

Effects of political economy on development in Cote d'Ivoire

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Question

Based on recent literature in French and English and expert views, what are the key aspects of political economy in Cote d'Ivoire which affect sustainable development in the country, including inclusive, environmentally sustainable livelihoods and growth? Identify the significant barriers and, where possible, any major positive factors.

Contents

1. Overview
2. Scope of report, and state of research and knowledge
3. Growing but imbalanced economy that works for elites
4. A State that is a powerful resource, yet a weakened institution
5. Structural inequalities that lead to massive exclusion and marginalisation
6. Sustained political conflict, contestation, and violence
7. Decisive role of elites and armed forces as key actors that dominate political economy
8. References

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1. Overview

Cote d'Ivoire presents a paradoxical picture on development: it ranks as a lower-middle income country and has had strong economic growth, yet it ranks low by human development – lower than countries with similar levels of *per capita* income (UNDP, 2019b, p. 302). Certainly, this is partly a legacy of the country's civil war (2002-2007), and of the years of political violence and tensions that followed, which all saw massive drops in GDP and living standards for the population (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 4).

More broadly however, its past and current political economy offers major explanations for the country's failures and successes in development. The present report synthesises evidence about the effects of political economy on development in Cote d'Ivoire, based on a rapid review of academic, practitioner, and policy literature in English and French published in the past five years. There is limited knowledge on the core causal question of the report, but a strong knowledge base on key aspects of Ivorian political economy.

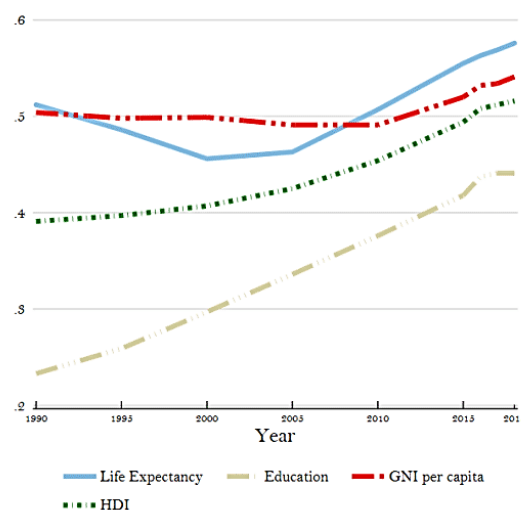
In short, available knowledge shows that four aspects of political economy have shaped the country's development, playing out as key factors, issues, and dynamics: 1. a growing but imbalanced economy that works for elites; 2. a State that is a powerful resource, yet a weakened institution; 3. structural inequalities that lead to massive exclusion and marginalisation; and 4. sustained political conflict, contestation, and violence. Of all the actors operating in this context, Ivorian civilian elites, Ivorian armed forces, and foreign elites are the decisive ones.

Economic growth with little development

The large increase in economic growth has only led to small increases in human development, as Figure 1 (p. 2) shows.

Cote d'Ivoire ranks 165th out of 189 countries and territories in UNDP's latest human development index (HDI), placing it in the category of low human development. This is 16 places below its rank for the level of gross national income (GNI) *per capita*, which is US\$ 3,589¹. Its HDI rank is below the average in Sub-Saharan Africa, and below countries comparable in HDI rank and in population size, such as Mozambique and Tanzania (UNDP, 2019b, p. 302, 2019a, p. 4). Cote d'Ivoire is not on course to meet the UN's sustainable development goals if it continues on its current trajectory, or even if it implements the government's 'National Prospective Study 2040' as it is (Pedercini et al., 2018).

Figure 1. Trends in Côte d'Ivoire's HDI component indices 1990-2018



Source: (UNDP, 2019a, p. 3), licensed under [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 IGO](#)

¹ This is in 2011 purchasing power parity (PPP) US\$.

Although there have been improvements in the country's human development index (HDI) over time, they have been small: the HDI rose by 0.40% between 1990 and 2000, by 1.09% between 2000 and 2010, and by 1.61% between 2010 and 2018 (UNDP, 2019b, p. 306). For instance, by 2018, life expectancy at birth was still at a low 57.4 years, having increased only by 4.2 years since 1990. Similarly, between 1990 and 2018, mean years of schooling increased only by 3.2 years. In contrast, GNI *per capita* increased by about 27.9% during the same period (UNDP, 2019a, p. 3).

Severe shortcomings in the country's development mean that, even as GNI continues to grow, multiple problems in areas such as standards of living, education, and health exist in addition to and in combination with widespread monetary poverty. Indeed, **the headcount of multidimensional poverty "is 17.9 percentage points higher than income poverty"**, according to the latest available UNDP calculations for 2016-2017 (UNDP, 2019a, pp. 6–7, 2019b, p. 320):

- 28.2% of the population is below income poverty when the line is set at PPP US\$ 1.90 per day, and 46.3% when the national poverty line is used;
- 46.1% of the population (over 11 million persons) are multidimensionally poor, with 24.5% of the population in severe multidimensional poverty;
- an additional 17.6% (over 4 million) are vulnerable to multidimensional poverty.

This shows that a significant number of people who are above the line of income poverty still suffer deprivations in multiple fundamental areas such as standard of living, education, and health. By UNDP's calculations for its index in this area (UNDP, 2019a, pp. 6–7, 2019c, p. 10):

- deprivation in standards of living (electricity, sanitation, drinking water, housing, cooking fuel, assets) contribute to overall multidimensional poverty by 40%;
- deprivation in education (Years of schooling, school attendance) contributes by 40.4%;
- deprivation in health (nutrition, child mortality) by 19.6%².

Main findings

The first key aspect of political economy affecting development is that Cote d'Ivoire has a **growing but imbalanced economy that works for elites**. At macroeconomic level, the economy has certainly been generating wealth and income. However, it has remained an **export-oriented, rent-based economy concentrated in a few productions and destinations**. Agricultural commodities – especially cocoa, cashew nuts, and rubber – have been at the core of production and export, with oil and mining products (e.g. gold) as complements. This leaves the economy exposed to shocks in production (e.g. poor harvest) and world prices. Since 2011, Ivorian elites have also generated and extracted new forms of outward-oriented rents, including using international aid on development, peacebuilding, and security as rents. In contrast, some sectors of Ivorian economy, such as industry and banking, are little developed, although there are slow changes in this regard, including a rising presence of information and communications technologies (ICTs).

² For additional detailed data on poverty and human development in Cote d'Ivoire, see the series of dashboards produced by UNDP for its 2019 Human Development Report, and associated documents: (UNDP, n.d., 2019b, pp. 322–347, 2019a, pp. 7–10, 2019c, pp. 11–15).

The wealth and income generated get appropriated, accumulated, and consolidated at the top. With wealth, this happens among others through vast illicit financial flows enabled by Ivorian and foreign actors. These flows have had damaging implications for development, by depriving the State of necessary revenue. For example, one study calculated that, without illicit financial flows, Cote d'Ivoire could have reduced the mortality of infants and children under five to its target under the Millennium Development Goals in 26 years, instead of the likely 62 years on its current course³. As for incomes, they accumulate at the top too, with one estimate showing that the bottom 50% hold a mere 13.44% of the income share, whereas the top 10% hold 48.28%, and the top 1% hold 17.15% (Czajka, 2017, p. 24). All this reinforces socioeconomic stratification, marked by a shrinking middle class, and downward mobility for some.

Land has remained a major driver and object of political economy, politics, and conflict, including violent conflict. A defining dynamic has historically been the constant negotiations around land ownership and use between *autochtones*, *allochtones*, and foreigners, through relations of dependence and complementarity. Since the 1990s, land has been a highly politicised issue, and land laws, registration, and titling have remained partisan, contentious, and embedded in political logics. Ouattara's policies in this area have favoured the central State, investors, and elites. In particular, members of the national urban elite – *cadres* and urban residents (especially around Abidjan) – have strongly seize up opportunities for land titling. In parallel, over the past two decades, some rural dynamics around land have changed. One reason lies with the demographics of successive generations of *autochtones* and immigrants. Another is that access to land is now dominated among others by 'plant-and-share' contracts. In any case, across urban and rural areas, the post-conflict period has led to the reconstitution and transformation of agrarian capitalism in the country, to the benefit of already better-off groups.

Cote d'Ivoire has suffered both from a significant degradation of environmental and climate conditions, and from socioeconomic and political tensions that arise from environmental protection. For instance, it lost 75% of its forest cover between 1960 and 2019 (World Bank, 2019a, p. 4). Cocoa growing in particular has led to massive deforestation, and there is continued pressure to exploit the remaining forests, including in protected areas, because growers' livelihoods depend on this given their current agricultural practices.

The second key aspect of political economy affecting development is that **the State is a powerful resource, yet a weakened institution.** On the one hand, **the State remains coveted.** In particular, as the **constitution concentrates political and economic power in the executive branch**, political elites focus on getting into power there.

On the other hand, **State capacities to provide essential public goods remain weakened, while both grand and petty corruption seems to have intensified** in recent years. Moreover, **Ouattara's public policies have been lopsided:** they have focused on macroeconomic growth and infrastructure, but lacked good-quality investment and provision in essential public goods such as health and education, and kept the base of revenues and taxes for the State small. They have also neglect less powerful groups, and entailed contested decisions (e.g. in the cotton and cashew sectors). As a result of all this, socioeconomic inequalities, poverty, and underemployment have remained high. The policies have also left intact a core problem in the country: workers are largely in informal, unwaged, low-productivity jobs.

³ (O'Hare and others, 2013, cited in HLPFFA, 2016, pp. 53–55)

The third key aspect of political economy affecting development is that **several major structural inequalities lead to massive exclusion and marginalisation. Gender inequality is structural across political, economic, and social dimensions.** There are gender disparities to the detriment of women and girls across wealth groups and across urban-rural groups. These dire outcomes can be tied back to a longstanding combination of deficient provision of public services with women's multiple disadvantages due to adverse gender norms and practices. Another fundamental factor is women's deprivation of access to land and to formal, paid positions in agriculture. Women's labour is also severely constrained.

Youth experiences exclusion, marginalisation, and insufficient support. The strong growth of the young population, combined with poor public policies for development, means that the situation for youth remains daunting, particularly in education, health, and employment. Moreover, in the postcolonial Ivorian State, elites have pursued and secured gerontocracy, depriving young men and women of economic, social, and political opportunities (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 16). In this context, and as part of the legacy of wartime and political violence, some youth have turned to violence in organised groups, while others are involved in initiatives for peace and security across the country.

There also remain longstanding geographic inequalities in politics and development. By most indicators, rural areas are worse off than urban ones, and the north is worse off than the south. For example, the north and north-west have poverty rates over 60%, whereas coastal areas and the south-west have rates under 40%⁴. While historical legacies play a role, these inequalities also result from contemporary policy decisions. Under Ouattara, capital Abidjan has received significant public investments which have fed its continued growth, and it has thrived as the country's economic, financial, intellectual, and cultural capital. In contrast, the benefits of GDP growth have not reached vast swathes of rural, remote, and peri-urban populations outside the main cities such as Abidjan, Bouaké, San Pedro, and Yamoussoukro.

The fourth key aspect of political economy affecting development is that **there remain sustained political conflict, contestation, and violence. In formal politics, there has been an overall stability, but tensions and violence have persisted.** Political leaders have kept mobilising ethnicity, regional identity, and nationality in partisan ways. There are also constant tensions and occasional violence, often structured along partisan and ethnic lines, around elections and formal politics – this is particularly visible ahead of the 2020 presidential election.

More broadly, there have been discontent, protests, and violence about structural socioeconomic and political problems. Popular discontent and disaffection with the ruling party's performance have risen. Protests have increased against the lack of socioeconomic development, and against rising inequalities. Conflicts and violence about structural socioeconomic and political issues that peacetime has not settled, such as land and authority, also continue.

⁴ (World Bank, 2019, cited in Crisis Group, 2019)

A key element shaping the conflict context is that the civil war and subsequent political violence remain unaddressed. At both elite and popular levels, **there remain widespread impunity for serious violations of human rights, a lack of reconciliation, and a legacy whereby violence is one effective way to power and resources.** More recently, another form of political violence has become part of the picture: threats of, and occasional acts of, violence from jihadi groups.

Within this four-component context of the country, **two sets of actors are decisive in shaping both political economy and its effects on development:** among Ivorians, civilian elites, and armed forces; and among foreigners, specific elites.

Among Ivorian civilian elites, the main political leaders and their parties (whose internal workings and finances are opaque) are the central players: Alassane Ouattara and the RHDP; Henri Konan Bédié and the PDCI; Laurent Gbagbo and the FPI; Guillaume Soro and the GPS; and Albert Toikeusse Mabri and the UDPCI. A few dynamics in this sphere are worth noting. The parties are often internally divided, whether they are currently in government and the opposition. The ruling coalition broke down in 2018, leaving the RHDP to rule alone, while opposition parties have been in dialogue with each other to build alliances ahead of the 2020 election. Faced with this, the ruling party has used a mix of de-escalation and hostile actions towards opposition parties. **Other Ivorian elites are powerful too, particularly in the business world, and are often closely connected to factions in the political elites.**

The armed forces are the other decisive set of Ivorian actors. The **national army** has remained factionalised based on ethnicity and partisanship, and its cohorts lack cohesion and discipline. Moreover, Ouattara has remained beholden to the former rebels who helped him reach power. In particular, zone commanders or com'zones associated with the former armed wing of the rebellion, still enjoy an important, ambiguous role, and have led repeated mutinies over issues of money, status, and functions, most prominently in 2017. Another group whose members have moved in and out of rebel and formal armed forces has been *dozo* hunters, a group of initiated hunters. In factions of the army not associated with Ouattara, there is widespread discontent too. Indeed, some political figures from the opposition have ties or influence of their own related to the armed forces, such as Soro, and the PDCI's Michel Gueu.

