

From anti-colonialism to anti-imperialism: The pivotal role of the Union générale des étudiants ouest-africains (UGEAO)¹ in Dakar (1956-1964)

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Abstract

Born in 1956, the UGEAO succeeded a former student organisation : The *Association générale des étudiants de Dakar* (AGED) and followed the path of the *Fédération des étudiants d'Afrique noire en France* (FEANF). The AGED was established with the existence of the *Institut des hautes études de Dakar* (IHED), that preceded the establishment of the University of Dakar in 1957. The AGED became critical against the academic authorities (especially about the issue of the quality of teaching) whereas it started to distance from the *Union nationale des étudiants de France* (UNEF) and to move closer to the FEANF, that took a radical anticolonial stance, claiming for immediate independence, after 1953 . The politicization of the UGEAO became ever more blatant when it rejected the « Communauté » proposed by De Gaulle in 1958 and campaigned to vote « no » with other radical anticolonialist organisations such as the *Parti africain de l'indépendance* (PAI) or the *Union générale des travailleurs d'Afrique noire* (UGTAN).

At independence, the UGEAO gathering students from the various West African territories, formerly part of the French West Africa, has maintained the same radical stance. The leadership of the UGEAO was under the influence of the PAI and the students, in a conference held in December 1960 denounced the « neocolonialist » regimes supported by the Western countries and expressed their support for the armed struggle of the *Front de libération nationale* (FLN) in Algeria or the *Union des populations du Cameroun* (UPC) in Cameroons.

Challenged by this determined opposition, the authorities reacted with authoritarianism, preventing the UGEAO in December 1961 to organise a conference about the 'African University' and a convention in 1962. Moreover the Senegalese government tried to foster the development of a pro-Western organisation, the *Fédération des étudiants libres de Dakar* (FELD) but it has remained a puppet organization. At last, the UGEAO was dissolved in 1964. However, the government had not silenced the students for long. Two years later, they were on the streets to march against the US and the British embassies when Nkrumah was toppled down in February 1966. Thereafter, within a new organisation, as radical as the UGEAO, the *Union des étudiants de Dakar* (UED), the student movement would resurface and challenge again the regime.

That is why the experience of the UGEAO can be considered as a turning point between the diasporic and panafricanist activism of the FEANF and the setup of student movements in African campuses, or, in other words, a transitional experience between the struggle against 'dying colonialism' and the struggle against African 'neocolonial' governments.

¹ The English translation : West African Students General Union

Introduction

African student movements still have a long history which is closely intertwined with the struggles for decolonization (Boahen, 1993). Furthermore, in contrast to their counterparts in Western countries, student movements have remained active beyond the 1960's (Altbach 1984: 635-655). In a former contribution, I have conceptualized their historical trajectories in Francophone Africa from the 1950's to the 2000's through a threefold periodization (Bianchini 2016a: 79-103).

To sum up, I have distinguished three ages : the anti-colonial moment mainly in the context of diasporic militancy with the *West African Students Union* (WASU) and the *Fédération des étudiants d'Afrique noire en France* (FEANF), the anti-imperialist phase with burgeoning leftist activist movements since the late 1960's to the early 1980's and the anti-SAP and pro-democracy struggles in a third period especially during the 1990's. The development of the UGEAO spans across the first and the second age. This empirical study exemplifies my previous historical conceptualization. More precisely, my purpose is to shed some light on a period of transition between two ages of student politics in West Africa : the anti-colonial and the anti-imperialist age.

Students at the University of Dakar played a prominent role within the process of decolonization and its aftermath. In many ways, the students' agency in the Senegalese case epitomizes the 'generative function' performed by the African students' movements as 'counter-hegemonic' actors challenging the political order (Bianchini 2004: 67 ; Bianchini 2016a: 93). In a nutshell, the student movement has been the spearhead of a process of radicalization that will influence or even determine the nascent political cleavages in the postcolonial African states.

Several contributions have documented the political history of Francophone African students during the 1950's (Dieng 2009 ; Blum 2015) the 1960's and the 1970's (Bathily 1992 ; Blum 2012 ; Hendrickson 2013 ; Guèye 2014) and later (Zeilig 2007). Several authors have dealt with different phases of the student movement (Bathily, Diouf & Mbodj 1992: 282-310 ; Diop 1992: 431-478 ; Bianchini 2002: 359-396). However, the period of the *Union générale des étudiants d'Afrique occidentale* (UGEAO) from 1956 to 1964 has remained out of the scope of the previous studies. While investigating about another period (1966-1973), I found interesting archives in the Rectorat of the University (University Vice-chancellor's building) in Dakar², that documents the hybrid and evolutive nature of students politics from the 1950's to the 1960's (from corporatism to activism to say it briefly) and its pivotal role as a counter-hegemonic force challenging both the French

² Besides the main data in the UCAD archives, I also found further information at the Centre of the diplomatic archives of Courneuve, 3.10.1961)

academic authorities and the new-born Senegalese state. In this paper, I will argue that the transitional experience of the UGEAO - between the anti-colonial struggle and the radical opposition to 'neocolonialism' - can be considered as a « missing link » between the diasporic militancy of the FEANF during the 1950's and the students movements burgeoning all through the 1970's in West African campuses, in the aftermath of May 1968 in Dakar.

