Triangulating a Modernization Experiment: The United States, France and the Making of the Kossou Project in Central Ivory Coast

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Abstract
Toward the end of the 1960s, authorities in the Ivory Coast decided to build the Kossou Dam, a hydro-electric dam on the Bandama River near the geographic center of the Francophone country. Initially conceived as a technopolitical measure to meet the growing energy demand of the most economically successful country of France's former colonies, the damming experiment soon emerged as a multipurpose regional development project aimed at correcting the regional disparities that tarnished the Ivory Coast's phenomenal economic growth.

This article focuses on the Kossou modernization experience and the sociopolitical transformations that it caused. I argue that the nationalist enthusiasm that followed the country's independence in 1960 all the way through the first decade of postcolonial nation-building provided the Ivorian authorities with an opportunity to flesh out their electrified vision of their country's future.

Keywords
Bandama River, Kossou Project, Ivory Coast, modernization

Disciplines
African History | Diplomatic History | History | Social History
Abou B. Bamba

Triangulating a Modernization Experiment:
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Toward the end of the 1960s, authorities in the Ivory Coast decided to build the Kossou Dam, a hydro-electric dam on the Bandama River near the geographic centre of the Francophone country. Initially conceived as a technopolitical measure to meet the growing energy demand of the most economically successful country of France’s former colonies, the damming experiment soon emerged as a multipurpose regional development project aimed at correcting the regional disparities that tarnished the Ivory Coast’s phenomenal economic growth.

This article focuses on the Kossou modernization experience and the sociopolitical transformations that it caused. I argue that the nationalist enthusiasm that followed the country’s independence in 1960 and the first decade of postcolonial nation-building provided the Ivorian authorities with an opportunity to flesh out their electrified vision of the country’s future. Such a vision, which linked modernization with the potentials of electrification, was hardly new. In fact, as early as 1959, the Ivorian leadership, as a significant step toward modernization, undertook the construction of hydro-electric power stations while simultaneously providing the basis for the electricity sector. This was considered a “pre-condition for the future.”

Like Ayamé, Kossou was viewed as a major operation to reduce dependence and to diversify, albeit timidly, the country’s economy, that of the region, and the area around the dam. The costs of US expertise and capital, which were a large part of the project, were justified by the economic growth generated by the dam. This justified the investment in hydro-electric power by the US government, which provided the financing for the project. However, the construction of the dam was only possible with the support of the French government, which provided the necessary resources and personnel to implement the project.

This article sheds light on some of the factors that led to the success of the Kossou Dam project and its implications for modernization in the Ivory Coast. It highlights the importance of international cooperation and the role of experts in shaping the course of development in Africa. The article also underscores the importance of electrification in modernization and the challenges that arise in the implementation of such projects.
The United States, France and the Making of the Kossou Project in Central Ivory Coast

as early as 1959, the Ivorian leadership had bet on the production of hydro-electricity as a significant step toward modernity. With the support of the French colonial authorities, they undertook the construction of the Ayamé Dam, the country's first economic infrastructure of this kind. At this juncture, the Ivorian ruling elite predicted that hydro-electric power would help secure the welfare of the Ivorian people while simultaneously providing the basis for national industrialization, which they considered the «pre-condition for the creation of the modern state».

Like Ayamé, Kossou was viewed as an emblem of this symbolic linkage between electricity and the genesis of a modern Ivorian society. Unlike Ayamé, however, the construction of Kossou went beyond the traditional bilateral relations between metropolitan France and its (post)colonies. In a context where they were trying to diversify, albeit timidly, the international partners to be enlisted for their country's modernization, the Ivorian authorities did not call exclusively upon France; they also demanded help from the World Bank and, later, called for US expertise and capital, which soon arrived in the form of technical know-how through Kaiser Engineers and loans administered by the Export-Import (Exim) Bank of the United States. The less than friendly response of the French diplomats to this American involvement in the electrification programme of the Ivory Coast is succinctly analysed in this article. Beyond the Franco-American tensions over the Ivorian postcolony, however, I suggest that the American presence in the electrification programme of postcolonial Ivory Coast confirmed the pervasive-ness of US know-how in the practice of comprehensive regional development both in France and the Ivory Coast. Besides the shared perception of electricity as both a tool of modernization and the quintessential symbol of modernity, this was due to the fact that regional development of the type promoted by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) had re-emerged as a favourite technique in the transnational world of modernization.

This article sheds light on some of the assumptions that informed the modernist and transnational processes of the damming of an African river. It contends that while recent studies on US-inflected transnationalism have unveiled the dynamics of the transmission of values and know-how across societal and national borders, few have scrutinized the triangulated nature of the transfer of American ideas and values to most of the (post)colonial societies in the latter part of the twentieth


2 Fraternité, 31 July 1959.


century. Taking the Ivory Coast as a case that crystallizes US-inspired transnationalism in a postcolonial situation, it appears that the concept of triangulation is a necessary detour for anyone trying to make sense of the American presence in the modernization landscape of Francophone Africa. But, as we shall see, the roots of triangulation reach deep. Indeed, they can be traced as far back as the post-war years, when French colonial subjects increasingly showed their dissatisfaction with France’s mission civilisatrice.