Police and gendarmerie have also formally undergone security sector reforms. The reforms have achieved some notable results in professionalising these bodies, while also being objects of power struggles and influence among both international and Ivorian actors.

Some foreign elites shape Ivorian political economy and development too, especially:

- **large foreign companies in the country's core economic sectors**, such as cocoa;
- **foreign countries and organisations that enable illicit financial flows;**
- **the Lebanese and French communities and immigrants**, who are typically among the wealthier in the country;
- **international and regional organisations**, including:
 - the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the UN system;
 - the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union, including the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the African Development Bank;
 - the European Union;

- **individual foreign countries, notably France, other European Union member States (e.g. Germany), the USA, China, and Ghana;**
- **international NGOs active in development, humanitarian aid, and environmental protection,** though their influence seems lesser than that of the other actors listed here.

Beside the decisive actors identified, **other actors have some influence over political economy and over development, albeit in a more limited and subordinate way:**

- the **Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)**, which many in the political opposition accuse of favouring the RHDP ahead of the 2020 elections;
- among civil society organisations, **religious institutions and organisations** (Christian, Muslim, and animist), **agricultural cooperatives, student unions, trade unions and associations, and media;**
- **the limited number of members of the middle classes who become involved in political protests** – often through their trade unions (most members of the middle class focus on pursuing self-interested goals);
- **immigrants from various countries in West Africa,** who keep coming into the country, continuing a dynamic that has made massive contributions to, and enabled, the country's wealth over decades.

The literature found in this rapid review identified the remaining parts of the population in Cote d'Ivoire – in short, the non-mobilised middle classes and the poor – as being part of, and contributing to, the country's political economy. But it usually did not conclude that their roles in the political economy had a decisive effect on development, other than through more structural demographic, social, and economic change, or through mobilisations about socioeconomic or political issues that are limited in time and/or space, and that they do not necessarily initiate (e.g. political clientelism).

The next section describes the state of research and knowledge on the question. Then sections 3 to 6 discuss the four key aspects of political economy that shape development in Cote d'Ivoire, namely the structure of the economy, the State, structural inequalities, and political conflict. Lastly, section 7 outlines the key actors in this political economy, and their roles in shaping development.

2. Scope of report, and state of research and knowledge

Scope of report

For the purpose of this report, DFID asked the researcher to adopt a broad and open-ended approach. ‘Development’ could cover any economic, social, political, and environmental dimension of development – as approached e.g. in the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. ‘Political economy’ could be about elite politics, but also about intermediate organisations and popular dynamics. It could be about Ivorian or foreign actors, and subnational, national, regional, or international dimensions, as relevant. DFID asked the researcher to conduct a rapid review of academic, practitioner, and policy literature in English or French, focusing on publications from the past five years. The report was to consider evidence about the recent and present situation, rather than being prospective and speculative through scenarios.

State of research and knowledge

Limited research on core report question

There is a mid-sized body of academic, practitioner, and policy literature in English and French on Cote d’Ivoire overall. However, only a limited subset of it addresses development and/or political economy (political economy approaches appear quite uncommon in literature on Cote d’Ivoire, especially in French language). Within that subset, few references address the intersection of political economy and development. In particular, some parts of the literature focus entirely on analysing formal elite politics without spelling out the implications for development, and other parts approach development issues through descriptive or technocratic lenses, without tying them back to political economy. **Few references specifically investigate the causal question of how political economy affects development in the country.** This leaves only a limited number of relevant references focused on the question examined in this report. In light of this, the report author prioritised using those core references, and then complemented them with others than speaks to particular aspects of political economy.

Strengths of available research and knowledge

Looking at references that address the report question as a whole, the knowledge base has a number of strengths.

First, nearly all references found are based on **rigorous methodology**. Helping this, a strong majority of relevant references stem from peer-reviewed academic sources. But most practitioner and policy references found are based on rigorous methods too.

Second, nearly all the references found are **based on empirical material**, rather than purely conceptual or theoretical pieces.

Third, while studies consider a variety of time frames, the knowledge base as whole is particularly valuable because **most authors draw on historical depth**. Some studies are about one-off, cross-sectional perspectives, but most take a longitudinal perspective. Similarly, most studies pay attention to short-, medium-, and long-term dynamics in the past and present.

Fourth, the knowledge base is diverse in several valuable ways. To begin, it is based on a **balanced mix of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies, and of specific methods within each type of methodology**. For example, in qualitative studies, the methods used range from document analysis to semi-structured interviews, participant or non-participant observation, and in-depth ethnography.

In addition, the **research approaches are varied**, ranging from single case studies to multi-case comparisons and reviews of evidence.

The **types of empirical materials involved are diverse** too. Most authors generated such material through their own primary work, while others conducted secondary analyses of available data. Most studies draw on field-based work, while a small minority rely on desk-based work only.

There is likewise **excellent diversity among the individual authors, publishers, and commissioning organisations** that have produced knowledge on the report topic. While a few authors and entities have published multiple relevant references, no small circles of sources dominate. This makes for diverse perspectives, and enables triangulating and contrasting findings. There are also a number of women authors, though overall there seem to be more men than women in this regard.

Fifth, the knowledge base offers **good geographic coverage** in several ways. Taken all together, relevant references address the national, regional, and local levels within the country, as well as regional, African, and global levels internationally. Further, their scales of study encompass macro, meso, and micro levels. They also cover urban, peri-urban, and rural settings. All this said, different regions within Cote d'Ivoire are covered unevenly, with the greatest degree of detail available on Abidjan, and much less detail e.g. on remote rural areas in the North. In addition, international and transnational actors are not covered equally. For example, beyond passing mentions or mere descriptions, this rapid review did not find many *analyses* of the roles of France, the USA, the European Union, international organisations, and international financial institutions, in the country's political economy and what this means for development. In contrast, there is somewhat more information on neighbouring countries, for example.

Sixth, most references offer **strong findings**. To begin, most offer analytical findings, not just descriptive or narrative ones. In addition, most are also able to offer conclusive rather than just indicative findings, with much more well-established knowledge than exploratory or tentative one. Further, most findings demonstrate causalities, not just correlations, though a number of authors call for caution on specific areas where information is hard to ascertain, such as corruption. Lastly, high-level findings are broadly consistent across references too, although there are a handful of areas of disagreements or nuances between authors (these are noted in the report).

Imbalances and gaps of available research and knowledge

Still, the knowledge base presents some imbalances and gaps worth noting. First, there are **nearly twice as many academic references as practitioner and policy ones** on the report question. This holds true in both English and French. This in itself does not lead to major problems, since academic literature happens to cover all major economic, social, political, and environmental aspects of development. However, it suggests that existing practitioner and policy literature on Cote d'Ivoire neglects political economy in its analyses.

Second, two differences between French- and English-language literature are noteworthy. First, **English-language research uses political economy approaches more often** than French-language one, leading to a slight over-representation of the former in the pool of relevant references. This being said, some French-language research does speak to political economy, without formally using its language – such research was included into the selection of references.

Second, **in academic literature, French-language research is usually less oriented towards practice and problem-solving** than English-language one. This leads to differences in the questions asked, methods used, and information conveyed. For instance, some parts of French-language academic references address political economy alone, without spelling out what the implications for development are. In contrast, practitioner and policy literature is typically oriented towards problem-solving for development in both languages.

Third, there are some **important thematic gaps**. While the knowledge base covers the key factors, issues, and dynamics of political economy affecting development, there is **comparatively less detailed analysis of the key actors in political economy**. References that do discuss key actors typically name the top leader of the main political parties, their political constituencies and clienteles, and their stances towards one another. There are also a few studies on the political economy of some religious institutions, and of agricultural co-operatives – though not always connected to their effects on development. Beyond this, there is limited research and information on the effects of political economy on development in relation to: other individuals and groups in elites (Ivorian and foreign); middle classes and intermediate organisations (e.g. associations, NGOs); and the poor⁵.

In addition, **different issues and sectors in economy and development receive unequal coverage**. For example, there are more publications on health care, and comparatively fewer on social or labour protection. Some environmental issues, such as water and air pollution, are less discussed than others, such as climate, soil, forests, and biodiversity. Most discussions of environmental issues are tied to discussions of agriculture, with few on e.g. the implications for human health or for cities.

Fourth, **the sociological coverage of different structures of inequalities is highly uneven**. Most of the relevant references do address socio-economic class, ethnicity, nationality, migration and refugee status, and religion or culture, and how their interplay in political economy affects development. Some of these references also address age, primarily with a focus on youth.

On the other hand, much of the literature overlooks gender in political economy and its effects on development. Further, of the small number of references that substantially address gender, some focus on women rather than gender as a power relation more broadly, and not all take into account how gender intersects with other structures of inequalities. In addition, as far as this rapid review found, the entire knowledge base on the report question is silent on disability as part of political economy, other than passing mentions of chronic problems in physical or mental health that resulted from the civil war and political violence of the past two decades.

⁵ Such detailed analysis of actors, especially elites, may well be available from other sources, such as media, but this was outside the scope and time of this rapid review.

Fifth, **official data and statistics on economy and development produced by the State are of uneven quality**. A 2015 assessment by the UN Economic Commission for Africa rated the quality of multiple indicators from national data based on their transparency, accessibility, regularity, periodicity, comparability over time, time frame, definition, measures, citation of sources, and exhaustivity and clarity of associated documentation (UNECA, 2015, pp. 27–28). It concluded that only a small minority of data could be rated ‘good’, such as data on employment, poverty, and maternal and child mortality. The large majority of data were rated ‘satisfactory’, such as data on demographic indices, macroeconomy, key economic sectors, major agricultural products, exports and imports, education and schooling, nutrition, public expenses on health, internet use, and environment (e.g. forest cover, CO2 emissions, electricity consumption). A minority of data was flagged as ‘needing improvement’, including data on foreign direct investment (FDI), official development assistance (ODA), penetration rate of mobile phones, and underweight children under 5 (UNECA, 2015, pp. 27–28).

Lastly, a number of references cite key statistics on Ivorian economy and development that date back to 2014 or 2015 (or even before), even when the reference itself is from 2018, 2019 or 2020. Based on the rapid review conducted for this report, this seems to be because more recent national statistics are not available. This applies to sources such as the national population census, and some national household surveys used e.g. by UNDP or the World Bank (see e.g. the data used in Elgazzar et al., 2019; UNDP, 2019b).

3. Growing but imbalanced economy that works for elites

A growing economy generating wealth and income at macroeconomic level

Since the end of the 2010-2011 crisis, **Cote d'Ivoire has performed well in macroeconomic terms**, manifested among others in a high growth rate of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP)⁶. Annual growth averaged approximately 9% between 2012 and 2018, and was at 7.2% in 2019. Cote d'Ivoire is the largest economy in the WAEMU, and has had annual growth rates since 2012 that have been higher than almost all WAEMU comparators, as well as higher than Ghana, Sri Lanka, and Ethiopia (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 1). Improvements in the economic and business environments, as well as better political stability, have gradually restored the confidence of investors and other technical and financial partners, though there remain weaknesses⁷.

About 40% of growth since 2011 “has been driven by investment through government spending, followed by services, agriculture, trade, transport, construction, banking, and the digital economy” (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 1). On the demand side, both domestic demand and investment have been strong and growing since 2011. Among others, salary increases for civil servants, a significant rising of the minimum wage, and reform in the cocoa sector have all boosted domestic consumption (Berrou et al., 2018, p. 9). The State has intensified its investments in public infrastructure, as part of both reconstruction and development, and because improvements in the business environment and structural reforms have led to an increase in private investment (Berrou et al., 2018, pp. 9–10; UNECA, 2015, pp. 1, 6–8).

On the supply side, this dynamism has resulted primarily from the good performance of the primary and tertiary sectors. Overall, this has been driven by activity in subsistence farming (rice, plantain, maize, manioc), export agriculture (cocoa, coffee, cashew, rubber, palm oil), agribusiness, mining, oil products, construction and public works, retail, telecoms, electricity, and transports. Economic dynamism has also resulted from good performance in managing internal and external inflation, public budgets, and trade (Berrou et al., 2018, pp. 9–10; UNECA, 2015, pp. 1, 6–8).

The country is also **well integrated into its regional and African economic environment**, especially within ECOWAS. In its relations with other African countries, it largely allows the free movement of people, has eliminated many tariffs in its trade, exchanges significant imports and exports, and is strongly integrated in regional value chains of intermediate goods as an upstream exporter. Its integration is somewhat more limited in other regards, such as downstream imports in its regional value chains (UNECA, 2015, pp. 4–5).

An export-oriented, rent-based economy concentrated in a few productions

From colonial times until now, the Ivorian growth model has rested on a plantation economy where the rents generated by forests are exploited extensively by a workforce that is plentiful thanks to demographic growth and immigrant labour. It has changed very little since independence, and the agricultural sector has hardly diversified. Agriculture has thus

⁶ (UNECA, 2015, p. 1; Miran-Guyon, 2017a, pp. 9–10; UNDP, 2019b, p. 302)

⁷ (Akindès, 2017, p. v; CNUCED, 2019; Fanny-Tognisso & Roux, 2017)

historically constituted a major components of the country's growth, though it has decreased and now represents about 28% of GDP (Berrou et al., 2018, p. 18, 2019, pp. 28–29). This model has suffered from several issues. One of them is that workforce has had low levels of education and training, and that there have been limited opportunities for formal employment. Another is that investment levels have been far lower from those other emerging countries, in good part because of a lack of financing to renew the stock of aging private capital. An additional one is that the successive political-economic orders that rulers have created through rent distribution have been unstable ever since the 1990s (Berrou et al., 2018, pp. 18–22).

