



Côte d'Ivoire in Perspective

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Aerial view of Abidjan
© Basile Zoma

Chapter 1 Geography

Introduction

Côte d'Ivoire, situated in a tropical rain forest, is a former French colony located on the Gulf of Guinea in southern West Africa.¹ The country, formerly known as Ivory Coast, was named for the valuable elephant tusks poached in the region.^{2, 3} Initially united and economically profitable after independence in 1960, the nation has since been divided by civil war and political violence. Since May, 2014, nearly 9,000 UN peacekeepers have remained on patrol in Côte d'Ivoire.^{4, 5} Of limited strategic interest to the United States beyond its oil, gold, diamonds, and other natural resources, the small, cocoa-producing country is known for its environmental diversity.^{6, 7}

Geographically, the varied terrain transitions from equatorial rainforests in the south to grassy, shrub-covered savanna in the north. Its elevation pattern also follows a

latitudinal trend, as the predominantly flat landscape rises from the southern coast to the northern plateau and northwestern highlands.^{8, 9} Mountain ranges lie along Côte d'Ivoire's western border. Four parallel rivers flow southward to the Gulf of Guinea.¹⁰ Historically home to diverse plant and animal species, the nation's ecosystems have been subject to substantial pressures over the last several decades. Foremost, the region's rich soil and tropical climate have made it ideal for agricultural production. As a result, less than 10% of the country's once dense and extensive rain forest remains.^{11, 12} In addition to habitat loss, illegal wildlife trade also has affected many native species.^{13, 14}



Abidjan

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Area

Situated on the southern rim of West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire shares borders with five other nations.¹⁵ To the west, it is bounded by Liberia and Guinea. Much of its border with Liberia is formed by the Cavally River.¹⁶ On its northern edge, it is bounded by Mali, its largest neighbor, and Burkina Faso. Its entire eastern border is shared with Ghana. Finally, Côte d'Ivoire's southern edge is an extensive coastline (515 km or 320 mi) on the Gulf of Guinea. With a total area of 322,460 sq km (124,502 sq mi), the country is slightly larger than the state of New Mexico.¹⁷

Geographic Divisions

The Coastal Lagoon Region

Running along the Gulf of Guinea, the country's coastal strip stretches from the Ghanaian border in the east to the mouth of the Sassandra River in the west. (Beginning west of the mouth of the Sassandra, the forest region extends to the coast.) In addition to beaches and marshes, the terrain consists of numerous islands and sandbars interspersed by an extensive series of lagoons, many of which are interconnected. Several of the country's major rivers empty into the gulf in this region, forming large estuaries. Human settlements and farmlands have replaced much of the natural vegetation along the coast; the existing plant life ranges from palm trees and shrubs to small patches of mangrove forest.^{18, 19} Sandbars—the products of strong waves and currents—make much of the lagoon region difficult or impossible to navigate by ship.^{20, 21}



Displaced persons crossing river
© DFID / flickr.com

The Forest Belt

Côte d'Ivoire's forest belt extends from the southern coast to the central interior, where it transitions into the grass and woodlands of the northern savanna. In the southwest, this region encompasses the coastal area between the Liberian border, where the Cavally River empties into the gulf and the mouth of the Sassandra River. In the south and southeast, the forest belt begins north of the lagoon region.^{22, 23} The belt extends inland approximately 265 km (165 mi) in the east and west and 100 km (62 mi) in the central region of the country.²⁴ As a whole, the forest belt has

been severely affected by high rates of deforestation, as its valuable hardwood trees and fertile soil have been exploited by loggers and farmers. Most notably, cocoa and coffee plantations have replaced expansive tracts of dense forest.²⁵

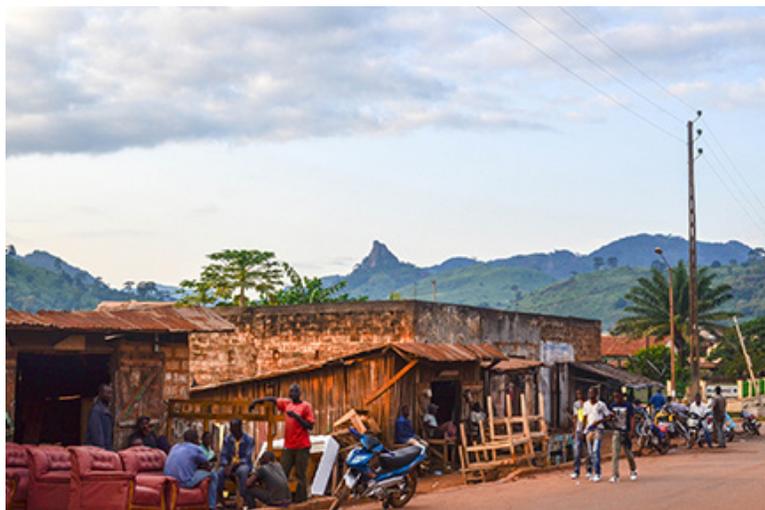
The Savanna

A vast expanse of savanna—broadly defined as grassy plains scattered with scrub and occasional woodlands—covers the northern half of Côte d'Ivoire.²⁶ The region's vegetation ranges from woodlands to grasslands with occasional dry scrub in the northernmost regions where it is generally hot and semi-arid.^{27, 28} The landscape is frequently dotted with termite mounds reaching more than 1 m (3 ft).²⁹ In general, this region has a lower population density than the southern half of the country.³⁰ The region, as a whole, is a transitional zone between the tropical rainforest to the south and the Sahara Desert to the north.³¹

Topographic Features

Côte d'Ivoire largely consists of flat or undulating plains that gradually rise from the coast to the upland plateau of the northern savanna. The majority of the northern plateau measures at least 300 m (984 ft) in altitude, with some areas reaching upwards of 500 m (1,640 ft).^{32, 33} The country's most pronounced relief is in the northwest, where low-elevation mountain ranges spread throughout the region. The nation's high point, Mount Nimba (1,752 m or 5,748 ft), is found in the Nimba Range of the western borderlands. The peak itself is located on the Guinean-Ivoirian border, which is the high point for both countries. East of its high point, the Nimba Range extends to the area surrounding the city of Man; this mountainous region is sometimes referred to as the Massif de Man.³⁴ Overall, much of the western Ivoirian border follows the jagged and meandering course of

the regional mountain chains. Elsewhere, there are additional peaks in the northeast and scattered rolling hills and outcroppings in the forest belt and northern savanna.³⁵



City of Man
© jbdodane / flickr.com

Climate

The Ivoirian climate demonstrates several regional variations as it transitions from equatorial conditions in the south to savanna-style conditions in the north. For the most part, these variations concern precipitation levels, which generally decrease as one travels northward from the coast.³⁶ In the south, the two rainy seasons are April–July (the major wet season) and late September–November. They provide an average annual rainfall of 2,000–3,250 mm (79–128 in), with the heaviest rains falling along the coastal strip. The region's primary dry season runs from December to March.³⁷ Due to the equatorial

climate and low elevation, the south is generally warmer and more humid than the north; temperatures in this region typically range between 22° and 32°C (72° and 90°F).³⁸

In the central region of the country, the dry season (November–March) grows slightly longer and the wet seasons are less marked. Average annual rainfall remains substantial, however, ranging between 1,000 and 2,500 mm (39 and 98 in). Precipitation in the mountainous western region around Man is particularly abundant; only January and December see limited levels of rainfall in this area.³⁹ Temperatures also grow more extreme in the central region, with daytime lows of 15°C (60°F) and highs of 38°C (100°F).⁴⁰ Humidity remains relatively high.

In the north, the dry season—influenced by the northeast wind from the Sahara—continues from November to March. The sole rainy season lasts from April to October, although in the northeast, it may be limited to the period between June and September.⁴¹ Precipitation levels decrease as one moves from the northwestern highlands (1,500 mm or 60 in) to the northeastern region (1,100 mm or 45 in).⁴² Temperatures range between 14°C (57°F) in the dry season and 32°C (94°F) in the rainy months.⁴³



Man canoeing down a river
© Y-Voir-Plus / flickr.com

Major Rivers

The rivers in Côte d'Ivoire all flow south and empty into the Gulf of Guinea—three of them into the lagoon region. During the dry season, many of these rivers' northern tributaries dry up, resulting in reduced flow downstream.^{44, 45}

The 515-km (320-mi) long Cavally River, also known as the Cavalla, flows southward into western Côte d'Ivoire from its origins north of the Nimba Mountains in Guinea. The Cavally delineates the border between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. Only the final 50 km (31 mi) are navigable.^{46, 47}

The Sassandra River originates in the northwestern highlands. Along its course through western Côte d'Ivoire, the river is fed by several tributaries. A dam near Buyo has created an artificial lake named after the city. The river empties into the gulf through an estuary near the port city of Sassandra at the far western edge of the lagoon region. Only the final 80 km (50 mi) are navigable.^{48, 49}

The Bandama River (800 km/ 497 mi) is the nation's longest. The river and its tributaries drain most of the central region of the country. The upper section, known as the Bandama Blanc, originates in the northern highlands, west of Korhogo. The river is dammed at Kossou, creating the country's largest body of water, Lake Kossou. Fisheries and a hydroelectric plant have been built in the area. South of the lake, the river is known as the Bandama Rouge. It is again dammed near Taabo before draining into the gulf through the Tagba Lagoon near the city of Grand Lahou. The river's final 56 km (35 mi) are navigable, with the lower reaches and lagoon used to transport timber.^{50, 51}

Originating in Burkina Faso to the north, the Comoé River forms a small portion of the northern Ivoirian border before entering northeastern Côte d'Ivoire. The river runs through Comoé National Park, a World Heritage Site, and receives the waters of several tributaries on its way to the coast.⁵² It flows into the Ebrié Lagoon near the city of Grand-Bassam.⁵³ The Comoé is navigable on its final stretch from Alépé to the lagoon, a distance of 48 km (30 miles).^{54, 55}



Yamoussoukro
© Felix Krohn

Major Cities

Yamoussoukro

Situated in south central Côte d'Ivoire, Yamoussoukro was a town of fewer than 20,000 people until the late 1970s. However, in 1983, it was designated the new national capital, with plans to develop it as an administrative and transportation center.⁵⁶ This planned development reflects the city's heritage as the home of Côte d'Ivoire's long-time president, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, who ruled

from 1960 to 1993.⁵⁷ He orchestrated the city's rapid growth, which included the construction of luxury hotels and a large highway connecting Yamoussoukro to the former capital of Abidjan, where most government offices and foreign embassies remain today. Houphouët-Boigny, a Catholic, also presided over the construction of the world's largest Christian cathedral, the local Yamoussoukro Basilica. It rises to a height of 149 m (489 ft) and was dedicated in 1990 by Pope John Paul II. Today, the city has an estimated population of approximately 200,000.^{58, 59, 60}

Abidjan

Nicknamed "the Paris of West Africa," Abidjan is the de facto capital and Côte d'Ivoire's largest city, with an estimated population of approximately four million residents.^{61, 62} ⁶³ It is located on the southeastern coast, in the lagoon region. The city's urbanization was the result of French colonial rule, but unlike many colonial cities, Abidjan was not a traditional market center that later evolved into a metropolis. In 1920, its population consisted of the inhabitants of a few dozen villages located on scattered islands and lagoon peninsulas. The French recognized the location's potential as both an administrative capital and a railway terminus to transport tropical produce from the interior to the coast.⁶⁴ The latter function was especially important as the French interest in developing colonies was primarily driven by the economic gains to be made through plantation agriculture.⁶⁵

The city's modern port was constructed in 1950 when the Vridi Canal was dug through a sandbar; today it serves all of French West Africa. The port provides large ships from the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean access to the sheltered and relatively deep Ébrié Lagoon.⁶⁶



