federation, instead he identified that ‘[u]ne véritable décentralisation de l’administration des territoires [qui] nécessite l’extension réelle des compétences des assemblées territoriales*.*’[[316]](#footnote-316) Following this statement Teitgen hinted at what would have been an important implication increasing the powers of Territorial Assemblies and making them legislative organisations.[[317]](#footnote-317) Passing powers to create legislation from the national assembly to any other body was in direct contravention of article 13 of the constitution which stated explicitly ‘[l]'Assemblée nationale vote seule la loi. Elle ne peut déléguer ce droit.’[[318]](#footnote-318). The next point of discussion was a similar ‘véritable décentralisation’ of the colonial service. To implement this Teitgen stressed that functionaries could no longer be considered to be representatives of the state but instead had to become representatives of their territories.[[319]](#footnote-319) The last statement that Teitgen made before the national assembly was regarding the need to modernise ‘les peuples d’outre-mer, d’élever leur niveau de vie’.[[320]](#footnote-320) This final measure was not going to be achieved through further *décentralisation*.Instead, Teitgen proposed further integration between the economies of France and the overseas territories in order to achieve an improvement in the lives of the overseas peoples. From a grand project of Federation between France and the overseas territories Teitgen had retreated into the familiar ground with policies of *décentralisation* and economic assimilation. Thusly the path followed by Gaston Defferre was established by Teitgen.

The links between the *loi-cadre* and various ideas espoused in the years preceding it have been explored by scholars. The similarities between Pierre Sanner’s propositions for reforms and the *loi-cadre* was noted by James Genova but the intervening evolution of reform under the guidance of Teitgen is missed out of Genova’s retelling of events.[[321]](#footnote-321) Genova links the propositions of Sanner and the resulting, albeit more radical, *loi-cadre* without mentioning Teitgen’s term as the head of the colonial ministry. Notably, Genova highlights how after its promulgation Gaston Defferre outlined a narrative of reform within which he situated the *loi-cadre*. Within this narrative Defferre underlined the post-1946 reforms as leading to final achievement of the *loi-cadre* as the embodiment of the ‘mission civilisatrice’.[[322]](#footnote-322) It is clear that the proposals from Teitgen informed Gaston Defferre’s approach to reforming the relationship between metropolitan France and the overseas territories. Despite the links between the Teitgen’s proposals and the *loi-cadre* it came to be associated with Defferre, although officials disputed this.

### Loi Defferre or loi Teitgen

Whilst consulting the file of William Cohen’s returned questionnaires I noticed that two of the former colonial officials who replied to William Cohen’s questionnaire had ‘corrected’ Cohen’s question about the ‘*loi Defferre*’.[[323]](#footnote-323) One of them did this by crossing out the ‘Defferre’ in Cohen’s question and replacing it with ‘Teitgen’ – an interesting and censorious act that hinted at the disdain that some of the officials held for Cohen’s questionnaire – the other wrote a *nota bene* in the margins of the questionnaire explaining that Defferre was not the instigator of the legislation. The second official wrote that most of the work for the law was realised by Defferre’s predecessor as Overseas Minister at Rue Oudinot, Pierre-Henri Teitgen. These officials implied the existence of a clear link between Teitgen’s project and the *loi-cadre*. The possibility of a link merits further investigation. The foremost reason for the importance of these ‘corrections’, acts which could be interpreted as minor pedantry, is that the role of right-wing politicians in the process of reforming the French Union needs to be understood. This act also shows how officials were concerned with protecting their understanding of events. The role of right-wing politicians in creating the *loi-cadre* has been underestimated as the SFIO was keen to take ownership of the law in the light of its apparent success. Following its promulgation, the *loi-cadre* became known to some as the *loi Defferre* and the SFIO claimed the *loi-cadre* as their own; these two acts separated the law from its right-wing origins.[[324]](#footnote-324) Whilst Gaston Defferre was a member of the SFIO and part of Guy Mollet’s government, Teitgen was a member of the MRP and colonial minister in the government of Edgar Faure.

At first glance the claims of the two ex-officials are not unfounded; before Defferre was anywhere near his office in the Colonial Ministry Teitgen had summoned a study group to discuss the prospect of reform.[[325]](#footnote-325) Head of this group was a longstanding member of the colonial administration, Robert Delavignette. This appointment demonstrated that Teitgen clearly respected Delavignette’s continued expertise in colonial affairs. Furthermore, it shows how an official mostly retired from frontline political activity could still be involved in the political processes of the Fourth Republic in the guise of an ‘expert’. This supports the argument that older and more conservative ways of thinking about the overseas affairs were influencing policy at this late stage. The conclusion of Delavignette’s group report highlighted that the Brazzaville Conference failed to resolve the tension between policies that tended towards self-government and others that would lead to ‘assimilation’.[[326]](#footnote-326) Teitgen sought to address this situation.

The officials who answered William Cohen’s questionnaire were right to address the misattribution and acknowledge the significance of Teitgen’s role in reform. The similarities between Teitgen’s eventual proposals and the *loi-cadre* demonstrate an unbroken line of colonial ideology influencing reform that, although renewed at the Brazzaville Conference, spans the years and ideas from the post First World War world to that of the mid-1950s. It was not the case that the *loi-cadre* was a particularly right wing or left-wing attempt at reform. Its true significance was that it was a reform steeped in a colonial ideology first. This colonial ideology should not be understood in a traditionally left/right spectrum of politics. The *loi-cadre* was emerged from the debates that had taken place over the course of France’s colonial history. These debates were always held within the constraints of the colonial discourse which delineated the terms on which the debate could be had. Despite these constraints officials within the colonial administration still found room to define concepts such as *déconcentration* and *décentralisation* in unique ways. However, these concepts still held significance for the audience for these documents. One of the key changes in this period was that by the end of 1955 the concepts of *déconcentration* and *décentralisation* had become the solution to the problematic idea of assimilation, which officials were keen to move on from. More typical use of the terminology of the colonial discourse can also be seen in the example of the use of variations of the term ‘valeur’ or the idea of value within the overseas territories and in the allusions to the topos of civilisation. The examples outlined in this chapter show that the colonial discourse was influencing and being influenced by the colonial mind in the period 1945 – 1955, and subsequently the *loi-cadre*.

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored how ideas about reform developed in the build-up to what became the *loi-cadre*. The chapter has also shown how the colonial discourse and myth shaped reform and approaches to reform. The positioning of *décentralisation* and *déconcentration* as the main means for reform was important as officials envisaged that these concepts would lead to positive results. It has been shown that these ideas were borne out of pragmatism which was underpinned by the idealism and colonial myth in which French administrators invested themselves. This belief in the colonial myth was expressed through the inclusion of the idea of the overseas territories having control over their ‘propres affaires’. The policies of *déconcentration* and *décentralisation* were seen as the best way of enabling the transfer of some power to the overseas territories. However, the fleshing out of what was meant by *déconcentration* and *décentralisation* had taken place within the context of French politicians and administrators attempting to maintain their grip of power over overseas reform. The results of this are examined in the next chapter. What emerged in the years 1944 – 1955 were attempts at reform that were being curtailed by a conservative administration. Even the decision to enact a limited transfer of powers through the implementation of *déconcentration* and *décentralisation* was hesitated upon by officials. It took the outbreak of violence in Algeria to shake the French political and administrative system into implementing reform. However, even then Teitgen turned to Delavignette to lead his efforts at reform. The debates that led up to the *loi-cadre* were coloured as much by an inherent conservatism of the colonial mind as they were influenced by the dissatisfaction of the inhabitants of the overseas territories.

# Chapter three – The *loi-cadre* from inception to application

This chapter argues that key aspects of the process that created the *loi-cadre* have been overlooked by scholars. In order to address this gap in understanding the different sections of this chapter each focus on a different stage of the law’s formulation and promulgation. Through the analysis of these different stages this chapter adds to our existing understanding of the law. It specifically calls attention to the detail of the *décrets d’application* of the *loi-cadre* showing how they were designed to enact the aims of the *loi-cadre*. The significance of the discourse in the period is shown through the continued use of key terms of the colonial discourse; the *loi-cadre* was framed with concepts such as *décentralisation*, *développement*, *propres affaires*, and the topoi of *évolution* and *réforme*. In terms of the colonial mind this chapter shows that there were similarities between how it reacted to the crisis in 1956 and how it had reacted to previous crises. This supports the idea that there was an established institutional pattern in the reaction to colonial crises.

As shown in this chapter through its study of the *loi-cadre*,the period 1956 to 1958 was turbulent. By 1956 two years had passed since the loss of Indochina and the start of the Algerian War: the lessons of the former and concerns about the latter were shaping French colonial politics. Fears about Egyptian influence on the Algerian War led France to join with Israel and the United Kingdom in an ill-fated invasion of Egypt in October 1956. This became known as the Suez Crisis and damaged the reputation of French and British politicians. There was a period of relative calm in 1957; France successfully supressed the *Front de libération Nationale* (FLN) in Algiers and the *loi-cadre* seemed to be working. This calm was soon disrupted, however, as concerns about the conduct of the Algerian War led to a coup by generals who demanded the return of General de Gaulle to power. The May Crisis of 1958 led to the *loi-cadre* being superseded by the Constitution of the Fifth Republic. With this context in mind, this chapter explores how officials sought to implement reform of the Overseas Territories.

Throughout the period of 1920 to 1955 ideas about overseas reform were created, shared and institutionalised. These concepts entered the minds of officials who studied and discussed them at the ENFOM, within relevant ministries, or other organisations related to the French colonial world. These ideas therefore firmly became part of a French colonial mind. An opportunity for the application of these ideas presented itself in the mid-1950s. In the shadow of the failure to achieve victory in Indochina, and with the spiralling crisis in Algeria a constant source of worry, officials were forced into action. Their reaction was to revisit propositions for reform that had been made in the preceding years whilst also coming up with some more novel proposals. These proposals originated in the periods of reform that are studied in the first two chapters of this thesis. As shown in the previous chapter *décentralisation* and *déconcentration* had dominated discussions about reform of the Union between 1948 and 1955, and with the *projet de loi Teitgen* these concepts were on the cusp of being enacted. However, the question remained of exactly how *décentralisation* of *déconcentration* were to be realised. The realisation of this reform took place through the debates that followed the *projet de loi* of February 1956 which led to the *loi-cadre* and its *décrets d’application*. During the process of defining reform, direct references to *décentralisation* and *déconcentration* occurred with less frequency as they had been settled on as the main means for reform. The debate in this period was about defining how to deconcentrate and decentralise the administration of the overseas territories. A study of the period 1956-1957 will show how the colonial mind reacted in a time of uncertainty and in the face of increasing opposition. It will also demonstrate how the framework of an established and approved idea of reform in the colonial sphere influenced the decisions made in this period. This chapter argues that what emerged in this period was a series of new tensions within the colonial mind. Officials were forced into action through fear of further violence. The analysis in this chapter shows that the colonial mind was balancing fear of losing control with fear of giving away too much control to the overseas territories through reform. The fear spawned dissonances within the colonial mind as it tried to give away powers without losing control. The ultimate result of this was an unsatisfactory settlement that added to the confusion it was supposed to solve.

In order to examine how the colonial mind dealt with the changing situation in 1956, and beyond, this chapter consists of a study of sources from the period February 1956 to August 1957. The focus of this chapter is to show the perspective and influence that administrators had on the *loi-cadre* and reform in this period because it is an aspect of the *loi-cadre* that has been overlooked. Whilst political discussion of the law has been subject to academic inquiry, the behind-the-scenes negotiation and planning has not undergone high levels of scrutiny. This is despite the importance of the role of these more private discussions. Within this chapter links are made between propositions and discussions of administrators, in the form of reports and letters, and the content of the *loi-cadre* itself. Furthermore, the precise mechanics of the *loi-cadre* are examined to a level of detail that has not previously been seen. This too is vital, as to fully understand the reasoning behind the *loi-cadre* it is necessary to understand how it was supposed to work during its application. Once the more complete comprehension of the law is established it becomes possible to evaluate the ways in which scholarship has misplaced key aspects of the law.

Through teleological interpretations of the law it has been integrated into a narrative in which the *loi-cadre* was an acknowledgement of the inevitable end of the French Union. A prominent example of this is made by Cooper in which he described the *loi-cadre* as being ‘a big step towards decolonization’.[[327]](#footnote-327) Even Chafer, who warned of the importance of avoiding teleological thinking falls into the trap of overlooking what officials thought the law would do and stated that ‘[t]he Loi-cadre played a crucial role… by establishing the framework for future relations between France and Black Africa and setting the direction of French policy in the run-up to independence and after.’[[328]](#footnote-328) It is true that the law did set policy in the years leading up to independence but that was not apparent to the architects of the law. Although neither Chafer nor Cooper explicitly stated that the *loi-cadre* was intentionally designed to lead to the end of the French Union, their framing of the law as being a gesture towards decolonisation and independence obscures the intentions behind the law. Officials who worked in the French administration played their own role in adapting the significance of the law following independence; this is analysed in chapter four. This framing of the reform as a step towards decolonisation or independence has led to key aspects of both the law and decrees being obscured; this chapter brings these aspects back into the light. Crucially, this chapter reassesses the initial reactions to the *loi-cadre* from officials. Scholarship tends to quickly move past the *loi-cadre*,and the return of Charles de Gaulle takes prominence.[[329]](#footnote-329) Chafer described the period in which the *loi-cadre* was functioning in the following terms,

During the period from February 1956, when Guy Mollet’s government was sworn in, to the fall of the Fourth Republic in May 1958, French governments came and went every few months under the spectre of the growing crisis in Algeria.[[330]](#footnote-330)

It is easy to see how the *loi-cadre* was overshadowed by wider events and important parts of its story have been missed given subsequent events. I want to address this gap in the story of the *loi-cadre*. In this chapter I examine key sources that show how the law was designed to prolong the French Union through reform and the redistribution of *competences*.

The chapter demonstrates how the colonial mind was working in this period and presents examples of the colonial discourse in use. Following the establishment of *décentralisation* as the key concept which defined the administration’s approach to political reform the administration set about putting this into practice.[[331]](#footnote-331) As officials were now in the process of decentralising, direct references to the term fell away. *Décentralisation* became manifest in the form of a division between the *services d’état* and the *services territoriaux*. By settling on a policy and enacting it the colonial mind was able to start again the process of defining the future that had been one of its main activities. This chapter argues that through the *loi-cadre* the colonial mind was briefly able to articulate a vision of the future which soothed anxieties about the situation in the overseas territories. The colonial discourse’s topos of civilisation and *évolution* and the concepts of *progrès* and *développement* were encapsulated through the provisions in the *loi-cadre* that addressed economic and social development. These terms were the other main components of the reform offered by the *loi-cadre* that were framed within the terms of the colonial discourse. In this chapter the links between the use of ‘développement’ and ‘progrès’ in the *loi-cadre* are linked to later theories of development. Another aspect of the colonial mind that is highlighted in this chapter is that it designated certain questions to be shielded from public view and discussed only in private. This was a prominent feature of the way that the colonial mind dealt with reform in this period. In one source analysed in this chapter an unnamed official specifically called for the use of ‘vague’ language and within other sources it is clear that some things were being left unsaid. These guarded or secret discussions took place despite the wider process of increasing the responsibilities of African politicians that was supposedly taking place. I argue that this tendency towards secrecy and vagueness increased frustration at the pace and character of reform. Ultimately the deliberate obfuscation of key issues may have had the effect of making the law and its provisions confusing; this confusion is shown at the end of this chapter.

This chapter charts a path through the documents that led to and emerged from the *loi-cadre* in order to reassert its significance in history. The first section analyses documents from the period between February 1956 and June 1956 in which the *loi-cadre* was first proposed, underwent a drafting process, and was passed into law. This section shows the colonial mind at work, attempting to define how reform was to take place. The next section analyses the *décrets d’application* of the *loi-cadre* that have been overlooked in scholarship. This section expands the exploration of the colonial mind by arguing that its main concern was to ensure the stability of the Union and the Republic. This middle section shows the confusion over some delineation of services between the territory and the state. Also it highlights the economic reforms put forward through the decrees. It shows how the tensions over reform and control resulted in the administration holding on to some powers whilst giving others away. The final section of the chapter shows the result of this process which was mostly confusion; the *loi-cadre* had failed at its main aim. Instead of presenting a clear vision of reform the law posed more questions than it answered. This chapter answers the question of what the *loi-cadre* meant for officials at the time of its implementation.

## Vague threats and future solutions: the *projet de loi* of 29th February

In February 1956 following promises of reform over the preceding years the Mollet government put forward a *Projet de Loi*. This *projet* authorised ‘le Gouvernement à mettre en œuvre les réformes et à prendre les mesures propres à assurer une évolution des territoires relevant du Ministre de la France d’outre-mer’.[[332]](#footnote-332) This began the process that led to the *loi-cadre*. The potential ‘évolution’ offered within the *projet* was not readily defined. Within the colonial discourse *évolution* was a topos that was often invoked; it implied that the overseas territories were in an undeveloped state and that France would lead them towards a more modern and developed future. This section will examine the language within the February 1956 *Projet de Loi*. It will also make links to the historical context and to the wider process of reform underway during the latter years of the French colonial empire. This section argues that the *projet de loi* shows that there was a change in tone due to the fear or threat of future disorder within the French Union. The response to this threat was reform, which itself created another kind of threat. The danger perceived by French officials was based on experiences of violence in the French Union which officials felt had been caused by frustration within the overseas parts of the French Union. Within the wording of the *projet* the references to the reasons why reform was needed were left vague. The lack of a direct reference to the violence shows that the colonial mind was attempting to maintain a degree of distance to events. The tendency for some things to go unsaid in more public settings was a key aspect of the colonial mind. Officials were aware of the problems in the French Union, and these problems influenced policy, but in order to soothe some anxiety the problem was not fully identified.

The *projet de Loi* used language that warned of a threat to the French Union. In the *projet* it was made clear that there was a threat to the future of the French Union. Reading between the lines it is clear that this menace was the recent imperial reverse experienced in French Indo-China and the burgeoning conflict in French Algeria. However, the precise nature of the threat is never made explicit. All that is written is ‘L’expérience a montré qu’un climat de confiance pouvait se dégrader de façon très rapide même pendant des périodes de calme apparent’.[[333]](#footnote-333) This sentence is a prominent example of the fear within the political establishment; they could not be sure about what the future held in store. It shows that the way in which the conflicts in Indochina and Algeria had occurred had shocked the political establishment. In places, particularly Algeria, where previously officials had felt that they retained control of the situation they had lost the prerogative with a shocking speed. Losing control of the initiative meant losing control of the ability to define the future. Officials were extending the lessons of the Algerian and Indochinese experience to other parts of the French Union. They felt that AOF and AEF were still stable but it was this very perception of stability that became a threat, as the *appearance* of stability could have been hiding the potential for serious disorder. The 1954 reports from Sanner, analysed in chapter two, had raised the possibility of disorder within parts of AOF in particular. This predicament within overseas France merited ‘[u]ne très grande attention’.[[334]](#footnote-334) Again, the reasons for this attention were left unspoken and they remained a lingering but clouded presence. The shockwave created by events in Algeria and Indochina was still passing through the French political system in 1956 but, in this *projet*, the government appeared keen to prevent further ruptures. Officials wanted to have the means to pre-empt or at least to react to disorder. The law was described as allowing the government to ‘éviter les conflits graves’. [[335]](#footnote-335) The fear of violence and the loss of control was summed up in the preamble in this sentence ‘[i]l ne faut pas se laisser devancer et dominer par les événements pour ensuite céder aux revendications lorsqu'elles s'expriment sous une forme violente.’[[336]](#footnote-336) The law that was to emerge from the *projet de loi* had to ensure that the government would no longer be slow in reacting to events and that they could be more proactive in their approach to governing the colonies. Politicians were increasingly aware that any future reform had to be enacted quickly because of the threat of violence.

This sense of vagueness pervaded the way that the preamble to the *projet de loi* approached recent events and also the future it was trying to shape. Threats were alluded to yet were not made clear. This reflects how during this period there was growing uncertainty about the future. As made clear by the opening paragraphs there was a threat to the French Union. This speaks to the wider situation faced by French officials. By early 1956 the Algerian War was growing in scale yet events had not reached the stage at which the French had to face up to the prospect of ceding Algeria to the Algerians, Mollet was determined to defeat the FLN. Thomas wrote that within the first two months of coming to power in early 1956 the Mollet Government had set a policy of ‘the prosecution of all-out war as a prelude to any meaningful talks with Algerian nationalists.’[[337]](#footnote-337) Furthermore, Evans’ analysis of Mollet’s policy in February 1956 supports the view that the French position was that Algeria could be saved. As he writes, Mollet ‘had always envisaged a new institutional structure that would recognize both Algeria’s specificity and the indissoluble bond with France’[[338]](#footnote-338). This shows that there was a similar character to the reform in Algeria and in the other parts of the French Union. In Algeria the Mollet government was convinced it could defeat the FLN and enact the reforms it wanted. In other parts of the French Union, such as AOF and AEF, where there had not yet been large-scale resistance or violence the Mollet government’s plan was to press on with reform. The future of the French empire was being threatened but at this stage it was not in serious doubt and reform was still possible. Significantly at this stage the real threat to the French administration was that its ability to define the future direction of policy in the French Union could have been undermined. In Algeria Mollet had to defeat the FLN in order to control the future, whereas in AOF there were different problems to be overcome.

Ongoing and recent events in the French Union created a need for action, and a sense of urgency. Although there had been strikes and violence in the overseas territories this clearly did not represent the same level of disruption that had been seen in Algeria and Indochina so for the administration the situation in AOF remained ‘calme’ and ‘les Africains sont toujours restés fidèles à la France’.[[339]](#footnote-339) The belief that the territories of AOF remained calm was stated in the inspection reports written by Sanner in the previous two years. In the territories that were ‘calme’ reform was ‘encore possible’ despite events elsewhere in the Union, although there was an unspecified deadline implied by the use of the term ‘encore’.[[340]](#footnote-340) The belief that there was a deadline showed that officials were worried about the threat of further violence in the French Union. This belief was also expressed in Sanner’s reports. The fear of violence originated in the overseas territories. However, the cause of the frustration that could have resulted in violence was to be found internally in the government of the Fourth Republic. The workings of government in the Fourth Republic made the process of reform difficult and slow. This process was directly critiqued in the *projet* and a solution for it was presented. In a passage critical of the nature of politics in the Fourth Republic the length of time taken for prior reforms was highlighted; ‘quatre ans pour faire voter le Code du travail et plus de trois ans pour faire voter la loi sur les municipalités’.[[341]](#footnote-341) The text goes on to criticise how hopes for reform were raised very high but then the time it took to implement them led to a rapid decline in hope. It is for this reason that the reform was felt to be so vital. Political, economic and social reforms were the proposed solutions that would head off any further anti-colonial risings within the areas of the French Union that remained ‘calme’.[[342]](#footnote-342) Continued delays in delivering reform were likely to lead to friction within the overseas territories. The fear of losing control due to violence necessitated reform.

Underpinning this contemplation of reform were the concepts of *décentralisation* and *déconcentration* that had been debated over the preceding years. The concepts were referred to directly and indirectly in the introduction to the *projet de loi*. The implementation of *décentralisation* and *décentralisation* were framed in the narrative of the colonial myth which posited that France was guiding the overseas populations to a degree of autonomy:

Les mesures tendant à accentuer la décentralisation et la déconcentration administratives visent à développer chez les populations d’outre-mer le sens des responsabilités civiques et la pratique de la gestions des affaires publiques.[[343]](#footnote-343)

The extent to which politicians were willing to publicly endorse their belief in the *mission civilisatrice* is shown by this statement. This framing of the transfer of powers is quite different to that which has been made by scholars of this period. Chafer’s argument that the transfer of powers was done in order to reduce costs of unimportant services is undermined by this evidence that officials believed they were granting powers as part of the tutelage of the overseas populations.[[344]](#footnote-344) Officials also believed that through granting powers to the overseas territories they would undermine the potential for violence.[[345]](#footnote-345) The belief in the *mission civilisatrice* had been given official sanction within the constitution and the process by which *décentralisation* and *déconcentration* re-emerged as the means by which the *mission civilisatrice* could be achieved is analysed in chapter two of this thesis. The concepts were linked to the ongoing crisis in the French union within the text. It is true that there were financial concerns in this period but the framing of the transfer of powers was using the colonial myth. By decentralising and deconcentrating the problem of slow reform and the inability to react to changing situations would be solved. This was explained in the *projet*;

[l]e Gouvernement propose donc un projet de loi qui prévoit des réformes dont la mise en application rapide satisferait certains désirs légitimes des populations d’outre-mer. Le texte proposé présente l’avantage de permettre le groupement d’un certain nombre de réformes et, par voie de conséquence, une répartition d’ensemble des compétences.[[346]](#footnote-346)

The reason that there was a transfer of powers was not to cut the costs of colonial administration. Officials believed that they were giving the populations of the overseas territories the control that they wanted over their own administration. In the conclusion to the first paragraph of the *projet* the colonised people were described as ‘toujours fidèles’ but the authors of the *projet* stated that their loyalty must not be penalised.[[347]](#footnote-347) The belief in the success of the policy of *décentralisation* was reinforced by the fact that it would enable quicker reactions to events and the administration would be fulfilling its mission of leading the overseas population to the administration of their ‘propres affaires’. As such the *projet de loi* was aimed at creating legislation that would guarantee the continuity of the French Union with the overseas territories being granted control through *décentralisation*.

The *projet de loi* of February 1956 was not designed as a decolonising gesture. Following the *projet* initial drafts of the law were produced. This analysis of *the projet de loi* has shown that the colonial mind employed the colonial myth in order to soothe its concerns about recent events in the overseas territories. In order to prevent violence spreading to other parts of the French Union the administration could implement *décentralisation* which would ensure that France would be fulfilling the mission set out in the constitution. The reason that officials were convinced that *décentralisation* would work is that the colonial mind had established it as the best way of enacting reform over the previous eight years. Whilst the *projet de loi* had addressed the fears of an outbreak of violence a new set of fears about the implication of reform were just around the corner.