Student politics may appear a trivial issue, especially during the early days of the University of Dakar when the students were the fortunate few. Only several hundreds of people were involved in the most achieved 'mass mobilizations'. However, the quantitative point of view is somewhat misleading. At that time, the campus was a political arena connected to other spaces in Africa and elsewhere in the world. The 1950's in Africa were characterized by rapid awakening of 'contentious politics' related to the process of decolonization taking place in other parts of the World and some shifting alignments among the African political actors. The students were involved in this process and gained legitimacy claiming for independence whereas the African politicians especially from 'partis administratifs' (Wallerstein, 1965), backed by the French authorities, were still prone to compromise with the French Empire and to reject or to postpone this prospect. After independence, the radical students have considered that independence was not « real » but « formal » as African governments remained under the control of the former metropole (Blum, 2015). In addition, the African political arenas that had opened up with the *Union française* and enabled a relatively « open » electoral competition — even with important exceptions due to the colonial authoritarian attitude against nationalist forces as in Cameroons — experienced rapidly a closure process. This occurred even in Senegal, which had a long history of competitive politics since the 19th century among the citizens of the *Quatre Communes* (Saint Louis, Gorée, Rufisque and Dakar) where the urban natives were given civil and political rights. In 1960, several organisations such as the *Parti africain de l'indépendance* (PAI) or the *Union générale des travailleurs d'Afrique noire* (UGTAN) were banned. In December 1962, a political crisis sparked between the Head of State, Leopold Sedar Senghor, and the Prime Minister, Mamadou Dia who was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment. Political opposition was silenced as for instance, the *Bloc des masses sénégalaises* (BMS) with Cheikh Anta Diop dissolved in 1963 or the *Parti du regroupement africain* (PRA) forced to merge with the ruling party, the *Union progressiste sénégalaise* (UPS) in 1966. In this context, the campus of Dakar-Fann has remained a stronghold of the opposition to one-party rule.

After looking back at the UGEAO's forerunner organisation, the *Association générale des étudiants de Dakar* (AGED) from 1950-51 to 1956 and having sketched the history of the

UGEAO up to the independence, I will focus on the late years of UGEAO's life (1960-1964) a period to be considered as a transition between the 'anti-colonial age' and the 'anti-imperialist age' for the West African Francophone student movements.

The Student Movement in Dakar before the Independence : from the AGED to the UGEAO

The first step in organizing students in Dakar : the AGED

The first post-secondary institution to be created in Dakar in 1950 was the *Institut des Hautes Etudes* (IHED) which was a compromise between the growing demand of higher education from the African élites and the Malthusian attitude of the French colonial administration. This claim had been voiced since the election of representatives in the African territorial assemblies and the election of African members of Parliament in the French Assembly but the single-minded colonial administrators and the reluctant Minister of Colonies (even renamed « Minister of Overseas France ») had prevented for several years the institution of a French University in West Africa (Guimont 1997: 38-40 ; Leney 2003: 119-28). As a consequence, it was only in 1957, that the IHED became the University of Dakar.

Another important feature of the higher education system in Dakar at that time, was the coexistence of different communities. It was not attended only by African students. They were also significant numbers of European students and among the African students, the Senegalese were a minority : 33% among the 1012 students registered in 1959-60 (UCAD, 1980-81). The students started to organise themselves to express their views following the creation of the IHED. In December 1950, a general assembly gave birth to the AGED (Leney 2003: 381). At its birth, the orientation of the association, whether in its statutes or in its practice, was corporatist and apolitical. At the head of this association, was elected a French student. It was probably the consequence of the small number of African students and also the initial submissive attitude among the African students. However, this situation was to change during the next years³. The European leadership proved ineffective to galvanise the association into action and the vacuum was to be filled by some more militant African members. Then, the first confrontation between the AGED and the French authorities occurred at the end of 1953 when it started to question the quality of education delivered by the French teachers. They wrote to the *Gouverneur général* of the *Afrique*

³ In his autobiographical interview with Abderrahmane Ngaidé, Amady Aly Dieng pinpoints the influence of a group of students whom he was a member and who came from Saint Louis radicalized by a recent students' strike in the 'lycée' (high school) : « *C'est nous qui avons renversé la vapeur, armés de cet esprit révolutionnaire provenant de la grève de 1952* » (Ngaidé 2012: 23)

occidentale française (AOF) to complain about the insufficient academic standard. They argued that most of the teachers lacked qualifications to lecture in a higher education institution. The response of the French authorities was to consider the students' demand for a better staffing as an insulting behavior and to threaten them not to be accepted in any French Universities, if they had to complete their studies in France (Faye a, 2000: 195-203). Nevertheless, the question raised by these « subalterns » in the colonial order was hard to dismiss and later on, the administration had to take it into account (Capelle, 1990: 196-201). With the creation of the University, the French authorities managed to recruit French academics with the required credentials and the dispute was to be remembered in the movement's memory, as the first step in the students' radicalisation process (*Union des étudiants de Dakar*, 1966) even though what the AGED claimed — basically equal rights with metropolitan students — for was clearly in line with the French assimilationist colonial ideology.