1. The Rise of the Politics of Triangulation: Decolonization, Post-war Developmentalism and the American Century

Historians of modernization theory and diplomacy have recognized that the coming of the American Century and the Cold War in the post-war years operated as a historical conjuncture that fuelled the diffusion of an American-inflected understanding of development. In fact, both the production of new economic spaces, which maintained American global economic hegemony necessitated, and the containment policies of the United States in the context of the emerging Cold War forced American diplomats and modernizers to take steps toward the establishment of an empire aimed at bringing the rest of the so-called Free World into the fold of what American cold warriors saw as legitimate (meaning: American-style) modernity. From Italy to Indonesia, from Latin America to India and Vietnam, the American economic planners and social engineers initiated spectacular modernization programmes informed by a US-centric understanding of the good life.

While recent studies on modernization theory have dramatically expanded our understanding of the historical consequences of these illusive attempts at imposing an American-orchestrated modernity on foreign peoples, few have discussed how the globalization of the American experience has brought to light the subaltern’s critique of the European colonialism when colonial subjects in Africa resisted colonial rule. Having realized that the colonial heritage was an inevitable fact of life, American policymakers in the 1950s and 1960s developed the concept of the «white man’s burden» for colonialism. In this context, they proposed that the problem of colonial peoples. Furthermore, American policymakers in the Philippines saw the problem of colonialism as a template that the Europeans should emulate. In this way, they equated mechanization with modernization, they also saw their civilization as an alternative to paternalistic domination.

Of course such a perception was replaced by a realization that associated European colonialism with the racialized ideology that sustained the system of colonialism. This was all the more possible since the American Century provided the colonial subject with an alternative to colonial modernity, which many of the former colonies found more acceptable. Post-war developments in the Ivory Coast are an interesting light on this historical process. The American Century, as the mouthpiece of a group of disgruntled citizens, decided to make the Ivory Coast a model of modernization of the country. The United States, France and the Ivory Coast were in the process of trying to make the American Century work for their mutual benefit.
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War America (Baltimore, 2003); D. C. Engerman
et al., eds., Staging Growth: Modernization,
velopment, and the Global Cold War (Amherst,

13 National Archive and Records Administration (College Park, Maryland, hereafter USNA), RG 469, Box 7: Maître Kouamé Binzème, «Le Déve-
loppement économique de la Côte d’Ivoire: Plan d’action» 2 September 1948.
argued for an active participation of the United States in the Ivorian post-war development drive, almost to the exclusion of the French colonial state. As the lawyer put it himself, his programme was informed by the «principle of partnership (association) between American capital and African labour». Implicitly critiquing the French doctrine of colonial mise en valeur, which was more exploitative than beneficial to the colonial subjects, Binzème added that the Ivoirian-American partnership in the domain of development should, above all, «protect the integrity of indigenous natural resources» while at the same time promoting «freedom, economic progress, and social betterment for the Africans».

In practical terms, however, the Binzème Plan was a reappraisal of some of the programmes that the French Fonds d’Investissement pour le Développement Économique et Social (FIDES) had initiated in the Ivory Coast earlier. These included the industrial exploitation of strategic minerals such as manganese, iron, silver, gold and oil. Still in line with the FIDES programme, Binzème hoped to mechanize Ivoirian agriculture and forestry for a better exploitation of their resources. Against France’s protectionist policy, which limited the import of foreign consumer goods into French overseas territories, Binzème solicited the «active collaboration» of American industries to meet the «unmet needs» of the indigenous peoples. Finally, the lawyer requested that American financial groups participate in the creation of a venture firm whose aim would be the exploitation of his country’s natural resources.

It is not clear how American Marshall Planners responded to Maître Binzème’s proposals. Nor can we ascertain whether the French colonial authorities took notice of his correspondence with the Americans. Still, the attitude of the Ivoirian lawyer crystallized a tendency visible throughout the larger French empire in the post-war period: the nationalist politics of triangulating development. If modernization had emerged as a transnational ideology that most people espoused, French colonial subjects increasingly came to doubt the modernizing capability of Paris and its imperial extension. In contrast to France’s mission civilisatrice, people like Kouamé Binzème emphasized the potential benefits of the American way of life and the modernization theory that informed its expansion.

The dangers inherent in the politics of triangulating modernization were not lost on the French colonial administrators. They reacted with massive development projects through FIDES and by dubbing American modernization techniques. For instance, under the Productivity Mission programme, French colonial authorities sent hundreds of their agents to the United States. They also invited a number of American experts to France to train French experts. France remained the sole mediator in the Ivory Coast and the larger empire. If despots like comparison and translation had been post-war world of French imperialism, then, independence became inevitable and formal separation from France.

However, French authorities did not continue to deploy similar efforts so relationship between the Ivory Coast and the gained independence. Perhaps not easy between the colonial and postcolonial nature of Kossou, which relied heavily on French money and technical know-how that recognized colonialist activities of French experts as mission Nationale pour l’Aménagement de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Cadre, an original US-Ivory Coast development economic modernization experiment.

2. Framing a Francophone Postcolonial Modernization, Regionalization and

In late February 1969, Philippe Lamour a veteran of planning agency on regional planning, visited and intimately involved in the post-war modernization of the Lower-Rhône region in France had emerged in the 1960s as «on


USNA, RG 467, Box 7; Maître Kouamé Binzème to ECA/Paris, 2 September 1948. (Emphasis in the original).
15 Ibid.
17 Ibid., 2-5.
18 Ibid., 6-7.
19 Ibid., 8.
American experts to France to train French colonial specialists, making sure that France retained the sole mediator in the post-war modernization of the Ivory Coast and the larger empire. If desperate, these actions suggested that knowledge, comparison and translation had become transnational historical forces in the post-war world of French imperialism. Despite these efforts, or maybe because of them, independence became inevitable, and in 1960 the country proclaimed its formal separation from France.

