

OCCASIONAL  
PAPERS

*Number 38*

**CÔTE D'IVOIRE IN CRISIS:  
THE SINS OF THE FATHERS  
OR HOUPHOUËT-BOIGNY'S  
REVENGE?**

*Dr. Cyril K. Daddieh*

THE INSTITUTE OF  
ECONOMIC AFFAIRS  
ACCRA, GHANA

The Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) Ghana was founded in October 1989 as an independent, non-governmental Institution dedicated to the establishment and strengthening of a market economy and a democratic, free and open society. It considers improvements in the legal, social and political institutions as necessary conditions for sustained economic growth and human development.

The IEA supports research, and promotes and publishes studies on important economic, socio-political and legal issues, in order to enhance understanding of public policy.

Further information may be obtained from Publication Officer, Institute of Economic Affairs, P. O. Box 01936, Christiansborg, Accra, Ghana

Tel: 233-21-776641 / 7795 68/9

Fax: 233-21-776724

**ISBN: 9988-584-47-4**

**CÔTE D'IVOIRE IN CRISIS: THE  
SINS OF THE FATHERS OR  
HOUPHOUËT-BOIGNY'S  
REVENGE?**

**DR. CYRIL DADDIEH**



An Institute of Economic Affairs Publication

© 2003 Copyright by Institute of Economic Affairs

Printed in Ghana. All rights reserved. No part of this work may be published, used, or reproduced in any manner without the written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations in critical articles and reviews.

Publication of this work signifies that the Institute of Economic Affairs regards it as a competent treatment worthy of public consideration. The findings, interpretations and conclusions of this paper are, however, entirely those of the author, and should not be attributed to the Institute of Economic Affairs or any organizations that support it.

## CÔTE D'IVOIRE IN CRISIS: THE SINS OF THE FATHERS OR HOUPHOUËT-BOIGNY'S REVENGE?

### PREFACE

Côte d'Ivoire should be of special interest to all Ghanaians, not only because of shared socio-cultural, religious, and ecologic ties and fault lines, but also because of the lessons that can be learned from our seemingly divergent political experiences. Shortly after our Independence celebrations, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah embarked on his first official visit to Conakry, Guinea, with a stopover in Abidjan on April 5, 1957. The following evening, Félix Houphouët-Boigny hosted a dinner in honor of Nkrumah during which he toasted Nkrumah's success, and wished him well in his chosen path of independence for Ghana.<sup>1</sup> He made it clear that he had no intention of following Nkrumah's footsteps or going the Ghanaian way. Not only that, he issued a challenge for the two of them to rendez-vous a decade later to compare their countries' achievements based on their diametrically opposed choices. This bet became known as the famous "West African wager." Jon Woronof, who was the first to draw up a balance sheet of the two experiments, reported that the "best man," Houphouët-Boigny, had won. Nkrumah, after all, had been deposed by the Ghanaian military in 1966, whereas Houphouët-Boigny had not only consolidated political power, but his country was experiencing an unprecedented economic boom.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, Houphouët-Boigny was invited but did not turn up for Ghana's independence celebrations.

<sup>2</sup> Jon Woronoff, *West African Wager* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1972).

Writing at roughly the same time about the development of capitalism in Côte d'Ivoire, Samir Amin, whose critical writings remain some of the most insightful and even prescient in light of current developments, had this to say: "Nobody who is interested in the future of the continent has the right to ignore this experience, even if he is of Socialist conviction and, because of this conviction, the Capitalist path of development appears regrettable to him."<sup>3</sup> He cast doubt on the sustainability of the Ivorian experience, noting that the Ivorian miracle of the 1960s and 1970s was merely a reproduction, albeit sixty years later, of what had happened in the Gold Coast under British colonial rule. This cautionary insight was fascinating in itself. A moment ago, I said that Amin was prescient. Indeed, he virtually predicted much of what is happening in Côte d'Ivoire today. A case in point is his remark that "The country's economic growth was accompanied by a no less substantial increase in population and by rapid urbanization.... *The assimilation and naturalization of these foreign workers constitute one of the Ivory Coast's most serious problems.*"<sup>4</sup> That problem apparently remains intractable.

Since the author's days in Secondary School, he has found Côte d'Ivoire a compelling story. Naturally, his chosen profession as a student of African politics he has been drawn to the country. He sound found Samir Amin's work on the country stimulating, and tried to build on his insightful analysis. Like him, the author have tried to explain Côte d'Ivoire using the tools of political economy.<sup>5</sup> Increasingly, however, the author has come to realize that a more comprehensive understanding of Côte d'Ivoire's experiences will require insights not just from political economy, but also from political culture, and even psycho-analytical studies of Ivorian

---

<sup>3</sup> Samir Amin, "Capitalism and Development in the Ivory Coast," in Irvin L. Markovitz (ed.), *African Politics and Society* (New York: Free Press, 1970), p. 278.

<sup>4</sup> Samir Amin, *Neo-colonialism in West Africa* (New York: Monthly Review, 1973), pp. 52-53.

<sup>5</sup> For an earlier attempt, see Cyril Kofie Daddieh, "Ivory Coast," in Timothy M. Shaw and Olajide Aluko (eds.), *The Political Economy of African Foreign Policy: Comparative Analysis* (New York: St. Martin's Press), pp. 122-144.

political elites. Explorations of Ivorian political culture and psychoanalysis of its leaders are clearly beyond the scope of this presentation.

Suffice it to say that an enhanced understanding of the current political crisis would at least require closer attention to be paid to the political and economic strategies and winning tactics employed by the late President Houphouët-Boigny and barons of the ruling PDCI to consolidate power and extend their long lease on Ivorian political life. The author will return to this point later. What is undeniable is that post-independence political developments created a situation of political enclosure, ensuring that development of an independent judiciary and the rule of law, and of genuine democratic institutions would be still-born. As in Ghana, and elsewhere in Africa, political enclosure produced atrophy of the ruling party and other State institutions, and a concomitant loss of confidence in the impartiality of the legal system and security personnel, among a large segment of the population. When the economic benefits/resources that had mediated resentment of the monopoly control of power by some 320 families,<sup>6</sup> and elite malfeasance began to diminish, latent conflicts began to bubble to the surface. The increased population and rapid urbanization, growing unemployment, the unresolved issue of the necessity of assimilation and naturalization of foreign workers, some of whom had lived in Côte d'Ivoire for several generations, and the growing competition for access to increasingly scarce public sector jobs, schools, and land, all became nettlesome problems for Houphouët-Boigny's successors to resolve. In their frantic search for quick and easy solutions, they have managed to obfuscate the true nature of the conflict by transforming what Michael Cohen had described as a "relative deprivation conflict" (involving competition for power and resources between the ruling class and the better-off members

---

<sup>6</sup>For more on these families, see Tessy Bakary, "Elite Transformation and Political Succession," in I. William Zartman and Christopher Delgado (eds.), *The Political Economy of Ivory Coast* (New York: Praeger, 1984), pp. 38-46.

of the ruled class) and "mass conflict" (involving competition for power and resources between the ruling class and the mass of the population),<sup>7</sup> into open ethnic-based warfare. It is this manipulation and politicization of ethnicity by all sides and the concomitant pursuit of exclusionary ethnic politics that Houphouët-Boigny would most certainly not have approved of, and which must cause him to roll in his grave. But in a perverse way it also affirms his conviction that the country was not ripe for open competitive politics. In his most categorical statement on the subject in 1985, he considered multipartyism a setback and a luxury that Côte d'Ivoire could not afford because the parties would be ethnic-based and this would undermine Ivorian national unity.<sup>8</sup> It is in this light that what has happened to Bédié, whose clumsy pursuit of ivoirité produced the turmoil to begin with, leading to his loss of the presidency, to Gueï - who could have changed course but did not and subsequently paid dearly with his own life, - to his unrepentant "son," Gbagbo, - now under siege but who was particularly responsible for opening the floodgates of multipartyism in 1990, - must be viewed as Houphouët-Boigny's revenge.

