Report

# Côte d'Ivoire: Ethnicity, *Ivoirité* and Conflict


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# 1. CONTEXTUALISATION: ETHNICITY IN COTE D'IVOIRE

Like most countries in West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire is a country with a large number of ethnic groups. Very few reports on the current situation in the country give any detailed information on this fundamental issue, but as it is central for today's political impasse, it deserves to be presented in some detail.

## 1.1 THE ETHNIC GROUPS IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

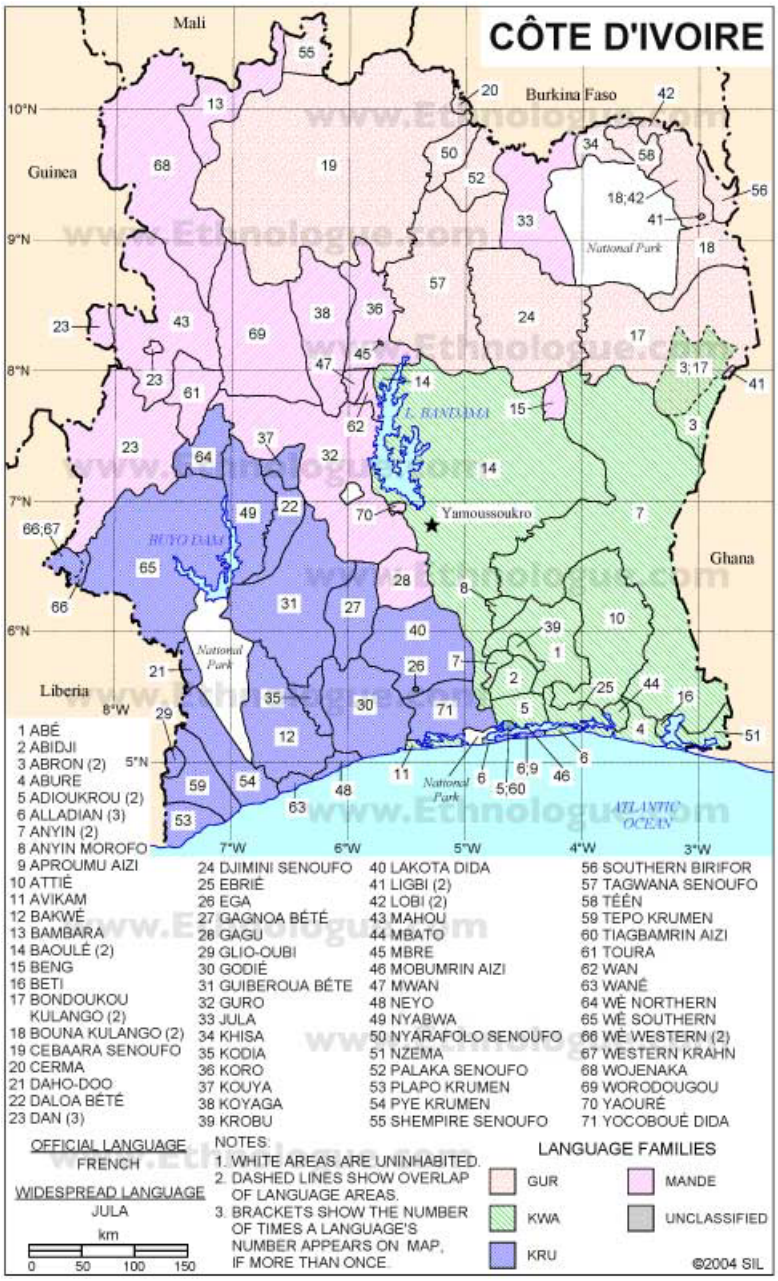
Usually, 60 ethnic groups are listed as indigenous to Côte d'Ivoire;[1] these belong to four main ethnic clusters with common linguistic and cultural traits:

- Mandé
  - Mandé north
    - Bambara, Dioula, Gbin, Malinké, Nigbi
  - Mandé south
    - Gagou, Gouro, Mona, N'gain, Ouan, Toura, Yacouba (Dan), Yaourè
- Gour
  - Birifor, Degha, Gondja, Gouin, Kamara, Komono, Koulango, Lobi, Lohron, Nafana, Samogho, Sénoufo, Siti, Toonie
- Krou
  - Ahizi, Bakwé, Bété, Dida, Gnaboua, Godié, Guéré (Wè), Kodia, Kouya, Kouzié, Kroumen, Neyo, Niédéboua, Oubi, Wané, Wôbè
- Kwa
  - Akan
    - Abron, Agni, Baoulé
  - Laguna groups
    - Abbey, Abidji, Abouré, Adjoukrou, Alladian, Appolo, Akyé, Avikan, Ébrié, Ega, Ehotilé, Essouma, Krobou, M'batto

Before the internal and regional migrations in modern times, mainly taking place since France colonised the area from 1893 onwards and continuing after Côte d'Ivoire got its independence from France in 1960, these ethnic groups had the following geographic spread:[2]

[1] Taken from CNCCI 1999. The ortography of the names of the ethnic groups given here is the one common in French, used by most Ivorians.

[2] Note that the ortography used here in some cases differs from the French commonly used by Ivorians. Some of the 60 ethnic groups usually mentioned are split up in subgroups here, as they speak distinct dialects. Map taken from Gordon 2005.




It is important to stress that West Africa has seen extensive regional migration over hundreds of years, and it differs how long the ethnic groups have dominated in the areas attributed to them on the map. Still, the map represents a close approximation of the local consensus of traditional core areas for the different ethnic groups. The ethnic clusters Kwa and Krou are generally established in the subtropic areas along the coast, whereas Mandé and Gour ethnicities have their origin in the savannah region in the northern part of the country.

None of the main four clusters of ethnic groups are only found in Côte d'Ivoire, all have strong linguistic and cultural ties with groups in neighbouring countries: the Krou ethnic groups with ethnic groups in eastern Liberia; the Kwa groups with groups in southern Ghana (as well as into southern Togo and Benin); while Mandé ethnic groups are found in Guinea, north-eastern Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mali and Burkina Faso; and Gour groups in Mali, Burkina Faso, northern Ghana and northern Togo.[3] Some ethnic groups in Côte d'Ivoire may feel stronger cultural, religious and linguistic attachment to ethnic groups in neighbouring countries than to ethnic groups than to groups inside Côte d'Ivoire – also within a single ethnic cluster.

**Ivorian citizens according to ethnic clusters – 1998[4]**

| Ethnicity | Abidjan | Côte d'Ivoire (including Abidjan) |
|---|---|---|
| Mandé | 27,4 % | 22,4 % |
| Gour | 9,3 % | 20,8 % |
| Krou | 17,4 % | 11,7 % |
| Kwa | 44,8 % | 44,2 % |
| Other | 1,1 % | 0,9 % |

## 1.2 IVORIAN MIGRATION FLOWS

### 1.2.1 Migration flows during the colonial period and after independence

During the French colonisation, new migration patterns evolved due to the economic development of the southern part of the country. This led to two main migration flows:

1. Urbanisation and rapid population growth in Abidjan fed by extensive migration from the whole country (as well as neighbouring countries – especially Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea). Thus, Abidjan has grown from a tiny village to a city of more than three million in less than a century.
2. Expansion of the plantation economy in the south-western part of Côte d'Ivoire led to the movement of large numbers of farmers from the north and south-eastern regions (as well as the neighbouring countries mentioned above – especially Burkina Faso).

[3] As is common all over Africa, several ethnic groups live across borders, and may be known under different names in different countries. For example, the Guéré/Wè are known as Krahn in Liberia, and the Yacouba/Dan are known as Gio.

[4] Figures from the 1998 census published in 2001, found in Loucou 2002:132.

