Introduction

Frantz Fanon was growing angry. It was 1960, and he was deep in Mali, a vast country, "fervent and brutal," a place where there was "no need of great speeches." The country had just gained independence from France weeks before, and its new president, Modibo Keita, "ever militant," had assured him of his support. Everything was set. Fanon and his colleagues, Algerian revolutionaries seeking to open a southern front for the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), had already avoided prying French eyes in Bamako and dodged what they took to be a kidnapping attempt in Monrovia. They were headed east and north, to Gao, Aguelhoc, Tessalit. So how to account for the roadblock, the intransigence?

> At Mopti, a snag. On the way out of town: a *gendarmes*' roadblock, and the sentries demand our passports. Difficult discussion because, in spite of the document from the Minister of the Interior [Madeira Keita], the *gendarmes* want to know our identities. Finally the commanding officer arrives, and I'm obliged to introduce myself. But it seems we're faced with a man who's after intelligence. He wants to know the nature of our mission and the roles of my companions.[1]

In the end, Fanon and his comrades get out of it. "Promising absolute secrecy," the officer lets the militants go, but that's not the end of their troubles. "The road from Mopti to Douentza is a joke," Fanon tells us.[2] Decades later, when I traveled it on a small but sturdy motorcycle, that joke wasn't funny anymore. But along that same road, some forms of political power were visible to the naked eye, just as in Fanon's roadblock

[1] Fanon (1964), 209. This and all other translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.
[2] Fanon (1964), 210.

experience.[3] What struck me then, and stays with me still, was the immobility of the state, represented by the somnolent gendarmes manning scattered checkpoints, and the humming power of international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), whose white Toyota Land Cruisers shot like arrows the length of the country. Neither Fanon nor the two Keitas could have imagined such a future, but they'd seen something like it in the past.[4] From the saddle of the motorbike, the easy conclusion was that the state was weak, the NGOs strong. That was wrong.

In 1960, people living in the West African Sahel became citizens of newly independent states. At the same time, many of those living along that long, thin band of arable land limning the Sahara found themselves foreigners in states to which they had long ties. In less than a generation, Sahelians would become the subjects of human rights campaigns and humanitarian interventions. *From Empires to NGOs* looks beyond the familiar political formations that came into being at the end of colonial rule – new nation-states and ex-empires – to consider newly transnational communities of solidarity and aid, social science and activism. In the two decades immediately after independence, precisely when its states were strongest and most ambitious, the postcolonial West African Sahel became a fertile terrain for the production of new forms of governmental rationality realized through NGOs. I term this new phenomeon "nongovernmentality," and argue that although its roots may lie partly in Europe and North America, it flowered, paradoxically, in the Sahel.[5] In this book, my question is not simply how African states exercised their new sovereignties,

[3] National highways in the Sahel can be particularly dense with memory and meaning; see Beck (2013); Klaeger (2013); Masquelier (2002).

[4] Modibo and Madeira were not of the same family.

[5] Of course, the term invokes Michel Foucault's governmentality. It is worth recalling his definition of that term, while recognizing that it was not particularly stable. For Foucault, the term identifies a form of power that takes a population, rather than individuals, as its object, political economy "as its major form of knowledge," and security forces as its "primary instrument"; (2007), 87–134, see esp. 108. With the term "nongovernmentality," I mean to invoke the assimilation of forms of governmental rationality by what are commonly referred to as nongovernmental (i.e., nonstate) organizations. I mean something different than do Michael Feher and Stephen Jackson. Feher refers to nongovernmental politics, "as that in which the governed as such are involved" [sic]; (2007), 13. His definition seems remarkably expansive as even totalitarian systems involve their subjects, but nothing akin to NGOs or civil society flourishes within them. As for Jackson, the predicate of his "nongovernmentality" is an atrophied state, particularly Zaire in the 1980s; (2005). The Sahelian case was different – nongovernmentality emerged earlier, and states were stronger – but I want to move away from a zero-sum analytics in which NGO strength is a function of state weakness. I note, too, that the politics I discuss in this book is largely secular. Only in the early 1990s did Islamic civil society associations begin to emerge. On

but how and why NGOs began to assume functions of it in a period when it was so highly valued.[6]

From Empires to NGOs attempts to break out of the colonial and postcolonial frame in which much of contemporary African history is situated. It does so by encompassing the decades of postwar economic growth punctuated by imperial reform (1946–60), African independence (after 1960), and coups d'état (notably in Mali in 1968 and in Niger in 1974).[7] No less significantly, it does so by looking east–west, along some of the many vectors tying the Sahel together as a coherent space, in addition to north–south, within the frame of the former European empires.[8] The gambit is simple: the complexity of postcolonial political memberships might best be analyzed on the margins and on the move. Thus, looking outward from Mali, I examine Sahelian political formations from oblique angles – such as from Khartoum to Paris – and at moments of rapid transition – such as independence. Doing so captures the elaboration of new forms of political rationality by governments and NGOs, and it poses the analytical challenge of reconciling the zone's deep historicity with the vision of the Sahel as a novel dystopic site that has predominated since the 1970s.