Mrs. Jean Mensa  
Administrator  
Institute of Economic Affairs

---

<sup>7</sup>See Michael A. Cohen, *Urban Policy and Political Conflict in Africa: A Study of the Ivory Coast* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 16.

<sup>8</sup>See *Fraternité-Hebdo, Documents du Parti: La Conférence de Presse du Président de la République. Président du PDCI-RDA* (Abidjan: Fraternité-Hebdo Editions, 1985), pp. 52-54.



## INTRODUCTION

For nearly three decades following independence in 1960, Côte d'Ivoire was widely regarded as an exemplary economic success story at the same time as it was touted for its unprecedented political stability. In deed, given the apparent mayhem surrounding her in the West African sub-region and elsewhere on the continent, Côte d'Ivoire often appeared as the lone bright star in the African political firmament. The country's success was epitomized by an impressive economic boom, driven largely by export cash crop production, and extensive infrastructure development that literally transformed the physical appearance of the country. Added to this was a remarkable array of import-substitution industries, regional political influence and international diplomatic acclaim, as well as peaceful coexistence among her diverse ethnic, religious and regional groups, her class fractions and expatriate communities. It was also considered a model of political stability, as a result of the long and uninterrupted reign of its charismatic founding father, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, and the single party, the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) from independence in 1960 until his death in 1993, and the subsequent unexpected overthrow of the party in 1999.

However, in reality, Côte d'Ivoire had been in the economic doldrums since the early 1980s. The downturn in the Ivorian economy, popularly known as *conjuncture*, was coupled with the rather unpalatable decision to embrace IMF and World Bank-inspired austerity measures which dictated the slashing of salaries of government employees, reductions in producer prices for cocoa and coffee, the mainstays of the economy, imposition of a "solidarity tax" on incomes in the private sector, and so on. All this provoked widespread popular discontent, which was followed by overt expressions of political grievances, demands, and challenges from a variety of civil society organizations and from even the once trusted and loyal military. The regime's difficulties were compounded by public perception of unchecked official corruption, economic mismanagement, and unfair distribution of the pain of structural adjustment, as well as uneasiness over the

continuing lack of clarity regarding the succession arrangements. The sustained intensity and expanding scope of the opposition to the government and its bitter policy pills, and the mounting social unrest convinced a reluctant, but still astute, President Houphouët-Boigny to lift the ban on political parties and opposition political activities, and to face his first multiparty Parliamentary and Presidential elections in 1990. Suddenly, the transition to both democracy and the long awaited post-Houphouët-Boigny era appeared to be underway.

While the ruling PDCI and President Houphouët-Boigny easily won the 1990 elections, Ivorian society was far from being pacified. Three years later, the country narrowly averted a succession crisis, when the long-serving President Houphouët-Boigny died, on December 7, 1993, and the reigns of government were turned over to his heir apparent, Henri Konan Bédié, then president of the National Assembly. President Bédié's legitimacy was challenged almost immediately by Prime Minister Alassane Dramane Ouattara and some opposition leaders. The new President's position was made even more tenuous by the fact that he lacked the charisma and political acumen of his more revered predecessor. Nevertheless, the country's political elite agreed to bury the hatchet while they mourned the death of *Le Vieux* (the wise "old man"), and prepared to give him a lavishly dignified burial.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the country weathered the storm of currency devaluation in January 1994 much better than most of its regional counterparts. However, social and political unrest continued unabated until the death-knell was sounded by the military on Christmas Eve 1999, producing the country's first successful military coup d'état against President Bédié. The entrenched power of the ruling PDCI was swept aside with astonishing ease, and replaced by a joint civilian-military junta under the leadership of General Robert

---

<sup>9</sup>For more on the twin issues of presidential funeral and currency devaluation, see Claudine Vidal, "Côte d'Ivoire: Funérailles Présidentielles et Dévaluation entre Décembre 1993 et Mars 1994," in *L'Afrique politique 1995: Le Meilleur, Le Pire et L'Incertain* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1995), pp. 31-46.

Gueï. Since then, Côte d'Ivoire has been caught in a dangerous vortex of political violence, including abductions and gruesome killings by shadowy death squads, and a virtual partition of the country.

In short, the long cycle of economic success, peace and stability, and concomitant elite cohesion, that had characterized the country since Independence has come to an ignoble end. The country seems to have entered a new postcolonial phase marked by a long nightmarish struggle for control of the State, and for personal survival. Since the highly flawed October 2000 elections, ethnic-based clashes between supporters of Ouattara's Rally of Republicans (Rassemblement des Républicains, RDR) and Laurent Gbagbo's Ivorian Popular Front (Front Populaire Ivoirien, FPI) have multiplied, and taken a terrible human toll. The crisis has been exacerbated by the multiplication of coup attempts, the most important of which was the one staged by ethnic-based factions on September 19, 2002. While the coup itself was foiled, it produced a dangerous partition of the country into two, with the government clinging to the south, the rebels holding on to the north and a corner of the "wild West", and the French military and ECOWAS troops providing a buffer and monitoring a shaky truce. Having had a taste of power, the hitherto apolitical and loyal military has allowed itself to be drawn into the fratricidal game of Ivorian politics, with any neutrality it may have had probably shattered for good.<sup>10</sup>

This presentation is intended to offer some historically informed reflections on the political economy of Côte d'Ivoire which may enhance our understanding of this dramatic reversal of political and social fortunes of a country once heralded for its prosperity and stability. It must be acknowledged that Côte d'Ivoire had

---

<sup>10</sup>Incidentally, General Robert Gueï whose successful Y2K coup provided the template for the subsequent coup attempts was implicated by the government in this latest coup. He and his wife were reportedly killed by government troops. General Lassana Palenfo and the Interior Minister, Emile Boga Doudou, also perished in the fighting, along with some 300 civilians.

experienced long periods of success followed by an equally prolonged economic downturn, that has in part produced the current political paralysis. The main thrust of my argument is that both the Ivorian economic miracle of the 1960s and 1970s and the current debacle are the results of the strategic and tactical choices made by Ivorian elites in the formative years of Ivorian independent statehood in the early 1950s. As indicated earlier, these strategic economic choices and political tactics, what I have heuristically characterized as "Houphouët-Boigny's political project," promoted economic prosperity, regime longevity, elite cohesion, and ethnic accommodation. They also sowed the seeds for the current harvest of political thorns. And, in that regard, they may be aptly described as "the sins of the fathers."

First and foremost, the current crisis reflects the virtual collapse of Houphouët-Boigny's political project barely ten years after his exit from the Ivorian political scene. Second, it reflects a continuing crisis of accumulation – a crisis that has been extant since the early 1980s – and which had already seriously eroded the basis of legitimacy of the PDCI government and leadership even before *Le Vieux's* death. Third, the issues surrounding the elections, including the resurgence of ethnic violence, underscore the inability, or unwillingness, of Ivorian political elites to forge a durable consensus around both the succession and democratic transition arrangements.<sup>11</sup> Finally, the crisis reveals the inability of the post-Houphouët leaders to manage the admittedly difficult legacy that was bequeathed to them, with tact, sensitivity, and wisdom.