Main Street in Bouaké, Ivory Coast
© BBC World Service

Bouaké

Located in central Côte d'Ivoire, Bouaké, with about 574,000 inhabitants, has long been an important trading center (it was once a large slave market for the Portuguese).^{67, 68} The French founded the city as a military post in the late 1890s. Since the early 20th century, it has functioned as the major market for the central region. The city is on the Abidjan-Niger rail line, as well as on road routes to Abidjan in the south and the city of Bobo-Dioulasso in Burkina Faso to the north. The city's factories process tobacco, sisal, and rice. The city is the seat of a Catholic bishop as well as a textile and veterinary research institute.⁶⁹ Following the 2002 partition of the

country, Bouaké served as the unofficial capital of the rebel movement.⁷⁰ Fighting again broke out in the city between rebel forces and government troops. U.S. Special Forces were dispatched to the city to protect U.S. citizens in the city.⁷¹

Korhogo

Korhogo, a city of approximately 167,000 people, is located in north central Côte d'Ivoire, in the eastern reaches of the northwestern highlands. It is believed that the city was founded in the 14th century by a Senufo chief. Today, Korhogo is the major trading center and the cultural capital of the Senufo people. Muslim Fulani herdsman from the northern region of the nation also trade there making the city a major center for cattle, sheep, and goats. The modern town is also home to cotton, sisal, and rice factories as well as an important government veterinary research station.^{72, 73}

Man

Man is a city of approximately 139,000 people located along the Ko River in the mountainous region of western Côte d'Ivoire. The surrounding area is densely forested, although many tracts have been cleared to create coffee and cocoa plantations. Mining operations are carried out in the nearby mountains. The city serves as a trading hub for several local ethnic populations including the Dyula who are well-known for their ivory carvings and the Dan famous for their wooden masks.^{74, 75} Man came under rebel control in 2002.⁷⁶

Environmental Issues

Deforestation

Historically, the southern half of Côte d'Ivoire was covered in dense tropical rainforests, which were at one time considered the most extensive in West Africa.⁷⁷ Indeed, the region's many valuable species of hardwoods, semi-hard woods, and softwoods have well-known international market value.⁷⁸ (Among them, African mahogany and teak (*iroko*) are particularly valuable.)⁷⁹ As a result, huge tracts of forest have been cleared—either legally or illegally—for international sale. At the same time, farmers also have cleared large swaths of forest land to expand of cultivation, thereby quickly replacing virgin forests with plantations.^{80, 81} One effect of deforestation is soil erosion. This in turn contributes to the country's flooding problems, which are often caused by heavy rains.^{82, 83} In addition to threatening people's homes and livelihoods, flooding increases the number of mosquitoes that spread malaria.⁸⁴

Pollution

Air pollution is another significant concern. It has been linked to a number of respiratory ailments including asthma. The government introduced a law aimed at second-hand cars, the main culprits behind the choking exhaust and pollution in the country. The poor quality of gas and the poor condition of cars also contribute to rising air pollution.⁸⁵ Approximately 90% of cancer risks associated with air pollution is due to vehicle emissions, which prompted the government to introduce electric buses as a means to combat the problem.⁸⁶

In addition, pollution has affected many of the country's waterways.⁸⁷ This pollution is largely the result of industrial and agricultural waste, as well as the discharge of raw sewage along the coast.^{88, 89} In 2006, the blatant dumping of a large amount of chemical waste near Abidjan caused sickness in tens of thousands of local residents, with at least 10 reported fatalities.⁹⁰ A critical shortage of clean drinking water threatens the health and safety of many Ivoirians. Some people have resorted to retrieving water from streams. Street vendors sell water but the quality is uncontrolled exposing many to the risk of cholera.⁹¹



African elephant
© Lukas Vermeer

Elephants

Forest elephants in Côte d'Ivoire are threatened by poachers. In 2011, there were 189 elephants in the country's Tai National Park, down from the estimated 800 in 1981.⁹² The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that elephant populations throughout Africa have decreased by 50% at the same time period as a result of rises in the demand for ivory.^{93, 94} No official census has been taken for some years but estimates are that the elephant population has declined to only a few hundred.⁹⁵ Although the Ivoirian government signed an international ban of the ivory trade in 1990, enforcement of the law has proven problematic.⁹⁶ The government has begun to relocate many of the elephants whose habitat has been taken over by people, particularly in the Marahoue National Park region.

Natural Hazards

The *harmattan* (also called "Harmattan Haze") is an extremely dry, dusty wind that blows from the Sahara Desert in the north toward the coast of West Africa.⁹⁷ It typically occurs between November and April, the dry season. The strong winds often damage cocoa crops. In 2012, much of the cocoa crop was damaged in one of the strongest *harmattan*

in years.⁹⁸ During this period, reduced visibility makes travel a problem. In 2000, an airliner crashed in Ivory Coast when its engines were clogged with dust from the *harmattan* winds.⁹⁹

Droughts and floods—the latter occurring most frequently during the rainy season—are other potential hazards. The strong tidal surf on the southern Ivoirian coast also can be dangerous.^{100, 101} The capital of Abidjan is one area commonly affected by floods and landslides.^{102, 103} In June 2011, a large flood caused by rain severely caused as many as 10,000 families to be relocated, and cholera cases were reported.¹⁰⁴ In 2014, flooding and landslides near Abidjan killed 23 people. Another dozen people were killed throughout the country during June 2014 as torrential rains hit the nation.^{105, 106}

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Overview: Chapter 1 Assessment

1. Population density increases in the Côte d'Ivoire as one moves away from the coast.

FALSE

As one moves closer to the savanna, Ivoirian communities become more dispersed. Population density increases in areas closer to the coast.

2. Yamoussoukro, the national capital, was a town of less than 20,000 people until the late 1970s.

TRUE

Yamoussoukro was the hometown of the first president, who transformed it from a small city into the capital in the early 1980s.

3. Côte d'Ivoire has experienced massive deforestation.

TRUE

The value of the mahogany and the need to clear land for farming has resulted in deforestation.

4. Côte d'Ivoire is named for the abundant elephant populations in the region, where elephant ivory can still be legally bought and sold.

FALSE

Although the country is named after the once abundant elephant herds in West Africa, the Ivoirian government signed an international ban on the ivory trade in 1990; yet, enforcement of the law has proven problematic.

5. The Harmattan dust haze is a problem throughout the year.

FALSE

The Harmattan dust haze is an extremely dry, dusty wind that blows from the Sahara Desert north toward the West African coast, typically between November and April.

Chapter 2 History

Introduction

Archaeological evidence shows that human settlements existed in Côte d'Ivoire during prehistoric times. But little is known about this period because recorded history did not begin until the arrival of French missionaries in 1637.¹

Through treaties signed in 1843 and 1844, the territory became a French protectorate.² Later, France's colonial efforts to assert administrative control over the region moved from the coast to the interior. Thereafter, Côte d'Ivoire was officially administered as a French colony from 1893–1958. After it gained its independence in 1960, the country appeared to make a smooth transition to stable governance and prosperity.³ These circumstances, which were unique for the region, attracted large numbers of immigrants to the northeast, particularly from Burkina Faso.^{4, 5, 6, 7}

Yet, the immigration patterns that have defined Côte d'Ivoire demographically and provided labor for the agricultural-based economy have also bred ethnic divisions and brought the country to civil war.^{8, 9} The cause of this sociopolitical strife has been a fear of foreigners and other socially divisive policies promoted by politicians since the death of Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the country's first president who ruled Côte d'Ivoire autocratically for more than three decades (1960–1993).¹⁰ The government's racist policies enacted by Houphouët-Boigny's successors ultimately pushed the country into civil war in 2002, partitioning the nation into a Muslim-majority north and Christian-majority south. This division remained in place from 2002–2007. Although the two factions have officially reconciled, about 3,000 people were killed in violent clashes between government and opposition forces



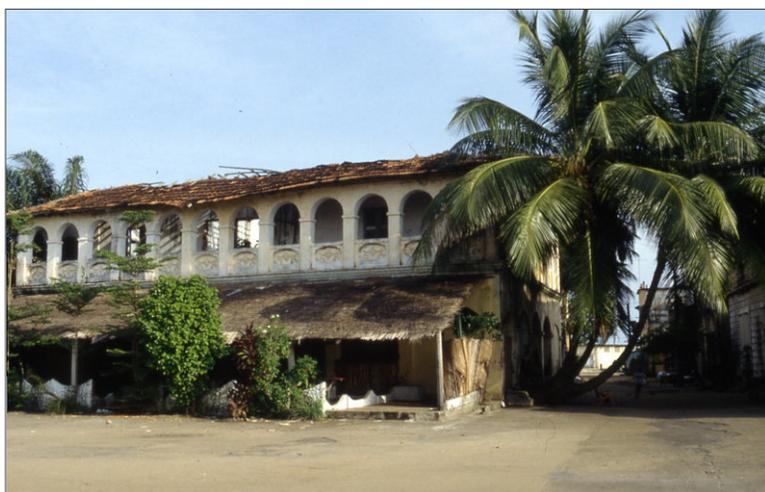
*Mask from Côte d'Ivoire
Courtesy of Wikipedia*

following contested 2010 elections, which concluded without a clear political mandate and thousands of UN and French troops on the ground to maintain civil order.^{11, 12, 13, 14}

Early History

Excavations in Côte d'Ivoire have provided evidence of prehistoric human settlements. The current configuration and demography of tribal groups suggests that migration played a major role in the development of the local population. The region's early history is characterized by the migration of tribal groups that broke off from the dominant West African kingdoms of the 12th–17th centuries.¹⁵

Côte d'Ivoire was relatively isolated from outside influences for much of its early history. The spread of Islam, which made major inroads through most other regions of West Africa prior to the 16th century, was stymied by the Ivory Coast's impenetrable forests. The region also was largely insulated from the European development of the Guinean coast, where the gold and transatlantic slave trade flourished in the 17th and 18th centuries. Because of its inhospitable coastline and lack of natural harbors, Europeans did not explore the area until the mid-19th century, when the scramble for colonies intensified.^{16, 17}



*A house from colonial time in Grand Bassam
Courtesy of Wikipedia*

The French Colonial Period

The coastal zone of Côte d'Ivoire was established as a French protectorate in 1842 and as an official colony in 1893. The first governor of the new colony, Captain Louis Gustave Binger, negotiated boundary treaties with Liberia and the United Kingdom, which was then in control of the Gold Coast.¹⁸ In addition, he oversaw a military campaign against a powerful Malinké tribal chief who resisted French encroachment until he was vanquished in 1898.¹⁹

As a colony and an overseas territory of the French Third Republic, Côte d'Ivoire was part of the Federation of French West Africa from 1904–1958. The nature of this arrangement was embodied in France's policy of "association," which provided the legal justification for colonial rule.²⁰ Africans were considered French subjects lacking the right to political representation in Africa or France. Governmental affairs for French West Africa were administered from Paris until after World War II.²¹

The first Constituent Assembly of the French Fourth Republic was held in 1946 when the French implemented far-reaching reforms with respect to their colonies. Owing

to the loyalty of the African “subjects” during World War II, French citizenship was granted to all inhabitants of Francophone Africa, as was the right to organize politically. Several forms of forced labor that had favored French plantation owners were abolished.^{22, 23}

Following a referendum granting it community status within the old Federation of French West Africa, Côte d’Ivoire became an autonomous republic in December 1958 and later the independent Republic of Côte d’Ivoire (RCI) in August 1960.²⁴



Houphouët-Boigny
© Robert Knudsen

Independence

During the first four decades of its independence, Côte d’Ivoire was more politically stable and economically prosperous than other West African countries. In contrast to Côte d’Ivoire’s pro-Western policies, many of its post-colonial neighbors experienced successive military coups and aligned with the Soviet Union and China.²⁵

Côte d’Ivoire’s post-independence fortunes are difficult to separate from those of Félix Houphouët-Boigny, president of the republic and leader of the *Parti Démocratique de Côte d’Ivoire* (PDCI). He first assumed a leadership role in 1944 as founder of the *Syndicat Agricole Africain*, an organization that focused attention on the plight of African farmers.^{26, 27}

Elected to the first Constituent Assembly following World War II, Houphouët-Boigny represented Côte d’Ivoire in the French National Assembly from 1946–1959. He returned home to become prime minister in 1958 and president in 1960.²⁸

The son of a well-to-do Baoulé farmer, Houphouët-Boigny realized that agriculture was the key to the country’s economic future. Under his leadership the RCI became one of the largest global producers of coffee and cocoa, and it developed the third-largest economy in sub-Saharan Africa. Immigrants from surrounding countries were encouraged to resettle in Côte d’Ivoire, where land user rights conferred

ownership and, as a result, the amount of land under cultivation continuously expanded.