The migrants going to Abidjan mainly work in commerce, transport, industry and as artisans, whereas the migrants moving to the southwest mainly work in agriculture – either as farmers or working on plantations. Most migrants from outside today's Côte d'Ivoire came from neighbouring French colonies – Burkina Faso was even administered together with Côte d'Ivoire as a single entity. Comparatively few migrants came from Liberia (independent in principle, but under strong American influence) or from the British colony Gold Coast (Ghana since independence). The migration to Côte d'Ivoire from other French colonies was encouraged by the French authorities, and this policy was continued by president Houphouët-Boigny after independence.

People with Kwa origin, especially Baoulé, were given preference in the colonial administration, the bureaucracy and in the plantation economy, and this situation continued after independence. A smaller migration flow in numbers, but with great political importance, consisted of educated Baoulé and other southerners who moved from the southeast to other parts of the country to take up administrative posts – in the educational system, as civil servants and as administrative staff on plantations.

### 1.2.2 On migration flows from abroad

As mentioned above, the migration from outside Côte d'Ivoire has been substantial, and roughly a quarter of the population of Côte d'Ivoire are people with origin in neighbouring countries. Relatively few of these migrants have been naturalised, not the least since this generally was a non-issue until the end of the 1980s. Only then did a serious debate evolve on whether there should be a difference in rights between Ivorian citizens and others living in the country. During the colonial period and the single-party system under president Houphouët-Boigny, there was no difference in rights to speak of between Ivorian citizens and immigrants, accordingly immigrants had little incentive to apply for naturalisation, and very few did.

Most of these immigrants originate in Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea, countries that share a common past as French colonies – and a shared administrative language, court system, school system, etc. Immigrants from these countries are generally of Mandé and Gour ethnicity. The immigration from Liberia and Ghana has been comparatively small.

In addition to immigrants from countries bordering Côte d'Ivoire, there are also smaller groups of immigrants from other countries in the subregion – including Senegal, Niger, Togo, Benin, Nigeria and Cameroon. Finally, Côte d'Ivoire has had a fairly large number of migrants from Europe (especially France) and Lebanon – especially in comparison with other countries in the region. The European minority – some of them second and third generation immigrants in Côte d'Ivoire by the end of the 1990s – has dominated in the private sector since independence, especially as administrative staff in international companies, while the Lebanese community – present since the 19th century – dominate international commerce networks.

**Foreigners living in Côte d'Ivoire according to citizenship – 1975 and 1988**[5]

| Country | 1975 | | 1988 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | % | Number | % |
| Burkina Faso | 773850 | 52,5 | 1565085 | 51,5 |
| Mali | 355234 | 24,1 | 714165 | 23,5 |
| Guinea | 98758 | 6,7 | 224886 | 7,4 |
| Ghana | 47168 | 3,2 | 167145 | 5,5 |
| Benin | 38324 | 2,6 | 85092 | 2,8 |
| Nigeria | 42746 | 2,9 | 51663 | 1,7 |
| Liberia | 4422 | 0,3 | 6078 | 0,2 |
| Other African countries | 82544 | 5,6 | 191457 | 6,3 |
| The rest of the world | 16214 | 1,1 | 33429 | 1,1 |
| | **1474000** | **100** | **3039000** | **100** |

**The immigrant population compared to the total population of Côte d'Ivoire**

| | 1965 | 1975 | 1988 | 1993 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total population of Côte d'Ivoire | 4 118 000 | 6 700 000 | 10 854 000 | 13 240 000 |
| Immigrants – number | 700 000 | 1 474 000 | 3 039 000 | 3 310 000 |
| Immigrants – percentage | 17 % | 22 % | 28 % | 25 % |

[5] Tapinos et al 2002:389, based on census figures from Ivorian authorities. The category «The rest of the world» mainly includes French and Lebanese nationals. Other sources set the number of Lebanese at around 100 000. This possible discrepancy between official figures and actual numbers may also concern other nationalities.

## 1.3 RELIGION

Historically, all ethnic groups with origin in the region were animists, where the relationship to a parallel spiritual world with influence on the visible world is generally important for religious beliefs and worldviews. The differences between the religious views and traditions of different groups may be considerable, but there are also several common denominators – both within ethnic clusters and between them. Islam expanded into the Sahel region (the savannah belt dividing the Sahara desert and the forest coastal region) from the west and the east during the 16th century. Today, around 23 % of Ivorians are Muslim – mainly people of Mandé and Gour origin. Christianity arrived in Côte d'Ivoire with European missionaries in the 19th century, and expanded from the coast into the country. Still, only some 12 % of the population are Christians today – largely people of Krou and Kwa origin. Both Muslims and Christians in Côte d'Ivoire may incorporate aspects of animist religion in their religious practice. Marriage between persons with different religious beliefs is common, especially among the educated in urban areas.

The Christians in Côte d'Ivoire were mainly Catholics until the 1970s-1980, but charismatic Pentecostal congregations are growing rapidly here as elsewhere in the region – both among Catholics and animists. These Pentecostal congregations are often closely tied to American mission movements.[6] The Muslims in Côte d'Ivoire are generally *sunni*, of the *maliki* law school.[7] Sufi brotherhoods dominate, whereas modern Middle East-inspired islamist groups seem to have little influence.

[6] Both the current president Laurent Gbagbo and his wife Simone are members of a Pentecostal congregation with close ties to such movements in the USA.

[7] The Lebanese Muslims are both *sunni* and *shi'a*.

## 1.4 NAMING TRADITIONS, RELIGION AND ETHNICITY

People's names often convey a lot of information on ethnic and religious affiliation. Muslims often have Muslim first names. However, many of these may differ strongly from their Arabic origin, due both to local pronunciation patterns and French orthography. Thus Abdullah becomes Abdoulaye, Fatima becomes Fatou, Ahmad becomes Amadou, Muhammad becomes Mamadou, al-Hasan becomes Alassane, Abdalrahman becomes Dramane, etc.[8] Similarly Christians often have first names with origins in Christian tradition (either Biblical names or names of Catholic saints), but then in normal French orthography – Jules, Laurent, Simone, etc. Among Christians it is common to combine a Christian first name and an African one, like Bernadette Akissi, and in such cases it may differ whether the person in question uses either or both names. Among Muslims it is more unusual to combine Muslim first names with African or European names, but it does happen. Persons who are neither Christian nor Muslim often have African first names, but not necessarily. There are also Christians and Muslims with only African first names. However, it is very unlikely that a Muslim would have only a Christian first name,[9] or a Christian a Muslim first name. In cases where children have parents with different religions, their first names may well indicate within which religion they are raised.

Ivorians are usually able to place one another in an ethnic group according to surname, at least within a larger ethnic cluster. Coulibaly, Diabaté, Diarra, Keita, Sangaré, Touré and Traoré are common Mandé family or clan names; while Koffi, Konan and Nguessan are common Kwa surnames[10] – and Doué, Gbagbo and Kessy are Krou surnames.

The order of first name and surname is not fixed, the surname may well be written before the first name. Many follow French practice in writing surnames in capitals, like SORO Guillaume.

## 1.5 ON THE EXPRESSION *DIOULA*

The word *dioula* means trader in Bambara. Ivorians generally use the expression Dioula for anyone with a Mandé or Gour origin. Dioula is also a local lingua franca, very closely related to Bambara (an important language in neighbouring Mali). Someone being called a Dioula does not necessarily use the language Dioula as a lingua franca.[11] The use of Dioula as lingua franca stems from it being a language of trade in the entire subregion, and not only among Mandé or Gour people – it is also widely spoken by Kwa and Krou people in the coastal region and cities.

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[8] This is of course not unique to the region, but parallel to how Biblical names have developed in European languages. Even relatively few Scandinavians are aware that the common first name Pål is the Biblical Paul(us).