Another step forward occurred in 1954-55, as the issue of the affiliation to the *Union nationale des étudiants de France* (UNEF) was discussed. The French students were in favor of the affiliation whereas the African who began to be influenced by nationalist and panafricanist ideas preferred to be separately organized. The clash occurred during an international meeting called by the *International Students Conference* (ISC) in Istanbul where the UNEF delegates tried without success to prevent the delegates from AGED to be accepted as members. Then, the opposition between the African students and the French students became still more blatant (*Dakar-Etudiant*, 5, February-March 1954: 3, Leney 2003: 390)⁴. The French students broke away and created the *Association générale des étudiants de France en Afrique noire* (AGEFAN) in 1956 which openly expressed its support for French colonialism⁵. Thereafter, the AGED was to be replaced by the UGEAO.

The birth of the UGEAO and its political role from 1956 to 1960.

The influence of the diasporic and earlier radicalised FEANF has been essential for the evolution of the UGEAO. The presence of leaders at the head of the nascent UGEAO such as

⁴ In another occasion the European students seem to have angered the African counterparts : the European refused to join a demonstration organized to protest against racist incidents that occurred in France (UGEAO, 22-25.12.1960, UCAD Archives 1B198)

⁵ The AGEFAN organized a special 'blood donor day' (*journée du sang*) where they invited the students to give their blood for the French troops in Algeria. This initiative provoked incidents with African students who supported the *Front de libération nationale* (FLN) in Algeria (Faye 2000 a : 203-4). However their activities remained limited compared to the UGEAO (Faye 2000a : 208-9). The association was still present on the campus in 1960 but there is no more documented presence in the next years.

Tidiane Baïdy Ly — he was to become one of the founders of the PAI in September 1957 advocating for both ‘immediate independence’ and ‘scientific socialism’ as opposed to Senghor’s ‘African socialism’ (CNP, 2013 ; Bianchini b 2016). — has already been noticed (Schachter-Morgenthau 1964: 156 ; Leney 2003: 392). However, if the PAI, has influenced the UGEAO leadership and its political guidelines, the UGEAO was a « mass organisation » that included other political or ideological tendencies whether progressive Catholic students, followers of Joseph Ki Zerbo or Albert Tevoedjre⁶ or reformist Muslim students grouped in the *Association musulmane des étudiants d'Afrique noire* (AMEAN)⁷.

Since its creation, the UGEAO has been considered as a significant socio-political actor. The organisation was invited at the first congress of the *Bloc progressiste sénégalais* (BPS), the main political party, lead by Mamadou Dia, the President-in-Office of the territorial government of Senegal and Leopold Sedar Senghor, then a member of the French parliament. They could also express their views in favor of independence at the RDA Congress of Bamako in September 1957 (de Benoist 1982: 352 ; Faye a 2000: 205-206). However the African politicians were criticized by the students for accepting the framework law (*loi-cadre*) that created territorial autonomous governments in 1956 (Faye b, 2000 : 242) The breach became obvious in 1958 when the UGEAO campaigned against the French African Community (*Communauté franco-africaine*) advocating for immediate independence. The links between the PAI but also the UGTAN or the *Conseil de la Jeunesse du Sénégal* (CJS) became stronger. Another activity organized by the UGEAO was the *Université populaire africaine* (UPA) according to a French model that had already been promoted after World War II by the *Groupes d'études communistes* (GEC) (Leney 2003: 384). Specifically, lectures were given to secondary school students by some University (Dakar-Etudiants, 1, April 1960).

During this period, the UGEAO and the FEANF developed close-knit relationship. Some former leaders of the UGEAO have played a prominent role in the FEANF such as Amady Aly

⁶ In Dakar, the catholic students have remained more under the grip of the catholic hierarchy and less prone to anticolonialist attitudes contrary to those in the metropole, for instance about the Algerian war (Faye 2000a: 2010-2011). However, in 1957, the Catholic students in Dakar, started also to express their views in favor of the decolonization and the independence of the African territories. (*Jeunesse d'Afrique*, 7, February 1957: 6-7). Later on, we can notice that some of these catholic students will become UGEAO leaders, for instance the Dahomean Emile Désiré Ologoudou, editor of *Jeunesse d'Afrique* in 1958 and deputy president of the UGEAO in 1960.