However, French authorities did not give up their role as mediators. In fact, they continued to deploy similar efforts so as to check the possibility of a bilateral relationship between the Ivory Coast and the United States, even after the country had gained independence. Perhaps no other instance epitomizes this continuity between the colonial and postcolonial modernization drives better than the making of Kossou, which relied heavily on French mediation, although it was American money and technical know-how that kept the project on track. As we shall see, the missionary activities of French experts such as the chairperson of the French Commission Nationale pour l’Aménagement du Territoire or the researchers of the Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre Mer (ORSTOM) proved crucial in turning an original US-Ivory Coast developmentalist encounter into a triangular socioeconomic modernization experiment.

2. Framing a Francophone Postcolony: Modernization, Regionalization and the Impact of French Expertise

In late February 1969, Philippe Lamour, the chairman of the French national agency on regional planning, visited the Ivory Coast. A man who had been intimately involved in the post-war modernization drive in metropolitan France, Lamour was a veteran of planning. Chief Officer of the firm set up for the rehabilitation of the Lower-Rhône region or Compagnie du Bas-Rhône Languedoc (CBRL), he had emerged in the 1960s as «one of France’s great economic managers».

Thanks to his proven experience in regional development, Monsieur Lamour had been commissioned to study the social issues regarding the relocation of the individuals about to be displaced by the construction of the Kossou Dam and ultimately to lend his expertise to remedy the problems arising from this project. The Frenchman reportedly carried out his task to the satisfaction of the Ivorian authorities and then returned to France.25

In many respects, the Lamour visit also brought some degree of contentment to the French diplomats posted in Abidjan. They were observing the mushrooming of competing private consulting firms that tried to tap the booming Ivorian economy and, simultaneously, the development of what the chief of French Aid Mission in the Ivory Coast denounced as «unofficial technical assistance» (assistance technique parallèle). In this context, the Lamour mission seemed to provide an opportunity for French Ambassador Jacques Raphaël-Leygues to reassess his policy options and chart a new course of diplomatic action.26 Thus, only a couple of months after Lamour’s departure, he issued a warning: because the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs was «seemingly hesitant to provide technical assistance personnel to the company in charge of the development of the Bandama valley, SCET-Coopération and other French firms have been, or are, planning to provide high-level experts to this new and very important Ivorian agency». The diplomat added: «Such a course has the advantage of helping to prevent that foreign experts exercise a monopoly in the making of the Kossou project.»27

While Ambassador Raphaël-Leygues did not explicitly name the national origins of the «foreign experts» he feared were gradually excluding the French from controlling the Kossou operation, it is obvious that he was referring to the United States. For years, French diplomats and political pundits had been trumpeting that the US was increasing its interest in Francophone Africa.28 In this context, Raphaël-Leygues’s recommendation that SCET-Coopération and other French firms be prodded into the Kossou venture was meant to contain the expansion of America’s informal empire in the economically most attractive of France’s former colonies in sub-Saharan Africa. While such a move is understandable given French hysteria over losing influence in the pré carré, it is also true that many French deci-


sionmakers and commentators over planning had already been studied by a key expert and consultant for SCET.

To make sense of this conjuncture, when the informal American empire’s minds and souls of people like Kourou, Europe’s liberal intellectuals and techies to confront modern American culture, American consumer durables while Hollywood movies were inundating hundreds of the French business and policy vast economic training programmes, encounters would eventually pave the way for techniques regarding modernization.

Within the context of the global Cold War and post-war decolonization, knowledge for rapid development was international. The World that emerged during the post-colonial era of the transfer of what David Hume and C. J. D. Stockton, Modernization, a development techni-


30 V. de Grazia, Irresistible Empire: America’s Ad

31 K. Ross, Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture (Cambridge, 1993); R. Kuigel, Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization (Berkeley, 1993); F. Co
gliola, France and the United States: The Cold A

32 K. R. Pedersen, «Re-Educating European Man-

33 M. Latham, Modernization as Ideology: America...
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, it is also true that many French deci-

29 On the influence of the TVA experiment

on Lamour, see Pite, Philippe Lamour, 56–59;

Philippe Lamour, Le Cadran solaire (Paris, 1986),

278–84.

30 V. de Grazia, Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance

through Twentieth-Century Europe (Cambridge,

London, 2003); R. Kuisel, Capitalism and the Sta-

te in Modern France: Renovation and Economic

Management in the Twentieth Century (Cam-


31 K. Ross, Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and

the Reordering of French Culture (Cambridge,

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gliola, France and the United States: The Cold Alli-


32 K. R. Pedersen, «Re-Educating European Manage-

ment: The Marshall Plan’s Campaign Against

Restrictive Business Practices in France,

1949–1953», Business and Economic History 23

(1996) 1, 267–274. Kuisel, Seducing the French,

131–153; L. Boltsanski, «Visions of American Man-

agement in Post–War France», Theory and Socie-


M. Latham, Modernization as Ideology: American

Social Science and «Nation-Building» in the Kenne-
dy Era (Chapel Hill, 2000); A. Escobar, Encoun-
tering Development: The Making and Unmaking of

the Third World (Princeton, 1995); C. E. Plottch,

«The Three Worlds, or the Division of Social

Scientific Labor, circa 1950–1970», Comparative


590; J. E. Orchard, «ECA and the Dependent Ter-

ritories», Geographic Review 41 (1951) 1, 66–87;

A. L. Moffat, «The Marshall Plan and British


34 D. Ekbлад, «Mr. TVA: Grass-Roots Develop-

ment, David Lilienthal, and the Rise of the Ten-

nessee Valley Authority as a Symbol for U.S.