THE SAHEL

Originally referring to "the shore" of the Sahara (Arabic, *sahil*) in recent decades, the term "Sahel" has become almost synonymous with crisis. In the context of the region's recent turmoil, government officials from Algeria, the powerful northern neighbor, played on this idea in dubbing the zone "a terribly vast, terribly empty space."[9] Only a few weeks later, former presidents Jacques Chirac of France and Abdou Diouf of Senegal used the French newspaper *le Monde* as a tribune to call for "a new Marshall Plan" for the Sahel.[10] Did they know that some forty years earlier, during the drought and famine of the early 1970s, presidents

these, see notably Soares (2005a) and Schulz (2012); on Christian congregations, see broadly Cooper (2006); Piot (2010); Larkin and Myers in Akyeampong, ed. (2006).

[6] On the contingent, unfixed, yet durable quality of sovereignty and the attempts of ex-colonies and new nation-states to generate it, see Howland and White, eds., (2009).

[7] Here I take a cue from Ellis (2002) and Cooper (2002). Such a periodization contrasts with that adopted in some histories of humanitarianism, which sees the period from the end of World War Two to the end of the Cold War as one; Barnett (2011), Fassin (2011), but see de Waal (1998).

[8] Other approaches to the Sahel as a cultural and intellectual unit include Tidjani Alou (2010) and Wise (2001), to name only two.

[9] "l'Algérie defend 'l'intégrité territoriale du Mali,'" *le Monde* April 6, 2012.

[10] Diouf and Chirac, "Urgence à Tombouctou," *le Monde* July 13, 2012.

Hamani Diori of Niger and Sangoulé Lamizana of Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) had pounded podiums at international conferences, using the same analogy to make the same call?[11] It was then that the term "Sahel" first became part of the lexicon of governments and international NGOs. Versions of the word had long been present in the region's everyday languages, but from the 1970s, the term "Sahel" would evoke poverty for the world at large.[12] Decades later, much the same truths prevailed. Even as Salafist fighters destroyed the tombs of Sufis in Timbuktu, a famine loomed, and Chirac and Diouf lamented the fact that "the security crisis [was] overshadowing a dramatic food crisis," while a population bomb was ticking.[13] Such was their vision of the Sahel, battered between crises, a place where, analytically, you could pick your poison. Tellingly, the very idea of a Marshall Plan implied outside intervention. This was a job for the international community, from the former imperial states of Europe (i.e., "countries traditionally engaged in Africa") to "newly emergent powers." It was a job for strong states, and a question of government. Implicit, too, in their language was a widespread idea, one unremarkable in 2012, hardly thinkable in 1912, and scarcely nascent in 1962: the Sahel was an object of governance within the framework of a shared humanity. The tombs that the Salafists had destroyed were, after all, UNESCO world heritage sites, a fact of which the men wielding the pickaxes were well aware.[14]

[11] Amb. Fr. Niger to MAE, DAAM, *Synthèses périodiques*, #11, June 4–17, 1973; #12, June 18 to July 1, 1973, FPU 783; T. Johnson, "6 African Nations End 14-day Talks," *New York Times* Sept. 13, 1973.

[12] Bonnecase (2011). *Contra* Bonnecase and Alpha Gado Boureima, variants of the term "Sahel" derived from the same Arabic root give "*saheli*" in Bamanankan and "*saahal*" in Fulfuulde. Rather than suggesting that it was externally imposed (Bonnecase 2011; Alpha Gado 1993) or misunderstood (Lydon 2009), diverse uses and meanings of the term suggest that it was deeply grounded. No less interesting is the usage of a comparable term – Sudan – that is not synonymous with Sahel, referring as it does to the sub-Saharan region, with its roots in the venerable phrase, "*bilad al-Sudan*," or, "the land of the Blacks." The term Sudan was prevalent in internal and external discourse in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, however, it has faded almost entirely, except of course to designate the Republic of Sudan, even as "Sahel" has become more commonly used.