### Competing visions of ‘progrès’ and how the colonial mind shaped the *loi-cadre*

Following approval of the *projet de loi,* a draft version of the *loi-cadre* was presented in March 1956 which underwent revisions before the final version in June 1956 was voted on by the assembly. This section explores how the discussions between officials influenced the final form of the law by comparing the different versions from March and June. The March draft of the law was debated in the national assembly and in the *Commission des Territoires d’Outre-mer*. The results of these debates were changes to some of the articles of the *loi-cadre* which was promulgated in June. Clauses were added that increased the scale and objectives of the reform. Through an examination of the debates, and the differences between the two versions of the law, this section will show the colonial mind working within the drafting of the law. This section argues two key points about the March and June drafts of the *loi-cadre*; one is that the content of both the March draft and June version of the law show that the *loi-cadre* was steeped in the ideas of the colonial mind. The influence of the colonial mind can be shown through an analysis of the language of the law which reveals the presence of the terminology of the colonial discourse. The second is that the changes made to the March draft reveal that some key aspects of reform were missed by the officials involved in creating the March draft of the law. In order to demonstrate this, the following section uses the example of an article that appears in both versions of the law and explores the differences between the two.

### The colonial mind in the *loi-cadre* and concepts of development

The influence of the colonial mind can be seen within the terminology that can be found within the March and June drafts of the law. The colonial discourse can be found underpinning the methods and motives for reform. The terms used in this paragraph are some of the building blocks of late colonial policy. The concepts of ‘développement’, and ‘progrès’ become the key principles of how colonial powers approached their relationship with the colonies following the Second World War. The presence of these terms within the document shows that officials still held on to colonial tropes about ‘primitive’ societies despites protestations of a new acceptance of autochthonous culture. The phrasing of the paragraph was agreed to by deputies from overseas France and Félix Houphouet-Boigny was a named signatory of the law. The use of the word ‘progrès’ shows the general acceptance of the need for ‘progrès’ to be made within the colonies. During the debates on the phrasing and content of the *loi-cadre* Defferre referred to the overseas territories as ‘les pays sous-développés’ showing the prevalence of ideas about development.[[348]](#footnote-348) One of the sites in which ideas of ‘développement’ were tested was within the areas colonised by European powers. It is for this reason that the structure ‘formes modernes de développement’ was used in the text of the March and June drafts of the *loi-cadre*.[[349]](#footnote-349) Larrain argued that theories of modernisation that came about in the twentieth century ‘[sought] to explain the process of development as a transition between two models or ideal types, the traditional society and the modern or industrial society.’[[350]](#footnote-350) The use of the terms ‘progrès’ and ‘développement’ within the *loi-cadre* match this conceptual model.

As the *loi-cadre* was written before the field of development studies was formalised the ideas of ‘progrès’ and ‘développement’ as used in the *loi-cadre* are examples of the colonial mind applying ideas that were later morphed into an academic discipline. Development theory grew out of a changing attitude towards the role of the coloniser within the colony that was provoked by several factors.[[351]](#footnote-351) European theories of development were created within the imperial context.[[352]](#footnote-352) Larrain stated the use of ‘progress’ predated the use of ‘development’ when the concepts emerged in the enlightenment period.[[353]](#footnote-353) These terms are therefore linked on a conceptual level. Larrain did not undertake a linguistic study of the terms ‘progress’ and ‘development’ beyond his noting of the use of one term before the other. In his analysis he almost exclusively uses the word ‘development’. However, the interchangeable nature of the terms is shown within how they are used in the *loi-cadre*. Larrain’s use of one term over the other could be explained through differences between English and French although it is also possible that the use of progress or ‘progrès’ fell away after the end of European Empires. The use of these terms within the *loi-cadre* hints at the role that late-colonial concepts had in subsequently shaping theories of development. However, it is beyond the remit of this thesis to pursue this avenue of research.

### Changes and challenges in how the colonies were to be developed

Article four of the *loi-cadre* presents a list of measures that the government aimed to take in order to ‘élever le niveau de vie’ in the territories covered by the law.[[354]](#footnote-354) This section of the chapter shows that through a process of drafting and debate, the measures contained within article four changed significantly between the March 1956 draft *loi-cadre* and the final June 1956 *loi-cadre*. This section uses three examples of changes made to article four in the areas of *droits coutumiers*, *éducation*, and *l’état civil* respectively. This section demonstrates how additions to the law were discussed in the *assemblée nationale*, and the *Commission des territoires d’outre-mer*. This process shows the multiple bodies which shaped the law challenging the image of the law as the ‘loi Defferre’. More importantly, the analysis of these sources shows how different, and sometimes unexpected, parts of the colonial mind were shaping the reform. The differences between article four in the final version of the law and how it appeared in the March 1956 draft expose how the consultation process influenced the law. The opening paragraph of the article did not change, but other clauses within it did. Here I will explain and examine the differences between key clauses that were changed or added between the draft and final version of the law. This examination of the differences sheds light on the process of reform in the Fourth Republic and underlines key points within the article. Article four outlined a series of ideas that are more like suggestions or hopes rather than clear policy propositions. Chafer described the law as a ‘declaration of intent’ and it is true that the law can be seen as an enabling gesture rather than reform act.[[355]](#footnote-355) The points in article four should be read as potential courses of action.

The first example of a change that was made is to the clause that referred to ‘l’établissement d’un plan cadastral’. By the June version of the law a caveat had been added to the clause that was designed to protect the ‘droit coutumier des autochtones’. The full final clause read ‘[p]ar la mise en place des formes modernes de développement rural et l'établissement d'un plan cadastral respectant les droits coutumiers des autochtones’.[[356]](#footnote-356) The difference between the clauses shown above on a basic level show that the initial draft of the law did not include concessions to the established customs of land ownership in the overseas territories. At first glance this could be seen as nothing more than an oversight by French officials. However, if we consider the context within which the *loi-cadre* was being written the omission becomes more striking. The *loi-cadre* was supposed to be being written in order to increase the control of the populations of the overseas territories of their ‘propres affaires’. Since the October 1946 constitution the idea of *propres affaires* had become firmly embedded in the colonial mind and *propres affaires* was a concept that formed part of the colonial discourse. This was because officials believed that leading the overseas territories towards greater autonomy was their mission in the overseas territories. They also thought that reform would prevent further violence in the French Union. Taking note then of the climate of fear, the fact that the March draft did not include an acknowledgement of pre-existing conditions of land rights is revealing. This shows that the colonial mind was adapting during the drafting of the *loi-cadre*. In this first version of the law a vision of reform in the overseas territories was offered as being a modern and controlled process. The pre-existing rights of those who would be subject to the reform were not considered to be important. In this future scenario those affected by the reform would have to accept its implications. In the June version of the law the potential implications of this have been identified and the risks associated with not respecting the rights of autochthonous landowners led to the inclusion of an explicit acknowledgement of their rights. The difference between these two clauses shows the difficulty that the colonial mind was having in adjusting to the new reality in which the rights of more than just educated Africans and French people were to be respected.

As well as clauses being changed, other new ones were added to article four. Between the production of the March draft of the *loi-cadre* and the final version in June 1956 a clause was inserted into article four of the law that covered education. This clause was discussed in the 15th June session of the *Commission des Territoires d’Outre-mer* following a suggestion to amend the clause by a member of the commission named Malbrant. However, Malbrant’s amendment was withdrawn until a later meeting could be held with Gaston Defferre present.[[357]](#footnote-357) The reasons why education was initially missing from the law are unclear but it is surprising that this was not included from the beginning. The fact that the initial version of the law omitted any provisions that mentioned education shows that for the original authors of the law, education was not seen as a vital reform. Parts of the colonial mind were settled on the idea that education was only for a limited few even within the period of reform. It took the intervention of other officials during the drafting of the law to get a clause about education inserted. In the final version of the law the clause called for ‘la généralisation et la normalisation de l'enseignement’.[[358]](#footnote-358) Since the Third Republic, education had played a prominent role within how citizens of the Republic were to be ‘raised’. Education was a vital point of connection between the state and individual. Specifically, education has and still does play a vital role in the formation of a ‘centralised concept of French citizenship’ that has helped to break down regional identities.[[359]](#footnote-359) Politicians who were redrafting the *loi-cadre* were aware of the power of education and their plans demonstrate that they were laying the foundations of a standardised education system. These designs show that, within the law, they were not looking to break up AOF and AEF. It also shows that they were making it possible to control an aspect of government policy that was seen as vital in the creation of a unified identity. This raises questions about their intentions further down the line. The clear identification of the importance of education within the law is indicative of how the law was intended to strengthen ties between France and the overseas territories. Governments that were at the point of relinquishing control of territories did not seek to maintain control of education policy and certainly did not appear to want to instigate wholesale reform of an education system. Although it was not included in the first draft of the law the insertion of a clause on education is evidence of how officials anticipated the reform to work and that education was to be a key part of the project of improving living conditions in the overseas territories.

Another new addition to article four is the clause specifying measures to facilitate the formalisation of ‘*l’état civil*’ within the overseas territories.[[360]](#footnote-360) *L’état civil* is a vital function of a state and another point of contact between the individual and the state. The inclusion of it within the law draws attention to the fact that it had been previously neglected within the colonies but also shows that the architects of the law were looking to expand the role of the state within the lives of colonial subjects as part of a drive towards progress. The origin of this amendment was another amendment put forward by Sékou Touré who was primarily concerned with furnishing the inhabitants of the overseas territories with identity cards. Touré gave an example of how the lack of identity cards was inhibiting the ability of Africans to get jobs where they were required to handle money.[[361]](#footnote-361) Touré’s amendment to this article included the time limit of one year for access to the identity cards to be completed. However, this was removed after Defferre pointed out the practical difficulties of doing this. What is striking is that Touré framed his proposal in terms of the colonial mind’s idea of progress. Touré stated ‘En tout cas, sans cette pièce, nous ne pouvons penser faire progresser socialement les Africains…’.[[362]](#footnote-362) Rather than the justification for his proposal being that all inhabitants of the French Union deserved an identity card as part of the citizenship Touré put forward his arguments using a prominent idea of the colonial mind. Of course this reform would go hand in hand with the expansion of voting rights which the law allowed for, but it serves to reinforce a picture of French officials making efforts to expand the powers of the French Union towards a more unified republic.

Ultimately, in the final version of the law the clauses on *éducation*, *droits coutumiers*, and *l’état civil* were included as some of the measures that were to be used to ‘élever le niveau de vie’. The examination of the addition of these two clauses demonstrated how the drafting of the *loi-cadre* worked. It shows how different bodies influenced the final format of the law. More importantly, it shows that the law was built from different parts of the colonial mind. The additions and amendments to clauses shows the terms on which the colonial mind was happy for reform to take place. Despite the initial omission of a clause on education it was later added as part of a project of creating a unified education system. Furthermore, the omission then subsequent addition of a clause on education shows how different parts of the colonial mind were attempting to set out their version of future reform in the overseas territories. The side that won was the one that was putting forward a unified vision of education. The need for the addition of the clause acknowledging the *droits coutumiers* of the overseas populations was likely the result of a telling oversight by the politicians drafting the law. As shown by the inclusion of a clause calling for the expansion of services related to the *l’état civil* the colonial mind was at work in this period. The example of Sékou Touré whose argument for the inclusion of a clause on the expansion of the *état civil* in the overseas territories was framed by concepts of ‘progrès’. The colonial mind was wrestling with many ideas in this period and the ones that won out need to be identified and explored.

## What was the *loi-cadre*?

The first ‘titre’ of the *loi-cadre* set out the terms on which reform would take place. Article one of the first section described the conditions in which administrative reform would take place. It described the new types of assemblies and councils that would be created through decrees and set out the process of ratification of those decrees. The second article set the penalties for infractions of the outcomes of the deliberations of the new administrative organisation. The third article explained that there would be decrees taken in order to establish the as yet undefined ‘services d’état’ and ‘services territoriaux’. As discussed above, article four set out what measures would be enacted by decree in order to ‘élever le niveau de vie’ in the overseas territories. The remaining articles of *Titre I* dealt with bureaucratic aspects of the future reform and set a time limit of 1st March 1957 on the powers granted by the law in article seven. *Titre II* consisted of articles eight and nine covering how the provisions of the *loi-cadre* would work in the mandate territories of Togo and Cameroon. *Titre III* granted universal suffrage to the inhabitants of the overseas territories and create a single electoral college that was not divided depending on civil status. *Titre IV* contained specific measures that addressed bureaucratic issues relating to the introduction of universal suffrage and the single college.[[363]](#footnote-363)

As stated previously the *loi-cadre* can be viewed as an ‘enabling’ act. For the most part it created the grounds for reform that would come later after being enacted by decree. Because of this, many of its articles were promises of reform at a later date although some such as universal suffrage were implemented sooner. Despite the fact that the precise terms of reform were not yet clear, one of the key tenets of the reform is made clear with added imperative. The government was to be able to ‘prendre toutes mesures tendant à élever le niveau de vie dans les territoires’.[[364]](#footnote-364) This phrase contained a similar vagueness that is seen elsewhere in the law and related documents. This vagueness was a feature of the late-colonial mind as it tried to grapple with ever-changing issues. However, the article also expressed a strong desire for action, ‘toutes mesures’ resembling a figurative call to arms. This clause was designed to address the growing concerns about the disparity between the living conditions of those in metropolitan France and those living in the overseas territories. The phrasing of this clause shows how the law functioned as a rhetorical device as well as a legal document. The law granted politicians the ability to state that they were taking the concerns of the inhabitants of the overseas territories seriously and that they had legislation to back it up. Most of the reform promised by the *loi-cadre* was set to be introduced over the coming months. The law created a situation which combined the promise of elections with the prospect of decrees that would reform vast parts of the overseas administration. In short, the law instigated more uncertainty. This uncertainty was a new cause of fear for the colonial mind; rather than addressing questions the *loi-cadre* had created more. Behind-the-scenes discussions about the implications of the *loi-cadre* before it was promulgated show the anxiety of the colonial mind.

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The next section of this chapter shows how the colonial mind dealt internally with anxieties. This is another aspect of the way that the colonial mind made divisions between private and public discussions. This section argues that as officials were faced with new realities about the relationship between France and the overseas territories they were concerned. They responded to these concerns by attempting to reassure themselves of how events were going to turn out and undertook planning for contingencies. Significantly, despite the next source that is analysed in this chapter acknowledging the possibility of a form of rupture between France and the overseas territories the official who wrote it struggled to imagine the full independence of an overseas territory. The source also shows how in this period officials were coming up with new sources of funding for the overseas territories. This also caused them concern which they met with ways of asserting control. As the implications of the *loi-cadre* were considered by officials there were more avenues of change that had to be considered. Officials were weighing up the implications of *décentralisation* and defining what they wanted *progrès* and *développement* to mean. The following document is analysed for how officials responded to one avenue for change.

## 6th June 1956 – Economic consequences of political independence?

The behind-the-scenes communication that took place three weeks before the *loi-cadre* was promulgated explored the potential scenarios arising from such a reform. Whilst the *décrets d’application* of the law separated out the political, administrative, and economic reforms, the links between these areas caused concern for officials. A note from the 6th June 1956, some twenty days before the *loi-cadre* was promulgated, examined ‘[l]es implications économiques de l’évolution politique des T.O.M.’. Written by an anonymous official and sent to the *ministère de la France d’outre-mer* it pre-empted the content of the decrees made several months later. This document put forward a fairly sober assessment of the future economic direction within the overseas territories. Its use of the word *évolution* was different to other appearances of the term. Here *évolution* did not denote an inevitable process of progress in which the French were guiding the Africans.[[365]](#footnote-365) Instead it was an uncertain process that France may not have been in control of. It is an interesting variation on a term that was used often by officials.

The evolution under scrutiny was that of the overseas territories towards ‘une autonomie grandissante’. This was, according to the author, a likely development in the eyes of most observers. Although opinions were split on the direction of travel. The author wrote ‘les plus pessimistes extrapolent les évènements d’Indochine et d’Afrique du Nord; d’autres jugent que l’évolution peut être ordonnée et contrôlée, et c’est précisément l’objet de la loi-cadre’.[[366]](#footnote-366) This shows that officials were undoubtedly concerned about events in Algeria and Indochina but, importantly, enough felt that they could find a solution to the problem. This shows that the colonial mind was concerned about a similar situation developing in AOF. Despite this threat, this official felt that the *loi-cadre* had the potential to engender a degree of control over the possible range of situations that might develop. However, unlike in the *projet de loi*, the unnamed official was prepared to identify what this problem was explicitly.

The author predicted that the changes in administration in the overseas territories would cause a period of instability and long-term insecurity unless the government implemented measures to counteract this. Moreover, the author of the text acknowledged that despite the provisions of the *loi-cadre* the future was still uncertain; he started the second paragraph with the phrase ‘quoi qu’il en soit’.[[367]](#footnote-367) He continued with the suggestion that precautions or revisions be made in the economic domain. This can be seen as a clear acknowledgement of the possibility of, or even desire for, continued economic links between the metropole and the overseas territories in an ambiguous political situation. The report examined two main points in substantial detail: the first was how to ensure that French money invested in the territories could remain under French control; the second was how to ensure the cohesion of a centralised economic system.

The first section of the report examines infrastructure investment funded by the French state. The second is entitled ‘Comment rassurer les capitalistes privés?’.[[368]](#footnote-368) This section identified the tenuous position that the French were in. When the perceived risk of financial instability increased, the desire to invest was reduced. The state wanted to reduce its liabilities whilst maintaining or increasing investment. In order to confront this, officials turned to the private sector. This was despite the fact that these officials had the same concerns. They wrote ‘Le développement des investissements privés […] est lui-même freiné par la peur politique’.[[369]](#footnote-369) The response to this situation was to implement a system of guarantees to investors.

On page 7 of the report the precise nature of the *capitalistes privés* was revealed. The director of investment bank *Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas*, M. Anthoine, is named as the leader of a group of businessmen who proposed a system of guarantees for private investments in the overseas territories.[[370]](#footnote-370) However, there was uncertainty about this with the word ‘apparemment’ being used before naming Anthoine as the leader. The sceptical tone of this section of the report indicates that this type of proposal was not commonplace and raises questions about the origins of the proposition. The proposal from the group was reported with an unusual tone for an official document. It read ‘C’est en effet des territoires eux-mêmes, ou plus exactement de leurs assemblées représentatives que M. ANTHOINE et **ses amis** entendent recevoir des garanties.’[[371]](#footnote-371) The use of ‘ses amis’ when the official referred to Anthoine’s group denoted that the official questioned their legitimacy. Given how the colonial mind created strong boundaries and standards of expertise the informal way in which the official referred to Anthoine shows that they considered him to be an outsider.

Despite the official’s perception of Anthoine the proposal was given serious consideration. The group of bankers had received guarantees for their investments from the representative assemblies of the overseas territories and were proposing the use of a ‘contrat fiscal de longue durée tel qu’il a été prévu par la loi de Finances du 31 décembre 1953’.[[372]](#footnote-372) The author himself used the term ‘sérieux’ to describe aspects of the proposal itself, and some of the wider implications therein. The precise nature of these private investments was left undefined within the letter about M. Anthoine’s proposition. However, in another note entitled ‘NOTE sur les Investissements de longue durée dans les Territoires d’Outre-Mer’ the nature of the investments is explained. The note was written in response to a study that evaluated the potential for mineral and fuel extraction in the overseas territories.[[373]](#footnote-373) The report seemed to conclude that there were significant resources that could be extracted but in order for them to be fully exploited a significant amount of investment was needed. France was not in a position to provide that kind of funding so officials were looking to other sources. The risks to this money were multiple and that was only exacerbated by the ongoing ‘evolution’ within the overseas territories. The report identified three things that threatened investments in primary resources: the growth of nuclear power, depreciation of mineral values, and new technologies. This second note acknowledged that the *évolution* in the overseas territories ‘peuvent aboutir à l’indépendance la plus complète’. However, officials used to the term ‘indépendance’ without it meaning a full end to the French rule in the overseas territories. In the case of ‘l’indépendance la plus complète’ all bets were off and ‘le bon sens et l’expérience indiquent qu’aucun texte ne conserve[ra] de valeur…’.[[374]](#footnote-374) In order to protect both private and public investment in the overseas territories measures had to be drawn up and taken.

The explanation of Antoine’s proposals foreshadowed some of the language used by the SFIO itself when referring to the *loi-cadre*. It also shows how the fear of promising too much or delivering too little led to the vagueness in discussions of reform and the *loi-cadre*. There is further explanation of the reasons for anxiety regarding the direction of politics in the overseas territories. The following quotation shows how the official was aware of the possibility of a break between France and the overseas territories but he was able to convince that a less threatening situation was also possible:

D’une part, on a le droit de se demander quelle confiance peut être accordée à de pareils engagements. M. ANTHOINE et ses amis ont répondu à cette objection dans le corps même de leur note en disant en substance que dans une hypothèse véritablement révolutionnaire toutes ces conventions ne seraient que chiffons de papier, mais qu’il faut se placer délibérément dans une hypothèse d’évolution sans révolution où les liens avec la France, tout en se transformant, demeurent solides et où les engagements pris par l’Assemblée de la veille ne sauraient être facilement répudiés.[[375]](#footnote-375)

This note explores the possibility of a seismic rupture between France and the overseas territories that would resemble that seen in Indochina. It countenances a future in which France is no longer firmly linked with the overseas territories. Furthermore, it identifies that the lack of tangible reform since the late 1940s was the cause of disquiet. However, the *loi-cadre* was going to give officials the impetus to enact real reform, revolutionary reform albeit without the revolution. This use of the topos of revolution appeared later in an SFIO leaflet that is examined in the next chapter. Curiously, the paragraph cited above falls short of unambiguously stating that the above scenario would be one of absolute independence. Instead it confronts the possibility of the new assemblies going back on the decisions of previous assemblies. This shows the inability of officials to envisage the actual independence of sub-Saharan African territories. This occurred because the colonial mind did not have the language or imagination to visualise such a scenario. For the colonial mind the people in sub-Saharan Africa still needed guiding to the administration of their ‘propres affaires’. This was reflected within the colonial discourse within which terms such as ‘décolonisation’ and ‘indépendance’ did not mean full autonomy in the way that they do from a contemporary perspective.

Officials were also having to tread a fine line between allowing the local assemblies tangible powers and ensuring stability when drawing up economic measures. Having promised that the *loi-cadre* would see powers given to the new assemblies, officials were also worried about taking any measures that could be seen to undermine the powers of the local assemblies that already existed in the overseas territories: these concerns were explored within the document. In order to ensure that the local assemblies did not feel that that their remit was being undermined the author suggested that the proposal from Anthoine be treated as such, and that it was only an option rather than an imperative. Furthermore, the author explicitly suggested that the discussions about future policy be left vague and wrote ‘[c]ela conduit nécessairement à employer des expressions assez vagues pour pouvoir inclure à la fois des pouvoirs actuellement existants – et des pouvoirs éventuels qui sont précisément ceux auxquels on pense.’[[376]](#footnote-376) This is an example of how the colonial mind chose to approach certain difficult issues by employing vague references or ideas. The necessity of this vagueness was because the note from Anthoine was speculating on the *compétences* that the local assemblies did not yet have ‘dans l’état actuel des choses et même après la loi-cadre’. For the author this uncertainty was concerning ; ‘rien [the act of speculating on *compétences*] n’est en effet plus inadmissible au point de vue juridique, ni plus dangereux au point de vue psychologique’.[[377]](#footnote-377) Officials knew that they were treading on dangerous ground and had to exercise caution. However, this caution may have led to frustration in the indigenous political sphere. The *loi-cadre* promised reform but as it was in the process of becoming law officials were reluctant to commit strongly to a vision of future reform; this would have caused frustration. One of the key justifications for the *loi-cadre* being written was that it was intended to speed up the process of reform but here we see what could be interpreted as delaying tactics or deliberate attempts to disguise the intentions of the French administration. With the frustration at the pace of reform since 1948 already high and fears about the *loi-cadre* undermining the perceived integrity of AOF, these tactics were potentially going to add more fuel to the fire despite being designed to prevent angry reactions. This was an example of the French misreading the situation on the ground due to the overly centralised nature of decision-making in the French Union.[[378]](#footnote-378) The official’s reaction to M. Anthoine’s proposal showed a deliberate tendency to avoid strong statements when African politicians wanted strong affirmations about policy. In their efforts to avoid creating problems for themselves, French officials managed to do exactly that. The result of the proposals from M. Anthoine can be seen in the section of this chapter that discusses the *décrets d’application* of the *loi-cadre*, specifically those relating to economic development. What this document represents is the colonial mind wrestling with the meanings of some of its key concepts and topoi. In order to address the potential outcomes of uncontrolled *décentralisation* or *évolution* questions about future scenarios were asked.

The focus on the role of private capital that is included in the law is representative of a new approach to financial governance within the overseas territories. Although a desire for an expansion of private capital investment into the colonies might not seem like an unusual gesture, it is representative of the extent to which officials were using financial investment as a means to persuade the overseas territories of the benefits of a relationship with France. Previously, investment in the colonies had been achieved through the presence of large colonial businesses with long-standing presences in the colonies. Allowing different businesses to invest in the colonies demonstrated a shift in policy.