Overseas Development, 1933–1973», Diplomatic

History 26 (2002) 3, 335–374. The literature on

the TVA is quite vast. While some of the schol-

arly contributions to the study of the TVA experi-

ment are very critical, others adopt a celebratory

tone. See, for example, W. L. Greese, TVA’s Public

Planning: The Vision, the Reality (Knoxville,

1990); N. L. Grant, TVA and Black Americans:

Planning for the Status Quo (Philadelphia, 1990);

M. J. McDonald and J. Muldowny, TVA and the

Dispossessed: The Resettlement of Population in →
during the New Deal to help bring the fold of American modernity, an integrated regional development enterprise icon that many modernizers in West Africa strove to emulate as they attempted to do so on their own.35

The Kossou experiment in Central Côte d'Ivoire reflected trends of incorporating American regionalism and perhaps worthy of investigation are the activities of the development personnel (coopérants) of the regionalization concepts as they secured the American post-colonial project.

To better understand Kossou and its construction, we should place the whole narrative of the regionalist turn that the Ivory Coast was to experience in the mid-1960s. In effect, with an increasing number of American d'études to the Ivory Coast in the 1960s, the period witnessed the deployment of a large number of projects and programmes, which lasted from 1962 until 1972. These projects, in turn, identified and evaluated the potentials of the various regions and sub-regions of the Ivory Coast. This period is often seen as the period when the Ivory Coast region witnessed the incorporation of regionalism into its political and economic life, thus supporting the alleged Ivorian economic development.

An interesting indicator of this shift is provided by a 1967 article written by a young and relatively unknown junior economist at the Office de la Coopération Economique du Cercle Littoral Nord, a regional division along with American economist D. E. Lilienthal. The article argued that earlier modernization attempts had been insufficient and that the Ivory Coast had performed rather poorly in terms of regional development strategies.

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35 R. Rook, "Race, Water, and Foreign Policy: The United States, France, and the Mekong River during the New Deal to help bring the fold of American modernity, an integrated regional development enterprise icon that many modernizers in West Africa strove to emulate as they attempted to do so on their own."
during the New Deal to help bring regions traversed by the Tennessee River into the fold of American modernity, the Tennessee Valley Authority's techniques of integrated regional development emerged in the 1950s and 1960s as an omnipresent icon that many modernizers in the postcolonial nation-states of Africa and Asia strove to emulate as they attempted to effect multi-purpose damming schemes of their own.35

The Kossou experiment in Central Ivory Coast was indicative of these larger trends of incorporating American modernization techniques into local developmental practices. As we shall see, however, what made the Ivorian example unique and perhaps worthy of investigation was its reliance on the expertise of French development personnel (coopérants), who worked to triangulate American modernization concepts as they secured the continuity of France's hegemony over the Ivorian postcolony.

To better understand Kossou and the incidence of French mediation during its construction, we should place the whole modernization experiment within the context of the regionalist turn that the Ivorian development planning underwent in the mid-1960s. In effect, with an increase in the flow of French coopérants and bureaux d'études to the Ivory Coast in the 1960s and 1970s, the early post-independence period witnessed the deployment of a vast survey programme, which was largely carried out by French research agencies. Known as Etudes Régionales, these investigations, which lasted from 1962 until 1965, were meant to assess the development potentials of the various regions of the Ivory Coast. Besides making the various regions of the Ivory Coast legible for development planning, the Etudes Régionales signalled the incorporation of regionalist concerns into the discourse of how to support the alleged Ivorian economic miracle.

An interesting indicator of this shift in development strategy was provided, if obliquely, by a 1967 article written by Hugues Lhuillier, a French expatriate and junior economist at the Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre Mer. Reappropriating the developmentalist ideas that informed the TVA experiment along with American economist Walter Isard's notion of «location economy», Lhuillier argued that earlier modernization and nation-building endeavours in the Ivory Coast had performed rather poorly because they lacked not only a clear definition of strategies for regional development but also a sound conceptual framework.

for organizing ideas related to such planning.\textsuperscript{36} Most importantly, the French \emph{co-opérant} criticized the previous Ivorian development strategy because it did not include specific methods for making viable projections with regard to regional development, the result of which was the unevenness of Ivorian economic development.\textsuperscript{37} In order to get around these limitations, he proposed a number of measures: First, regional growth poles for industrial decentralization should become a part of national planning so as to distribute growth evenly in the national space.\textsuperscript{38} Secondly, since national planners had to work with preliminary sketches produced by regional planners, there should be collaboration between the two for stronger coherence in development programming.\textsuperscript{39}

Ivorian authorities heeded these recommendations and took further steps to enlist the continued counsel of Lhuillier, who would eventually work for the Ivorian Ministry of Development Planning. Furthermore, ORSTOM was recruited to draw up a five-year plan for the entire country, a plan that ultimately enshrined regionalist precepts in the planning of Ivorian economic development. As many ORSTOM researchers subsequently pointed out, one effect of this move was the explicit effort in the ORSTOM-produced Loi-Plan of 1967–70 to fight against what was perceived to be \textquote{regional disparities} and uneven development in the Ivory Coast.\textsuperscript{40} In many regards, the Kossou regional development project was one of the brain-children of this regionalist tilts. As we shall see, however, French control over the making of Kossou was a precarious affair, especially because the multi-purpose damming project occurred within an international financial context marked by the Ivorian need for developmental funds, which the French government was reluctant to provide.