Concentration of production and exports in a few products and destinations

The country's **productions and exports centre on the rents generated by its natural resources – especially its forests –, and are strongly concentrated in a few products and destinations** (Berrou et al., 2018, p. 18; Ndikumana, 2016, p. 11). During the period 1995-2014, for instance, the composition of the country's top exports was as follows (Ndikumana, 2016, pp. 10–11):

- The top product, cocoa, made up 31.8% of exports.
- The top three products made up 54%, with the next two products being:
 - petroleum oils or bituminous minerals, with more than 70% of this being oil, representing 13.2% of total exports;
 - petroleum oils, oils from bitumen materials, and crude;
- The top five products made up 65.9% of exports.
- The top 10 products made up 81.2% of exports.

In 2014, 53.1% of exports were made up of primary products, and 46.9% of processed products. Primary products remained dominated by export agriculture (78.4%) – mainly cocoa (46.2%), cashew (12%), and rubber (9.3%). They also included mining products (21%), including gold (10.7%), and crude oil (9.9%) (UNECA, 2015, pp. 12–13). Indeed, mining and oil production are on the increase (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 10).

Processed products consisted mostly of manufactured products (53.8%) – including oil products (34.1%) and basic processed goods (42.5%) such as processed cocoa (27.2 %). The share of processed products in the value of Ivorian exports has risen in recent years (UNECA, 2015, pp. 12–13), and the country has a growing manufacturing sector (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. xiii).

Exports are concentrated towards a few destinations. For example, in late 2014, 57.8% of Ivorian exports went to the European Union (EU) and ECOWAS (UNECA, 2015, pp. 12–13).

This concentration exposes the country to shocks affecting its core products, whether they come from world commodity prices, climate, or harvest levels. For instance, Cote d'Ivoire is vulnerable “to adverse effects of demand and price shocks in international commodity markets” (Ndikumana, 2016, p. 11). Indeed, the evolution of its economic activity depends in part on world economic trends out of its control. For example, in 2014-2015, weak growth in most industrialised countries and slowing growth in major emerging countries led to a decrease in world prices for most commodities, including several that Cote d'Ivoire exports, although prices for other Ivorian commodities such as cocoa and cashew rose thanks to sustained world demand for them (UNECA, 2015, p. 2). Similarly, for the period since 2019, while high growth and low inflation are projected, “falling world cocoa prices and increasing oil prices are impacting Côte

d'Ivoire's revenue generation": public revenues fell short by 0.6% of GDP because of these losses (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 4)⁸.

Since 2011, Ivorian elites have also generated and extracted new forms of outward-oriented rents, in addition to historical ones: "financial extraversion through the massive international support since 2011, political extraversion through 'reconciliation' policies and the instrumentalization of the International Criminal Court, and attempts to seek a security rent using the frame of 'Islamic terrorism' and 'stability' with regard to the Malian conflict, but also the continuity of military and economic extraversion of the former rebels" (Ricard, 2017, p. 14).

In contrast, some sectors of Ivorian economy, such as industry and banking, are little developed. For instance, households make little use of banking, and private actors get little financing from the banking system. Access to credit happens through mechanisms such as microfinance, informal finance, or more recently mobile money⁹. Yet, when diversified and adapted financial services have indeed been developed, such financing has led to positive effects, for example for small and medium-sized enterprises in the cocoa sector (Darie-Rousseaux & Brown, 2016).

Nonetheless, **ICTs have become increasingly available, and have been taken up by ever greater numbers** of individuals and public and private organisations in Cote d'Ivoire. For example, by 2018, ten million Ivorians, i.e. 40% of the population, had mobile money accounts, transferring EUR 25.9 million a day with them (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 14).

The case of agricultural commodities as major productions

Cocoa

Cote d'Ivoire is the biggest producer of cocoa worldwide, and its biggest exporter, as widely noted in the literature. The country provided 40% of world supply in 2019. That year, cocoa involved nearly one million producers who provided income to five million persons, i.e. one fifth of the population. It is the country's leading earner of foreign exchange and makes among the biggest contributions to State revenue (World Bank, 2019a, p. 1). In 2014, cocoa contributed to 15% of the country's GDP¹⁰.

As with other commodities, **this leaves the country highly exposed to changes in world cocoa prices, and producers highly exposed to national policies on prices.** For example, cocoa prices declined in 2017-2018: the guaranteed producer price was cut by 36% in 2017, to a level lower than in 2012 when the price had started its steady increase. When lower farm gate prices persist, and the State fails to create new job opportunities and provide a safety net, this typically puts a strain on "poor cocoa farmers with limited coping strategies" (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 5).

⁸ Going against the grain of most authors, one author argues that in recent years Cote d'Ivoire has been "relatively resistant to fluctuations in commodity prices" (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 10).

⁹ (Berrou et al., 2018, p. 18, 2019, pp. 37–38; Darie-Rousseaux & Brown, 2016; Ehigiamusoe et al., n.d.; Lonie et al., 2018; Morisset, 2016; Shepherd, 2017)

¹⁰ (Agence de promotion des exportations de Côte d'Ivoire, 2014, cited in UNECA, 2015, p. 21)

There is heavy concentration among Cote d'Ivoire's top trading partners in cocoa too.

Between 1995 and 2014, the top two trade partners accounted for nearly 50% of the country's total exports, with 31.3% for the Netherlands, and 18.3% for the USA. The top three importers (adding France) made up 58.9% of cocoa exports, the top five 69.7%, the top ten 84.3%, and the top fifteen 93.5% (Ndikumana, 2016, pp. 11, 21).

In recent years, the country has gradually moved towards processing some of its cocoa before exporting it, through action by the State and private companies, although this has remained limited. There remains significant room for action in processing cocoa, in moving up the value chain towards greater quality and value added, and in diversifying and increasing Cote d'Ivoire's market shares across a range of cocoa products (UNECA, 2015, pp. 21–25).

Cashew nuts

Cote d'Ivoire has become the primary global producer of cashew (Bassett, 2017; Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. xiii). It reached this position over the past twenty years, rising "from being an insignificant producer of raw cashew nuts to becoming the world's largest producer" (Bassett, 2017, p. 55). By 2017, it was the leading world producer, surpassing India and Vietnam, respectively the second and third largest cashew nut producing countries (Bassett, 2017, p. 55). Cashew nuts grow in the savannah zone of the northern forest, the country's cotton basin (Bassett, 2017)¹¹.

Rubber

Cote d'Ivoire has become the leading African producer of rubber (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 10). There has been a recent boom in investments by the national urban elite to acquire land and set up rubber plantations in the region around Abidjan (Colin, 2013, cited in Boone, 2018, p. 211).

The case of mining products as major productions

Mining is booming, and quickly becoming an important source of national income and budget (Allouche & Adama Mohammed, 2017). In the case of gold, the rise in mining is partly a local, innovative response by cocoa farmers that face rising risks of drought, land conflict, and drops in prices in cocoa and rubber, and partly a quasi-industrial set-up involving entrepreneurs of various nationalities. It is becoming a major feature of the country, including in cocoa-growing areas (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, p. 89)¹².

¹¹ On cashew nuts, also see e.g.: (Tessmann, 2019; van Seters & Konnon, 2018).

¹² On gold mining, also see e.g.: (Reichel, 2018; Sauerwein, 2020; Van Bockstael, 2019).

Appropriation, accumulation, and consolidation of wealth and income at the top

Wealth accumulation and consolidation at the top, including through illicit financial flows

Illicit financial flows, including capital flight, have been pervasive in Cote d'Ivoire. Cote d'Ivoire was cited among the top 10 African countries by cumulative illicit financial flows over the period 1970-2008, losing an estimated total of US\$ 21.6 billion during the period, and ranking 7th out of the 10 countries. Cote d'Ivoire represented 3% of Africa's total illicit financial flows over the period¹³.

Whilst estimates about the amounts involved vary widely, there is a consensus in the literature that illicit financial flows and capital flight put a substantial cost and burden on the Ivorian population¹⁴.

- One UNDP study indicates that, in 2010, capital flight *per capita* stood at US\$ 2,838, amounting to nearly three times Ivorians' average *per capita* income that year, which was US\$ 1,161. In total, between 1970 and 2010, Cote d'Ivoire lost over US\$ 1.3 billion each year on average to capital flight, by conservative estimates. This represented well over 200% of the country's GDP in 2010 (UNDP, 2015, pp. 2–3).
- Another study, published in 2013, mentioned that illicit financial flows are estimate to amount to 6% of GDP¹⁵. For comparison, the latest OECD-DAC data about Cote d'Ivoire shows that, in 2018, the ratio of net ODA to GNI was 2.3%, with the country receiving US\$ 953.7 million in net ODA (OECD - DAC, n.d.).

The main components of capital flight are (UNDP, 2015, p. 4):

- Leakages through the balance of payments (76.4% of capital flight);
- Trade misinvoicing (20.5%), with misinvoicing on exports (17.9%) and imports (2.6%);
- Remittances (3.2%).

Illicit financial flows are particularly large in the country's major economic sectors, such as cocoa (HLPIFFA, 2016, p. 100). For instance, between 2000 and 2010, Cote d'Ivoire was the source of a major part of total illicit financial flows from Africa in the sector of cocoa, at 38.1%, and in the sector of edible fruit and nuts, at 13.9%. Conversely, cocoa generated most of Côte d'Ivoire illicit financial flows, at 49.7% (HLPIFFA, 2016, pp. 98–99). There is both significant under-invoicing and significant over-invoicing in the cocoa sector, though some of it might be because the recipient countries receive some of the cocoa only for transit trade meant for delivery in a third country¹⁶.

¹³ (based on Kar & Cartwright-Smith, 2010, cited in HLPIFFA, 2016, p. 93)

Considering all sectors together, the historical pattern of capital flight in Cote d'Ivoire has exhibited large fluctuations over time (UNDP, 2015, p. 7).

¹⁴ (see this point stated e.g. UNDP, 2015, pp. 2–3)

¹⁵ (O'Hare and others, 2013, cited in HLPIFFA, 2016, pp. 53–55)

¹⁶ (Ndikumana, 2016, pp. 21–22; for a discussion on this, also see e.g. Shaxson, n.d.)

One study also assesses of the risk of illicit financial flows based on the extent of financial secrecy of the partner jurisdiction: the greater the secrecy, the higher the risk. It finds that Cote d'Ivoire has fairly high vulnerability, with similar levels of vulnerability between inward and outward direct investment, portfolio investment, assets portfolio investment, liabilities, imports, and exports. When taking into account the intensity of each of these activities through its share in GDP, trade comes out as the main component of the risk, with exports first, followed by imports (HLPIFFA, 2016, pp. 106–111).

Illicit financial flows have deprived Cote d'Ivoire of resources needed for its development.

For example, a 2013 study looked at their effects on the mortality of infants and children under five, which was an indicator for Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 4. The study calculated the potential reduction in the years required for Cote d'Ivoire to reach MDG 4 from the year 2000 if illicit financial flows were eliminated, as compared with the actual rate of progress of the country between 2000 and 2011. It found a dramatic impact: without illicit financial flows, Cote d'Ivoire could reach the MDG indicators in 26 years, instead of 62¹⁷.

These illicit – though not always illegal – flows benefit from the enabling role of several Ivorian and foreign institutions. It is the combination of Ivorian and foreign actors' behaviours than enables illicit financial flows. For instance, in the cocoa sector, both Cote d'Ivoire as the exporter and the country's trading partners as importers – including Belgium, Canada, China, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, the UK, and the USA – often engage in export misinvoicing, through under-invoicing (Ndikumana, 2016, p. 31)¹⁸.

Within Cote d'Ivoire, **wealthy individuals belonging to the country's political and economic elites** have used illicit financial flows to consolidate and grow their wealth. For example, the 2015 SwissLeaks scandal revealed that some Ivorian residents had 382 bank accounts in tax heavens and held large wealth in them. According to the International Consortium of Investigative Journalism, the sum of Ivorian deposits amounted to US\$ 190,500,000 (in 2007 US\$). Some individual accounts sheltered over US\$ 35,000,000 (Czajka, 2017, p. 11).

In another example, as part of the 'West Africa Leaks', a journalistic investigation showed that Noël Honoré Charles Akossi Bendjo created a company in the tax haven of the Bahamas in 1997. He used an opaque set-up to do so in order to hide that he was the owner, with the help of the Mossack Fonseca law firm, which is specialised in creating offshore companies. The company, called Benath Company Limited, then actively took up clients in Cote d'Ivoire, among others by acquiring shares in the Klenzi Distribution firm, which specialised in the distribution of petroleum products (Barzegar & ICIJ & Cenozo, 2018; Diédri, 2018).

At the time the investigation was published in 2018, Mr. Bendjo had been mayor of the Plateau, the business centre of Abidjan, for 17 years. He was also executive secretary of the Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), which was in power as part of the RHDP coalition, and was a close collaborator of Henri Konan Bédié, PDCI chairman and former head of State. Between 2011 and 2018, Mr. Bendjo also headed the board of directors of the Ivorian Refining Company (*Société ivoirienne de raffinage*, SIR), which has refined crude oil and distributed petroleum products in the country since 1962. In fact, Mr. Bendjo spent his career at the SRI in

¹⁷ Cote d'Ivoire' target on under-five mortality under MDG 4 was 51 deaths per 1,000 for 2000-2011, whereas its actual mortality rate in 2000 was 148 per 1,000.