[9] As mentioned, some Muslims do combine a Muslim and a European first name. In such cases the European name may be of Biblical or Catholic origin, but is probably interpreted as a «modern» European name with no religious connotations.

[10] See Koffi 2001 for a thorough presentation of Baoulé naming traditions (relevant also for other Akan ethnic groups both in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana).

[11] To add to the confusion, there is also a proper ethnic group called Dioula, a Mandé group with origin in northeastern Côte d'Ivoire, east of Ferkessédougou close to the border with Burkina Faso. Their language is also called Dioula, but is in many ways different from the lingua franca Dioula, though the two languages are related. See also IRB-CISR 2005.

Dioula used as a lingua franca by people who have a first language which is not close related to it, is usually considerably less complex grammatically and uses more loanwords from French than i.e. the Dioula of the ethnic Dioulas, Bambara-speakers, Malinké-speakers, etc.[12]

When someone presents him-/herself as Dioula, s/he usually means s/he has origin in the north of Côte d'Ivoire and/or in the neighbouring countries Guinea, Mali or Burkina Faso. S/he will generally also be able to pinpoint his/her ethnic origin(s) more specifically. Ethnicity is generally patrilineal, but persons with parents of different ethnicities will generally be aware of both parents' ethnic affiliation.

[12] See LeBlanc 2000:469 n17.

# 2. *IVOIRITÉ* AND POLITICAL CONFLICT IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE[13]

Reports written since the attempted coup on 19 September 2002 commonly assume a certain knowledge of the modern history of Côte d'Ivoire before this event. A relatively short summary of the political development in the country since independence follows, to serve as a backdrop for today's conflict.

## 2.1 FROM INDEPENDENCE IN 1960 UNTIL THE MID 1980S

From the 1960s until the mid 1980s, the southern regions of Côte d'Ivoire experienced phenomenal economic growth in the agricultural sector – especially in the cultivation of cocoa, coffee, pineapple, coconuts and palm oil. This led many to call Côte d'Ivoire "Africa's economic miracle", and the income generated by the agricultural sector led to large scale investments in infrastructure, the evolvement of a local middle class and urban development – especially of Abidjan.

Related to the five year plan for the period 1970-1975, president Houphouët-Boigny declared that farmland belonged to the farmer exploiting it, and this resulted in large scale competition between different ethnic groups, both indigenous groups and immigrants, for the control of existing farmland and forest areas suitable for farmland – especially in the southwest. By the end of the 1970s, around one million Burkinabè immigrants were established as farmers and agricultural labourers in this region, in addition to migrants from other parts of Côte d'Ivoire.

## 2.2 FROM THE MID-1980S UNTIL THE LATE 1990S

### 2.2.1 Crisis in the world market for agricultural produce

Through the 1980s, the market for the agricultural goods exported from Côte d'Ivoire gradually becomes saturated, as more and more countries expand their production of the same goods – especially cocoa and coffee. Côte d'Ivoire also increases its production of these goods, which leads to world markets prices collapsing. The country faces a steadily decreasing national income, and both the state and the agribusiness take up large loans. By 1987 the country is almost bankrupt, and financial crisis is unavoidable – with the problems in the agricultural sector affecting the entire society.

[13] Fabrice Mignot's French-language reports *La question dioula et la partition de la Côte d'Ivoire* (Mignot 2004) and *Les Baoulé, Henri Konan Bédié et la crise ivoirienne* (Mignot 2005) have been instrumental in the writing of this section.

### 2.2.2 Democratisation and further financial crisis

The wave of democratisation in the late 1980s has huge implications all over Africa, not the least in the former French colonies in West Africa, and comes simultaneously with the financial crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. After political tension as a result of the financial situation and popular pressure for political opening, president Houphouët-Boigny has to implement a multiparty system, and allow other parties to compete with PDCI,[14] which until 1990 was the only legal political party in the country. Still Houphouët-Boigny is re-elected president with an 80 % majority, and PDCI ends up with 163 of the 175 mandates in the parliament. The opposition mainly votes for FPI,[15] led by Laurent Gbagbo, who is also their candidate for president. The now-dominant student organisation at the University of Abidjan-Cocody, FESCI,[16] was founded by FPI while the party was still in exile, and during this period, it becomes an increasingly important tool for FPI.[17]

After the election, FPI is the main opposition party, and focuses on claims presented by Ivorians of Kwa and Krou background that the authorities had granted Ivorian ID-cards to immigrants from neighbouring countries to the north in order to secure political support for PDCI in the elections. After large-scale demonstrations in Abidjan in February 1992 that deteriorate into riots, hundreds of FPI-activists (including Laurent Gbagbo) are arrested. FPI starts accusing Alassane Ouattara (then a member of PDCI) of being anti-Ivorian, and claims he cannot be Ivorian, but Burkinabè, as his father was buried in Burkina Faso.[18]

### 2.2.3 Houphouët-Boigny dies

The economic situation continues to deteriorate through the 1990s, with students, civil servants and soldiers protesting on different occasions because of inflation and diminishing value of scholarships and wages. President Houphouët-Boigny dies in December 1993, and this leads to a competition for power within the PDCI between prime minister Alassane Ouattara and parliamentary spokesman Henri Konan Bédié, who is appointed interim president until election are held in 1995. Bédié receives support from the Baoulé-dominated PDCI leadership, Ouattara is appointed vice president of the International Monetary Fund and moves to Washington DC – in the meantime, Ouattara's supporters are removed from positions of power in PDCI, and this group breaks out of the party and creates the new party RDR.[19]

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[14] Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire – The Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire. A presentation of the main political parties in the country follows later in the report.

[15] Front Populaire Ivoirien – The Ivorian People's Front.

[16] Fédération des Étudiants et Scolaires de Côte d'Ivoire – The Côte d'Ivoire Federation of Students and Scholars.

[17] See Mignot 2006 for a very thorough report on the role of FESCI in the conflict.

[18] Ouattara's mother died in December 2005, and was buried in Côte d'Ivoire. See IRIN News 2005c.

[19] Rassemblement des Républicains – Rally of the Republicans.

### 2.2.4 The *ivoirité* question

After the PDCI split which results in the founding of RDR, FPI enters into an uneasy alliance of interest with PDCI to stop Ouattara from taking the power in the 1995 presidential election. A national debate evolves on the question of *ivoirité* (ivorianness) and the criteria for being a "real" Ivorian citizen. A lot of the focus of the debate is to disqualify Alassane Ouattara from running for president, but still it contributes to questioning whether people of Mandé and Gour origin in general are sufficiently Ivorian – including internal north-south migrants of such background. Bédié wins the presidential election.

While the *ivoirité* debate evolves, the three large political parties in Côte d'Ivoire assume a progressively ethnic character. PDCI becomes dominated by people of Kwa origin, especially Baoulé and Agni, and Bédié expresses the opinion that people with this ethnic background are more able to rule the country than others because of inherited historical and political structures developed in Baoulé communities (with roots in the Ashanti-kingdoms in Ghana, claimed to have ties all the way back to the ancient Egyptian civilisation). FPI's supporters are increasingly Krou-dominated, while people of Mandé and Gour origin largely support RDR.

The *ivoirité* debate hides a conflict over which ethnic cluster is "more Ivorian", and thus has legitimacy to rule the entire country – clearly a controversial question in a country with considerable ethnic diversity, where no ethnic group is in absolute majority. At the same time, all political parties accuse each other of acting on behalf of narrow ethnic interests in disregard of the interest of the nation.

### 2.2.5 Increased political tension, and consequences of the military coup on 24 December 1999

Through 1999, the political situation becomes increasingly tense, with large-scale demonstrations in Abidjan. One factor behind the increased tension is the judicial process against Alassane Ouattara for allegedly having presented false documents in order to prove his Ivorian citizenship and *ivoirité*. This process worries many people with Mandé and Gour origin, from northern Côte d'Ivoire and/or neighbouring countries to the north both, as harassment and intimidation of northerners during random checks by police and armed forces of their ID-papers becomes common.