3. Securing Funds for Kossou: Development and the Politics of International Finance

Historically, plans about construction of the Ivory Coast\textquotesingle s largest hydro-electric dam were revealed as early as 1960, when the newly independent Ivory Coast asked Electricité de France (EDF) along with American Kaiser Engineers and Constructors to carry out hydrological surveys in order to determine the ideal location for the country\textquotesingle s third hydro-electric complex.\textsuperscript{41} Equipped with the first results, the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 104–05.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 109.
\item \textsuperscript{40} République de Côte d\'Ivoire/Autorité pour l\textquoteright{aménagement de la Vallée du Bandama, AVB: Opération Kossou (Abidjan, 1971), 8.
\item \textsuperscript{41} On the rejection, see World Bank, \textit{Appraisal of Agricultural Aspects of Proposed Bandama River Project} (Washington DC, 1966).
\item \textsuperscript{42} AMAE, série: DAM/sous-série: CI, Carton 8789, Incoming Telegram, 13 October 1966.
\end{itemize}
Most importantly, the French co-development strategy because it did not have projections with regard to regional unevenness of Ivorian economic developments, he proposed a number of measures: decentralization should become a growth evenly in the national space, work with preliminary sketches generated labor between the two for stronger recommendations and took further steps to do would eventually work for the Ivorian emer. ORSTOM was recruited to draw a plan that ultimately enshrined regionalist economic development. As many ORSTOM effect of this move was the explicit effort 7-70 to fight against what was perceived as velopment in the Ivory Coast. In many project was one of the brain-children of French control over the making of Kossou: the multi-purpose damming project context marked by the Ivorian need for development was reluctant to provide.

**The Politics**

The Ivory Coast's largest hydro-electric power facility, the newly independent Ivory Coast asked American engineers and constructors to determine the ideal location for the dam. Equipped with the first results, the Ivorian planners hurriedly submitted an application to the World Bank. The international financial institution rejected the plan because of its high cost and low profitability. It was the consequence of this rejection that threatened to dislodge French domination over the Kossou project, while it provided the United States with an opportunity to push for larger involvement in the making of the so-called Ivorian economic miracle.

In fact, reacting to this rejection, the Ivorian ambassador to Washington, Henri Konan Bedié, accused the bank of having a bias against Francophone Africa and implicitly criticized France's inaction in this matter. Anticipating an appeal, the ambassador, reportedly «on instruction» from the Ivorian president, requested that French diplomats intervene «in favour of the Bandama». His efforts were disappointed, however, and all the more so since information leaked out that the World Bank rejection had been encouraged by the French members of the international financial institution. The ensuing bitterness of the West Africans must have temporarily cooled Franco-Ivorian relations. As a result, EDF was outbid by Kaiser Engineering, which not only developed a more thorough feasibility study in 1966, but also encouraged the Ivorian government to submit its damming project to the Exim Bank. Alarmed by this supposed American encroachment, the French commercial attaché in Abidjan concluded that the «total exclusion of any French participation (through EDF) in this new study» as well as Kaiser's pretense to control works sub-contracted to French laboratories, could «give a certain weight to the rumours that the new Ivorian economic policy is in favour of the United States».

The French diplomat may have been right. An indication was provided by Bedié, newly promoted to Minister of Finance, who, as a further reprimand of French inaction and opposition, requested that France no longer have any direct involvement in the new Bandama venture. President Houphouët-Boigny apparently agreed. This is why he directly wrote to President Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) soon after the World Bank rejection and asked for US participation in the Kossou project. In his response to the Ivorian request, the American president assured his Ivorian counterpart that the US government had «given this matter [the Kossou

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46 AMAE, DAM/CI, Carton 1888: Commercial Attaché (Abidjan) to Ministre de l'Economie & des Finances, 3 February 1966.
47 Bancroft Library, Edgar F. Kaiser Papers, BANC MSS 85/61c, Carton 328/1c: Joseph Rucinski (Vice President of Kaiser Industries Corporation) to Willem van Ravesteijn (Paris Office), 6 May 1966.
project] our thorough attention and shall continue our efforts to be of help». LBJ instructed the Exim Bank to study the Bandama project and suggest options for an American backing, which the bank did in 1968.

If anything, the involvement of the United States in Ivorian modernization projects turned the cold alliance between the United States and France into something akin to a hot peace. In fact, provisions for a US loan to the Ivory Coast in 1968 increased tensions between the United States and France. This is confirmed by the fixation of French diplomats on the US, while ignoring the Italian and later Canadian interests, whose representatives also became involved in the Kossou project. The politics of Ivorian postcolonial electrification, however, shed light on more than just the mechanics of international finance and its connections to development in the postcolonial worlds of Africa and Asia. In fact, a closer look at the boosting of the «Ivorian miracle» through the multi-purpose damming scheme on the Bandama River reveals more than anything else that triangulation was almost always at work in the transfer of American know-how to the postcolonial societies of Francophone Africa.

