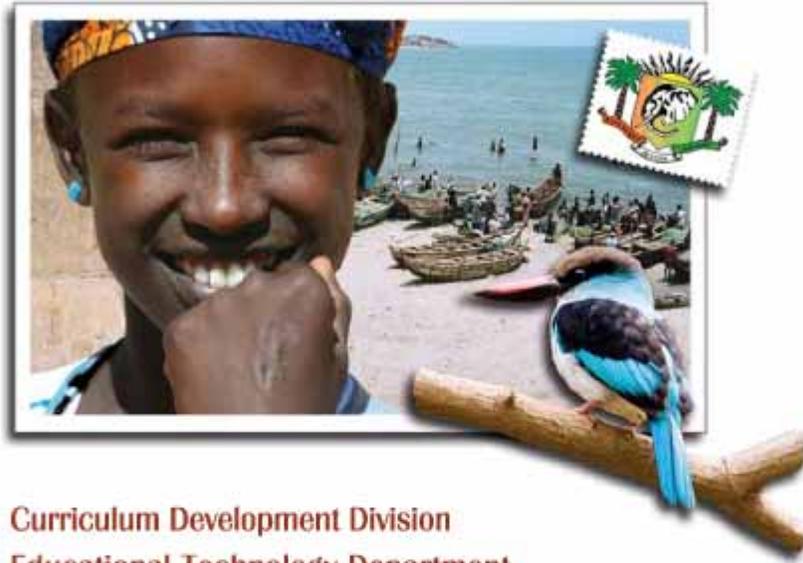


# IVORY COAST IN PERSPECTIVE

An Orientation Guide



Curriculum Development Division  
Educational Technology Department  
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DEFENSE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CENTER

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## Côte d'Ivoire Profile

### Introduction

For more than three decades after its independence from France in 1960, Côte d'Ivoire was recognized as a model of religious and ethnic harmony. Its market economy was cited as the reason for its impressive growth, which was based on exporting primary products. However, economic stagnation in the late 1980s contributed to ethno-regional division and civil war that split the country in 2002 between the predominantly Muslim north and the historically Christian south. This led to protracted international mediation efforts. The two sides finally reached a peace agreement in early 2007.



© kepi.cncplusplus.com  
Ivory Coast Skyline

### Côte d'Ivoire Facts and Figures:<sup>1</sup>

**Population:** 17,654,843

#### Age Structure:

*0-14 years:* 40.8% (male 3,546,674/female 3,653,990)

*15-64 years:* 56.4% (male 5,024,575/female 4,939,677)

*65 years and over:* 2.8% (male 238,793/female 251,134)

**Infant Mortality Rate:** *total:* 89.11 deaths/1,000 live births

#### Life Expectancy at Birth:

*total population:* 48.82 years

*male:* 46.24 years

*female:* 51.48 years

#### Literacy (*definition:* age 15 and over can read and write):

*total population:* 50.9%

*male:* 57.9%

*female:* 43.6% (2003 est.)

**Ethnic Groups:** Akan 42.1%, Voltaiques or Gur 17.6%, Northern Mandes 16.5%, Krous 11%, Southern Mandes 10%, other 2.8% (includes 130,000 Lebanese and 14,000 French) (1998)

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<sup>1</sup> Information in Facts and Figures is courtesy of the CIA World Factbook updated on 15 March 2007. All figures are 2006 estimates unless otherwise noted.

<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/iv.html>

**Religions:** Muslim 35-40%, indigenous 25-40%, Christian 20-30% (2001)  
*note:* the majority of foreigners (migratory workers) are Muslim (70%) and Christian (20%)

**Languages:** French (official), 60 native dialects with Dioula the most widely spoken

**Country Name:**

*conventional long form:* Republic of Côte d'Ivoire (RCI)

*conventional short form:* Côte d'Ivoire

*former:* Ivory Coast

**Capital:** Yamoussoukro

Though Yamoussoukro has been the official capital since 1983, Abidjan remains the national commercial and administrative center of Côte d'Ivoire. Like other countries, the United States maintains its embassy in Abidjan.

**Administrative Divisions:** 19 regions; Agneby, Bafing, Bas-Sassandra, Denguele, Dix-Huit Montagnes, Fromager, Haut-Sassandra, Lacs, Lagunes, Marahoue, Moyen-Cavally, Moyen-Comoe, N'zi-Comoe, Savanes, Sud-Bandama, Sud-Comoe, Vallee du Bandama, Worodougou, Zanzan

**Independence:** 7 August 1960 (from France)

**National Holiday:** 7 August 1960

**Constitution:** new constitution adopted 4 August 2000

**Legal System:** based on French civil law system and customary law; judicial review in the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court; accepts compulsory ICJ jurisdiction, with reservations

**Executive Branch:**

*chief of state:* President Laurent Gbagbo (since 26 October 2000)

*head of government:* Prime Minister Charles Konan Banny (since 7 December 2005)

*cabinet:* Council of Ministers appointed by the president

*elections:* president elected by popular vote for a five-year term (no term limits); election last held 26 October 2000 (next to be determined by unity government, which signed a peace accord in March 2007); prime minister appointed by the president

**Legislative Branch:** unicameral National Assembly or *Assemblée Nationale* (225 seats; members are elected in single- and multidistrict elections by direct popular vote to serve five-year terms)

**Elections:** elections last held 10 December 2000 with by-elections on 14 January 2001 (next to be held by 31 October 2007)

*election results:* percent of vote by party – not available; seats by party – FPI 96, PDCI-

RDA 94, RDR 5, PIT 4, other 2, independents 22, vacant 2  
*note: agreement reached on unity government*

**Judicial Branch:** Supreme Court or *Cour Suprême* consists of four chambers: Judicial Chamber for criminal cases; Audit Chamber for financial cases; Constitutional Chamber for judicial review cases; Administrative Chamber for civil cases; there is no legal limit to the number of members

**Political Parties and Leaders:** Citizen's Democratic Union, or UDCY [Theodore MEL EG]; Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire-African Democratic Rally, or PDCI-RDA [Henri Konan BEDIE]; Ivorian Popular Front, or FPI [Laurent GBAGBO]; Ivorian Worker's Party, or PIT [Francis WODIE]; Opposition Movement of the Future, or MFA [Anaky KOBENAN]; Rally of the Republicans, or RDR [Alassane OUATTARA]; Union for Democracy and Peace in Côte d'Ivoire, or UDPCI [Mabri TOIKEUSE]; over 20 smaller parties

**International Organization Participation:** ACCT, ACP, AfDB, AU, ECOWAS, Entente, FAO, FZ, G-24, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICCt (signatory), ICRM, IDA, IDB, IFAD, IFC, IFRC, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ITU, ITUC, MIGA, NAM, OIC, OIF, OPCW, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNWTO, UPU, WADB (regional), WAEMU, WCL, WCO, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO

**Export Commodities:** cocoa, coffee, timber, petroleum, cotton, bananas, pineapples, palm oil, fish

**Export Partners:** France 18.3%, US 14.1%, Netherlands 11%, Nigeria 8%, Panama 4.4% (2005)

**Imports:** USD 5.548 billion f.o.b.<sup>2</sup>

**Import Commodities:** fuel, capital equipment, foodstuffs



© Hiroo Hiyori / flickr.com  
Pineapple plantation

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<sup>2</sup> freight on board (f.o.b.) includes the cost of shipping to the Ivory Coast.

## Geography

### Côte d'Ivoire's Neighborhood

Located on the southern rim of the West African bulge, Côte d'Ivoire lies on the Gulf of Guinea. It shares land borders with Liberia, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Ghana. Violent conflict has characterized West Africa over the past decade and a half. It has resulted in the death, injury, and mutilation of hundreds of thousands of people and the displacement of millions more.<sup>3</sup> Refugees from neighboring countries have sought safety in the République de Côte d'Ivoire (RCI), which has teetered on the brink of civil war since 2002.



Courtesy of www.cia.gov  
West Africa

In West Africa the population belts are horizontal. Population concentrations increase as one moves south, away from the Sahara and toward the fertile, tropical landscape nearer to the Atlantic Ocean. But the national borders established by European colonial governments are vertical and therefore at odds with demography and topography.<sup>4</sup>

### Neighboring Countries

#### *Burkina Faso*

Burkina Faso is one of the most densely populated countries in Africa. While its citizenry shares many cultural and ethnic characteristics with Muslim Ivorians, relations between it and Côte d'Ivoire have been tense over the past decade. Côte d'Ivoire has accused Burkina Faso of backing the rebel government in the North, a claim that has been denied. The Burkina Faso government in turn has accused its neighbor of mistreating Burkinabes, who comprise the largest ethnic immigrant group in Côte d'Ivoire.

#### *Liberia*

In times of unrest in either Liberia or Côte d'Ivoire refugees flow across the mutual border. The Liberian Civil War (1989-1996) was one of Africa's bloodiest conflicts. It claimed the lives of more than 200,000 Liberians and displaced one million more who sought refuge in neighboring countries including Côte d'Ivoire. When civil war broke out in Côte d'Ivoire in 2002, Liberian mercenaries fought in the west and terrorized the civilian population. The border region between the two countries remains particularly dangerous for travelers.

#### *Ghana*

Relations between the two governments have been tense owing to their respective geopolitical alignments and support for governments the other finds objectionable.

<sup>3</sup> US Institute of Peace. Docking, Timothy. "Responding to War and State Collapse in West Africa." 1 February 2002. <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr81.html>

<sup>4</sup> The Atlantic Monthly. Kaplan, Robert D. "The Coming Anarchy: How scarcity, crime, overpopulation, tribalism, and disease are rapidly destroying the social fabric of our planet." February 1994. <http://www.theatlantic.com/ideastour/archive/kaplan.mhtml>

However, they successfully worked together to end smuggling in both directions across their common border. Ghana is the world's second largest producer of cocoa after Côte d'Ivoire.

### *Guinea*

Severe economic problems, instability in neighboring states that has saddled it with refugees in the past, as well as uncertainty over a successor to its authoritarian president have prompted fears that Guinea could plunge into the same type of unrest that has engulfed some of its neighbors.

### *Mali*

While Mali is the largest country in West Africa and has a stable democracy, it is also one of the poorest nations in the world. An unknown number of minor Malian nationals work in the Ivorian cocoa plantations as slaves. Many are orphans or have been abandoned by their families, who did not have the means to care for them. They are easily lured across the border under false pretenses and then have no means or place to escape to.

## **Geographic Divisions**

Côte d'Ivoire has three natural regions: the coastal lagoon area, the wooded central forest belt, and the northern savanna. This number has been reduced from four because the equatorial forest zone, which separated the lagoons from the central forest belt, has largely disappeared.



© kepi.cncplusplus.com  
Ivory Coast Sunset

Most of the lagoons are narrow, shallow, and salty. They run parallel to the coastline, linked together by small waterways or canals. In places where rivers empty into the Gulf of Guinea, broad estuaries extend as far as 10 to 20 km (6 to 12 miles) inland. The sandy soil is conducive to coconut palms as well as salt-resistant coastal shrubs.

A broad forest band covers nearly one third of Côte d'Ivoire, running north of the lagoon area in the east and extending down to the coastline in the west between the Sassandra River and the mouth of the Cavally River.

The North is a grassy savanna with little other vegetation save for scrubs. The southern part has been referred to as the transition zone and the northern half as the Sudanic zone. In fact, the entire region exists as an ecological transition between the belt of forest paralleling the lagoon coastline and the Sahara Desert.<sup>5</sup>

## **Climate**

Lying close to the Equator, Côte d'Ivoire is divided into three main climatic regions according to its geography: the coast, the forest, and the savanna. The coastal region sees the greatest rainfall at 2,032-3,048 mm (80-120 inches) and an average temperature of

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<sup>5</sup> IUPTravel. "Ivory Coast Weather Report." <http://www.luptravel.com/weather-forecast/cote-d-ivoire.html>

23-26°C (73-80°F). It enjoys a long dry season from the months of December through April. From the middle of May to the middle of July, heavy rains are the norm. From mid July to October, there is a short dry season, and light rain follows in October and November.