The source study is: (O'Hare and others, 2013, cited in HLPIFFA, 2016, pp. 53–55).

¹⁸ For details on the figures, see: (Ndikumana, 2016, p. 31).

the 1980s and 1990s, before being made its chief executive in 1997 (Barzegar & ICIJ & Cenozo, 2018; Diédri, 2018).

In addition, **State authorities give away a number of tax incentives to corporations**, both formally and off-the-books or in a discretionary manner, through special deals with companies. The most prevalent incentives are tax holidays, one study on West African countries finds: “As many as 46% of 40 firms in Ghana, Nigeria and Cote D’Ivoire surveyed [...] receive tax holidays: 10% of the firms have complete exemptions from company income tax while another 10% pay reduced corporate income tax” (ActionAid International & TJN-A, 2015, p. 10).

And yet, a number of these incentives are not effective or efficient. As a large body of literature demonstrates, there are much more important factors than corporate tax incentives in attracting foreign direct investment¹⁹. For example, in Cote d’Ivoire, during the 2010s, political turmoil led to the closure of several firms, and to the emigration of others from the country. The government’s response was to increase incentives to the remaining companies, offering “50% tax exemptions to any firm willing to invest in regions outside of Abidjan”, and “as much as 50% tax exemption to firms locating outside Abidjan”. Still, firms have continued “to cluster around Abidjan because of the size and buying power of its markets”, while unemployment rates have remained very high throughout the country, and youth unemployment has continued to threaten social cohesion²⁰.

In addition, **other countries act as havens for corporate taxes from Cote d’Ivoire**. For example, a study for the African Union and UN Economic Commission for Africa identified the top five destinations, by share of total flows of trade mispricing, for Cote d’Ivoire’s cocoa sectors in 2008. These countries concentrate 58.1% of the total flows concerned:

- **Germany** (23.6%);
- **Canada** (9.4%);
- **USA** (9.2%);
- **Mexico** (8.5%);
- **France** (7.4%).

In other words, the main recipients of these flows are “developed countries [...] and emerging economies [...], which are also Africa’s major trading partners” (HLPIFFA, 2016, p. 99). In another example, MTN – one of the largest operators of mobile telecoms in Africa – made substantial payments from Cote d’Ivoire to a mailbox company of MTN located in **tax haven Mauritius**, a 2015 report by Finance Uncovered revealed²¹.

Intermediaries and enablers also include for example **law firms specialised in tax havens**, such as previously mentioned Mossack Fonseca (Diédri, 2018).

¹⁹ These are namely: “good quality infrastructure, low administrative costs of setting up and running businesses, political stability and predictable macro-economic policy”, as well as “[t]ransparency, simplicity, stability and certainty in the application of the tax law and in tax administration” (ActionAid International & TJN-A, 2015, p. 9).

²⁰ All direct quotes in this paragraph are from : (ActionAid International & TJN-A, 2015, pp. 9–10).

²¹ (Mckune & Turner, 2015; & Ghana Business News, 2015, cited in Berkhout, 2016, p. 14)

MTN “denied any wrongdoing and referred to agreements with the appropriate authorities in the countries involved” (Myjoiyonline, 2015, cited in Berkhout, 2016, p. 14).

Income accumulation at the top

As with wealth, **incomes are distributed highly unequally in favour of the wealthy, and official figures typically underestimate income inequalities**, especially because they fail to accurately measure the income of the wealthiest (Czajka, 2017, p. 2).

UNDP estimates that the richest 10% in Cote d'Ivoire hold 31.9% of the income share – with the richest 1% holding 17.1% of it –, whereas the poorest 40% hold a paltry 15.9%, according to the latest UNDP estimates. The Gini coefficient at 41.5 likewise confirms that inequalities in income are strong (UNDP, 2019b, p. 310).

However, other studies find even starker inequalities. The World Inequality Lab, drawing on data about pre-tax national income, finds that in 2014, the top 10% get a 48.3% share – with the top 1% taking 17.1% –, the middle 40% get 38.3%, and the bottom 50% are left with 13.4% (World Inequality Database, n.d.).

Further, one quantitative study finds that tax data proves to be reliable to measure inequalities, while avoiding the non-response and under-reporting associated with household surveys. The study used the latest available data, which is from year 2014 (see World Inequality Database, n.d.). Comparing 2014 tax data with a 2014-2015 household survey, it shows that “the survey significantly underestimates wages from the formal private sector” (Czajka, 2017, p. 24). This is in part due to the exclusion of wealthier immigrants from the survey – which is likely intentional, given the size of some immigrant communities such as the French and Lebanese²². Once corrections are applied accordingly, among others to the formal private sector and the informal sector, the study finds that, in 2014 (Czajka, 2017, p. 24):

- **the top 1% held 17.15% of the income share** (from 11.57% before correction);
- **the top 10% held 48.28% of the income share** (from 40.34% before correction);
- **the middle 40% held 21.91% of the income share** (from 25.56% before correction);
- **the bottom 50% held 13.44% of the income share** (from 15.66% before correction);
- the Gini coefficient was at 0.59 (from 0.53 before correction).

The corrected data means that Cote d'Ivoire's levels of income inequality are comparable to those of the USA (Czajka, 2017, p. 2).

Changing socioeconomic stratification since independence

The socioeconomic stratification of the country and its drivers have changed since 1960, marked particularly by the shrinking of intermediate categories. After the country's independence, a bourgeoisie associated with the State enriched itself. In its wake, intermediate categories akin to an emergent middle class formed. These benefitted from an expanding State apparatus and from economic activities mostly related to agricultural rents²³. They built their fortunes by investing in education, capturing the most attractive public and private wage jobs, and by investing in land. Until the late 1980s, farmers (particularly planters), intermediate professions, and elites in public administration (especially in education) formed the bulk of the country's middle classes. The 1990s then saw these middle classes get split from the dominant

²² (Guénard & Mesplé-Somps, 2010, cited in Czajka, 2017, p. 24)

²³ (Fauré & Médard, 1982, Contamin & Fauré, 1990, cited in Berrou et al., 2019)

elites, with rising inequalities²⁴. The succession of economic, political, and military crises through 2010 then led to a general impoverishment of Ivorian society, with GDP per capita falling back to a level close to that of the 1960s²⁵. Despite the return of political stability and economic growth after the 2010-2011 crisis, middle categories have found it hard to achieve prosperity again (Berrou et al., 2019, p. 31).

Nowadays, the complex structure of the middle class illustrates **the mix of historical continuities and new dimensions in socioeconomic stratification, including ones generating downward mobility**²⁶. In the higher strata of the middle class, employees in the modern public and private sectors have managed to reproduce their advantages across generations, transferring middle-class legacies from the 1960s-1980s to their children. Despite 30 years of crises, this strata has benefited from an intergenerational transfer of the human, economic, financial, social, and cultural capital necessary to succeed (Berrou et al., 2019, pp. 25, 31).

In contrast, the continued presence of farmers in the middle class is more ambiguous. Farmers were an important, protected category of the middle class until the late 1980s, but have suffered the full force of unstable international prices for commodities (especially cocoa) and of insecurity in land tenure. These farmers feel abandoned by public authorities (Berrou et al., 2019, pp. 27, 31). Meanwhile, the value chains approaches promoted by aid actors are based on the erroneous assumption that improvements in product quality at producers' level will lead to increases in producer prices and incomes. As one study on cashew nuts finds, there is a disconnect between quality and producer prices. Rather, "power relations are more important than quality in setting producer prices" (Bassett et al., 2018, p. 1).

As for the rising importance of middle classes in the informal urban sector, this stems from workers' redeployment towards small-scale commercial and industrial activities to escape recession since the 1980s, paired with a turn to entrepreneurship partly caused by the dearth of formal jobs (Berrou et al., 2019, pp. 27, 31).

Land as a major driver and object of political economy, politics, and conflict

Land as historically central to political economy

The current system of 'rural governance', as Chauveau (2018) called it, **rests on a system of chiefdom, which is defined by land and arbitrated by the State**. It has its roots in the colonial situation, and recent conflicts over land and between different communities are part of a process which goes back to the colonial period²⁷.

²⁴ (Vidal, 1997, cited in Berrou et al., 2019, p. 31)

²⁵ (Cogneau et al., 2016, cited in Berrou et al., 2019, p. 31)

²⁶ For more details on the make-up of the middle classes, see the section on it, p. 47.

²⁷ (Allouche & Bley, 2017; Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 13; Speight, 2017)

Historically, this rural governance has been “based on a **continually renegotiated relationship of dependence and complementarity**” between *autochtones* (autochthonous / indigenous), *allogènes or allochtones* (allogenous), and *étrangers* (foreigners /strangers)²⁸:

- The autochthonous “are the populations or ethnic communities who define themselves (and are generally recognized by others to be) the first ones present within a particular region”. *Autochtones* can be from the south of the country – the most frequent perception of them –, but there are also *autochtones* in the north.
- The allogenous are internal migrants.
- The foreigners are migrants from outside Côte d’Ivoire.
- Both allogenous and foreigners “are often simply referred to as *étrangers*”. The terms “took on a harmful ideological cast in the 1990s”, which they did not always have in previous history.

Land as a major driver and object of politics and conflict, including violent conflict

Since the 1990s, land has been a major driver and object of politics and conflicts, including violent conflicts, in Cote d’Ivoire, although there have also been some peaceful dynamics around land – this is a matter of consensus in the literature.

In this context, land laws, and land registration and titling programmes have been “highly partisan, bitterly contentious, and carried forward by political logics that diverge strongly from the market-enhancing vision” of its promoters (Boone, 2018, p. 189). Since the 1990s, international aid actors such as the World Bank and the French aid agency have promoted reforms of Ivorian land laws through registration and titling, and have often viewed them “as a technocratic, good-governance step toward building liberal market economies”, and commodifying, depoliticising, and individualising land transactions²⁹. However, in practice, successive Ivorian governments since 1990, representing rival coalitions of the national electorate, have pursued reforms of land law out of multiple, opposing political logics, for the purpose of extending and consolidating political power. As a result, reforms of land laws have sometimes been “as much an amplifier of social conflict as a solution to it” (Boone, 2018, p. 190).

In particular, the political nature of the issue has been visible as successive governments crafted the 1998 land law, aimed at land certification and titling, and have since shaped the strategies for its implementation. Indeed, since the mid-1990, any change of regime or locus of political (partisan) control at the national level has produced dramatic national shifts, even reversals, in “the content, political purposes, and political uses of land law” (Boone, 2018, p. 190). This has been visible for instance in strategies to advance land rights registration and titling, in strategies to delimitate village and decentralise, and in legal adjudications of land law (Boone, 2018).

Ivorian regimes have successively privileged user rights, *autochtones*’ ethnic land rights, and most recently, state-building (for more on the recent period under Ouattara, see the section on the dynamics around land, p. 22). The landmark national law on rural property, adopted in 1998, excluded the *non-autochtones* from land ownership. However, since it also reflected power struggles, it contained an array of conflicting provisions for assigning land

²⁸ (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, pp. 12–13); (also see Allouche & Bley, 2017; Speight, 2017)

²⁹ (Boone, 2018, pp. 189–190, quote from p. 190)

ownership rights that have since lent themselves to different rulers' political orientations (Boone, 2018).

In view of all this, several specialist authors warn against common misconceptions about land reform in Cote d'Ivoire. One misconception is to view land reforms as a technocratic initiative pushed by international actors that has foreseeable market-based outcomes. In fact, the drivers of land law reforms have been both domestic and international, Ivorian actors have been the ones primarily shaping the actual effects, and goals related to markets have often been tangential to the drivers and most immediate effects of reforms (Boone, 2018, pp. 192, 210; also see Chauveau & Colin, 2014).

The other misconception is that partisan competition for state power is only about ethnicity and patronage, void of programmatic stakes. Instead, "struggles over land law have been intertwined with partisan conflicts, electoral struggles, and actual battles over the national trajectory writ large" (Boone, 2018, p. 192). For instance, under both Gbagbo' and Ouattara's rule, the content and implementation of land law reforms were instruments in larger political struggles to control the national territory and trajectory. These reforms "revolved around questions of citizenship rights (autochthony vs. user rights), state structure (decentralisation and political status of the local community) and state sovereignty (state control over population and territory)" (Boone, 2018, p. 210).

Recent dynamics around land that favour the central State, investors, and elites

The Ouattara regime did not formally erase the legacy of the 1998 land law, and even endorsed it in the 2016 constitution that he promoted. These constitutional moves established legal pluralism, going against the neoliberal bent visible in other aspects of Ouattara's policies³⁰. In part, this was because the 1998 law remained a priority of Ouattara's backers in the EU and World Bank, probably because they agreed that land problems had been a key driver in the civil war, "and because they saw registration and titling as clearing the way for large-scale investment in agriculture" (Boone, 2018, p. 206). Indeed, aid donors pledged about 10% of the estimated cost of delimiting all 11,000 villages in the country, setting up village land committees (CVGFR), and issuing the necessary 300,000 land certificates (Boone, 2018, p. 206).

However, **the Ouattara regime oriented land policies to serve its electoral, political, and programmatic agendas centred on state-building, centralisation, and private registering and titling limited to the Abidjan area**. Throughout, land policy "served a state logic of extending territorial control more than the market-making logic envisioned by the [international financial institutions], or the smallholder securisation logic that is of most concern to [non-governmental organisations]" (Boone, 2018, p. 210).