4. Practicing Postcolonial Triangulation: Ivorian Authorities, French Coopérants and the Making of Kossou

It is not clear why the Ivorian authorities called specifically upon Philippe Lamour to consult and give expert advice regarding Kossou. It is equally uncertain whether they knew about Lamour’s post-war visits to the United States to observe the TVA experiment. But Lamour served as a postcolonial node that effectively triangulated American social engineering knowledge to make Kossou a smoother developmental experience. Once in the Ivory Coast, the chairman of the CBRL lectured against viewing the production of electricity as an end in itself, for the Ivory Coast «could well build thermal plants which would be both more powerful and cost-effective». Taking the TVA lessons of comprehensive regional development to heart, Lamour advised the Ivorian planners that they should tend to the societal transformations that the damming scheme would effect in the Bandama Valley: «Agriculture, fishing and animal husbandry – these are what will be the major activities.» The central Ivory Coast region, he prophesied, would effectively «witness rapid [economic] expansion.» As he left the country, Lamour «promised he [would] submit a brief memorandum to the Ivorian government within three weeks, in which he would lay out the objectives to be pursued as the larger frame of the aménagement, mentioning his memorandum, the French people to be displaced by the construction of Roussillon, Lamour also encouraged the search of land to be irrigated for a comprehensive development road map to be drawn up for both the Bandama and Kossou dams, these being expected to host the displaced of the Kossou. Thus, although US money and technical assistance apparatus (cf. Coopération) were to participate in the postcolonial expertise in the Ivory Coast, the Ivorian authorities and Lamour initiated the survey of the villages to be displaced for the Kossou dam. A month later, the Swiss consulting firm General Guy Camus and propinquity, which was being carried out by your agency, abroad and Michotte, justifies and would make the French the United Nations Development Programme and power of ORSTOM as a principal actor in the Kossou operation. After visiting the hydro-electric plant, it is concluded that the country lacked the resources of the Bandama Valley, but the entrepreneurs to «carry out successfully [more complex] as Kossou. In light of this

51 AMAE, série DAM, sous-série Côte d'Ivoire, Carton 2: Hubert Dubois (Chargé d'Affaires) Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, 18 March 1969. See also CAD, Abidjan, Carton 9: Hubert Dubois (Chargé d'Affaires) Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, 18 March 1969.
52 Ibid.
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called specifically upon Philippe Lamour g Kossou. It is equally uncertain whether o make Kossou a smoother development e chairman of the CBRL lectured against instead of the dam. As he had done in Languedoc- Roussillon, Lamour also encouraged the Ivorian authorities to survey the valley in search of land to be irrigated for agriculture. Most importantly, he requested that comprehensive development road maps (schéma directeurs d’aménagement) should be drawn up for both the Bandama Valley and south-western Ivory Coast, which were expected to host the displaced population from the Kossou reservoir area. Thus, although US money and technological expertise were building the Kossou Dam, this was largely done through the intervention of a French Ameriophile.

French mediation in the making of Kossou was not restricted to the missionary activity of Philippe Lamour, though. In fact, in the context of the increasing internationalization of the Kossou project, other French actors would rise to prominence. This included ORSTOM, whose researchers would help the French foreign assistance apparatus (cf. Coopération) secure a position of advantage in the market of postcolonial expertise in the Ivory Coast.

As early as June 1969, Mohamed T. Diawara – the Ivorian minister for development planning – had asked Pierre Etienne, one of the Orstomians who had carried out the census campaign of the Études Régionales, to take charge of the sociological survey of the villages to be displaced by the construction of the Kossou Dam. A month later, the Swiss consulting firm Bonnard & Gardel wrote to ORSTOM Director General Guy Camus and proposed a partnership: «We believe that the work being carried out by your agency, and specifically by Messieurs Etienne, Chevassu and Michotte, justifies and would make a collaboration on our part most rewarding.» The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) further confirmed the prestige and power of ORSTOM as an intellectual resource in the implementation of the Kossou operation. After visiting the Ivory Coast in mid-1969, UNDP experts concluded that the country lacked not only sufficient knowledge to develop the resources of the Bandama Valley, but also skilled personnel and trained social scientists to «carry out successfully (mener à bien par eux-mêmes) a project as huge and complex» as Kossou. In light of this weakness, the international agency requested


52 Ibid.


54 Archives Nationales de France (Paris, hereafter ANF), Fonds ORSTOM, F 17 Bis 90.17, Article 20: Note à l’attention de Monsieur le Sекrétaire Adjoint, 10 June 1969.

55 ANF, Fonds ORSTOM, F 17 Bis 90.17, Article 20: Bonnard & Gardet to Camus, 24 July 1969.
that the expertise of ORSTOM be mobilized.\textsuperscript{56} Given the hegemony of the Orstomians on the Ivorian epistemological landscape, the request was granted. Furthermore, Pierre Etienne was appointed as part-time consultant with the \textit{Autorité pour l'Aménagement de la Vallée du Bandama} (AVB), the agency set up in 1969 to carry out the Kossou project.\textsuperscript{57}