Christmas Eve 1999 general Robert Gueï leads a military coup conducted by junior officers recently returned from a mission in the Central African Republic. President Bédié goes into exile in France, while Ouattara returns to Côte d'Ivoire. Higher ranking military officers take the power after the coup, whereas the junior officers who originally did the coup to a large extent end up as leaders of criminal gangs which contribute to increased crime and tension in the country, especially in Abidjan.

### 2.2.6 From the presidential election campaign of 2000 until the coup attempt on 19 September 2002

General Gueï wishes to run as PDCI's presidential candidate, but the party refuses (not surprisingly, as the party was ousted from power through his coup less than a year before). He founds his own party, UDPCI,[20] as base for his own presidential ambitions. Another coup attempt is stopped in September 2000, led by Ibrahim 'IB' Coulibaly together with other officers of northern origin. Several senior officers with a northern background are dismissed, general Gueï declares a state of emergency and outlaws political activity until the approved list of presidential candidates is published. The election campaign is reduced to a debate on whether Alassane Ouattara is eligible to stand as candidate for RDR. A coalition of anti-Ouattara forces, among them FPI, FESCI and LIDHO,[21] arranges a demonstration in front of the presidential residence in the Abidjan suburb Cocody on 28 September. Thousands of Burkinabè immigrants take refuge in the coastal town San Pedro after conflicts with "indigenous" Krou ethnic groups.

On 6 October, the High Court, on instructions from Gueï, declares that Ouattara is barred from being RDR's presidential candidate for having submitted questionable documents to prove that both his parents are Ivorian. Five of the possible presidential candidates forwarded by PDCI, including former president Bédié, are also barred on formal grounds. The High Court approves five candidates:

- General Gueï (UDPCI)
- Laurent Gbagbo (FPI)
- Francis Romain Wodié (PIT[22])
- Mel Eg (UDCY[23])
- Nicolas Dioulo (independent)

PDCI chooses not to participate in the election, but some PDCI politicians declare their support for Gueï. RDR asks its supporters to participate in a peaceful boycott of the presidential election.

The election is held on 22 October. On 24 October general Gueï declares himself winner. Laurent Gbagbo encourages "democrats" to take to the street, and there are clashes between civilians and the armed forces several places in Abidjan. On 25 October Gueï flees Abidjan in a helicopter, and Gbagbo declares himself winner of the election. On 26 October RDR supporters demand a re-election during demonstrations, and clash with FPI supporters, gendarmes and police. Gbagbo assumes the position as president.

[20] L'Union pour la Démocratie et la Paix en Côte d'Ivoire – The Union for Democracy and Peace in Côte d'Ivoire.

[21] Ligue Ivoirienne des Droits de l'Homme – The Ivorian Human Rights League.

[22] Parti Ivoirien des Travailleurs – The Ivorian Labour Party.

[23] L'Union Démocratique et Citoyenne – The Democratic Citizen Union.

In the weeks leading up to the election and the days after, there was generally a lot of violence – not the least in Abidjan. On 27 October, the bodies of 57 young men who have been shot are discovered in a forest close to the Abidjan suburb Yopougon. Most of them had been detained as suspects of being RDR supporters, and the rest were detained by gendarmes to carry the corpses of the ones killed in the Abobo Gendarme camp as revenge for the killing of a gendarme by RDR supporters. The porters were also executed after carrying the bodies of the others. In addition to this, eighteen others were found dead in the Ébrié Lagoon (mainly FPI supporters) and yet six others in the Blocosso suburb. More violence took place around the elections in December 2000. According to Human Rights Watch, some 170 people died in political violence in October 2000, and 42 during December the same year.[24]

RDR also boycotts the legislative elections on 10 December 2000 and 14 January 2001 (election districts in the north of the country), but still receives votes enough to win a few seats in parliament:

- FPI – 96 seats
- PDCI – 94 seats
- RDR – 5 seats
- PIT – 4 seats
- Independent candidates – 22 seats
- Other parties – 2 seats

All major parties participate in local election held in March 2001. RDR wins the majority in the largest number of municipalities, followed by PDCI and FPI. Tension increases during the summer of 2002 before regional elections on 7 July. Ouattara is issued proof by a judge on 30 June 2002 that he is indeed an Ivorian citizen, which contributes to the tense situation. FPI and PDCI win a majority in 18 *départements* each, RDR wins the majority in 10 and UDPCI in 3.

On 4 January 2000, general Gueï invites all political parties except PDCI to share power in a national unity government. FPI soon pulls out and withdraws its four ministers as twelve of the twenty-two ministerial posts go to persons who are either RDR politicians or assumed to be RDR supporters. FPI is given two additional posts, and rejoins. Two coup attempts are stopped on 15 May and 4 July the same year. RDR is thrown out of the unity government, but still Ouattara issues a joint declaration together with general Gueï, PDCI and FPI which expresses unity on a new national unity government following the presidential elections planned for 2000, no matter the victor.

### 2.2.7 The coup attempt on 19 September 2002 and the immediate aftermath

On 19 September 2002, in the early morning hours, armed rebels attack government structures in Abidjan, Bouaké and Korhogo. In the turbulence that follows, some 400 people lose their lives, among them general Gueï, his wife and members of his entourage. The attempted coup fails after forces loyal to president Gbagbo stop the rebels, but the northern region of the country is soon in rebel hands.

[24] For more details, see HRW 2001.

Map © BBC News

French forces, stationed in Abidjan since independence according to a French-Ivorian defence pact, are stationed along an armistice line dividing the country in two from east to west. In the early days, it is difficult to tell who the rebels are and what political interests they represent, but on 1 October they declare themselves to represent an organisation called MPCI.[25] The organisation is accused of having strong ties to the president of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaoré. At a later stage, two more rebel groups appear in the west, both supported by Liberia's president Charles Taylor (whose relationship with Laurent Gbagbo is very tense[26]), MPIGO[27] and MPJ.[28] The three rebel groups later enter into an alliance called FN.[29] With time, the political influence of rebels from MPIGO and MPJ becomes increasingly limited.

[25] Mouvement Patriotique de la Côte d'Ivoire – The Patriotic Movement of Côte d'Ivoire.

[26] Laurent Gbagbo is of the Krou ethnic group Bété, which has strong historic, cultural and linguistic ties to the Liberian Krahn and their political leadership fighting against Charles Taylor.

[27] Mouvement Ivoirien pour le Grand Ouest – The Ivorian Movement for the Large West.

[28] Mouvement pour la Justice et la Paix – The Movement for Justice and Peace.

[29] Forces Nouvelles – New Forces.