⁷ 'L'AMEAN s'inscrit dans la mouvance de l'*Union culturelle musulmane* (UCM) dont elle est membre.' (Faye 2000a: 213 ; see also : Schachter-Morgenthau 1964: 156). The AMEAN sided with the UGEAO against the French colonial warfare in Algeria. These muslim students criticized the traditional religious elites 'for their entrenched privileges and their cooperation with the French'. (Leney 2003: 390-91)

Dieng who was secretary general of the UGEAO in 1958 and afterwards, president of the FEANF in 1960. They also attended the same international events : international youth festivals in Moscow in 1957 and in Vienna in 1959, conference of the *International Union of Students* (IUS) in August 1956 in Prague and conference of the ISC in February 1959 in Lima (Dieng 2009: 99-106). Another similarity with the FEANF is that the UGEAO had joined in the pro-Eastern bloc UIS (Kane, in CNP, 2013: 161). Though, even if they were 'sister organisations', the members of FEANF were probably more radicals and politicized than the members of UGEAO where the radicalization process came later (Dieng, 2009, 172-173). Anyway, in a Cold War international context, both for the French and the Senegalese authorities, the student activists in Dakar or in Paris were considered as subversive elements, not to say Soviet proxies.

The Student movement in Dakar in the early years of the independence : the unfinished domestication of a rebel student-intelligentsia ⁸.

Whereas before 1960, the UGEAO (and previously the AGED) had primarily been in confrontation with the colonial administration and the French academic authorities, after the independence, the main adversary for the students was the Senegalese government led by Senghor. However if the Senegalese government and the French officials could have different point of views, they were minor discrepancies as they were linked by a formal and informal « neocolonial pact », This period coincided with the tenure of Claude Franck, a French teacher of Medicine, who stood as vice-chancellor of the University of Dakar from 1960 to 1964.

The first (and last) convention of the UGEAO in December 1960 : a statement against the neocolonialism without any compromise.

The first convention of the UGEAO was held at the University of Dakar between the 22nd and the 25th of December 1960. The general idea developed by the students was that if formal independence had become a reality, the struggle was still going on, against neocolonialism and imperialism, which was the same position as FEANF. Besides, the general report recalled that the struggle for independence was still going on in Algeria. It also denounced the suppression of the nationalist *Union des populations du Cameroun* (UPC), especially the recent assassination of its leader in exile, Felix Roland Moumié poisoned in Geneva by a French agent. Another concern for

⁸ The expression is borrowed from an illuminating study about the suppression of the students in Ouagadougou (Chouli 2009)

the students was the situation in Congo with the arrest of Patrice Lumumba and the secession of Katanga. About the issue of international students' relations, the UGEAO claimed for being a member of both UIE (IUS) and COSEC⁹ and advocated for a Pan-Africanist organisation of students. In the context of the Cold War, the UGEAO had joined the IUS because of its firm stance against colonialism and racism whereas the ISC-COSEC remained 'apolitical' about these issues. Though, the union never secured ties with the pro-Western organisation mainly because other African students associations were also members of ISC-COSEC (UGEAO, 22-25 12.1960. in : UCAD Archives, UGEAO 1B198). The international profile of the UGEAO was enhanced by the presence of several foreign delegations, from both IUS and ISC-COSEC but also from different countries as USSR, USA, China, Morocco, Tunisia and Ghana. The interest for international issues and the quest for 'geopolitical' models of emancipation was obvious among the UGEAO as it is reflected in its journals and its statements that were not only focused on the African continent : the Cuban revolution was particularly a matter of interest (Dakar-Etudiants, 3, 1961 ; Dakar-Etudiants, 1, 1962 ; Le Flambeau, 2, 1962).

However, the union convention also addressed more internal and more « corporatist » issues. Since 1958, the Union was organized in 'corporations' (one for each faculty) whereas the union leadership was concentrated in the hands of a governing council (*conseil d'administration*) ; then, a division of labour existed between this organ in charge of the « revolutionary politics » and the corporations in charge of the « bread-and-butter issues ». As a result of this organizational choice, the corporations were less politically engaged compared to the leadership itself. Another debated issue was the relations between the various territorial/national communities of students who had their own association in Dakar. At last, the UGEAO decided not to ask them to affiliate as for the FEANF. The formal reason was that these associations also included secondary schools students in the various countries of the ex-French West Africa (UGEAO, quoted above), but in retrospect, it can be seen as a first step towards the nationalisation of student politics. Thereafter, a new organisation specific to the Senegalese, the *Union générale des étudiants sénégalais* (UGES) was to be created in July 1961¹⁰.

It has not been possible to find out through the archive a breakdown membership according to nationalities , but it is clear that the UGEAO gathered students from the various territories of

⁹ *Coordinating Secretariat of National Students Unions*, the other name for ISC, the pro-Western international organisation in 1953, from a split in the IUS

¹⁰ According to the French secret services, the Conference was opened by Amath Dansokho, vice-president of the UGEAO and five out of seven members of the union's board were member of the PAI (Centre of the diplomatic archives of Courneuve, DAM 349/QO/93)

Francophone West Africa and was considered by the vice-chancellor's services as the association that effectively represented the student body (UCAD, 22.10.61). Besides, we must not forget that the Senegalese students were outnumbered by the bulk of the other African communities, especially the Dahomeans who were strongly represented in the militant segment of the UGEAO. This Panafricanist orientation was formally reflected in the leadership of the association : in 1960-1961, the Executive committee was presided by an Ivorian, Ibrahima Koné and among the eight other members, three were Dahomeans, two had come from Guinea, one from Mali, one from Niger and another one was Senegalese (Bureau, UGEAO, 1960)

According to another report presented in the convention (social affairs), while they were several complaints about the housing, for food and scholarship, the situation of the students in Dakar at that time was not miserable. Interestingly, the author of the report added that the action of the UGEAO should not to focus on mere corporatism because it could « blunt the combativeness of the students » (UGEAO, 22-24.12.1960).