³⁰ Article 12 of the new constitution included the 1998 law. Article 175 introduced a *Chambre nationale des rois et chefs traditionnels* (National Chamber of Traditional Kings and Chiefs, CNRCT), which is tasked with 'valorising habits and customs', and providing 'the non-judicial settlement of conflicts in villages and between communities' (Boone, 2018; Chauveau, 2018, & Zina, 2018, cited in Miran-Guyon, 2017a, pp. 13–14).

Ouattara's government neutralised "the anti-migrant thrust of the land law", to provide for their power base in the north and among northern migrants in the south (Boone, 2018, p. 191). In addition, during Ouattara's first term (2011-2015), the government used the 1998 land law to promote state-building through three priorities:

- In land certification, it developed the legal and bureaucratic machinery "required to respond to individual demands for land certification and titling, rather than pushing for state-led titling", except in two local areas that concentrated projects funded by the EU, the World Bank, and the African Development Bank, in Abengourou, Soubré, and Duékoué (Boone, 2018, pp. 206–208, quote from p. 206-207);
- In village delimitation, the Ministry of Interior dissociated village delimitation from land registration, and harnessed village delimitation to extend and deepen the State's presence through its territorial administration in war-torn localities along the turbulent borders in the far west (Boone, 2018, pp. 191, 206–207, quote from p. 191).
- In the locus of action, it decisively recentralised authority (Boone, 2018, p. 207).

During Ouattara's second term, the government has sought to accelerate land certification – it opened the doors to registering and titling land upon demand in a 100 km radius around Abidjan –, but did not invest political capital for the agenda of land privatisation (Boone, 2018, p. 191)³¹.

In this context, **members of the national urban elite – *cadres* and urban residents (especially in the region around Abidjan) – have strongly seize up opportunities for land titling**³². In this area, counter to trends in the rest of the country, private investors have driven registration and titling. These investors want to acquire land, typically about 28 ha (Colin, 2013, cited in Boone, 2018, p. 211). They have done so mostly to set up rubber plantations, and to a lesser extent palm oil trees, but are now also turning to cocoa³³.

Since much of this land comes from domain that was under customary tenure in 1930-1980, the selective implementation of the 1998 land law to the area has accelerated class formation in the agrarian sector, to secure transfers that benefit national elites – through purchase –, or national or foreign agro-industrial firms – through long-term leases on certified, and then titled land (Colin, 2013, cited in Boone, 2018, p. 211). In the process, this has revived tensions around land as some *autochtones* try and get land back to sell it on to the new investors in this plantation economy (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, p. 89)³⁴.

In the meantime, rural dynamics of land acquisition have changed too. The cocoa sector, discussed below, offers a typically illustration of this.

First, **the demographics have changed.** Until the 2000s, all first-generation migrants had to negotiate land with *autochtones*, and transactions took the form of gift-sales under a tutelage regime where the *autochtone* sellers still retained some authority over the migrant purchaser. By 2020, planters' land situation has become more complex. Growers are increasingly likely to belong to a migrant family, but decreasingly likely to be migrants themselves, since they are

³¹ For a detailed narration and analysis of the Ouattara regime's land policies and its political economy, see: (Boone, 2018, pp. 205–210).

³² (Boone, 2018; Colin, 2017a; Colin & Tarrouth, 2017; Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019; Tarrouth & Colin, 2016)

³³ (Colin, 2013, cited in Boone, 2018, p. 211; Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, p. 89)

³⁴ On urban land and farming, also see: (Nassa & Akablah, 2019).

more and more second-generation migrants. Whether they are first- or second-generation migrants, their country of origin is, increasingly, Burkina Faso (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, p. 6).

Further, different subgroups of landowners in the cocoa sector take different paths (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, p. 6):

- Among the second generation of *autochtones*, one group truly goes into planting cocoa and rubber trees, while the other seeks to get back part of the land that their parents sold in order to sell it on to new purchasers.
- Among the second generation of migrants of *baoulé* descent, one group abandons and squanders their inherited land, whereas the other tries to resist this, in a context where Burkinabe migrants too face the challenge of ageing.
- Additionally, the category of growers made up of urban professionals participating in the land rush is much more recent, but is significant because of these investors' wealth.

At this point, the land market is largely monopolised by migrants (whether their migration is recent or much older), mainly by Burkinabe migrants. There are now migrants from new countries, such as Togo, too. Overall, migrants keep being on the demographic and social rise, and now dominate the cocoa sector (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, pp. 6, 104).

Second, **the mode of access to land has transformed, and has now come to be dominated by the legacies of plantations, and the rise of 'plant-and-share' contracts** (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, p. 6)³⁵. Under 'plant-and-share' contracts, "a landowner provides the land to a farmer who develops a perennial tree crop plantation; when production starts, the plantation, the plantation and the land, or the product is shared" (Colin, 2017a, p. 1). While this contract has the potential to cause tensions and conflicts, it actually is "an alternative to the much more conflictive land sales that currently dominate extra-familial land transfers in the country" (Colin, 2017a, p. 1).

Another important mode of access to land has been the placement of plots under "guarantees" (*mise et prise en garantie*), whereby a plantation that is already in production is given away for one to five years against the payment of a lump sum, with no reimbursement possible. While this is close to lending, the actual amounts paid are very disadvantageous to the ceding party (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, p. 6).

Taking the recent dynamics in both rural and urban settings, some authors emphasise that, even when international companies are involved, the dynamic is fundamentally less about land grabbing, as framed by some campaigners and protesters, and more about the **reconstitution and transformation of agrarian capitalism** in the country (Grajales, 2018). From this perspective, rather than merely defining land tensions as a risk for stability, it is crucial to see that peace-making itself has contributed to the transformations of agrarian capitalism in the country, producing a "post-war agrarian capitalism" (Grajales, 2020a, p. 1).

Peace-making "policies have contributed to differentiate the economy from the political sphere, and to define land as an economic problem, not a political matter" (Grajales, 2020a, p. 1). Simultaneously, economic domination has been produced by the interaction between: policies of development and post-conflict transition; people's expectations and fears triggered by the end of the war; and local actors' capacities to establish external alliances. The development policies

³⁵ On these points beyond the cocoa sector, also see: (Colin, 2017a, 2017b)

implemented in the name of peace have provided resources to already dominant actors that seek to consolidated their position. They have thus strengthened the very social structures of agrarian capitalism that were challenged during the war (Grajales, 2020b).

A potential issue of future contention is that, under the 1998 law, land holdings not certified by 2023 become State property. “Many insiders in Côte d’Ivoire believe that this will never happen, that the law will be amended, and that the current provisions are only there to pressure smallholders to seek [land certificates]” (Boone, 2018, p. 211). Still, in 2023, the majority of small-scale landholders may find themselves in the legal position of being on State land that State actors could lease over the long term to investors. If so, the small-scale users’ land rights would be “determined by the political character of the regime in power, interactions between national and local actors and agendas, and the more general balance of state-society relations at the time” (Boone, 2018, p. 211).

Degraded environment and climate interacting with socioeconomic and political conditions

Significant degradation of environmental and climate conditions

There has been widespread environmental degradation in the country. The country’s forest cover has sharply declined, from 12 million hectares in 1960 to under 3 million hectares in 2019 – a 75% loss. The increase in cocoa production is behind much of this destruction: “For a long time, it has been easier (and more profitable) for a producer to cut down trees than to invest in modern production techniques” (World Bank, 2019a, p. 4). Similarly, in the coastal belt of Cote d’Ivoire, “large-scale monoculture plantations of oil palm and rubber have now replaced most of the natural ecosystems, and the only forests left are included within [protected areas]” (Amin et al., 2015, p. 108). In addition, Cote d’Ivoire fits the “pollution haven hypothesis”, i.e. its inflows of FDI contributes to rising carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. This suggests that current environmental regulations are insufficient, and do not attract clean FDI (Assamoi et al., 2020).

Environmental shocks and stresses, including those due to global climate breakdown, have had negative repercussions for growth and development. For instance, recently, a drought caused a decline in the production of cocoa and cashew nuts, triggering a fall in their export and contributing to a deficit in the country’s current account (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 4).

Contradictions and tensions around environmental protection³⁶

In response, measures for environmental protection have been adopted – although there remain funding gaps (Falconer et al., 2017). But these **environmental measures have, in turn, led to some socioeconomic and political contradictions and tensions.** In the previously mentioned coastal belt, for example, people’s need for income through oil palm and rubber “presents a major trade-off for land use, not only between forest conservation and commercial crop plantations, but also between commercial and subsistence crop cultivation” (Amin et al., 2015, p. 108). If left unaddressed, the competing demands on land for commercial versus subsistence crops might serious undermine people’s food supply, which could eventually hamper conservation “through increased hunting or deforestation for the cultivation of subsistence crops”

³⁶ On issues, contradictions, and tensions around environmental issues, in addition to the points in this section, also see: (Cumunel, 2020).

(Amin et al., 2015, p. 108). Fundamentally, the politics of rent crops follows a post-colonial agrarian model “that benefits agribusiness entrepreneurs and, more recently, sustainability standards” (Ongolo et al., 2018, p. 1).

Protected areas have been major sites where such contradictions and tensions have played out. The long-term integrity of protected areas hinges on local people’s support, but such support varies. For example, one comparative study on three protected areas in the south finds that rural villagers living near protected areas have vastly different perceptions of the impact of these areas on their wellbeing. Some people praise their protected area e.g. “for protecting biodiversity and spiritual values”, whereas others demand its deregulation in order to cultivate crops on the land (Amin et al., 2015, p. 107).

People in this study “do perceive a number of different ecosystem services as benefits” from protected areas (Amin et al., 2015, pp. 107–108):

- A favourable microclimate, especially for the quantity of rainfall, that the protected area maintains. However, perceptions on this are likely influenced by outreach activities or environmental education from NGOs.
- The provision of medicinal plants. This is another major ecosystem service mentioned. Indeed, the more households depend on medicinal plants, the more positive they are towards the protected area.
- The maintenance of cultural heritage, the bequest value of safeguarding biodiversity for future generations, and the preservation of spiritual values linked to sacred places.

On the other hand, since the rules governing the management of the protected areas restrict people’s access to most other services that the ecosystem could generate for them, this negatively influences people’s attitudes (Amin et al., 2015, pp. 107–108).

The study concludes that **local preferences for protected areas and their ecosystem services are correlated with three main factors** (Amin et al., 2015, pp. 107–108):

- **the rules and quality of management of the protected areas.** Top-down approaches, such as national parks, are associated with more negative views, whereas community-based ones are associated with more positive views. For example, in the protection of the *Forêt Marécageuse de Tanoe-Ehy*, the programme has successfully used an inclusive community-based approach. It has integrated local opinions and needs in the planning from the start, and researchers and a local NGO have conducted outreach. This has positively influenced people’s perceptions of the link between their wellbeing and the protected areas.
- **people’s dependence on natural resources (e.g. firewood, bush meat, fish) for their livelihoods.** The more dependent households are on these resources, the less favourable they are towards protected areas.
- **people’s age.** Older people, who have experienced the landscape changes from forests to plantation monocultures, are acutely “aware of the negative impacts that widespread deforestation has on their livelihoods”, and older age “increases the likelihood of having a positive preference for protected areas”.
- **people’s education level.** Illiterate people tended to express more negative views, and people who are educated to at least the first level of secondary education tended to express more positive views.

Complementing these findings, one study on five villages adjacent to two protected forests in the district of Abengourou, in the east, finds that farmer are more likely to adopt perennial crops and expand them into forests where there is: **tenure insecurity; a larger household; interference of the administration in customary land distribution; and proximity to the forest.**

Conversely, land tenure security, improvement in agricultural yields, farmer's experience, and higher education are the key factors in forest preservation (Djezou, 2016).

The case of the cocoa sector

There has been a **structural decrease in cocoa yields, due to “the cumulated, interactive effects of deforestation, quasi-monoculture for 40 years, climate change, and the powerful spread of swollen shoot disease”** (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, p. 7). As a result, there is widespread concern about four major problems in the cocoa sector, and how their interplay poses severe risks to both livelihoods and environmental sustainability (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019):

- **the ageing of cocoa farmers and plantations, combined with young people’s disinterest** for cocoa growing;
- **climate change**, manifest among others in the 2015-2016 drought;
- **the expansion of diseases afflicting cocoa trees**, especially swollen shoot;
- **the exhaustion of the rent that Ivorian forests had to offer for cocoa growing.**

This concern is expressed not only by academic, practitioner, and policy sources, but also by businesses. Multinational companies that produce chocolate warned in 2016 that world production would rapidly decline if nothing was done (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019).

Yet, cocoa production has kept strong, to the point where world prices collapsed in 2016. In view of this, **a few authors challenge aspects of these majority concerns on the state of cocoa growing in the country**, calling it disinformation. They point out that, if the above adverse factors were all true, the cocoa production achieved despite them would mean that the old farmers and plantations involved are effective to an incredible degree (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, p. 4).

Instead, based on mixed-method field data, these argue that **not all aspects of cocoa farmers’ profile have changed between 2000 and today**. Cocoa farming has remained a family-based agriculture. In 2015-2020, the average grower is a man, aged 45, i.e. hardly a higher age than in 2000. Another constant is the low level of education, at least among migrants. Growers have 8 to 10 persons to feed and support on average. Growers have largely remained poor. Their incomes have been weakened by a combination of declining yields, decreases in farm-gate prices since 1988, and the increasing necessity of using inputs. On the other hand, drops in the price of goods such as motorcycles, solar panels, television, and mobile phones have led to a few improvements in their living standards, in their remote management of their fields, and in their connection to markets. The quality of their housing has also slightly improved (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, pp. 6–7).