### Décentralisation de la fonction publique

A similar, albeit shorter, note was written on the subject ‘décentralisation en matière de fonction publique*’*. This note also put forward the idea of shaping the outcome of the *loi-cadre* before it had passed through all of the stages of promulgation. The author of the note speculated on this point,

Quels que soient les amendements qui seront apportés à ce texte lors des débats devant le Conseil de la République, il est possible de dégager dès maintenant, compte tenu de la définition des objectifs poursuivis tant par le projet lui-même que par la note no 307.CAM du 16 Mars, la liste des lois ou des décrets applicables dans les territoires relevent du Département dont les dispositions devront être modifiées ou abrogées de façon à étendre le pouvoir délibérant des Assemblées.[[379]](#footnote-379)

Here I am not arguing that any of this process of prediction or second guessing of the evolution of the law is exceptional. By pre-planning the reforms of vast parts of the colonial administration, officials were deciding the fate of the overseas territories at a moment when politicians from those territories were being promised a greater role in deciding their own fate. Bizarrely, officials were fully aware of the overly centralised nature of the administration of the overseas territories. The author of the note cited above described the ‘régime actuel de la Fonction publique outre-mer’ as being ‘extrêmement centralisateur’.[[380]](#footnote-380) Similarly to the propositions examined in the preceding section, this note from 5th April 1956 influenced the *décrets d’application* that followed the *loi-cadre*.

## *Les décrets d’application de la loi-cadre*

This section argues that the *décrets d’application* need to be reintroduced to the history of the *loi-cadre* in order to fully understand the events of the period. I show that the way scholars have dealt with the *décrets* has led to key aspects of them being overlooked. As I examine the key aspects of the *décrets* I argue that they demonstrate that the French colonial mind in 1956 and 1957 was making plans that predicted the continuation of the French Union and of the close links between France and the overseas territories. This section analyses how the colonial mind attempted to address the concerns that had provoked the decision to push through the *loi-cadre*. The sources for the section are documents primarily related to the decrees and the reactions to them. The analysis continues to focus on the colonial mind and shows how officials tried to shape their future having worried about it for the preceding months. The analysis continues to emphasise the fear, desire for control, sometime vagueness, and dissonance of the colonial mind. Within the documents the topoi and concepts of the colonial discourse were used to from the attempts at reform. Through the study of the decrees and related documents it is shown that despite the new powers granted by the *loi-cadre* officials were concerned with similar issues as they had been before the law was promulgated. The difference was that now because of the space opened up by the *loi-cadre* new topics were brought to the table. Now, officials had to actually face the reform that had for so long been just over the horizon and rather than thinking about *décentralisation* they were undertaking the act of decentralising parts of the administration. This period revealed that even at a time in which reform of the overseas territories was an objective for the administration fears about maintaining control were paramount. The first part of this section studies how the provisions relating to the creation of *services d’état* and *services territoriaux* reveal the confused approach of officials to the administration of the overseas territories. The second part analyses the decrees relating to economic development; it shows how officials articulate their vision for economic reform. The third part shows the colonial mind’s preoccupation with control through a study of decrees relating to broadcasting in the overseas territories. The penultimate section shows that changes to the organisation of the overseas territories represented an expansion of control into new areas of the overseas territories. The last section shows how officials perceived the results of the *loi-cadre* and the *décrets d’application*. Together the analysis in this section of the chapter shows how the colonial mind reacted to more tangible attempts at reform after the *loi-cadre*. It argues that in the face of uncertainty and doubt the colonial mind attempted to reassert control and to continue the French Union.

The historical significance attached to the *loi-cadre* is certainly warranted, but some aspects of how it worked have been overlooked. A substantial part of its influence was realised through the decrees that it enabled. These decrees are often mentioned in scholarship on the law but, as I will demonstrate in this section, their importance has not been fully acknowledged. This is due to two factors: firstly, the processes surrounding the *loi-cadre* itself were unclear; secondly, the pace at which events changed was quick so it is easy to skip past parts of the story. I will unpack both suggestions here. In terms of the positioning of the decrees within the wider arguments of the thesis they represent a moment of praxis. They are the realisation and enacting of the post-war reform; reform that drew upon the colonial discourse. The motivations, aims, concerns, and ideas of officials are shown within the *rapports* that begin many of the decrees as well as through the clauses within them. Moreover, the decrees represented attempts to resolve the tensions that officials felt over granting powers to the new institutions of the overseas territories. Because of the fear of these new institutions officials wanted to assert control.

In Tony Chafer’s description of the *loi-cadre* he states that it was ‘essentially a declaration of intent, which set down the guidelines for reform but which made it possible for the actual reforms themselves to be enacted by presidential decree.’[[381]](#footnote-381) On this Chafer was correct, although this description does gloss over some of the finer details of the *loi-cadre*. He identified the decrees from March and April as key to his analysis; he wrote ‘[t]hirteen such *décrets d’application* were subsequently issued on 27 March and 4 April.’. However, Chafer did not mention the decrees from November or December.[[382]](#footnote-382) As Chafer continued, it became clear why he foregrounded the decrees from March and April 1957. His interpretation of the *loi-cadre* was that the law represented a ‘realist approach to international relations’ through which the law would ‘maintain French dominance by keeping control of strategic areas of ‘high’ policy’.[[383]](#footnote-383) Because the decrees from April 1957 address the policy areas that ‘were to become the direct responsibility of the French government’ Chafer focused on them and did not include the other decrees in his analysis. Chafer’s reading of the *loi-cadre* and its decrees was shaped by the fact that AOF and AEF became independent. Fred Cooper did something similar in *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*. Cooper analysed the decrees in the context of his study of the debates around citizenship and federalism in the French Union. On the decrees themselves he wrote ‘As the decrees implementing the *loi-cadre* came out, members perceived that they tend “to suppress the political and administrative entity that AOF constitutes.”’.[[384]](#footnote-384) He also cited Teitgen’s explanation of the decrees relating to the definition of *services d’état* and *services territoriaux*. This was also in order to highlight the discussion about the different forms of government that the French Union would take, whether it was to be a federal or confederal system.[[385]](#footnote-385) James Genova stated that the ‘*Loi Cadre* of 1956 that dissolved AOF and permitted the formation of ministerial cabinets for each of the territories…’ whilst not mentioning directly any of the decrees.[[386]](#footnote-386) He did write that the *loi-cadre* ‘provided for its implementation by “particular decrees for each territory.”’[[387]](#footnote-387) It appears that Genova is using ‘loi-cadre’ as a form of short-hand for all of the reforms engendered by the *loi-cadre* and its decrees. Another more recent example of this use of *loi-cadre* as short-hand can be found in *Freedom Time* by Gary Wilder. Wilder implied that the *loi-cadre* led to changes in the powers of the territories.[[388]](#footnote-388) This shorthand can serve to obscure some aspects of the *loi-cadre* that were important to the politicians and administrators who were working on it. Furthermore, it is clear that scholars think that the decrees (or at least the results of them) are important yet they often go relatively unmentioned. What does this all of this mean for historical understanding of the *loi-cadre*? At attempt at redressing these issues and questions is made below.

In the 1950s the law and the decrees that it enabled were linked as a process. For contemporaries of the *loi-cadre* the law was closely linked with the decrees that emanated from it. For example, a SFIO pamphlet presented the law and decrees in this way.[[389]](#footnote-389) An issue of *Présence Africaine* was published on the effects of the *loi-cadre* in which the decrees are positioned as forming an ensemble of texts with the law itself.[[390]](#footnote-390) They are certainly an important part of the story of the *loi-cadre*. In a curious way the *loi-cadre* has become removed from its decrees whilst the content of the decrees has become synonymous with the *loi-cadre*. There is a tendency to state that the *loi-cadre* did something when the process was actually that the *loi-cadre* created a system in which a decree was used to create or do something. For example, Genova wrote ‘the Loi Cadre of 1956 that dissolved AOF and permitted the formation of ministerial cabinets for each of the territories that comprised the former federation, an act that effectively ended French rule in West Africa’.[[391]](#footnote-391) The distinction is important as currently parts of the process of reform have been obscured whilst others have been over-emphasised through a lack of clarity about the *loi-cadre* and its decrees. Furthermore, the sources show that those implementing reform understood the *loi-cadre* in a wider sense than it has come to be written about in the literature.

Over time, the *loi-cadre* became the shorthand when reform was being written about.[[392]](#footnote-392) In contemporary scholarship, the *loi-cadre* denotes a transitional moment and the actual content of the law and decrees has faded into the background. The shorthand version of *loi-cadre* has become removed from what it actually signified including the *décrets d’application*. These processes cannot be represented by one single event or moment yet particular laws, leaders, or events come to take on a symbolic role. In this way it is like the treatment of the Suez crisis in British Imperial History. One prominent work has posited that Suez was a turning point denoting the true beginning of the end of British Imperial power.[[393]](#footnote-393) This has led to a lack of understanding of not only the wider process but also of the events themselves. It then becomes possible, for example, for an article to be written about the *loi-cadre* that does not actually cite the law or any related decrees. An example of such an article is by Andrew Smith.[[394]](#footnote-394) This happens because we ‘know’ what the *loi-cadre* represents as it has been written about so many times and that knowledge has been recycled. Now using the words ‘loi-cadre’ usually denotes an acknowledgement of a change in French colonial policy. The process by which narrative about the *loi-cadre* have emerged is examined in detail in chapter four. However, returning to the ideas of the architects of the law shows that their understanding was different to contemporary interpretations.[[395]](#footnote-395) Thus, this section of the chapter examines the intentions expressed within the decrees. It also reveals more about the political processes of the Fourth Republic; a political system within which the decrees enabled by a law that was designed to speed up reform were finally issued a year after its promulgation. Finally, it is a re-contextualisation of the *loi-cadre* and its decrees showing the ideas that were important for officials at the time and how they planned to reform the French Union.

### From loi-cadre to décrets d’application

To begin it is important to describe the overall chronology and format of the decrees. The first decrees were issued five months after the *loi-cadre* was promulgated. This first batch of decrees were measures designed to encourage economic development. They were issued on the 13th November 1956 although these decrees were only implemented on 23rd February 1957. Decrees reforming the public services followed on 3rd December 1956. Then on 24th February a series of decrees entitled ‘reforme et évolution’ were passed. The final set of decrees on the reorganisation of the overseas territories were issued on the 4th April. The April decrees created the new institutions of the *haut-commissaire*, and the *grand conseil*.[[396]](#footnote-396) The areas covered by the decrees show the scope and scale of reform envisaged by officials.[[397]](#footnote-397) The decrees, as reproduced by the official printer of the French Republic under the title ‘Textes d’intérêt général’, mostly consist of a ‘rapport*’* followed by the clauses of the decree. The ‘rapport’ section of a decree is similar to a preamble as it explains the reasons behind the decree being written.

### Services d’état et services territoriaux

The significance of the decrees has not been missed by scholars but the content of the decrees has not undergone close scrutiny in secondary historical scholarship as well shall see. It is understandable that the political debates and discussion of the decrees are a particular focus for academics. However, my analysis of the decrees will show how the colonial mind was working in and through the decrees. The concern that became paramount in the colonial mind was the integrity of the Republic. Furthermore, there is evidence that supports the idea that those politicians and officials working on the *loi-cadre* did not see their reform as being part of a project of withdrawing from Empire. The ‘rapport’ from Décret 56-1227 identified the third article from the *loi-cadre* as the relevant section of the law that enabled the reform of the civil service. The text identified that in order to achieve reform of the civil service two independent but ‘intimement liés’ decrees were to be used.[[398]](#footnote-398) The rapport identifies the two projects:

L’un portant définition des services de l’Etat dans les territoires d’outre-mer et énumération des cadres de l’Etat ;

L’autre relatif à l’organisation des services publics civils dans les territoires d’outre-mer.[[399]](#footnote-399)

Importantly, the text also contains this further explanation;

[les] services d’Etat ont pour mission d’assurer la cohésion politique, culturelle, économique et financière, ainsi que la sécurité de la République dans les territoires d’outre-mer.[[400]](#footnote-400)

The author was clearly concerned about emphasising the importance of the role of the civil service in defending the Republic and its values. When the text returns to discussion of the territorial civil service it states:

Pareillement, la création et l’organisation des services publics territoriaux chargés de la gestion des intérêts propres aux territoires fait l’objet de dispositions se conformant à celles inscrites dans la loi-cadre, notamment en ce qui concerne les pouvoirs respectifs du chef de territoire, de l’assemblée territoriale et du conseil de gouvernement.[[401]](#footnote-401)

This passage is very different to the one that opened the discussion of the *services de l’Etat*. Its tone is less bombastic and it does not appeal to any greater vision: the ideal of *la République* inspired talk of a mission, whereas the territories were worthy only of a top-down definition of ‘intérêts propres’. This was despite the fact that these two projects were supposed to be ‘intimement liés’. This difference became more apparent as the effects of the reforms were felt and, as shown by Cooper, African politicians sensed that their expectations were going to be disappointed.[[402]](#footnote-402) This shows that the colonial mind perceived the mission of the *services d’état* as existing on a higher idealistic level than the *services territoriaux*. Historians have identified that the division of the *services d’état* and the *services territoriaux* was an important aspect of the *loi-cadre* and they are correct. However, what they have not done is correctly identify how officials conceptualised their reform of the different *services*. Whilst Chafer argues that the division of the *services* was done in order to cut costs, officials were also concerned with the integrity and powers of the Republic. The next example discussed in this chapter shows how officials negotiated this tension between the Republic and the territory and how the cohesion of the former was as important as increasing the powers of the latter.

### *Radiodiffusion* and maintaining control

The tension between Republic and territory was expressed most clearly in the lengthy debates about where the control of radio, telecommunications and postal services was to be located. Sources show plentiful discussion on this topic, including fears expressed that handing control of radio broadcasting over to the territories could serve to undermine the authority of the state. An intervention from High Commissioner of AOF, Gaston Cusin, pointed out the potential pitfalls of the territorialisation of broadcasting.[[403]](#footnote-403) At the time he sent his letter to Gaston Defferre in November 1956, discussions were taking place regarding which services were to become territorial. Cusin cited the report from a *mission d’inspection* headed by M. Berthier which forewarned of grave consequences if the *Service de l’information* became a ‘service local’. Cusin feared that a *Conseil de Gouvernement* in a territory would be tempted to use that service in a way that would not provide ‘information complète et objective’, which was how Cusin viewed standards of the service.

What followed Cusin’s intervention was that these services were designated vital to the state, and the individual territories only had limited control over some aspects of them. The content of the behind-the-scenes discussions did not make it into the *rapport* at the beginning of the decree 56-1229. The justification that made it into the rapport was that ‘en l’absence d’un réseau spécial de télécommunications, c’est le réseau public des postes et télécommunications qui sert outre-mer de réseau de commandement et de sécurité.’[[404]](#footnote-404) Furthermore, the rapport stated that within the field of external communications the ‘caractère de service d’Etat des postes et télécommunications est très marqué’.[[405]](#footnote-405) Another justification included in the rapport was that metropolitan control would assure ‘l’exploitation technique de la radiodiffusion’ which had paternalistic overtones as the French were positioning themselves as the technical advisors.[[406]](#footnote-406) This showed that at times the paternalism of the colonial mind was never far away and this paternalism could be justified with a rhetorical wave of the hand.

In a text that introduced a decree that was designed to protect services that were identified as important aspects of the ‘services de l’état’, the French Union is only mentioned towards the end of the opening section. In the last paragraph the postal service is described as being part of the communications network of the French Union and contributed to the ‘solidarité des éléments constitu[ant] la République’and to its‘expansion économique, sociale and culturelle’.[[407]](#footnote-407) In Algeria French soldiers were fighting to preserve the integrity of the Republic, in other overseas territories part of that battle was to be fought by postal workers. The methods of coercion employed by the colonial state varied greatly. Later in the rapport, the plans for telecommunication services were articulated in greater detail. The idea for telecommunications was that they should be a public service that helped to serve the interests of the Republic and the territories.[[408]](#footnote-408) Moreover, a grouping of the various offices involved in telecommunications would facilitate the development of a cadre of African employees working within them.[[409]](#footnote-409) Again we can see not only that French officials were making designs for the future of the overseas territories that would involve at least a medium-term project, they also wanted to ensure that the plans were robust enough to protect the integrity of the Republic. The possibility of handing over wholesale control of telecommunications to the territories was seen as a threat to the Republic. By taking action to ensure continued control over telecommunications officials were trying to ensure the Republic’s longer-term stability. This was part of the proactive measures that started with the *loi-cadre* itself. Another set of decrees sought to extend the power of the state and therefore the French Union into areas that had previously been under a looser system of administration.

### Réorganisation

The decrees that provided the most change in the overseas territories came on the 4th April 1957, some ten months after the *loi-cadre*. These ten months that had seen substantial discussion on the implications of the *loi-cadre*. This level of discussion shows how open to interpretation the provisions of the *loi-cadre* were. In the case of the organisation of the overseas territories these discussions ended in April 1957.[[410]](#footnote-410) Tony Chafer described these decrees as setting the policy areas that were to be the responsibility of the state.[[411]](#footnote-411) However, their impact extended far beyond this aspect of policy. The document that collated all of the April decrees is over one hundred pages long and covers the reorganisation of AOF, AEF, and Madagascar. The distinctions between the services of the state and of the territory made up only a small part of the whole package of reforms. Aside from ruling on the reorganisation of the groups of territories the decrees defined the role of the government councils, territorial chiefs, territorial assemblies, rural collectives in AOF and AEF, and the equivalent bodies in Madagascar which had its own provisions. Amongst all the changes wrought by these decrees the provision to create ‘collectivités rurales’ was one of the more interesting. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis the precise boundaries of colonial rule are hard to define and the experience of those living under it varied widely. This is, in part, because the exercise of power varied throughout the territories controlled by colonial power. The same was true within the overseas territories of the French Union where power was still applied unevenly. In practice this meant that a person living in an urban environment had a different experience that someone living in a rural one. Whilst an urban area might have several administrators as part of a local office of the authorities a rural area would only have one *commandant de cercle* who was responsible for a vast area. Decree57-461 gave the *chef de territoire* the power to create *collectivités rurales* in whatever format they desired.[[412]](#footnote-412) These *collectivités* were to have their own budgets and become the method through which the French Union would expand more equally throughout the overseas territories. The financial aspects of the future relationship between France the overseas territories were also dealt with in the decrees. These other decrees were also aimed at the expansion and maintenance of control.

### *Développement économique* – 13 November 1956 and 23 February 1957

The decrees published on 13th November 1956 elaborated a comprehensive vision of economic reform as directed by Gaston Defferre and Minister for financial and economic affairs Paul Ramadier. This section argues that these decrees contain significant uses of the colonial discourse and the ideas established by Sarraut and others. Significantly, the decrees assigned clear responsibility for overseas reforms to the *ministre des affaires économiques et financières*. The fractious nature of ministries within the Fourth Republic led to areas of responsibility being jealously guarded so the inclusion of another ministry in the administration of the overseas territories was somewhat remarkable. Many of the reforms proposed in these decrees were adjustments to the structure of overseas finance. For example, decree56-1132 adjusted the limit of financing schemes established by bodies within the *territoires d’outre-mer* to fifteen years.[[413]](#footnote-413) However, within the other decrees a vision of the future of the French Union was articulated. Some decrees extended metropolitan standards and rules into the overseas territories thereby creating a more equal union. Others were designed to enable investment and the development of industry within the overseas territories. One example of investment being enabled was a decree that sought to implement measures that planned to guarantee returns for investors traditionally cautious of investing in the overseas territories. The *loi-cadre* had identified that officials wanted to encourage the role of private capital within the overseas territories. The law included an article on this point; ‘par toute modification en matière de législation et de réglementation financières propres à favoriser les investissements privés outre-mer’.[[414]](#footnote-414) This was discussed in the note about Anthoine’s proposition analysed above. The next section of this chapter examines these decrees and highlights their importance. These key aspects are; the presence of the colonial discourse in the form of references to ‘développement’ and the ideas of Sarraut, the dissonances and contradictions within the decrees, and the desire and anxiety about retaining control.

In a similar way to the decrees on the reforms of the civil service the series of November decrees begins with a ‘rapport’ that provides context and narrative for the main content of the decree. Across the whole range of November decrees the overall aim is made clear: the decrees should engender ‘le développement économique’ or ‘l’évolution du niveau de vie’ of the overseas territories; the Sarraut-inspired phrase ‘la mise en valeur’ is also used.[[415]](#footnote-415) Taken directly from the opening lines of the *loi-cadre* these phrases appear in the first four of the November decrees. The latter decrees address more specific issues to do with funding and investment in the colonies. However, when discussing the wider ideas of reform, the decrees all reference similar concepts and topoi. This shows that there was a continuity of thought in the colonial mind about how to approach the development of the overseas territories that spans from Sarraut to the *loi-cadre*.

Within the rapport from the first decree from 13th November the financial role of the metropole in ensuring economic development was highlighted. Moreover, the rapport explains that the industrialisation supported by the metropole was essential:

Seules l’installation d’industries nouvelles, la mise en valeur de richesses énergétiques et minières dont les travaux de prospection révèlent chaque année plus complètement l’importance permettront d’atteindre ces objectifs. La métropole elle-même bénéficiera de cet effort puisqu’elle pourra trouver à l’intérieur de la zone franc les produits de base nécessaires à l’expansion de sa propre industrie*.*[[416]](#footnote-416)

The economy of the overseas territories at this point was primarily agricultural. Defferre and Ramadier were keen to encourage and support industrialisation as it was considered beneficial for the overseas territories as well as metropolitan France. The ‘niveau de vie’ in the overseas territories would be improved and France would potentially gain new products and address the balance of payments within the Franc zone.[[417]](#footnote-417) The understanding of the colonies or overseas territories as a site of profit that would benefit metropolitan France was in no way a new one. Albert Sarraut’s *La mise en valeur* identified this proposal in the 1920s and duly the phrase ‘la mise en valeur’ appears in the rapport as seen in the above citation. The belief that a general improvement in the economic situation within the overseas territories would lead to an improvement of the quality of life for the people there can also be found in Sarraut’s work.[[418]](#footnote-418) The sources show that in 1956 the SFIO government was attempting to implement an idea that was first put forward by Radical Party politicians in the mid-1920s. The inclusion of private capital in the formula for economic growth was a newer idea and some of the other relevant decrees attempted to brighten the prospects for private investors.

Efforts to introduce private capital into financing of overseas projects were not the only measures contained within the November decrees. Decrees 56-1133 and 56-1134 addressed the question of making investment a more viable prospect for private individuals. Decree 56-1133 addressed issues related to long-term deals in certain categories of overseas businesses.[[419]](#footnote-419) In effect the main aim of this decree was *‘*la poursuite des investissements de caractère culturel et social, accord[er] la priorité au développement de la production avec la préoccupation de ne mettre en place que des installations véritablement rentables’.[[420]](#footnote-420) One novel aspect of the decree was its inclusion of the idea of ‘l’économie africaine’ that was distinct from the overall economy of the Union. Sarraut referred exclusively to the idea of ‘l’économie coloniale’ with no distinction between that of the metropole or the overseas territory. The overall objective of Sarraut’s 1921 economic plan was to address the exploitative nature of the ‘pacte colonial’ whereas the plan in decree 56-1133 involved the support of a distinct overseas economy that had links with the metropole. This distinction is representative of the desire to move away from the idea of assimilation. The SFIO made clear their rejection of this policy and as such began to acknowledge the possibility of difference within the Union. The debates on how this was to work are examined in Fred Cooper’s *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*.[[421]](#footnote-421) However, subsequent decrees would tend to show an expansion of metropolitan regulations into the overseas territories. These decrees are examined below.

Officials were using the decrees to strengthen economic links between the overseas territories and France. One aspect of this was to draw in private finance from the metropole. In order to do this officials had to ensure that the private capital was protected. The fears of a rupture taking place and the risks of this to private finance were discussed in the note analysed above in this chapter. However, officials were wary of granting too much influence to non-governmental organisations and wanted to create checks against this. This fits the overall argument of this section that officials were, at all times, seeking to maintain control and protect Republican and national interests. The next decree that expanded metropolitan standards was related to ‘actions de préférence dans certaines sociétés d’outre-mer’.[[422]](#footnote-422) This decree was designed to address the imbalance between ‘action et obligation’ within organisations created to support development in the overseas territories. To guarantee the future of development in the overseas territories French politicians turned to different funding sources. Investment was to come from private individuals both foreign and domestic, as well as public sources. However, bringing private money and especially private money from foreign investors was perceived as a risk to French authority. Until this point the money going into the overseas territories had primarily been from French government coffers. Private capital in the overseas territories was primarily restricted to long-established colonial companies and was not used in infrastructure projects. The fear of this new influence over affairs in the overseas territories meant that officials chose to take measures that were expressed within the decree; it stated, ‘la combinaison de capitaux français et étrangers publics et privés, impose une revision [sic] du principe d’égalité de vote afin de permettre à la fois la plus grande souplesse dans le financement des investissements et la sauvegarde des intérêts nationaux’.[[423]](#footnote-423) Their method of protecting national interests was through the use of ‘actions de préférence’. Unlike the more typical form of shares, *actions de préférence* could be more flexible in terms of voting rights and dividends. The more rigid forms meant that one share granted one right to vote. Importantly, the responsibility for dictating the terms could be in the hands of the organisation issuing the shares. This flexibility reassured politicians that inviting new investment would not lead to a total loss of control.

Chafer has argued that French policy was designed to keep institutions important to the Republic in the hands of the French state whilst lesser parts of the overseas civil service were passed over to the territories.[[424]](#footnote-424) This is pitched as a cynical gesture that was designed to maintain French control whilst being able to cut funding to the colonies. However, if it is true, as Genova writes, that ‘France had accepted that it could no longer effectively govern West Africa’ thereby acknowledging its waning power in the overseas territories, why were officials so concerned about maintaining control over certain parts of policy?[[425]](#footnote-425) The answer is that the measures they were taking were designed to defend ‘intérêts nationaux’. Although what exactly these interests were is mostly unarticulated during the period, they were grounded in a greater sense of the Republic which has been examined previously in this thesis. They sought to either defend or support the Republic. In the source cited above, decree 56-1134, a discussion about the funding of infrastructure projects within the overseas territories still involves national interests. At this point what exactly the French nation *was* is unclear, and remains unclear until the end of the war in Algeria, but that nation still needed to be protected. In this case it needed protecting from investors who potentially did not hold the interests of the nation high in their list of priorities. Scholars are correct in their identification of France wanting to maintain control however for some officials this was more than a cynical gesture, it was done to defend the nation, albeit one that was poorly defined. So poorly defined that in one decree the idea of a distinct ‘économie africaine’ is put forward and in another infrastructure projects in the overseas territories are ‘intérêts nationaux’. This was the dissonance of the colonial mind at work and shows the confusion of the period. In amongst the confusion officials were primarily concerned with maintaining control. Control had to be maintained within the administration and politics of the territories and in the financial spheres. Despite all of the efforts made by the administration to define reform prior to these final decrees being passed, officials started to predict problems with the roll-out of the changes.