The country also attracted considerable foreign direct investment from the West, particularly France, whose nationals provided technical assistance.²⁹

During this period of growth and stability, Houphouët-Boigny presided over a one-party state in which he simultaneously served as head of state, head of government, and leader of the PDCI. Despite his consolidation of power, he brought members of the opposition into the party rather than subjecting them to official persecution. He referred to this process as “reconciliation.”³⁰ Representatives of all major ethnic groups were incorporated into Houphouët-Boigny’s cabinet as well as the important policy-making bodies of the PDCI.³¹ Furthermore, in what became known as *le modèle houphouétiste*, he used the country’s wealth to dispense patronage to supporters while distributing punishment to critics and disloyalists.³²



Laurent Gbagbo
Courtesy of Wikipedia

Political Liberalization

The introduction of democracy in the form of competitive elections occurred during the final years of Houphouët-Boigny’s rule. Opposition parties were authorized for the first time in 1990, when all residents were allowed to vote. However, a new law required all immigrants to carry a visa (*carte de séjour*) that identified them as non-Ivoirian nationals.³³

The aging incumbent easily defeated an opposition candidate in that year’s presidential election. Three years later, Houphouët-Boigny died, and Henri Konan Bédié of the PDCI was chosen as his successor.³⁴ In 1995, two years after Houphouët-Boigny’s death, there was some potential for the opposition party to claim the presidency in a contest with Bédié. However, Bédié, who like Houphouët-Boigny was a Baoulé Catholic, prevailed by launching a national-identity campaign known as *Ivoirité*.^{35, 36} This move represented a radical departure from the early Houphouët-Boigny era, when rights were conceived of in individual rather than group terms. *Ivoirité*, in short, justified rooting out

“foreigners.” In addition, foreigners were denied the right to vote and run for political office. In effect, the policy marginalized Muslims in Côte d’Ivoire and set the stage for civil conflict.³⁷

A 1994 law stipulated that all presidential candidates must be born in Côte d'Ivoire to parents who were born in the country.³⁸ The immediate casualty of this legislation was Bédié's northern Muslim rival, Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara who was alleged to have been born in Burkina Faso and once held Burkinabe citizenship.^{39, 40, 41, 42} Bédié's maneuver backfired, and on Christmas Day 1999, he was overthrown in a coup staged by a group of military officers.⁴³ Retired General Robert Guei, a Muslim and former armed forces chief of staff, emerged as the new president, although his tenure, too, was short-lived.⁴⁴

Laurent Gbagbo, an evangelical Christian and longstanding opponent of Houphouët-Boigny's ruling party, became the next president.⁴⁵ He also resorted to "the politics of exclusion" to secure his power. In doing so, he proclaimed himself the people's choice in an election in which opposition leader Ouattara had again not been allowed to run.⁴⁶

The Beginnings of Ethnic Fracture

Ethnic unrest mounted. In September 2002, a failed coup led by soldiers from the Muslim north resulted in the death of General Guei. The Gbagbo government's heavy-handed response to the coup led to full-scale rebellion.⁴⁷ The rebel group, calling itself the *Mouvement Patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire* (MPCI), asserted control over the cities of Bouaké and Korhogo.⁴⁸ Within two weeks, the MPCI had extended its power over the remainder of the northern half of the country. Côte d'Ivoire was thus divided between the historically Christian south, the heartland of Laurent Gbagbo's government and popularity, and the predominantly Muslim north. The North was also the political base of opposition leader Ouattara.^{49, 50}

In the view of many observers, Ivoirian politicians in the post-Houphouët-Boigny era resorted to ethnic and nationalistic rhetoric to rally their supporters.⁵¹ Indeed, *Ivoirité* had been initiated during a period of economic crisis that was exacerbated by a growing population in competition for scarce resources.⁵²



Northern rebels
© VOA Photo - M. Motta

A Country Divided

Government and MPCCI representatives negotiated a ceasefire in mid-October 2002. In January 2003, the major political parties and the MPCCI signed the Linas-Marcoussis Accord creating an interim Government of National Reconciliation. In July 2003, the government and the New Forces (Forces Nouvelles), composed of rebel groups, signed an “End of War” declaration and recognized President Gbagbo.⁵³

In November 2004, escalating tensions resulted in renewed fighting after the government bombed rebel-controlled Bouaké, killing nine French soldiers in the process.⁵⁴ Paris responded with a military strike that destroyed the small Ivoirian air force.⁵⁵ The retaliation angered southerners who felt that the French were interfering in their

country’s internal affairs. Rampaging Abidjanis destroyed French-owned property and assaulted French expatriates (*tubabu*), including women.⁵⁶ Other nationalities reported harrowing encounters with vigilante groups composed of young men who operated according to the “act first and ask questions later” mentality.⁵⁷ Most non-African foreign nationals fled the country, and embassies were downsized to only essential staff.⁵⁸ The UN Security Council issued an immediate arms embargo on the RCI, and it gave the nation’s feuding leaders 30 days to renew the peace process or face a travel ban and a freeze on their assets. Despite the resurrection of the peace process, no agreement was reached between the two sides. Neither side was committed to the final goal. Those in power found the conditions of a divided country (which remained in a state of “neither peace nor war”) preferable to a political settlement.⁵⁹



Guillaume Soro
© Africa1979 / flickr.com

Recent Events

In 2006, a Dutch tanker disposed of 500 tons of hazardous waste near Abidjan.⁶⁰ The widespread outbreak of sickness and deaths resulting from exposure to the pollution sparked violent demonstrations.^{61, 62} The prime minister and his government resigned, although most members were subsequently reinstated.⁶³

In December of that year, Interim Prime Minister Banny publicly criticized President Gbagbo's decision to reinstate three senior officials deemed partially responsible for allowing the shipment. Gbagbo responded by dismissing the head of Ivoirian television for broadcasting Banny's statement. An international review committee considered Gbagbo's actions to be in violation of the UN-backed peace process sparking street demonstrations that left one person dead.⁶⁴

In late 2006, Gbagbo repudiated the UN peace plans, opting instead to use African mediators to bring an end to the political stalemate with the rebels. Talks began in Burkina Faso in early 2007 and resulted in an agreement in early March.⁶⁵

President Laurent Gbagbo and rebel chief Guillaume Soro signed the deal, under which they agreed to set up a new government within five weeks. An April 2007 agreement offered

amnesty for all non-economic crimes committed during the civil war backdated to September 2000, effectively exonerating Gbagbo loyalists for crimes committed before the 2002 coup.⁶⁶ The agreement also called for the gradual withdrawal of French and UN peacekeepers following the elections and the free circulation of goods and people for the following 10 months.⁶⁷

Although the buffer zone was dismantled as agreed, progress in other areas was slow.⁶⁸ For Gbagbo, it was a means to undermine the power of Banny and perceived UN meddling. By appointing Soro as prime minister, Gbagbo was able to deflect criticism that there were no northerners in the government. For Soro, it resolved the stalemate in a way that enhanced his political stature.⁶⁹

In June 2007, a rocket attack on Soro's plane provided Gbagbo with an opportunity to

postpone the agreed-upon elections.⁷⁰ The 2007 election was rescheduled for 2008. It was again deferred until 2009 because of delays in registering eligible voters. In January 2009, the elections were once again postponed.^{71, 72}

The 2010 Elections and the Aftermath

Nearly 80% of the electorate participated in the elections that eventually were held in October 2010. However, neither opposition leader Ouattara nor sitting president Gbagbo received enough votes to be elected outright. In November, a runoff election was held. Election results, which initially favored Ouattara, later indicated that Gbagbo had won after a re-count. The international community declared Ouattara the rightful winner. Gbagbo, however, refused to step down and, with the support of the nation's military, was sworn in for another term.^{73, 74}

In response, the international community leveled a number of sanctions against Gbagbo. The World Bank, for example, cut funding to the nation. Thousands of Ivoirians were displaced as a result of the ensuing economic meltdown and violence. Bans on sales of cocoa affected virtually everyone in the country. By February of 2011, the banks in Côte d'Ivoire closed and ceased functioning. Civil violence escalated even further as fighting between Gbagbo's forces and the rebels (Republican Forces of the Ivory Coast) intensified. The rebels controlled more than two-thirds of the country while Gbagbo remained holed up in Abidjan. Two weeks of intense fighting in the city took place, including bombings by the UN and French. Finally, on 4 April 2011, Gbagbo called for a ceasefire. A few days later, his troops attacked civilian neighborhoods thought to be supportive of Ouattara, as well as the UN-protected headquarters of Ouattara himself.⁷⁵

UN and French forces responded by storming Gbagbo's residence on 11 April 2011 and taking the African leader into custody.⁷⁶ Although Ouattara was sworn in as president in May, tens of thousands of Ivoirians remain displaced from the ethnic fighting.⁷⁷ The UN and other agencies declared the situation a humanitarian emergency, and international agencies began assisting the victims.^{78, 79} In addition to the huge number of refugees, the post-election violence in the country claimed at least 3,000 lives.⁸⁰ The situation remained unstable, and there were fears of renewed ethnic violence. Muslim-Christian killings occurred after President Ouattara took office.^{81, 82} Despite efforts by President Ouattara to reconcile the country, members of the opposition party of ex-president Gbagbo pulled out of the election commission, sparking worry about more post-election clashes.⁸³

2011-2014

Those fears may not have been unfounded. In 2012, the interior minister announced that authorities in Côte d'Ivoire had foiled a plot to overthrow the government. More than 100 Gbagbo supporters were arrested after details of the plot were found on the hard drive of Gbagbo's former senior presidential guard officers.^{84, 85} In September of that same year, the government closed its borders with Ghana for more than two weeks following an attack by exiled Gbagbo supporters that left at least five dead.^{86, 87,}
⁸⁸ Following months of attacks by Gbagbo supporters, President Ouattara dissolved the government citing a lack of solidarity after disagreements between the parliamentary parties over a proposed marriage law.^{89, 90}

New local elections were held in April 2013. The elections were relatively peaceful despite protests and a boycott leading to low turnout.^{91, 92} Perhaps the real test of stability, however, lies in the presidential election scheduled for 2015. President Ouattara announced that he plans to run for reelection. Although former president Gbagbo is out of the picture and awaiting trial for war crimes in the International Criminal Court, most of the same actors from the contentious 2013 election are present. Henri Konan Bédié, former president, announced that he will run for the office despite being 79 years old. Another possible contender is Guillaume Soro, a former leader of the main rebel group in Côte d'Ivoire's civil war.⁹³ Claims that Ouattara is ineligible to run because he is not "Ivoirian" surfaced again in February 2014 causing tensions to flare among the rival factions.⁹⁴

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Overview: Chapter 2 Assessment

1. Ivoirians were isolated from outside influences through much of their history.

TRUE

The topography of Côte d'Ivoire made it difficult to establish trading routes throughout much of its history, causing the people living in this region to be more isolated than others.

2. Much of President Ouatarra's support comes from the Muslim north.

TRUE

Former President Gbagbo is a Christian who received political support from Christian groups in the south. However, current President Ouatarra is Muslim backed, in part, by Muslims who traditionally live in the north of the country.

3. Côte d'Ivoire gained independence from France in 1960.

TRUE

In December 1958, Côte d'Ivoire became an autonomous republic within the French community and later gained its full independence from France in August 1960.

4. The political stability experienced by Côte d'Ivoire during its first 40 years of independence distinguishes the West African nation from many of its neighbors.

TRUE

In a region where governments and even political systems are short-lived, Côte d'Ivoire has stood alone for its extraordinary political stability during the first four decades of its independence.

5. Ivoirité was a government policy that helped immigrants become Côte d'Ivoire citizens.

FALSE

The national-identity campaign known as Ivoirité provided a justification to root out "foreigners," as well as deny them the right to vote and compete in elections. In effect, the policy marginalized Muslims in Côte d'Ivoire and set the stage for civil conflict.