Among aspects that have changed, some actually support greater resilience. Current growers are more likely to have a more diversified basis for sustainable culture, even though their agricultural surfaces, and the area allocated to cocoa, have decreased compared to their parents', from an average of 5-6 ha in 2000 to 4 ha in 2015-2020. Coffee trees have nearly disappeared, but have been replaced by rubber trees, by palm oil trees in some regions, and most recently by cashew trees that are reaching the south of the country. Moreover, while the first generation took no interest in lowlands (*bas-fonds*), these have become a new stake in land and economy, as the second generation relies on it for growing rice, which has contributed to its food security and income. Lastly, cocoa growers have also diversified their incomes through livestock farming and non-agricultural activities (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, pp. 6–7).

On the other hand, some trends do appear to have more problematic effects. In particular, **growers have tended to use family or external labour less, as such labour has become scarcer, while also making greater use of inputs in lieu of labour.** Growers rely on considerably fewer permanent or semi-permanent contract workers involved through sharecropping, compared to 2000. There is a scarcity of contract workers, because the ageing and saturation of cocoa regions attract fewer immigrants (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, p. 7).

To replace contract workers, growers rely much more on their family workforce, and on labour associations. However, family dynamics have changed. Family members are not so inclined any more to work unpaid for three or four years, and even close relatives now request some form of compensation, such as sharecropping. Conversely, when the creator of a plantation returns to their village of origin, he often turns over their cocoa field to their chosen 'manager' son, but keep exercising scrutiny over this – hence the importance of mobile phones. If the chosen son does not give the parent satisfaction, he is replaced with another son. When the father dies, a family council makes decisions. In parallel, the manager son can create his own plantation (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, pp. 7, 9).

The lesser use of labour is also caused by growers' structural, rising need to use costly inputs, which leads to trade-offs between labour and capital. The use of chemical and biological inputs has been rising for the past 20 years. Even so, it has not always made up for **the structural decrease in the yields of cocoa trees, which results from “the cumulated, interactive effects of deforestation, quasi-monoculture for 40 years, climate change, and the powerful rise of swollen shoot disease”** (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, p. 7).

Indeed, cocoa farmers do have **good reason to worry about their decline in incomes, which undermines the investment capacity** they need to face the multiple challenges identified in this section. Issues of food security are becoming more important, although for now cocoa growers have found institutional arrangements to get land they can rent or borrow (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, pp. 7–8).

Declining cocoa yields have also fed into the dynamics of land conflicts. As more cocoa trees die, fallows become more common. In several regions, second- or third-generation *autochtones* have seized on this to try and challenge second- or third-generation migrants' rights on these plots. In response, the latter have tried to manage this rising risk by planting trees that have greater chances of success than cocoa trees, especially rubber and cashew trees (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, pp. 8–9).

In a context of climate-created droughts, land conflicts, drops in the prices of cocoa and rubber, and labour scarcity, **growers have adopted several innovations in the 2000s-2010s, with varying implications for environmental protection** (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, pp. 7–9, 89–90):

- the use of herbicides, and inputs more broadly, in cocoa and rice fields.
- a strategy of post-forest, and post-monoculture diversification. Growers have adopted rubber trees and cashew trees, and associated cashew and cocoa trees, in order to diversify, but also most recently to revive cocoa trees through agroforestry.
- women’s paid activity, and the rise in garden agriculture (*marâchage*). Cocoa growers’ wives work intensively in cocoa farms without getting paid. In addition, they engage in trade and occasionally in gold mining, and most importantly have been developing subsistence crops such as manioc and garden crops.
- mass migration into the last pockets of protected forests.
- gold mining.

Lastly, one of the strengths of the Ivorian cocoa sector is that its **family-based agriculture has a proven record at constantly shifting and adapting in response to changes in families and environment**. In particular, the migrants involved in the cocoa sector keep contacts and interests in the village of origin, while moving in search of forests and fallows. This gives migrant families intergenerational resources, such as networks of information built up through their trajectories, and the use of two or three physical and economic spaces that they draw on. Such informal regional integration is a notable asset to Cote d’Ivoire and its neighbours (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, p. 9).

4. A State that is a powerful resource, yet a weakened institution

Concentration of political and economic power in executive branch

The State has remained a coveted institution (Akindès, 2017, p. iv). In areas such as construction works and procurement, the State is associated with “long-established networks of power and patronage – enabled by a lack of transparency, old-fashioned financing mechanisms and a highly complex bureaucracy – [which] continue to serve vested interests rather than encouraging healthy, open competition” (Shepherd, 2017, p. 1). The State has also “never stopped being a point of reference in the minds of the youth” across the country, including the north (Akindès, 2017, p. iv).

Within it, presidential elections have particularly high stakes because **the Ivorian constitution gives the head of state and their inner circle “an enormous share of executive and economic power”** (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 6; also see Zina, 2017b). As a consequence, political parties “equate electoral defeat with economic and political marginalisation, for both their leaders and the ethnic groups they represent” (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 6)³⁷. The centrality of the

³⁷ An important legal point is that the new constitution promulgated in 2016 states that a candidate can only be re-elected once (Penar, n.d.). Another point to note is that, even as this “ultra-presidentialist regime pays little

presidency may be compounded by the fact that the Ouattara camp perceive themselves as having decisively won in 2011 (Piccolino, 2018).

State capacities that remain weakened, and intensified corruption

Economically, **the country has not yet recovered from the major structural crisis of the 1980s, and from the structural adjustment plans** that international financial institutions imposed on it³⁸. For example, the health system was already weak due to legacies of weak capacity on part of the State even before the IMF got involved. However, the reforms that the IMF demanded as conditionality for its loans have undermined national governments' ability to repair their historical problems (Kentikelenis & Stubbs, n.d.).

Both grand and petty corruption seems to have intensified in recent years. It “has become widespread, from the highest levels of the state to everyday functionaries across the country”³⁹. Certainly, the latest Afrobarometer surveys suggest that, in public perceptions, corruption has strongly worsened (see recent surveys available in Afrobarometer, n.d.).

There are, however, “**pockets of effectiveness**” in the State. One study found one such case in the Sustainable Tree Crops Programme, which introduced farmer field schools to small-scale cocoa producers supplying international commodity markets in order to meet international sustainability standards. The challenge was to find effective ways to deliver services to large numbers of these farmers. This programme, rather than rely on private governance, embedded service delivery in the institutional dynamics of the State, and achieved a large scale by numbers reached and geographical spread. This successful scaling was realised thanks to skilful institutional work by managers of a public-private partnership, who had a long professional association with the sector and “the capacity to embed new forms of service delivery in persistent pockets of bureaucratic effectiveness” (Muilerman & Vellema, 2017, p. 83).

Lopsided public policies that have not significantly reduced inequalities and poverty

Lopsided public policies that focus on macroeconomy and infrastructure, and neglect good-quality public services

Ouattara and his party have focused on ‘emergence’ through economic development, which it promised to achieve by 2020. This has precedent in former President Bédié’s mass investments in 1996 (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 9). In the Ouattara regime’s rhetoric, macroeconomic emergence is preeminent. The stated ambition has combined “the desire for rupture, for a ‘new Ivorian’ and a new constitution, with the desire for continuity, a second economic ‘miracle’ like the good old days of Félix Houphouët-Boigny” (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 10). Ever since assuming power in 2011, Ouattara has relied on a “depoliticizing vision for crisis recovery—a vision that has relied partly on economic growth as demonstrated through increased macroeconomic indicators and major infrastructure projects, and partly on a seemingly unflinching faith in the transformative power of this growth and its assumed trickle-down effect” (Akindès,

attention to the National Assembly”, the new constitution established a second parliamentary chamber, the Senate (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 16).

³⁸ (Cogneau, Czajka, & Hounghbedji, 2017; Ehrhart, 2017; Berrou, Darbon, Bekelynyck, & Bouquet, 2017; cited in Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 13)

³⁹ (Mgr Koné, 2017, Heitz-Tokpa & Mori, 2017, cited in Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 18)

2017, p. v). The 2016-2020 National Development Plan renewed this emphasis on economic growth and further decreased any focus on policy issues, confirming this preference for an economic approach to tackle a fundamentally political crisis.

In particular, **there has been a deliberate policy of investing in public infrastructure focused on construction works, mostly with international financing**. This has led to “the construction, among other things, of bridges and roads—including Abidjan’s third bridge, the Henri Konan Bédié toll bridge”⁴⁰. However, the new infrastructures, which have been concentrated in Abidjan’s rich neighbourhoods, are widely perceived to be foremost a showcase for Ouattara’s ‘emergence’ (Berrou et al., 2019, p. 51)

In contrast, **under Ouattara, public provision of essential public services, such as health care and education, has remained low** (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 7). Health care is one well-documented area where the insufficiency and poor use of public budgets – related to health but also all other essential services – has had extremely negative effects, directly and indirectly. Among other problems, there is a scarcity and poor geographic distribution of health care staff. Many health care professionals do not want to work in under-served areas that lack drinkable water, electricity, internet access, regular transport, and proximity to their families. Many doctors, nurses, and midwives, currently in post or in training, also condition their service in such areas to financial support or higher wages (Aké-Tano et al., 2018). Even once some health care staff serve in rural areas, the measures to encourage them to stay in these areas have been limited and insufficient (Bertone, 2018)⁴¹.

Poor provision has prevented many people from using public services altogether, and forced high costs onto users (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 7). For example, high costs and long distances to schools have led to low enrolment and high dropout, as Ivorian households have spent as much as 33% of total national expenditure on education⁴². There are pronounced disparities too. For example, rural residents and the poor have limited access to secondary education⁴³.

The quality of public services provided has also been low, not only due to financial and material constraints, but also due to their very organisation and ways of working⁴⁴. In this context, while the poor are not well served, members of the middle classes have either had to pay for services, or chosen to do so in order to invest in better quality of life and to achieve intergenerational upward mobility. This applies particularly to health care and education, e.g. with the choice to send children to private schools. Public policies have focused on the poorest and left markets to offer services to the middle classes, manifest for example in the rapid expansion of private supply of secondary and higher education in the face of the poor quality of public education (Berrou et al., 2019, pp. 38–39).

Public spending for social protection and labour programmes represents only an estimated 1.66% of GDP as of 2016-2018. The pensions system is the main social protection programme in Cote d’Ivoire, whereas there is very limited coverage of other dimensions such as unemployment protections, maternity benefits, and other income support in case of poverty,

⁴⁰ (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 10; also see Shepherd, 2017)

⁴¹ On health care, also see: (Duran et al., 2020; Yakhelef et al., 2018).

⁴² (UIS, IIEP, & Pôle de Dakar, 2016; cited in Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 7)

⁴³ (UIS, IIEP, & Pôle de Dakar, 2016; cited in Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 7)

⁴⁴ (see e.g. Desclaux et al., 2018; Nove, 2018)

ill-health, disability, or death. Even the two main pension funds – the national pensions for workers in the formal private sector (CNPS) and the pensions fund for civil servants (CGRAE) – together cover only 6-10% of the population, as of 2018 (Elgazzar et al., 2019, pp. xiii–xv).

In addition, **most public spending on social protection and labour programmes does not benefit the poorest households**, a World Bank study on the period 2016-2018 found.

Expenditures in these areas largely go to pension schemes for the non-poor, including civil servants and to workers in the private, formal sector (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. xiii). “Average pension expenditure per pensioner in CNPS amounted to 1.3 times GDP per capita whereas average pension expenditure per pensioner in CGRAE exceeded 2 times GDP per capita” (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. xv). In fact, a number of these public policies do not benefit large swathes of the middle classes either (Berrou et al., 2019, p. 56).

Similarly, **national policies and programmes for employment, including those focused on youth, are relatively limited, and “have largely targeted urban, semi- and relatively highly-skilled workers”** (Elgazzar et al., 2019, pp. xiv, 9). Most of these programs were launched following the 2011 crisis. In most cases, their criteria for target groups and eligibility are not clearly defined and not consistent across programmes, particularly in those that target youth at risk and vulnerable populations. As currently designed, they tend to be costly and to have limited impacts. Moreover, they have proven challenging to improve because there is little coordination among the agencies involved, and among sectors (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. xiv).

Cote d’Ivoire has recently begun implementing a new system for social safety nets, centred on a national programme of cash transfers to channel resources to the poorest while helping them earn more. Its building blocks are “a household registry, a reliable and efficient payment system, and services to boost human capital, household earnings and employment” (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. xv). Under the program, a monthly transfer of FCFA 12,000 to all 608,201 households in the entire country that are extremely poor would likely cost around US\$163 million annually, i.e. 0.70% of GDP. However, while the new programme is meant to institute a sustainable national system, the question remains of how to scale it up by integrating it across existing public programmes for social protection and labour (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. xv).

Even in the area of public investments in infrastructure, realisations have been insufficient and of poor quality. For example, public policies for urban planning, transport, and for housing have been weak, and housing in the country is of low quality. Ouattara’s programme of building a large number of housing units, including a significant share of housing for low-income households, has been poorly targeted. The required deposit amounts to 10 years of savings for a middle-class person, and informal workers in urban and rural areas find themselves excluded because they lack the necessary bank guarantees (Berrou et al., 2019, pp. 40, 51). Infrastructures for internet and electricity remain fairly limited and of poor quality too, as noted based by a UN study on 2013 data (UNECA, 2015, pp. 4–5).