# 3. THE SITUATION AFTER THE 2002 COUP ATTEMPT

There have been relatively few exchanges of fire between the rebels in FN and the loyalist[30] armed forces in FANCI[31] since the armistice following the coup attempt in 2002. The French forces placed along the armistice line were enforced with soldiers from African countries, and later with UN forces. Numerous rounds of negotiations have been held between the two sides, where representatives from France, the African Union, ECOWAS,[32] the UN and several regional leaders have been involved as mediators. After the first agreement, signed in Linas-Marcoussis (a suburb of Paris) at the end of January 2003, there was cautious optimism, but soon a clear pattern was established for the relationship between the two parties and how they behave during and after negotiations: The two sides sit down at negotiations led by one or several of the mediators mentioned above, and reach an agreement which is usually rather vague. When the agreement is duly signed, everyone goes back home, and a few days later, both parties start declaring their respective interpretations of the vaguer parts of the agreement, which are then categorically dismissed by the other side. The whole process then degenerates into reciprocal accusations of hidden motives, active sabotage and a profound lack of interest in reconciliation. This is often followed by claims of bias on the part of the mediator(s). Already in 2004, Crisis Group, which closely monitors the development in Côte d'Ivoire and the region at large, pointed out that the political leadership on both sides have considerable financial interest in maintaining impasse and a low-key conflict:

> *To get to the heart of Côte d'Ivoire's problems, it is necessary to understand their economic dimension, and in particular, in terms of the old dictum, to "follow the money". The political impasse is exceptionally lucrative for almost everyone except ordinary citizens. Major government figures have been accused of using state monies, especially from the Enron-like maze of interlinked institutions within the cocoa marketing system, for personal enrichment, purchasing weapons, and hiring mercenaries. Members of the Forces Nouvelles have been accused of monopolising lucrative economic activity, including the trade in cotton and weapons.* (Crisis Group 2004:i)

[30] In an Ivorian context, loyalist is generally implied to mean loyal to president Gbagbo.

[31] Les Forces Armées Nationales de Côte d'Ivoire – The National Armed Forces of Côte d'Ivoire.

[32] The Economic Community of West African States. The French acronym is CEDEAO – Communauté Économique des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest.

Ordinary Ivorians tend to become more and more pessimistic with regards to the situation, and even though both sides are able to mobilise considerable support in the population, cynicism about the motives of political leaders is also widespread. At the same time, the financial situation in the country is far from improving, something which is strongly felt by everyone – with the exception of the elite. Large funds that used to be channelled more transparently through the state coffers "disappear", foreign investment in local industry and agribusiness has to a large degree dried up, and the expatriate community in Abidjan, working in the private sector, the diplomacy and international organisations,[33] has mostly left the country – which has resulted in many people becoming unemployed. Because the country is divided in two, and the crossing of the dividing line involves large bribes for transporters of goods and people, the landlocked neighbouring countries Mali and Burkina Faso have shifted a lot of their exports to ports in Senegal, Ghana, Togo and Benin, which means diminished income for the port in Abidjan – the largest in the region.

Another worrying aspect of the situation is the appearance of a large number of armed militia groups, especially in the southern part of the country – so-called *jeunes patriotes* (young patriots). These groups often consist of unemployed or underemployed young men, they set up roadblocks in the areas controlled by president Gbagbo (both roads in the countryside and thoroughfares in Abidjan and other cities) – allegedly to stop rebels from creating trouble and smuggling weapons into this region. By placing youth who are easily manipulated in armed positions of power, the circle around president Gbagbo has created a tool which may become difficult to control, and which undermines the efforts of more moderate forces on a ground level – like village councils and similar structures traditionally used for mediation in conflicts between different groups on a local level in the countryside. These have to a large extent become marginalised by more radical and in some cases conflict-seeking militia groups, with ready access to firearms.[34] In Abidjan, the *jeunes patriotes* to a large extent originate with the sections of the student organisation FESCI loyal to president Gbagbo at the University of Abidjan-Cocody. The dominant leader for the loose association of these groups in Abidjan, Charles Blé Goudé, was the leader of FESCI 1998-2001. Interestingly, his predecessor as leader of FESCI was none other than Guillaume Soro Kigbafori, central in the FN leadership.[35] In addition to the unruly nature of these militia groups, it is important to stress that they are also the sole source of income for a large number of young unemployed men. People passing these roadblocks/checkpoints have to pay relatively large bribes, and this creates considerable tension in Abidjan and elsewhere. Especially drivers with a northern origin feel singled out and harassed by such militias, and to a lesser extent from soldiers, gendarmes and police officers.

[33] The evacuation of the African Development Bank from Abidjan to Tunis in 2002, led to thousands of expatriate foreigners leaving Abidjan and Côte d'Ivoire. Moreover, many diplomats and UN expatriate staff have left the country during turbulent periods since 2002, especially in November 2004.

[34] See Chaveau & Bobo 2003.

[35] See Konate 2003.

## 3.1 THE SITUATION IN KEY AREAS OF THE COUNTRY

The actual situation on the ground differs widely between different parts of the country, especially with regards to security and open conflict. It must be stressed that although most people in Côte d'Ivoire feel the consequences of the impasse in their daily lives, the situation in many areas has been mostly calm since the attempted coup 19 September 2002.

### 3.1.1 Abidjan

Abidjan remains the most important city in Côte d'Ivoire, despite Houphouët-Boigny declaring his village Yamoussoukro capital in 1983. More than a quarter (maybe as much as a third) of the population of the country lives in Abidjan, and most government institutions, public administration, private companies, international organisations and diplomats are found here.[36] The city remains the focus of the political struggle between southerners and northerners, and a main arena for demonstrations and open conflict between supporters of different political factions. Groups loyal to president Gbagbo – especially south-easterners – have been more active in staging demonstrations and during riots in Abidjan, but oppositional groups – especially northerners – have also staged demonstrations and become more active since March 2004 (until then, they had generally kept a lower profile since September 2002).

The crime level in Abidjan has been rising since well before the attempted coup in 2002, although with a considerably calmer period from the curfew that was in place from then until May 2003. Since then, crime has increased again, fuelled by the growing number of arms in circulation. According to the consultants of Mercer Human Resources Consulting, Abidjan is the second most dangerous city in the world for expatriate personnel, only Baghdad is worse.[37]

A large everyday problem for the population of Abidjan is the checkpoints along thoroughfares all over the city, present most of the time since 19 September 2002. These checkpoints are manned by police, gendarmes, soldiers and *jeunes patriotes*, and especially people of Mandé and Gour origin are subject to checks of ID-documents (mainly by soldiers, gendarmes and police), shake-downs for bribes and harassment. The checkpoints increase in number during the night and in periods of tension, and during these times more people have to pay bribes to be allowed to pass (including southerners). Drivers of taxis, buses, minibuses and lorries are especially vulnerable, as they pass such checkpoints many times every day and because most of them are of northern origin. Conflicts at checkpoints have sometimes resulted in deaths, and on at least one occasion, professional drivers have gone on strike.[38]

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[36] In June 2006, president Gbagbo stated in Jeune Afrique that he wished to turn Yamoussoukro into a real capital due to the overcrowding of Abidjan, but even though the issue seems to have broad political support, it remains to be seen whether this project will be implemented. See Gbagbo 2006.

[37] See IRIN 2005b.

[38] Personal experience from working at the Norwegian Embassy in Abidjan February-July 2003. Information about the strike among professional drivers the autumn of 2003 was given by former colleagues at the embassy.

### 3.1.2 The "Wild West"

Whereas Abidjan is the main focus of tension and conflict around the question of political participation and influence for northerners, the southwest is the area most affected by conflicts over land resources between indigenous groups and migrants. Such conflicts have been latent since the 1980s when land started becoming scarce due to population increases, both among indigenous groups and migrants. Since 1999, armed conflicts between the two sides have erupted on several occasions, resulting in considerably larger numbers of dead and displaced than elsewhere in the country. The escalation of the situation from 1999 onwards was to a large extent the consequence of new legislation on ownership of rural land resources introduced in 1998, which privileged Ivorian citizens, the state and public cooperatives, excluding farmers of foreign origin, foreign companies and Ivorians without ID-documents (Mignot 2005:IV). These regular eruptions of violence and the involvement of Liberian fighters in the armed conflicts have earned the region the moniker the "wild west".