Girls selling foods
© Felix Krohn

Chapter 3 Economy

Introduction

The Republic of Côte d'Ivoire (RCI) was once the most politically stable and financially successful francophone country in Africa. Since a military coup in 1999, however, the nation has been plagued by political violence and a severely eroding infrastructure.^{1, 2, 3} The situation is gradually improving, and the country appears to be experiencing a time of economic growth and relative political calm although there are still significant tensions.^{4, 5, 6}

Dominated by agriculture grown for export markets since colonial times, the economy of this West African nation is beginning to diversify.⁷ Cocoa has long been the nation's largest source of export revenue but in 2007 export revenues from oil surpassed cocoa for the first time.^{8, 9} In 2011, the government predicted that the nation's biggest source of wealth will soon come from petroleum resources.¹⁰

In addition to exploration for oil and natural gas, currently more than 30 international mining companies are busy in Côte d'Ivoire exploring and mining abundant reserves of gold, estimated by some to total 200 metric tons.¹¹ Ultimately, the region's political stability will determine whether multinational energy and mining companies can help bring oil, natural gas, gold, diamonds, nickel, and other natural resources to market.¹² Because of political instability, foreign investments in Côte d'Ivoire—which initially contributed to the country's financial success—have slowed.

Economic growth is improving. After the political crisis of 2010-2011, the economy grew at a robust 8% - 9%, making it one of the fastest growing economies in Africa.^{13, 14} In the first quarter of 2014, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate improved about 5.5% over the same quarter of 2013.¹⁵ On the other hand, GDP per capita income has risen only slightly since 2004 from approximately USD 942 to USD 1,014 in 2013.¹⁶

Although the economy and budget are in better condition than in previous years, challenges remain. The national workforce remains relatively uncompetitive, banking and business regulations deter investment, and transport infrastructure needs improvement. Opportunities for economic expansion exist but political instability and uncertainty threaten growth, at least in the short term.¹⁷



A woman collects dried coconut shells discarded by tourists to use as firewood
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Agriculture

About 68% of Ivoirians work in the agriculture sector, which accounts for 26% of GDP.¹⁸ The nation's two most lucrative cash crops are cocoa and coffee but other important cash crops include bananas, corn, rice, sweet potatoes, sugar, cotton, rubber, timber, and cocoa.¹⁹ The main food crops are rice, yam, cassava, plantain, and maize, grown primarily on small farms. Farms suffer from outdated techniques, lack of modern equipment, aging plantations, and dysfunctional cooperatives.²⁰ Most of the country's export crops are cultivated in the wetter forest regions of the south. The climate in the savanna region of the north is much drier.²¹ Fisheries represent an important subsector. Abidjan is the second-largest tuna landing port on the Atlantic. The

city has three tuna processing plants where the fish are canned for the export market. Livestock are raised in the Côte d'Ivoire but the industry suffers from a lack of access to veterinary services, disease, poor market access and high costs.²²

As the world's largest producer of cocoa beans, the source ingredient for chocolate, the West African nation supplies about 40% of the world's cocoa beans, 70% of the cocoa beans imported by the United States, and nearly 100% of the chocolate in U.S. candy bars.^{23, 24, 25} Owing to strong demand, for decades the national resources of Côte d'Ivoire were funneled into expanding cocoa production.^{26, 27} The nation has approximately 600,000 cocoa farms employing about six million workers.^{28, 29} Cocoa trees, which can only grow 20 degrees north or south of the equator, were introduced to Côte d'Ivoire under French colonial rule. Although revenues from cocoa exports are undeniably significant, concerns have been raised about the economic and social costs of cocoa production. In addition to its vulnerability to international commodity pricing and fluctuating weather patterns, cocoa production in Côte d'Ivoire has raised serious issues related to claims of slavery.^{30, 31} Approximately 15,000 children are illegally trafficked to work on the cocoa farms.^{32, 33, 34}

Despite these concerns, the agricultural sector rebounded more strongly than

anticipated following the post-election violence of 2010–2011.³⁵ The government plans to inject large sums of money to improve and diversify the sector and hopes to create an additional 2.4 million jobs by the end of 2016.³⁶

Industry

The Ivoirian government has taken steps to diversify the economy and reduce dependence on the agricultural sector.³⁷ Before its independence, there was little manufacturing in the nation aside from timber by-products, textiles, and food products. Light industry expanded rapidly in the years following independence becoming one of the fastest growing economic sectors, averaging about 31% per annum.³⁸ In 2013, the industrial sector accounted for more than 21% of GDP. Industry has diversified and today there are soap factories, a tuna-canning factory, beverage-processing plants, sugar mills, cotton-ginning plants, sawmills, rock quarries, brick works, cement plants, ship-building yards, electricity-production centers, oil refineries, and mining operations.^{39, 40} The bulk of manufacturing, however, remains largely limited to agricultural



Place de la République, Abidjan
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products.⁴¹ Many previously state-owned companies have been privatized since 2000, including electricity and water utilities.⁴²

Mining is a relatively new industry for the country. Sitting on what are believed to be major gold reserves, the country had four operating gold mines in 2014 with plans to open a fifth before the year's end.⁴³ In a bid to encourage large companies to invest in the sector, Côte d'Ivoire adopted new requirements to obtain mining permits.⁴⁴ There are also plans to open iron ore and nickel mines in 2014.⁴⁵ In a positive sign for the sector, gold output is expected to rise 10% and manganese production by 18% in 2014.⁴⁶ The hope is that minerals will contribute up to 10% of national GDP in the coming years.⁴⁷



Gas station

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Energy

Côte d'Ivoire has 100 million bbl of proven oil reserves.⁴⁸ The nation exports about 32,000 bbl/day with most of the refining done at Abidjan but the nation has plans to increase output to 200,000 bbl/day by 2019.^{49, 50} These plans to increase drilling and production are complicated, however, because the discovery of an offshore oil deposit has led to a maritime dispute with Ghana over ownership of the new fields.⁵¹ Two underwater oil fields were discovered off the coast of Côte d'Ivoire in the 1970s.⁵² To help manage oil resources, the government created the state-owned Peroci oil company in 1975.⁵³ National

investment plans into the oil subsector are designed to increase growth by 10% a year.⁵⁴

In addition to oil reserves, the discovery of natural gas reserves in Panthere, Kudu, Eland, Ibex, Gazelle, and Foxtrot have positioned Côte d'Ivoire to be a regional exporter.⁵⁵ At present, the country has an estimated 28 billion cu m of proven reserves but production is insufficient to meet domestic demand.^{56, 57}

Natural Resources

Côte d'Ivoire has significant gold reserves but exploration has been severely limited since the outbreak of the civil war in 2002.⁵⁸ The nation is believed to have more reserves of gold than neighboring Ghana, Africa's leading producer of gold behind South Africa.⁵⁹ Although gold is the primary metal, Côte d'Ivoire has a number of other natural resources, including iron ore, cobalt, copper, nickel, bauxite, manganese, and hydropower.^{60, 61, 62} Diamonds are important to Côte d'Ivoire's economy.⁶³ Because the United Nations suspected that diamonds were financing domestic political violence, their export was banned in 2005 causing the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars to the national economy. Those sanctions were lifted in 2014.^{64, 65}



Cocoa sacks

© Nestlé / flickr.com

Trade

Côte d'Ivoire is the center of commercial activity in West Africa. It is a member of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), the Free Trade Zone and is eligible for preferred trade status with the United States.^{66, 67} Côte d'Ivoire has carried a trade surplus for the last decade, due largely to its exports of cocoa and oil which account for 69% of all exports.^{68, 69} Cocoa, oil, and rubber account for Other than cocoa and oil, major exports include coffee, timber, tropical fruits, palm oil and fish. Its largest export partners in 2012 were the Netherlands (9%) the United States (8%), Nigeria (8%), Germany (8%), France (5%) and Canada (4%).⁷⁰

The country's primary imports are fuel, capital equipment, and foodstuffs. The largest import partners in 2012 were Nigeria (25%), France (11%) and China (7%).⁷¹ The EU has become an increasingly important trading partner for Côte d'Ivoire. In 2012, 25% of national imports came from EU countries and 36% of exports were destined for the EU.⁷²



Traffic in Abidjan
© Y-Voir-Plus / flickr.com

Tourism

The travel and tourism sector came to a virtual standstill at the end of 2010 with the violence that accompanied the presidential elections. The return of relative peace and stability, however, has created a more promising environment for the development in the industry.⁷³ In 2012, this subsector contributed 2.4% to national GDP and that number was expected to rise 5% a year through 2023. In 2012, approximately 102,000 people were directly employed in the industry. Tourism accounted for 4.2% of national employment, an estimated 208,500 jobs, when considering

both direct and indirect employment. By 2023, direct employment in the sector is projected to be about 135,000 jobs equaling roughly 2.2% of national employment.⁷⁴ To encourage sectorial growth, the country plans to double the number of tourists who visit and will build as many as 15 hotels to help support its tourism industry.⁷⁵

Once a destination for French travelers, the tropical beaches and national parks of Côte d'Ivoire are again looking to become popular with tourists. The nation has three UNESCO world heritage sites: Comoé and Tai National Parks and the Mount Nimba Nature Reserve. Current plans are to promote these as ecotourist destinations where tourists can see African wildlife in some of the only remaining virgin rainforests remaining in the nation. The country also hopes to capitalize on its ethnic diversity and promote cultural tourism.^{76, 77}

Banking and Finance

Banks

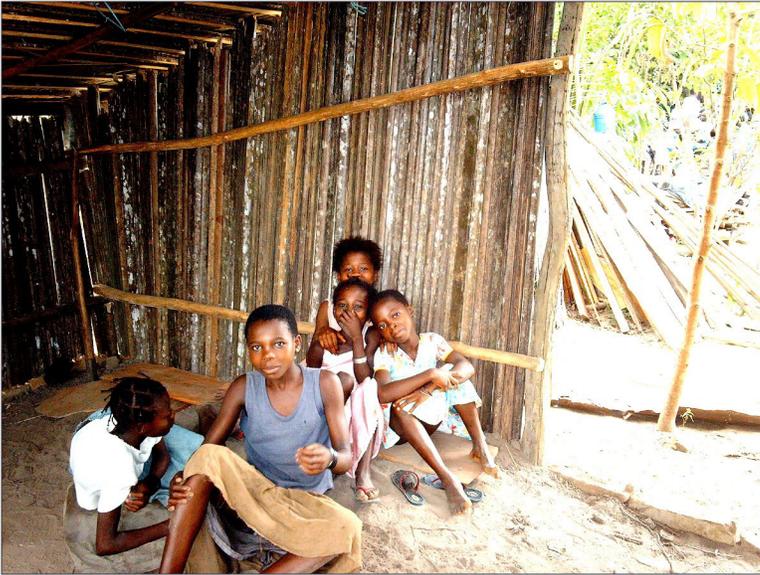
In 1962 Côte d'Ivoire, along with seven other francophone nations in the region, became a member of the West African Monetary Union (WAEMU), which established the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO). The Central Bank regionally issues the common currency—known by the French acronym (African Community of Finance) CFA franc—and establishes interest rates and



West African Franc
© Hayko / Wikimedia.org

overseas policies.^{78, 79, 80} African nations complain, however, that the system makes it impossible for them to regulate their own economic policies because they are not provided with accounting records indicating the amount of their reserves held in Paris or where the reserves are invested.⁸¹

Following the violence that accompanied the presidential elections of 2010, the banking industry was thrown into a state of disarray. President Gbagbo nationalized all foreign banks and most commercial banks ceased their operations due to security problems.^{82, 83} In 2012, however, the situation began to normalize.⁸⁴ By 2012, approximately two dozen banks operated in Côte d'Ivoire in 2012. These represented international, regional, and private banks. More than half of all banks, including their branches, operate in and around the city of Abidjan. Most are commercial banks serving primarily corporate clients.^{85, 86} The economy is still very much cash driven but there are plans to increase electronic access.⁸⁷ As part of its efforts to increase privatization in the nation, the government announced plans to divest its interests in four banks including the state-owned Versus Bank.⁸⁸