On the revenue side, the State has had a small tax base and has collected only limited income tax, which contributes to its limited fiscal space. The collection of tax revenue represented 14.9% of GDP, whereas total public expenditures represented 23.4% of GDP, leaving the overall budget deficit at 3.9% of GDP, according to 2016 estimates. The “shortfall was mainly covered by funds from WAEMU financial markets and foreign loans” (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 4). More recently, revenues “fell short by 0.6 percent of GDP because of cocoa- and oil-related losses, as well as lower-than-expected revenues on tobacco and alcohol excises, income tax, and VAT” (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 4).

In this context, **less powerful groups are typically neglected in public decision-making**. For example, there have problems with how public authorities have managed the cotton and cashew sectors. In particular, decision-makers have largely neglected small producers and their expectations (Bassett, 2017). As a result, **the substance of some public policies in specific sectors has met with contestation by key sectoral actors concerned**. For example, Ouattara’s agricultural policy has been “interventionist in the cotton sector—much to the displeasure of cotton growers in the North”⁴⁵.

Persistence of high socioeconomic inequalities, poverty, and underemployment

Inequalities caused by appropriation of wealth and income at the top are not only a structural factor shaping Ivorian political economy over the past decades, but are also an ongoing, leading dynamic in, and contributor to, the country’s low development.

Indeed, **Cote d’Ivoire’s inequality-adjusted human development index (IHDI) is 35.8% lower than its HDI average**, according to the latest UNDP data. This pushes Cote d’Ivoire three further ranks down in the HDI ranking of 189 countries and territories. In detail, inequality leads to a loss of 24.4% in the income index, 33.3% in index of distribution of expected life expectancy, and 47.4% in the index of education (UNDP, 2019a, pp. 4–5, 2019b, p. 310).

Inequality has risen over the past two decades in Côte d’Ivoire, although recent trends may be improving. For instance, one study on the 1995-2015 period shows that the incomes of the bottom 40% grew 20 percentage points less than the average income in the country, although there was an improvement between 2005 and 2015 (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Difference between income growth of the bottom 40% and average income growth, 1995–2015, in percentage points

| Country \ Period | Overall 20-year period: 1995–2015 | First decade: 1995–2005 | Second decade: 2005–2015 |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Cote d’Ivoire | -21.2 | -22.1 | +8.2 |

Source: (Chancel and others, 2019, based on data from the World Inequality Database, cited in UNDP, 2019b, p. 118), , licensed under [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 IGO](#)

Despite recent improvements in trends, this still leaves Ivorian society with extreme levels of inequalities, as shown e.g. by the World Inequality Lab (see

See: Chart 1, p. 34)⁴⁶.

As a consequence, levels of poverty have remained high – indeed, they are higher now than in the late 1980s⁴⁷. This is despite the poverty rate decreasing from 51% in 2011 to 46% in 2015, according to data based on the national poverty line (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 1). In this context,

⁴⁵ (Bassett, 2017; cited in Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 18)

⁴⁶ This does not even use the tax information that may most accurately identify the higher share of income of the wealthiest (as done by Czajka, 2017).

⁴⁷ (see e.g. Cogneau et al., 2017 for a analysis of income inequality and poverty between 1988, 1993, 1998, 2002, 2008, and 2014)

longstanding, widespread poverty means that an adult with a monthly income of US\$ 1,000, in PPP, already belongs to the top 8% of Ivorians by income (see Table 2, p. 34)⁴⁸.

Poverty is higher for families in rural areas and/or in agriculture, “families with many young children, the less educated, the elderly, and those living in the northern regions” (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 4).

See: Chart 1. Trends in income inequality in Cote d'Ivoire, 1988-2014, Source: (World Inequality Database, n.d.), <https://wid.world/country/cote-divoire/>

Table 2. Income groups in Cote d'Ivoire

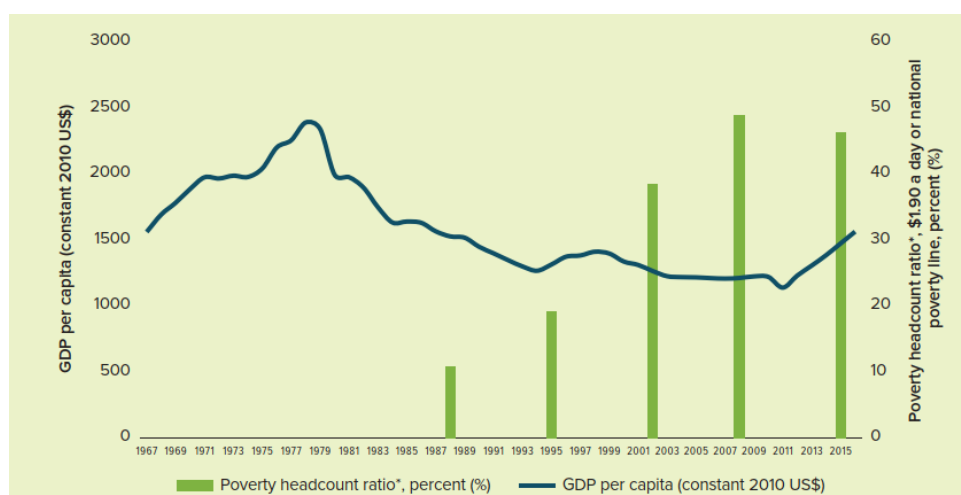
| Monthly income per adult (US\$, in PPP) | Position among income groups in Cote d'Ivoire |
|--|---|
| \$100 | Bottom 20% |
| \$1,000 | Top 8% |
| \$2,000 | Top 3% |
| \$5,000 | Top 1% |
| \$12,000 | Top 1% |

Source: (simulator at World Inequality Database, cited in UNDP, 2019b, p. 114), licensed under [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 IGO](#)

Importantly, **poverty has remained high despite the increase in GDP *per capita***, as Chart 2 on the next page shows.

⁴⁸ For similar points, also see: (Berrou et al., 2019).

Chart 2. Growth and poverty trends, 1967–2016



Source: (World Bank Indicators, 2017; cited in Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 5), licensed under [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 IGO \(CC BY 3.0 IGO\)](#)

Moreover, **the shortcomings across many dimensions of development mean that vulnerability is typically complex.** For example, one study analysed levels of household economic vulnerability in HIV-affected communities, defined as communities where prevalence of HIV is high and there are large numbers of orphans and vulnerable children. The study could not identify sets of correlated vulnerabilities for targeting interventions: the 65 measures of vulnerability examined did not coalesce into a small number of clusters. Instead, “households face numerous unique pathways to vulnerability” (Burke et al., 2016, p. 1).

A problem central to the country’s inequalities is that **workers are underemployed, and are largely in informal, unwaged, low-productivity jobs.** On the labour market, the major problems are informality, and underemployment – rather than unemployment. The unemployment rate for most workers in Cote d’Ivoire has remained quite low (Elgazzar et al., 2019, pp. xiii–xvi, 5).

There are major problems with the quality of employment too. 80% of the labour force is in the informal sector. In this context, formal labour regulations have played only a limited role in protecting most workers (Berrou et al., 2019, p. 56; Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. xiii). Further, only 17.4% of the employed hold wage jobs. Compounding this, many wage jobs are informal too. Since formal wage employment starts from a very low base, “even strong growth of that sector would only absorb a small share of the population, most likely starting with the more educated” (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 5)⁴⁹.

Moreover, “employment is strongly concentrated in low-productivity occupations” (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 5). 66.9% of the employed population is in agricultural self-employment, and 29.3% in non-agricultural self-employment. This is particularly the case “among the poor, women, and those living in rural areas” (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 5)⁵⁰. There is a skills deficit in the Ivorian workforce too (Shepherd, 2017).

⁴⁹ Projections suggest that at most 30% of the population is likely to hold wage jobs by 2025 (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 5).

⁵⁰ On these points, also see e.g.: (Christiaensen & Premand, 2017; Cirera et al., 2017; Diabate et al., 2019).

5. Structural inequalities that lead to massive exclusion and marginalisation

Structural gender inequality across political, economic, and social dimensions

There are gender disparities to the detriment of women and girls across wealth groups and across urban-rural groups (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 7)⁵¹.

Cote d'Ivoire is in the lowest development group of UNDP's Gender Development Index (GDI). Its ratio of female to male HDI stands at 0.796, with a HDI of only 0.445 for women and girls against 0.559 for men and boys, according to the latest UNDP data from 2018. This places Cote d'Ivoire in the bottom group of UNDP's ranking of 166 countries by absolute deviation from gender parity in HDI values (UN Development Programme [UNDP], n.d., 2019b, p. 314, 2019a, p. 5). While female life expectancy at birth is slightly higher (58.7 years for women vs. 56.3 for men), male indices are higher on all other counts (UNDP, 2019b, p. 314, 2019a, p. 5):

- expected years of schooling (10 for boys vs. 8.2 for girls);
- mean years of schooling for adults aged 25 and older (6.3 for men vs. 4.1 for women);
- most strikingly, GNI per capita⁵² (US\$ 5,355 for men vs. US\$ 1,790 for women).

Similarly, **Cote d'Ivoire has stark gender inequality in reproductive health, educational and political empowerment, and economic activity.** It ranks 157 out of 162 countries in the Gender Inequality Index (GII), according to the latest UNDP data⁵³:

- Women and girls experience poor sexual and reproductive health⁵⁴:
 - 645 women die from pregnancy-related causes for every 100,000 live births.
 - There are 117.6 births per 1,000 women of ages 15-19.
 - Access to sex education, modern contraception, and safe abortion are also lacking (Aké-Tano et al., 2017).
- Women hold only 9.2% of parliamentary seats. They are also under-represented in trade unions at grassroots and leadership levels (Gbadi, 2018).
- 17.8% of adult women have at least a secondary level of education, against 34.1 percent of men.
- Women participate in the labour market at a 48.3% rate, against 66% for men.

⁵¹ For analyses of gender inequality, see, in addition to the points mentioned in this section: (Cardoso et al., 2016; Donald et al., 2020a, 2020b; Gbadi, 2018; Guiraud, n.d.; Ibos, 2020; Indigo Côte d'Ivoire et al., 2018; Martinez et al., 2018; Stork et al., 2015; Zimmer, 2020).

⁵² In 2011 PPP US\$.

⁵³ (UNDP, 2019a, pp. 5–6, unless otherwise noted)

For additional detailed data on gender and human development in Cote d'Ivoire, see the series of dashboards produced by UNDP for its 2019 Human Development Report, and associated documents: (UNDP, n.d., 2019b, pp. 322–347, 2019a, pp. 7–10, 2019c, pp. 11–15).

⁵⁴ On this point, also see: (Équilibres & Populations, 2018).

In addition, reporting rape remains difficult for men, women, boys, and girls (Medie, 2017).

These dire outcomes can be tied back to a **longstanding combination of deficient provision of public services with women’s multiple disadvantages due to adverse gender norms and practices**. On the gendered implications of poor public services, for example, 67% of women surveyed in 2011 on maternal health services cited cost as their major barrier to accessing and using the services. This figure rose to 83% in rural regions, against 64% in Abidjan (UNICEF, 2011; cited in Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 7).

Another fundamental factor is **women’s deprivation of access to land and to formal, paid positions in agriculture**. In the crucial cocoa sector, for instance, women have little access to land and to the status of cocoa grower. In 2015-2020, they represented less than 6% of cocoa growers – but they performed a lot unpaid labour on cocoa farms as growers’ wives (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, pp. 5, 90).

Women’s labour is also severely constrained. For example, one study on the cotton sector found that women’s production and productivity is constrained by (Carranza et al., 2017):

- **“Low financial liquidity**: women have less access to cash and have more limited access to credit, which prevents them from hiring agricultural labor.
- **Little control of household labor**: gender norms imply that labor is allocated in priority to agricultural plots managed by men. This causes systematic delays for agricultural tasks performed on female-managed plots.
- **Lack of flexible working hours**: domestic work and other household duties requiring daily attention constrain women’s use of labor networks.
- **Lower returns**: when hired by women, men don’t work as hard”.

Exclusion, marginalisation, and insufficient support towards growing youth population

The Ivorian population is extremely young: children aged 0-14 make up 41.8% of the population, and the dependency rate is 79.8%. The rate of population growth has slowed but remains high, falling from 3.8% in 1975 to 2.6% in 2014. There has been no strong public policy to speed up demographic transition⁵⁵.

The annual growth rate of the population was estimated at 2.5% in the 2014 census. This results from the combination of a declining infant mortality rate, a high fertility rate, and a high level of immigration (in 2014, 24.2% of the population was not Ivorian). In this context, with one out of two girls and women being of childbearing age, “the population is expected to continue to grow and remain young over the coming decades” (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 6). For example, at least 1,000 new classrooms will need to be created a year (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 6).

This, combined with poor public policies for development, means that the situation for youth remains daunting, particularly in education, health, and employment (Lefevre et al., 2017; Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 19; Schilling et al., 2019). According to the World Bank, “[d]emographic pressures contribute to elevated poverty and risk in Côte d’Ivoire due to a rapidly growing and young population” (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 5).

⁵⁵ (Elgazzar et al., 2019, pp. 5–6; INS, 2014; cited in Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 19)

Moreover, **in the postcolonial Ivorian State, elites have pursued and secured gerontocracy:** “the old are stopping a new generation taking power, even though 79% of Ivorians are under thirty-five” (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 16). Even at more local levels of political economy, domination by older age groups remains a challenge. For example, in a case study about a village in the west, young planters of coffee and cocoa have invested themselves in the export-oriented agricultural system, and created agricultural innovation. However, nowadays this system does not offer youth the conditions for their empowerment, autonomy, and independence any more. Still, “these educated youth, who are open to the wider world, mobilise their agricultural savings in order to invest as individual entrepreneurs outside their village, while developing new solidarities that transcend old oppositions” (Balac, 2016, p. 41). This complexification of rural life comes with promises, but also risks of new divides due to exacerbated economic competition (Balac, 2016, p. 41). On this last point, there are similar findings about economic exploitation in urban areas (Schilling & Dembele, 2019).