On the sidelines of this event, occurred a revealing episode of the French authorities' attitude about African students involved in anti-colonial activism : two French students who were the sons of top officials in the French educational administration (the Dean of the Faculty of Letters and the Inspector of the Schools) were suspected by the French services to have attended the convention organized by « African extremists » (UCAD, 28.4.1961). Then, as soon as he was alerted, the dean of the Faculty of Literature wrote a letter to the vice-chancellor denying this version and saying that his son and his friend had just come to Dakar to spend the Christmas holidays and not to attend the UGEAO convention (UCAD, 30.4.1961), a version that the vice-chancellor transmitted to the French ambassador (UCAD, 2.5.1961) and supposedly, it has put an end to this matter. The radicalisation of the UGEAO had occurred in relation with the international decolonization process but it has remained limited to the campus. Then, the students would go one step further in the following weeks.

The first political mobilisation after independence : the demonstration against Lumumba's assassination in February 1961 and its aftermath

The 14th of February a crowd of students (around 250) gathered in front of the Building (Government headquarters) to protest against the death of Patrice Lumumba, prime minister of Congo and symbol of a real African nationalism for the anti-colonial UGEAO. The demonstration echoed another one organized in Paris by the FEANF the same day. Both the Senegalese

government and the French academic authorities were taken by surprise. The attitude of the latter is revealed by the archive : far from any apolitical academic position, behind the scenes, they behave as police informers. Each dean sent a report on the students strike and one of them collected leaflets issued by the PAI (UCAD, 16. 2. 1961a ;UCAD, 16. 2. 1961b). The Vice-Chancellor also sent a telegram to the ambassador to summarize the events (15.2.1961a). Furthermore, the administrator ('intendant') of the 'Cité Universitaire' wrote down the plate numbers of the *cars rapides* (minibus) used by the students to go downtown to the demonstration (15.2.1961b). The information was shared on both sides : the vice-chancellor also received a detailed account of the FEANF demonstration in Paris from the French secret services (UCAD, 27.2.1961).

Towards the suppression of the UGEAO : the interdiction of the Conference about the African University in December 1961.

In a context where the political system was shifting to a one-party state with the banning of the PAI and the UGTAN in 1960, we can imagine that the attitude of the UGEAO could be perceived as challenging the government and the ruling party. However, the first decision in the suppression of the UGEAO from the government occurred in a context that the French academic authorities did not perceived as politically subversive compared to the demonstration of February 1961. In August 1961, the UGEAO started to make contacts to prepare a Conference about the 'African University'. For the very first time, the UGEAO wanted to raise the issue of the africanisation of the University, moving beyond the initial assimilationist claims about the quality of education in Dakar compared to metropolitan higher education. The event would have had an international ambition with invitations sent to delegates from African unions and even African states. Several renowned intellectuals such as Joseph Ki Zerbo, Amadou Hampate Ba, Alioune Diop, Cheikh Anta Diop or Assane Seck would have expressed their views (UGEAO, 5.10.1961). After a waiting period of several weeks, in October, the government decided to forbid the conference (UCAD, 26.10.1961). The French vice-chancellor as well as another academic, Jean Devisse, who had been contacted by Jean Rous, the French adviser of Senghor, were not in favour of the refusal and tried to persuade the Senegalese authorities to reconsider such an authoritarian decision (UCAD, 23.11.1961). The French academics perceived the idea of the conference as a signal that the student union was becoming more 'moderate' (UCAD, no date) but this view was not shared by the government as it appears in the sharp answer made by the Minister of Education to the vice-chancellor (UCAD, 16.12.1961). Seemingly the government, especially the head of State, wanted to avoid that the rebellious UGEAO could gain some intellectual and political

legitimacy from such a prestigious event.

The government publicly justified the decision with vague reasons of public order, alleging that the conference was in fact a pretext for subversive agitation (Sénégal-Info, 92, 25-26. 12.1961). In his correspondence, the French vice-chancellor evoked the fact that one of the guest speakers, Assane Seck¹¹, junior teacher at the University, had just been charged for arms trafficking and was involved in a rebellion in Casamance against the government (UCAD, 18.12.1961).