It would be a mistake to conclude that all of the American technocratic knowledge used in the making of Kossou filtered through France and its expatriate extension in the Ivory Coast. This was far from being the case, especially in a post-independence context in Africa marked by what a contemporary French observer called a relative «trend toward the loosening of old ties».\textsuperscript{58} In fact, as early as 1963, a group of Ivorian parliamentarians and lawmakers had visited the TVA installations in the Knoxville, Tennessee, area.\textsuperscript{59} Although at present no evidence allows us to gauge the impact of the Tennessee Valley tour on the Ivorian visitors, it is clear that both David Lilenthal and the TVA model exerted a lasting influence on the Ivorian policymakers. Revealing the effects of this spell, Raphaël Saller – the man who ran Ivory Coast’s early development planning – flatteringly remarked in 1962, when he met Lilenthal: «I know about you and about TVA, so I know TVA isn’t just dams.»\textsuperscript{60} The Ivorian minister, who had reportedly longed for «fifteen years» to meet Lilenthal, even reminisced having sent «two of his men to TVA in 1946 because there was the center, the mecca for planned development the world over».\textsuperscript{61}

Beyond the flatteries of an eccentric French-born Saller, whom Lilenthal himself described as «not really an Ivorian»,\textsuperscript{62} the radiance of the TVA model reached deep into the very elitist imagination of the regional planning world of the Ivory Coast. President Houphouët-Boigny himself had expressed interest in the TVA as a model when he first met David Lilenthal.\textsuperscript{63} Consequently, the \textit{Autorité pour l’Aménagement de la Vallée du Bandama} was juridically patterned on the Tennessee Valley Authority.\textsuperscript{64} In this light, besides the \textit{maître d’œuvre} of the Kossou operation, the agency in the postcolonial history of the comprehensive and integrated regional development models was it in its statutory positioning with AVB came closest to the TVA model. The French Jacobin tradition of centralized governmental status that effectively removed the day-to-day control of any given ministry. AVB was placed under the effort to bestow the new agency with a fillip.

While these actions strengthened the Ivorian administration’s need for more funds to run the whole project, the French government to achieve a direct involvement allowed the American Kaiser Engineers Holmes, who had left many French expatriates with a feeling of owed some members of the expatriate community, a new voice in French favoritism toward American interests. An added benefit was a full appreciation of their potentially renewable resource potential, maintenance of French hegemony in the region and the act dexterously. In the late 1960s, they suggest how the financial implications of the damming crisis required US diplomats opted to call for a direct involvement in Kossou’s social programmes.

For instance, a note intended for the US government, Kossou had turned out to be an irreversibleness in the interest of France not to remain involved in the project. However, provide developmental funds for the region in the filling of the Kossou reservoir. In fact, US diplomats had missed the opportunity to link the project to social transformations that the damming required in the social transformations that Kossou.
Given the hegemony of the Orstomi-a, the request was granted. Further-time consultant with the Autorité pour VB, the agency set up in 1969 to carry all of the American technocratic knowl-
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Mrs. Joanne Gervais and a certain Mr. Assamou. For details, see USNA-South East Region (Atlanta, GA), RG 142. Records of TVA Internatio-
nal Visitors Center (IVC), Box 1: Report on operations for the period of six months ended 31 December 1963. See also ibid, Box 2: Log book 0-1963, 4 August 1963.
D. E. Lilienthal, The Journals of David E. Lilien-
Ibid., 549-50.
Ibid., 182.
Seeley Mudd Library, Princeton University, David E. Lilienthal Papers, Box 48: Lilienthal to Diawara, 1 June 1969.

Valley Authority. In this light, besides its name, which easily recalled the TVA, the maître d’œuvre of the Kossou operation was the first non-sectoral modernization agency in the postcolonial history of the Ivory Coast whose goal it was to achieve the comprehensive and integrated regional development of the Bandama Valley. Perhaps it was in its statutory positioning within the Ivoryan administrative landscape that AVB came closest to the TVA model. In a country that had largely inherited the French Jacobin tradition of centralized government, AVB was given a semi-autono-
mous status that effectively removed the agency’s actions from the jurisdiction of any given ministry. AVB was placed under direct presidential supervision in an effort to bestow the new agency with a flexibility that would enhance its efficiency.

While these actions strengthened Ivoryan oversight on the making of Kossou, the need for more funds to run the whole regional development operation helped the French government to achieve a diplomatic comeback. The setback that had allowed the American Kaiser Engineers to win the bid to build the Kossou Dam had left many French expatriates with a feeling of bitterness. This atmosphere encour-
aged some members of the expatriate community to accuse the Ivoryan leaders of favouritism toward American interests. Alarmed by these developments and in full appreciation of their potentially negative consequences with regard to the maintenance of French hegemony in the Ivory Coast, French diplomats decided to act dexterously. In the late 1960s, they started to gather intelligence reports on the financial implications of the damming experiment. Furthermore, some French diplomats opted to call for a direct involvement of France in the implementation of Kossou’s social programmes.

For instance, a note intended for the French ambassador suggested that since Kossou had turned out to be an irreversible venture (despite French opposition), it was in the interest of France not to remain a passive spectator. Rather, Paris should provide developmental funds for the resettlement of people to be displaced because of the filling of the Kossou reservoir. In fact, the note’s author argued, if France’s diplomats had missed the opportunity to get involved in the initial infrastructural transformations that the damming required, they could not afford to be bystanders in the social transformations that Kossou was likely to cause. Ultimately, the note

66 Lassailly-Jacob, «Exemple éphémère», 335.
concluded, French intervention in the Kossou project was an ideal and timely opportunity since any involvement in the social and population issues would have a «deep and lasting impact» on the people of the region. Given these suggestions, it was only understandable that the missionary activities of French nationals such as Philippe Lamour or the researchers of ORSTOM received the blessing of the French embassy in Abidjan. By their participation in the making of Kossou, these actors eventually turned the regional development experiment into a transatlantic and triangular techno-socio-political saga that aimed at bringing the central Ivory Coast into the fold of modernity.