The central forest region experiences heavy rainfall of 1,342-2,540 mm (53-100 inches) annually and continuous high humidity. The seasons are more difficult to differentiate. The earlier, shorter dry season runs from November to the middle of March, after which mid March through mid May sees a short wet season. Another short dry season follows from mid May to mid July, proceeded by heavy rainfall from mid July to mid November.

In the northern savanna temperatures reach as high as 32°C (95°F) and drop to as low as 14°C (57°F). This zone experiences a wet season from June to October and a dry season lasting six to seven months.<sup>6</sup>

## Major Cities

### *Yamoussoukro*

A small town of fewer than 20,000 people until the late 1970s, Yamoussoukro was designated in 1983 to become the new national capital and an administrative and transportation center. It was the home of the RCI's long-time president, Félix Houphouët-Boigny. He orchestrated the city's rapid growth, which included luxury hotels and a large highway connecting Yamoussoukro to the former capital of Abidjan, where most government offices and foreign embassies remain. The late president, a Catholic, also presided over the construction of the world's largest cathedral, Our Lady of Peace Yamoussoukro, in his hometown. It rises to a height of 149 meters (489 feet) and was dedicated in 1990 by Pope John Paul II. Yamoussoukro's urban development, particularly the cathedral, drew criticism for its extravagance during a difficult economic period.<sup>7</sup> Population: 110,000

### *Abidjan*

The largest city and cultural capital of Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan has earned the international nickname "the Paris of West Africa" for its cosmopolitan ambience. Its modern port, constructed in 1950 when the Vridi Canal was dug through a sandbar, serves all of French West Africa. It provides large ships from the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean access to the sheltered and relatively deep Ebrié Lagoon. Population: 5 million (metropolitan area estimate)<sup>8</sup>



© Bob Harvey  
Abidjan

<sup>6</sup> "Climate: Côte d'Ivoire." <http://www.ecowas.info/ivrweat.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Bernard Cloutier. "Ivory Coast." 1999. <http://berclo.net/page99/99en-ivory-coast.html>

<sup>8</sup> Population figures for Abidjan vary widely from two to five million. The range reflects the difficulties of counting migrants lacking identification who live in slum housing that has been built without the appropriate permits.

### *Bouaké*

Located on a plateau in the central part of Côte d'Ivoire, Bouaké was once an important slave market. It was established as a French military post in the late 1890s. The city is on the Abidjan-Niger rail line and is the commercial and transportation hub of the interior. Following the 2002 partition of the country, Bouaké served as the unofficial capital of the rebel movement. Population: 450,000

### *Korhogo*

Founded in the 14th century by a Senufo chief, Korhogo is the cultural capital of the Senufo people. The city evolved as an important trade route from the mountains to the Atlantic coast. It remains the primary marketplace for Senufo farmers of the savanna. Population: 87,800

### *Man*

This key western city is located in a region of cocoa plantations. The surrounding area is mountainous and densely forested.<sup>9</sup> It came under rebel control in 2002. Population: 59,500<sup>10</sup>

### **Major Rivers**

Côte d'Ivoire has four major river systems that flow from north to south and drain into the Gulf of Guinea. From west to east these are the Cavally, Sassandra, Bandama, and Comoé--all navigable only for a limited distance inland from the coast. In the North, many smaller tributaries revert to dry streambeds between rains.<sup>11</sup>

The Cavally River has its headwaters in the Nimba Mountains of Guinea. It marks the border between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia for over half its length. Traversing rolling land and rapids, it is navigable for about 50 km (31 miles) inland from its mouth near Cape Palmas.

The source of the Sassandra River Basin is in the high ground of the North, where the Tiemba River merges with the FéréDougouba River, which descends from the Guinea highlands. This river is joined by the Bagbé, Bafing, Nzo, Lobo, and Davo Rivers along the way. Winding through shifting sandbars to create a narrow estuary, it is navigable for about 80 km (50 miles) inland from the port of Sassandra.

The Bandama River, also referred to as the Bandama Blanc, is the RCI's longest river. Others merge into it along its 800-km (500-mile) course. This large river system drains most of central Côte d'Ivoire before flowing into the Tagba Lagoon opposite Grand-Lahou. During rainy seasons, the Bandama is navigable for 50 or 60 km (31 to 37 miles) inland.



© Ferdinand Reus  
Boats on a river at sunset

<sup>9</sup> US-Africa. "Ivory Coast." <http://us-africa.tripod.com/ivory2.html>

<sup>10</sup> All city population figures taken from United Nations. "Facts About Côte d'Ivoire." [http://un.cti.depaul.edu/cgi-bin/spider.py?\\_request=1&country=Cote\\_dIvoire&language=English](http://un.cti.depaul.edu/cgi-bin/spider.py?_request=1&country=Cote_dIvoire&language=English)

<sup>11</sup> US Library of Congress. "Rivers." <http://countrystudies.us/ivory-coast/16.htm>

Easternmost of the main rivers, the Comoé, formed by the Leraba and Gomonaba, has its sources in the Sikasso Plateau of Burkina Faso. It flows within a narrow 700-km (435-mile) basin and is augmented by the Kongo and Iringou tributaries before meandering among the coastal sandbars and ultimately emptying into the Ebrié Lagoon near Grand-Bassam. The Comoé is navigable for light draft vessels for about 50 km (31 miles) to Alépé.

Large dams were constructed in the 1960s and 1970s to manage the flow of water to the south. These projects created reservoirs, referred to as lakes, bearing the names of the dams: Buyo on the Sassandra, Kossou and Taabo on the Bandama, and Ayamé on the small Bia River in the southeast corner of the country. Lake Kossou is the largest, occupying more than 1,600 square km (618 square miles) in the center of the country.

### Environment

In the past, Côte d'Ivoire was known for its dense tropical forest. However, as a result of massive deforestation this is no longer the case. The primary species of precious and common woods, hardwoods, semi-hard woods, and softwoods have well-known international market value.<sup>12</sup> African mahogany and teak (*iroko*) are particularly valuable. Farmers who grow cocoa have also cleared the forest to increase the amount of land under cultivation.<sup>13</sup> Pollution has impacted many of the country's waterways. It has been principally caused by industrial and agricultural waste as well as the discharge of raw sewage along the coast.<sup>14</sup>



© kepi.cncplusplus.com  
Ivory Coast Jungle

### Natural Hazards

The Harmattan haze is an extremely dry, dusty wind from the Sahara that blows toward the western coast of Africa between November and April.<sup>15</sup> During this period, airlines are frequently forced to make route detours owing to reduced visibility. In the words of a traveler who paddled across Lake Volta in neighboring Ghana: "The haze made the lake's surface merge seamlessly with the sky. We seemed to be traveling through white, undefined space. Only two men paddling a fishing boat far in the distance gave us a sense of where water met air."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> UN FAO Corporate Document Repository. "Forest Problems in Africa." 1949.  
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/x5349e/x5349e03.htm>

<sup>13</sup> American University. "Cocoa Trade in Cote d'Ivoire." <http://www.american.edu/tes/cocoa.htm>

<sup>14</sup> Yale New Haven Teacher's Institute. Kirkland-Mullins, Waltrina. "A Story, A Story - Embracing Geography, Culture, and Diversity through Film," 2003.

<http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/2003/1/03.01.05.x.html>

<sup>15</sup> "Guinea Study Guide."

<http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/international/LegendsOfAfrica/StudyGuides.doc>

<sup>16</sup> Concord Monitor. Garvin, Ben. "Crossing Lake Volta." 2 February 2003.

<http://www.bengarvin.com/portfolio/Africa/crossingvolta.html>

## Wildlife Preservation

African elephants roam open savanna and deep forest habitats, where their numbers are difficult to monitor. Often steep declines in population are observed only after it is too late to prevent extinction.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, a report issued by the World Wildlife Fund revealed investigators found more than 4,000 kg (4.4 tons) of illegally harvested ivory on public display in nine cities in Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Senegal. This volume represents the tusks of more than 760 elephants, although evidence suggested in 2003 that there may be no more than 543 elephants left in the three countries.<sup>18</sup>



© Ferdinand Reus  
The baobab tree and elephant

Commerce within a country is regulated by national legislation. The RCI banned the lucrative ivory trade in 1997. However, in a land plagued by poverty and civil unrest, wildlife protection laws are a low priority. Moreover, they are easily subverted by cash-strapped local officials who see the profit potential.<sup>19</sup> As someone involved in conservation observed, “[like] high-value illegal narcotics, the high bounty on these animals will always attract criminals willing to take risks for what is seen as quick money. With such large animals involved, the poachers come armed with automatic weapons and even rocket launchers.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Animal Domain. Lloyd, Robin. “DNA Tests of Illegally Traded Ivory Could Save Elephants.” 14 October 2003. [http://www.livescience.com/animalworld/041014\\_ivory\\_origins.html](http://www.livescience.com/animalworld/041014_ivory_origins.html)

<sup>18</sup> BBC News. Kirby, Brian. “West Africa’s Ivory Trade Thrives.” 15 December 2003. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/3314069.stm>

<sup>19</sup> National Public Radio. “Lifting the Ivory Ban Called Premature.” 31 October 2002. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=3879214>

<sup>20</sup> Animal Defenders International. “Endangered Animals Lose Out as Hunters Make Gains at Conference.” October 2004. <http://www.ad-international.org/conservation/go.php?id=82&ssi=14>

# History

## Early History

Archeological excavations in present-day Côte d'Ivoire provide evidence of human habitation since prehistoric times. The present tribal configuration demographic suggests migration, especially of splinter groups from the former reigning West African kingdoms of the 12th to the 17th centuries.

The dense forests covering the southern portion created natural barriers, which made it difficult for any group to establish a large-scale system of government. In the savanna region in the North, dissimilar populations had neither the incentive nor the means to overcome their differences and create a larger state. Prior to the 18th century, Ivorian communities were comprised of villages or clusters of villages where awareness of the larger world was filtered through interactions with long-distance traders.<sup>21</sup>

Côte d'Ivoire was relatively isolated from outside influences for much of its early history. Islam, which spread through most other regions of West Africa before the 16th century, made only minor inroads into its impenetrable forest belt. The country was too far west to have been significant in the 17th- and 18th-century European development of the Guinea coast gold and transatlantic slave trades.<sup>22</sup> Its foreboding coastline and lack of suitable harbors discouraged European exploration until the mid 19th century when the scramble for colonies intensified.<sup>23</sup>

## The French Colonial Period

A French protectorate was established over the coastal zone in 1842. The interior, however, remained free from European control until the very end of the century. Côte d'Ivoire officially became a French colony in 1893. Captain Louis Gustave Binger, who had explored the Gold Coast frontier and depicted it as an agricultural landscape left in ruins by endlessly feuding kingdoms, was named the first governor.<sup>24</sup> He negotiated boundary treaties with Liberia and the United Kingdom (for the Gold Coast) and later initiated the campaign against Almany Samory, a powerful Malinké tribal chief, who fought against the French until 1898.