In sum, the current debacle is a manifestation of a crisis of accumulation leading to socioeconomic and political blockage and the intensified search by political elites, and even ordinary Ivorians, to maximize their prospects for accumulation, or minimize their current or future losses, through rather dubious or questionable

---

<sup>11</sup>For more on this "unfinished business of succession and democratic transition," see Cyril K. Daddieh, "Elections and Ethnic Violence in Cote d'Ivoire: The Unfinished Business of Succession and Democratic Transition," in *AFRICAN ISSUES*, Vol. XXIX/1&2 (2001), pp. 14-19.

tactics, including *ivoirité*, mutinies, coups, banditry, land seizures, and so on. For the most part, this breed of leaders, whose policies and personal animosities have brought the country to the brink, were all conceived, as it were, by Houphouët-Boigny. As such, they are “all the president’s men,” another reason we can talk about the “sins of the fathers.” The long term resolution to the current crisis will require sustained economic recovery leading to significant job creation and private accumulation, independent of State sponsorship, coupled with the kind of genuine democratization that responds to the interests and concerns of all the communities that make up the Ivorian polity. Success also hinges on a re-engagement of Côte d’Ivoire’s traditional partners and patrons, as well as the nurturing of a democratic and stable regional political economy and order.

## HOUPHOUËT-BOIGNY’S POLITICAL PROJECT: THE ROAD TO SUCCESS AND BACK?

It is important to recall those significant historical developments that shaped the postcolonial political economy of Côte d’Ivoire, and the subsequent trajectory of the emerging state. Côte d’Ivoire became a French colony in March 1893, and was incorporated in 1904 into the Federation of French West Africa (*Afrique Occidentale Française*, AOF) with its capital in Dakar, Senegal. In 1932, Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) was attached to the country and became an integral part of northern Côte d’Ivoire only to be decoupled from it and turned into a separate colony in 1947. Meanwhile, in 1944 Gabriel Dadié and other members of an emerging class of indigenous planters approached Houphouët-Boigny and persuaded him to lead them in organizing an exclusively African agricultural union.<sup>12</sup> The *Syndicat Agricole Africain* (SAA) was launched in July 1944 to challenge the entrenched power of French planters and to resist perceived injustices in colonial policy toward indigenous producers, such as discriminatory pricing, unequal access to

---

<sup>12</sup>Incidentally, the European (French) planters had formed their own exclusive union, the *Syndicat Agricole de Cote d’Ivoire*, seven years earlier, in 1937.

official credit, forced labor, and so on. Among other interests, the SAA sought equal access to a free labor market in which their members stood a better chance of competing for agricultural workers. This would enable them to expand their landholdings and extend commodity production. An interesting sidebar regarding Houphouët's early "activism" is that it may have been prompted by the sting of the insult he felt personally, when a French planter attempted to justify price discrimination in 1944 by telling him "You want to be paid the same price for your one kilogram of coffee for mine? That is stupid! As for me, I eat bread while you devour yams."<sup>13</sup>

Evidently French colonial ambitions and related racial and economic discrimination, including the despised forced labor laws, produced a backlash in Abidjan, as elsewhere in French West Africa, during the interwar years. Meanwhile, the political changes wrought by World War II in Europe, and the contribution of Africans to the European liberation effort, made demands for changes in Euro-African relations inevitable. Seizing the opportunity, Houphouët-Boigny, Sékou Touré of Guinea, and other francophone West African elites, met in October 1946 in Bamako (capital of French Soudan, now Mali) and formed the pan-territorial African Democratic Assembly (*Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* or RDA). This served as the umbrella organization under which the various territorial parties that emerged, such as the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (*Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire* or PDCI-RDA), and the Democratic Party of Guinea (*Parti Démocratique de Guinée* or PDG-RDA) were to rally. Although some of the leaders, men like the Secretary-General Gabriel d'Arboussier, were more defiant and uncompromising toward the French, the RDA and its territorial affiliates were, on the whole, reformist rather than radical or revolutionary. They did not advocate immediate or even distant self-government for each of their countries. Instead, they sought to win minimal political rights for Africans.<sup>14</sup> None proved more successful at the new postwar political game in Paris

---

<sup>13</sup>Quoted in F. O. Alalade, "President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the Ivory Coast, and France," *Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1975), p. 122.

<sup>14</sup>In that sense, comparatively, they were more like the leaders of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC).

than Houphouët-Boigny. He spent fifteen years in the French Parliament and served in six governments. Along with Lamine Guèye of Senegal, he was also credited with orchestrating the abolition of forced labor and putting an end to the hated 'indigénat' in 1946.

However, even Houphouët-Boigny and his PDCI had a shaky beginning. Since emerging African parties needed affiliation with metropolitan parties in the French National Assembly, for both visibility and organizational support, RDA leaders joined various leftist parties. The PDCI-RDA took a calculated risk by entering into a tactical alliance with the French Communist Party (PCF), in an effort to advance African claims. Although the PDCI-RDA alliance with the Communists was remarkably short-lived (1946-1950), it provoked tremendous French government hostility, especially after the Communists left the French cabinet in 1947. In 1949, following the recall of the more sympathetic Governor Latrille, Governor Péchoux was posted to the country, apparently with instructions to crush the PDCI-RDA. He unleashed brutal repression that claimed the lives of several dozen members of the PDCI. To hamstring the party, the colonial authorities banned its meetings, imprisoned activists, bribed wavering leaders, and falsified election results. By all accounts, 1949 was a very difficult year for the party and its leaders. Houphouët-Boigny himself narrowly escaped arrest in January 1950.

Interestingly, rather than push him toward greater militancy, the experience induced a political conversion. He opted for compromise, or "constructive collaboration", with the colonial authorities, and "divorced" the Communists in 1950.<sup>15</sup> As Patrick Manning observed, "In 1950 and 1951 the RDA, having survived the colonial administration's repression but now seeking an

---

<sup>15</sup>For more on this period, see Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Road to Independence: Ghana and the Ivory Coast* (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1964). See also A. E. Afigbo et. al., *The Making of Modern Africa: The Twentieth Century. Volume 2* (London: Longman, 1986); and Basil Davidson, *Modern Africa* (London: Longman, 1986).

accommodation, pulled back from systematic opposition to the government.

Houphouët removed d'Arboussier, whom he saw as too close to the Communists, from the post of Secretary-General, and broke the formal Parliamentary link to the Communists in October of 1950.<sup>16</sup> Subsequent developments convinced Houphouët-Boigny that he had made the right choice. Again, as Manning succinctly puts it:

... in 1951, with a new government in France and a new administration in Ivory Coast, the PDCI and the administration struck an accommodation. Houphouët-Boigny had made the first move a year earlier in breaking the RDA's parliamentary alliance with the Communists. The Ivory Coast administration ceased treating the PDCI as disloyal, and began supporting the development of both European- and African-owned enterprises. Ivory Coast became, more than ever, a privileged colony.... within three years Houphouët-Boigny had become a minister in the French government.<sup>17</sup>

To summarise, after World War II, Ivorian elites made a number of strategic and tactical choices. First, they decided to challenge the dominant position of French planters in the Ivorian political economy by organizing along syndicalist lines. Shortly thereafter, they transformed their agricultural union into a political and electoral machine. Second, during a brief period of defensive radicalism, they sought metropolitan support for their political claims, by entering into a tactical alliance with the Communists. When that alliance proved too costly, politically and even personally, the leaders showed their true ideological colours by severing their ties to the PCF in order to pursue a policy of accommodation or close collaboration with the French authorities.