## *Mise en application de la loi-cadre du 23 juin 1956*

The outcome of the *loi-cadre* and the *décrets d’application* was a continuation of the tension between the desire to control events and the fear of losing control. The response to the *loi-cadre* and the implications of the decrees shows that the colonial mind was still anxious. This section analyses communications made after the promulgation of the *loi-cadre* that show there was still a high level of concern within the administration. The *loi-cadre* had been designed to soothe concerns about a loss of control in the overseas territories. During its drafting, promulgation, and the writing of its *décrets d’application* the fear of losing control persisted. Now, as the effects of the *décrets* were being evaluated a new set of concerns emerged in the colonial mind. Following a vote in February 1957 in *l’Assemblée Nationale* on the first readings of the November and December decrees, the *directeur des affaires politiques* at the Ministry of Overseas France made a list of three items that had emerged as problems. The potential issues identified within the letter that was sent to Gaston Defferre were,

*–* les réactions de l’opinion africaine et malgache devant les réformes institutionnelles adoptées par l’Assemblée Nationale ; les mesures à prendre éventuellement pour informer et expliquer ;

– les améliorations éventuelles à introduire par voie d’amendements dans les textes votés en première lecture ;

– les dispositions pratiques à prendre pour assurer dans les meilleures conditions la mise en œuvre des nouvelles institutions*.*[[426]](#footnote-426)

These problems were predicted to resurface at the conference of High Commissioners and Governors later that year. This stage of the process involved seeking approval of the *décrets d’application* of the *loi-cadre* from the multiple organs of power within the French Union. The director identified problems that had also emerged in the national assembly – this shows a similarity in the thought within circles of power.

The three points were responded to within the letter. The fear that had led to the *loi-cadre* showed itself within the response to the first item on the list. Officials were worried that elections for the newly created territorial assemblies would lead to an opportunity for the accession to power of ‘représentants élus au caractère absolu des idéologies et aux facteurs passionnels’.[[427]](#footnote-427) The colonial mind was now concerned about the implications of free elections with an open candidature. The response to this possibility was ‘il faut donner avant les élections aux Assemblées territoriales… aux candidats qui acceptent de coopérer avec la France le maximum de chances.’[[428]](#footnote-428) However, the official writing this piece also knew that it was important for the administration to act in a way that would not ‘mettre en doute la neutralité électorale de l’Administration’, which seems like quite a difficult proposition.[[429]](#footnote-429) What is clear is that rather than soothing anxieties, the *loi-cadre* had created a new set for officials to contend with. The response to the potential threat of new politicians entering the fray can be classified as a defensive gesture. The tension felt by officials in February 1957 is shown by Martin Shipway’s idea of the *loi-cadre* representing the tension between being a ‘blueprint for decolonisation’ or a ‘last chance for Empire’.[[430]](#footnote-430) The evidence within the report would tend towards the idea of it being a ‘last chance’. Officials were aware of agitation against the French Union but they were still searching for ways that they could maintain control. In the elections to the territorial assembly this was to be enacted through subtle support for certain candidates. This support would enable the metropolitan regime and more moderate politicians to resist ‘les périls qui menacent les partis et les chefs de parti les plus raisonnables’. The writer of the document emphasised that ‘ces périls sont certains et graves.’[[431]](#footnote-431) Beyond the threat of extremist politicians and the potential for violence in AOF there was a final warning that eyes were turning to the UN and the growing anti-colonial lobby there. Given that the UN general assembly had just debated the Algerian question in February 1957, there were increasing concerns about the intrusion of the UN into affairs within the French Union.

Supporting the argument put forward by Smith that the *loi-cadre* saw an expansion of the state into different parts of the overseas territories is a letter that was sent by Gaston Defferre to the high commissioners in the overseas territories.[[432]](#footnote-432) In his letter of 5th February 1957 Defferre asks for a list of the expenses for the services defined as ‘les services de l’état’. This letter is significant as it raises questions about whether the provisions of the *loi-cadre* were actually adhered to. [[433]](#footnote-433) Smith’s article raises the point that the *loi-cadre* was intended to expand French administration of the overseas territory into areas hitherto untouched.[[434]](#footnote-434) In a geographical sense this was achieved through the decree relating to the rural *collectivités*. However, in a more administrative sense the application of the *loi-cadre* saw a formalisation of processes that had not been seen in the overseas territories since the reforms of 1904. This act enabled the overseas ministry to take charge of services that it had previously not had a hand in directing, and it also opened up new lines of communication between the high commissions and Rue Oudinot. This was the centralisation part of the *loi-cadre*’s programme although much of the law had been focused on *décentralisation,* demonstrating a degree of dissonance. The list of items that Defferre wanted to receive the costings of was comprehensive, and included items from staff costs to the expenses of maritime security.[[435]](#footnote-435) When Defferre made this request the *décrets d’application* had not undergone the full scrutiny required by the institutions of the Fourth Republic. Because of this he requested in no uncertain terms that the reports from the commissions be kept completely confidential as, in effect, he was presuming that the reforms would get the approval of the assembly and council of the Republic. It is notable that whilst a process of reform was underway that would clarify and redefine the responsibilities and lines of communication of the organs of power in the overseas territories the minister for overseas France was attempting to get around the rigid structures. The colonial mind was obsessed with control and Defferre wasn’t ready to allow the new services to exist without his oversight. The tension between control and reform was still present a year after the project to create the *loi-cadre* had started.

### A new minister but the same problems

The *loi-cadre* and its *décrets d’application* failed to provide a definitive answer to the challenges that were facing the French Union. Despite all the attempts at reform and the creation of new administrative bodies there was an enduring lack of clarity. Moreover, the sense of flux that had been created by the failed promise of reform between 1946 and 1956 was still not addressed by the 1956 reform. Whereas previously that instability was caused by the lack of reform, post-*loi-cadre* it was because of the reform itself. The implications of the wide-ranging decrees were still being examined and re-examined months after their implementation. One example of this is a *circulaire* sent by the new *ministre de la France outre-mer* Gérard Jaquet to the *Hauts-Commissaires* and *Chefs de Territoire d’outre-mer* on 8th August 1957. The purpose of the *circulaire* was to address uncertainty about the ‘Administration des affaires de l’Etat dans les groupes de territoires et territoires d’outre-mer’.[[436]](#footnote-436) In this instance the confusion was related to the role of personnel working in the *services d’état*. Jaquet was addressing a query about whether the distinctions between personnel working in the different *services d’état* and the *services territoriaux* were ‘compatibles avec l’esprit et la lettre de la loi-cadre’. At this early stage the *loi-cadre* held a symbolic position as a reference point against which actions or ideas could be judged. It functioned in a similar way to a constitution in terms of it being a statement of principles and intent. However, rather than laws being measured as being constitutional or unconstitutional they were being measured as fitting the ideal of the *loi-cadre*. However, as we have seen this ideal was very loosely defined. The reason for this query was that the questioner was unsure whether the control over the status of *fonctionnaires* was wielded by the government or its inferior sections. This led to a situation where measures enabling changes to the administration’s personnel had been interpreted 'comme [des mesures] pouvant permettre désormais à tout vice-président d’un conseil de gouvernement ou à tout Ministre de provoquer la mutation de n’importe quels fonctionnaires… ‘.[[437]](#footnote-437) The complaint was similar to the one made by Chauvet nine years earlier in his initial report on the prospects for *décentralisation* in the overseas territories as seen in chapter one.

In his response to the problem Jaquet cited the opening articles from *décret no 56-1227 du 3 décembre 1956* which were intended to define the services that fell under the authority of the state. He also cited articles from several other decrees including 56-1228, 57-458, 57-460, 57-462. Despite the amount of legislation there was still room within the system for decisions to be made ‘mutatis-mutandis’ so as long as any decision did not threaten the stability or security of the republic competences could be changed by the *Hauts-Commissaires* or *Chefs de territoire*.[[438]](#footnote-438) Despite a new law and dozens of decrees there was still uncertainty about who held power in particular domains. Finally, in the same letter where Jaquet addressed the concerns about *les Services d’Etat* he expressed a desire to be kept appraised of all changes made on a local level. The decentralisation aspect of the *loi-cadre* empowered local assemblies in hitherto unseen ways. However, Jaquet wanted to be informed ‘dans le plus bref délai’.[[439]](#footnote-439) Despite tentative efforts at decentralising control over local affairs to local governmental bodies the desire to maintain control and keep a close eye on events was still present in the *Ministère de la France outre-mer*.

## Conclusion

This chapter has been formed around a chronological overview of the *loi-cadre* from initial conception to the beginning of its application. The first key conclusion, then, is that the timeframe that began with the *projet de loi* and ends sometime in the summer of 1957, a year and a half later, needs a greater degree of scrutiny than it has currently received within scholarship. The haste with which academics move past this period to focus on the return of Charles de Gaulle and the escalating violence in Algeria has led scholars to overlook this important part of the history of the *loi-cadre*. Whilst initial reactions from French politicians were positive the effects of the law were still being figured out. Politicians were confident that their reform had worked but others in the administration were confused. The fact that the reform was very centralised had been missed by officials. Official narratives were ignoring problems that were already being identified. This was facilitated by the way that the colonial mind’s dissonance and tendency towards the use of vague language. The role of established terms that formed part of the colonial mind has also been highlighted here. Although there were new ideas in this period, especially those relating to the encouragement of private investment in the overseas territories, the primary basis for policy was on the key ideas of administrative reform through *décentralisation*, and economic reform through *mise en valeur*. This shows how closely linked the *loi-cadre* was to the *longue durée* of French colonial reform and the colonial discourse. The relationship between the *loi-cadre* and its *décrets d’application* has been noted by scholars but the precise mechanics and their importance have not been fully understood. This has perpetuated the use of the term ‘loi-cadre’ as being an all-encompassing term that accurately describes the reforms of 1956/1957, whilst simultaneously diminishing the significance of the time period between the law and its decrees. Subsequent events obscured the *loi-cadre* further, this phenomenon is analysed in the next and final chapter of this thesis. The *loi-cadre* was designed to address concerns about the future of the French Union although it did not solve the confusion that seems to have been endemic in the administration of colonial affairs. What did emerge from the law was a scenario in which politicians were able to claim that the law worked, indeed some believed that it did, whilst other in the administration were still debating its effects. As events in the wider French Union continued to evolve officials began to understand the *loi-cadre* in different ways.

# Chapter four – The *loi-cadre* between history and memory

This chapter divides official discouse on the *loi-cadre* into three narrative periods in order to demonstrate how the framing of the law has changed. These periods reflect the different contexts within which the colonial mind had to explain the *loi-cadre*. Within these periods the way that officials viewed the law changed due to wider events in the French Union. Despite the changing narratives about the law, the discourse and ideas of the colonial mind were sustained through adaptations. The analysis of how the colonial mind worked to create narratives about the *loi-cadre* reveals how it adapted to changing circumstances while keeping its pre-existing mind-set relatively intact. In practice this means that the topoi, concepts and ideas of the colonial mind such as *évolution or développement* held the same significance in the different narrative periods of the *loi-cadre*. For example, *évolution* still meant a process by which the colonies were developed but, after independence, the objective of *développement* changed. This process is explained in this chapter but before doing so I outline the different narrative periods of the *loi-cadre*. The first narrative period immediately followed the *loi-cadre* and saw officials link the *loi-cadre* with the myth of reformism that they perceived as beginning with the Brazzaville conference. The collapse of the Fourth Republic and the shift in colonial policy implemented by de Gaulle saw a second narrative develop. The May Crisis of 1958 saw the return of Charles de Gaulle who implemented legislation that superseded the *loi-cadre*. In the second narrative period the *loi-cadre* became an act of tutelage in which the French were guiding the people of the overseas territories towards a greater autonomy than had actually been anticipated within the law. The third narrative period followed independence, in this period officials retraced their past and created a version of events in which the *loi-cadre* had always been a measure designed to lead to full independence. With this narrative structure in mind the process by which the meaning of the *loi-cadre* changed within the colonial mind can be explained. The wider significance of this analysis is that it can be used to question whether official narratives influenced the historiography of the *loi-cadre*.

From immediately after its promulgation the *loi-cadre* has been undergoing reassessment. Within these periods of reappraisal, explanations were sought and invented for all that had taken place. This process of creation and re-creation of narratives of the law changed official and historical perceptions of it. Different stages in the creation of the story of the *loi-cadre* are explored in this chapter. It is perhaps useful to imagine a snapshot being taken of events at certain points in this history which are reproduced in this chapter. Within these snapshots the image was different depending on events. For example, when the last decrees of the *loi-cadre* were ratified in April 1957 the law was viewed positively. On the other hand, by September 1958 as a referendum was held on the new constitution the perspective on and image of the law changed. Following independence, the perspective changed yet more. Unwrapping the creation of this narrative is important as it allows us to more fully comprehend the *loi-cadre* and removes some of the historical baggage that has come to encumber understandings of it.

It is clear that the *loi-cadre* has taken on a symbolic role in the history of French Imperialism. It represents a moment of reform in the grander story of decolonisation and it is framed as a measure that acknowledged the inevitability of independence. This narrative interprets measures designed to solidify control as being intended to do the opposite. The previous chapter has identified how the law was designed to preserve the French Union through measures that were based on longstanding ideas from the colonial mind. The vision of the *loi-cadre* in history as a decolonising gesture has come about because of the intervention of the politicians and administrators who worked with the *loi-cadre* first-hand in writing their own history. This chapter interrogates how officials shaped the narrative of the *loi-cadre*. In order to show how this process took place I analyse the development of the history of the *loi-cadre* as expressed through the use of the colonial discourse from the period immediately after its promulgation to the years following independence.

This chapter is divided into two parts. Part one is an analysis of reactions to the *loi-cadre* during the last years of the Fourth Republic. Part two is a study of the role that officials had in creating the history of the *loi-cadre*. Part one begins with an analysis of a speech by René Coty made one month after the law was promulgated in which he established a discourse that integrated the *loi-cadre* into the annals of French history. From there the chapter moves to analysis of a period overlooked in the history of the *loi-cadre*. This period begins as the final *décrets d’application* were being debated and ends when the *loi-cadre* was superseded in September 1958. This period, of just over a year, was the beginning of the implementation of the *loi-cadre*, a piece of reform so wide-ranging that it may have taken years for its full effects to be revealed. During these months there was guarded optimism at the prospects for the future of the French Union in contrast to the anxiety experienced in the preceding months. Understanding that there was optimism, and the reasons for that, is key to understanding the subsequent development of the narrative of decolonisation: a narrative that integrates the *loi-cadre* in a way that would have been difficult to imagine from the perspective of an official in 1957. The profound effects of the implementation of the new constitution in September 1958 and the subsequent independence of most areas of the French Empire in 1960 are analysed in the second part of this chapter. This section analyses how a new understanding of the *loi-cadre* was formulated built on the idea that independence was and had always been, inevitable. The analysis in part two begins by exploring two dissertations written by students at the ENFOM whose studies spanned the period of the implementation of the *loi-cadre* and its replacement with clauses from the constitution of the Fifth Republic. It continues with an analysis of texts that show how administrators remembered the *loi-cadre* following independence. This chapter tells the story of how shortly after its birth the *loi-cadre* was re-framed in a way that was completely different to that intended by its authors. What was supposed to be a piece of legislation that ensured the stability of the French Union came to be part of the story of its dissolution.

## June 1956 to May 1958 – the *loi-cadre*’s zenith?

Between June 1956 and May 1958 the *loi-cadre* was seen by officials as a success, the sources show that this was a consistent view within the administration. This was because, despite the growing concerns about Algeria and violence in Cameroon, overall the situation overseas appeared to stabilise.[[440]](#footnote-440) In the short term, fears about the balkanising effect of the *loi-cadre* seemed to have been overstated. After the law was voted through the assembly in June, discussions about the *décrets d’application* began. These discussions resulted in decrees being issued in November and December 1956 and February and April 1957. The reforms enabled by the *loi-cadre* were being implemented until the crisis of May 1958 disrupted the process. This apparent contentment with the *loi-cadre* existed at different levels of the administration. Whilst the President of the Republic praised the reform and spoke of how it realised the ideals of the Republic, officials on the ground were more reserved in their praise, although they did remain positive. This show how the discourse used by individuals within the administration differed depending on their position within it. This period of two years is overlooked in scholarship as it was so incongruous with the events that took place in subsequent years. Yet the key idea that emerged from officials in this period was that the *loi-cadre* had made history. The development of this idea and the significance of the perceptions of the law are examined in this section.

### René Coty enters the *loi-cadre* into history

A speech by President René Coty delivered three weeks after the *loi-cadre* was promulgated shows a version of the discourse that would be used when officials discussed the *loi-cadre* for the next year and a half. This discourse was present at different levels of the administration in the French Union. President Coty gave the speech to the *grands Chefs d’Afrique Noire* on 12th July 1956. These *Grands Chefs* were an assortment of traditional and political leaders and the title ‘grands Chefs’ does not appear to be widely used. The speech contains an unambiguous vision of the future of the French Union expressed with strong underpinnings of republican tradition. Coty delivered his speech in a private setting to an audience of delegates from French Africa in the Elysée palace. As would be expected in a presidential address, the speech references the ideas of *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité* as well as notions of tradition and shared history. Given the situation in which Coty was speaking it can be expected that he was full of praise for the *loi-cadre*. He was performing in his role as president and delivering a speech that was not designed to explain the *loi-cadre*. In the context of the *fête nationale* Coty began by discussing how the meeting he was addressing was ‘une tradition qui n’est pas encore très vieille’ because it had taken place only twice before.[[441]](#footnote-441) Coty then asserted the new traditionality and inclusiveness of the meeting in a way that integrated the overseas territories into the idea of Greater France. Having talked about the previous year’s meeting, now Coty stated that ‘nous ne pouvons plus concevoir que dans la capitale de la France on fête la Patrie sans qu’y soient spécialement représentés nos frères d’outre-mer.’[[442]](#footnote-442) Coty’s version of a tradition was not something fixed, rather ‘[l]es traditions, les vraies, sont des traditions en marche, qui vont en progressant’; the novelty of this tradition did not stop it from being a ‘true’ one.[[443]](#footnote-443) The introduction to Coty’s speech shows how in this period elected officials were keen to show desire for change and progress, as long as change was kept well in bounds. The idea of tradition was used in an attempt to strengthen bonds within the French Union.

Coty used the republican ideas of *liberté* and *fraternité* to frame his description of the *loi-cadre*. He described the *fête nationale* as being the ‘fête de la Patrie, mais aussi la fête de la liberté*’*; he went on to explain that ‘le 14 juillet 1789, c’est le commencement de ce grand mouvement d’émancipation humaine’.[[444]](#footnote-444) This movement was continued, for Coty, by the *loi-cadre*. He stated that ‘dans cette évolution commencée le 14 juillet 1789 l’année 1956 sera, je crois, une grande année’.[[445]](#footnote-445) There were two reasons why 1956 would be a great year for the French Union: the first was that it represented ten years since the 1946 constitution had been written, the second was that 1956 was the year of the *loi-cadre*. Coty noted that the constitution of October 1946 had abolished colonies and created ‘des citoyens libres et égaux’, an important step towards France completing its ‘mission’ which was ‘d’aider les populations autochtones à parvenir peu à peu à une situation qui leur permettra de gérer elles-mêmes leurs propres affaires.’[[446]](#footnote-446) In subsequent paragraphs, having made this previous acknowledgement of the importance of self-rule, Coty used the topos of *fraternité* to assert the common endeavour of the populations of the French Union. In speaking about the different groups in the French Union he stated ‘Nous donnons, vous et nous, tous ensemble, un grand exemple au monde, un grand exemple de solidarité fraternelle.’[[447]](#footnote-447)

Later, Coty gave another reason for the *loi-cadre* being created. Whilst the desire to enable the overseas territories ability to administer their own affairs was one, the other was the tendency of reform to take a long time. In the speech Coty quoted Defferre directly:

Le Ministre s’est dit: ‘En France, quand il s’agit de faire des grandes réformes, nous avons un petit défaut, c’est de palabrer, et si on palabre trop longtemps, la réforme attendra trop longtemps!’.[[448]](#footnote-448)

The problem of reform taking a long time was present throughout the Fourth Republic. As shown in this thesis it was discussed at length by officials throughout the administrative system. Coty’s acknowledgement shows a uniformity in the discussions about problems affecting the Union. The issue of naming of the *loi-cadre* appeared in the speech. Coty spoke of the great work done by Gaston Defferre in pushing through the *loi-cadre*. This potentially marks the first point where the law is presented as being the work of Gaston Defferre. The section of the speech in which Coty discusses the law does not contain any mention of the work put into the law by Felix Houphouët-Boigny nor Pierre-Henri Teitgen.

In his address Coty also inserted the *loi-cadre* into the history of France and a process of *évolution* that had been underway since 1789. He asked the audience ‘Allions-nous nous déclarer satisfaits de cette évolution?’ involving them personally through their response to the question.[[449]](#footnote-449) Because of this tension between the past and an as yet undefined future the precise historical moment occupied by Coty through his address is interesting. On one level it is part of a long narrative beginning in 1789, on another it is in the recent past beginning in 1946, and on a third level it is mixed into a future timeframe that projects the very recent reforms into the future as the continued ‘*évolution*’ bears fruits. The reason for this multi-temporal positioning of the *loi-cadre* is that it need to address problems of the past and future, the lack of reform, the uncertain status of the overseas territories before 1946, as well as the increasing demands for independence from some parts of the French Union. It is pertinent to restate here that the *loi-cadre* was certainly a defensive gesture designed to ensure the future viability of the French Union. To ensure that the French Union had a tomorrow Coty integrated the *loi-cadre* into a republican past to strengthen the bonds tying the French Union together. He encouraged those present for the address to assure their fellow citizens that the future of the French Union was one of cooperation and reforms that would work for the overseas territories. He asked his audience to spread the word of ‘les monuments et les trésors de notre grand passé’ and noted the *Chefs*’ visit to Verdun where many compatriots of the notables present fought and were decorated for their actions.[[450]](#footnote-450) This passage clearly demonstrates the colonial mind and the colonial discourse interacting and presenting a view of the role of France in the overseas territories. Coty’s use of the colonial myth and the topos of *évolution* was vital for his vision.

Despite Coty’s appeals to French history and praise of the *loi-cadre*, at the time of his address the law had not actually done anything other than open up the space for reform yet to materialise. As such, these appeals for the Africans present to believe in their role in a republican history can be seen as an attempt to buy time. As the effects of the *loi-cadre* were yet to be seen, Coty could not make any strong commitments on the shape of future reform: this was a situation that confronted officials in different parts of the government and administration over the next two years.

Although Coty’s praise came early in the process of implementing the *loi-cadre*, a sense of optimism was expressed. This filtered down through the different levels of the administrative and political system. The perspectives of officials lower down in this organisation are shown in the sources analysed in the next section of the chapter. The records of the ENFOM and the CHEAMreveal the attitudes of those in the education of officials in overseas affairs. Officials working in positions lower down in the administrative system used the ideas that Coty expressed in his speech. This shows how the attitudes expressed by Coty were almost universal within the administration and demonstrates their importance. The SFIO also published its own narrative about the *loi-cadre* in an official pamphlet which mirrors some of the statements made by Coty.

### Response to the *loi-cadre*, decrees in action

By September 1957 the SFIO were proud of their accomplishments and felt that the *loi-cadre* had achieved the desired aims. They shared this good news was their adherents through a pamphlet that supplemented their ‘bulletin intérieur’.[[451]](#footnote-451) The author of this document looked back at the journey that resulted in the *loi-cadre* and its decrees. This document links together the reform of 1946 and 1956 then looks to the future of France and the overseas territories. In this way the pamphlet serves as a book-end to the initial phase of the *loi-cadre*. The vision of reform as expressed within the pamphlet will be analysed here to give a snapshot of French perceptions of the successes and failures as perceived at the beginning of autumn 1957. The pamphlet contains references to the colonial discourse including concepts such as *déconcentration* and *décentralisation*, and the idea of the *loi-cadre* being revolutionary.

Within the pamphlet the law and the decrees are linked together and the ideas of *déconcentration* and *décentralisation* make a comeback within this phrase from the introduction; ‘[l]es Décrets d’application de cette loi réalisent outre-mer une œuvre importante de décentralisation et de déconcentration’.[[452]](#footnote-452) Almost every page of the pamphlet has an interesting take on the reforms seen during 1956 and 1957 and it would be easy to get bogged down in too close a reading of each page. Therefore, this section will present the overall arguments and key conclusions of the pamphlet. The pamphlet is structured into chapters; the opening one provides the context for the reform, the middle sections are descriptions of the reforms carried out in the fields of institutions, politics, administration, economics, and society. The conclusion makes the case for the importance of the reforms and signals a great future lying in wait for France and the *territoires d’outre-mer*.

As a source the pamphlet is challenging as its audience was members of the SFIO so its content is shaped to convince an already sympathetic audience. Despite this the author of the pamphlet made a strong case for the necessity and importance of the reforms. Within the introduction to the pamphlet the *loi-cadre* was described as a ‘révolution légale’ and that ‘les structures institutionnelles et politiques des pays outre-mer ont été complètement transformées’.[[453]](#footnote-453) The results of this drastic reform were, in the words of the author, going to lead to a new reality in the colonies, ‘Les relations de ces pays avec la Métropole ont été établies sur des bases entièrement nouvelles’.[[454]](#footnote-454) According to the author events had forced the hand of the government of Guy Mollet. Although there had not been violence on the scale of that seen in North Africa there had been ‘des évènements sanglants’ in Cameroon in May 1955, the author writes that this violence was serious enough to warrant reaction. The implication of the text is that this unrest was caused by a ‘malaise’ within the African and European populations. On the part of the African population this malaise was caused by growing nationalist pressure. An explosion of this had been prevented by the various reforms implemented after the Brazzaville conference. Here the author is playing an interesting trick they acknowledge the concerns of African people yet they immediately write a list of reasons why Africans should not be concerned.