The UGEAO denounced the attitude of the government and decided in December to organise its second convention during the very same period (UGEAO, 21.12.1961). Then a new ban was issued by the government. When the students decided to go on strike, the government maintained the same hard line (Le Monde, 27.12.1961). Moreover, the minister of information used a 'divide and rule' tactic when he said that the Senegalese government could not accept that non-Senegalese students could lead protest movements that they would not dare to organise in their own countries (Sénégal-Info, 92, 25-26. 12. 1961). Three members of the executive council (an Ivorian, a Dahomean and a Guinean) were arrested and then expelled (UCAD, 4.1.1962). The immediate reaction of the various national organisations from Dahomey, Upper Volta, Niger, Mauritania, Togo and Cameroun was to warn the University that they could no longer accept to study at a University where the academic freedoms were unreasonably infringed and in a country where they were at risk because of their nationality. Then, as consequence they warned the authorities that they could not stay any longer at the University of Dakar (Association des scolaires voltaïques, 22.12. 1961; Les étudiants mauritaniens à l'Université de Dakar, le 22.12. 1961; Association des étudiants togolais, section de l'UNETO, no date ; Mouvement « Jeune Togo », 23.12.1961; UGEED, section ouest-africaine, 23.12.1961 ; USN, 23.12.1961, in UCAD archives). The vice-chancellor embarrassed by the turn of events, managed to persuade these students to stay in Dakar and organized a scheme so that the expelled students could take their exams, as it appears in a letter in which one of the students expelled to Dahomey was thanking the vice-chancellor for his intervention (UCAD, 24.2.1962). Whatever the vice-chancellor did, in order to mitigate the consequences of the governmental attitude, it was a turning point : if until the end of 1961, the government had tolerated the dissident voice of the UGEAO within the academic space, henceforth, it was clear that a tough-minded attitude would prevail. Another important 'lesson' of this first student crisis in Dakar was the

¹¹ Assane Seck, a geographer, was one of the leaders of the *Parti du regroupement africain* (PRA), , who remained the only opposition party until 1966 when he became Minister of Education as its party was compelled to merge with the *Union progressiste sénégalaise* (UPS). In an autobiographic essay, he has gone back to the story explaining that it was a political fabrication in order to destabilize the PRA in Casamance which was a stronghold for the party since its birth in 1958 (Seck 2005: 120-30). Nowadays, the University of Ziguinchor carries the name of Assane Seck.

vulnerability of non-Senegalese students involved in a 'Panafrican' struggle with the Senegalese student body. At this time, these 'foreign' students were enough numerous to put pressure on the University authorities threatening them of fleeing Dakar. However, in 1968 especially, the story was to be repeated and the student activists from surrounding countries experienced that they were again on an ejection seat if they expressed their solidarity to their Senegalese counterparts on strike. The balkanisation of the African states that had been fought by radical anticolonial students appeared with the postcolonial states as a barrier for building up Panafricanist mass organisations, even among the students who were prone to support such ideas.

The reiterated interdiction of the UGEAO Convention in December 1962 in contrast to the governmental support to the Federation des étudiants libres de Dakar (FELD)

One year after the dispute over the Conference on the African University, the executive committee of UGEAO wrote to the Vice-Chancellor to ask him to make available premises to organise its second union convention (UGEAO, 12.11. 1962). As a strange coincidence, he received a few days later another demand from the new-born pro-government FELD (FELD, 27.11.1962). As he had already done before, the Senegalese government decided not to authorize UGEAO to hold its convention (UCAD, 5.12.1962) using the lack of acknowledgement of declaration as a legal excuse (Dakar-Matin, 13.12.1962.). The government went even further when he declared that the UGEAO was to be considered as a 'foreign association' (Le Monde, 15 Jan. 1962). Meanwhile, the FELD was given the right to organise an 'internal convention' outside the campus (UCAD, 11.12.1962). Behind these legal pretexts there were obvious political reasons as it was reported in a letter from the vice-chancellor to his French superior, the minister of Education (UCAD, 17.12.1962). The hardline official stance went on when the Senegalese minister of Higher Education asked the vice-chancellor to consider the FELD as the only representative of the student body at the board of the students' services (*Centre des Oeuvres universitaires*) (UCAD, 2.1.1963). Without any surprise, a new request of the UGEAO to organise its convention was rejected in May 1963 (UCAD, 7.5.1963).

The final step : the dissolution of the UGEAO symptomatic of the shift towards as a one-party State though unable to curb the activism of the students.

Even though the vice-chancellor had made attempts to adopt a accommodating attitude, he was finally perceived by the students as complicit of the suppression of the UGEAO decided by the government. At the end of its mandate, he was personally targeted by a leaflet issued by the

UGEAO not only for his practical collusion with the government but also for patronage in granting scholarships or plane tickets to students that he personally selected to go to France (UGEAO, 30.5.1964). Then, the social climate on the campus had worsened in 1962. A former leader of the UGEAO wrote that he returned to his home country in Niger because he felt 'demoralised' by the 'antidemocratic' atmosphere at the University of Dakar in 1962 (Dioulde 1995)¹². Hence, the dissolution of the UGEAO in November 1964 was a logical outcome¹³. The events at the University had also to be linked with the general climate of political repression that culminated in 1965 when the Senegalese police was tracking the PAI members using special law provisions¹⁴. The fact that some members of the executive committee (as the last President of the Union, Samba Dioulde Thiam) belonged to the clandestine PAI may have been considered as a sufficient reason to ban the UGEAO, followed a few months later by that of the UGES. Even the UPA was considered as subversive enough to be banned the same year (Leney 2003: 463). However, the government had won a Pyrrhic victory. The organisation he had pushed on the stage — the FELD — was to remain a 'puppet organisation' unable to attract a significant part of the student body. The rebellious spirit of the students was not about to disappear. The student movement would rise from the ashes of the UGEAO in February 1966, with the demonstration against the military coup that overthrew Nkrumah in Ghana (Thioub, 1992: 267-281).