---

<sup>16</sup>Patrick Manning, *Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa, 1880-1985* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 143.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 145.



From the early 1950s until the late 1990s, the PDCI hardly deviated from the following policy tendencies: to cooperate with 'mother France' in all fields;<sup>18</sup> to follow the path of gradualism rather than revolutionary change; to deny the existence of classes in Côte d'Ivoire and, concomitantly, to reject the ideology of class struggle as a means of resolving the outstanding contradictions in the emerging post-colony. Conversely, it opted for heavy dependence on foreign and indigenous private initiative to help boost its economic prospects and consolidate its sovereignty, while resisting any attempts to form larger pan-African economic and political groupings that could draw attention and resources away from Côte d'Ivoire.

In line with this thinking, first, the Ivorian leadership categorically rejected the Nkrumaist option of seeking independence within the framework of a pan-African union, an option they dismissively called the "mystique of independence." Instead, Houphouët-Boigny and the PDCI leadership committed themselves to strengthening the vertical ties between France and Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>19</sup> Thus, in the referendum of September 1958 Houphouët-Boigny campaigned vigorously for the approval of the Fifth Republican Constitution and Franco-African Community provisions which he had helped to craft. Unlike Guinea, which heeded Nkrumah's call for a rejection of the French Constitution, under Houphouët-Boigny's leadership, Côte d'Ivoire approved the Constitution by 99 percent (a prelude of election results to come?!). Following the ratification of the Constitution, Côte d'Ivoire became a Republic within the French community. In a rather spirited defense of his country's dependent capitalist choice, Houphouët-Boigny interrogated himself:

Why attach oneself to this single source? The fact is

---

<sup>18</sup>This included the all important field of education where long after independence students recited this line "nos ancêtres sont les gaulois" (our ancestors are the Gauls) from a leading textbook.

<sup>19</sup>For insights into their competing visions and orientations, see their own writings: Félix Houphouët-Boigny, "Black Africa and the French Union," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 35, no. 4 (July 1957), p. 595; and Kwame Nkrumah, "African Prospect," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 37, no. 1 (October 1958), pp. 45-53

that the manner in which money is given can be a guarantee of continuity and stability. Perhaps we will on occasion find some creditor, public or private, capable of loaning, if not giving, the billions necessary for the industrial, technical and social development of the African territories. But what guarantee would we have that this aid will be forthcoming year after year? How could we control the allocation of loans offered? For what would we be asked to exchange?<sup>20</sup>

This highly anachronistic position became untenable as the wind of change blew across Africa. In the end, Ivorian leaders reluctantly accepted independence on August 7, 1960, and Houphouët-Boigny was elected unopposed in November as the country's first President. However, both sides pursued the path of constructive engagement. The relationship was buttressed by the signing of Franco-Ivorian Accords in October 1961. This agreement extended preferential tariffs to Ivorian timber, cocoa, and bananas entering the French market, in return for similar treatment for French imports and firms. These Accords underscored the government's unabashed preference for the capitalist model of development (as opposed to African socialism!).<sup>21</sup> Franco-Ivorian relations were further secured by a Mutual Defense pact which allowed France to station its 43rd Infantry Battalion strategically at the country's international airport.<sup>22</sup>

One of the potential benefits of such an arrangement, for the Ivorian

---

<sup>20</sup>Houphouët-Boigny, "Black Africa and the French Union," p. 595.

<sup>21</sup>See Peter Anyang' Nyong'o, "Liberal Models of Capitalist Development in Africa: Ivory Coast," *African Development*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (1978), pp. 5-20. See also Nyong'o, "The Development of Agrarian Capitalist Classes in the Ivory Coast, 1945-1975," in Paul M. Lubeck (ed.), *The African Bourgeoisie: Capitalist Development in Nigeria, Kenya, and the Ivory Coast* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1987), pp. 185-245.

<sup>22</sup>Incidentally, similar military agreements allowing similar strategic prepositioning of French military assets exist with Senegal and Gabon, to name two of the most important ones.

government, was the perceived dissuasive effect that the French garrison would have on the postcolonial army, while at the same time allowing the government to keep the military relatively small, divided, weak and checkmated.<sup>23</sup>

Second, sufficiently reassured by these arrangements, which signaled France's commitment to long term economic partnership, political patronage and regime protection, the Ivorian government launched an ambitious development programme that rested on four pillars: (a) extensive cultivation for export of traditional cash crops, especially cocoa and coffee; (b) the search for foreign direct investors; (c) pursuit of agricultural diversification; and (d) an open door immigration policy toward skilled manpower from France and elsewhere and unskilled cheap labour from neighboring states.

From the onset, the Ivorian government sought to curry favor with foreign investors and skilled manpower by unveiling a rather permissive Investment Code, that promised generous tax holidays, unfettered repatriation of profits, and very attractive salaries. This open-door policy also encouraged and welcomed immigration from neighboring countries. Indeed, foreign investors were attracted partly by the promise of plentiful cheap labour, that would also be state-controlled through the UGTCI (national trade union), and thus made quiescent and even politically docile. The decision to stay in the franc currency zone provided an additional incentive to both foreign investors and migrant workers, who would thus enjoy hassle-free or seamless currency transactions. The government also promoted extended production of cocoa and coffee in particular, through a very flexible land policy which granted ownership to the person who puts land to productive use. This ideology and the absence of a rural land ownership law until 1998, vastly improved the chances of access to land by both Ivorians from

<sup>23</sup>For more on this, see *Claude E. Welch, Jr., No Farewell to Arms? Military Disengagement from Politics in Africa and Latin America* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), especially chapter 9. The Government later created a stake for officers by giving them a political role in the prefecture system.

different parts of the country and foreign Africans alike. Some of the foreigners developed into important farmers in their own right.<sup>24</sup>

Houphouët-Boigny's political project produced excellent results within a relatively short period of time. There was a very generous inflow of western capital and manpower, led initially by the French whose presence increased five-fold over the immediate pre-independence period to 50,000. There was an equally impressive influx of cheap labor from impoverished neighboring countries, especially Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, and Niger. Over time, the ranks of the African immigrant population swelled to well over 3 million. Most of these migrants were hired by cocoa and coffee farmers, or worked on pineapple, rubber and palm oil estates. They provided the bulk of the unskilled and low-wage labor required by State-owned and private industries. They were also employed as "boys" in the homes of affluent Ivorians in cities and towns. In short, their involvement in the Ivorian political economy was critical to the overall *embourgeoisement* of Ivorian society.

The apparent success of these strategic choices was reflected in the phenomenal growth (averaging 8 percent) of the Ivorian economy in the first two decades following Independence. The government redirected rents captured from cocoa and coffee farmers by the *Caisse de Stabilization et de Soutien des Prix des Produits Agricoles* (CSSPPA, State Marketing Board, 1962-1990) into an ambitious programme of diversification of the Ivorian economy. It collaborated closely with its foreign development partners to launch an extensive estate development of non-traditional crops such as palm oil, coconut, rubber, pineapple, banana, and cotton, many of which were linked to agro-industrial processing. A number of import-substitution industries (ISIs), ranging from flour milling, fruit canning, beverages, cigarettes, textiles and timber mills to plastic products, vehicle assembly plants and oil and gas refining, were

---

<sup>24</sup>For more on this and other sources of agricultural success in Côte d'Ivoire, see Cyril Daddieh, "Food and Agricultural Strategies and Popular Responses in Côte d'Ivoire," in Naomi Chazan and Timothy M. Shaw (eds.), *Coping with Africa's Food Crisis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1988), pp. 119-143.

established.