5. Conclusion

In hind-sight, we know that the making of Kossou suffered from the modernist hubris that informed the planning of so many modernization experiments. In fact, the political élan for orchestrating techno-political changes in the central Ivory Coast did not survive the crises that challenged the Ivorian miracle during the 1970s: bureaucratic centralization within AVB, the jealousy of civil servants in the various technical ministries, the competition of other sectoral development agencies that felt their spheres of actions were being encroached by AVB’s activities, and the burden of foreign debt – all of these factors converged to turn Kossou into another short-lived modernization experiment. As a consequence, AVB was closed in 1979 along with the Autorité pour l’Aménagement de la Région du Sud-Ouest (ARSO), the other regional agency established in the late 1960s to carry out the modernization of the Ivorian south-west region.

These setbacks notwithstanding, the story of the making of Kossou is indicative of how fruitful the concept of triangulation can be in interpreting post-war modernization drives in Francophone Third World countries. While this article has focused on the case of the Ivory Coast, there is reason to believe that similar triangular processes were at work in such diverse countries as Morocco, Senegal and Gabon. Furthermore, moving away from a monolithic understanding of developmentalism – even within the so-called West – this article has shown how competing national interests between France and the United States provided colonial subjects and postcolonial leaders with a number of opportunities to rearticulate their visions of modernization and nation-building. They also bore the seeds of challenges, which ended in the 1970s. Still, one cannot deny that Kossou and other regional development landscape of social change planning.


Triangulation: The United States, France and the Kossou Dam

This article attempts to analyse the complex drives in Francophone Africa. It focuses on the central Ivory Coast. Adopting a transnational approach, the Kossou damming experiment reflects the New Deal. While such US-inflected models were in place throughout the Bandama project, it was, mediated through workers and social scientists – a process I call the Kossou experiment supports the claim between France and the United States projects in the Francophone world with a number of opportunities for modernization and nation-building.
visions of modernization and nation-building. As it turned out, these opportunities also bore the seeds of challenges, which became apparent in the Ivory Coast by the end of the 1970s. Still, one cannot deny the magnitude of the transformations that Kossou and other regional development endeavours wrought on the Ivorian landscape of social change planning.


Triangulating a Modernization Experiment: The United States, France and the Making of the Kossou Project in Central Ivory Coast

This article attempts to analyse the complex history of the post-war modernization drives in Francophone Africa. It focuses on the damming of the Bandama River in central Ivory Coast. Adopting a transnational historical approach, I argue that the making of the Kossou damming experiment necessitated the importation of regional planning à la Tennessee Valley Administration, i.e., modernization in the style of the New Deal. While such US-inflected modernization approach informed the Bandama project, it was, mediated through the expertise of French development workers and social scientists — a process I call triangulation. Although short-lived, the Kossou experiment supports the claim that competing national interests between France and the United States provided (post)colonial societies in the Francophone world with a number of opportunities to rearticulate their visions of modernization and nation-building.
Triangulation eines Modernisierungsexperimentes: Die USA, Frankreich und die Realisierung des Kossou-Projektes in der zentralen Elfenbeinküste


De la triangulation d'une expérience de modernisation: les États-Unis, la France, et la mise en œuvre du projet Kossou dans le centre de la Côte d'Ivoire.

Cet article tente de complexifier l'histoire des élan s de modernisation conduite en Afrique francophone dans l'après-guerre. Il se concentre sur la construction d'un barrage sur le fleuve Bandama dans le centre de la Côte d'Ivoire. Adoptant une approche historique transnationale, je soutiens que l'expérience de la construction du barrage de Kossou a nécessité l'importation de la planification à base régionale dans la ligne de la Tennessee Valley Administration, i.e., la modernisation dans le style du New Deal. Quoiqu'une telle inflexion américaine dans l'approche de la modernisation informe le projet Bandama, il était, cependant, conçu par l'entremise de l'expertise des assistants techniques et chercheurs en sciences sociales français – un processus que j'appelle triangulation. Bien qu'éphémère, l'expérience de Kossou confirme l'affirmation que la compétition des intérêts nationaux entre la France et les États-Unis a fourni aux sociétés (post)coloniales dans le monde francophone un grand nombre d'opportunités pour réarticuler leurs visions de la modernisation et de la construction de la nation.

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Soviet Lessons for Soviet Educational Administration

The subject of this paper is the educational and the Arab countries during the Cold War, the mid-1950s and the 1970s. The years in the Southern Hemisphere witnessed the communist superpower observers, diplomats and journalists, and of the Soviet Union, devoted much attention to the formation of such a relation as military cooperation, economic, and cultural programs. On the one hand, the training programs that the Soviet Union to induce «progressive changes» and

1 I am particularly grateful to Corinna Unger, David Engerman, Stephan Malinowski, Antonis Lidakis, Tassos Anastasiadis, Vaggelis Karamanolakis and Lina Ventoura for their critical remarks, aid and patience. I am also greatly indebted to my anonymous readers for their extremely accurate comments.

2 I use the term «modernization» and the expressions with the attributive adjective «progressive», i.e. «progressive changes» or «progressive transformation», interchangeably, but with a preference for the second, because the adjective «progressive» (progresivnoi) was, undoubtedly, more representative of the communist vocabulary. On the other hand, in the Russian language of the