Courtesy of wikipedia.org  
A house from colonial time in Grand Bassam

By the early years of the twentieth century, the French administratively controlled most of what would come to be their colonial territory in West Africa (including present-day Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, and Niger). The French appeared fully aware, even at this early stage, that assimilation of West Africans was

<sup>21</sup> US Library of Congress. "Country Studies." <http://www.country-studies.com/ivory-coast/history.html>

<sup>22</sup> "Côte d'Ivoire." <http://www.geographia.com/ivory-coast/>

<sup>23</sup> US Library of Congress. "Ivory Coast." [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ci0012\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ci0012))

<sup>24</sup> Bassett, Thomas J. *The Peasant Cotton Revolution in West Africa: Côte d'Ivoire, 1880-1995* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 27.

unlikely. Both the cost of implementing such a program and the tenacity of indigenous culture represented large obstacles. Instead, the French sought to control the West African populations.

Accordingly, the area was divided into *cercles*, or units that were administered by *commandants de cercle*, or district commissioners, and then further down, *chefs de subdivision* at the local level. Villages were governed under the authority of an appointed chief, a practice that drew villagers into the national system of governance but also disrupted traditional channels of tribal authority. This provoked resistance, which could be met with forced labor (*corvée*) and imprisonment (*indigenant*), depending upon the circumstances.<sup>25,26</sup>

Abidjan's urbanization was the result of French colonial rule. In 1920, its population consisted of the inhabitants of a few dozen villages located on scattered islands and lagoon peninsulas. The French realized its potential as an administrative capital that could also serve as a railway terminus to transport tropical produce from the interior to seaport.<sup>27</sup>

From 1904 to 1958, Côte d'Ivoire was part of the Federation of French West Africa. It was a colony and an overseas territory of the French Third Republic. Until after the Second World War, governmental affairs for French West Africa were administered from Paris. France's policy was reflected in its philosophy of "association." In effect, this meant that while all Africans in Côte d'Ivoire were officially French subjects, they did not enjoy the right to citizenship or political representation in Africa or France.<sup>28</sup>



© Claudia Wanner  
Ivory Coast Village

The Brazzaville Conference in 1944, the first Constituent Assembly of the French Fourth Republic in 1946, and France's appreciation for African loyalty during World War II resulted in far-reaching governmental reforms in 1946. French citizenship was granted to all African "subjects," the right to organize politically was recognized, and various forms of forced labor that had favored French plantation owners were abolished.

In December 1958, Côte d'Ivoire became an autonomous republic within the French community. This was the result of a referendum that brought community status to all members of the old Federation of French West Africa who wanted it. The RCI became

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<sup>25</sup> US Library of Congress. "Voltaic Cultures" December 1988. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ci0056\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ci0056))

<sup>26</sup> University of Pennsylvania African Studies Center. "French in West Africa." [http://www.africa.upenn.edu/K-12/French\\_16178.html](http://www.africa.upenn.edu/K-12/French_16178.html)

<sup>27</sup> Freund, Bill. "Globalisation and the African City: Touba, Abidjan, and the Durban." November 2004. [www.ssn.flinders.edu.au/global/afsaap/conferences/2004proceedings/freund.PDF](http://www.ssn.flinders.edu.au/global/afsaap/conferences/2004proceedings/freund.PDF)

<sup>28</sup> International Crisis Group. "Conflict History: Côte d'Ivoire." May 2006. [http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?action=conflict\\_search&l=1&t=1&c\\_country=32](http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?action=conflict_search&l=1&t=1&c_country=32)

independent on 7 August 1960, and subsequently allowed its community membership to lapse.

### **Independence**

In a region where governments and even political systems have proved to be short-lived, Côte d'Ivoire stood apart for its remarkable political stability over the first four decades after independence. During this time it maintained a close political allegiance to the West. In contrast, many of its neighboring countries were undergoing successive military coups, experimenting with various Marxist economic systems, and developing ties with the Soviet Union and China.

Côte d'Ivoire's post-independence political history is closely associated with the career of Félix Houphouët-Boigny, president of the republic and leader of the *Parti Democratique de la Côte d'Ivoire* (PDCI). He first came to national leadership prominence in 1944 as founder of the *Syndicat Agricole Africain*, an organization involved in improving conditions for African farmers.

After World War II, he was elected by a narrow margin to the first Constituent Assembly. Representing Côte d'Ivoire in the French National Assembly from 1946 to 1959, he devoted much of his time to inter-territorial political organization and improving farm labor conditions. After his 13-year service in the French National Assembly, including almost three years as a minister in the French Government, he returned home to become prime minister in 1958, and president in 1960.

The son of a well-to-do Baoulé farmer, he realized that agriculture held the key to prosperity. Under his leadership the RCI became one of the largest global producers of coffee and cocoa as well as the third largest economy in sub-Saharan Africa. Its economic policies were closely aligned with those of France.<sup>29</sup> During this period of growth, Houphouët-Boigny presided over a one-party state in which he was head of state, head of government, and leader of the PDCI. But he brought members of the opposition into the party rather than subjecting them to official persecution. He referred to this process as "reconciliation."<sup>30</sup> Representatives of all major ethnic groups were in his cabinet as well as the important policy-making bodies of the PDCI.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> A significant number of French nationals remained in Côte d'Ivoire after independence many of whom had business interests in the country. Under Houphouët-Boigny, the RCI was France's most important, wealthiest and staunchest ally in Africa. It's the linchpin of the French-African quasi-commonwealth. The commonwealth is important to France because it provides a large voting block in the United Nations conferring international prestige and important player status in world politics.

<sup>30</sup> San Jose State University. "The Economic History and Economy of Ivory Coast." <http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/ivory.htm>

<sup>31</sup> US Library of Congress. "History." <http://www.country-studies.com/ivory-coast/history.html>

## 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. The aging incumbent easily defeated an opposition candidate in that year's presidential election. In 1995, two years after Houphouët-Boigny's death, the opposition had some prospect of claiming the presidency against Henri Konan Bédié, Houphouët-Boigny's PDCI successor who was, like him, a Baoulé Catholic. But Bédié prevailed and won a five-year term. He quickly began consolidating his power by launching a national identity campaign known as *Ivoirité*. Designed to keep political power in the hands of Ivorian nationals, it ushered in the present politics of exclusion.



Courtesy of wikipedia.org  
Félix Houphouët-Boigny

Bédié's immediate target was his northern Muslim rival for the presidency, Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara. After Houphouët-Boigny passed away, Ouattara's detractors pointed out that he had been born in neighboring Burkina Faso and had allegedly held Burkinabe citizenship in the past. *Ivoirité* provided a cover for a witch hunt to root out "foreigners" and deny them the right to compete in elections.

Bédié's maneuver ultimately backfired. On Christmas Day 1999, he was overthrown in a coup by a group of military officers. Retired General Robert Guei, a Muslim and former chief of staff of the armed forces, emerged as the new president, though his tenure proved short-lived.<sup>32</sup>

The military government proved unable to govern in the face of widespread public opposition. Guei was forced out of office in a contested election, which brought Laurent Gbagbo, an evangelical Christian and longstanding opponent of Houphouët-Boigny's ruling party, into office.<sup>33</sup>

The government's heavy-handed response to a failed *coup* in September 2002, led by soldiers from the Muslim north, during which General Guei was murdered, resulted in full-scale rebellion.<sup>34</sup> The rebel group, calling itself the *Mouvement Patriotique de la Côte d'Ivoire* (MPCI), asserted control over Bouaké and Korhogo.<sup>35</sup> Within two weeks, the MPCI had extended its power over the remainder of the northern half of the country.

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<sup>32</sup> Houphouët-Boigny believed that a smaller army was a safety valve against *coup* attempts by the military. As a result he had kept the Ivorian armed forces small for decades.

<sup>33</sup> The Perspective. Kamara, Tom. "Gen Guei's Ignoble Escape." 26 October 2000.  
<http://www.theperspective.org/gueiescape.html>

<sup>34</sup> Christian Science Monitor. "Ivory Coast Braces for War." 30 September 2002.  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0930/p06s01-woaf.html>

<sup>35</sup> In late September, heavy fighting broke out in Bouaké. More than 100 American students and staff at a missionary boarding school were caught in the crossfire. US Special Forces from the military's European Command were dispatched at the request of the US Ambassador. Ghana was the staging base for the 200 US troops involved in the evacuation. Global Security. "Ivory Coast Conflict 2002."  
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/ivory-coast-2002.htm>

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 Alassane Ouattara.

Many governments have dealt with citizenship issues and the rights of foreign residents. *Ivoirité*, however, proved not only divisive but explosive.<sup>36</sup> It was initiated during a period of economic crisis that was exacerbated by a growing population in competition for scarce resources.<sup>37</sup> These flames were further fueled by political and religious leaders, who made use of Christian and Muslim evangelism (or the fear of it) to strengthen their own fortunes and assail that of their rivals.

### The Country Divided

Government and MPCFI representatives negotiated a ceasefire in mid October 2002. French military forces already present in the country, as well as African troops fielded by UN Peace Keeping Forces, continue to monitor the ceasefire line. In January 2003, the major political parties and the MPCFI signed the Linas-Marcoussis Accord, which created an interim Government of National Reconciliation. Every political party in the RCI was given a seat in the new government and the MPCFI gained control of seven ministries, including those of Justice and Information.<sup>38</sup> However, this government in fact exercised authority only intermittently, with various opposition parties suspending their participation for long periods of time.<sup>39</sup>



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Government fighter

New rebel groups emerged in the western part of the country in 2003, complicating national unity efforts. The *Mouvement Populaire du Grand Ouest* (MPIGO) and the *Mouvement pour la Justice et la Paix* (MJP) claimed they were fighting to avenge the death of General Guei. In reality, however, they were former Revolutionary United Front (RUF) soldiers from Sierra Leone and units from Liberia's army loyal to former President Charles Taylor. Moreover, it was pillage rather than politics that motivated them.<sup>40</sup> Profiteering from war was the only business many had ever known.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The political instability which results from inter-ethnic conflict is all too representative of modern Africa. The Ivorian example is neither unique nor the most extreme to date when contrasted with the ethnic cleansing which occurred in Rwanda and, more recently, Darfur. What makes the situation noteworthy is the RCI's decline came from a relatively greater height and for the lessons it offers on how states fail. Project Syndicate. Granville, Brigitte. "The Ivory Coast Shipwreck." 2005. <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/granville12>

<sup>37</sup> Cambridge Journals. Woods, Dwayne. "The tragedy of the cocoa pod: rent-seeking, land and ethnic conflict in Ivory Coast," (Abstract). March 2003. <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?jsessionid=C0910DFF0206991A1BD31F8E4C3F93A9.tomcat1?fromPage=online&aid=190489>

<sup>38</sup> Rothchild, Donald. "Power Sharing as a Response to Insecurity after Africa's Civil Wars." <http://mrgec.mcgill.ca/Papers/rothchild,%20feb%2005.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> Foreign Policy in Focus. Dukule, Abdoulaye. "Violence Returns to Côte d'Ivoire." 15 November 2004. <http://www.fpif.org/fpiftxt/1048>

<sup>40</sup> Znet Magazine. Gberie, Lansana. "The Crisis in the Ivory Coast." 24 June 2004. <http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?ItemID=5769>

The three rebel groups subsequently formed a political-military alliance called the New Forces (*Forces Nouvelles*). In contrast to the MPCI, which controls the North, where it has established itself as a professional force in key cities, the MPIGO and MJP are notorious for vandalism and terror.<sup>42</sup> As a result, tens of thousands of Ivorians have fled the western region where Liberian mercenaries and local armed militia are also present.<sup>43</sup>

In November 2004, escalating tension resulted in renewed fighting after the government bombed rebel-controlled Bouaké and killed nine French soldiers.<sup>44</sup> The French response was swift; they launched a lightning strike, destroying the Ivorian air force, including its gun ships.<sup>45</sup> The French, ironically, earned the hatred of both sides, who agreed on little else.<sup>46</sup> Each accused Paris of supporting the enemy and believed that but for the intervention of French troops, military victory would have been theirs.<sup>47</sup>

The retaliation angered southerners who felt the French were interfering in their country's internal affairs.<sup>48</sup> Rampaging Abidjanis destroyed French-owned property and assaulted French expatriates, including women.<sup>49</sup> Ivorians could not tell which Caucasians were French, of course. Other nationalities reported harrowing run-ins with vigilante groups of young men who operated according to the "act first and ask questions later" rule.<sup>50</sup> Most non-African foreign nationals fled the country, and embassies were downsized to only essential staff.<sup>51</sup> The UN Security Council issued an immediate arms embargo on the RCI and gave its feuding leaders 30 days to get the peace process back on track or face a

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<sup>41</sup> The New Republic. Merrill, Austin. "Duékoué Dispatch, Citizen Soldiers." 17 October 2005. <http://www.friendsofcotedivoire.org/docs/FOCnewsletter0906.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York: Henry Holt, 2003, pp. 315-316.