As the so-called economic miracle unfolded over the ensuing two decades, Côte d'Ivoire became the manufacturing as well as diplomatic hub of francophone West Africa. For a time, Côte d'Ivoire appeared to have produced sub-Saharan Africa's first genuine developmental state, characterized by apparent administrative effectiveness and efficiency, skilled, experienced and dedicated bureaucrats and technocrats, minimal corruption, policy coherence and impressive economic growth.<sup>25</sup> The country developed the look, feel and smell of prosperity and modernity. Abidjan's trendy skyline of office skyscrapers, its European-style high-priced hotels, its over-passes and by-passes, its broad boulevards and tree-lined avenues, all attested to the country's economic success. It was even quipped that "*you go to Paris and it reminds you of Abidjan.*"

On the domestic political front, the President turned the apparent economic success into a political credo. He tightened his grip on power while exhorting Ivoirians, especially the ones with presidential ambitions of their own, to "*get rich and leave politics to me.*" He lectured young Ivoirians in particular about the virtues of patience, and the need to undergo long years of apprenticeship at the feet of their political elders. In typical neo-patrimonial fashion, he insisted that "*when the head is seated, the knee does not wear the hat.*" He vigorously resisted what he considered the hasty and cut-rate indigenization of the Civil Service. Nevertheless, he began to actively absorb the growing number of younger intellectuals and technocrats into the State-owned business sector and into the government and political party in the 1970s. Indeed, while the State owned enterprises, or parastatals, served the ends of economic growth, their Boards of Directorate and other bureaucratic institutions were used to facilitate co-optation, and to contain emerging political ambitions.

Moreover, although he insisted that neither the youth nor the coun-

---

<sup>25</sup>The relative effectiveness of policy making is explored by Richard Crook, "*Patrimonialism, Administrative Effectiveness, and Economic Development in Côte d'Ivoire,*" *African Affairs*, Vol. 88, no. 4 (April 1989), pp. 205-228.

try was mature enough to embrace multipartyism, he held out the prospect of one day moving in that direction. Thus, he rather adroitly left intact Article 7 of the Constitution, which formally recognized the principle of multipartyism and also provided for the exercise of individual liberties. Meanwhile, he carefully calibrated Cabinet appointments to give representation, if not voice, to all the major ethnic groups in the country. This tactic also produced widespread loyalty for Houphouët-Boigny and the PDCI.

At the regional level, the President sponsored a number of organizations, in particular the *Conseil d'Entente* (Entente Council), through which he conducted his foreign policy. A key feature of Ivorian foreign policy was the containment of Communism. Because the President became an implacable foe of Communism, he kept his eyes on regional developments, always ready to contain, or if possible rid, the region of any radicalizing tendencies. Thus, he embraced a dialogue with apartheid South Africa partly because he perceived South Africa as a formidable bulwark against the spread of Communism.<sup>26</sup> He did not shed a tear for the demise of his arch nemesis, Kwame Nkrumah.<sup>27</sup> He was chagrined over the appearance next door of radical regimes led by J. J. Rawlings and Thomas Sankara in Ghana and Burkina Faso respectively. He orchestrated the demise of Sankara and Samuel Doe and their replacement by Charles Taylor and Blaise Campaoré. He had apparently become so successful at taming the region that Howard French labeled it "Houphouët's Region."<sup>28</sup>

Thus Ivorian political success under Houphouët-Boigny was based

---

<sup>26</sup>For more on Houphouët-Boigny's antipathy towards communism and his dialogue efforts, see Cyril K. Daddieh, "South Africa and Francophone African Relations," in Larry A. Swatuk and David R. Black (eds.), *Bridging the Rift: The New South Africa in Africa* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), pp. 183-197.

<sup>27</sup>This relationship has been developed more fully in Cyril K. Daddieh, "Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana-Guinea: 'A Hair in Each Other's Soup'?" Unpublished manuscript.

<sup>28</sup>Howard French, "Houphouët's Region," *Africa Report*, Vol. 31, No. 6 (November-December 1986).

on a seductively simple formula that consisted of a mixture of carrots (made possible by economic growth) and sticks (supplied by a relatively weak military but with full confidence that the French was held in reserve to intervene at a crucial moment of need). At one end of the spectrum, the ruling elite resorted to Constitutional and Electoral engineering, not to say manipulation, monopoly control over access to political and bureaucratic sinecures, the use of non-nationals, especially French but also others, to execute particularly important or sensitive political and economic projects, co-optation of student political activists and other young professional dissidents, coupled with regime-controlled public spectacles known popularly as "Dialogue Days."<sup>29</sup> The government also resorted to redistributive politics, through the expansion of public sector employment, the launching of sugar, rice and cotton schemes in the north, and the rotation of Independence Anniversary celebrations, in order to buy the support, or at least acquiescence, of politically relevant social groups.

When necessary, the government also resorted to harassment and intimidation, forced exile, conscription of student dissidents into the national army for what the former Minister of Education, the late Dr. Balla Keita, once described as "national service and for a civic and moral education in the best interest of the nation." Occasionally, truly recalcitrant political adversaries were sentenced to prison terms. As the President himself once noted, "If forced to choose between injustice and instability, he would choose injustice."<sup>30</sup> These "winning tactics" were followed periodically by another tactic designed to demonstrate the magnanimity of *Le Vieux*: a rapprochement and political rehabilitation.<sup>31</sup> Hence,

---

<sup>29</sup>Houphouët-Boigny's style of leadership, including his use of "dialogue days" and cooptation, see Cyril K. Daddieh, "The Management of Educational Crises in Côte d'Ivoire," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (December 1988), pp. 639-659.

<sup>30</sup>I have addressed the issue of student political activism and State responses in Cyril K. Daddieh, "Universities and Political Protest in Africa: The Case of Côte d'Ivoire," *ISSUE: A Journal of Opinion*, Vol. XXIV/1 (Winter/Spring 1996), pp. 57-60.

the popular perception that he was a benevolent autocrat.<sup>32</sup>

## NO CONDITION IS PERMANENT: PRELUDE TO POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION

Notwithstanding the apparent economic and political success, beginning in 1979, the country ran into economic distress triggered ostensibly by a slump in world commodity prices. The economic debacle of the early 1980s was exacerbated by drought, which reduced hydroelectric power generation and, along with bush fires, cut agricultural output during the 1983-84 planting season. Food security began to be threatened. Indeed, the government became alarmed enough to set as its goal the attainment of food self-sufficiency.<sup>33</sup> Almost every sector of the economy was adversely affected. Between 1981 and 1984, the share of gross domestic product (GDP) accounted for by industry, services, and agriculture fell by 33%, 9%, and 12.2% respectively.

The economic picture improved somewhat between 1984 and 1986, as a result of record levels of cocoa production and improved market prices. However, the economic resurgence proved ephemeral. In 1987, coffee and cocoa exports declined by 62%. The GDP declined by 5.8% in real terms. The trade surplus was cut almost in half. In the first half of 1987, there was a 35% drop in the value of exports compared with the same period in 1986. Faced with this crisis of accumulation, the government responded by resorting to external borrowing in order to maintain its high level of spending, instead of bringing budget expenditures into line with the shortfall in revenue. To make matters worse, external borrowing was used largely to finance consumption and prestige projects rather than production that might have generated foreign exchange. The net result was a growing external debt and a heavy debt service

---

<sup>31</sup>Daddieh, "The Management of Educational Crises in Côte d'Ivoire."