[13] Both the food crisis and the security crisis – but more important, the frames of understanding either and the modes of engaging with them – are the products of particular historical processes. They will wax and wane; the famine of 2012 never happened partly because of lessons learned since the 1970s. For a critical and historically informed appraisal of the balance between government imperatives and NGO activites in Sahelian food emergencies, see Crombé and Jézéquel (2007).

[14] YouTube clip, Ansar Dine at Timbuktu, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TBSD2VpAzE, last viewed December 11, 2013.

While the Sahel is an apt place to study tattered but resilient sovereignties and the emergence of nongovernmental politics, that history cannot be disentangled from the rise of neoliberalism in Africa. Still, the last decades of the region's colonial history and the first of its independence would constitute an odd moment in which to ground a study of neoliberalism. Indeed, to do so would be profoundly ahistorical. As an economic doctrine, neoliberalism's moment came only in the late 1970s. The World Bank's "Berg report," often taken to announce its arrival in Africa, was released in 1981.[15] In the years following, as much of the world "stumbled" toward implementing economic programs based on neoliberal doctrine, many heavily indebted African states would be shoved in that direction.[16] That history is beyond the horizons of this book, which offers a prehistory of neoliberal Africa, a sketch of the gap between state and government, one that later wedges – not all of them "neoliberal" – would widen. Here I ask how at particular moments certain characteristics of government itself began to be defined as beyond the prerogatives of the state.[17] My questions are propelled by those of others who have explored the deepening shadows along the border between the private and the public in contemporary Africa since the era of multiparty political contestation began in the 1990s.[18] My answers, however, are not. The chapters that follow demonstrate that. They ask, for instance, who gave meaning to the citizenships, European and African, roughly sketched out at independence? Migrants, rebels, policemen, and bare-knuckled diplomats. Not jurists and legislators. Who opened up the civic space for humanitarian action and human rights-oriented

[15] Harvey (2007); Harrison (2010); see also Ferguson (2006), 78, 84, 87. Senegal had already received loans conditioned on structural adjustment, starting in 1979; Harrison (2010), 38.

[16] Harvey (2007), 13; see also Konings (2011). For a competing view, see Van de Walle (2001). Mali may have been one of the most "adjusted" of the Sahelian countries, having had the most state monopolies before reform and none after, as did the Gambia; Naudet (1999), 80.

[17] I trace this phenomenon to a different and earlier moment than does, e.g., Charles Piot, whose study of Togo emphasizes the effects of the end of the Cold War for a variety of reasons that do not obtain in the Sahel; (2010), esp. 5.

[18] Some of the richest work on this theme advances the idea of private indirect government, which captures well the permeable boundaries between private and public, legal and illegal, and between gestures of authority and acts of accumulation; Hibou (1999; paraphrasing pg. 6), Diouf (1999), Mbembe (2001), Roitman (2005). Janet Roitman argues that although representations of state power through taxation and economic regulation shifted considerably in the era of multiparty democracy, such changes were indicative of the evolution rather than the demise of state sovereignty; (2005), 22, 200.

interventions that would later swell with local and international NGOs? Those who prized African sovereignty the most; people on the Left, not the Right.[19] And who first tried to prevent West Africans from migrating abroad? New states in the Sahel, notably Mali, but also Sudan. Not France.[20] Most importantly, these inquiries into human rights activism and humanitarian intervention demonstrate that it was not in the period of neoliberal reform during the late Cold War and after, but rather precisely in the wake of independence, when African sovereignty was mostly highly prized, that some of those who had worked to establish that sovereignty began to mortgage it.

From 1960, Sahelian governments secured their independence in different ways, but within a decade, all would be loosely labeled neocolonial regimes. I argue to the contrary that, in parts of the Sahel at least, independence was real, if awkwardly acquired and unevenly exercised. At that time, it was expressed most concretely by asserting autonomy from France in three key sectors reserved for Paris in the 1958 constitution of the French Fifth Republic: diplomacy, defense, and monetary policy. In rejecting French tutelage, Mali went further than any of its neighbors apart from Guinea. Within weeks of acceding to independence, the country had asserted its control over its diplomatic relations, notably with the FLN, as Fanon's visit demonstrates. A few weeks later, the country requested the departure of French forces from its military bases. By July 1962, the ruling Union Soudanaise-Rassemblement Démocratique Africaine (US-RDA) had created a new currency for the new nation. The Malian franc was designed to be "a declaration of political and economic war" against France, President Modibo Keita declared in a closed meeting of the Party's central committee.[21] So by what measure was Mali neocolonial?