<sup>43</sup> OpenDocument Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. March 2003. [http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/\(httpEnvelopes\)/C9D01F76187AA630802570B8005A6FDD?](http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/(httpEnvelopes)/C9D01F76187AA630802570B8005A6FDD?)

<sup>44</sup> BBC News. "AU [African Union] Condemns Ivory Coast Air Raids." 6 November 2004. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3987787.stm>

<sup>45</sup> Washington Post. Farah, Douglas. "Road to Violence: Ivory Coast President Divided His Country." 22 November 2004. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A3155-2004Nov21.html>

<sup>46</sup> The Perspective. Nabakwe, Ruth. "Côte d'Ivoire, Africa and the Policy of the 'Third Man.'" 8 October 2002. [http://www.theperspective.org/ivory\\_coast.html](http://www.theperspective.org/ivory_coast.html)

<sup>47</sup> The New Republic. Kahn, Jeremy, "Ivory Keys." 17 November 2004. <http://www.tnr.com/doc.mhtml?i=express&s=kahn111704>

<sup>48</sup> It has been suggested that Laurent Gbagbo feared loss of power in any type of settlement. Council on Foreign Relations. Pan, Esther. "Ivory Coast Mission Imperiled." 21 January 2006. [http://www.cfr.org/publication/9620/ivory\\_coast\\_mission\\_imperiled.html?breadcrumb=%2Fpublication%2Fpublication\\_list%3Fgroupby%3D0%26page%3D1%26type%3Ddaily\\_analysis](http://www.cfr.org/publication/9620/ivory_coast_mission_imperiled.html?breadcrumb=%2Fpublication%2Fpublication_list%3Fgroupby%3D0%26page%3D1%26type%3Ddaily_analysis)

<sup>49</sup> American Renaissance. "Rioters Rape Europeans as They Flee Ivory Coast." 15 November 2004. [http://www.amren.com/mtnews/archives/2004/11/rioters\\_rape\\_eu.php](http://www.amren.com/mtnews/archives/2004/11/rioters_rape_eu.php)

<sup>50</sup> In the words of a British journalist, "Loyalists at impromptu roadblocks around Abidjan's otherwise deserted streets stopped cars and frisked passengers. At one checkpoint, a bare-chested young man whose breath smelled of alcohol leaned in the window, saw I was a foreigner, and drew his finger across my throat." The New Republic. Peel, Michael. "Abidjan Dispatch: Rumbblings." 20 December 2004. <http://www.tnr.com/doc.mhtml?i=20041220&s=peel122004>.

<sup>51</sup> Washington Post. Timberg, Craig. "Younger Generation is Embracing Anti-French Sentiment," 19 November 2004. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A60915-2004Nov18?language=printer>

travel ban and a freeze on their assets. While the peace process was resurrected, no agreement was reached.<sup>52</sup>

### Recent Events

The troubled RCI and its unstable political situation received renewed international attention in September 2006. News organizations reported that hazardous waste from the industrialized world was being haphazardly disposed of in a developing country with few prospects for foreign investment.<sup>53</sup> Specifically, 500 tons of toxic sludge from a Dutch tanker was off-loaded around Abidjan under cover of night. Tales of spreading sickness sparked violent demonstrations.<sup>54</sup> It took little to convince many Abidjanis that their own government officials, who had initially denied anything was amiss, were complicit in the dumping. The furor forced the prime minister and his government to resign, though most members were subsequently reinstated.<sup>55</sup>

In December, Interim Prime Minister Charles Konan Banny publicly criticized President Gbagbo's decision to reinstate three senior officials. These individuals had been identified as being partially responsible for allowing the shipment (ultimately linked to ten deaths) to enter the country. Gbagbo, who was given a seventh successive year in power in November 2006 under a new UN plan to establish lasting peace, responded by sacking the head of Ivorian television for broadcasting Banny's statement. An international review committee deemed this move as to have violated the UN-backed peace process aimed at reuniting the country through elections. This resulted in a street demonstration that left one person dead.<sup>56</sup>

In late 2006, Gbagbo repudiated the peace plans backed by the UN and France. He opted instead to use African mediators to bring an end to the political stalemate with the rebels. Talks between the two sides began in Burkina Faso in early 2007. In contrast to earlier efforts, these talks resulted in an agreement in early March.



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According to the terms of the deal, signed by President Laurent Gbagbo and rebel chief Guillaume Soro, a new government was to be

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<sup>52</sup> Realistically, the mediation process can only fulfill its mandate if the interested parties agree in principle about the final goal and remain divided only on how best to achieve it. However, the limited progress reflected the reality that everyone with power found the status quo of a divided country in a state of "neither peace nor war" preferable to a political settlement. Spectrezine Dévérin, Yveline. "Ivory Coast: The Crisis is Good for Business." 24 May 2006. <http://www.spectrezine.org/Africa/IvoryCoast.htm>

<sup>53</sup> Slate. Kahn, Jeremy. "How First World Garbage Makes Africa Sick." 22 September 2006. <http://www.slate.com/id/2150243>

<sup>54</sup> Spiegel Online. Knauer, Sebastian. "Profits for Europe, Industrial Slop for Africa." 18 September 2006. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,437842,00.html>

<sup>55</sup> New York Times. Polgreen, Lydia. "Global Sludge Ends in Tragedy for Ivory Coast." 2 October 2006. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/02/world/africa/02ivory.html?ex=1317441600&en=289499925513d443&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>

<sup>56</sup> International Herald Tribune. "Police Fire on Protestors Killing One." 5 December 2006. [http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2006/12/05/africa/AF\\_GEN\\_Ivory\\_Coast\\_Protests.php](http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2006/12/05/africa/AF_GEN_Ivory_Coast_Protests.php)

set up within five weeks. Previous stumbling blocks such as rebel disarmament and their integration into a national army have been addressed. Agreement was also reached in April to offer amnesty for all non-economic crimes committed during the civil war. It has been backdated to September 2000. This means crimes committed by soldiers loyal to the Gbagbo government before the coup that divided the country in 2002 will also be wiped off the slate.<sup>57</sup>

The main sticking point in previous efforts, i.e., determining who is Ivorian and therefore eligible to vote, has been left vague. The enforcement mechanism is also underspecified. Nonetheless the agreement calls for the gradual withdrawal of French and UN peacekeepers and the free circulation of goods and people over the next ten months.<sup>58</sup>

### **Côte d'Ivoire Time Line, 1842-2007**

**1842** - France establishes a protectorate over coastal zone.

**1893** - Ivory Coast formally becomes a colony of France.

**1904** - Ivory Coast becomes part of the French Federation of West Africa.

**1944** - Félix Houphouët-Boigny, later to become the RCI's first president, founds a union of African farmers, which develops into the inter-territorial African Democratic Rally and its Ivorian section, the Ivory Coast Democratic Party.

**1958** - Côte d'Ivoire becomes a republic within the French Community.

**1960** - The RCI gains its independence and Félix Houphouët-Boigny assumes office. He remains President until his death in 1993.

**1990** - Opposition parties are legalized; Houphouët-Boigny wins the first RCI multi-party presidential election.

**1993** - Henri Konan Bédié becomes president following the death of Houphouët-Boigny.

**1995** October - Bédié is re-elected in a ballot that is boycotted by opposition parties in protest over nationality restrictions imposed on other candidates.

**1999** September - Bédié is overthrown in a military coup led by General Robert Guei.

**2000** October - Guei proclaims himself president after an election, but is forced to flee in the wake of a popular uprising against vote counting irregularities.

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<sup>57</sup> BBC News (International Version). "Amnesty for Ivory Coast Conflict." 13 April 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6553547.stm>

<sup>58</sup> Voice of America. Colombant, Nico. "Ivory Coast President, Rebel Leader Sign New Deal to End Stalemate," 4 March 2007. <http://www.voanews.com/english/2007-03-04-voa17.cfm>

**2000 October - Laurent Gbagbo, presumed to be the true winner of the presidential election, is proclaimed President. Opposition leader Alassane Ouattara, denied the right to run, calls for a new election.**

**2001 June - Amnesty International criticizes government's human rights record over alleged killings of 57 northerners during presidential election campaign in October 2000. Eight gendarmes accused of the killings are cleared by tin August.**

**2002 19 September - Mutiny in Abidjan by soldiers from the North are about to be demobilized. Uprising turns into a full-scale rebellion and rebels gain control of the North.**

**2002 October-December - Previously unknown rebel groups seize towns in west.**

**2003 March - Transitional government is created under UN auspices. Political parties and rebels agree on transition government to include members from rebel ranks now operating as the New Forces. This body proves unable to exercise power effectively.**

**2003 July - Military chiefs and rebels declare that the war is over. Ceasefire does not hold.**

**2004 November - Ivorian air force attacks rebel-held territory. French military responds after nine of their soldiers are killed in an air strike. Violent anti-French protests force non-African foreign nationals to flee Abidjan. UN imposes arms embargo.**

**2005 April - Representatives of the government and rebels declare an "immediate and final end" to hostilities that have divided the country. Ceasefire brokered in South Africa does not hold.**

**2005 October - Scheduled elections are shelved as President Gbagbo invokes a law that he claims allows him to remain in office. The UN extends his mandate for another year.**

**2005 December - Charles Konan Banny is nominated to serve as prime minister by outside mediators. He is responsible for disarming militias and rebels and organizing elections scheduled for October 2006.**

**2006 January - Loyalist street demonstrators, enraged by what they see as UN interference in their country's internal affairs, turn violent in Abidjan.**

**2006 February - Principal political antagonists meet on Ivorian soil for the first time since the 2002 division of the country. No progress is made but they agree to future sessions.**

**2006 June - Militias loyal to President Gbagbo miss disarmament deadline.**

**2006 September - Toxic waste dumped in Abidjan Harbor. Fumes from the waste kill three people and make many more ill, forcing several senior leaders to resign.**

**2006 November - A UN Security Council Resolution extends the transitional government's mandate for another year until October 2007.**

**2007 March - Government and the New Forces sign a peace agreement in Burkina Faso to reunite the country.**

**2007 April - President Gbagbo announces "the war is over" between his government and the northern-based rebels. Both sides move to dismantle the buffer zone. Within days there are reports of an upswing in violence.**

## Economy

### Industry

The Ivorian economy is market-based and heavily reliant on the agricultural sector. A majority of the population derives their income from smallholder cash-crop agriculture. Principal exports are cocoa, coffee, cotton, pineapples, tuna, and tropical woods. This means the RCI's economy is particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in international prices for these products, as well as adverse weather conditions.<sup>59</sup>

During the 1990s, Côte d'Ivoire was poised to become a major coffee-producing country. It was the largest coffee producer in Africa and fifth in the world. But the Ivorian coffee industry remains geared toward producing large volumes of coffee made from *robusta* rather than the better quality *arabica* beans, which yield higher value-added specialty coffee.<sup>60</sup>

### Foreign Investment and Business Outlook

Plunging commodity prices coupled with government corruption and fiscal mismanagement brought the Ivorian economy to its knees at the end of 1999. A military coup d'état resulted in the loss of foreign assistance. Private foreign investment declined precipitously. Internal and external debt ballooned as the government spent more than it took in from tax collection.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) helped implement changes, which created optimism for economic and business recovery. But the political and social crisis that began in September 2002 sapped the government of the will to continue with a reform program, which placed substantial economic hardship on farmers.