<sup>32</sup>See Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa: prince, autocrat, prophet, tyrant* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

<sup>33</sup>See Daddieh, "Food and Agricultural Strategies and Popular Responses in Côte d'Ivoire."



burden. It is hardly surprising that the country had difficulty meeting its rapidly rising debt servicing obligations. Rising U.S. interest rates pushed the country's debt upward, since a disproportionate share of Ivorian public debt was denominated in dollars. As the external debt mounted and the fiscal crisis of the state worsened, the government decided, in May 1987, much to the President's chagrin, to suspend debt payments and appeal to the Paris and London Clubs for debt relief. This was followed by the desperate July 1987 decision to resort to "cocoa and coffee holdup." This dramatic and uncharacteristic resort to defensive radicalism failed to halt the precipitous fall in prices on the world market. Ultimately, the government was compelled to introduce revenue-enhancing fiscal reforms, and to reduce the size and budget of the State by initiating austerity measures, including privatization of state-owned enterprises.<sup>34</sup>

The collapse of coffee and cocoa prices on the world market in 1978-79, coming on the heels of two years of spectacular boom, and coupled with increased prices for imported goods (a reflection of the second oil price hike), exposed several structural weaknesses of the Ivorian economy. First, despite the fairly successful diversification programme, the economy remained heavily dependent on agriculture, especially cocoa and coffee, which together account for nearly a third of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and 70% of its exports. Second, the low wages paid most workers, especially the large population of agricultural workers, constrained the domestic market and prevented the import-substitution industries (ISIs) from being able to take advantage of economies of scale. Third, the ISIs relied on intermediate inputs, whose cost often exceeded the cost of the previously imported consumer goods. Fourth, the liberal Investment Code encouraged capital- rather than labor-intensive industrial development. As a consequence, the prices

---

<sup>34</sup>See E. Gyimah-Boadi and Cyril K. Daddieh, "Economic Reform and Political Liberalization in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire: A Preliminary Assessment and Implications for Nation Building," in Kidane Mengisteab and Cyril Daddieh (eds.), *State Building and Democratization in Africa: Faith, Hope, and Realities* (Westport: Praeger, 1999), especially pp. 130-138.

of consumer goods remained high, reflecting the high costs of production and protection. Industrial growth thus failed to contribute significantly to the growth of industrial labor force or a domestic market. Fifth, the Investment Code also permitted vast sums of capital to leave the country in the form of repatriated capital, tax-free profits, and salary remittances. The outflow of capital contributed to balance of payments problems and reinforced the need to export more commodities and limit agricultural wages and producer prices. This led to an intensified search for land for cultivation, widespread deforestation, conflicts over land rights, invasion of forest reserves, and so on.

Finally, let us recall that the dependent capitalist development strategy embraced by the Ivorian government hinged on the exploitation of cheap migrant labor, and extensive agriculture based on land availability, in conjunction with investment in those critical sectors of the economy that could produce quick returns. This strategy resulted in a concentration of social services, jobs, and wealth in major centers in the south, affecting population distribution as well. The expatriate community of roughly 20,000 French nationals and roughly 300,000 Lebanese are heavily concentrated in the south. They have been joined by Ivorian migrants from the north and by the vast majority of the non-Ivorian Africans, with roughly a third to one-half originating from Burkina Faso. It is worth noting that these last three groups are predominantly Muslim.

This approach to development had a propensity to produce or exacerbate regional inequalities in infrastructure and incomes between rich and poor, between rural and urban areas and, even more significantly, between the north and the south of the country. Even during the heyday of Houphouët-Boigny's rule, there were signs that the accumulation of these inequalities was beginning to threaten peaceful ethnic coexistence. To his credit, in the mid-1970s, the President attempted to bridge the north-south divide by making highly publicized visits upcountry, during which he proclaimed "the unity and especially the equality of all Ivorians, north, south, east and west" and pledged that "the Savanna will have its revenge ... [and that] each peasant ... will attain equality with his southern brothers within five years."<sup>35</sup> In other words, he was

going to ensure that there were equal opportunities for both southerners and northerners. This explains the launching of politically expedient development programmes, most notably the cotton, rice and sugar schemes in the north which proved so financially costly to the State, and politically disastrous for Henri Konan Bédié, then Finance and Economic Minister, and two other Ministerial colleagues in Planning and Agriculture at that time. The sugar development plan was plagued by such high cost overruns and financial mismanagement, it eventually went bankrupt.

## **POLITICS UNDER HOUPHOUËT-BOIGNY: THE TWO LIGHT YEARS**

Politically motivated redistributive measures, such as the northern sugar scheme, and government corruption exacerbated the fiscal crisis of the Ivorian state following the collapse of cocoa and coffee prices in the late 1970s. With no less palatable options left, the government was forced to introduce new austerity measures in March 1990. It reduced the producer prices for cocoa and coffee, cut the salaries of all State employees, some by as much as 40%, tightened controls over the use of government vehicles, and capped it all off with a "solidarity tax" on incomes in the private sector, as well as the privatization of all but 7 of the 35 State-owned enterprises. Furthermore, public sector work programmes were abandoned because of SAP-induced State contraction.

These measures provoked widespread popular resentment, especially among the urban unemployed who were the most seriously affected. However, it was University students, Faculty and Secondary School teachers who initiated protest demonstrations against government cutbacks, cost of living increases, perceived government corruption, and unfair distribution of the pain of structural adjustment. The scope and sustained intensity of the civil strife were unprecedented. Over the course of the decade,

---

<sup>35</sup>For more on this, see Richard E. Stryker, "A Local Perspective on Developmental Strategy in the Ivory Coast," in Michael F. Lofchie (ed.), *The State of the Nations: Constraints on Development in Independent Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 130.

unrest spread from this narrow University base and reached into other social groups and organizations including, most astonishingly, the army which had hitherto been rather apolitical, or seemingly politically contented and loyal.

The beginning of the decade of the 1990s marked a turning point in the long-awaited transition to a post-Houphouët-Boigny era. Faced with this unprecedented challenge to his authority, the President lifted the ban on opposition parties on May 3, 1990, and set an October date for Presidential and Parliamentary elections. There was an abundant flowering of associational life, not to mention the overnight registration of over two dozen political parties, most notably Gbagbo's *Front Populaire Ivoirien* (FPI). It has been suggested that the President's about face was calculated to catch the opposition off-guard, allowing him to win the contest and legitimize his rule and thereby escape the fate of Sékou Touré.<sup>36</sup> For the first time, the President had to go head-to-head against an opponent, and none other than his unrepentant "son," Laurent Gbagbo. While the President and the PDCI won rather handily, carrying 81.7 percent of the votes and 163 out of 175 seats, the democratic opening allowed opposition parties to gain a foothold in the National Assembly.