The next part of the text describes how the above situation developed. It starts with a clear statement that the accomplishments of France in the name of ‘l’œuvre civilisatrice’ were something to be proud of. However, the author states that these accomplishments had been sullied by the role of *assimilation* as the ideological underpinning of reform. The author outlined of the precise meaning of *assimilation*, it was ‘l’idée que les pays d’outre-mer devaient être administrés comme la Métropole, que la République devait être gouvernée de façon uniforme de Dunkerque à Brazzaville.’[[455]](#footnote-455) The author acknowledges the possibility of one republic governing different ‘pays’ that the *loi-cadre* initially created. This shows how through *décentralisation* the *loi-cadre* could be implemented without threatening the integrity of the republic. This was achieved through the acceptance of difference that the *loi-cadre* codified. In terms of the debate between *assimilation* and *association* which had raged for many years of in French colonial circles this later development is curious. According to officials, including Albert Sarraut, assimilation had already been consigned to the past in the 1920s yet it was necessary again in the 1950s. Yet the resurfacing of this debate did take place on slightly different terms. The author of the document used the term ‘autonomie’ in place of ‘association’ which better represented the zeitgeist on the second half of the 1950s. The ghosts of France’s colonial past, although their full nature was never described, were haunting policy over the decade after the 1946 constitution. The answer to this problem was the new system of governance established by the *loi-cadre*.

On page eleven of the pamphlet there is a description of the ‘système de la loi-cadre’. This section shows the concerns that the author felt warranted a response. It emphasises the continued role of parliament in the decision-making process and argues that the main focus of the law was expediency in addressing problems as they arose. The institutions of the Fourth Republic were inadequate in responding to problems in the overseas territories so the response was to replace the institutions. The examples of the parliamentary system taking three years to settle the municipal law in the overseas territories, and numerous proposals that were ‘…déposées sur le bureau de la République’ but ‘n’ont jamais été votées’ are cited in the pamphlet.[[456]](#footnote-456) However, there were concerns that the *loi-cadre* was going to create an unequal system in which parliament would be bypassed. The author of the pamphlet attempted to soothe these concerns by stressing the role of the assembly in voting for both the *loi-cadre* and the *décrets d’application* that it enabled.[[457]](#footnote-457) The final sentence of this section shows how open ended the reforms engendered by the *loi-cadre* were, it states that ‘il [the *loi-cadre*] n’avait d’autre objectif que de permettre au Gouvernement d’agir en temps utile’.[[458]](#footnote-458) The law took on a strange position as being an act of reform whilst not being the definitive gesture that would solve all problems in the overseas territories.

The main body of the pamphlet describes the *décrets d’application* and how they were addressing issues in the overseas territories. The political and administrative reforms were again justified using the idea of ‘propres affaires’. This term had become a key concept of the colonial discourse and colonial myth. The use of it drew on this discourse and the term was found the constitution of the Fourth Republic. The last sentence of the preamble to the constitution reads:

Fidèle à sa mission traditionnelle, la France entend conduire les peuples dont elle a pris la charge à la liberté de s'administrer eux-mêmes et de gérer démocratiquement leurs propres affaires ; écartant tout système de colonisation fondé sur l'arbitraire, elle garantit à tous l'égal accès aux fonctions publiques et l'exercice individuel ou collectif des droits et libertés proclamés ou confirmés ci-dessus.[[459]](#footnote-459)

The way that the *loi-cadre* and its decrees ensured that the peoples of the overseas territories had control of their *propres affaires* was through the creation of new institutions. One of the institutions was the ‘Conseil du Gouvernement’ with the decrees that established them described as the most important. The *Conseils du gouvernement* were created from six to twelve member chosen by the territorial assembly and bestowed with the authority to lead the territory with the approval of the assembly. The powers of the new *conseils* were restricted to administer local issues or ‘les intérêts des Territoires’ with other decrees defining the distinction between these interests and those of the state. Later in the same section the difference between the interests of the state and those of the territories is described as ‘une distinction entre les intérêts de la République Française prise dans son ensemble et les intérêts des collectivités territoriales’.[[460]](#footnote-460) The politics of autonomy contained sufficient leeway for distinctions to be made between constituent parts of the republic and the republic itself.

The pamphlet collates into lists the territorial, and state interests as they were delineated by the decrees of the *loi-cadre*.[[461]](#footnote-461) Whilst the territorial interests fell under the control of the *conseils de gouvernement* and the *assemblées territoriaux*, the interests of the state were regulated by the *Haut-Commissaires and Chefs de Territoires*. The policies of *déconcentration* and *décentralisation* had finally borne fruit. The result was a bifurcated administrative system that had been defined in a centralised manner. However, the author of the pamphlet did not engage with the criticism directed at the new systems created by the *décrets d’application*, instead they continued to paint an almost completely rosy picture of the progress of reform. The next part of the thesis will examine how the colonial mind came to ignore the criticisms of the *loi-cadre* and saw a positive future for the French through analysis of publications from one of its educational institutions.

### Centre des Hautes Etudes d’Administration Musulman

As the *loi-cadre* was an important change in the administration of the overseas territories the centre commissioned pieces from three administrators who then studied and wrote about its effects. These officials were Commandant Barthélémy, Pierre Alexandre, and Paul Le Layec. Their writing serves as examples of how those involved in administration in the overseas territories thought about the *loi-cadre* at the time it was in effect and show us what other officials were being told about the *loi-cadre*.

Le Layec

Governor Paul Le Layec was twice invited to speak at CHEAM to discuss the provisions in the *loi-cadre* relating to the civil service. Within these speeches he mirrored the perspectives demonstrated within Rene Coty’s speech. As there had been some progress made since Coty’s speech Le Layec also mentioned new issues that had arisen. Le Layec’s first speech was about the measures of Africanisation made since the *loi-cadre* and the second was about reforms of the colonial service more generally.

Across the two speeches a pattern emerges of how Le Layec talked about the reforms. He expressed guarded optimism about their potential and asserted their importance as history-making measures. He noted that since the end of the Second World War the desire for people in the overseas territories to ‘gérer leurs propres affaires’ had increased significantly. This was, he explained, ‘un fait historique qu’il serait vain de nier, qu’il serait dangereux d’ignorer’.[[462]](#footnote-462) Le Layec’s presentation of the reforms showed that he considered them to be vital in showing the populations in the overseas territories that there was a future with France. In this future the overseas territories would be responsible for their *propres affaires*. He cited the paragraph from the preamble of the 1946 constitution that related to self-administration and equal access to the civil service for all individuals in order to show that not enough progress had been made. He stated ‘Le texte est net. La réalité l’est moins.’[[463]](#footnote-463) He argued that the growing disquiet in the overseas territories was in part due to unfulfilled ambition. Because the *loi-cadre* opened up the possibility for the ‘subalterne’ members of the civil service to access higher echelons, well-educated Africans had something to aim for.[[464]](#footnote-464) He had praised the economic reforms enabled by the FIDES programme as being positive but argued that they were not going to create enough jobs for educated Africans in the near future. The *loi-cadre* was one solution to this problem. Whilst some historians have argued that the Africanisation of the civil service and the creation of territorial assemblies with budgetary responsibilities was designed to cut costs, Le Layec’s interpretation was different. For Le Layec in his position on the ground, the measures stemming from the *loi-cadre* were the source of guarded optimism.

In this view the symbolic significance of the reforms was greater than their practical importance. Le Layec argued that that the 1946 constitution had included contradictory policies; ‘assimilation, décentralisation administrative, fédéralisme*.*’[[465]](#footnote-465) For Le Layec, the *loi-cadre* represented a choice between continued assimilation or accepting the personality of the territories:

La loi du 23 juin 1956 témoigne d’un choix entre deux voies possibles: celle de l’assimilation, d’une part, celle de la reconnaissance de la personnalité territoriale, d’autre part.’[[466]](#footnote-466)

Le Layec’s use of ‘témoigne’ is another example of how officials saw history being made through the *loi-cadre*. The idea of bearing witness, through the use of *témoigner*, positioned the *loi-cadre* within history as an important moment that acknowledged change – a key objective of officials in this period. In the second speech he repeated the idea that the *loi-cadre* had broken away from previous policies of assimilation although he used the past tense instead of the present; he wrote ‘La loi… a témoigné d’un choix entre deux voies possibles’.[[467]](#footnote-467) Also, in the second speech Le Layec identified the inevitability of the reform by using the phrase ‘Le temps est venu de donner aux territoires le moyen d’exprimer nettement cette personnalité’, and elsewhere the law was described as being part of the march of history.[[468]](#footnote-468) Le Layec finished on an optimistic note that emphasised the idea that the reform was genuine:

Le Gouvernement et le Parlement se sont engagés dans la voie de l’avenir. Le choix est irréversible et la décentralisation administrative qui se manifeste dans les collectivités d’outre-mer est appelée vraisemblablement à connaître son aboutissement dans un fédéralisme constitutionnel.[[469]](#footnote-469)

Le Layec framed the *loi-cadre* as being a key moment in history and as enabling the future to be revealed. The *loi-cadre* was a key moment in the history of overseas France as it symbolically represented a break with the past policy of assimilation, another important concept in the colonial discourse. What is clear from the speeches is that at the time they were delivered Le Layec was positive about the measures taken in the law. His speeches gave the clear impression that the *loi-cadre* was designed to make the relationship between the overseas territories and the *métropole* more equal whilst accepting difference. This speech, when read alongside the other sources from CHEAM shows a picture emerging. It is clear that in the period between the promulgation of the *loi-cadre* and May 1958 officials felt that there were positive signs and that the reform would work.

Barthélémy

A different form of document in the journal of CHEAM adds nuance to this picture of the *loi-cadre* as it stated that by December 1957 the *loi-cadre* had not yet been implemented. The report was written by a Commandant Barthélémy. His speech was titled *La Côte d’Ivoire au seuil de la loi-cadre*.[[470]](#footnote-470) This was thirteen months after the *loi-cadre* became law and eight months after the last *décret d’application* was written. Barthélémy had been serving in Ivory Coast and had his work published in the journal of CHEAM. The article was published on 9th December 1957 and the use of ‘au seuil’ shows that the *loi-cadre* was still in the process of being implemented. The last of the *décrets d’application* had been promulgated in April 1957 so it appears that the intervening eight months were not sufficient for their full implementation. The question raised by Barthélémy’s title challenges the amount of agency that has been assigned to the *loi-cadre* by historians. Furthermore, Barthélémy’s interpretation of the *loi-cadre* shows the importance of a rereading of sources from the period April 1957 – September 1958. If, by December 1957, the Ivory Coast was only just on the cusp of implementing the *loi-cadre* its real significance was not the reforms that were attempted through it. Still, from his position in December 1957 Barthélémy was hopeful about the future prospects in the Ivory Coast now that the *loi-cadre* was close to being implemented.

Barthélémy described the economic and political situations within Ivory Coast as being closely linked. While the economic situation had been stable Barthélémy felt it was still fragile. In the event of a deterioration in the economic situation Barthélémy predicted that there was the possibility of the situation rapidly worsening. He wrote ‘si dans mon exposé une place importante est réservée aux questions économiques, c’est qu’en Côte d’Ivoire, plus je pense qu’en aucun autre pays de l’outre-mer français, l’économie est déterminante’.[[471]](#footnote-471) The reason for the economic fragility was the overdependence on the production of labour-intensive crops. If the prices of these products fell the territory would have seen a rapid decline in the living conditions of a large and influential section of Ivorian society. The economic fragility was only part of the picture as on the question of the durability of the political situation Barthélémy could only ‘faire une réponse de Normand’.[[472]](#footnote-472) Barthélémy identified three factors that would indicate stability and four that would indicate instability. After this he made a clear statement that, in his opinion, the *loi-cadre* had the potential to ‘dissiper le malaise dont souffre le Côte-d’Ivoire’.[[473]](#footnote-473) He argued that the RDA would benefit from having tangible responsibilities in government. He also felt that having these responsibilities would temper the demagoguery that had been on the increase among the cadres of the RDA. The guarded optimism Barthélémy expressed and the reasons for his optimism are key to understanding how the *loi-cadre* was perceived within the period after the finalisation of the *décrets d’application* in April 1957, and how different this was to subsequent perceptions. First, the key point of note is that even in December 1957, thirteen months after the *loi-cadre* had been promulgated, the law had not produced much in the way of results. Therefore, despite narratives of the period of decolonisation that examine the law in terms of success or failure it is clear that it never had time to be either of these things. However, for Barthélémy, less than a year before the *loi-cadre* was superseded by the new constitution it was going to address some of the serious concerns held by officials regarding affairs in the overseas territories. According to Barthélémy the *loi-cadre* had arrived in just enough time to address these problems. Given the way events unfolded it could be argued that his optimism about the law was misplaced. Yet, making that argument would miss the importance of the fact that for a period the *loi-cadre* was, in the minds of officials, going to be a success.

Alexandre

Further to this report on the *loi-cadre*’s effects in Ivory Coast there is a lengthy examination of the provisions of the law written by Pierre Alexandre which shows the same guarded tone as the others.[[474]](#footnote-474) Alexandre was a graduate of the ENFOM and served as the high commissioner in Togo and Cameroon before going on to have a career as a specialist in African studies.[[475]](#footnote-475) His writing covers the implications of each aspect of the *loi-cadre* and examines the decrees that emerged from it. Although there is no precise date for the article it was written after all of the decrees came into effect in April 1957. Whilst the majority of the piece consists of an article by article explanation of the *loi-cadre* and its *décrets d’application,* at the end of each section there is a conclusion in which Alexandre gave his own summary of the potential of the reforms. Pierre Alexandre experienced the *loi-cadre* from the perspective of his position in the UN mandate territory of Togo. Whilst Togo had a position in the French Union that was different to the other overseas territories, due to its status as a mandate, Alexandre’s conclusions are particularly relevant to a discussion about official perspectives on the *loi-cadre*. He writes that because of the powers that had been granted to the territorial assembly of Togo it was a ‘territoire-pilote’.[[476]](#footnote-476) The other TOMs were about to be granted similar powers that had already been granted to Togo. The guardedly optimistic tone of Alexandre’s examination was similar to that of Le Layec, and Barthélémy.

Alexandre indirectly mirrored the statements made by Le Layec regarding economic problems in the overseas territories. He identified a difference in pace between the administrative and economic reforms undertaken through the *loi-cadre*. Whilst the reform of the civil service was leading to a more federalised system, economic reforms were lagging behind. These were the problems that Le Layec hoped would be in part solved by the Africanisation of the civil service. In his conclusion Alexandre described the differences ; ‘Le “train” de décrets économiques paraît beaucoup moins “révolutionnaire” que le “train” politique’.[[477]](#footnote-477) The invocation of the idea of revolution occurs in other sources. It is clear that Alexandre felt that reform was progressing albeit at a mixed pace. Alexandre touched upon the debate ongoing within the French Union regarding the future structure of the republic, he described the effects of granting new powers to the territorial assemblies as creating a *de facto* federal system. Here Alexandre was content that the end justified the means as if the territories were not granted greater powers he felt that revolt was a possibility.[[478]](#footnote-478) Yet, the loi-cadre had addressed some of the issues facing the French Union.

In the section in which Alexandre examined the more general provisions of the *loi-cadre* he linked it to the deeper history of administrative reform in France; ‘Des “quarante rois qui en dix siècles firent la France” à la Constitution de 1946, on peut dire que la volonté de centralisation politique de la Nation a été la grande constante historique française’.[[479]](#footnote-479) This is another formulation of how officials inserted the law into a republican/historical narrative showing it occurred at different levels of the administration. Alexandre specified that in the overseas territories these tendencies had been present although they encountered ‘*des problèmes locaux*’.[[480]](#footnote-480) He too thought that the *loi-cadre* was the solution to these problems although we gave a warning about the potential for the *services d’état* extending their reach into what should have been the jurisdiction of the *services territoriaux*. Alexandre’s writing on the *loi-cadre*, in similar way to Le Layec, places the law within a historical narrative and was cautiously optimistic about the effects of the reform.[[481]](#footnote-481) Alexandre wrote that the main impact of the *loi-cadre* would be an increase in the speed with which problems could be dealt with.[[482]](#footnote-482) On the future Alexandre wrote,

L’avenir est donc pour le moins incertain, mais il apparait [sic] évident, en fonction même de cette incertitude, que la future révision constitutionnelle devra donner à nos institutions la plus grande souplesse possible pour leur permettre de s’adapter à chaque instant à toute évolution de la situation.[[483]](#footnote-483)

The excerpt shows that Alexandre considered that officials were still in control of the *évolution* they spoke of. Further down the line Alexandre foresaw a federal or confederal structure as the likely form of the French state.[[484]](#footnote-484) Nowhere within Alexandre’s text is there a statement that he felt the reforms would fail. For him they had ticked every box; the pace of reform would quicken and help temper radical elements in Togolese politics, heading off the main risks in Togo. His optimism was tempered by the unknowable reaction of African politicians but he wrote ‘Il reste incontestable que les dispositions actuelles constituent un progrès certain’.[[485]](#footnote-485)

These three sources from CHEAM show that on the cusp of 1958 the opinion of officials on the *loi-cadre* was that it had the potential to be a success. This success would be measured by the continuation of the French Union. As the historical record shows, the French Union did not last beyond 1958. Officials were following similar patterns when they discussed the law; they were somewhat optimistic and often they inserted the *loi-cadre* into a historical narrative. The idea of the law being history-making was firmly established in their interpretations. The next set of sources show a different perspective on the law in order to show how the colonial mind had a very limited view of the effects of the *loi-cadre*.

### Counterpoint: *Présence Africaine* on the faults of the *loi-cadre*

Most of the sources used within this thesis have originated from within the colonial mind. This section analyses a series of articles from the 18th and 19th editions of *Présence Africaine* published in February and May of 1958.[[486]](#footnote-486) The analysis of these articles next to official documents reveals more insights into how the colonial mind was working at the time of the *loi-cadre*; it also shows why in part the reform failed. The analysis in this section shows that the language of some of the writers published in *Présence Africaine* was influenced by the colonial mind by their exposure to official documents. The writers whose discourse reflects the colonial discourse had weaker criticisms of the *loi-cadre*. The writers with the strongest criticism of the *loi-cadre* inverted the terminology of the colonial discourse. The analysis here is only a preliminary investigation into the relationship between the colonial discourse and the anti-colonial discourse and its main focus is to develop our understanding of the *loi-cadre* and the colonial mind. However, given the overlap in terms of background and ideas between these anti-colonial writers and their more pro-colonial counterparts the emergence of the anti-colonial discourse from the colonial discourse is a possibility hinted at by this section of the chapter. The main focus of the analysis in the section is to use the criticism and analysis of the *loi-cadre* contained within the articles of *Présence Africaine* as a mirror to the colonial mind. The gap between the thoughts of the writers published in *Présence Africaine* and those published in the journal of CHEAM is vast. What is shown by the existence of the analysis in the special issue of *Présence Africaine* is that there was a body of thought to which French officials were blind, whether wilfully or through ignorance.

### The *loi-cadre* as a missed opportunity?

All of the articles in the issue of *Présence Africaine* engaged critically with the *loi-cadre* and its provisions. The three articles which focused on specific aspects of the *loi-cadre* contain clauses that show that on one level the authors integrated some of the ideas of the colonial mind into their analysis. Here I am not arguing that these writers were active participants in the colonial mind. Instead I am arguing that the nature of the analysis undertaken by these authors led them to use the colonial discourse in a way that indicated that they accepted certain ideas and terms. For example, in one of the articles the ideas of *mise en valeur* and *développement* are mentioned by the author;

L’O.G.R.S. qui devait s’intéresser à la mise en valeur des régions en bordure du Sahara confisque déjà au profit de la seule métropole, sous le prétexte de la rentabilité, les gaz provenant des puits d’Hassi-Messaoud. Dépassant encore une fois ses appréhensions la création en Afrique Noire d’une infrastructure de développement et de mise en valeur exigerait parallèlement l’implantation d’une industrie de transformation et de construction.[[487]](#footnote-487)

In *Conséquences financières de la loi-cadre* by Mamadou Touré the concept of *évolution* and *développement* appeared despite the critical tone of the article. Touré engaged with the hierarchy established by the colonial administration that saw the colonised countries as economically backwards. Touré identified that ‘la sous-administration semble bien être une caractéristique des pays économiquement arriérés indépendants […] placés sous le contrôle politique de métropoles plus évoluées…’[[488]](#footnote-488). Furthermore, Touré outlined a plan put forward by the RDA that contained the recommendation that France and AOF must ‘[c]onsolider les réformes politiques intervenues depuis l’application de la loi-cadre par un développement rapide des territoires.’[[489]](#footnote-489) Touré acknowledged the official use of these concepts and was not advocating for them directly himself but he did use them without challenging the logic behind them. The topos of *évolution* also appeared in an analysis of the decrees emanating from the *loi-cadre* by Nicolas Atangana. After a lengthy criticism of the legal impact of the decrees Atangana yielded and acknowledged that the *loi-cadre* ‘répond fort tardivement et fort maladroitement à certains aspects de l’évolution des T.O.M. prévue par la Constitution.’[[490]](#footnote-490) What this shows is that through their engagement with the colonial discourse the criticism of the *loi-cadre* by these authors became limited and they were accepting some of its key principles. This demonstrates that the colonial mind had power and one of the ways that this power was exercised was through official texts. In contrast to other articles in the issue of *Presence Africaine* analysed below, the above articles took the propositions of the *loi-cadre* and the colonial administration at face value and evaluated them in terms of it being an opportunity for genuine reform that had been missed. Other authors whose work was in the journal did not engage with the *loi-cadre* on the same level. Instead they confronted the colonial mind and the colonial discourse directly. What emerges in these articles is a reversal of the colonial discourse and a rejection of the logic of colonialism.

### Reversing the language of the colonial discourse and myths of the colonial mind

The inversion of the colonial discourse allowed for its clearest criticism. In the following examples the authors used the terms of the discourse but did not use them in a way that accepted their logic. Instead the terms were used in a way that showed them to be empty phrases. Moreover, at the same time as reversing the meaning of certain words the authors reversed the narrative with which the *loi-cadre* was being framed. One example of this is ‘[a]u cours de ce conflit [the Second World War], l’Europe colonisatrice a subi des défaites partielles et des dommages matériels qui ont ébranlé son économie et ont porté un coup décisif à son prestige de “Métropole protectrice des peoples primitifs”. L’aide énorme apportée par ces “peuples primitifs” à la “Mère-patrie” en guerre, loin de fortifier les liens de subordination, a créé des conditions d’insubordination’.[[491]](#footnote-491) The argument within this quotation, that the Second World War damaged European prestige to such an extent that the colonised questioned European hegemony was not new. However, the way in which Behanzin used the term ‘mère-patrie’ which had been favoured by colonial officials starting with Sarraut is noteworthy. Behanzin’s reference to the idea of the metropole protecting the primitive people in the overseas territories also took one of the colonial myths and argued that it was wrong. He stated that through their experience of the war the colonised people ‘voyaient se désagréger le mythe des “valeurs occidentales”, le mythe du “white moral burden”.[[492]](#footnote-492)

The myth which linked the Brazzaville conference to a narrative of colonial liberation was also attacked by Behanzin. He cited the preamble of the Brazzaville conference which had stated ‘[l]es fins de l’œuvre de civilisation accomplie par la France dans les colonies écartent toute idée d’autonomie, toute possibilité d’évolution hors du bloc français de l’Empire, la constitution éventuelle même lointaine du self-government dans les colonies est à écarter’.[[493]](#footnote-493) However, unlike a colonial official he did not state that Brazzaville was the dawning on a new colonial policy ; instead Brazzaville ‘impos[é] au phénomène fatal de la décolonisation la forme de la lutte sanglante’.[[494]](#footnote-494) In his criticisms of the *loi-cadre* Behanzin was inverting the narrative that the colonial mind had created. Instead of Brazzaville being the watershed for a new liberal colonial policy it was the beginning of a series of bloody conflicts that had spanned the existence of the Fourth Republic.

In his article Joseph Ki-Zerbo laid out his understanding of what was taking place by bringing his analysis into his present. The title of Ki-Zerbo’s article was *La loi-cadre se meurt* and in contrast to Behanzin’s piece Ki-Zerbo was focused on the immediate context of the *loi-cadre*. Ki-Zerbo described his article as an ‘autopsie de la loi Defferre’.[[495]](#footnote-495) Rather than exploring the decrees or financial implications of the *loi-cadre* Ki-Zerbo attacked the foundations of the law and overarching narratives about colonialism. Ki-Zerbo wanted to remove power from the colonial administration and show that Africans were in control of their own destiny. He explained his point :

‘[i]l y a des craquements qu’il faut bien entendre. Tels sont ceux qui ébranlent la vieille bâtisse du colonialisme. Bien des tuiles volent déjà de son toit au grand souffle de la liberté: la loi-cadre se meurt. Dira-t-on bientôt: la loi-cadre est morte? Cela dépendra des Africains surtout.’[[496]](#footnote-496)

The image of the future following the *loi-cadre* can be contrasted with that outlined within the journal of CHEAM. In the articles written by colonial officials the *loi-cadre* was going to act as a moderating force on African politics. For Ki-Zerbo the *loi-cadre* was nearly dead and the direction of future was not going to be decided by colonial officials.