The Ivorian economy has been in a discernible decline since the country was divided. Most external assistance (except humanitarian aid) has been terminated and foreign investment is negligible. Even without the civil war, Côte d'Ivoire did not offer an attractive environment for large-scale foreign investment. Commercial regulation and bureaucratic red tape are burdensome and provide opportunities for public officials to solicit bribes. Property rights are not enforced by an independent judiciary.<sup>61</sup>

#### ECOWAS

*The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional group of 15 countries founded in May 1975. Its mandate was to enhance member state economic stability and the prospects for peace in the region. Political instability has hindered progress in promoting economic integration and regional cooperation. ECOWAS has played a role in promoting peace, however. It has supplied peace-keeping troops to a number of member nations including the Cote d'Ivoire after the country was split in two in 2002. The following countries are ECOWAS members: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.*

<sup>59</sup> Reuters Foundation. "Ivory Coast." [http://www.alertnet.org/printable.htm?URL=/db/cp/ivory\\_coast.htm](http://www.alertnet.org/printable.htm?URL=/db/cp/ivory_coast.htm)

<sup>60</sup> Ringsurf. "Africa – Arabica."

[http://www.ringsurf.com/info/Food/Coffee/Coffee\\_Growing\\_Regions/Africa\\_-\\_Arabia/](http://www.ringsurf.com/info/Food/Coffee/Coffee_Growing_Regions/Africa_-_Arabia/)

<sup>61</sup> Heritage Foundation Index of Economic Freedom. "Ivory Coast."

<http://www.heritage.org/index/country.cfm?id=IvoryCoast>

## Standard of Living

The Ivorian economy began to perform poorly in the 1980s, when the international price for its principal exports fell. The government was forced to devalue the national currency by 50 percent.<sup>62</sup> Ivorians suffered a 25 percent decline in per capita income between 1987 and 1993.<sup>63</sup> This, coupled with high population growth, resulted in a continuing drop in living standards. The gross national product per capita was USD 727 in 1996, but had fallen to USD 669 by 2003.<sup>64</sup>

## Divided Country

The political impasse makes life difficult for the average Ivorian, but proved to be quite lucrative for those in power. As of 15 June 2006, Côte d'Ivoire owed the World Bank USD 310.3 million.<sup>65</sup> This is a relatively small sum in proportion to its economy. The government of Laurent Gbagbo appears to have had other priorities. A number of international NGOs allege that Gbagbo's supporters stocked up on weapons after the country was divided and used public money to pay for them.

Prominent government figures have been routinely accused of using public monies for personal enrichment, weapons procurement, and hiring mercenaries. Members of the rebel *Forces Nouvelles* have been similarly accused of dominating lucrative economic activities such as trade in cotton and weapons.

It is not just national politicians who were in a position to benefit from the neither-peace-nor-war status quo. Many others, from private businessmen tied closely to public officials to municipal political bosses, have benefited from business interests that are frequently protected (or expanded) by militias. Comprised of otherwise unemployed youth styling themselves as Young Patriots (*Jeunes Patriotes*), militia membership offers opportunities to acquire wealth.<sup>66</sup>

### West African CFA Currency

*The West African CFA franc is the currency of the eight member countries of the African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). It is important to distinguish it from the Central African CFA franc being used by the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC). While each monetary community issues its own CFA franc notes that are printed in France, the two currencies are legal tender only in their respective regions.*

*The CFA has been in use since 1945. A drastic devaluation occurred during the history of the currency in 1994. That meant in all eight countries the price of goods including necessities such as milk, rice, and fertilizer doubled overnight. Originally tied to the French franc, it has been pegged to the Euro at a rate of 656 to one since 1999. Countries using this currency are Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Togo, Niger, Benin, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire.*

<sup>62</sup> The CFA currency became so overvalued it distorted market incentives. Goods smuggled in from Nigeria, for example, were often cheaper than their locally made equivalents. International Herald Tribune. James, Barry. "In Africa, Both Money and Paris's Role Shrink," 24 January 1994.

[http://www.iht.com/articles/1994/01/24/cfa\\_3.php](http://www.iht.com/articles/1994/01/24/cfa_3.php)

<sup>63</sup> Baptist Missions International. "Ivory Coast." <http://www.bimi.org/countries/ivorycoast.php>

<sup>64</sup> US Department of State. "Background Note: Côte d'Ivoire." October 2006.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2846.htm>

<sup>65</sup> BBC News. "Ivory Coast Faces Worst Economic Crisis." 20 June 2006.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/5097634.stm>

<sup>66</sup> BBC News. Copnall, James. "A Young Patriot's Conviction and Anger." 4 January 2005.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4079385.stm>

Leaders drive luxury vehicles and employ personal body guards. This is possible because they are reputed to receive as much as USD 80,000 a month from presidential coffers.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, members of the security forces on both sides of the demarcation line use roadblocks to stop civilian travelers and shake them down for whatever they can get.

### **Transportation**

By the standards of developing countries in general, and West Africa in particular, Côte d'Ivoire has an outstanding infrastructure. The RCI boasts an excellent network of more than 8,000 miles of paved roads and good telecommunications services, including a public data communications network, cellular phones, and internet access. There is regular air service within the region as well as to and from Europe.<sup>68</sup>



© liquidrage2007 / flickr.com  
Night shot of Abidjan

Abidjan is the most modern port in West Africa and the largest one between Casablanca and Cape Town on the West African littoral. It formerly served all of land-locked West Africa. After the country was split in two and security became precarious, a lot of perishable freight was diverted to Ghana. Among other problems, having the country under the control of different groups has increased the “road fees” truckers have to pay to move their freight. Even with expanded capacity, however, Ghana’s Tema Port only has 17 ship berths, whereas Abidjan has 70.<sup>69</sup>

### **Tourism**

Although stores are open for business and Ivorians go about life as usual, many countries, including the United States, have travel advisories in effect for non-essential travel to Côte d'Ivoire. The security situation remains volatile since the country was divided in 2002. Failure to realize a political settlement to reunite the country means the risk of escalation into a full-scale armed conflict remains.

### **Banking and Credit**

The Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO) governs banking and other financial institutions in the RCI. Like the other seven BCEAO countries, Côte d'Ivoire uses the CFA French Franc which is pegged to the *Euro*. In 2005, there were 17 commercial banks. Those in the rebel-held North have been closed since the outbreak of civil war.<sup>70</sup> Since the banks have been closed, money has circulated more informally in the North.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> International Crisis Group. “Côte d'Ivoire: No Peace In Sight,” Africa Report No. 82. 12 July 2004. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=2858&l=1>

<sup>68</sup> US Department of State. “Background Note: Côte d'Ivoire.” October 2006. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2846.htm>

<sup>69</sup> BBC News. Simpson, Sarah. “Ghana’s trade gains from conflict.” 29 October 2003. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/3205723.stm>

<sup>70</sup> Heritage Foundation. “Ivory Coast.” 2007 Index. <http://www.heritage.org/index/countryFiles/pdfs/IvoryCoast.pdf>

<sup>71</sup> International Herald Tribune, Associated Press. “War Divided Ivory Coast Risks Unity in Bid to end Restive Stale-mate.” 9 April 2007. <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/04/09/africa/AF-GEN-Ivory-Coast-Grasping-at-Peace.php>

Lending to individuals without political connections is non-existent. However, the capacity of the poor for entrepreneurship has been tapped to a limited extent through the availability of small loans known as microcredit.<sup>72</sup> Microfinance institutions offer loans to people in developing countries who are not able to get credit elsewhere in order to start small businesses. The main focus of those involved is developing networks in which members are responsible for group formation, loan disbursement, and enforcement of repayment rules.<sup>73</sup>

Microfinance in Côte d'Ivoire is represented by many different credit unions and small savings and credit associations. The majority of microfinance programs were initiated in the early 1990s in response to the risk posed by mobile saving bankers. This scheme touted that the client's money would be retained for an agreed-upon period of time, only to have the banker disappear when repayment time rolled around.



© Rick Boyne  
Shopping center Abidjan

In 1995 alone, the microfinance sector contributed over 20 percent to Côte d'Ivoire's GDP and provided almost 30 percent of the country's employment.<sup>74</sup> It has enabled the poor to become more self-reliant by creating employment opportunities and engaging women in economically productive activities. Access to credit, however, is still a major obstacle preventing individual entrepreneurs from achieving their full economic potential. The political instability that has wracked the country has also disrupted commerce, hurting the poorest entrepreneurs the most.

### **Resources**

The RCI's main natural resource is petroleum. Diamonds, the hardest known mineral, are another. But the mining industry has played only a small role in the economic development of Côte d'Ivoire. Similarly, relatively small amounts of oil have been extracted from offshore sources. Exploration has confirmed the existence of additional oil and natural gas resources, though these have yet to be exploited.<sup>75</sup>

### **Land Use**

The principal natural resources of Côte d'Ivoire are its relatively rich soils, conducive to abundant harvests, and its forests, comprised of commercially valuable hardwoods. After independence, the government actively promoted the development of oil palm and rubber plantations as a means of diversifying the economy away from cocoa and coffee. However, growth remained heavily reliant on exporting primary products.

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<sup>72</sup> Grameen Bank. Yunus, Muhammed. "What is Microcredit?" January 2003. <http://www.grameen-info.org/mcredit/index.html>

<sup>73</sup> Women Aid International. "Microcredit: Rapid Growth Threat." 1998. <http://www.womenaid.org/press/info/microcredit/micro3.html>

<sup>74</sup> UN Capital Development Fund. "Countries and Regions: Côte d'Ivoire." [http://www.uncdf.org/english/countries/cote\\_divoire/index.php](http://www.uncdf.org/english/countries/cote_divoire/index.php)

<sup>75</sup> Côte d'Ivoire." [http://www.uoguelph.ca/~geology/rocks\\_for\\_crops/21cote\\_divoire.PDF](http://www.uoguelph.ca/~geology/rocks_for_crops/21cote_divoire.PDF)

Less concern was given to the land's carrying capacity.<sup>76</sup> People trying to sustain themselves through farming have quickened the rate of desertification. Trees are chopped down to create fields where the same crops are planted year after year, the land never allowed to lay fallow (unused) and recover.<sup>77</sup> This is particularly important when farmers utilize the shifting cultivation farming method.<sup>78</sup>

Migration from other parts of Côte d'Ivoire has exacerbated the problem by accelerating the rate of forest conversion. According to the UN Environmental Program, the arrival of people from the north, where the effects of desertification are already evident, accounts for the disappearance of forests in the southwest.<sup>79</sup>

### Agriculture

NGOs involved in promoting fair trade have focused a harsh spotlight on the conditions under which cocoa is grown in Côte d'Ivoire. The RCI supplies 70 percent of America's cocoa beans and close to 100 percent of the chocolate in American candy bars.<sup>80,81</sup> Most of this is cultivated on 450,000 small farms with an area of 12 acres or less.<sup>82</sup> The use of child labor under conditions of involuntary servitude has

Cocoa Production
<p>1) All chocolate products start with the cocoa tree. It is found in hot, rainy environments primarily near the equator where the growing season is continuous. The fruit matures as a green or maroon oval shaped pod. It is harvested with a curved knife or pole which can cut the fruit without damaging the soft tree bark.</p>
<p>2) After the fruit is cut the pods must be broken by splitting the shells. A skilled breaker can open 500 pods an hour. Farmer can expect 20 to 50 cream-colored beans from an average pod. Approximately 400 beans are required to produce one pound (.45 kg) of chocolate.</p>
<p>3) Like any moist fruit, cocoa beans must be dried to prevent spoilage. During this stage they lose nearly all their moisture and more than half their weight. Dried beans typically weigh less than two ounces (56 grams).</p>
<p>4) During the drying phase the beans need to be turned frequently. This makes cocoa a labor intensive crop. Children frequently help out with the work.</p>
<p>5) After the dried cocoa beans are packed, they are delivered to an exporting company where they will be inspected for quality. The exporter is responsible for shipment. Because candy companies don't buy directly from the farmers, it is impossible for them to know which farms use slave labor.</p>



© Rick Boyne  
Rice Harvest in the Village of Dantomba, Cote d'Ivoire

<sup>76</sup> University of Michigan. "The Tropical Rain Forest." 2 November 2005.