Children
© Y-Voir-Plus / flickr.com

Foreign Investment

Côte d'Ivoire's government is actively promoting foreign investment in its economy. New legislation passed in 2012 was designed to make private investment more attractive.⁸⁹ The growing economy and relative political stability have increased interest in Côte d'Ivoire by potential international investors.⁹⁰ France is the main investor followed by the United Kingdom and Switzerland.⁹¹ French firms own the national utility company, the public water utility for the city of Abidjan, and have controlling interest in the national telecommunication company.⁹² ⁹³ Much of the 2012 Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) dollars went to the hydrocarbon and cement

industry. Other sectors securing large investments were agriculture and tourism.⁹⁴ Other countries are also interested. China is set to lend more than USD 10 billion in the next decade to help with infrastructure projects.⁹⁵ China is also investing in the mining sector.⁹⁶ India and Canada have also invested in the mining sector, particularly gold.⁹⁷

Standard of Living

Côte d'Ivoire is a low human development nation ranking 168 out of 187 countries. Human development indicators are generally low with life expectancy around 58 years and per capita GDP income around USD 1,014.^{98, 99, 100} The World Bank estimates the national unemployment rate is 4%.¹⁰¹ Unemployment is much higher among the young. Estimates suggest that unemployment ranges from 25% to 60% among 15-35 year-olds.^{102, 103, 104}

In 2011, over half of the nation's population lived in poverty, and nearly a quarter of the population (23.8%) lives on less than USD 1.25 daily.^{105, 106, 107} Rates of poverty are much higher in rural areas than in urban centers. Approximately 62% of the rural population lives below the poverty line compared with 29% in urban areas.¹⁰⁸

At least eight million people, more than one-third of the population, have no access to adequate sanitation facilities. Four million do not have safe drinking water, particularly in the rural areas. The rate of waterborne diseases such as typhoid fever and dysentery is high and takes the lives of many children each year.^{109, 110}

Access to healthcare also is low for the poor, with 12% having no access to health centers and 26% lacking access to hospitals. Traditional healers are generally sought out before modern medical practitioners. Among the poor who seek healthcare, 52% consult traditional healers.¹¹¹

As a result of the fighting that followed the presidential elections in 2010, nearly one million people were displaced including 700,000 from Abidjan. There are still about 70,000 internally displaced people (IDPs), and many who attempt to return to their homes will displace others who sought refuge in homes of those who fled.^{112, 113} IDPs face tremendous hardship and are in need of humanitarian aid for even the most basic supplies. Returning IDPs face the threat of violence and reprisals.^{114, 115, 116} In addition, villages have been destroyed, and people must rebuild. Living conditions in these areas are severe.^{117, 118}



Silhouette of boys
© Brian J. McMorrow

Outlook

As the country settles into stability following the crisis of 2010-2011, the outlook for economic growth is generally favorable. The country has enormous potential for economic growth and is already the second largest economy in West Africa.¹¹⁹ The rate of growth is projected to be 9% in 2014 and 2015.¹²⁰ Some analysts project a slower rate of annual GDP growth averaging between 3% and 4% through 2030. Unemployment is expected to remain above 23% in 2015 but will drop to about 8% by 2020.¹²¹ Inflation is expected to remain below 4% through 2030.^{122, 123}

Nevertheless, there are challenges that could derail projected economic growth. Although the political condition in the nation is relatively stable as of July 2014, the system remains fragile. The upcoming presidential elections in 2015 could be a critical time. Ethnic and regional tensions are still just under the surface. Regional instability including that in Mali, Liberia, and Guinea could spill over into the Côte d'Ivoire. Fluctuations in global commodity prices could reduce export revenues and threaten the economy. Global warming and climate change could mean hard times for agriculture.^{124, 125, 126} In spite of the challenges, some believe that the Côte d'Ivoire will be among the world's 20 fastest growing economies between 2013 and 2017.¹²⁷

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Overview: Chapter 3 Assessment

1. Agriculture remains a key component of the Ivoirian economy.

TRUE

About 68% of Ivoirians work in agriculture and related activities, which accounts for 28% of the GDP. Cocoa is one of the largest sources of export revenues.

2. The economy in Côte d'Ivoire has shown little growth since the civil war.

FALSE

Economic growth has begun to improve. After the political crisis of 2010-2011, the economy grew at a robust 8%-9% making it one of the fastest growing economies in Africa.

3. Côte d'Ivoire has significant gold reserves.

TRUE

The nation is believed to have more reserves of gold than neighboring Ghana, Africa's leading producer of gold behind South Africa.

4. Germany receives more imports from Côte d'Ivoire's than any other nation.

FALSE

The most imports in 2012 were bound for the Netherlands (9%) the United States (8%), Nigeria (8%), Germany (8%), France (5%) and Canada (4%).

5. The Ivoirian economy has little potential for growth.

FALSE

The outlook for economic growth is favorable with enormous potential for economic growth. Some believe that the Côte d'Ivoire will be among the world's 20 fastest growing economies between 2013 and 2017.



Ivorian man
© BBC World Service

Chapter 4 Society

Introduction

The name “Côte d’Ivoire” was bestowed by French and Portuguese merchants who traded their wares with the indigenous peoples of West Africa for ivory.^{1, 2} The modern nation is both ethnically and culturally diverse.³ Migration has long played a major role in the settlement and development of the region, resulting in the dispersion of numerous ethnic groups across national borders.^{4, 5} Today, most Ivoirians have ties and allegiances that extend from kinship group to tribe to nation.

Although the population is largely dominated by Muslim and Christian majorities, many Ivoirians also practice indigenous religions.^{6, 7} Life’s major milestones—birth,

adolescence, marriage, and death—are all marked with ceremonies and rituals. Among the most important of these are initiation rites, during which participants undergo endurance tests and secret ceremonies.⁸ Accordingly, the people of Côte d’Ivoire have retained distinct music, dance, and storytelling traditions.



Children
© Julian Pierre

Languages and Ethnic Groups

More than 60 languages are spoken in Côte d’Ivoire.⁹ The official language, French, is used in government and is the medium of instruction in all educational institutions. Dioula, a pidgin French variant, is the most common language and the language of commerce.¹⁰ In addition to French and Dioula, various regional ethnic languages (including Akan, Kru, Mandé, and Voltaic) are spoken.¹¹ None of the African languages is spoken by a majority of the people and most Ivoirians are able to speak at least two languages fluently.¹²

The country is ethnically diverse—a product of colonial borders and evolving ethnic identities. Over 60 ethnic groups, which can be broadly classified into seven subgroups, live in the West African nation. The seven subgroups are further subdivided into four major ethnic/cultural regions.¹³ In the historically Christian southern half of the country, the Akan live primarily in the East Atlantic region, separated by the Bandama River from the Kru, who live primarily in the West Atlantic region. The historically Muslim northern half of Côte d’Ivoire is populated by the Voltaic peoples in the northeast and the Mande in the northwest.^{14, 15, 16}

About two-thirds of the population lives in the south divided equally between the East and West Atlantic cultural groups. The remaining third of the population resides in the north. Many ethnic groups share cultural and ethnic ties with other groups in and outside the country, a result of years of internal migration and intermarriage.^{17, 18, 19}

The Akan

The Akan, comprising approximately 42% of the population, are the largest ethnic group in Côte d’Ivoire.²⁰ They live mainly in the East Atlantic region and central parts of the country in the south.^{21, 22} This matrilineal group, which traces family lineage from the mother to a common female ancestor, is descended from the Asante Kingdom of neighboring Ghana. The Baoulé subgroup is the largest (about 15% of the country’s total population).^{23, 24} President Houphouët-Boigny was a member of the Baoulé group.²⁵ The Baoulé are agriculturists whose primary crops include coffee, cocoa, and yams, the latter of which hold great cultural significance for the tribe.²⁶ They practice indigenous

religions and are known for their wood sculptures.^{27, 28} The Agni peoples (about 3% of the total population) are another major subgroup.²⁹

Some researchers suggest that the Akan culture has remained relatively unaffected by outside groups and remains one of the purest examples of West African culture remaining. The group largely resisted Islamization. Many adopted the Christian faith but indigenous religious practices are still an important element of culture. Akan society is highly centralized and organized into farming communities. Each community is headed by a chief and governed by a council of elders. These units are grouped into a still larger unit called an *abusua*, which is similar to a clan. All members of a single *abusua* are descended from the same female ancestor; members belong to this *abusua* for life, regardless of marriage. Property within the group can only be inherited by matrilineal kin.^{30, 31, 32}

The Kru

Separated from the East Atlantic region by the Bandama River, the Kru live primarily in the southwest. They moved into the region between the 15th and 17th centuries. The Kru depend largely on farming and hunting (or fishing). A large number hold jobs as stevedores or as fishermen.^{33, 34} Land is held collectively within this group but farmed by individual families.^{35, 36} Compared to the Akan, the Kru are less centralized and trace family lineage through the father to a common male ancestor. The largest subgroup is the Bété who have widely adopted Christianity. Their strong sense of cultural awareness and identity has led to both pro- and anti-government activism following their nation's independence.^{37, 38}

The Voltaics

The Voltaic cultural group is the second-largest in the nation with about 18% of the population.³⁹ They reside primarily in the northeast region. The Senoufo, one of the largest subgroups, sided with the rebels in the 2002 civil war. The Senoufo remain prone to violence based on their previous alliance with former President Gbagbo and pro-Gbagbo militants.⁴⁰ The Senoufo culture is heavily influenced by the Akan and their economy is largely agricultural.^{41, 42} Senoufo villages are largely independent units. Secret societies, known as *poro*, are a major part of life for men until the age of 30 after which, men are no longer obligated to work in agriculture. Each of the villages has a sacred forest where the rituals of the secret societies are performed. These *poros* help unify villages by preserving social customs and values.^{43, 44} For the most part, the Voltaic people practice either Islam, animism, or other indigenous faiths, although some may be Christian converts. Former prime minister of the nation, Guillaume Soro, was a Catholic Senoufo.⁴⁵ They are patrilineal, meaning that lineage is traced from fathers to a common male ancestor. The patriarch is the moral and religious head, and is believed to communicate with and appease local gods.^{46, 47}



Mande Mask
© Fondazione Passaré

The Mandé

The Northern Mandé (or Mandingo) comprise approximately 17% of the national population concentrated mainly in the northwestern region of the country.^{48, 49, 50, 51} With strong ethnic and cultural links to groups in neighboring countries—especially Ghana and Mali, where Mandé kingdoms thrived in the past—subgroups of the Northern Mandé today include the Malinké, Dioula, Bambara, and Juula.^{52, 53} The Southern Mandé compose another 10% of the national population. One important subgroup of the Southern Mandé is the Guro/Kweni who are famous for their masks. Many of the Southern Mandé live in the Bandama River Valley.^{54, 55, 56} The Mandé peoples are patrilineal and predominantly Muslim, although the Bambara subgroup are locally known as pagans.^{57, 58, 59} Historically, these groups have earned their livelihoods in agriculture, animal husbandry, and trade. Among the Mandé, the Dioula are particularly known for their history as active and successful merchants. In the past, they operated a major trade network linking the southern forests with the Sudan in the north.^{60, 61}



Mosque
©, Moustafa Cheaiteli

Religion

The majority of Ivoirians are followers of either the Christian (33%) or Islamic faiths (39%).^{62, 63, 64} Estimates suggest that between 12% and 25% practice indigenous religions which often include ancestor worship, divination, and ritual sacrifice. Witchcraft and sorcery are especially important in the rural areas.^{65, 66, 67, 68} The remainder claim no religious affiliation.^{69, 70, 71} Historically, the southern half of Côte d'Ivoire was dominated by Christian groups, and the northern half was Muslim. However, as a result of the civil war, immigration, migration, and interethnic

marriages, the country's once concentrated Muslim and Christian communities are now more widely dispersed.⁷²

Islam

All Muslims, regardless of sect, are obliged to follow the Five Pillars of Islam which capture the essential beliefs and rites of the Muslim religion. These include the declaration of faith (*shahada*), "There is no god but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God;" ritual prayer (*salat*); fasting during the holy month of Ramadan (*sawm*); making a pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*); and the giving of alms (*zakat*).^{73, 74}