Shortly after the elections, the President made two crucial decisions that were to have far-reaching consequences for his country. First, he reinstated the famous Article 11 of the Constitution, which stipulates that in the event of vacancy, the president of the National Assembly would assume the reigns of power and serve out the remainder of the President's term. On the surface, this clarified the succession picture and should have put an end to all intrigues. Secondly, his own failing health and the comatose Ivorian economy forced him to institute the position of Prime Minister accountable to the President. He handpicked a well-known tech-

---

<sup>36</sup>See Jennifer Widner, "The 1990 Elections in Côte d'Ivoire," *ISSUE: A Journal of Opinion*, Vol. XX/1 (Winter 1991), pp. 31-40.

nocrat, Alassane Dramane Ouattara, as the new Prime Minister, even though he was considered a non-Ivorian by most of the Ivorian political elite. It was, of course, common practice for *Le Vieux* to rely on non-Ivorians for critical services. He apparently needed someone who could reassure the Bretton Woods Institutions and pull off favorable debt negotiations. He was given primary responsibility for the economy and finance, in addition to his duties as Prime Minister. He was assisted by Daniel Kablan Duncan, who was made Minister for Trade and Planning. Meanwhile, Bédié was re-elected President of the National Assembly.

The elections of 1990 did not mollify the opposition. Campus disturbances continued unabated over a laundry list of grievances. Students demanded additional grants, payment of grant arrears, additional accommodation, curricula changes, release of detained colleagues, a probe into the high rate of failure in Intermediate and University-entrance examinations. The rather dismal prospects for post-graduation employment increased their anxieties. When violence erupted again in Abidjan in May 1991, Ouattara sent a Rapid Commando Intervention Force (*Forces d'intervention Rapide Para Commandos, FIRPAC*) under the command of Colonel Robert Gueï to the campus to quell the disturbances. Several students were arrested and the Regional Director of *Agence France-Presse* ordered out of the country for reporting that four students had been killed. Student representatives and leaders of human rights organizations accused the army of excessive use of force and of raping female students. The President's failure to reprimand Gueï for the conduct of his troops even after the release of a highly critical report of his handling of the situation triggered further student demonstrations in January and February 1992. In March 1993, some members of the elite Presidential Guard staged a brief rebellion at the Palace to demand pay increases to match those recently granted their civilian counterparts. In April, the President, General Gueï and the Minister of Defense negotiated an end to an apparent copycat mutiny, this time by Presidential Guards in Yamoussoukro.

With his health failing, his grip on ship of state slipping, and the

economic miracle considerably tarnished, the President left Abidjan in May 1993 to seek medical attention in Europe but without having found answers to the Ivorian economic and political malaise. In his absence, the issue of succession was resurrected, as the presidential aspirants jockeyed for power. Apparently Gbagbo, Ouattara, and others had misgivings about the succession procedures enshrined in Article 11 of the Constitution. They denounced it as tantamount to a “hereditary presidency” and demanded its amendment to permit the President of the National Assembly to only assume the presidency on an interim basis until new elections could be conducted. Although Ouattara had apparently confessed his disinterest in Ivorian politics, when he was pressed into service immediately after Houphouët-Boigny’s death was announced on December 7th, he saw an opening and tried to usurp power by refusing to recognize Bédié’s right of succession. With deliberate speed, Bédié announced in a nationally televised broadcast later that day that he was assuming the duties of President with immediate effect, in accordance with the Constitution. Ouattara had apparently gambled and lost, and resigned two days later. Bédié elevated Kablan Duncan to the Premiership and put him in charge of the Economy, Finance and Planning.

## POST-HOUPHOUËT ELECTIONS AND THE POLITICIZATION OF ETHNICITY

It bears repeating that at the time of Houphouët-Boigny’s death, Côte d’Ivoire was already in a state of considerable flux. Moreover, the central cast members in the unfolding political drama—Bédié, Gbagbo, the late General Gueï and Ouattara—had been stage-managed by the late President himself. Not surprisingly, the much anticipated political unrest during this time of transition was averted. They all paid homage to *Le Vieux* by remaining remarkably quiescent during the two-month period of national mourning declared by Bédié, in accordance with Baoule (Akan) custom. Even the 50% devaluation of the CFA franc on January 12th, 1994, did not provoke the kind of outburst one might have expected, as happened elsewhere in Francophone Africa. To be sure, trade unionists denounced the government’s compensatory mea-

asures, including salary increases of 5-15%, as inadequate to offset the adverse effects of the currency's depreciation. But that is as far as they went at this time.

Against this background, Bédié prepared to launch his bid for election to his first full term in the 1995 elections. First, he sought to tap into the growing anxiety over personal security caused by rising banditry and unemployment, both of which were often unfairly blamed on African foreigners, by being tough on crime. Then, in a highly controversial move that nevertheless had widespread elite support, Bédié unveiled a policy of *Ivoirité*, an ultra-nationalist project under which only candidates whose parents were born in Côte d'Ivoire could run for office. In December 1994, the PDCI-dominated National Assembly approved a *new Electoral Code* which added another provision to the proof of nationality. It required proof of an uninterrupted five-year residency in the country prior to the election, unless one had been serving the State abroad. Both requirements were clearly designed to frustrate Ouattara's Presidential bid.<sup>37</sup>

The October 1995 Presidential Election was marred by clashes between opposition party supporters and the ruling party. President Bédié tried to enlist the army to suppress his political opponents and demonstrators in the run-up to the election, but was rebuffed by the Army Chief, General Gueï. (Was it a question of once bitten, twice shy?!) Citing the rising level of State-sponsored violence and the lack of a level playing field, all opposition parties except Professor Francis Wodié's Ivorian Worker Party (Parti Ivoirien des Travailleurs, PIT) boycotted the Presidential balloting, which was won handily by Bédié. Perhaps learning from Ghana's 1992 boycott fiasco, all opposition parties competed in the Legislative Elections in November, and made some gains.

Conflict between the opposition and the ruling PDCI continued to

---

<sup>37</sup>For more on this, see Robert J. Mundt, "Côte d'Ivoire: Continuity and Change in a Semi-Democracy," in John F. Clark and David Gardinier (eds.), *Political Reform in Francophone Africa* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), pp. 182-203.

summer, punctuated periodically by violence, until a 24th December, 1999 coup toppled Bédié. The coup leader, General Gueï, claimed that the government had been overthrown for taking political prisoners and fomenting ethnic intolerance, as well as for financial mismanagement and widespread corruption. He promised to work with the politicians to restore democratic civilian rule, and invited party nominations to be considered for the new Cabinet. Interestingly, he vowed that he was not interested in power; he only wanted “to sweep the house clean.” He went on to promise that “once we know that the house is clean and politicians can dance without slipping, we will withdraw after holding transparent elections.”<sup>38</sup>

In the early days of the coup there was considerable anxiety in Abidjan, because of rumors that the coup had been masterminded by Ouattara. Indeed, one of the junta's first acts was to free twelve prominent RDR members, who had been jailed by the deposed government. Moreover, Generals Abdoulaye Coulibaly and Lassana Palenfo, both northerners, who occupied the second and third positions in the junta, were well-known Ouattara sympathizers. Thus, most observers were pleasantly surprised when inter-ethnic violence continued under the junta. The security situation also continued to deteriorate throughout 2000, with reported army uprisings and coup plots in March, July and September. After hundreds of soldiers mutinied on July 4 to demanded more pay, General Gueï, at a press conference, accused the soldiers of blackmail. He basically confessed that his hands were tied because the national coffers were empty. He had no way of placating them with State largesse. On September 18, the government revealed that an attack on General Gueï's residence was a plot to kill him, and that Generals Palenfo and Coulibaly were behind the attack. Fearing for their lives, the two went into hiding in the Nigerian embassy and only came out in November, after Gueï lost power.