<http://www.globalchange.umich.edu/globalchange1/current/lectures/kling/rainforest/rainforest.html>

<sup>77</sup> Sodefot. "Management and Prevention of Forest Fires in Côte d'Ivoire." March 1999.

[http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iffn/country/ci/ci\\_2.htm](http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iffn/country/ci/ci_2.htm)

<sup>78</sup> The most common form of shifting cultivation is known as slash-and-burn agriculture. Land is cleared by burning so that crops can be grown. After a few planting cycles, soil fertility has been reduced and cultivators need to clear a new area to allow the old land to recover its fertility, a process that can take years.

<sup>79</sup> Interpress Service News Agency. Zamble, Fulgence. "West Africa: From Desertification, to Migration, to Conflict." 4 January 2007. <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=36067>

<sup>80</sup> TravelLady Magazine. Miller, Madelyn. "The Cocoa (sic) Bean: The Heart of the Sweetest Delicacy in the World." October 2005. <http://www.travellady.com/Issues/October05/1903CocoaBean.htm>

<sup>81</sup> CalPoly. "Cal Poly Professor Heading to Africa to Investigate Chocolate - Slave Labor Ties," 10 August 2005.

[http://calpolynews.calpoly.edu/news\\_releases/2005/aug\\_05/neuhaus.html](http://calpolynews.calpoly.edu/news_releases/2005/aug_05/neuhaus.html)

<sup>82</sup> Organic Consumers Association. Tiger, Caroline. "Valentines and Fair Trade." 14 February 2003. [http://www.organicconsumers.org/Starbucks/021603\\_fair\\_trade.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/Starbucks/021603_fair_trade.cfm)

generated ongoing attention.<sup>83</sup> At this time, the controversy does not involve finding a solution, rather it focuses on getting a handle on the problem.<sup>84</sup>

Brand name corporations buy cocoa from middlemen who purchased it from numerous cultivators.<sup>85</sup> The final cocoa product is a mix, which enables buyers to claim to be unable to determine whether or not the cocoa originates from farms employing slave labor.<sup>86</sup> Public relations firms also argue that putting pressure on chocolate manufacturers to stop buying cocoa beans from Côte d'Ivoire would only hurt poor growers.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, international buyers have voiced concerns over their reliance on the RCI amid fears of prolonged political instability.<sup>88</sup>

### **International Organizations**

With the exception of humanitarian aid, all assistance to Côte d'Ivoire has been halted. As civil war threatened to erupt, international organizations engaged in humanitarian work found it hard to both maintain a presence in the RCI and be perceived as impartial. This is because humanitarian aid was put under the command structure of UN peacekeeping efforts.

When the peace process goes awry, however, both sides can react in very different ways. Peacekeepers may need to threaten or even use force if necessary. It is therefore unlikely that those keeping the peace will continue to be viewed as neutral. It is critical, however, that humanitarian groups be perceived by combatants as impartial in order to deliver humanitarian assistance to civilians caught up in the conflict.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> New Republic Online. Kahn, Jeremy. "Does Valentine's Day Enable Child Slavery?" 14 February 2007. [http://www.faithinpubliclife.org/content/news/2007/02/does\\_valentines\\_day\\_enable\\_chi.html](http://www.faithinpubliclife.org/content/news/2007/02/does_valentines_day_enable_chi.html)

<sup>84</sup> Yale Global Online. Aaronson, Susan Ariel. "Globalization and Child Labor: The Cause Can Also Be a Cure." 13 March 2007. <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=8907>

<sup>85</sup> Treehugger. Dworkin, Tex. "The Bitter Truth About Chocolate." 1 February 2007. [http://www.treehugger.com/files/2007/02/the\\_bitter\\_trut.php](http://www.treehugger.com/files/2007/02/the_bitter_trut.php)

<sup>86</sup> Knight Ridder News Service. "Much of America's sweets made possible through slave labor on Ivory Coast." 25 June 2001.

<http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/fairtrade/cocoa/knightRidder062501e.html>

<sup>87</sup> ihscslnews.org. Maddalone, Tony. "Child Slave Labor: Chocolate's Sweet Scandal." October 2006. [http://ihscslnews.org/view\\_article.php?id=161](http://ihscslnews.org/view_article.php?id=161)

<sup>88</sup> International Reporting Project. Kahn, Jeremy, "The Chocolate War." Fall 2003.

[http://www.internationalreportingproject.org/stories/ivorycoast/ivorycoast\\_chocolate.htm](http://www.internationalreportingproject.org/stories/ivorycoast/ivorycoast_chocolate.htm)

<sup>89</sup> Global Policy Forum. Jefferys, Anna and Toby Porter, "Ivory Coast Is a Case of Too Much UN Coordination." 26 November 2004. <http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/aid/2004/1126ivorycoast.htm>

## Society

### Ethnic Groups

Three main groups inhabit the coast and the immediate hinterland of Côte d'Ivoire. They include the Kru, the Kua-Kua and the Akan. Renowned for their navigation skills, the Kru probably got their name from a corruption of the English word "crew." The Kua-Kua were fishermen who dominated local commerce. This enabled them to broker business deals between traders in the deeper hinterland and the European merchants. While the Kua-kua were more ethnically diverse, the Akan had a more cohesive structure. They appear to have migrated to their present location from the Ashanti Confederacy in Ghana and then separated into the Agni and the Baoulé tribes.



© Brian J. McMorrow  
Silhouette of boys

The Senofu, who inhabit northern Côte d'Ivoire, lacked a centralized tribal hierarchy, which made them an easy mark for slave traders. There were also the Dioulas, whose name means "itinerant trader." Legendary merchants, they controlled the camel caravan trade routes from the forests in the South to the markets of Sudan. Among other things, they transported gold, discovered in the Akan forest, and kola, the one luxury stimulant allowed by Islam, and grown exclusively within the forest belt.<sup>90</sup>

### Languages

There are over 60 languages spoken in Côte d'Ivoire. The official language, French, is used in the government and is the medium of instruction in all educational institutions. Dioula is the language of commerce.<sup>91</sup> In addition to French and Dioula, Akan is spoken in and around Abidjan. Baoulé is the native tongue of the RCI's largest tribe, and Malinké and Senufo are also widely spoken, particularly in the North.

### Religion

The RCI's religious fault line, like that of most West African states, separates a historically Christian coast from a hinterland dominated by Muslims, found mostly in the northern region. As a result of immigration, migration, and interethnic marriages, however, Muslims are increasingly numerous in areas outside of the North, particularly in cities. In 1998, they comprised 45.5 percent of the total urban population and 33.5 percent of the total rural population. Catholics are found mainly in the southern, central, and eastern parts of the country. Practitioners of indigenous faiths are concentrated in rural areas of the northern, western, central, and eastern regions. But the traditional view that the spiritual and physical worlds are inseparable retains a powerful pull even for Muslims and Christians.

<sup>90</sup> Africa since 1800. <http://www.cup.cam.ac.uk/us/catalogue/catalogue.asp?isbn=9780511108839>

<sup>91</sup> Pilot Destination Guide. "Introduction to Ivory Coast."  
[http://www.pilotguides.com/destination\\_guide/africa/west\\_africa/ivory\\_coast.php](http://www.pilotguides.com/destination_guide/africa/west_africa/ivory_coast.php)

Those who still practice traditional religions represent potential converts. This creates an atmosphere of competition between various faiths.<sup>92</sup> The Catholic Church has made the continent a priority while Pentecostal and Evangelical Christian churches send members of their congregations overseas to work as missionaries.<sup>93</sup>

Adherents of Evangelical faiths are now estimated to comprise over nine percent of the total population.<sup>94</sup> Evangelical Christian missionaries are working with a newly created Ivorian agency doing ministry work among the Muslims of the North.<sup>95</sup> The ethical issues related to spreading one's faith, however, can become a source of tension between different religious communities and a potential basis for conflict.<sup>96</sup>

Iran has also made substantial efforts to foster acceptance for its religious and political views on the continent.<sup>97</sup> Saudi Arabia, too, has spent large amounts of money to spread its Islamist *Wahhabi* tradition.<sup>98</sup>

### Gender Issues

In Côte d'Ivoire, the Constitution and the law prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender. Ivorian women were accorded the right to vote and stand for election in 1952, when elections focused on issues related to the country's future relationship with France. The first Ivorian woman was elected to Parliament in 1965, five years after independence. President Houphouët-Boigny established the Ministry of Women's Affairs in 1976.



© kepi.cncplusplus.com  
Mother and child

Despite these gains in the realm of political representation, the status of women in Ivorian society remains subordinate. When families have limited resources to send children to school, sons often receive priority over daughters. The literacy rate for adult men in the RCI is 55 percent, while for adult women it is 38 percent.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) has been banned in Côte d'Ivoire since 1998. But the dissemination of information is slow. As one member of an isolated community pointed

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<sup>92</sup> Foreign Policy Research Institute. Jenkins, Philip. "Globalization and the Transformation of Christianity." January 2002.

<http://www.fpri.org/ww/0301.200201.jenkins.globalizationtransformchristianity.html>

<sup>93</sup> Baptist News. House, Polly. Cody, Melissa, Kat, Risa & others rally for her to pray in Africa." 16 August 2001. <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=11526>

<sup>94</sup> Serving in Mission. "Côte d'Ivoire." <http://www.sim.org/country.asp?fun=1&CID=23>

<sup>95</sup> BBC World. "Upbeat: A Mission to Unreached People." Fall 2003.

[http://www.bgcworld.org/newstand/Upbeat/upbt\\_fall03.htm](http://www.bgcworld.org/newstand/Upbeat/upbt_fall03.htm)

<sup>96</sup> Kroc Institute of Peace Studies, Notre Dame University. Omar, Rashied. "The Right to Religious Conversion: Between Apostasy and Proselytization." [http://kroc.nd.edu/ocpapers/op\\_27\\_1.pdf](http://kroc.nd.edu/ocpapers/op_27_1.pdf). August 2006

<sup>97</sup> National Intelligence Council Conference. "Mapping Sub-Saharan Africa's Future." March 2005.