The indigenous groups involved in these conflicts are generally of Krou background, one of the more important being the Bété – president Gbabgo's ethnic group, but also the Guéré/Wè. The Bété and related groups are most often in conflict with farmers of foreign origin (Burkinabè and Malians), but also with migrants from other parts of Côte d'Ivoire (both Baoulés from the southeast and northerners). In addition to this, there is also conflict between the Guéré/Wè (Krou) and the Yacouba/Dan (Mandé), with the Guéré/Wè on the loyalist side and the Yacouba/Dan on the rebel side.[39]

### 3.1.3 The situation in the FN-controlled north

There are very few indications that the discrimination many northerners experience in the south on the basis of ethnic background is mirrored in the northern zone, with people of southern origin being singled out as Gbagbo loyalists on basis of ethnicity alone. Examples of such problems may well take place, but it seems not to be a phenomenon of the same scale as seen in the southern zone. This, however, may well be related to the southern zone being more ethnically mixed than the north: the migration from the south to the north has mainly been limited to civil servants, teachers, etc. Villagers of Baoulé origin in the eastern part of the north (which is part of the Baoulé heartland) have according to some reports complained that they have been subject to extortion from rebel forces, but this appears to be fairly wide-spread all over the FN-controlled north, and not limited to Baoulé villages in the east.

[39] There is a clear link to the conflict in Liberia here, as the Guéré-Yacouba conflict mirrors the armed conflict between the same groups in Liberia – there called Krahn and Gio respectively. The Krahn-dominated militia MODEL was supported by loyalist Ivorian funds and military support in its struggle against the Gio-dominated NPLF forces led by Charles Taylor (who is of Gio origin on his mother's side). Charles Taylor on his side supported two of the Ivorian rebel militias – the Yacouba-dominated MPIGO as well as MPJ.

There has been a very clear deterioration of the situation in the north regarding public services and infrastructure since the *de facto* partition, especially in the education sector and health service. However, even with this abrupt fall in standards, I feel it is important to state that the humanitarian situation in the northern zone today is not unlike the normal conditions in provincial areas of neighbouring Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea (admittedly among the poorest countries in the world). Now that this situation has lasted more than four years, there are both positive and negative signs. The redeployment of civil servants in the north, the reopening of schools and holding of important school exams on several levels are clearly positive developments, whereas the rapidly deteriorating physical infrastructure – water pipes and electricity lines especially – is very negative.

## 3.2 THE ID-DOCUMENTS ISSUE

Possessing ID-documents that prove someone's *ivoirité* has been at the heart of the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire since the mid-1990s. The continued struggle Alassane Ouattara of RDR has faced with the court system to be recognised as an Ivorian citizen is highly symbolic for the population with Gour and Mandé background, and it mirrors their everyday problems with getting hold of necessary ID papers, and their safekeeping in tense times (there are numerous cases of northerners' ID documents being intentionally destroyed, both before and after 19 September 2002[40]).

2006 saw this issue finally being addressed in practice, with ambulant government hearings intended to provide the some 3.5 millions who are without ID-documents with such papers. Trial hearings started on 18 May, and these trials went fairly well, despite some tension around the hearings in government-controlled areas. However, when the actual hearings started on 17 July, this came after FPI's president Pascal Affi N'Guessan 13 July summons to all Ivorians to oppose the hearings "by all means". First, this led to groups of jeunes patriotes disrupting hearings in Divo and Grand Bassam, not far from Abidjan, during July. Then on 6 August, president Gbagbo held a televised speech where he redefined the terms of the entire registration process, turning it into something quite different from what was originally agreed between the parties.[41] During negotiations in Ouagadougou on 26 September, president Gbagbo reaffirmed his current position that only the courts are in a position to issue proof of citizenship.[42]

[40] See IRIN 2005a and HRW 2001.

[41] See Crisis Group 2006:4-9 for a detailed account of this issue until early September 2006.

[42] See Seck 2006. In the same article, Burkina Faso's president is quoted in posing the relevant question "How long would it take for the judges to go through the cases of millions of people?"

# 4. POLITICAL STRUCTURE

## 4.1 THE MAIN POLITICAL PARTIES

The political landscape in Côte d'Ivoire is dominated by three major parties, each organising a large segment of the population.

### 4.1.1 PDCI

| ***Name in full*** | ***Website*** |
|---|---|
| Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire-Rassemblement Démocratique Africain | http://pdci.ahibo.com/ |
| ***Newspaper*** | ***Youth organisation*** |
| Nouveau Réveil | JPDCI (Jeunesse du PDCI); JUPDCI (Jeunesse universitaire du PDCI) |

PDCI was founded in 1946, well before Côte d'Ivoire was granted independence from France. Since independence in 1960, it was the only political party with Houphouët-Boigny as its uncontested leader. Under him, Baoulés were over-represented in the party structure, but he also incorporated other ethnic groups in the structure – not the least northerners who benefited from the encouragement to migrate to the south-west. Significantly, little difference was made between immigrants and Ivorians when it came to political and economic rights in this period.

With the death of Houphouët-Boigny in December 1993, an internal power struggle broke out in the PDCI over the question of his successor – the main protagonists were Henri Konan Bédié and Alassane Ouattara. It is during this power struggle over the Houphouët-Boigny legacy[43] that Bédié launches the concept of *ivoirité* to discredit Ouattara.

PDCI continues to have strong popular support among people of Kwa background, especially Akan subgroups, whereas popular support among people of Mandé and Gour origin to a large extent was lost with the secession of PDCI politicians of northern background and the foundation of RDR in 1994.

### 4.1.2 FPI

| ***Name in full*** | ***Website*** |
|---|---|
| Front Populaire Ivoirien | http://www.fpi-ci.org/ |
| ***Newspapers*** | ***Youth organisation*** |
| Notre voie, Le Courrier d'Abidjan[44] | JFPI (Jeunesse du FPI) |

[43] As will be shown below, evoking loyalty to an vaguely defined legacy of Houphouët-Boigny and presenting oneself as his symbolic successor is still common in Ivorian politics.

[44] The government daily Fraternité Matin has to a large extent been an FPI mouthpiece since Gbagbo assumed power.

FPI was founded in 1982, but was an illegal opposition party until 1990, when Houphouët-Boigny was forced to open up for a multiparty system in the country. In its early days, it was mainly a vehicle for intellectual opposition to the political establishment inside PDCI and ideologically socialist/social-democratic in character (it is still a member of the Socialist International, and until November 2004, had strong ties to the French Parti Socialiste[45]). It has been a long-time critic of French economic dominance in Côte d'Ivoire, which party officials see as a continued colonisation after independence. Prominent activists within the party, like parliament speaker Mamadou Koulibaly, claims the coup attempt on 19 September 2002 was orchestrated by France together with Burkina Faso in order to oust FPI from power, as Gbabgo's government wanted too much economic independence from French state and business interests.[46]

Although FPI does include activists from different ethnic backgrounds, it has become increasingly nationalist and is today the foremost force for promoting the idea of *ivoirité*. It mainly has popular support from people of Krou ethnic background (not the least president Gbabgo's ethnic group Bété), and to some extent other southerners.[47]

It is important to note that opposition to PDCI has been strong in Bété circles since the late 1960s. An attempt in 1970 to found an opposition party led to strong reactions from the government, with 4000 Bétés massacred in Gébié (Mignot 2005:III).

### 4.1.3 RDR

| ***Name in full*** | ***Website*** |
|---|---|
| Rassemblement des Républicains | http://www.le-rdr.org/ |
| ***Newspaper*** | ***Youth organisation*** |
| Le Patriote | RJR (Rassemblement des Jeunes Républicains) |

RDR was founded in 1994, after the secession of political allies of Alassane Ouattara. These were not all of a Mandé or Gour origin, but the party's main political projects soon became the political participation of northerners and the rejection of a narrow definition of *ivoirité*. Since then, its main popular base has been among people of northern origin.

[45] Though the PS formally broke ties with FPI after the riots in Abidjan targeting French nationals and business interests in November 2004, FPI still links PS among its *partis amis* on its official website.

[46] See Koulibaly, Ahua & Busch 2003.