Certain ideas were key to the colonial mind, the unquestioned belief in the *mission civilisatrice*, and the backwards nature of the colonised people, for example. Moreover, within the specific context of the *loi-cadre* officials believed that they were giving the colonised people what they wanted, and that France had led the overseas territories to a stage at which they were being passed the reins of power. Within this issue of *Présence Africaine* all of these ideas were debunked. The civilising mission was a sham and the colonised people were capable of managing their own affairs on their own terms. France’s attempts to argue that they had led the people in the overseas territories to a future in which they were leading their own affairs had fallen on deaf ears. When Sarraut spoke of a new colonial policy acting as a *miroir* for the French to be able to overcome their contradictions it is doubtful that he had the kind of criticism in the issue of *Présence Africaine* in mind. Even when the authors in this issue were not directly attacking colonialism their criticisms of the *loi-cadre* were profound. This begs the question of what was going on in the colonial mind? Why did it fail to see these criticisms? Or was it wilfully ignorant of the problems and chose to overlook them? Reading this issue of *Présence Africaine* alongside a much larger selection of documents from the colonial authorities is a jarring experience. Within the fifty pages of one edition of this journal a wider variety of opinion can be found than in the vast majority of documents analysed in the rest of the thesis. The inability of the colonial mind to think beyond a series of pre-existing parameters is one of the reasons why the *loi-cadre* fell far short of the mark. It should also be underlined that in order to find the reasons why the *loi-cadre* failed it is important to look beyond sources from the colonial mind. Little explanation can be found in sources tied to the colonial administration as rather than confronting the problem officials resorted to mythmaking to obscure their failures. By May 1958 French officials were themselves having to reassess the *loi-cadre* because of a growing crisis spawned by the conflict in Algeria. However, their criticism of the law was far more restrained than that of the writers published in *Présence Africaine*. The sources analysed in the next section show how official reactions to the *loi-cadre* changed in the light of the new constitution and how a different historical narrative and meaning of the term history-making was created when the French Community began to spiral apart. Despite the failure of the *loi-cadre* the colonial mind did not criticise it as deeply as the writers analysed above did.

## September 1958 to independence – from zenith to nadir?

The crisis of May 1958 shook the French political system to the core. The Algerian war had struck right into the heart of the metropole and caused a severe crisis. In response to this emergency the nation turned to its saviour from the Second World War and Charles De Gaulle was appointed prime minister on the 1st June 1958. By September 1958 a new constitution was drawn up and approved by a referendum. The effects this new constitution had on the fledgling reforms precipitated by the *loi-cadre* were profound. In effect, the *loi-cadre* had been rendered obsolete. The provisions contained in the constitution of the Fifth Republic strengthened the power of the individual overseas territories and granted the territories the right to secede from the French Community. The *loi-cadre* had gone from being a vital law that assured the continuity of the French Union to being redundant in just under two years. However, this did not mean that officials stopped talking about it. The law’s history-making significance lasted beyond its short lifespan and it took on new meaning. Deep within the institutions that made up the administration of Overseas France, trainee officials were evaluating the *loi-cadre* in the context of the recent past. At the *Ecole Nationale de la France d’Outre-Mer* in Paris students who were training to be the next generation of administrators wrote about the *loi-cadre* just after it had been superseded. It is key that the ideas present in the discourse of Coty and those invited to contribute to CHEAM are also present in work from these students. This demonstrates that students’ views were being shaped by prevalent narratives. It is important to note that the dissertation mark formed part of the final grade for the student and some of their work may have been designed to mirror a marker’s thoughts. The effect of the crisis of May to September 1958 can be seen in their work and in response to it they placed the *loi-cadre* within a new narrative. This narrative extracted the *loi-cadre* from a history of France but maintained its history-making significance.

### ENFOM mémoires de stage

In the final year of their study at the school, trainee administrators were required to complete an extended piece of writing on a subject of their choice. Two dissertations written in 1958/1959 directly examine the *loi-cadre*. Another dissertation from the previous year mentions the *loi-cadre* as part of an assessment of the role of administrators in the development of the overseas territories.[[497]](#footnote-497) The use of key topoi in the *mémoires* shows how the political discourse used to discuss the law had filtered down into the minds of trainee administrators. Furthermore, recent changes in the French political realm had important effects on the students’ perspectives on the law. Within the ENFOM and wider overseas administration these effects turned out to be profound. This section of the chapter uses these three pieces of writing to explore how different perspectives on the *loi-cadre* shaped interpretations of it. Through this exploration it shows how the formation of narratives about the law was affected by the end of the Fourth Republic.

Following the events of May – September 1958 and in the context of the ongoing violent repression of his countrymen one Cameroonian student at the ENFOM wrote a dissertation that praised the efforts of the French overseas administration. Jean Bikanda titled his dissertation ‘*Grandeur et Servitude Administratives outre-mer : l’administrateur français*’.[[498]](#footnote-498) The dissertation is an insight into the period between the *loi-cadre* becoming law and the implementation of the constitution of the Fifth Republic from the perspective of a African student within one of the key institutions of colonial France. In this period, despite the continued violence in Algeria and the often-overlooked repression of the UPC in Cameroon, the *loi-cadre* was perceived as working as intended. The essay is a look into the ‘colonial mind’ in the latter days of the French Empire. Bikanda wrote his *mémoire* in 1958 at the end of his period of study. Instead of a cutting piece of analysis of a Union in turmoil Bikanda’s *mémoire* reads more as a eulogy for French administrators. By the time he was writing, the French Union had been replaced by the French Community and the bonds between France and the overseas territories were being weakened. Within this tumult Bikanda foresaw a future in which the French administrators would be viewed by Africans as the ancestors of African Civilisation ‘comme la Rome antique fut le ferment de la vôtre’.[[499]](#footnote-499) He was buying wholesale into the idea of the civilising mission. However, his essay contained more than hopes for the future, it was steeped in ideas from the colonial past. The ‘Grandeur et Servitude’ of his title is a reference to Albert Sarraut’s 1931 text.[[500]](#footnote-500) This shows that the ideas of Sarraut were still being referenced in 1958 as they were being taught at the ENFOM. In his introduction Bikanda stated ‘La loi-cadre tourne une page de l’histoire de l’Empire français outre-mer’ and he described the *loi-cadre* as revolution showing the continuities of discourse between himself, Alexandre, Coty and the author of the SFIO pamphlet.[[501]](#footnote-501) He was charting the route through French colonial history that officials would take in subsequent years.

Two other *mémoires de stage* had the *loi-cadre* as the focus of their analysis. Together these *mémoires* exemplify different aspects of the historicisation of the *loi-cadre*. Both *mémoires* were written by students in the 1958/1959 *promotion,* so their outlooks on the law were influenced by the constitutional referendum of 28 September 1958. Their tenure at the ENFOM would have begun in 1956 as the *loi-cadre* was still taking shape and ended as the Fifth Republic and *Communauté Française* had been established: this gave the students a unique viewpoint on the law. One *mémoire* was written by Jean-Marie Bamouni-Yoffu and titled ‘La Loi-cadre du 23 Juin 1956’; the other was by Alain Mauric on ‘Le Gabon de la Loi-cadre au Référendum’. Bamouni-Yoffu’s *mémoire* was an overarching study of the evolution and implementation of the *loi-cadre*. Mauric focused on the effects of the law on the territory of Gabon until the referendum superseded its provisions. It is likely that Bamouni-Yoffu was a beneficiary of the policy designed to ‘africanise’ the overseas administration, whereas Mauric was likely a metropolitan student. The different origins of the authors enable a study of how two trainee administrators interpreted the law from varied perspectives. As in the previous sources in this chapter the students related the *loi-cadre* to a historical position or defined it as an important turning point. With the changes that occurred in the French political system this historical understanding of the law became more important. If the *loi-cadre* was no longer going to define the future, it was going to define the past.

The *loi-cadre*’s position in the past and its history-making importance

Both of the students discuss the how the *loi-cadre* did or did not fit into a historical position. Bamouni-Yoffu’s perspective on the law as history was that time had not passed sufficiently to allow for an objective assessment. However, he still sought to examine how the law had contributed to the changes in administration in the overseas territories and viewed it as a key moment. On the subject of the passage of time he wrote:

Cependant, si la loi 56. 619 du 23 juin 1956 ne bénéficie pas encore du recul historique nécessaire à son étude objective, c’est presque devenu un lieu commun que de dire qu’elle a constitué un tournant marquant entre les rapports de la France et les collectivités ultra-marines. A ce titre, il convenait principalement d’examiner ses aspects politiques et juridiques et de s’y attacher tout particulièrement. Il convenait également de mettre en relief les innovations apportées par cette loi.[[502]](#footnote-502)

Bamouni-Yoffu did not want to place the law into a historical narrative of the period but it was nonetheless an important turning point. His description of the law as a ‘lieu commun’ predicts the way in which the term *loi-cadre* became synonymous with colonial reformism. Within his work there is a sense of the law being a profound change that enabled even greater change. His approach can be described as framing the law as being part of a historical narrative of progress.

Mauric’s position was different. In his work he created a greater distance between the law and his position at the time he wrote about it. To describe his perspective on the *loi-cadre* Mauric used terminology more closely related to the idea of memory: ‘Aujourd’hui la loi-cadre n’est plus qu’un souvenir*.*’[[503]](#footnote-503) One explanation for the differences between the two students’ perspectives could be because of their different positions in the changing French Union. Even without the rupture caused by the events of September 1958 Mauric, as a metropolitan entrant into the ENFOM, was being trained to help wind down his own presence overseas by taking a more instructional role once on the ground.[[504]](#footnote-504) The speed of his redundancy was exacerbated when the French Union was replaced by the French Community. Mauric described this process in strong terms; ‘Les évènements ont considérablement écourté la durée probable de son [the *loi-cadre’s*] application.’[[505]](#footnote-505) It is apparent that Mauric felt that the speed of events after September 1958 disrupted the planned schedule of reform established by the *loi-cadre*. On the other hand, Bamouni-Yoffu was possibly thinking more about a long term career in the administration of an overseas territory. Given the two students’ different circumstances their perspectives on the law varied greatly and one student had more optimism than the other.

Different perspectives

The students’ views on the purpose of the *loi-cadre* also contrasted. Mauric’s understanding of the *loi-cadre* was that it had been designed to be in place for a number of years and that its replacement was not foreseen. He put this down to ‘la brusque accélération des choses à partir de la prise de pouvoir du général De Gaulle’.[[506]](#footnote-506) The use of *brusque* is an unambiguous signal that Mauric did not approve of how quickly events had turned out. Within the conclusion to his work Mauric did not hold back. His description of how the institutions created by the *loi-cadre* had been replaced by those of the new *Communauté* demonstrated a further lamentation at the lack of time the law had to take effect. He finished the paragraph with ‘[l]a compétence territoriale n’a plus d’autres limites que celle de la Communauté et, bien entendu, toute espèce de tutelle administrative a disparu.’[[507]](#footnote-507) His chagrin at spending two years in a school only to see his training become obsolete at the end of his study was palpable. Because of the implications of the new constitution Mauric’s work expressed a sense of loss which soon became a more prominent sentiment.

The tone and objective of Bamouni-Yoffu’s work is very different. He wanted to examine how the provisions of the *loi-cadre* had led to the new institutions created under the *Communauté Française*. Rather than seeing the events of May to September 1958 disrupting the implementation of the *loi-cadre* he saw the *loi-cadre* as enabling the events of 1958. He wrote ‘La loi-cadre a incontestablement permis d’aboutir à la Communauté. C’est pour cette raison que nous ne pouvions passer sous silence la Constitution du 4 Octobre 1958.’[[508]](#footnote-508) Bamouni-Yoffu’s thoughts on the development of the *loi-cadre* fall into stark contrast with those of Mauric. Whilst Mauric thought that the lack of time that the *loi-cadre* had was a problem, Bamouni-Yoffu celebrated the law’s role in enabling the *Communauté* without serious unrest. As we shall see Bamouni-Yoffu’s views on the role of the *loi-cadre* in colonial reform were strikingly similar to those of officials who wrote their version of events in subsequent years and his optimism expressed itself in his analysis.

Mauric’s colonialism and Bamouni-Yoffu’s positive outlook

Despite his future career unravelling before his eyes, Mauric undertook a detailed investigation of the effects of the *loi-cadre*. In his conclusion he took aim at some of the criticism that had been made of the *loi-cadre* although he also made his own criticisms of some of the results of the law. As he did this he rehabilitated the use of the term *colonial*. He ignored attempts at ridding the overseas administration of the term *colonial* and used it several times when discussing the *loi-cadre*. His use of the word signals that, for him, a break had occurred with the ideas of the French Union and its attempt at managing how language was used. Mauric’s first use of a variant of the word colonial was as he described criticisms made of the *loi-cadre*. He wrote :

Il y a mieux à faire aujourd’hui que rechercher si la loi-cadre fut une initiative généreuse de la métropole ou, comme l’avait proclamé l’UGTAN en novembre 1956, une mystification ayant pour seul but de masquer et de perpétuer le régime *colonial*.[[509]](#footnote-509)

Later, he used quotation marks when he referenced colonialism again in the text. As he was describing the process of territorialisation ‘Ce fut une décision très grave et quoiqu’il arrive, les critiques et les invectives prendront pour cible le “colonialisme français qui a voulu diviser pour régner*”*’.[[510]](#footnote-510)

Whilst both of these uses of this term ‘*colonial*’ were because of the criticisms of others, Mauric also used the term within his own analysis several times. He did this in order to integrate the *loi-cadre* into the *longue durée* of France’s overseas policy and beyond the period 1946-1958. After 1946 the use of the term *colonial* was frowned upon yet here Mauric used it freely.[[511]](#footnote-511) Echoing Sarraut, he acknowledged the more problematic aspects of colonial rule but stated that France had nothing to be ashamed of:

Face à ses anciennes colonies la France et les Français n’ont pas à rougir de ce qu’ils ont fait. Les erreurs et les abus sont choses trop communes à tous les peuples du monde, y compris les peuples colonisés.[[512]](#footnote-512)

Moreover, France had succeeded in achieving the civilising mission ‘[p]uisqu’en définitive la France a fait l’essentiel: a mené les anciennes colonies à l’état de se gouverner elles-mêmes*…*’.[[513]](#footnote-513) That the preceding statement forms part of the conclusion of an essay which also expressed concerns that the *loi-cadre* had been done away with too quickly, shows how the logic of colonialism influenced its practitioners. Mauric ended his *mémoire* by invoking the idea of ‘progrès’ and ‘*civilisation*’ which were established terms of the colonial discourse. *Progrès* was still the main result of the *loi-cadre* despite Mauric’s statement that the reforms of 1958 had cut short the reforms of 1956; France had always stayed the course and the ends justified the means. He foresaw problems on the horizon but these were due to the problematic attitudes of the ‘colonised’. Although Mauric’s work is not representative of the entirety of thought of his classmates, professors or the wider administrative community, it does demonstrate that change was taking place within the way that the colonial or overseas experience was being discussed. Mauric was rehabilitating the term *colonial* in a way that foreshadowed later events.

For Bamouni-Yoffu the reforms of the *loi-cadre* had enabled the constitution of October 1958 by way of a natural process of evolution ‘[l]’évolution dont nous avons parlé plus haut est appelée à se poursuivre plus vite qu’on ne pense. L’histoire est en marche’.[[514]](#footnote-514) He used the term *évolution* to describe the process that was underway in the overseas territories showing that he adhered to a linear understanding of progress. Bamouni-Yoffu’s use of the phrase ‘l’histoire est en marche’demonstrated his understanding of the significance of the changes underway. The same phrase was used to describe the *loi-cadre* by the SFIO.[[515]](#footnote-515) However, rather than focusing on the past, in the way that Mauric did, Bamouni-Yoffu speculated on the future and hoped for a ‘Commonwealth Franco-Africaine’.[[516]](#footnote-516) He did not return to the idea of the civilising mission; nor did he make explicit appeals to the older ideas of colonialism. Instead this student at the ENFOM had embraced the new position that France had been leading the African territories to independence. However, the French student had taken refuge in older ideas about the role of France in the overseas territories.

The differences between these two essays shows that competing understandings of the *loi-cadre* were being created. Furthermore, in this example the different visions were coming from *within* the structures that were built to support and maintain French overseas interests. Despite their shared pedagogical experience these attendees of the ENFOM were developing divergent attitudes towards events they had lived through. They created their interpretations whilst borrowing the same idea about the law’s role in history that had been used when the *loi-cadre* was still considered to be a success. The quick decline of the French Union and Community was undoubtedly a shock to officials both French and African. Whilst some of the African territories were attempting to negotiate federations in order to avoid the feared balkanisation first predicted during debates about the *loi-cadre*, French officials were coming to terms with the end of an extra-metropolitan France. The effects of this profound change on how the history of the *loi-cadre* was written are analysed in this next section of the chapter. As time progressed and the lens through which the *loi-cadre* was viewed changed, officials’ interpretations began to shift. In order to comprehend their own experience of events French officials continued to explore their own past in later periods. Whilst Coty had used the past in an attempt to persuade African officials that they had a future with France, after 1958 officials were going to use history very differently. The process of officials historicising their experiences was undertaken for many reasons: it could be done as form of catharsis or as a defensive gesture designed to protect the reputation of ex-administrators. As time passed criticism of the French overseas adventure continued to grow.[[517]](#footnote-517)

## Post-independence – the *loi-cadre* in a changing world

By 1960 the question about the future relationship between France and the overseas territories had been settled. There was to be no *Union* nor was there to be a *Communauté*. Instead France’s overseas empire was to be replaced by a series of independent states operating under their own constitutions. Unlike the tumult caused by the crisis of May 1958 independence came as less of a shock to the French political system. Guinea’s ‘No’ vote in the constitutional referendum of September 1958 had exposed that fundamental fragility of the French Union.[[518]](#footnote-518) The effects of independence on perceptions of the *loi-cadre* were still significant. As the French colonial system dissipated, criticism of the endeavour grew. This criticism led to officials searching for examples of their good conduct. The history-making *loi-cadre* and its democratising clauses served as a good example of France conducting the *mission civilisatrice*. This memory was not uncontested amongst officials and opinions of their actions did differ. However, the development of archetypes of administrators and overseas statesmen unified perceptions of the overseas experience and of the *loi-cadre*.

### *The Rulers of Empire* by William B. Cohen

William Cohen’s *Rulers of Empire: The French Colonial Service in Africa* was one of the first books to integrate the role of administrators into the history of colonialism.[[519]](#footnote-519) The book demonstrates how archetypes of the colonial experience developed. In it Cohen discussed the opinions ex-administrators had on the *loi-cadre*. The book was based on research undertaken for Cohen’s PhD thesis, submitted in 1968 and published in 1972. It received some criticism for its uncritical nature and tone: in the words of one reviewer, ‘it reads like an official history stripped of the heroic and romantic tone’.[[520]](#footnote-520) Although that criticism is particularly strong, it is true that Cohen’s conclusion lacks nuance. His work was based on access to what were fairly limited archival sources but with direct communication with ex-colonial civil servants. One form that this communication took was a questionnaire that Cohen sent to members of the *Association des anciens élèves de l’Ecole nationale de la France d’outre-mer*. These questionnaires provide an insight into how officials were able to shape the narrative about their own history. Another source used by Cohen were interviews he held with ex-officials residing in Paris. He cited the conversations he had with these ex-administrators within his book.[[521]](#footnote-521) Although it would be unreasonable to criticise Cohen’s work too deeply for its shortcomings, it was written at a time when the field of colonial studies was in its early days, a reassessment of parts of this text is warranted. This reassessment evaluates Cohen’s work as a part of the history he was writing about. Given the proximity of Cohen’s work to the events it analysed, in some ways the text is a like a primary source rather than secondary analysis.

This section will query the relationship between the questionnaires that Cohen sent out and the text that came out of them. Cohen’s questionnaire is included as an appendix as part of *Rulers of Empire*, allowing the reader to examine the specific questions that were part of it. Viewing the filled-in questionnaires shows that some of Cohen’s questions were leading and elicited certain answers. I doubt that this was a conscious effort at getting a certain kind of answer. Rather, it is likely that Cohen had in mind a way in which he thought events played out that informed how he framed his questions. Looking more closely at the questions regarding reform in the post-war period it is apparent that the way in which they were structured could be leading. Rather than the question on the *loi-cadre* being open-ended it was phrased using positive and negative quantifiers, with the majority being negative;

16) La loi cadre Defferre de 1956-57 vous a-t-elle apparue comme nécessaire?

 Comme prématurée?

 Vous a-t-elle semblé venir trop tard?

 Vous a-t-elle parue malheureuse?[[522]](#footnote-522)

The format for the question relating to reform in 1946 was the same. The next questions about decolonisation also had the potential to imply a certain response. This line of questioning encouraged the respondent to revisit their experiences within the framework of how events turned out; it falls into the trap of ‘knowing the end of the story’. As shown in this thesis the *loi-cadre* was an attempt to maintaining an empire that was slowly spiralling away from the metropole. When one is aware of how events turned out, the significance of the *loi-cadre* changes. Therefore, a questionnaire that actively encourages the respondent to shape their interpretation of the law based on subsequent events is problematic. However, the fact that Cohen wrote the questionnaire in this way shows that by the late 1960s perceptions of the *loi-cadre* were such that it was integrated into a history of decolonisation leading to full independence. Inevitably there were a great variety of responses to this question with some rejecting the premise of the question and other allowing it to shape their answers. However, the answers to the questionnaires did not feature prominently in Cohen’s work. He rarely cited them and his main use of them was in tables that aggregated their content.[[523]](#footnote-523) As many responses were shaped by the leading questions used by Cohen they do not challenge the implied assumptions in the question. In one of Cohen’s tables he used the information he gathered from the questionnaires to make the statement that ‘most officials thought it [the *loi-cadre*] a timely reform’; when calculated the figure for this is sixty percent.[[524]](#footnote-524) His use of the questionnaires overrode the diversity of opinions officials held. Investigating the answers to the questionnaires reveals that the history of the *loi-cadre* was being contested between officials. One anonymous official stated that it is difficult to rate the *loi-cadre’s* efficacy as there was not enough time to see its effects implemented. Furthermore, this official’s opinion was that in 1956 the law was the source of guarded optimism in the same way it was for the officials whose work can be found in the journal of CHEAM.[[525]](#footnote-525) Another official stated that ‘C’était [the *loi-cadre*] une étape vers l’indépendance’.[[526]](#footnote-526) This highlights the process that saw the idea of the law being ‘history making’ being transformed into *une étape* in the process of decolonisation after the overseas territories became independent. Whereas in 1956 the *loi-cadre* was *une étape* in French history towards a more egalitarian French Union, by the late 1960s is was *une étape* in the process of decolonisation. This shows how historical events reshaped perceptions of the *loi-cadre*.

### Officials imagine the past

After Cohen published his book, officials also revisited the *loi-cadre* within memoirs and pseudo-academic texts. Within these texts officials wrestled with the events to which they had been party. This section argues that following the independence of all the former states of the French Union officials came to terms with events by shifting narratives about the *loi-cadre*. The first change in narrative was that as individuals they had seen that full independence was inevitable even as the colonial mind continued down the path of attempting to maintain a degree of control over the overseas territories. The second adjustment to the narrative was that the *loi-cadre* itself had been an acknowledgement of the inevitability of full independence. These narratives present obvious contradictions and questions. If individuals within the colonial administration were sure that independence was inevitable why did they accept polices that were directed towards maintaining the French Union and in some cases further integrating France and the overseas territories? If the second narrative, that the *loi-cadre* accepted inevitable independence, was true, why did the rhetoric around it not acknowledge this? And why did the decrees strengthen political and economic ties between France and the overseas territories? The section identifies examples of the creation of these narratives within texts written by ex-administrators and shows the continued tendency of the colonial mind to create contradictions as well as resorting to myths in order to justify policy. With the added perspective granted by the passage of time, the officials whose work is examined here had to acknowledge some of the contradictions more directly. This section should only be understood as a demonstration for the potential of a study into the memoires of ex-officials and how they shaped ideas about the past.

### The colonial mind’s mission in Africa and the effect of time

Examining the writing of ex-officials demonstrates the effect of independence on the way officials remember events. This section shows this process through analysis of texts written by ex-officials. The texts examined in this section are two books by Pierre Messmer, a memoire written by Jean Clauzel, and a book edited by both. It is apparent from the existence of these texts that there was a desire within some ex-officials to tell their story about the events they had experienced; to give testament to what they had done. However, given the passage of time these officials re-framed their understanding of the entity that they were working for. Both men had worked in what were the *territoires d’outre-mer* of the French Union. Yet given the distance between themselves and their past careers both men placed a boundary between Africa and France. When they had been working in AOF these boundaries were less clear. Clauzel made this clear in the introduction to *Administrateur de la France d’outre-mer* when he explained his motivations:

Ce témoignage n’est pas et ne veut pas être une démonstration. Je n’ai rien prétendu démontrer. J’ai simplement voulu montrer ce qu’avait été, en un temps et un lieu donnés, un métier au double service de la France et de l’Afrique, un métier qui n’est plus et ne sera jamais plus et dont le souvenir même risquerait de disparaître si ceux qui l’ont pratiqué et aimé ne le présenteraient pas… avant de disparaître à leur tour.[[527]](#footnote-527)

This quotation shows that as well as wanting to give an account of his work Clauzel still saw the work of a colonial administrator as a vocation. However, in the time since the end of his career as a colonial administrator he had come to understand his job as taking place between France and Africa. This is despite the fact that he would have been working for the French Union in what was supposed to be a unified entity. The contradiction of the title of a book being ‘Administrateur de la France d’Outre-mer’ whilst the introduction discussed the idea of a ‘double service de la France et de l’Afrique’ could have only occurred following the independence of the former overseas territories and represents a different form the dissonance of the colonial mind. This contradiction was the result of an official attempting to reconcile his experience with the way that history unfolded.