[http://www.dni.gov/nic/confreports\\_africa\\_future.html](http://www.dni.gov/nic/confreports_africa_future.html)

<sup>98</sup> US Institute of Peace. Chiro, Daniel. "Could There be Muslim-Christian Wars in West Africa?" May 2005. <http://www.usip.org/muslimworld/bulletin/2005/may.html>

out, “There are people in the village who have never seen a television. Only a few fortunate ones have radio sets. Our road is impassable year round. We almost never go anywhere. Given such conditions, how do you think we can get any information or news?”<sup>99</sup>

But there is also resistance on the part of those who are aware of the law. Some of it is cultural. But there is also a rational economic logic to the practice explaining why it remains widespread. For most girls the only way to secure their futures is through marriage. A girl who is not circumcised will have difficulty finding a partner and face an unknown future.

For married women, the law enforcement and judicial systems continue to view spousal abuse as a private household matter. Official intervention only occurs when there is serious bodily harm or in the unlikely event the victim files a formal complaint. For women in urban areas who seek work outside the home, employers often discriminate against female applicants because they do not want the inconvenience of pregnant workers.<sup>100</sup>

The economic and political crisis has impacted women’s health, safety, and ability to support their families. 80 percent of the people who have been displaced since the political unrest began are women and children. Forced displacement increases the risk of HIV infection, sexual abuse, and exploitation.<sup>101</sup> Most women and girls in these circumstances have no choice but to turn to prostitution as a way to support themselves and their families.

Even those who remain in their communities are at risk. Being symbols of a family’s honor, girls and young women have been raped by both government security forces and members of various armed opposition groups. The purpose is to humiliate them, the men in their families, and the entire village. Some see it as part of a deliberate strategy to instill terror in the civilian population.<sup>102</sup>

#### Settlement Patterns and Lineage

In a patrilineage all members of the lineage trace their membership through their father. In a matrilineage such as that practiced by the Akan people, including the Baoulé, kinship is traced through the mother. This has implications for settlement patterns. In a matrilineal system, when women marry they retain their original lineage membership, which is passed down to their own children. This means for practical purposes they cannot marry far away from their home villages in order to fulfill both their household responsibilities and maintain the lineage tie.

Sons receive their inheritance from their maternal uncles. Their own father’s property goes to his sister’s sons while daughters get nothing. An Akan father was traditionally accorded the right to select the husband of the firstborn daughter of each of his own daughters. The granddaughters were commonly given in marriage to young men of the father’s own matrilineage. This ensured they would be remain part of the matrilineal community.

<sup>99</sup> InterPressService. Munkanouan, Doua D. “Renewed Fight against Female Circumcision.” 24 September 2002. <http://www.aegis.com/news/ips/2002/IP020917.html>

<sup>100</sup> United Methodist Women’s Home Page. “Action Alert: Côte d’Ivoire: A Country in Distress, An Opportunity to Act.” June 2003. [http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/action\\_ivoirycoast.html](http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/action_ivoirycoast.html)

<sup>101</sup> Doctors Without Borders. “International Activity Report: Ivory Coast 2005.” <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/publications/ar/i2005/ivoirycoast.cfm>

<sup>102</sup> Amnesty International. “Ivory Coast: Sexual violence against women ignored in conflict.” 12 March 2007. [http://www.amnesty.org.uk/news\\_details.asp?NewsID=17291](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/news_details.asp?NewsID=17291)

## Cuisine

Côte d'Ivoire has many regional cuisines. In the northern savanna a common dish is rice with a peppery peanut sauce. Closer to the coast, fish with fried plantains is popular. Ivorian cuisine consists primarily of braised meat and fish and a variety of sauces served with rice or ground manioc, also known as cassava.



© Andymod / McDee at flickr.com  
Chilled Avocado Soup

In regions where cereal grains cannot be cultivated, those with lower incomes often rely upon starchy vegetables (roots and tubers) to supply most of their calories. Cassava is a tropical, starchy staple. Others include potatoes and yams. While cultivators often enjoy high yields, the primary disadvantage of these starchy staples is their very low protein content.<sup>103</sup>

Cassava, while rich in vitamin C, has another disadvantage: its fleshy roots contain poisonous compounds, which, if consumed with certain foods, such as almonds, can convert into cyanide. Thus, they need to be specially prepared before they are eaten. One way is to shred the roots and ring out the juice; this flushes out many of the toxic compounds. Using heat to dry them removes any remaining compounds.<sup>104</sup> Once washed and cooked, the tubers are pounded into a starchy paste or porridge (*foutou*). This is basic to the human diet across all of West Africa. Similar pastes can be made from other starchy staples.

The expatriate French Caucasians (*tubabu*) who remained in the RCI after independence were able to find all the spices, meats, fruits, and vegetables required to prepare their own native cuisine. Though kitchens may appear primitive, there is no lack of food preparation equipment: wooden pestles, mallets for grinding, ovens, etc. What is most representative of Ivorian kitchens, however, are the huge *calabashes*, or hollowed-out gourd halves, that are used for various tasks. These immense containers are used for preparing food (pounding cassava, and washing dishes) and even washing clothes and bathing young children.<sup>105</sup>

## Celebrations and Holidays

Each ethnic group has its own traditions. Life's major milestones, such as birth, adolescence, marriage, and death, are all marked with ceremonies and rituals. Among the most important are initiation rites, during which participants undergo endurance tests and other secret ceremonies. In the case of the Senufo, tribal cohesion is maintained through the rituals of the forest (*poro*) society. This involves educating and inducting males into manhood from the age of seven onwards.

<sup>103</sup> US Library of Congress. "Food Crops." <http://www.country-studies.com/ivory-coast/food-crops.html>

<sup>104</sup> Illinois State University. "Cassava *manihot esculenta* a low-protein, starchy staple." <http://www.bio.ilstu.edu/Armstrong/syllabi/cassava/cassava.htm>

<sup>105</sup> "Flavours of the Ivory Coast." <http://www.theworldwidegourmet.com/countries/africa/ivory.htm>

## Traditional Dress

Ivorians wear both traditional and Western clothes. In cities and towns, most men wear pants or blue jeans and shirts. Many women still wear the traditional brightly colored wraparound skirts (*pagne*) with matching blouses and a head scarf.<sup>106</sup> Prints feature a profusion of designs and are named after whatever adorns them. This can include politicians, religious leaders, animals, flowers, or events and holidays. In more recent times fabrics have begun to sport the faces of global celebrities like Michael Jordan or brand name product labels. Similarly, the fabric might be decorated with footprints to indicate that a woman follows her husband around to prevent him from finding a mistress.<sup>107</sup>



© Brian J. McMorrow  
Mali girl

*Pagne* reflect a woman's dignity and wealth. After she dies, it is customary for the family's female elders to inventory her possessions. The more *pagne* skirts she acquired in her lifetime, the greater her stature. Similar to the Western convention of bequeathing the family silver and china, *pagne* are passed down from mother to daughter.

Traditional dress is common in rural areas. Men wear shorts or wrap pieces of cloth around their bodies. For ceremonial occasions, they don long, elegant robes.<sup>108</sup> Muslim men and women both wear a *boubou*, a flowing, sleeved robe or dress, on special occasions. As for veiling, it is optional for Muslim women in Côte d'Ivoire. Some believe that Allah cares only about what is in an individual's heart and how one lives his or her life, so adhering to practices such as wearing a veil is irrelevant. Others subscribe to the view that veiling is an essential part of Islamic religious practice for women.<sup>109</sup>

## Folklore

Each tribal group has its own folklore. One of the most famous legends of the Baoulé is the story of how they migrated to Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>110</sup> In their original homeland, the Ashanti Kingdom in present-day Ghana, they had wisely stored grain in the event of famine. However, when famine hit, they were attacked by other groups. Rather than give up the food, their queen, Abla Pokou, led her people west.<sup>111</sup> Finding it impossible to cross the

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<sup>106</sup> Wax-printed fabric or *pagne* in fact is an Indonesian creation that found its way to Africa via Dutch colonialists at the beginning of the 1900s. It quickly displaced the indigenous hand-woven cottons which are more expensive and time-consuming to make. Pangaea.net. News From Ivory Coast. "Pagne, the Fabric of Life." October 1995. <http://www.pangaea.net/country/ivorycst.htm>

<sup>107</sup> Rutgers University Focus. Cornell, Diane. "Silent no Longer: Stories told in French by the Women of Africa and the Caribbean islands." 13 October 2000. <http://ur.rutgers.edu/focus/article/Silent%20no%20longer/215/>

<sup>108</sup> Every Culture. "Ivoirians." <http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Costa-Rica-to-Georgia/Ivoirians.html>

<sup>109</sup> US Embassy Abidjan. "Women Muslims in Yamaoussoukro." [http://abidjan.usembassy.gov/women\\_muslims\\_in\\_yamaoussoukro.html](http://abidjan.usembassy.gov/women_muslims_in_yamaoussoukro.html)

<sup>110</sup> Demographers acknowledge this represented a population shift towards the current Ivory Coast. CaapAfrica. "The Queen Pokou Fondatrice of the Kingdom Baoulé," <http://www.caap-afrika.com/enlareine.html>

<sup>111</sup> The Suppressed Histories Archive. "Women in Global Perspective: Liberators." <http://www.suppressedhistories.net/articles/liberators.html>

Comoé River, the queen sacrificed her own child to the spirits (*genies*) of the river. The *genies* responded by causing the trees to bend and form a bridge across the river, enabling them to reach a land of peace and safety. After they crossed, the trees straightened, preventing others from continuing their pursuit. The name Baoulé means “the little one dies.”<sup>112</sup>

For the Dioula, a big part of village life is the totem.<sup>113</sup> It is something (usually a breed of animal) that people make sacrifices to, something they lavish care on and never, under any circumstances eat, even if they have to go hungry. Families become paired with particular animals in different ways, as the following example demonstrates.

One family’s totem was the chicken. This pairing occurred because the mother had been pounding corn when a baby chick hopped into her mortar. She was in a fast rhythm and could not stop before she pounded the chick with her pestle and killed it. That night she had a dream in which the mother hen spoke to her. The hen said because the woman had killed one of her chicks, she would take one of her children. Later that week the family’s baby came down with a fever and died. From that day on, the chicken was that mother’s totem. As long as she took care of the family flock, her children thrived.<sup>114</sup>

## The Arts

Though story-telling, music, and mask-dancing are important in the lives of Ivorians, it is interesting to note that in most African tribal languages there is no word for “art.” Its value is assessed by its connection to the spirit or religious world.<sup>115</sup>



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Boys and Boat

### Story-tellers

The oral tradition has a revered place in Africa.<sup>116</sup>

Story-tellers (*griots*) may sing or tell folk tales, riddles, and proverbs late into the night. Practitioners must demonstrate a mastery of complex verbal, musical, and memory skills. Such knowledge is acquired through years of specialized training that includes a strong spiritual and ethical component. This is needed to control the supernatural forces that are believed to be released by the spoken/sung word in public performances.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> EveryCulture. “Ivoirians.” <http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Costa-Rica-to-Georgia/Ivoirians.html>

<sup>113</sup> Service in Mission. “Djoula.” <http://www.sim.org/PG.asp?pgID=20&fun=1>

<sup>114</sup> Personal recollection of a Peace Corps volunteer who served from 1993 to 1996.

<sup>115</sup> “Art and Music Ansi Travel.” <http://www.nas.com/africa/africaartmusic.html#Anchor-In-49575>

<sup>116</sup> Specific aspects of landscape are important in West African stories. Solitary trees, for example, have a number of functions in an environment where water is scarce and the sun is hot. A tree is respected for its ability to survive drought. It offers shade and serves as a place where elders sit and discuss important village matters. As far as the survival of the community is concerned, a tree offers a lookout spot for the village’s defense and affords an ambush site from which invaders can be attacked. Film Education. Stafford, Roy. “Kirikou and the Sorceress.” 2000. <http://www.filmeducation.org/primary/Kirikou.html>

<sup>117</sup> Central Oregon Community College. “African Story Telling.” 2005.