[47] It is my personal impression that laguna subgroups of Kwa ethnic background are somewhat more favourable to the *ivoirité* concept than Akan subgroups, perhaps because they are generally assumed to have "longer historical roots" in the south than the Akan groups – especially the Baoulé, who stress an origin in today's Ghana.

## 4.2 THE SECONDARY POLITICAL PARTIES

There is a large number of political parties registered in Côte d'Ivoire, the ones included here are parties which are included in different reconciliation negotiations, which have representatives in parliament, which presented presidential candidates in the 2000 election and/or which have held seats in government since the 2000 elections.

### 4.2.1 PIT

| *Name in full* | *Website* |
|---|---|
| Parti Ivoirien des Travailleurs | - |
| *Newspaper* | *Youth organisation* |
| | |

PIT was founded in 1990, among the first new parties in Côte d'Ivoire after Houphouët-Boigny was forced to open the political arena for other parties. It has been characterised as "a party of the intellectual elite in favour of *ivoirité*" (Mignot 2004:6), and is currently an allied satellite of FPI. Its leader Francis Romain Wodié was among the few presidential candidates allowed to stand in the 2000 election.

### 4.2.2 UDPCI

| *Name in full* | *Website* |
|---|---|
| Union pour la Démocratie et pour la Paix en Côte d'Ivoire | |
| *Newspaper* | *Youth organisation* |
| | |

UDPCI was founded in 2000 to serve as a political vehicle for general Gueï when PDCI rejected his initiative to become the PDCI presidential candidate, and was created by mainly Yacouba supporters of general Gueï. UDPCI seems to be very marginal in today's political landscape since Gueï's death during the attempted coup on 19 September 2002.[48] Close to RDR politically, and with ties to the rebel group MPIGO.

[48] Thus the party is very similar to many political parties in neighbouring Liberia and Sierra Leone, which are mainly local strongmen's tools for achieving political position. Such parties tend to implode when its main leader leaves the political stage.

### 4.2.3 MFA

| *Name in full* | *Website* |
|---|---|
| Mouvement des Forces de l'Avenir | |
| *Newspaper* | *Youth organisation* |
| | |

MFA is a small party with little popular support. It is close to RDR politically.

### 4.2.4 UDCY

| *Name in full* | *Website* |
|---|---|
| Union Démocratique et Citoyenne | |
| *Newspaper* | *Youth organisation* |
| | |

UDCY is a result of a secession from PDCI in 2000. It has little popular support.

## 4.3 FN POLITICAL WINGS

In the days and weeks following 19 September 2002 it remained very unclear who was behind the coup attempt,[49] and only in early October did the main group emerge with a name – MPCI.[50] Later in the year, two more rebel groups emerged – MPIGO and MJP. The leader of MPIGO stated to BBC in January that the two groups had fused,[51] but there are still references to the groups as separate entities.

These groups have participated in a number of negotiations along with established political parties on both sides, but with the loyalist side often questioning their legitimacy as political actors. As the formal status of these groups is very vague, and there already is an established political party on the scene in RDR, it can seem that the separation between FN and RDR can be interpreted both as rivalry between competing political figures wanting to represent northern political interests, and as an attempt to avoid RDR being discredited as coup plotters.

In any case, the FN today is more or less synonymous with MPCI – with MPIGO and MJP being more or less incorporated into MPCI.[52]

[49] See Doyle 2002.

[50] See Jaffre 2002.

[51] See Welsh 2003.

[52] This is a result of many factors. An important one is that they never seemed to have any political agenda distinct from MPCI, another is that their supporter Charles Taylor has been fairly absent from the regional political scene since 2004, concentrating more on influencing the presidential election in Liberia since he was sent to Nigeria in exile in August 2003.

## 4.4 SHIFTING ALLIANCES BETWEEN POLITICAL BLOCS

### 4.4.1 Three main political blocs

To a large extent, the political landscape in Côte d'Ivoire is divided between three main blocks: Northerners (Mandé/Gour) represented by RDR, south-easterners (Kwa, especially Akan subgroups[53]) represented by PDCI and south-westerners (Krou) represented by FPI. The trinity of today's main political blocs to a certain extent also reflects three important socio-political groups:

- Civil servants and other government workers (where Akan groups are overrepresented) oriented towards PDCI
- Traders, transport and construction section workers (dominated by Mandé and Gour groups) oriented towards RDR
- Rural and urban groups considering themselves "extra indigenous" in the competition with internal migrants and immigrants (dominated by Krou and Kwa>Laguna groups) oriented towards FPI

### 4.4.2 The political elite and ethnicity

Another important feature of the power struggle in Côte d'Ivoire, which is easy to overlook with a focus on ethnicity, is the fact that the political elite of the country is considerably more ethnically mixed than society as a whole. Within the political (and economical), social standing and formal education level are often very important factors. Marriages, close friendships and other alliances across ethnic and religious lines are more common than in other social groups, and the individual members of the elite have often known each other personally since the school days. Shifting alliances, rivalries and personal antagonism within this fairly small circle is also important for the current power struggle.

The shared social background of the political elite also explains why the leadership of the political parties and blocs tends to be more multi-ethnic than their support bases. Seen in this light, the fact that Mamadou Koulibaly, one of the most hardliner FPI politicians, is actually a Muslim Sénoufo and that the Bété Louis André Dacoury-Tabley has left FPI and is today an FN political activist perhaps becomes less surprising.

### 4.4.3 Shifting alliances from independence to 2002

Before 1990, most groups were co-opted within PDCI, but the scepticism towards Baoulé dominance and calls for more democracy and a multiparty system were increasing until a political opening was forced through in 1990. During the early 1990s, before the PDCI schism which resulted in the founding of RDR, northern and south-eastern politicians were generally allied within PDCI, against the south-western opposition of FPI. It has to be stressed that the ethnic character of the political were a lot less pronounced in this period.

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[53] As mentioned above, the Kwa laguna subgroups seem more oriented towards a narrow definition of *ivoirité*, and thus may have more in common with south-westerners than other south-easterners when it comes to political orientation.

The power struggle between Henri Konan Bédié and Alassane Ouattara for the position as "natural" successor to president Houphouët-Boigny after his death in late 1993, resulted in the above mentioned split in PDCI into a more south-eastern oriented PDCI and the new party RDR, which rapidly became the main vehicle for the political interests of northerners. It is during this power struggle that Bédié launches the concept of *ivoirité* to discredit Ouattara, and by this opens a Pandora's Box where the loyalty and political rights of roughly half the population of the country becomes subject to question. With this, the three main blocs are established, but while FPI adopts the *ivoirité* concept wholeheartedly, this does not result in a *de facto* alliance with PDCI.

The period 1994-1999 is characterised by a rivalry for full political power between FPI and PDCI, where both parties have incentives to attempt to exclude RDR from the political scene by all means – as RDR would possibly be able to rally more voters than FPI and PDCI combined, should all northerners be registered as voters.

The 1999 coup was done by young officers of northern origin, but was soon dominated by general Gueï and other higher ranking officers who had been squeezed out of position within the PDCI hierarchy as the party became increasingly Baoulé-orientated. Gueï's clear antagonism towards PDCI, and its subsequent rejection of his bid to become its presidential candidate, led to him creating UDPCI, but this party has never been able to mobilise any significant number of supporters outside his own ethnic group – and the founding of UDPCI meant little for the political development.

Gueï used the courts as a tool to keep his main political rivals from presenting themselves as presidential candidates in the 2000 election, and only allowed people he may have assumed would not be much competition to stand – that is, excluding Henri Konan Bédié and Alassane Ouattara, but allowing Laurent Gbagbo to run. In hindsight, it seems clear that he miscalculated, as the result was Gbagbo assuming power after the elections.