Another example of this remembering is Pierre Messmer in his recollection of events titled *Les blancs s’en vont: récits de décolonisation*. Messmer’s project was different to Clauzel’s as he wanted to recount his experience of the final years of the French Union. He wanted to show that he understood the events taking place around him as inevitably leading to decolonisation. Given that the term ‘décolonisation’ was not popularised until after 1954 it was unlikely that Messmer was thinking with that precise term in mind. Messmer also invoked the idea of a grand narrative when he outlined his understanding of decolonisation; ‘[d]ans l’histoire du monde, colonisation et décolonisation se succèdent comme les marées montantes puis descendantes dans l’océan.’[[528]](#footnote-528) Messmer’s use of a nature metaphor was a device designed to absolve those involved the process of some of the responsibility for their actions. Ultimately, when Messmer outlined the experiences that he aimed to recount, he invoked a similar idealised role about his role in Africa that Clauzel did:

Pendant quinze années, j’ai vécu ces contradictions, ces conflits, travaillé pour les dépasser ou les résoudre en compagnie d’hommes blancs et noirs, jeunes et vieux, laïcs et religieux. J’ai connu succès et échecs, dirigé tant d’équipes civiles et militaires, forgé tant d’amitiés que j’ai aimé les Africains comme des frères et l’Afrique comme une seconde patrie.[[529]](#footnote-529)

It is clear that with time both authors distanced themselves from events and the places within which they worked. This shows how the colonial mind, or at least the remnants of it, adapted to a world in which it was outdated. It highlights the effects that the passage of time had on the colonial mind’s understanding of the French Union. The second quotation from Messmer also highlighted the ‘contradictions’ of colonial rule. When the texts engaged with the *loi-cadre* the contradictions became more apparent.

### The *loi-cadre*; too little too late or a measure that increased autonomy?

Together, the texts in this section allow for an overview of the inconsistencies and contradictions with which the colonial mind came to view the *loi-cadre* after independence. The section outlines these inconsistencies and shows that the colonial mind’s struggle to explain and understand the *loi-cadre* emerged from the collision of myth and reality. From his position as an administrator in French Sudan Clauzel observed the clash between what he saw as different French policy decisions. He explained the problem :

La création de l’Organisation commune des régions sahariennes (OCRS) entretenait une interrogation, pour certains teintée d’espoir, sur l’éventuelle création d’un Sahara destiné à demeurer français, constitué au premier chef des territoires du sud de l’Algérie (qui devaient devenir départements des Oasis et de la Saoura), mais susceptible de mordre sur les parties sahariennes des territoires du nord de l’A.O.F et de l’A.E.F. La mise en place de cette nouvelle instance fut accompagné en France d’imprudences de plume et de langage qui renforcèrent les hommes politiques soudanais dans leur opposition à des intentions, réelles ou supposées, qui leur paraissaient particulièrement inacceptables à un moment où la ‘loi-cadre’ leur annonçait une prochaine autonomie de leur territoire.[[530]](#footnote-530)

Clauzel cited Sudanese politicians who had identified a contradiction between a law that was purportedly designed to increase the autonomy of the overseas territories and the creation of a new institution that potentially would have continued to control parts of these overseas territories. However, when this excerpt is read alongside the analysis in this thesis that has shown that the *loi-cadre* was designed to maintain a continued relationship between France and the overseas territories the contradiction becomes less apparent. The objective of the *loi-cadre* was to extend the life-span of the French Union in the face of conflicts and ruptures. The problem for Clauzel is that by the time of writing he had accepted fully the myth that the *loi-cadre* was a step towards the independence of the overseas territories. He was unable to see past this myth and to acknowledge that a large part of the inspiration and motivation behind the *loi-cadre* was the continued control of the overseas territories.

The confusion about how the colonial mind came to understand the direction of policy after independence is also apparent when the works of Pierre Messmer are compared. In *Après tant de batailles…* Messmer highlighted his key role in the promulgation of the *loi-cadre* and stated that the key aim of the *loi-cadre* was to allow African politicians control of their territories :

[j]e dirigerai le cabinet en ne m’occupant que des affaires d’outre-mer et, particulièrement, de la loi que Gaston Defferre veut mettre en chantier et faire voter pour associer les Africains à l’exercice du pouvoir exécutif dans les territoires.[[531]](#footnote-531)

However in *Les Blancs s’en vont* Messmer was surprised at the results of the very policy he had played a key role in creating, ‘[l]es blancs ne sont pas encore partis mais ils ne sont plus vraiment les patrons.’[[532]](#footnote-532) What this contradiction demonstrated is that there was a dissonance in the way Messmer remembered the *loi-cadre*. In the first citation he wanted to present a version of his own history that saw him playing a key role in the granting of political power to politicians in AOF and AEF. The second excerpt reveals a version of the colonial mind closer to the one that existed in the 1950s that saw the white French administrator as being more suited to rule. Messmer’s surprise at the results of a policy he designed can be explained by the continued confusion of the colonial mind. The colonial mind struggled to rectify the original intentions behind *the loi-cadre* with what the colonial mind later wanted to pretend were the deliberate outcomes of the law. The intention was a continued relationship with France but the outcome was independence.

This contradiction between intention and outcome was confronted within Clauzel’s edited collection in an article by ex-administrator Gabriel Massa,

La question a été maintes fois posée… du véritable sens de la loi-cadre : s’agissait-il d’un aménagement du système colonial ou d’un renoncement aux colonies? Les réponses que donnèrent alors Yvon Bourges, gouverneur de la Haute-Volta lors de la loi-cadre et Paul Masson qui a participé à l’élaboration de la première rédaction de la loi-cadre, par le ministre Pierre Henri Teitgen, sont intéressants à citer. Pour le gouverneur Bourges, la loi-cadre “était une étape nécessaire, qui substituait à l’administration directe métropolitaine la gestion par un gouvernement territorial”. Paul Masson était avec Pierre Sanner et Guy Georgy dans l’équipe de P.H. Teitgen, qui a ouvert le chantier de ce qui fut la loi-cadre; il atteste qu’il s’agissait bien “de la préparation de la transition à l’indépendance”.[[533]](#footnote-533)

It is interesting how, in the second quotation by Masson, Massa positioned the *loi-cadre* two steps before independence and as part of the ‘préparation’ for the ‘transition’ to independence. Instead of confronting the real intention behind the *loi-cadre* Massa avoided the question. The colonial mind was adept at these sleights of hand. The opinions shown in the quotations posit that the *loi-cadre* had deliberately played a role as a step or as preparation towards independence. However, Messmer lamented the fact that the law was made redundant so quickly. After a passage in which he described the political machinations that followed the promulgation of the *loi-cadre* and its decrees he wrote ‘deux ans après son vote, elle [the loi-cadre] était déjà dépassée’.[[534]](#footnote-534) The implication of Messmer’s point is that the law was superseded more quickly than had been intended and that it had been made redundant by events. It is strange then that other officials described it as a part of a transition as if it were part of a deliberate wind-down of French control in the overseas territories. The way that Massa confronted the contradiction was to fall back on the myth that had been created during the drafting of the constitution of the Fourth Republic. Massa wrote that,

[l]a loi-cadre permet, sans attendre une réforme constitutionnelle, d’appliquer la promesse solennelle par la France dans le préambule de la constitution de 1946 de conduire les peuples dont elle a la charge vers la gestion démocratique de leurs propres affaires. C’est une étape importante et sans doute décisive vers l’autonomie des territoires d’outre-mer.[[535]](#footnote-535)

In the text this paragraph immediately followed the one cited above in which the real meaning of the *loi-cadre* was interrogated. It shows that even as Massa wrote nearly fifty years after the events he was describing that the colonial mind still relied on the myths it created for itself.

This section has shown that in the years following independence ex-officials were still engaged in a process of myth-making. They were also confronting the contradictions that had emerged during the years that the French Union existed. What differentiates the way that officials viewed the *loi-cadre* in this period from others is the amount of the time that had passed. They were no longer bound so closely to events so they formulated slightly different versions of what had taken place. Clauzel was able to ignore the contradictions by remembering his sojourn in Soudan in a way that could have inspired the character of Michel Sardou’s *Les Temps des Colonies*.[[536]](#footnote-536) However, officials such as Messmer and Massa who were trying to explain events were forced to confront contradictions. As in previous periods one of the best ways that the colonial mind confronted contradiction and dissonance was to rely on a comforting myth.

## Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the influence of the changing situation in the overseas territories on officials’ perception of the *loi-cadre*. There are three periods within which the *loi-cadre* was repurposed. It has also shown how the significance of the idea of the law being history-making shifted over the years and after independence. Within the span of six years the *loi-cadre* had gone from being a law that guaranteed the future of the French Union, and an integral part of French history, to being *une étape* designed to facilitate the accession of the overseas territories to full independence. It is interesting to note that the idea of the *loi-cadre* being ‘une étape’ has been repeated within histories of the period.[[537]](#footnote-537) The efforts made to bring forward the reform and the hours spent debating it were reduced to a part of a wider series of events. This chapter has shown that the colonial mind was forced to adapt its understanding of the *loi-cadre*. Despite the necessity of this change there were consistencies in the way the colonial mind responded during the process of adaptation. The main consistency was to fall back on the myth represented by the constitution of the Fourth Republic. However, even the use of this myth changed. Before May 1958 the *loi-cadre* was part of a policy of creating a more egalitarian French Union but after May 1958 this changed. In the wake of the collapse of the Fourth Republic the *loi-cadre* became part of a history in which France had been guiding the overseas territories to their independence. The jump from Coty’s speech hailing the new traditions of the French Union to Bikanda’s eulogy for the soon to be departing French administrators shows the difference events had made to perceptions of the *loi-cadre*. In order to cope with this substantial change the colonial mind engaged in a process that adapted the discourse and created new myths about the past. The process by which the meaning of the *loi-cadre* transformed shows the location of the *loi-cadre* between history and memory.

# Conclusion

Writing a thesis that reinvestigates the *loi-cadre* has presented a series of challenges. Foremost amongst these has the way that perspective and context has shaped how the significance of the *loi-cadre* has been measured. Unpacking the development of narratives about the *loi-cadre* became the focus of my study. I have shown that in order to comprehend the *loi-cadre* it must be contextualised in the longer history of reform and the turbulent events that followed its promulgation. Understanding the changing contexts of the *loi-cadre* allows for wider conclusions about the colonial mind to be drawn. This thesis represents my exploration of the *loi-cadre* in the colonial mind and the colonial discourse. Through the use of some of the concepts and principles of discourse analysis I have shown the intertextual origins of the ideas that resulted in the *loi-cadre*. Furthermore, discourse analysis has enabled the continuity of the colonial discourse to be demonstrated. The result of this is a study that reveals the nuanced history of the *loi-cadre*. The *loi-cadre* has occupied a multitude of contradictory positions. It was a piece of legislation that led to the end of the French Union whilst not being designed to. It was designed to create a novel system of administration in the overseas territories but was steeped in older ideas drawn from the colonial past. Through the linking of the law to ideas from the colonial past I have shown its position as reform that drew on older concepts from the colonial discourse such as *mise en valeur* and *décentralisation*. By demonstrating how officials shaped narratives about the law after its promulgation I have explained how the law came to occupy these contradictory positions.

The idea of the *loi-cadre* fitting into the narrative of a post-Second World War decline of Empires is one that at first glance makes sense. It is inarguable that within twenty years of the end of the Second World War most European Empires had collapsed. The experience in the French Empire was no exception to this rule. Aside from places that remain territories, departments, and collectivities of France to this day most of the French Empire became independent states in the first half of the 1960s. From today’s perspective this sequence of events is well known yet questions linger about how it has been understood. Within this wider story the *loi-cadre* was positioned less than half a decade before most territories of what was known at the time as the French Union became independent. The law’s role in the end of the French Union is seemingly inevitable. However, by accepting that by granting more administrative power to the overseas territories France was deliberately preparing the territories for independence we are buying into an interpretation of the past created within the French colonial administration. Moreover, by accepting that the division of these powers on a territorial basis was done in order to pre-emptively weaken burgeoning nations we are ignoring the attempts made to strengthen the *état civil* and expand administration within the overseas territories. This thesis has shown that the *loi-cadre* represented more a step towards the end of the French Union. The law was an attempt at defining the future, weighed down by a colonial past. The reason that this thesis explores the *loi-cadre* from different perspectives is that it sheds light on the precarious position of the law and how narratives about the law have been constructed. In order to understand the *loi-cadre* it cannot be only perceived from one perspective it must be viewed from multiple vantage points. If the law is only seen from a contemporary perspective looking backwards, important parts of the project are overlooked as they do not fit the pattern of what followed: as others have said, we know the end of the story.

The analysis within each chapter of this thesis has shown the importance of understanding the varied contexts of the *loi-cadre*. Chapter one analysed the origins of concepts of reform, *mise en valeur*, and development. It also demonstrated how a pattern of officials turning to reform in response to a crisis emerged. The analysis in this chapter is vital for showing part of the overarching pattern of thought of the colonial mind. The ideas analysed in chapter one were still referred to well into the post-*loi-cadre* period. Chapter two explored how ideas about reform developed in the build up to the *loi-cadre*. In this period older ideas mixed with new ones and the language of reform adapted to the context. The central role of *décentralisation* as the manifestation of reform and as a safe approach to a difficult situation was shown here. Through *décentralisation* French officials could envisage a way of reforming the overseas territories without losing control. The tension around how reform was to take place is explored in chapter three. This chapter analysed how the colonial administration as an institution created an accepted version of reform taking into account the role of individuals. Ultimately, the chapter highlighted how officials attempted to negotiate their fears about reform and losing control. It suggested reasons for why the reforms enabled by the *loi-cadre* took the form that they did whilst not addressing all of the concerns of the time. Chapter four demonstrated how the institutions and individuals of the colonial mind created narratives about the law after it was superseded and failed to ensure a longer-term future of the French Union. It showed how subtle changes were made to the narrative using the same discourse throughout the whole period. These subtle changes enabled the creation of a narrative in which the objectives of the *loi-cadre* were transformed into ones very different to the original intentions. Together, the chapters show how the colonial mind responded to the law within different contexts.

The approach taken in this thesis has revealed the ways in which the institutional mindset of officials was reflected in their use of language. Through discourse analysis this thesis demonstrates that there were a series of terms, albeit flexible, that made up the colonial discourse. The significance of these terms is how they were used at the time of the *loi-cadre* and afterwards. The identification and analysis of key terms or ‘discursive strategies’ has enabled their use to be highlighted over a significant period. The DHA framework has enabled me to highlight the links between terms and texts thereby facilitating the unpacking of the colonial discourse. Throughout this thesis my analysis of sources has shown the reccuring use of concepts and topoi. For example, the topos of evolution remained a stable presence over the course of decades. Moreover, through discourse analysis I have shown have the concept of *décentralisation* emerged and grew into a key part of the colonial discourse. One difficulty encountered in applying discourse analysis techniques was encountered when a new word was used to define something that had previously been defined by another word, or when terms shifted in meaning. Despite these methodological difficulties the fact that terms fell in and out of use is important. It shows that officials were adapting their use of the colonial discourse. Despite the introduction of novel terms there was a stability to the understanding of key ideas. The changing of terminology could not disrupt the importance of these concepts. These concepts were adapted over time due to changes in the wider context of events. For example, the rationale behind *mission civilisatrice* shifted. Prior to independence it was used as a justification for the colonial endeavour that obscured the reality of colonial practice. As independence approached the objective of the *mission civilisatrice* changed. Instead of the *mission civilisatrice* being a justification of colonial practice in which the civilised people of Europe spread enlightenment to different parts of the globe, now it had been realised. The capacity for this change in meaning had always been there. It does not take much adjustment to jump from a *mission civilisatrice* in which the objective was to spread civilisation to then state that enough civilisation had been spread. Yet what is vital in the analysis of this thesis is that it shows the moment this takes place in the mind of colonial officials. In between the promulgation of the *loi-cadre* and the independences of the territories of the French Union the narrative of a deliberate policy of preparing the overseas territories for independence was created. Following the creation of this narrative it took hold in the minds of officials as an easy way of explaining the events that had unfolded in front of them.

The thesis does not deliver a conclusive verdict on the utility of CDA within this kind of study. Although it is clear that there is some use to having a framework through which I was able to explore language, the limits of this become apparent. Too strong a focus on key terms runs the risk of depersonalising the use of language, those speaking the words become secondary to the words they are using. It is evident that the personality of individuals is important in how they approached events. It is also clear that, within the colonial mind, some attributes were not expressed using one key term. The section at the end of chapter three shows how the colonial mind was concerned about maintaining control.[[538]](#footnote-538) However, this was expressed through a demand for information and not the use of any particular word that easily identified the desire for control. CDA certainly has a use in reading texts and it allows for terms to be highlighted across a variety of source material: it becomes less useful when reading events and individuals. This thesis can be presented as evidence for the potential for the use of CDA when reading colonial sources, although there is more work to be done on using this approach.

From a multi-positioned perspective, the *loi-cadre* makes more sense and it becomes possible to see how the law was a measure designed to preserve the French Union whilst playing a part in its downfall. As shown in chapter four in 1956 the law was undoubtedly designed to ensure the former but by 1958 it was approaching the latter. This is due to the stark differences between intention and outcome and the shifting between two different belief systems. The older generation of European officials clashed with their younger colleagues and African politicians over the direction of policy who did not see the colonial world in the same was as their colleagues. As wider opinion shifted against colonialism officials were forced to provide justification for their prior actions and opinions. From this the narrative of an inevitable and planned decolonisation took hold. What is interesting about this process is how it displays both the inflexibility and adaptive potential of the colonial mind. Officials could not countenance the fact that they had lost their firm grip over the overseas territories, demonstrating inflexibility. However, they were able to reframe the policies and to adapt their meaning and intention. The wider point here relates to how historians have framed decolonisation. After officials reframed *loi-cadre* historians took a similar and later interpretation of the significance of it. Whether directly influenced by French officials’ version of events or not historians certainly fell into the trap of seeing the end of the story.

What is clear from this thesis is that right up until the *loi-cadre* and perhaps more importantly in the years that followed officials had a similar way of thinking and expressing their thoughts. This poses the question of what influence the colonial mind had over officials in subsequent periods. Following the independence of the overseas territories officials did not disappear into the ether. It has been shown that ex-colonial officials entered into the Foreign Affairs directorate of the EEC.[[539]](#footnote-539) Others became researchers at policy institutes and some became academics. This post-independence transfer of personnel should be explored in the same way that the continuities in personnel between the different periods of study in this thesis has been studied. Would an analysis of documents from the institutions that officials came to work at reveal further similarities in the discourse and ideas? One example from ex-*Inspecteur-Général* Pierre Sanner hints at the potential for a study into the post-Independence careers of administrators. Following his career Sanner worked at the *Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques*. He published an academic article on the statistics services of the French colonial administration.[[540]](#footnote-540) This thesis shows that the impulses of the colonial mind were strong and we should interrogate the publishing done by Sanner for the ideas of the colonial mind and the language of the colonial discourse.

The analysis of texts written by ex-officials found in chapter four represents a tentative step towards what would be a vast research project. The publication of texts by officials continues to this day with memoirs from Chauvet and Delavignette being published in 2016 and 2017 respectively.[[541]](#footnote-541) Given the source base from the latter years of the French Union and these texts recounting the experience of officials, it will be possible to undertake a more expansive study of how officials have framed the past. If this study were focused on the question of how and why officials framed the past in these texts it would provide more insight into the evolution of the colonial mind. There is clearly an interest and an industry that warrants this publication, and given enduring debates about the colonial experience more understanding of this subject would be enlightening and useful. Chauvet and Delavignette are key examples of the men who shaped part of the colonial world and more insight into their understanding of it will enhance our own comprehension of it.

The question of how officials’ thoughts on the overseas territories were shaped by the colonial discourse remain relevant to this day. Within the military the devise of the *Troupes de marine* remains '[e]t au nom de Dieu, vive la coloniale’ showing an unchallenged link with the past. Moreover, whilst various presidents have announced changes in French policy towards the former colonies there are questions about whether the colonial mind endures. Nicolas Sarkozy’s 2007 speech in Dakar led to horrified reactions after he outlined his interpretations of the problems of Africa. His comments were described as having colonial overtones in the press.[[542]](#footnote-542) Current president Emmanuel Macron met similar criticism when he described Africa’s problems as ‘civilizational’.[[543]](#footnote-543) Whether or not the criticisms of these speeches was warranted, both presidents ignored the impact of French colonialism. This demonstrated a tendency to rewrite the past akin to the way done by Sarraut and other colonial officials. Despite their ignoring of the legacy of French colonialism both men used language that people argued harked back to the stereotype of the saviour mentality. Sarkozy and Macron were drawing their ideas from the colonial mind and discourse despite their efforts to distance themselves from the legacies of colonialism. As we have seen this seemingly contradictory position is not out of character for French officials.

Whilst this thesis has not sought to disrupt our current narratives about decolonisation as a whole it does suggest new avenues for thought and research. The first point it raises regards where we locate the moment or period of decolonisation in our analysis. This thesis supports Shepherd’s argument about the invention of decolonisation by officials, and expands it into an earlier period. From this we can begin to question what is meant by this term. I am not suggesting that decolonisation be done away with. Rather that we question whether it is the best term to be used when we are discussing events. This thesis has made it clear that the *loi-cadre* was not intentionally designed to spark a series of events that led to the creation of many new independent states. Officials in this period were not ‘decolonising’ the French Union in our current understanding of the term. The main point that can be drawn from this is that the use of the word decolonisation should be very thoughtful. As scholars of this period we need to be very clear about what it denotes. It must be made apparent that within the umbrella of decolonisation there were attempts at rear-guard actions.

This point about decolonisation hints at another question raised by the continued use of it as a term beyond its historical and historiographical context. Recently this has occurred within movements to ‘decolonise the curriculum’ or ‘decolonise the university’.[[544]](#footnote-544) Reinterpreting terms such as curriculum is positioned as key to these movements, but the concept of ‘decolonisation’ seems to have escaped scrutiny. This is possibly because in the way that historians ‘know’ what the *loi-cadre* represented scholars now know what decolonisation represents. As Shepherd argued the idea of decolonisation was invented by officials. Can a term created by colonisers be used to challenge their legacy or is the term too encumbered by its historical connotations? At the very least, the use of this term within these new movements shows that its meaning has been cemented as a process that in some way challenged colonialism. As shown in this thesis decolonisation was a murky process that played a role in creating the conditions for neo-colonialism.

The thesis does not deliver a conclusive verdict on the utility of CDA within this kind of study. Although it is clear that there is some use to having a framework through which I was able to explore language, the limits of this become apparent. Too strong a focus on key terms runs the risk of depersonalising the use of language, those speaking the words become secondary to the words they are using. It is evident that the personality of individuals is important in how they approached events. It is also clear that, within the colonial mind, some attributes were not expressed using one key term. The section at the end of chapter three shows how the colonial mind was concerned about maintaining control. However, this was expressed through a demand for information and not the use of any particular word that easily identified the desire for control. CDA certainly has a use in reading texts and it allows for terms to be highlighted across a variety of source material: it becomes less useful when reading events and individuals. This thesis can be presented as evidence for the potential for the use of CDA when reading colonial sources, although there is more work to be done on using this approach.

The process and significance of the end of European empires is still undergoing reassessment within scholarship. The fraught nature and varied significance of those events means that these events will continue to be debated by scholars from different fields. I have situated my study of the *loi-cadre* within this wider debate. In seeking to understand what the *loi-cadre* meant in history I discovered that it signified different things to different people at different times. This discovery led to a far deeper understanding of the law than just as one moment in history. When viewed from different moments both before and after its promulgation the law held different meanings. The history of how the law came to mean different things at different times is as important a part of the story of the *loi-cadre* as it is to understand the significance of the law in 1956. This thesis has shown how discourse, myth, and history have shaped the meanings of the *loi-cadre* over time.