Significantly, Gueï tightened Bédié's eligibility requirements by

---

<sup>38</sup>Televised press conference by the junta in Abidjan.



inserting the famous “*et*,” to make it mean that both mother and father of a candidate had to be Ivorian. Naturally, RDR activists protested boisterously, to no avail. After considerable wrangling, all parties endorsed these amendments, which were approved in a Referendum in July 2000. As anticipated, the Supreme Court ruled that Ouattara was not eligible for the 2000 Presidential Elections. He had apparently not passed the “*et*” test. Thus, like Bédié before him, General Gueï found it simply too irresistible not to play the ethnic card. He used it to stir up xenophobic feelings against so-called foreigners, including Ouattara. The trouble was that, at the street level, foreigners translated too loosely into Dioula-Mossi-Muslim. It became relatively easy to transfer the “foreigner” label to Ivorian northerners, because of their religion, their names and other cultural identity markers which they shared with Burkinabès, Malians, Guineans, and so on. Northerners felt under siege, harassed, and discriminated against by their fellow countrymen. They felt constantly humiliated by the gendarmes, some of whom were all too prone to confiscating their National Identity Cards and driving permits. The unlucky ones even had their documents torn up and thrown away.

The General’s best laid plans went awry during the October 2000 elections. To be sure, he had succeeded in getting the Court to conveniently disqualify Ouattara, Bédié, Djeny Kobbina and other formidable opponents. However, his clumsy bid for the nomination of the former ruling PDCI collapsed. Undaunted by this setback, he went into the election as a self-professed “candidate of the people.” When the people rejected him, he tried to nullify their verdict by falsifying the results. Three days of spectacular displays of people-power forced the General to flee the capital, thus paving the way for the swearing-in of Gbagbo as President on October 26, 2000.

While Ouattara’s supporters were elated that Gueï was gone, they showed little willingness to accept Gbagbo’s presidency. They perceived it as illegitimate because they felt it had come at the expense of their man. The two sides have been locked in a bitter power struggle ever since. Violent clashes between their respective

supporters continue to take a deadly toll. Subsequent efforts at reconciliation through the Forum for National Reconciliation, which occurred from October to December 2001, appeared promising. They were an opportunity for both sides to vent their anger and frustrations rather than engage in escalating violence. The reconciliation process took place under the aegis of Seydou Diarra, and produced some success. It paved the way for the reinstatement of Ouattara's nationality in June 2002, and the creation of a Government of National Unity on the eve of Independence celebrations in August. However, that promising process was eviscerated by the abortive coup of 19 September 2002, the resurgence of inter-communal violence and the virtual partition of the country.

Following failed mediation efforts by ECOWAS under the auspices of President Eyadema of Togo a new round of talks was initiated by the French government, involving of the country's political forces. The subsequent Linas-Marcoussis Peace Accord signed by the government, opposition parties and all three rebel groups on January 25, 2003, provided a roadmap, albeit imperfect, for pulling back from the brink of political disaster. Under the terms of the agreement, the government was dissolved and replaced by a 41-member all-party Government of National Unity. A new consensus Prime Minister, Seydou Elimane Diarra, was chosen to form a government with some executive powers ceded to it by the President. In exchange for this concession, President Gbagbo retains the presidency until the end of his term in 2005, at the end of which Prime Minister Diarra is charged to conduct transparent elections. Seydou Diarra is barred from contesting the Presidential Elections. The government was also expected to oversee the demobilization and disarmament of all rebel forces, the amnesty of prisoners and the repatriation of all mercenaries. The government was also required to resolve the issue of citizenship, and improve the human rights record. The National Assembly passed Amnesty Legislation this summer, but the rebels (now called New Forces) have balked at demobilization and disarmament. In September they suspended their participation in the government, and are now flexing their military muscle in their northern stronghold, and have threatened to resume all-out war to depose President Gbagbo. They

view him as an obstacle to peace. It is a classic case of mirror-imaging. There is also pervasive mistrust and mutual suspicions all around.

## CONCLUSIONS

Let me conclude by saying that I have endeavored to enhance our understanding of this important subject by establishing some of the crucial links between the political project of Côte d'Ivoire's founding father and the current crisis. Essentially, the sons are reaping the bitter harvest of Le Vieux's actions as well as inactions. Particularly relevant here was his failure to develop an enforceable land tenure law, to institutionalize the rule of law and judicial independence, to democratize the domestic political system and facilitate similar developments in the sub region rather than cuddling the likes of Blaise Campaoré and Charles Taylor. These two men have not helped the current situation in Côte d'Ivoire. They have been conduits for the proliferation of arms which have been used to fan the flames of conflict. Nor did Houphouët-Boigny establish a transparent legal framework for assimilating and granting citizenship to migrant workers who were and still are truly the backbone of the Ivorian economy. He cannot exculpate himself by arguing, as he did at his 1985 press conference, that Ivorians did not follow his leadership on this issue. Even more importantly, since the current crisis is at its core a "resource-based conflict," elite obfuscations notwithstanding, Le Vieux's failure to transform the economy from dependence on extensive cultivation of cash crops and extroversion into intensified production, and to promote auto-centric growth, equitable redistribution of incomes, and regional market development, have left his sons with vastly diminished resources and virtually empty state coffers. The end result is this highly destructive struggle for protection of whatever scraps of power and resources still remain. Only sustained economic recovery and a commitment to equity and fairness in allocation of resources along with the development of a genuine democratic system rather than ethnic scapegoating and xenophobic rhetoric can prevent Côte d'Ivoire from lurching from one crisis to another and provide a more secure basis for stability and peaceful ethnic coexistence.

## OCCASIONAL PAPERS

*Also Available*

### **The Potential for Expanded Economic Activity in the Informal Sector**

*Ernest Aryeetey*

### **Revitalizing Ghana's Industrial Base**

*Ahena D. Oduro*

### **"Ghana's 1992 Constitution - The Gender Gaps"**

*Mrs. Betty Mould-Iddrisu*

### **The Social Significance of Ghana's 2002 District Level Elections in the Upper East Region**

*Kwesi Jonah*

### **Intellectuals and Government: A Tale of Uneasy Partnership**

*Kwesi Yankah*

### **Democracy, Adjustment and the "Internationalization of the State" in Ghana**

*Daniel Green*

### **Science and Technology Policy: Sub-Saharan African Countries in the Context of Global Trends**

*Titus Adebuye*

### **Côte D'Ivoire In Crisis: The Sins Of The Fathers Or Houphouët-boigny's Revenge?**

*Dr. Cyril Daddieh*

### **The Criminal Law and the Health Professional in Ghana**

*H.J.A. Mensa-Bonsu*

### **Education and Democracy in Africa: Preliminary Thoughts on a Neglected Linkage**

*Cyril K. Daddieh*

### **Towards Judicial Independence and Accountability in an Emerging Democracy: The Courts and the Consolidation of Democracy in Ghana**

*H. Kwasi Prempeh*

### **Dynamics of Conflict Management in Liberia**

*Amos Sawyer*

### **Some Issues in Higher Education: A Management Perspective**

*G.F. Daniel*

### **Financing the 1997 Budget**

*Jones Ofori-Atta*

### **Ghana's Timber Industry: Perspectives of the Processing Sector**

*Fosuaba A. Mensah Banahene*

### **Food Aid, Agriculture and the African Farmer: A Curate's Egg?**

*Dr. Cyril K. Daddieh*

---

## INSTITUTE OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

---

**IEA**

P. O. Box 01936  
Christiansborg, Accra  
Ghana

ISBN 9988 584-47-4



ISBN 9988 584-47-4  
ISSN 0855 3238