<http://web.cocc.edu/cagatucci/classes/hum211/afirstory.htm>

### Music

In 2001, UNESCO declared the “Gbofe of Afounkaha: The Music of the Transverse Trumpets of the Cultural Space of the Tagbana Community” a masterpiece of oral and tangible heritage of humanity.<sup>118</sup>

The Gbofe of Afounkaha are side-blown trumpets used in rituals and traditional ceremonies. The trumpet players perform in groups of six with the fifth trumpet playing lead, and are accompanied by traditional drums and costumed male dancers. Song themes include love, mourning, education, and daily life. The term *gbofe* can refer to the instrument, the players, the music, or the entire performance. Making the instruments is a ritual itself: When a tree is to be felled to make an instrument, a ceremony with costumed female dancers is held when its roots are cut.<sup>119</sup>

### Masks

African masks, made by many tribes, are used to represent the souls of the dead, lesser deities, or even caricatures of animals. Their ownership is restricted to certain powerful individuals or to specific families. Only designated, specially trained individuals are permitted to wear ceremonial masks. It is dangerous for those without such training to wear them because each mask has a soul, or life force. Ivorians believe that when a person’s face comes in contact with the inside of one that person is transformed into the spirit the mask represents.



Courtesy of wikipedia.org  
African mask from  
the Ivory Coast

There are also restrictions on who can view masks. In some cases, only initiates of secret societies can witness masked ceremonies.

Women are not permitted to gaze on certain masks. Some may not be viewed by outsiders. Others may be viewed by anyone since they are worn by dancers who perform at public festivals.

Masks can figure into initiation rites, weddings, funerals, judicial proceedings, law enforcement activities, as part of an effort to ward off witches and sorcerers, agricultural festivals, or simply for entertainment.<sup>120</sup> They may have multiple ceremonial functions but such details may be known only to those who are privy to the secrets of specific societies.<sup>121</sup>

### Sports

<sup>118</sup> UNESCO. “Africa: Cote d’Ivoire.” [http://portal.unesco.org/geography/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=2332&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/geography/en/ev.php-URL_ID=2332&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

<sup>119</sup> UNESCO. “The Gbofe of Afounkaha: the Music of the Transverse Trumpets of the Tagbana Community.” May 2001. [http://www.unesco.org/bpi/intangible\\_heritage/cote.htm](http://www.unesco.org/bpi/intangible_heritage/cote.htm)

<sup>120</sup> Masks and Mask Culture. Craft, Kathryn Williams. “Mask Dance Tells the Story of Ivory coast Music and Folklore.” 16 February 2002. [http://www.highlandsofohio.com/images/Masks\\_and\\_Mask\\_Culture.pdf](http://www.highlandsofohio.com/images/Masks_and_Mask_Culture.pdf)

<sup>121</sup> African Art at the Ralph Procter Gallery. “Masks of the Ivory Coast.” Summer 1997. <http://www.introspecinc.com/gallery/exhibit4.htm>

Soccer is a national pastime in Côte d'Ivoire that transcends class, religion, and region.<sup>122</sup> The players on the national soccer team, fondly nicknamed the Elephants, came from both the North and South during the period the country was divided. They have regularly been held up as an example for the rest of the country to follow.<sup>123</sup> Some players have become national heroes after securing lucrative contracts in Europe. However, the political problems at home have taken precedence in public appearances. One Ivorian player who played for a British team broke off an interview on Italian TV after he realized that the reporter knew nothing of the situation in his homeland.<sup>124</sup> So connected are the two in Ivorian 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!"<sup>125</sup>



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<sup>122</sup> As a film director observed, "Soccer is a game people can play anywhere, anytime, with a single ball. It's simple, and you don't need a lot of space. The superstar players often come from the least-privileged neighborhoods all over the world....[It] ends up being a gateway to a future of possibility and to leaving poverty behind." LA Weekly. Khazeni, Dorna. "The Beautiful Game." 21 March 2007.  
<http://www.laweekly.com/film+tv/film/the-beautiful-game/15951/>

<sup>123</sup> BBC News. Copnall, James. "Soccer unites divided Ivory Coast." 21 January 2006.  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4633688.stm>

<sup>124</sup> Spiegel Online. Fichtner, Ullrich. "The Ivory Coast's War of the Elephants." 29 May 2006.  
<http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,417940,00.html>

<sup>125</sup> CBS News. "Hey Guys, It's Just a Game." 20 June 2006.  
<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/06/20/opinion/main1732895.shtml>

## Looking Forward

### US-Ivoirian Relations

Relations between the United States and Côte d'Ivoire have historically been cordial. Through the mid 1980s, the RCI was Africa's most loyal backer of the United States in the United Nations General Assembly. It strongly supported American moves against Libyan leader Muammar Qadhaafi, especially in light of rumors that Libyans in Burkina Faso were recruiting and training agents to infiltrate Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>126</sup>



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Street scene

The United States is Côte d'Ivoire's second largest trading partner after France. Policymakers in Washington long pointed to the RCI as an example of the benefits of capitalist development.<sup>127</sup> However, when the Cold War ended, the interests of the United States shifted from halting the spread of communism on the African continent to preventing conflicts that create millions of refugees.<sup>128</sup> After civil war broke out in 2002, there was some debate about whether the United States should get involved.<sup>129</sup>

As its relations with France soured, the Gbagbo government has sought to improve ties with the United States. What it is offering Washington is the prospect of trumping Paris in its own backyard through stronger bilateral ties. To that end, Abidjan has dispatched a succession of envoys to curry favor with lawmakers on Capitol Hill. It has hired prominent lobbying firms to make its case as well. Ivorian officials have even taken part in National Prayer Breakfasts. To date, this effort has not paid any dividends and is unlikely to do so in the future.<sup>130</sup> The United States has maintained its support for French efforts to end the political stalemate which divided the country in two.

The stakes, however, remain high. Côte d'Ivoire shares borders with three stable states including Ghana and Mali, two shining examples of democratic governance in Africa. Instability in the RCI threatens to have ripple effects not only in these neighboring countries but throughout the entire region. The conflict has proved difficult for outsiders to address because it has been driven by multiple causes. These include the quest for

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<sup>126</sup> US Library of Congress. "Ivory Coast: Relations with the United States." [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ci0144\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ci0144))

<sup>127</sup> Capitalism Magazine. Sowell, Thomas. "From Marxism to the Market." 2 January 2002.

<http://www.capmag.com/article.asp?ID=1331>

<sup>128</sup> CNN News. "Cold War Chat: Chester Crocker Former US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs," 14 February 1999. <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/guides/debate/chats/crocker/>

<sup>129</sup> Black Star Journal. "Will the Bush Administration push for enforcement of UN Resolution in the Ivory Coast?" January 2004. [http://blackstarjournal.blogspot.com/2004\\_01\\_01\\_archive.html](http://blackstarjournal.blogspot.com/2004_01_01_archive.html)

<sup>130</sup> CSIS Africa Policy Forum. Hennemeyer, Christian. "Ivory Coast: What a Difference a Decade Makes," 2 March 2007. <http://forums.csis.org/africa/>

political power, ethnic schisms, economic recession, opportunism, and banditry.<sup>131</sup> Yet the most dangerous division remains that along the lines of faith.<sup>132</sup>

### Radical Groups

There are a number of rebel groups in West Africa, including the RCI. Most have claimed that they are fighting to improve local conditions rather than on behalf of a global cause. But in their efforts to find backing they have sometimes accepted assistance from outside groups who want to create chaos in the region.<sup>133</sup>

Given the concern that terrorist groups will seek refuge in failed states, the civil conflict in Côte d'Ivoire makes it an important area to monitor.<sup>134</sup>



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Ivory Coast rebel

### Looking Forward

In October 2006, the World Cocoa Foundation and the US Agency for International Development announced the creation of the “Healthy Communities” program to help West African cocoa farmers improve their economic, social, and environmental standards. A central element is the emphasis on educating farmers about crop management.<sup>135</sup> It is envisioned that the program will provide assistance to as many as 150,000 farm families over the next five years.<sup>136</sup> However, with 700,000 farmers in Côte d'Ivoire alone, it is unlikely to bring vast improvements in the near future.<sup>137</sup>

The national unification process is at a fluid stage.<sup>138</sup> The peace agreement, reached after nearly a month of talks in early 2007, came after a succession of UN-mediated efforts failed to deliver national elections. This time the deal was negotiated by the two leaders,

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<sup>131</sup> Even among those who opposed the rebellion, many acknowledged compelling reasons for the formation of a new government of inclusion. The Perspective. Dukule, Abdoulaye W. “Liberia & Ivory Coast: Two Different Paths to Peace.” 30 December 2004. [http://www.theperspective.org/2004/dec/liberia\\_ic.html](http://www.theperspective.org/2004/dec/liberia_ic.html)

<sup>132</sup> US Institute for Peace. Congressional Testimony. Docking, Timothy. “Prospects for Peace in the Ivory Coast.” 12 February 2003. [http://www.usip.org/congress/testimony/2003/0212\\_docking.html](http://www.usip.org/congress/testimony/2003/0212_docking.html)

<sup>133</sup> Voice of America. Colombant, Nico. “Sahel Region Sees Rise in Violence, But Links to Terrorist Threat Debatable, Experts Say.” 13 February 2007. <http://www.voanews.com/english/2007-02-13-voa30.cfm>

<sup>134</sup> International Herald Tribune. Bennhold, Katrin. “In Ivory Coast Violence Leaves the Economy ‘Fatally Hurt.’” 20 November 2004. <http://www.iht.com/articles/2004/11/20/coast.php>

<sup>135</sup> World Cocoa Foundation. “‘Healthy Communities’ Program Expands Work to Improve Life for Cocoa Farm Families.” 4 October 2006.

[http://www.worldcocoaoundation.org/for-the-media/wcf\\_pr-06-10-4.asp](http://www.worldcocoaoundation.org/for-the-media/wcf_pr-06-10-4.asp)

<sup>136</sup> Foreign Policy. “The List: Killer Products.” December 2006.

[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story\\_id=3646](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3646)

<sup>137</sup> Congress is expected to draft legislation in 2008 if the chocolate industry is unable to satisfactorily address the problem of children working on cocoa farms. BBC News (International Version). Hawksley, Humphrey. “Child cocoa workers still ‘exploited.’” 2 April 2007.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6517695.stm>

<sup>138</sup> For a history of past efforts, see Global Policy Forum. “Ivory Coast.” 2006.

<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/ivorindex.htm>

President Gbagbo and his New Forces counterpart, Guillaume Soro, giving grounds for cautious optimism.<sup>139</sup>

The need to disarm former combatants remains paramount because they are a threat to regional stability. Strong tribal ties between people living in neighboring countries makes recruitment across national borders easy.<sup>140</sup> Under these circumstances, concerns have been raised regarding how fast French and UN troops should withdraw. The agreement stipulates that they should withdraw from the buffer zone and set up observation posts along a yet-to-be-determined green line while rebel forces are integrated into the Ivorian army. However, if the agreement should collapse, there would be no troops in place to prevent armed conflict from breaking out again.<sup>141</sup>



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Ivory Coast rebels

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<sup>139</sup> BBC News (International Version.) “Q & A: Ivory Coast’s Crisis.” 5 March 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3567349.stm>

<sup>140</sup> Voice of America. Tran, Phuong. “New Peace Deal Signed, Demobilization to Begin in Ivory Coast.” 5 March 2007. <http://www.voanews.com/english/2007-03-05-voa36.cfm>

<sup>141</sup> Voice of America. Colombant, Nico. “UN Security Council Studies Ivory Coast amid Concerns.” 12 March 2007. <http://www.voanews.com/english/2007-03-12-voa17.cfm>