Labeling Sahelian states neoliberal is no more useful in analyzing the present than dismissing them as neocolonial was in the past, and it may be no more accurate. By the same token, the effects of neoliberal programs on African sovereignty can neither be ignored nor assumed; they must be demonstrated. They can be paradoxical Neoliberal narrowing of state prerogatives may strengthen the state's ability to fulfill its most essential functions – reinforcing, for example, the customs

[19] This argument contrasts with the premises of a broader literature on NGOs in Africa; for a review, see Hearn (2007).
[20] Although the British empire also claimed vast tracts of the Sahel, my attention is focused on the formerly French territories and, consequently, on their imperial government.
[21] *Procès-Verbal* [hereafter, P-V], BPN, August 7, 1962, BPNCMLN 77.

service in Ghana.[22] Historical analyses of Africa's "past in the present" suggest that this should be no surprise. After all, if many of Africa's states act as "gatekeepers" with the limited ambition of controlling linkages between foreign capital and domestic economies,[23] one would expect customs and border control to play a vital role in anchoring their future. On the other hand, the gatekeeper metaphor is of greater help in understanding the flow of commodities and capital (at least in the formal sphere) than it is in accounting for the volume and the economic significance of international migration in much of sub-Saharan Africa, which is a theme of this book. By and large, Sahelian states, with their long loose borders, have failed to control either, and their own policies and those of their neighbors have made smuggling of goods and people ever more lucrative. Farther north in the Sahara, where I do not linger at length, there are indeed "gates," – in the form of taxes levied by armed groups – but states do not keep them.[24]

As a zone of intense mobility and uneven sovereignties, the Sahel offers rich potential for studying evolving political affinities and novel forms of postcolonial politics, as expressed through humanitarianism and human rights. From the Sahel, one sees clearly the emergence of the "politics of the governed," or what Partha Chatterjee calls the politics of "most of the world," awkwardly straddling state and civil society, loosely rooted in the thin but vital soil of the latter.[25] Still, the core of my project is not the Sahel as a locale. Rather, it is the Sahel as an object of governance, investigation, and intervention. It is the "political Sahel," not the geographic one.[26] In the twentieth century, the West African Sahel stretched from Senegal to the Sudanese provinces of Darfur and Kordofan and beyond. From the late nineteenth century, the zone had fallen under French and British rule.

[22] Chalfin (2010). Departing from different empirical examples, which nonetheless included the privatization of customs, Hibou arrived at a similar argument; Hibou (1999), esp. 6–7. See also Roitman (2005), esp. 22; Mbembe (2001), ch. 2.

[23] Cooper (2002).

[24] Scheele (2012); on the Lake Chad basin, Roitman (2005).

[25] Chatterjee (2004), 3–4. One can see similar processes at work in South Africa and Cameroon, where the soil is much thicker; Robins (2008); Konings (2011).

[26] Giri (1983), 12. By way of example, nine states comprise the *Comité inter-états de lutte contre la sécheresse au Sahel* (CILSS), created in 1976. They include Senegal, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Chad, and Cape Verde. This is clearly the "political Sahel," inasmuch as Cape Verde is an archipelago and not a classically "Sahelian" country. The first three of these countries, Mali in particular, are at the center of my project.

However, migratory, religious, and kinship networks continued to link parts of the Sahel across imperial boundaries, and successive waves of pastoralists and pilgrims from West Africa settled in Sudan in the first half of the twentieth century. After independence, circa 1960, African nation-states restricted movement across their borders, but ties of migration, activism, and intellectual life bound most of the countries of the Sahel to their neighbors and to postimperial France. Such transimperial and transnational filaments constitute the axes along which my analysis proceeds.

A ROADMAP

Rather than taking the West African Sahel as a place from which to ask the familiar question, "What is the state?" this book asks, "What is government?" I attempt to think through that question – idiosyncratically, perhaps irregularly – in relation to the Sahel. I do so in an opportunistic fashion. Rather than proposing a broad synthesis, the argument coalesces around particular events, or moments when something happens and common sense is both disrupted and re-created. The book is structured around three pairs of chapters, the pairs arranged chronologically: the creation of a society and a public during the period of anticolonial politics; the elaboration of citizenship and belonging by migrants, in the context of decolonization; the rise of humanitarianism and human rights activism as idioms of political engagement in the 1970s. In all but one chapter, that on humanitarian relief, Madeira Keita looms large. The steady presence of the man whose signature Fanon waved at the roadblock compels us to ask how, in the wake of an era in which independence was so highly prized, it was pawned and devalued in the decades to come.