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# Appendix – Tables of décrets d’application de la *loi-cadre*

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| 13 November 1956 – Economic development |
| Decree number | Title |
| 56-1131 | relative aux sociétés financières pour le développement des territoires d’outre-mer |
| 56-1132 | portant modification de l’article 32 de la loi du 31 décembre 1953 relatif au régime fiscal exceptionnel de longue durée |
| 56-1133 | relative aux conventions de longue durée pouvant être passes avec certaines catégories d’entreprises outre-mer |
| 56-1134 | autorisant et réglementant la création d’actions de préférence dans certains sociétés d’outre-mer |
| 56-1135 | relative aux sociétés mutuelles de développement rural dans les territoires d’outre-mer. |
| 56-1136 | portant modification du décret 55-184 du 2 Février 1955 fixant le statut de la coopération dans les territoires relevant du ministre de la FOM |
| 56-1137 | relatif au crédit agricole outre-mer |
| 56-1138 | modifiant le décret 54-1021, créant des caisses de stabilisation des prix dans les territoires d’outre-mer |
| 56-1139 | portant création d’un fonds de soutien des textiles des territoires d’outre-mer |
| 56-1140 | rendant applicable dans les territoires de l’AEF, du Cameroun, Cote Française des Somalis, des Etablissements Français de l’Océanie, des iles Saint-Pierre et Miquelon et dans la République autonome du Togo la loi du 30 avril 1906 sur les warrants agricoles |
| 56-1141  | organisant le crédit au petit et moyen commerce, à la petite et à la moyenne industrie, dans les territoires d’outre-mer, au Cameroun, et dans la République autonome du Togo |
| 56-1142 | relatif au placement des fonds des caisses d’épargne des territoires relevant du ministre de la France d’outre-mer |
| 56-1143 | modifiant et complétant la loi du 24 juillet 1867 sur les sociétés telle qu’elle a été rendue applicable dans les territoires d’outre-mer, au Cameroun et dans la République autonome du Togo |
| 56-1144 | rendant applicables dans les territoires d’outre-mer, au Cameroun et dans la République autonome du Togo certaines dispositions de la législation métropolitaine relative aux sociétés à responsabilité limitée |
| 56-1145 | relative à la commission supérieure des caisses d’épargne en ce qui concerne les territoires d’outre-mer |
| 56-1146 | portant modification de l’article 2 du décret no 54-573 du 4 juin 1954, pris pour l’application de l’article 23 de la loi du 31 décembre 1953 relatif à l’institution de régimes fiscaux de longue durée dans les territoires d’outre-mer |

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| --- |
| 3 December 1956 – Public services |
| Decree number | Title |
| 56-1227 | portant définition des services de l’Etat dans les territoires d’outre-mer et énumération des cadres de l’État |
| 56-1228 | relatif à l’organisation des services publics dans les territoires d’outre-mer |
| 56-1229 | portant réorganisation et décentralisation des postes et télécommunications d’outre-mer |

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| --- |
| 24 February 1957 – Reforms and Evolution |
| Decree number | Title |
| 57-239 | arrêtant la liste des offices et établissements publics de l’État dans les territoires d’outre-mer |
| 57-240 | instituant une université à Dakar |
| 57-241 | relatif à l’organisation des Chemins de fer de la France d’outre-mer |
| 57-242 | relatif au régime des substances minérales dans territoires d’outre-mer |
| 57-243 | instituant dans les territoires d’outre-mer une procédure d’expropriation spéciale pour certaines terres acquises à la suite d’octroi de concessions domaniales |
| 57-244 | relative à l’émission des monnaies métalliques dans les territoires d’outre-mer, au Cameroun et dans la République autonome du Togo |
| 57-245 | sur la réparation et la prévention des accidents du travail et des maladies professionnelles dans les territoires d’outre-mer et au Cameroun |
| 57-246 | relative au recouvrement des sommes dues par les employeurs aux caisses de compensation des prestations familiales installés dans les territoires d’outre-mer et au Cameroun |

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| 4 April 1957 - Reorganisation |
| Decree number | Title |
| 57-458 | portant réorganisation de l’AOF et de l’AEF |
| 57-459 | fixant les conditions du formation et de fonctionnement des conseils de gouvernement dans les territoires de l’AOF et de l’AEF |
| 57-460 | fixant les conditions des chefs de territoires, des conseils de gouvernement et des assemblées territoriales dans les territoires de l’AOF et de l’AEF |
| 57-461 | déterminant les conditions d’institution et de fonctionnement des collectivités Rurales en AOF et en AEF |
| 57-462 | portant réorganisation de Madagascar |
| 57-463 | fixant les conditions de formation et de fonctionnement ainsi que les attributions du conseil de gouvernement et portant extension des attributions de ‘assemblée représentative de Madagascar |
| 57-464 | fixant les conditions de formation et de fonctionnement ainsi que les attributions des conseils de province et portant extension des attributions des assemblées provinciales de Madagascar |
| 57-465 | déterminant les conditions d’institution et de fonctionnement des collectivités Rurales à Madagascar |
| 57-466 | retirant le caractère obligatoire à certaines dépenses a la charge des budgets des groups de territoires et des territoires d’outre-mer ainsi que les provinces de Madagascar |

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3. Typically the phrase colonial mind will be used rather than colonial mind-set as I borrow the term from recent studies on the topic. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
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5. James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven : Yale Univ. Press, 1998), pp. 3, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. D. Bruce Marshall, *The French Colonial Myth and Constitution Making in the Fourth Republic* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1973)*,* p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Patricia M. Lorcin, ‘Reflections on the French Colonial Mind’, in *The French Colonial Mind* *Vol. I*: *Mental Maps of Empire and Colonial Encounters* ed. byMartin Thomas (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), pp. 3-25 (pp. 3-4). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
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10. *Ibid*., p. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *Ibid*., p. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
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14. Alice L., Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize : The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1997); Véronique Dimier, ‘For a Republic “Diverse and Indivisible”? France’s Experience from the Colonial Past’, *Contemporary European History*, 13 (2004), 45-66 (pp. 45-46). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Susan Bayly, ‘Conceptualizing Resistance and Revolution in Vietnam: Paul Mus’ Understanding of Colonialism in Crisis’, *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 4 (2009), pp. 192–205. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. David Chandler, ‘Paul Mus (1902–1969): A Biographical Sketch’, *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 4 (2009), 149-191 (p. 172). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
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20. Ibid., pp. 277-278. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Ibid., p. 279. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Ibid., p. 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
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90. *Ibid*., p. 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
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132. *Ibid*., p. 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Emphasis added, *Ibid*., pp. 81-82. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
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135. *Ibid*., p. 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
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137. *Ibid*., p. 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
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155. *Ibid*., p. 118. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilise*, p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Sarraut*, La mise en valeur*, p. 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. *Ibid*., p. 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
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160. *Ibid*., p. 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. *Ibid*., p. 401. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. *Ibid*., p. 579 [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. Examples can be found at Sarraut, *La Mise en valeur*, p. 361. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. *Ibid*., pp. 11, 414 - 439. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
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167. *Ibid*., p. 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
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175. Catherine Coquéry-Vidrovitch, ‘The Popular Front and the Colonial Question. French West Africa: an Example of Reformist Colonialism’, in, *French Colonial Empire and the Popular Front: Hope and Disillusion* ed. by Tony Chafer and Amanda Sackur (London, 1999), pp. 155-169 (p. 155). [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
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177. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. See this chapter, p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. Moutet, Quelques réflexions sur une politique coloniale socialiste. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. Cohen, ‘Colonial Policy of the Popular Front’, p. 376. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. Moutet, Quelques réflexions sur une politique coloniale socialiste. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
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189. Cohen, ‘The Colonial Policy of the Popular Front’, p. 377. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. Ibid., p. 377. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. Philippe Machefer, ‘Autour du problème algérien en 1936-1938: la doctrine algérienne Du P.S.F.: Le P.S.F. et Le Projet Blum-Viollette’, *Revue D’histoire Moderne et Contemporaine (1954-)*, 10 (1963), 147-156 (p. 147). [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
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193. Ibid., p. 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. Cohen, ‘Colonial Policy of the Popular Front’, p. 380. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. Ibid., p. 385. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. Manuela Semidei, ‘Les socialistes français et le problème colonial entre les deux guerres (1919-1939)’, *Revue française de science politique*, 18.6 (1968), pp. 1115–54. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. Martin Shipway, ‘Gaston Defferre’s Loi-Cadre’, p. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. Shipway, ‘Reformism and the French ‘Official Mind’’, pp. 131-151. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. *Ibid*., p. 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. *Ibid*., 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. *La Conférence Africaine Francaise, Brazzaville: 30 Janvier 1944 – 8 Février 1944* (Paris: 1945),p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. *Ibid*., p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. *Ibid*., p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. Gildea, Robert, *France Since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. *Brazzaville conference*, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. *Ibid*., p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. See this chapter p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. Assemblée Nationale, ‘Fily-Dabo Sissoko’, Assemblée Nationale, <http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/%28num\_dept%29/6862> [accessed 21 October 2018]. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. *Brazzaville*., p. 98 [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. *Ibid*., p. 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. *Ibid*., p. 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. *Ibid*., p. 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. *Ibid*., p. 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. The same citation also appears in James Genova, *Colonial Ambivalence, Cultural Authenticity, and the Limitations of Mimicry in French-Ruled West Africa 1914-1956* (New York : Peter Lang, 2004), p. 119; Catherine Atlan and Jean-Hervé Jézéquel, ‘Alienation or Political Strategy? The Colonised Defend the Empire’, in T. Chafer and A. Sackur (eds), *Promoting the Colonial Idea* (Palgrave: Basingstoke, 2002), pp.102-115 (p. 107). [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. *Brazzaville*, p. 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. *Ibid*., pp. 105 – 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. Conseil Constitutionnel, ‘Constitution de 1946: IVeme république’, *Conseil Constitutionnel* <http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/francais/la-constitution/les-constitutions-de-la-france/constitution-de-1946-ive-republique.5109.html> [accessed 16/11/2016], hereafter ‘Constitution de 1946: IVeme république’. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to include analysis of the intervening years of Vichy rule in AOF. For analysis of the changes and continuities in colonial rule in the Vichy years see Ruth Ginio, *French Colonialism Unmasked: the Vichy Years in French West Africa* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press; 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. Archives Municipales de Marseille (AMM): 100|-312 (Fonds Gaston Defferre), *Projet de Loi* No 895, 29 February 1956. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. Throughout the years of the Fourth Republic there were campaigns of repression in parts of the French Union. Aside from the main examples of the wars in Indochina and Algeria there was substantial repression in Cameroon. Beyond the increased perception of threat identified in this chapter I do not discuss this violence despite its ubiquity. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. Martin Shipway, ‘Gaston Defferre’s Loi-Cadre’, p. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. Martin Thomas, ‘Albert Sarraut, French Colonial Development, and the Communist Threat’, p. 918. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. Loi n° 46-940 tendant à proclamer citoyens tous les ressortissants des territoires d'outre-mer (Loi Lamine Guèye), 7th May 1946, < http://mjp.univ-perp.fr/france/loi1946-940.htm> [accessed 30 October 2018], hereafter Loi Lamine Guèye. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. Gregory Mann, ‘What Was the Indigénat? The “Empire of Law” in French West Africa’, *The Journal of African History*, 50.03 (2009), 331-353 (p. 334(. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. Ibid., p. 353. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. Mann, p. 351. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. Mann, pp. 350 - 351. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. Marshall, *Colonial Myth*, p. 222. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. Archives Nationales du Senegal (AS) 18G 287, Letter from Le Docteur Anjoulat Secrétaire d’état à la France d’Outre-mer a Messieurs les Hauts Commissaires de l’AOF, l’AEF, du Cameroun, et Monsieur le Commissaire de la République au Togo, 9 August 1950. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. Cooper, *Citizenship*, p. 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. James Lewis, ‘The French Colonial Service and the Issues of Reform, 1944–8’, *Contemporary European History* 4 (1995), 153-188 (p. 162). [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. Ibid., p. 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. Ibid., p. 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. Ibid., p. 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. Cooper, *Citizenship*, p. 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. *Ibid.*, p. 123, [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. D Bruce Marshall, *The Colonial Myth*, p. 312. [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. *Ibid*., pp. 6-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. Chapter four of this thesis contains analysis of the recollections of those present at the time of *the loi-cadre*. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. Marshall, *Colonial Myth*, pp. 210-212. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. Loi Lamine Guèye. [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. Veronique Dimier, ‘De la France coloniale à l’outre-mer’, p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. Chafer, *French West Africa*, p. 87; Titre VIII article 60 of the Constitution of the Fourth French Republic. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. For discussion of the idea of ‘Greater France’ see Gary Wilder, ‘Framing Greater France Between The Wars’, *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 2001 14, 198-225. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. Chafer, *French West Africa*, p. 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. Marshall, *Colonial Myth*, p. 315. [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. AS 18G 287 P. Béchard, Lettre du Haut-Commissaire de la République en Afrique Occidentale Française to Messieurs les Gouverneurs des Colonies, Directeurs Généraux, Directeurs et Chefs de Service du Gouvernement General, 21st May 1948. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. Preamble, Constitution de 1946 IVeme république. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. AS 281, Paul Chauvet, Rapport sur la décentralisation en A.O.F, 29th May 1948. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. Cooper, *Citizenship*, p. 214. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. Chauvet, Rapport sur la décentralisation, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. Ibid., p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. Original emphasis, ibid., p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. Ibid., p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. Ibid., p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. Ibid., p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. Ibid., p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. Ibid., p. 6 [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. Ibid., p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. Ibid., pp. 6-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. Ibid., p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. Ibid., p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. Ibid., p.9. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. Ibid., p.9. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. André Raymond, ‘Une conscience de notre siècle: Charles-André Julien 1891-1991’, *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, 59 (1991), 259-262 (p. 261). [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. Charles-Robert Ageron, ‘Nécrologie : Charles-André Julien (1891-1991)’, *Revue Francaise d’histoire d’outre-mer*, 296.79, 401-402 (p.402). [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. ANOM, AFFPOL 2187, Charles-André Julien,L’Union francaise, September 1949. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. Ibid., p. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. Quoted in, Ibid., p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. Ibid., p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. Ibid., p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. Ibid., p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. Ibid., p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. Ibid., p. 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. AS 18G 261, Letter from Le chef adjoint du cabinet à Messieurs les Hauts Commissaires, Commissaires, Gouverneurs, et Chefs du territoire au sujet de l’emploi des mots “colonie” et “colonial”, 2September 1949. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. See chapter one, p. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. Vivian A. Schmidt, *Democratizing France: The Political and Administrative History of Decentralization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. ‘Les grandes dates de la décentralisation - Approfondissements Découverte des institutions - Repères - vie-publique.fr’, 2016 <http://www.vie-publique.fr/decouverte-institutions/institutions/approfondissements/grandes-dates-decentralisation.html> [accessed 20 April 2016]. [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. Jacques Baguenard, *Que sais-je?*: *La décentralisation*, 7th edn (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France - PUF, 2004), p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
282. This is a continuation and adaptation of the relationship identified in Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize : The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1997). [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
283. Olivier Diederichs and Ivan Luben, *Que sais-je?:* *La déconcentration* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, c1995), p. 1; Direction de l’information légale et administrative, ‘Les grandes dates de la décentralisation - Approfondissements Découverte des institutions - Repères - vie-publique.fr’, 2016 <http://www.vie-publique.fr/decouverte-institutions/institutions/approfondissements/grandes-dates-decentralisation.html> para. 1 [accessed 20 April 2016]. [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
284. This is explored in detail in the chapter but in the *loi-cadre* they are linked together as ‘*décentralisation et déconcentration administrative*’; AMM: 100-312 Text of Loi no 56-619 (*Loi-Cadre*), 23 June 1956. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
285. Diederichs and Luben, *Déconcentration*, pp. 3-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
286. *Ibid*., pp. 3-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
287. Cooper, *Citizenship*, p. 200. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
288. There were two/three substantial reports researched and published in the same timeframe. ANOM, FM AFFPOL 491, Etude d’une reorganisation administrative eventuelle de l’A.O.F., in two parts, Mission d’inspection en A.O.F. 1953-1954, M. Cauet, 1st August 1954; ANOM, FM AFFPOL 491, Rapport de développement sur les compétences et les possibilités de déconcentration concernant: la justice et la legislation autochtone, X. de Christens, 4th August 1954. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
289. ANOM, AFFPOL 491, M. Cauet, Etude d’une Reorganisation Administrative de l’A.O.F*.,* July 1954, p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
290. Ibid., p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
291. Constitution de 1946 IVe République. [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
292. Rousso, Henry, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France Since 1944*, 3rd Ed (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1994). [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
293. Gildea, Robert, *The Past in French History* (New Haven, CT.; Yale University Press, 1996), p. 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
294. Cohen, William B., *Rulers of Empire: French Colonial Services in Africa*, (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press,U.S., 1971), p. 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
295. For details see Bernard Fall, *Street Without Joy: The French Debacle in Indochina* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
296. Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
297. ANOM, FM AFFPOL 491, Pierre Sanner, Note succincte sur la réforme de la structure de l’Afrique Occidentale Francaise, 1st July 1955. [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
298. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
299. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
300. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
301. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
302. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
303. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
304. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
305. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
306. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
307. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
308. Within chapter four of this thesis there is analysis of the significance of some sources referring to the Loi-cadre as the Loi Defferre and other variations that include an association with Gaston Defferre. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
309. AMM 100-302, Avant projet de loi du 30 novembre 1955 rélatif aux institutions des territoires de l’Afrique Occidentale Française. [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
310. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
311. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
312. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
313. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
314. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
315. Keese, ‘“Quelques Satisfactions d’Amour-Propre”’, p.36. [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
316. AM 100-302, Report of M. Teitgen addressing the Assembly of the French Union. [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
317. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
318. Article 13, Constitution de 1946 IVeme république. [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
319. Report of M. Teitgen addressing the Assembly of the French Union. [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
320. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
321. James E. Genova, *Colonial Ambivalence*, p. 248. [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
322. *Ibid*., p. 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
323. ANOM 49, Archives Prives Outre-mer – William Cohen. [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
324. See section in chapter four on the SFIO pamphlet, p. 182-186. [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
325. Shipway, ‘Defferre’s Loi-Cadre’, p. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-325)
326. Cited in Chafer, *French West Africa*,p. 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
327. Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-327)
328. Chafer, *French West Africa*, p. 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-328)
329. *Ibid.*, pp. 165-170. [↑](#footnote-ref-329)
330. *Ibid*., p. 172. [↑](#footnote-ref-330)
331. See chapter two. [↑](#footnote-ref-331)
332. AMM 100-312, Projet de loi No 895, 29 February 1956. [↑](#footnote-ref-332)
333. Projet de loi No 895. [↑](#footnote-ref-333)
334. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-334)
335. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-335)
336. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
337. Martin Thomas, *The French North African Crisis* (MacMillan: Basingstoke: 2000), p. 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-337)
338. Martin Evans, *Algeria: France’s Undeclared War*, (OUP; Oxford, 2012), p. 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-338)
339. AMM 300-312 Projet de loi 895; Frederick Cooper, ‘“Our Strike”: Equality, Anticolonial Politics and the 1947–48 Railway Strike in French West Africa’, *The Journal of African History*, 37.1 (1996), 81-118 (p. 81); Meredith Terretta, ‘Cameroonian Nationalists Go Global: From Forest Maquis to a Pan-African Accra’, *The Journal of African History*, 51.2 (2010), 189-212 (pp. 194-196). [↑](#footnote-ref-339)
340. Projet de loi 895. [↑](#footnote-ref-340)
341. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-341)
342. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-342)
343. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-343)
344. Chafer, *French West Africa*, p. 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-344)
345. One example of this is a governor who argued that the reforms would be a moderating influence in politics in the overseas territories, see chapter four, p. 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-345)
346. Projet de loi 895. [↑](#footnote-ref-346)
347. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-347)
348. *Journal officiel de la République française* (JORF), 22nd March 1956, p. 1192. [↑](#footnote-ref-348)
349. AMM: 100-312 *Projet de Loi* No 63, 22 March 1956; AMM: 100-312 Text of Loi no 56-619 (*Loi-Cadre*). [↑](#footnote-ref-349)
350. Jorge Larrain, *Theories of Development: Capitalism, Colonialism, Dependency* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), p.11. [↑](#footnote-ref-350)
351. One example of this change in attitude is outlined in J. E. Lewis, ‘The Ruling Compassions of the Late Colonial State: Welfare versus Force, Kenya, 1945-1952’, *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 2.2 (2001) <doi:10.1353/cch.2001.0035>. [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
352. Larrain, *Development*, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-352)
353. *Ibid*., p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-353)
354. AMM: 100-312 Text of loi no 56-619 (*Loi-Cadre*), 23 June 1956. [↑](#footnote-ref-354)
355. Chafer, *French* *West Africa*, p. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
356. AMM: 100-312 Projet de loi No 63, 22 March 1956; AMM: 100||312 Text of loi no 56-619 (*loi-Cadre*). [↑](#footnote-ref-356)
357. Archives Nationales de la France, Pierrefitte sur Seine (ANF), Commission des territories d’outre-mer séance du vendredi 15 Juin 1956, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-357)
358. AMM: 100-312 Text of loi no 56-619 (*loi-Cadre*). [↑](#footnote-ref-358)
359. Alistair Cole, ‘The New Governance of French Education?’, *Public Administration*, 79 (2001), 707-724 (p. 707). [↑](#footnote-ref-359)
360. AMM: 100-312 Text of Loi no 56-619 (*loi-Cadre*). [↑](#footnote-ref-360)
361. JORF 22 March 1956, p. 1194. [↑](#footnote-ref-361)
362. Ibid., p. 1194. [↑](#footnote-ref-362)
363. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-363)
364. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-364)
365. Archives Nationales d’outre-mer (ANOM) AFFPOL 492, *Les implications économiques de l’evolution politique des T.O.M.*, 6 June 1956. [↑](#footnote-ref-365)
366. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-366)
367. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-367)
368. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-368)
369. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-369)
370. By the 1960s *Le Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas* was known by the shorter title *Paribas*; Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-370)
371. Emphasis added, ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-371)
372. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-372)
373. ANOM AFFPOL 492, *Note sur les investissements de longue durée dans les territoires d’outre-mer*, 24 April 1956. [↑](#footnote-ref-373)
374. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-374)
375. ANOM AFFPOL 492, *Les Implications Économiques de l’Évolution Politique des T.O.M.*. [↑](#footnote-ref-375)
376. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-376)
377. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-377)
378. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-378)
379. ANOM AFFPOL 492, *Note au sujet des mesures de décentralisation à prendre conformément aux dispositions de la loi cadre*, 5 April 1956. [↑](#footnote-ref-379)
380. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-380)
381. Chafer, *West Africa*, p. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-381)
382. *Ibid*., p. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-382)
383. *Ibid*., p. 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-383)
384. Cooper, *Citizenship*, p. 239. [↑](#footnote-ref-384)
385. *Ibid*., p. 240. [↑](#footnote-ref-385)
386. Genova, *Colonial Ambivalence*, p. 226. [↑](#footnote-ref-386)
387. Cooper, *Citizenship*, p. 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-387)
388. Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, decolonization, and the future of the world* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2015), p. 155. [↑](#footnote-ref-388)
389. AMM 100-312, *L’Œuvre du gouvernement Guy Mollet*. [↑](#footnote-ref-389)
390. *Présence Africaine*, 18/19 (1958), (pp. 68 – 124). [↑](#footnote-ref-390)
391. Genova, *Colonial Ambivalence*, p. 226. [↑](#footnote-ref-391)
392. This article also personalised the law by referring to it as ‘*La Loi-cadre de Gaston Defferre*’. Y. Sylla, ‘Évolution de L’Afrique’, *Politique Étrangère*, 24 (1959), 83-91 (pp. 86). [↑](#footnote-ref-392)
393. William Roger Louis and Roger Owen, *Suez 1956: The Crisis and its Consequences* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991). [↑](#footnote-ref-393)
394. Andrew Smith, ‘Investment, Reform and the Loi Cadre’, 92-113 (pp. 92–113). [↑](#footnote-ref-394)
395. [↑](#footnote-ref-395)
396. The decrees are collected in booklets in the folder AMM 100-312; JORF: Textes d’intérêt général Territoires d’Outre-mer – Développement Économique, November 1956; JORF: Textes d’intérêt général Territoires d’Outre-mer – Services publics, December 1956; JORF: Textes d’intérêt général Territoires d’Outre-mer – Développement économique, February 1957; JORF: Textes d’intérêt général Territoires d’Outre-mer – Réformes et évolution, February 1957; , JORF: Textes d’intérêt général Territoires d’Outre-mer – Réorganisation; April 1957. [↑](#footnote-ref-396)
397. A list of the decrees is contained in Appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-397)
398. AMM 100-312, JORF Textes d’intérêt général – Services publics, décret 56-1227 du 3 décembre 1956 portant définition des services de l’état dans les territoires d’outre-mer et énumération des cadres de l’état, p.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-398)
399. Ibid., p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-399)
400. Ibid. p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-400)
401. Ibid. p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-401)
402. Cooper, *Citizenship*, p. 240. [↑](#footnote-ref-402)
403. ANOM AFFPOL 247, Letter from Gaston Cusin to le ministre de la France d’Outre-mer, 13 Novembre 1956. [↑](#footnote-ref-403)
404. AMM 100-312,JORF Textes d’intérêt général – Services publics*,* décret no 56-1229 du 3 décembre 1956 portant réorganisation et décentralisation des postes et télécommunications d’outre-mer, p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-404)
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406. Ibid. p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-406)
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429. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-429)
430. Shipway, ‘Gaston Defferre’s Loi-Cadre’, pp. 15–29. [↑](#footnote-ref-430)
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441. ANF, Fonds René Coty - AJ 111, René Coty, Allocation prononcée par M. le Président de la République à la réception à l’elysée des grands chefs d’afrique noire, 12 July 1956. [↑](#footnote-ref-441)
442. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-442)
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451. AMM 100-312, *L’Œuvre du gouvernement Guy Mollet*. [↑](#footnote-ref-451)
452. Ibid., p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-452)
453. Ibid., p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-453)
454. Ibid., p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-454)
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456. Ibid., p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-456)
457. Ibid., p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-457)
458. Ibid., p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-458)
459. Preamble, Constitution de 1946 IVeme république. [↑](#footnote-ref-459)
460. AMM 100-312, *L’Œuvre du gouvernement Guy Mollet*, p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-460)
461. The territorial interests were ‘*les Finances, l’Economie, le Plan, le Commerce, l’Industrie, les Mines, l’Agriculture, l’Elevage, les Eeaux [*sic] *et Forêts, l’Intérieur, le Travail, la Fonction Publique, les Affaires sociales, la Jeunesse et les Sports, les Affaires culturelles, les Travaux publics et les Transports, la Santé publique et la Population, l’Urbanisme et l’Habitat, le Tourisme*’. The state interests were ‘*les relations extérieures, la défense, la garantie des libertés publiques, la solidarité économique et culturelle des Territoires constituent la République, le régime monétaire et financier constituent des intérêts généraux de la République*.’, Ibid., pp. 15-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-461)
462. Text of speech appears in ANF, Paul Le Layec, ‘L’Africanisation des cadres’, *Centre de Hautes Études d’Administration Musulmane* 119, 18 Janvier 1957, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-462)
463. Ibid., p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-463)
464. Ibid., p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-464)
465. Curiously, this list of policies is crossed out in the reproduction of his speech. Given that this was done in the same pen as other modifications to the speech, including additions, it is reasonable to assume that Le Layec did this himself although the question remains as to why did it. Ibid., p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-465)
466. Ibid., pp. 18-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-466)
467. Text of speech appears in ANF, Paul Le Layec, ‘Application de la loi-cadre dans les territoires d’outer-mer en matière de fonction publique’, *Centre des Hautes Études d’Administration Musulmane* 138, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-467)
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471. Ibid., p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-471)
472. Ibid., p. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-472)
473. Ibid., p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-473)
474. ANF, Pierre Alexandre, ‘L’Application de la loi-cadre du 23 Juin 1956: I. le nouveau statut du Togo’, *Centre des Hautes Études d’Administration Musulmane* 119.2646, pp. 1-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-474)
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478. Alexandre, ‘Statut du Togo‘, pp. 19-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-478)
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