With FPI securing the presidency, and 96 of the seats in parliament, RDR called for new elections; whereas PDCI chose to enter into a coalition government with FPI (PDCI got 94 seats in parliament[54]). Shifting coalition governments uniting FPI, PDCI and smaller parties continued to rule the country in the tense period which culminated with the 19 September 2002 coup attempt.

### 4.4.4 Political alliances since 2002

The coup attempt of 19 September 2002 resulted in a de facto partition of the country in two. RDR continues to represent the north politically, but now in an uneasy alliance/competition with the *Forces Nouvelles*. Ouattara goes into exile, and RDR's political work in the south becomes considerably more difficult due to its association with the FN.

[54] As a result of the RDR call for boycott of the elections, the party only got 5 seats in the 2000-2001 parliamentary elections.

The new partition splits the Baoulé heartland in two, and this has consequences for PDCI's position. With the northerners dominating the northern half, and FPI monopolising the political life of the south, PDCI and Bédié keeps a relatively low profile during the first 18 months after the coup attempt – participating in the shifting unity governments, but to a large extent sidelined by the struggle between FPI and the growing number of groups in the so-called patriotic galaxy on one side, and northern political interests articulated by both FN and RDR on the other.

From spring 2004 and onwards, the relationship between PDCI and FPI becomes increasingly uneasy, and culminates in the formation of a formal political coalition in May 2005, the RHDP.[55] As the name of the coalition implies, it attempts to draw legitimacy on the political heritage of Houphouët-Boigny – and interestingly, manages to ally the rivals Bédié and Ouattara. UDPCI and MFA are also part of the coalition. This coalition unites the established political parties of the more informal alliance called the G7, which includes these four parties and the three political wings of the FN – MPCI, MPIGO and MJP.

On the loyalist side, this coalition is mirrored by a pro-Gbagbo alliance of political parties and organisations called CNRD,[56] led by his wife Simone Gbagbo.[57]

## 4.5 OTHER ORGANISATIONS WITH A POLITICAL ROLE SINCE 2002

In addition to the established political parties, and the new movements which form the FN, a myriad of other groups has entered the political scene since 2002, and some which were established many years before (notably FESCI) have become even more important in the political landscape since the coup attempt. These groups include the infamous militias which operate all over the south (especially in urban areas, but also on the roads) and west (everywhere – also on a village level), but also women's groups, student groups and indeed all NGOs which have taken side in the current conflict.[58] The list includes only the more active groups and umbrella organisations. Note that this kind of activity is considerably more widespread in the south than in the north, and especially so in the "wild west".

[55] Rassemblement des Houphouétistes pour la Démocratie et la Paix – Rally of Houphouetists for Democracy and Peace.

[56] Congrès National de la Résistance pour la Démocratie – National Resistance Congress for Democracy.

[57] See Panapress 2006.

[58] It seems fairly difficult for Ivorian NGOs to avoid taking sides. This phenomenon also extends to Ivorian diaspora NGOs organising Ivorian migrants abroad.

### 4.5.1 The "patriot galaxy"

The "patriot galaxy" is a common term for groups in the south and the west loyal to president Gbagbo. Most of these groups are fairly informal militias grouping unemployed or underemployed young men from a local area, usually ethnically based, but not strictly so. Some militias have a clear hierarchy and an almost military organisation; others have a considerably looser structure. Their income comes from contributions from local people (everything from voluntary donations to extortion for "protection money"), extortion (mild to severe) of passing traffic at checkpoints, etc. Many militia groups have received both arms and training from the loyalist armed forces, and some sources claim they receive direct funding from FPI backers and people in president Gbabgo's entourage (HRW 2005:17). Some have stated that the president's wife Simone Gbagbo (an important hardliner FPI politician in her own right) has very strong ties to these militias.

#### 4.5.1.1 FESCI

In the current situation, the FPI-associated student organisation FESCI to a large extent functions as a militia – especially in Abidjan. I refer to Mignot 2006 for a thorough presentation of FESCI's important role in the conflict around the question of *ivoirité*.

#### 4.5.1.2 COJEP

COJEP[59] is an umbrella organisation gathering a large number of youth groups, militias and other patriots. It is led by Charles Blé Goudé, a Bété former FESCI leader with close personal ties to president Gbagbo and his wife Simone. Blé Goudé is on the UN travel ban list for the following reasons:

> *repeated public statements advocating violence against United Nations installations and personnel, and against foreigners; direction of and participation in acts of violence by street militias, including beatings, rapes and extrajudicial killings; intimidation of the United Nations, the International Working Group (IWG), the political opposition and independent press; sabotage of international radio stations; obstacle to the action of the IWG, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, (UNOCI), the French Forces and to the peace process as defined by resolution 1643 (2005).* (SCCCI 2006)

The close ties between groups organised by COJEP and president Gbabgo's entourage seem well established, and to many observers, the groups' role in demonstrations and riots – especially in Abidjan – seems directly orchestrated by people close to Gbagbo, if not the president himself.[60] This is, however, repeatedly denied both by president Gbagbo and Blé Goudé. Analysing the behaviour of militias in Abidjan during the riots of November 2004, Crisis Group has pointed out the following:

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[59] Congrès Panafricain des Jeunes et Patriotes – Panafrican Congress of Youth and Patriot. Their website can be found at http://www.cojep.org.

[60] See Crisis Group 2003:44.

> *The fact that no French citizen was killed during the violence from 6 to 9 November seems to indicate that the "patriots" who committed these acts received strict guidelines. However, the rape of a number of French women, as well as the murder of the French Radio France Internationale (RFI) journalist Jean Hélène in November 2003 by an Ivorian soldier, leads one to think that the ones encouraging this kind of violence are not always in full control of their troops.* (Crisis Group 2005:3, note 9)

From this, it seems the militias are generally behaving according to the instructions they receive, but that they sometimes act outside of these instructions.

### 4.5.2 Groups associated with northerners

As the conflict around citizenship, ID documents and political participation for people of Mandé and Gour origin is mainly taking place in the south, the FN-controlled north has generally not seen the large number of grassroots level political groups or militias common in the south. Whereas youth supporters of RDR and other opposition-oriented youth were very active and visible in Abidjan in the turbulent years leading up to the 19 September 2002 coup attempt, they have generally kept a lot lower profile since then. To the extent that opposition supporters are organised, this mainly seems to be through organisations that were established before the coup attempt, with very few new groups visible on the scene, at least in Abidjan. The main exception is local self defence groups formed among migrant villagers in the west.

#### 4.5.2.1 RJDP

Several established party youth movements, including RDR's RJR and the youth organisations of PDCI and UDPCI have gone together in the umbrella organisation RJDP.[61] This organisation seems less coordinated than COJEP, probably a result of it grouping organisations that agree less on political aims than the organisations within the "patriot galaxy" which generally adhere to the political aims forwarded by hardliner FPI politicians.

### 4.5.3 Reconciliation groups

From time to time, groups calling for reconciliation and national unity have been formed, but their importance for the peace process and negotiations between the Gbagbo loyalists and FN has been very limited.

One of the more important of such organisations is RPP,[62] launched by former PDCI General Secretary Laurent Dona-Fologo in May 2003. The initiative was met with considerable scepticism at the time, interpreted by many as an attempt by Dona-Fologo to launch a new political party, which in turn could serve as the vehicle for his own presidential ambitions as yet another "natural" successor of Houphouët-Boigny.[63] RPP has since realigned itself in the pro-Gbagbo camp as part of CNRD.

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[61] Rassemblement des Jeunes pour la Démocratie et la Paix – Rally of Youth for Democracy and Peace.

[62] Rassemblement Pour la Paix – Rally For Peace.

[63] Views presented by other diplomats I talked to during the official launch ceremony of RPP at Hôtel Ivoire in Abidjan 7 May 2003.

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