Islam is a monotheistic religion whose followers believe in a single deity. The Muslim community, or *umma*, calls this deity Allah (God). The Arabic term *islam* means "submission" or "surrender." Therefore, a Muslim is one who submits to the will of Allah.⁷⁵ Muslims believe that Allah revealed his message to the Prophet Muhammad, a merchant who lived in Arabia from 570 to 632 C.E. They consider Muhammad as the last in a long line of prophets including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Allah's message, as relayed by Muhammad, is delivered in the Quran, the sacred text of Islam. Additional doctrinal guides include the *Hadith*, a collection of the words, sayings, and deeds of Muhammad; and the *Sunna*, which describes the practices of Islam by way of Muhammad's example.⁷⁶

Although most people living in the northern region of Côte d'Ivoire claim adherence to the Muslim faith, few pray, fast, or give alms. Only the wealthiest Ivoirians are able to make a hajj. The Muslim faith in Côte d'Ivoire is interlaced with Sufism. As a result, numerous practices detour from mainline Islam, including the belief that a religious figure known as a *marabout* possesses magical and moral authority. This belief in *marabouts* has been declared "un-Islamic" by purists, but many in Côte d'Ivoire view *marabouts* as working on their behalf.⁷⁷



Quran
© Muhammad Ghouri

Care and Treatment of the Quran

Islam's holy book, the Quran, is regarded as sacred and should be treated with respect. It should not be touched with dirty hands and should be kept off the floor and out of latrines. When sitting on the floor, the Quran should be held above one's lap or waist. When not in use, the Quran should be protected with a dustcover. Nothing should be placed on top of the Quran. Muslims often keep the Quran on the highest shelf of a bookcase.⁷⁸ Old or damaged copies can be properly disposed of in one of two ways: burning or burying. Burning is acceptable as long as the process is conducted with respect. Texts should not be burned with trash or

other items. For burial, the Quran should be wrapped in something clean and buried where people do not walk.^{79, 80}



Church
©, jbdodane / flickr.com

Christianity

Christianity is most common among the urban middle class and in the southern parts of Côte d'Ivoire. Although Catholicism is the most widely practiced variant, other denominations in the country include Methodist, Baptist, Jehovah's Witnesses, Coptics, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons).⁸¹

Harrism was the most widely practiced Protestant religion in the 1980s. The doctrine counsels against idolatry, denounces adultery, and condemns lying and thievery. Its founder, William Harris, was eventually expelled from the coastal regions because officials feared he might spark anti-government unrest. Part of

his success resulted from recognizing the importance of matrilineal cultures and thus including women among his many converts. After Harris was expelled from the country, Methodists worked to convert former members of the Harris churches.⁸² Later, Harrism was recognized as a denomination of Methodism. The Methodist Church now claims approximately a million members in Côte d'Ivoire and is the largest Protestant denomination in the country. Members are overwhelmingly young with nearly 60% under the age of 35.⁸³

Indigenous Religions

There are many variants of indigenous religions in Africa. However, in Côte d'Ivoire, traditional beliefs often involve some form of ancestor worship and the belief in spirits. Some of the spirits are good and protect against evil or harm while others are considered evil who visit misfortune upon the people. These "good" spirits are often ancestral spirits who remain interested in the lives and prosperity of their families. In some religions, spirits may be nature spirits. These spirits live in the skies and control natural phenomenon like rain and storms.^{84, 85, 86} Belief in fetishes (sacred objects in which a spirit lives during ceremonies) is popular, and traditional ceremonies often include wearing masks or sacrificing animals.⁸⁷ Even among Muslims and Christians, these traditional practices find their way into religious observances and into the daily life of the people.^{88, 89}



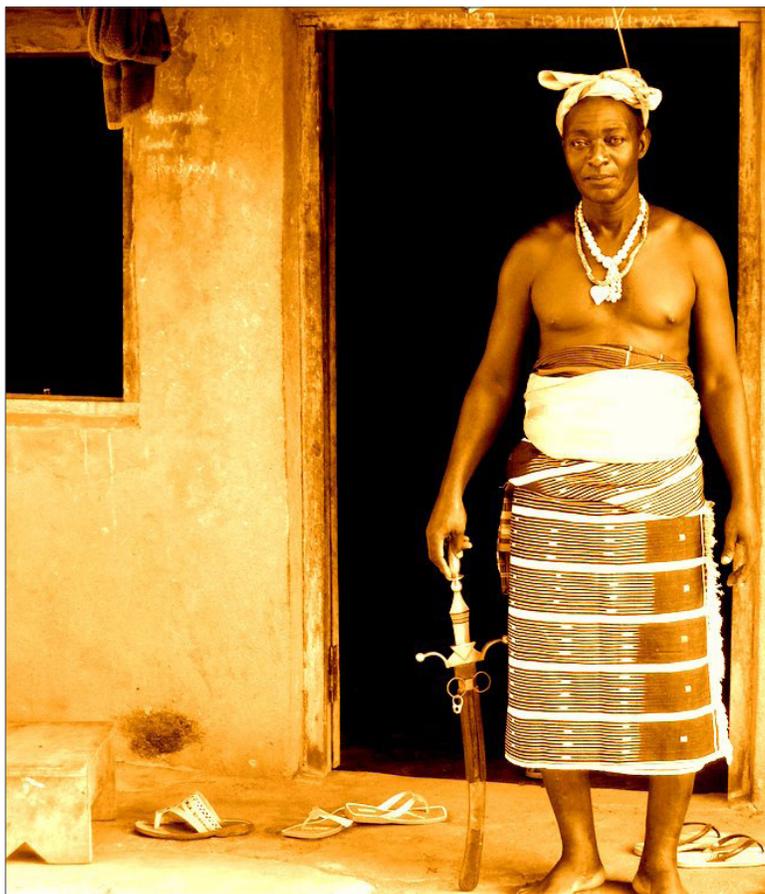
Chilled avocado and cucumber soup
© andymcd / McDee at flickr.com

Cuisine

Tubers, peanuts, rice, corn, and millet are staple foods in Côte d'Ivoire.⁹⁰ A variety of regional specialties includes rice with a peppery peanut sauce in the savanna region and fish with fried plantains along the coast. The national dish, *fufu*, is made of plantains, cassava, or yams pounded into dough. It is served with a sauce made from peanuts, eggplant, okra, or tomatoes. It can also have a meat base of chicken, beef, or fish. The dish is simmered and resembles a stew.⁹¹ Another popular local dish is *kedjenou* (chicken with braised vegetables).⁹² *Attieke* (ground or grated cassava served with meat or fish) is an Ivory Coast delicacy.^{93, 94} *Aloko* (fried bananas served

with onions and chilies) is a popular snack often available from street vendors.⁹⁵ Along the coast, *poisson braise*, grilled fish, is a popular dish.⁹⁶

Fruits such as mangos, mandarin oranges, pomegranates, passion fruit, and coconuts are typically eaten as desert. *Gâteau à l'ananas* (pineapple cake) is always a popular choice. Beverages include palm wine (*bangui*), ginger beer, coffee, and red tea.^{97, 98, 99, 100}



Traditional dress
© Y-Voir-Plus / flickr.com

Traditional Dress

Ivoirians wear both traditional and Western clothing. In urban areas, Western clothing is more common, with most men wearing pants or blue jeans and shirts.¹⁰¹ Many women still prefer to wear brightly colored wraparound skirts (*pagne*) with matching blouses and a headscarf.^{102, 103} These wraps feature a profusion of designs and are named after whatever adorns them. Prints may include images of politicians, religious leaders, animals, flowers, or events and holidays. Reflecting the globalization of American pop culture, fabric designs have begun to include faces of internationally recognized celebrities like Michael Jordan or brand name product labels. The fabric might also be decorated with footprints to indicate that a woman follows her husband around to prevent him from finding a mistress.¹⁰⁴

Both men and women wear embroidered robes (*boubou*) over trousers or skirts. Historically, the boubou was crafted from silk, but cotton is more commonly seen today.^{105, 106} In the south or west, intricately patterned cloth pieces (*kita/kente*) are often tied around the body on special occasions. This cloth, developed by the Ashanti peoples in the 17th century, is a woven fabric in bright colors and patterns. Each color and design has a unique meaning, often associated with historical events.^{107, 108, 109}

Traditional dress is more common in rural areas.¹¹⁰ Muslim men and women wear a flowing, sleeved robe or dress on special occasions.¹¹¹ Veiling is optional for Muslim women in Côte d'Ivoire.¹¹² Some believe that Allah cares more about a person's individual faith and actions than his or her adherence to "cultural practices" such as wearing a veil. Others believe that veiling is an essential part of Islamic religious practice for women.¹¹³ Some women, regardless of religion, wear a head covering to signify that they are married.¹¹⁴



Bouake woman
© BBC World Service

Gender Issues

According to the constitution, gender discrimination is prohibited.¹¹⁵ Ivoirian women have had the right to vote and run for office since 1952. In 1965, an Ivoirian woman was first elected to Parliament, and just over a decade later, President Houphouët-Boigny established the Ministry of Women's Affairs.¹¹⁶ In 2013, however, only 10% of the delegates to the National Assembly were female.¹¹⁷

Despite these gains in political representation, the status of women in Ivoirian society remains subordinate. Especially in the rural areas, women remain in traditional roles.¹¹⁸ Three in four rural Ivoirian women live in poverty.¹¹⁹ In terms of education, boys often receive priority over girls, especially if a family's resources are limited. As a result, the adult literacy rate for Ivoirian men is 65.6%, compared to 47.6% for women.¹²⁰ Women in the nation continue to be marginalized and many lack access to even the most rudimentary social services.¹²¹ Overall, the nation receives poor marks in gender equality, ranking 61st out of 81 countries in 2012.^{122, 123}

Violence against Women

Female genital mutilation (FGM) has been banned in Côte d'Ivoire since 1998. Despite criminal penalties, including imprisonment for those who perform FGM, the practice is common, especially in rural areas of the north and the west. The World Health Organization estimates that up to 45% of women have undergone the procedure, which is more common among Muslims.¹²⁴

Domestic violence is not a crime. Spousal abuse is widely treated as a private household matter in Côte d'Ivoire. Data from some studies show that 90% of women have experienced domestic violence.^{125, 126}

The civil war severely endangered the health and livelihoods of Ivoirian women. Many women and girls were forced to turn to prostitution as a means to support themselves and their families.^{127, 128} Yet treatment for victimized women is inadequate and has led to an increase in sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.¹²⁹

Sexual Discrimination and Early Marriage

Women are often denied access to food, education, healthcare, political rights, and employment.¹³⁰ Often lacking identification papers, they cannot vote.¹³¹ Employers often discriminate against female applicants who seek work outside the home because they do not want the inconvenience of pregnant workers. Women are often excluded from inheriting property. On a positive note, however, women are paid equal wages with men in the formal sector.^{132, 133}

Forced marriages and child marriages remain a problem in the country. Typically, girls as young as eight are forced to marry a distant relative. Ivoirians believe this helps maintain strong kinship bonds between clans while at the same time, preventing promiscuity among females.¹³⁴ Such marriages are more typical among the poorest segments of the population. Nearly half of all girls in the poorest 20% of households marry before the age of 18.¹³⁵



Mask
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The Arts

Oral tradition has a revered place in African culture. Storytellers must master complex verbal, musical, and memory skills requiring years of specialized training designed to control the supernatural forces thought to be released by the performer's words.¹³⁶

Dances fall into one of three categories: the royal dance, the fetish dance, and the popular dance. The royal dance is performed only by a tribal chieftain or a king. The fetish dance is performed by males who have undergone an initiation rite. The popular dance is open to men and women alike. Mask dances, during which the performer's identity remains hidden, are fetish dances.