Conclusion :

Unlike the history of the FEANF in the 1950's and afterwards the UED (1966-71), the history of the UGEAO has still remained in the shadow¹⁵. It is seemingly less epic than those of the

¹² Founding member of the Union des scolaires nigériens (USN) in 1959, he became the founding father of the sociological discipline in Niger (Smirnova 2015: 424).

¹³ Since early 1962, according to the French services, the gradual 'dismantling' of the UGEAO was already on the government's agenda because it was considered that the radical student organisation has lost a critical battle in December 1961 when they were prevented to organise their conference (Premier ministre, SDECE, 9.2.1962)

¹⁴ Since 1960, the emergency state enabled the Government to ban some organisations as the PAI and to arrest its militants. In 1965 the suppression of the PAI members rose to a higher level. In reaction against the intent of guerrilla warfare from the PAI, the law against seditious associations enabled the Government to legally prosecute any person suspected to be linked to these associations. Many alleged members or sympathizers were detained and sometimes tortured (Bianchini b, 2016)

¹⁵ Significantly, errors in date and confusions about the UGEAO in several contributions reveals a general lack of knowledge on this specific subject. For instance the demonstration of February 1966 is said to be the cause of the banning of the UGEAO whereas it occurred previously in November 1964 (Hesseling 1985: 255). About the same period, another author though very accurate about the FEANF, confuses the UED and the UDES with 'puppet organisations' backed by the authorities as was the FELD (Guimont 1997: 262). As for me, I must also acknowledge that I had previously underestimated the importance of the UGEAO activism in considering that the demonstration of February 1966 was the effective starting point of the student movement in Dakar (Bianchini 2002)

FEANF and the UED. However, even if its scope of action appears limited, the role of the UGEAO has been important in several aspects.

First, it has successfully enshrined the radical anti-colonialism inherited from the FEANF in West Africa, whereas one of the reasons for building universities in Africa was to avoid subversive politicisation of African students in the metropole in contact with leftist organisations (Bathily, Diouf & Mbodj 1992: 291-2). In addition, this process occurred in an unfavorable environment : the paradox of the independence of the former French territories lies in the fact the 'African nationalists' had been largely defeated by the French metropole and its local allies through different means (Chafer 2002: 227-35). Meanwhile, the main exception, Guinea, that the UGEAO supported enthusiastically (Dakar-Etudiants, 2, 1960) became also a problematic reference as Sekou Touré turned rapidly more and more autocratic and paranoiac, especially since 1961 when occurred the so-called 'teachers' plot and when he decided to suppress the PAI members, both Guineans and Senegalese (Pauthier, in Blum, Guidi & Rillon, 2016: 51-52). The Guinean students would become the core of a diasporic opposition during the 1960's and the 1970's, in Senegal and in France, and would be backed by the UGEAO and the FEANF, notwithstanding the anti colonial and anti-imperialist international image of Sekou Touré.

Second, it has also prepared the ground for the major confrontation to come in 1968, between the government and the students of the UED and the UDES : the idea of africanisation was already formulated in very clear terms since 1961-62 :

L'UGEAO lutte pour la décolonisation culturelle. Elle part du principe que l'Education – l'enseignement supérieur en particulier – est un attribut inaliénable de la souveraineté. Dans cet esprit, elle lutte pour que l'Université de Dakar soit placée quant à la gestion et à l'administration, intégralement sous l'autorité et le contrôle du Gouvernement sénégalais et non sous l'autorité et le contrôle du Gouvernement français (Le Flambeau, 2, 1962 in : Archives UCAD).¹⁶

Third, the UGEAO has been a melting pot for a militant generation that will play a significant role in political and intellectual spheres during the next decades. Several UGEAO activists in the early 1960's also members of the PAI will become later prominent left-wing political leaders in the 1980's and the 1990's as Amath Dansokho, Samba Dioulde Thiam in Senegal or Adama Touré in Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) were. Some former Dahomeans students leaders — as Gratien Capo-Chichi, president of the UGEAO in 1960-61 — will join the

¹⁶ Maybe the idea of the africanisation came from the Nigerien Abdou Moumouni, a founding member of the FEANF in 1950 and also of the PAI in 1957 who wrote a seminal book : *L'éducation en Afrique*, first published in 1964.

'*Ligueurs*', the civil wing of the Beninese military revolutionary regime led by Kerekou after 1974. Among the former UGEAO activists, are also to be found intellectual figures as Amady Aly Dieng (Senegalese) in economics and philosophy, Pathé Diagne (also Senegalese) in political science and linguistics, Alpha Ibrahima Sow (Guinean) in linguistics,, Laya Dioulde (Nigerian) in sociology, Ibrahima Ly (Malian) well-known as a novelist.