Our story begins out of place, in Conakry, Guinea. There, in the 1940s, a nascent anticolonial politics began to intertwine with emerging forms of social scientific inquiry. That episode itself was brief, beginning, in my telling, when two young men met on a gangplank at the harbor, interrupted when they parted a few months later in a dark and dreary airport. In that postwar moment of imperial reform, Madeira Keita, a West African research assistant and anticolonial leader, and Georges Balandier, a French social scientist, began to elaborate new and particular forms of politics and knowledge, the effects of which would last longer than their relationship. Chapter 1 asserts that the party-state that Keita helped to found in postcolonial Mali understood the object of government to be not only the economy, but society itself. Once in power, the party would identify social forces as the primary constraint on economic growth; its first task

was to counter them. It set out to govern aggressively, taking society as its site of intervention, but would fail to nurture any sense of a public or a common good beyond an aggrieved nationalism. Although an idea of the social became domesticated or naturalized, this was a society with precious little place for the "civil," a concept which, along with "the market," would become one of the legitimate arenas of neoliberal politics in future decades.[27] The generative tension between social science and political activism that Keita and Balandier represented is a theme that runs throughout the remainder of the book, as does Keita's own presence.

If Chapter 1 argues that the object of government was society, Chapter 2 asks what forces composed that society and the emergent citizenry with which it overlapped. The years from 1946 through 1960 represent a particularly open political moment across French West Africa. They were marked by the end of the *indigénat* (or "Native" status and the coercive regime that defined it), gradual mass enfranchisement, notably of women, and the emergence of party politics, which was often fiercely contested. In Mali, as the anticolonial US-RDA took power, its leaders dismantled the chieftaincy, which had long been a pillar of colonial rule. Such minor revolutions built up, as if brick by brick, the necessary conditions for a form of egalitarian citizenship. That open moment of postwar political reform both culminated and closed down with independence as the party invested the state.[28] As a key actor in those events, Madeira Keita would play an outsized role in establishing new practices of government in Mali and beyond.

The pair of chapters that follow explore what new citizenships meant, at home and abroad, at the moment when they would have seemed to matter most, as empires dissolved and Sahelian states struggled to establish their independence. In these chapters, I understand the state as an unfinished project, as an entity coming into being, and I argue that migrants, bureaucrats, and diplomats created new forms of political belonging through a haphazard set of practices. Thus, the second pair of chapters centers on African movement and attempts to control it. It accounts for poles of attraction distinct from the colonial metropoles and informed by logics other than exclusively imperial ones. As a pair, these chapters juxtapose West African migration to Sudan, which is little studied, with that toward

[27] Hibou (1999). Ironically, the remnants of the party would work to re-create something like civil society years later, while in exile; see ch. 6.

[28] I borrow the language of opening and closing from Cooper (2005; 2008). On the party-state, see Zolberg (1966).

France, much better known. This combination is an unusual one, and not only because of the sharp divide that exists between those who study immigration to the rich countries of the world and those who study "South–South" migrations. Pairing these two phenomena requires moving along two distinct axes: one, West–East across the Sahel, is the subject of Chapter 3; the other, South–North between Africa and France, is the subject of Chapter 4. Pairing them also requires moving between an analysis grounded in the long-term historical trends of a region – one that prizes the depth and resonance of a particular past partly for its own sake – to a truncated history of European empires, their dissolution, and the rise of new postcolonial states. The two chapters complement each other: one phenomenon characterized by its historicity; the other manifesting a contemporary governmental rationality. One is *hajj*, the other, loosely speaking, *hijra*.

By placing in the same frame two such divergent phenomena as pilgrimage across the Sahel and labor migration to France, this pair of chapters offers a new vision of postimperial formations, of the links and disconnections that existed within, across, and after imperial rule, and of the possibilities and failures of new forms of politics and political belonging. In the Sahel, it was this combination of historicity and governmentality, these crises of membership, moments of conflict and exchange, and networks of affinity – as well as the forms of political discourse they generated and the governmental practices on which they relied – that ultimately composed and gave meaning to the nebulous condition dubbed "postcolonial." That condition would continue to evolve in the 1970s as the political idioms in which it was anchored, notably those of sovereignty and citizenship, almost simultaneously gained greater bite in the context of immigration control and lost some of their purchase to an emergent politics predicated on the existence of a shared, nonpolitical, humanity. Thus the next pair of chapters turn to humanitarianism, development, and human rights activism.

"Governing Famine," the fifth chapter, studies the constellations of political authority, international activism, and postcolonial affinity that emerged from the Sahelian drought and famine of 1973–74 and the humanitarian interventions the crisis provoked. This chapter moves between multiple African nation-states, the populations they claimed, and the world of nongovernmental organizations to analyze the famine as an episode in international history and as a formative moment in the shape of the new Sahel. Rather than exploring the causes of the famine, I address the causes of its relief, asking how external empathy translated