Dancers whirl and twist and do headstands, sometimes performing on high stilts.¹³⁷

The *Gbofe of Afounkaha* are side-blown trumpets constructed from tree roots and cowhide. Players perform in groups of six, accompanied by traditional drums and costumed male dancers. Song themes include love, mourning, religious praise, and moral or educational lessons. The term *gbofe* may refer to the instrument, the players, the music, or the entire performance. The crafting of the instruments is a ritual in itself.¹³⁸ In 2001, UNESCO declared the "Gbofe of Afounkaha" a "masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage" of humanity.¹³⁹

Masks are a common feature of tribal ceremonies.^{140, 141} Masks represent the souls of the

dead, certain deities, or animal caricatures. Because their sacred nature, only specific individuals or families of a certain standing may own masks. There are restrictions on who can see them. Certain masks may only be viewed by members of secret societies. Women and non-tribal members may not be allowed to see specific masks; however, some masks may be viewed by anyone.¹⁴² Only specially trained individuals are permitted to touch or wear the masks which may have meanings or functions known only to a privileged few.¹⁴³ Each mask is believed to have a soul so wearing masks without proper training is considered dangerous. When a person dons the mask, many believe the person is transformed into the spirit the mask represents.^{144, 145} Masks may be involved in initiation rites, weddings, funerals, spiritual or magical ceremonies, festivals, entertainment activities, or other events.¹⁴⁶



Soccer
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Sports and Games

In Côte d'Ivoire, soccer is the national pastime that transcends class, religion, and region. Losses by the national team, the Elephants, can have ramifications in the highest echelons of government. In 2000, General Robert Guei, who had just come to power through a military coup, had the national team remanded into police custody for two days as punishment for their elimination in the first round of the African Nations Cup.¹⁴⁷

The team has typically been composed of players from both the North and South, even when the country was divided by civil war. During the conflict, the Elephants were regarded by many as

an example for the rest of the country to follow.¹⁴⁸ Côte d'Ivoire and its national team are so interconnected in Ivoirian minds that when the Elephants qualified for the World Cup in 2005, jubilant fans raced through the streets of Abidjan shouting, "The war is over! The war is over!"¹⁴⁹ The man given credit for the victory was neither a politician nor a military officer. Instead it was Didier Drogba, the team's captain and star striker, who is held in great esteem by his adoring compatriots.¹⁵⁰ In 2014, the nation was jubilant when their beloved Elephants qualified for the World Cup in Brazil.¹⁵¹ The team won only one game and did not advance out of the match play round.¹⁵²

Awélé is a traditional game from Côte d'Ivoire. The game is one of more than 200 versions of the popular African game more commonly known as Mancala. The game played by two players in which each player tries to capture all of an opponent's seeds. The Ivoirian version of the board has two rows of six cups.^{153, 154}

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Overview: Chapter 4 Assessment

1. Dioula is the official language of Côte d'Ivoire.

FALSE

Although the official language of government and education is French, the pidgin French variant Dioula is the most commonly spoken language and the language of commerce.

2. Christianity is most common among the poor.

FALSE

Christianity is most common among the urban middle class.

3. Pagne is an article of clothing worn by men.

FALSE

Women wear a pagne, which is a brightly colored cloth wrapped around their skirts.

4. Masks are popular living room decorations in Ivoirian homes.

FALSE

Ivoirian masks are considered functional objects rather than works of art. They are used by many tribes for traditional ceremonies and rituals. Masks are highly revered objects, and only specially trained individuals may own them.

5. While the country was divided by civil conflict, the national soccer team included players from both sides.

TRUE

Even in times of national strife, the soccer team was a symbol of national unity.



Man tossing a rock
© Virgotopia / flickr.com

Chapter 5 Security

Introduction

Once the most politically stable and economically successful nation in West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire has been plagued by political violence since a 1999 coup removed the nation's second president from office.^{1,2} Until then, France had wielded much influence in the nation and had helped build coalitions and alliances with the West. In 2000, the left-wing Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) was formed. Anti-French feelings began to emerge in 2002. By 2004, relations with the French hit an all-time low when the French destroyed the Ivorian air force in November in retaliation for an attack on a French military base.³ As relations

between France and Côte d'Ivoire worsened, relations also became strained with other Western powers such as the U.S. and the EU. Few regional governments openly supported the Ivoirians who now found themselves without any patrons and increasingly isolated.⁴

The government set forth on a path to normalize its international relations but international criticism of the FPI and President Gbagbo was growing. By 2010, tensions boiled over when Gbagbo refused to hand over power to his opponent who had won contested presidential elections. The international community implemented a series of economic sanctions but these proved ineffective and the nation erupted into violence. In April 2011, Gbagbo finally stepped down. The new president quickly took advantage of international goodwill and support to try to rebuild the nation. Large amounts of cash flowed in from old allies including France, the EU, and the United States. The UN sent troops to try to maintain the fragile peace.⁵

Currently, Côte d'Ivoire is relatively stable but challenges loom. Liberia, to its west, is struggling with its own stability issues and the looming threat of civil war which could spill across the border and reignite tension in the Côte d'Ivoire.^{6, 7, 8} The new government has set about repairing relations with neighbors and other major states. Its new foreign policy appears to focus on supporting democracy in the region and taking a stronger role in regional politics. Slowly, the country appears to be emerging from its isolation.^{9, 10,}

11

U.S.–Ivoirian Relations

The United States first established diplomatic relations with the country, then known as the Ivory Coast, in 1960 following its independence from France. Relations between the United States and Côte d'Ivoire (RCI) have historically been cordial.¹² Through the mid 1980s, the RCI was Africa's most loyal backer of the U.S. in the UN General Assembly. Abidjan strongly supported American moves against Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi, especially after evidence surfaced that Libyan agents based in Burkina Faso were training recruits to infiltrate Côte d'Ivoire.¹³

The U.S. has supported the international effort to help stabilize Côte d'Ivoire. In addition to funding approximately 25% of the UN peacekeeping mission to resolve the post-2010 election crisis, the United States provided some economic support aimed at promoting democracy within the country.^{14, 15} In terms of humanitarian aid, as of mid-April 2011, the U.S. has provided about USD 34 million through the United Nations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).¹⁶ Côte d'Ivoire enjoys preferential trade benefits. The United States imports cocoa, oil, rubber, wood, and cashews while exporting plastics, machinery, oil, agricultural products, and vehicles. Côte d'Ivoire also receives significant

amounts of Foreign Direct Investment from U.S. firms.¹⁷

Efforts to combat HIV/AIDS also receive funding, and Côte d'Ivoire is one of the 15 focus countries identified by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). The PEPFAR program is the largest U.S. assistance program for Côte d'Ivoire. The two countries also share an active cultural exchange program.¹⁸



Relations with Neighboring Countries

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso, a landlocked country northeast of RCI, has been largely dependent on Côte d'Ivoire for trade, employment, and sea access. Côte d'Ivoire is Burkina Faso's largest import trading partner and a top-five export partner.^{19, 20} Approximately three million Burkinabe live and work in Côte d'Ivoire and send remittances back to Burkina

Faso.^{21, 22, 23} Relations between the two countries began to decline in 1983 with the radicalization of Burkina Faso and its subsequent alignment with Ghana and Libya. Tensions increased in 1985 after allegations surfaced about the mistreatment of Burkinabe immigrant workers and the assassination of a prominent Burkinabe businessman in Abidjan.^{24, 25}

Relations between Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso deteriorated further with the death of Ivoirian President Houphouët-Boigny in 1993. During the civil war of 2002, Côte d'Ivoire accused Burkina Faso of backing the rebel government in the north, a claim that was denied despite the presence of some high profile rebel leaders in Burkina Faso.²⁶ Although relations remained tense through 2007, state visits by the respective presidents in 2008 and 2009 led to some improvement. President Compaoré of Burkina Faso continued to support peace in Côte d'Ivoire until new violence erupted following the 2010 elections.^{27, 28}

From April 2010 through April 2011, the Burkina Faso government permitted pro-Ouattara militia to base and train in the country. The militia became a legitimate part of the Ivoirian military forces and was renamed the National Armed Forces of Ivory Coast.²⁹ Burkina Faso backs the RCI's new president and has deployed military security forces to the nation in an effort to boost friendly relations. The new Ivoirian president, who is Muslim, is seen as friendlier to Burkina Faso than the ousted Christian president.³⁰

Ghana

Relations between the Ghanaian and Ivoirian governments have been cordial but tense due to differences in their geopolitical alignments and a dispute over offshore oil fields discovered in the Gulf of Guinea.^{31, 32} In 2010, Côte d'Ivoire informed Ghana and the United Nations that it no longer respected their mutual border. Negotiations to resolve the border issue are underway but the border remains in dispute.^{33, 34, 35}

Ghana's president supported the national reconciliation process in Côte d'Ivoire. Following the 2002 coup attempt, Ghana sent a small number of peacekeeping troops under the auspices of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) near their common border.^{36, 37} In 2012, relations became frosty when the Ivoirian government alleged that a coup attempt was being planned in Ghana and was to be launched from there. When Ghana's president died, the new president, John Dramani Mahama, was more receptive to Ivoirian requests to extradite suspected coup leaders.^{38, 39}

Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana have worked together to reduce smuggling (in both directions) across their common border. Ghana is particularly concerned about small arms smuggling and has worked with Côte d'Ivoire to stop the gun-running activities. Ghana is on high alert, intent on making certain it does not become a destination and transit point for small arms.^{40, 41} Cross-border smuggling of cocoa beans remains problematic. Ghana is the world's second-largest producer of cocoa behind Côte d'Ivoire; when purchase prices are higher in the RCI it creates an incentive for Ghanaians to smuggle cocoa beans across the border.^{42, 43, 44} Syndicated cartels now smuggle 4 million bags of rice across the border yearly. The illegal imports sparked a "hidden" trade war.^{45, 46}

Relations warmed in 2013 when Ghana agreed to supply electricity to the northeastern regions of Côte d'Ivoire.⁴⁷ Tensions flared again in late 2013 when Ghana reported to the U.N. that Ivoirian hit squads had illegally entered the country to kill exiled supporters of ex-President Gbagbo.^{48, 49} In 2014, both nations agreed to explore the institution of chieftaincy and traditional governance. Côte d'Ivoire believes it may help stabilize governance throughout the country.⁵⁰

Guinea

Guinea is located northwest of Côte d'Ivoire. The early relations between the two countries, both former French colonies, were strained as a result of disagreements between leaders.⁵¹ Unresolved border issues persist based on the Guinean belief that Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso armed insurgent groups which ultimately destabilized the southern Guinea region throughout much of the 1990s.⁵² Relations between the two nations are generally positive in 2014, and seem unaffected by presidential elections in both countries. A brief hiccup in relations took place in February 2013 when an Ivorian village was occupied briefly by Guinean troops. The situation was, however, quickly defused with no lasting negative effects.^{53, 54} Côte d'Ivoire closed its borders with Guinea in July 2014 to try to contain the spread of a deadly Ebola epidemic that has gripped Guinea.⁵⁵



Liberian border
© Peter Lockyer

Liberia

Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire have generally maintained friendly relations with each other. During the reign of Samuel Doe in Liberia during the 1980s, however, relations were quite strained. Doe murdered the son-in-law of then Ivorian president, Houphouët-Boigny.⁵⁶ The Liberian Civil War (1989–1996), one of Africa's bloodiest conflicts, displaced one million people, many of whom sought refuge in neighboring Côte d'Ivoire.⁵⁷ Relations began to normalize in 1997 but turned tense again in 2002. By the mid-2000s, relations seemed on the mend but again worsened in 2011 when post-election violence broke out in Côte d'Ivoire. The unrest destabilized Liberia who was accused of providing mercenaries for the Ivorian conflict.^{58, 59} Around 180,000 refugees displaced

by the violence swarmed across the border into Liberia, which was severely stretched to cope with its new humanitarian crisis.⁶⁰ In August 2011, both governments signed an agreement for the voluntary repatriation of refugees.⁶¹

Cross-border issues have remained sore spots for both countries. West African leaders have asked for increased monitoring of the borders where conflict continues.⁶² Suspected Liberian mercenaries have led cross-border attacks.⁶³ Liberia closed the border after gunmen crossed into Côte d'Ivoire and killed seven UN peacekeepers in 2012.⁶⁴ In 2013, the two nations began a dialog on increased border security. Nevertheless, cross-border violence and illegal migrations remain serious issues.⁶⁵ Heavy fighting along the border flared again in May 2014.⁶⁶ Later that same month, an Ebola outbreak centered in Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone prompted the Ivorians to prohibit Liberian busses

from crossing into the country.⁶⁷

Mali

Mali is located north of Côte d'Ivoire. Bilateral relations were unsteady and tense during the early years following Ivoirian independence. Growing commercial links, however, resulted in a 1963 treaty between the two nations. A peace deal between Burkina Faso and Mali in 1985 further strengthened the relationship, which later suffered following the Ivoirian elections in 2000 and attempted coup in 2001.⁶⁸ Because of its landlocked status, Mali depends on Côte d'Ivoire for access to sea ports for import and export.⁶⁹ In 2014, relations had recovered and Côte d'Ivoire was one of Mali's most important trade partners.⁷⁰