However, the UGEAO experimented the limits of its own Panafricanist links when the government chose to retaliate and expelled some of non-Senegalese students considered to be more radical or simply holding a position in the executive council. In the forthcoming crisis of 1968, the issue of the foreign students involved in the movement will be raised still more dramatically as they will be expelled in large numbers and excluded from the negotiations between the Senegalese students and the government (Bathily 1992: 112-3). Then, the Panafricanist idea that was put in practice by the African students gathering in territorial unions within a federal umbrella-organization, would fade away and the frame of student politics should become clearly national. Nascent African nations were not really 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1991) but rather new states with boundaries separating them from other African states and maintained links with the former colonial metropole. through unbalanced 'cooperation agreements' However, the dissemination of revolutionary ideologies during the 1960's and the 1970's among the students will still continue so that the various versions of 'geopolitical' marxism (from Moscow, Beijing or even Tirana...) will be the languages to express their rebellion against their pro-Western governments. But, the political and intellectual dimensions of the student's movement were not taken into account by the French academic staff in Dakar. Even though, the vice-chancellor and the deans of faculty were perfectly conscious of the representativity of the UGEAO and conversely persuaded of the lack of legitimacy of the pro-government FELD, they had a strong respect for authority, much more stronger than their sense of academic autonomy and so they were not ready to oppose a serious resistance to the infringements to academic freedom made by the government¹⁷. Moreover, they were still imbued with colonial prejudice : they were prompt to patronize the students' anti-colonial feelings in psychological terms as a symptom of youth immaturity. At last, the legal previsions for student representation, as in the metropole were very restrictive : the students' delegates were not sitting at the University Assembly except with a consultative voice for disciplinary issues. It was only for the catering services and housing in the *Centre des œuvres*

¹⁷ Significantly, when the government had clearly decided to eliminate the UGEAO, the attitude of the vice-chancellor was to persuade the Senegalese authorities to comply with the formal rules of academic freedom (Affaires étrangères, 14.2.1963) and to postpone the official announcement of the dismantling the UGEAO after the time of exams during June 1964 in order to avoid a violent reaction of the student body (Affaires étrangères, 10.6.,1964).

universitaires de Dakar (COUD) that the students were considered as social partners¹⁸.

Meanwhile, if they were patronized by the academic institution, the students in Dakar in the early 1960's were an élite (or in more accurate terms both a 'counter-élite' and a 'would-be élite'). Within a few years, their union had gained a cross-border recognition through the decolonizing process and also paradoxically through the Cold War rivalries. However, how would they use this position remained an open question : would it be to take advantage of the situation and become the new rulers in a neocolonial context as Frantz Fanon feared or will they accept after being at the forefront of the anticolonial liberation struggle to commit a class suicide as Amílcar Cabral imagined ? Student activism debates will be concerned by the issue during the next decade, especially after 1968.

At last, the position of the regime was torn between two positions : on one side, Senghor was sensitive regarding his international standing : as a founding father of the ideologies of 'negritude' and 'African socialism', he did not want to be considered as a dictator or even as an authoritarian leader silencing the youth and the intelligentsia as Houphouët-Boigny. However, Senghor was engaged in a bitter struggle for power against several opponents — the PAI, the PRA and also the Diaists since the crisis between Leopold Sedar Senghor and Mamadou Dia, the Prime Minister, in December 1962 —, and he did not want to be challenged by a younger and more nationalist political generation. According to his views, these newcomers had to join the one-party system which was de facto implemented, and to accept the dominant political framework and his ideology of 'African socialism'.

Whereas the process of monopolisation of power could appear complete in 1966 when the regime had compelled the PRA to merge within the UPS, Senghor had to realize very soon, in 1968, that he had underestimated the political agency of the rebellious students,. Student politics at the University of Dakar should still be placed high on the political agenda in Senegal as well as in other neighboring countries where the universities was also to become conflictive arenas where the

¹⁸ A comparative study between Ghana and Senegal has underscored the differences in colonial legacies : the British tradition was more in favor of autonomy and academic freedom compared to the French centralised one (Leney 2003: 498-9). However, I will go further into the comparison : the French process of decolonization has faced more than reluctance from various conservative forces within the period of the Fourth Republic (Schachter-Morgenthau, 1964: 32-74). Even after independence, among the French *cooperants* in Senegal, a phenomenon of colonial 'hysteresis' existed. It was all the more the case that the africanisation process was not obvious during the first decade of independence in Senegal. Another element which has to be mentioned in this comparison is the difference of ideologies between the two regimes : the socialist panafricanist ideology of Nkrumah was considered much more anti-Western compared to the Senghorian 'negritude' and his version of 'African socialism'. The Cold War winds were still blowing in decolonizing African countries in the 1960's...

ruling class power as chronically challenged by students' movements joined sometimes by other protesting actors.

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Interview : Samba Dioulde Thiam : Member of Parliament and former President of the UGEAO
(1962-64) (registered the 10 January 2015)