More than two million Malians work in Côte d'Ivoire and remit significant funds to Mali.^{71, 72} Tens of thousands of illegal Malians have been expelled from Côte d'Ivoire since 2002. In 2013, the deportations from Côte d'Ivoire ceased, however, as a war waged in northern Mali.⁷³ There are major concerns about children forced into slavery to work on Ivoirian cocoa farms. As many as 15,000 children are believed to be slaves for Ivoirian agricultural interests. Most are trafficked in from Mali.^{74, 75, 76} In 2000, the two governments signed an agreement in which Abidjan committed to prosecuting persons exploiting child labor; Côte d'Ivoire also pledged to repatriate abducted minors back to Mali.⁷⁷ It has proven difficult to enforce labor laws so cause has been taken up by international NGOs.^{78, 79}

Fighting broke out in Northern Mali in 2012 following a coup by Islamist rebels.⁸⁰ ECOWAS forces, including Ivoirian troops, alongside the French and other nationals, defeated the rebels in 2013. The victory, however, appears to be temporary. In May 2014, rebel troops returned to the Malian city of Kidal and defeated African UN and French troops in the region.⁸¹ Côte d'Ivoire remains concerned about the situation believing it poses a threat to its own national security.⁸²



Bue helmets in Yamoussoukro
© Felix Krohn

Military

The Republican Forces of Ivory Coast (FRCI) include the Army, Navy, and Air Force.⁸³ The army's primary role is to maintain internal order and security. It is frequently deployed to hotspots within Côte d'Ivoire. Many units are deployed along the border with Liberia where Liberian gunmen attacked a military outpost.⁸⁴ The size and state of the nation's military is unknown following a major reorganization, but troop strength is estimated to be around 15,000.^{85, 86} Although attempts to integrate the armed forces have been somewhat successful, there is still a clear division within the ranks. The New forces

(*Forces Nouvelles*) northern militia provides the main core of the FRIC but southern military groups loyal to the ousted president Gbagbo have joined the FRCI. These forces, however, often carry out military activity only in their region or related to their own ethnic or political interests.⁸⁷



Young rebel
© hdptcar/flickr.com

Issues Affecting Stability

Côte d'Ivoire is enjoying a tenuous stability for the first time in years. A presidential election is scheduled for 2015 and the International Criminal Court's (ICC) decision to try former president, Laurent Gbagbo, for crimes against humanity means that he will not be able to run as his party had hoped. His absences, and the decision of the sitting president to run for reelection, could be hopeful signs that the election will be peaceful. In May 2014, the Ivoirian Popular Front (FPI) agreed to resume peace talks ahead of the election. The dialogue between the FPI and the government helps firm the possibility that a peaceful transition can occur along with stability. In spite of these hopeful signs, however, there are serious challenges to the internal security. The attempts by the national truth and commission have not been

particularly fruitful. They have done little to fix the political and ethnic divisions which created the climate leading to violence following the elections of 2010. Most of the issues that existed then remain unresolved.^{88, 89, 90} The most serious threats to internal stability are internal divisions, internally displaced persons and refugees, government corruption, and instability in the region.⁹¹

Internal Divisions

One of the major threats to the political stability of the nation comes from internal divisions, especially armed militants. Armed ex-combatants from previous conflicts still exist and their demilitarization has been slow. Unofficial militias operate within the country and while they support the current president, their loyalties could turn. These internal divisions are fueled by ethnic tensions and by issues of land tenure, particularly in the western region of the nation.⁹² Relations between Côte d'Ivoire's mostly Muslim north and largely Christian south are a related concern. Muslims are believed to support President Ouattara, who hopes to end the policy of *Ivoirité* that has denied citizenship to many Muslims in the northern part of the country.^{93, 94, 95, 96} The effect of such a change in government policy would create an instant Muslim majority.⁹⁷ Because several outbreaks of religious violence have occurred, the possible escalation of ethnic tensions increases worry about the future stability of the nation.^{98, 99, 100} Instability in neighboring Liberia, along with large numbers of migrants, makes ethnic stability a near impossibility. The administrative regions of Cavally and Guémon, in western Côte d'Ivoire, are the two most problematic in the entire country.¹⁰¹



Refugees

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Displaced Persons and Refugees

Because of the post election violence in 2010, tens of thousands of Ivoirians fled their homes. The United Nations estimates that more than 170,000 Ivoirians crossed into Liberia alone and tens of thousands more fled to Ghana, Guinea, and Togo.^{102, 103, 104, 105} The government is trying to encourage the refugees to return but many claim that it is too dangerous to return to their homes in Côte d'Ivoire.¹⁰⁶ In 2013, tens of thousands of Ivoirians seeking to return were halted because of unrest along the border with Liberia.¹⁰⁷ In 2014, approximately 400 refugees were prohibited from returning to the country by Ivoirian officials because of concerns about the spread of Ebola.¹⁰⁸ According to U.N. estimates, 93,738 refugees

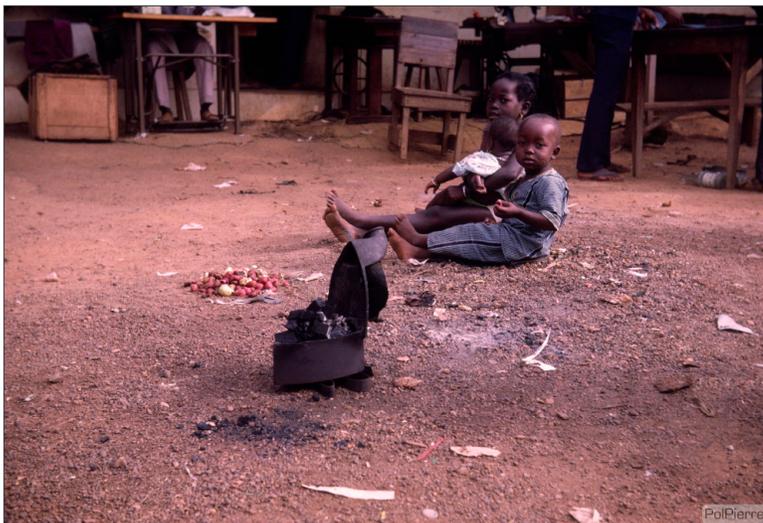
remain in Liberia, Togo and Ghana and 24,000 Ivoirians are counted as internally displaced persons in country.¹⁰⁹

Corruption

Corruption is rampant in Côte d'Ivoire. Even President Ouattara acknowledges that corruption is ingrained in the nation's management practices and has promised to work to oust corruption in all its forms.^{110, 111} The World Bank estimates that between 95 and 150 billion CFA francs (USD 187 to 296 million) are extorted annually in Côte d'Ivoire.^{112, 113} The extent of corruption is believed to be serious enough to threaten the peacekeeping process. Unbalanced allocations across the nation's security forces have helped create divisions between the groups. Security forces are also known to harass individuals by extorting money as they try to cross the borders.^{114, 115, 116}

Terrorist Groups and Regional Instability

Although the nation has moved along the path to greater security and an end to internal armed struggle, the peace is fragile and still depends on UN forces to help maintain it. Nearly 65,000 former combatants have not been demobilized or disarmed. Most have not been effectively reintegrated into the economy or society and could remobilize given the proper circumstances.¹¹⁷ The country remains plagued by violence both within the country and in neighboring nations. Tensions still remain in its relations with neighbors, and old conflicts remain, occasionally flaring up and threatening the fragile stability the nation now enjoys.^{118, 119} Cross-border raids into the country have become increasingly violent in recent years, creating diminished stability.^{120, 121} Côte d'Ivoire remains relatively terrorist free but such groups operate within the region, especially in the Sahel. Al-Qaeda linked groups are currently in northern Mali, Nigeria, and Libya. They have not yet entered Côte d'Ivoire but could be a destabilizing force.^{122, 123}



Children in the street
© Julian Pierre

Outlook

Côte d'Ivoire has a high risk of political instability.^{124, 125} A positive future hinges on the government's ability to create a stable political climate that is favorable to international investment. The government has been successful in gaining some international credibility but it has been less successful in achieving domestic legitimacy. Cocoa is a good performer but the country remains overly dependent on two commodities: cocoa and oil.^{126, 127} There is hope, however, that the government will be able to create a more stable system. Elections scheduled for 2015

will be a critical component in determining whether or not a peaceful transition can take place, and whether or not the nation will be able to maintain its march toward democracy. Signs are good but there are many pitfalls ahead. It is possible to navigate the course successfully but it will be difficult.^{128, 129, 130}

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Overview: Chapter 5 Assessment

1. The United States has had formal diplomatic relations with Côte d'Ivoire since its independence.

TRUE

The United States first established diplomatic relations with the country, then known as the Ivory Coast, in 1960, following the nation's independence from France. Relations between the United States and Côte d'Ivoire (RCI) have historically been cordial.

2. The border between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire is under dispute.

FALSE

The border with Ghana is under dispute, including the maritime boundaries. In 2010, Côte d'Ivoire announced it would no longer respect the line demarcating the common border, and Ghana appealed to the UN to negotiate the issue of maritime boundaries.

3. Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire have generally enjoyed cordial diplomatic relations.

FALSE

The early relations between the two countries were strained as a result of disagreements between leaders. Unresolved border issues persist. Relations between the two nations could generally be described as positive, as of 2014.

4. Côte d'Ivoire is a major trading partner with Mali.

TRUE

Côte d'Ivoire was one of Mali's most important trade partners in 2014.

5. Extortion is a major problem affecting the stability of Côte d'Ivoire.

TRUE

According to World Bank estimates, between 95 and 150 billion CFA francs (USD 187–296 million) are extorted annually in Côte d'Ivoire.

Côte d'Ivoire in Perspective: Final Assessment

1. A French protectorate in Côte d'Ivoire was initially established in the mid-19th century.

True or False?

2. Terrorist activity in Côte d'Ivoire is very low.

True or False?

3. Côte d'Ivoire has four major rivers.

True or False?

4. Korhogo is the cultural capital of the Baoulé people.

True or False?

5. After the 2002 ethnic tensions divided the country along a north–south axis, Mouvement Patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire (MPCI) rebels initially took control of the North.

True or False?

6. Côte d'Ivoire's coastline borders the Gulf of Guinea.

True or False?

7. President Gbagbo had the support of international community following elections in 2010.

True or False?

8. About half of the Ivoirian population lives in poverty.

True or False?

9. Because of the United Nations ban on diamond exports from Côte d'Ivoire, diamonds can no longer be sold legally on the international market.

True or False?

10. The first coup d'état occurred within the first decade of Côte d'Ivoire's independence.
True or False?
11. The largest foreign investor in Côte d'Ivoire is France.
True or False?
12. Traditional religious beliefs often involve some form of ancestor worship.
True or False?
13. Côte d'Ivoire has four geographic regions.
True or False?
14. Côte d'Ivoire is home to over 60 ethnic groups.
True or False?
15. The introduction of competitive elections in Côte d'Ivoire occurred in the 1960s.
True or False?
16. Men are generally paid a higher wage for the same work in the formal sector.
True or False?
17. The introduction of competitive elections in Côte d'Ivoire occurred in the 1960s.
True or False?
18. Cross-border raids between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire largely ended in 2011.
True or False?
19. Western Côte d'Ivoire is one of the most stable regions of the country.
True or False?
20. There are two rainy seasons in the southern regions of Côte d'Ivoire.
True or False?
21. Côte d'Ivoire has significant oil reserves.
True or False?

22. Most of the banks in the nation are state-owned.

True or False?

23. Mali and Côte d'Ivoire signed an agreement to end child labor.

True or False?

24. Ivoirians believe that putting on a mask transforms the wearer into whatever spirit the mask represents.

True or False?

25. All Muslim women in Côte d'Ivoire wear a veil in public.

True or False?

Côte d'Ivoire : Further Reading

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