In this context where many youth experience exclusion and persistent poverty, and as part of the legacy of wartime and political violence, **some have turned to violence in organised groups, while others are involved in initiatives for peace and security across the country** (Indigo Côte d’Ivoire & Interpeace, 2017b). They are often not driven only, or primarily, by greed or by the group’s ideology, but also by a search for social recognition of their place in society, and by the impact of gender norms on them (Indigo Côte d’Ivoire et al., 2016, 2018).

One oft-mentioned example is groups of children and youth, ranging in age from 8 to 25, who have organised into gangs that have been nicknamed “*microbes*”. They arose in the post-electoral crisis in Abobo, a poor neighbourhood in Abidjan, and have increasingly been moving into middle-class neighbourhoods such as Yopougon and Angré (Berrou et al., 2019, p. 53). Some of these young people were personally involved in bringing the current regime to power, and believe they have been ignored by the process of disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR). They have demanded recognition for their role. They also fit into a broader socioeconomic history of Ivorian urban gangs, through which some disadvantaged youth re-establishing their existence in society through violence (Kouamé, 2017). However, in the view of the middle classes living in the affected neighbourhoods, the phenomenon manifests abdication on part of the State, and creates higher feelings of insecurity, which are reinforced by people’s low trust in the police (Berrou et al., 2019, p. 53)⁵⁶.

Longstanding geographic inequalities in politics and development

Two important, longstanding geographic disparities are rural-urban, and north-south.

There is lower development in rural areas compared to urban ones. While the national poverty rate stood at 46%, it was over 70% in rural regions, using the national poverty line in 2015, although poverty continues to gradually decline (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 1). Another important fault line is north-south, as poverty is higher for families living in the northern regions. **The north and north-west have higher poverty rates (over 60%) than coastal areas and the south-west (under 40%)**⁵⁷. The disparity is explained in part by the country’s distinct agricultural regions: in the south, the forest region is home to the production of cocoa, coffee, and palm oil,

⁵⁶ On “microbes », also see: (Indigo Côte d’Ivoire & Interpeace, 2015, 2017a).

⁵⁷ (World Bank, 2019, cited in Crisis Group, 2019; also see Nguyen & Dizon, 2017)

while in the north, the drier savannah is home to the production of cotton and cashew (Elgazzar et al., 2019, pp. 4, 7).

Beyond this broad north-south distinction, specific regions and localities have fared unequally in the course of Ivorian politics and development. **Some regions have historically been marginalised in the country's politics and development.** For example, the Tonkpi region, in the former Eighteen Mountains region bordering Guinea and Liberia, is marked by a legacy of political marginalisation (Allouche & Bley, 2017)⁵⁸.

In contrast, **capital Abidjan has historically thrived as the country's economic, financial, intellectual, and cultural capital**, and its *de facto* political capital too – rather than Yamoussoukro, the *de jure* capital since 1983. Abidjan badly suffered during the past two decades' crises, but has recovered since (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 15).

Such geographic inequalities have continued and widened since 2011: **under Ouattara, the benefits of GDP growth have not reached vast swathes of rural, remote, and peri-urban populations outside the main cities** such as Abidjan, Bouaké, San Pedro, and Yamoussoukro. Nearly half of the population is urban, but poverty has continued to be overwhelmingly rural. 57% of the rural population lives in poverty, compared to 35% of the urban population. As there is more population in rural areas, a total of 61% of the poor in the country are in rural areas. Poverty is also higher among agricultural households than non-agricultural ones⁵⁹.

Capital Abidjan has received significant public investments which have fed its continued growth. It is the second most populous city in west Africa after Lagos. It is “a sprawling megalopolis” that, by 2014, hosted over four and a half million inhabitants⁶⁰. It is the economic, financial, intellectual, and cultural capital, and its *de facto* political capital too, rather than Yamoussoukro, the *de jure* capital since 1983. Abidjan badly suffered during the past two decades' crises (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 15).

Since Ouattara took power, Abidjan has remarkably recovered, particularly in its infrastructure. Ouattara's “feverish construction programme of new bridges and roads has fed runaway urbanisation, and Abidjan now connects the neighbouring cities of Grand-Bassam, Bingerville, and Anyama” (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 15). However, high demand and lagging supply for housing in Abidjan have led to high inflation in housing prices. The most vulnerable middle-class households find it harder to find housing meeting their needs, and live in peripheral neighbourhoods that have more affordable rents. Higher strata of the middle classes invest in real estate in the capital to diversify their incomes (Berrou et al., 2019, p. 40). All this has come at the cost of driving away huge numbers of vulnerable populations, pushing them into growing marginalisation and neutralising their political mobilisations (Banégas, 2017a; Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 15).

⁵⁸ For an overview of inequalities in development indicators between Ivorian regions just before Ouattara took power, see e.g. the table in: (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 6).

⁵⁹ (Elgazzar et al., 2019, pp. 1, 4–5; on urbanisation, see Fall & Coulibaly, 2016)

⁶⁰ (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 15; figure from INS, 2014)

Still, **Abidjan has remained very attractive, and has further reinforced its disproportionate importance in the country.** By now, around 20% of the national population lives in the district of Abidjan, representing close to 39% of the urban population of the country. Two of its 13 communes, Abobo and Yopougon, each count a million inhabitants – twice as many as the second largest city, Bouaké, in the centre of the country⁶¹.

In contrast, other regions have not yet recovered from the effects and legacies of the civil war. For instance, in the centre, Bouaké’s population “is practically shrinking”⁶². Bouaké “is struggling to recover from a decade of rebel governance”: as promises of recovery have not yet been met, there have been “repeated mutinies by troops, protests by demobilised soldiers who were not reintegrated into the army, and violent riots against the rising price of electricity”⁶³. In rural areas, as housing prices are lower than in Abidjan, the incomes of agricultural middle classes enable them more easily to own their home (Berrou et al., 2019, p. 40).

Due to time and length constraints, the present report cannot delve into the **micro-, meso- and macro-level political economies of specific locations, and their effects on development.** However, it is worth noting that a number of authors have explored such political economies, and – explicitly or implicitly – their effects on development; see a selection of references p. 80.

6. Sustained political conflict, contestation, and violence

In formal politics, overall stability but persistent tensions and violence

Political leaders’ partisan mobilisation of ethnicity, regional identity, and nationality

Ever since the death of Felix Houphouët-Boigny in 1993, **leading politicians – in power and in opposition – have relied on the tactic of “firing up their ethnic and regional bases”** for political gains (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 5). Starting with the exclusionary ideology of *ivoirité* (‘Ivorianness’) around 1994, this has produced lasting, ongoing effects in parts of the population (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 5; Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 13). This was in evidence in the violent clashes in the centre of the country between two ethnic communities with different political allegiances showed in 2019 (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 5). Indeed, **Cote d’Ivoire “remains a site of violent long-term land and community conflicts**, primarily in the west, but also [for example] in Bouna, in the north-east”⁶⁴.

Political “parties are more representatives of regional or ethnic interests than vectors for manifestos or ideologies” (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 8). As a consequence, their opposition to each other tends to quickly translate into intercommunal violence (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 8).

⁶¹ (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 5; Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 15; figures from INS, 2014)

⁶² (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 15; population data from INS, 2014)

⁶³ (Zina; Diallo; cited in Miran-Guyon, 2017a, pp. 15–16)

⁶⁴ (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 11; on Bouna, see Speight, 2017; on politicians’ use of anti-immigrant rhetoric, see Whitaker, 2015)

Constant tensions around elections and formal politics

Compared to the period between 2002 and 2011 when Cote d'Ivoire suffered a civil war and then political violence, the country has experienced some political stability since 2011 (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 9). However, **there remain constant tensions around elections and formal politics.**

In recent decades, elections have been times of tension, and often violence, in Cote d'Ivoire. There is a consensus in the literature that this has been **primarily due to political leaders' actions and discourses.** As the 2010 election demonstrated, "neither a transparent election nor international pressure is guaranteed to protect Côte d'Ivoire from a new cycle of political violence", although without them, the already considerable risks of violent conflict resuming are higher still (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 10).

A few references also point to **weaknesses in the capacities of agents involved in electoral processes.** For instance, previous elections have seen technical irregularities, such as ballot boxes that were unsealed or improperly sealed, "or poorly drafted records of official proceedings at polling stations", such as "improperly drafted minutes that record whether a given polling station followed correct electoral procedures" (Crisis Group, 2020a, pp. 6, 10). Such irregularities were linked to a lack of training of electoral agents, but sparked political disputes (Crisis Group, 2020a, pp. 6, 10). The lack of training of some electoral agents remains an issue ahead of the 2020 election, as technical irregularities could "raise suspicions of foul play and spark potentially violent local disputes" (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 10).

The last two years have seen an "uptick in intercommunal violence related to political contestation, reflecting ethnic and political tensions" that the 2020 election could exacerbate (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 8). "Following municipal polls in late 2018, violence erupted in multiple locations across the country, leaving at least five dead" (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 8). In May 2019, "clashes in the town of Béoumi, in the country's centre, left 14 people dead and more than a hundred wounded" (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 8). Members from "two ethnic groups – the Malinké, a northern group that tends to vote for the RHDP, and the Baoulé, a subgroup of the Akan with roots in the centre that is more aligned with the PDCI" – were "vying for control of the town's government" (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 8).

Currently, many tensions revolve around the upcoming 2020 presidential election. With the presidential election scheduled for 31 October 2020, not only is there political manoeuvring and positioning, but there are tensions and risks of political violence building up. Disputed management of the election could spark a sustained conflict. Having a peaceful election, and a result accepted by all, would require that the ruling party and the opposition agree from the start on fundamental electoral matters (Crisis Group, 2020a, pp. 8–9, 2020b)⁶⁵.

The IEC could be an important forum for defusing tensions, but it has been contested itself by parts of the opposition. The PDCI has been boycotting participation in the IEC, saying it "is too heavily dominated by individuals politically close to the president", pointing the finger at the make-up of its membership and at the choice of its president from the north of the country (Crisis Group, 2020a, pp. 5, 9).

⁶⁵ For possible scenarios around the 2020 election, see for example: (Crisis Group, 2020a; Penar, n.d.).

One issue of contention around the 2020 election has revolved around the implications of COVID-19. Government and opposition politicians debate “whether the election should be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic”, which heightens tensions (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 5). A delay due to COVID-19 could “spark disagreements if not managed carefully” (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 9).

COVID-19 risks derailing the IEC’s electoral preparations. The IEC postponed its revision of the electoral census and voter roll from April-May to 14 days in June, with the law requiring the roll to be posted by the end of July. In its current form, the roll has roughly the same number of voters as in 2010, even though the population has since increased by an estimated 30%. Responding to the postponement, the PDCI called the timeframe for revision “unrealistic”, saying 30 days were needed. The IEC must also provide a complete map of polling stations, and a comprehensive plan for distributing electoral materials and centralising results (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 9, 2020b).

COVID-19 also risks derailing electoral preparations that involve political parties. Parties must also come to a consensus to choose “the company that will transmit and process the voting data and tally results” (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 9). In addition, the government adopted a new electoral code by decree in April 2020 as Parliament could not assemble in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis. But the PDCI has condemned the revision by decree, saying in May it refuses “to ratify laws that generate conflict” and accusing the government of trying to avoid parliamentary debate (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 9, 2020b).

In this context, any unilateral decision by the authorities to delay the election could be seen by the opposition as an attempt by the president to stay in charge and would risk violence. On the other hand, a postponement that is mutually agreed through negotiations between all parties might help complete electoral preparations, “and create additional room for the government and opposition parties to iron out any disagreements” (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 9).

Other tensions around the 2020 election are building more along particular, “longstanding political and ethnic fault lines” (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 5). For instance, the exclusion of Gbagbo and Blé Goudé is likely to put their supporters “at odds with northerners and parties most closely associated with them” (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 8). There are also tensions within the north of the country. For example, the exclusion of Soro risks rekindling a rift that existed during the civil war and its aftermath between Soro’s Forces Nouvelles rebels and several pro-Ouattara mayors, who occupied posts during the country’s partition (2002-2012) and “had to compete with rebel administrators for shares of local taxation and resources” (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 8).

Discontent, protests, and violence about structural socioeconomic and political problems

New resentments have combined with old ones to make the Ivorian social order increasingly fragile (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 11). People’s current levels of dissatisfaction with their situation, that of the country, and the direction of events are high, as the latest Afrobarometer surveys show (see recent surveys available in Afrobarometer, n.d.).

Increasing discontent with ruling party's performance, and popular disaffection

Since the start of Ouattara's second mandate in 2015, **there has been increasing discontent with the ruling party's performance, which has manifested in two ways: 'voice', and 'exit'.**

On 'voice', the RHDP has found finding it increasingly difficult to win over and mobilise its constituencies of voters and supporters. For example, in the 2016 legislative elections, voters sometimes chose independent candidates instead⁶⁶. Even in Abobo and Bouaké, where votes for Ouattara were strong, people feel neglected⁶⁷. Added to all this is discontent among army factions that had supported Ouattara (see the section about this p. 51).

On 'exit', youth, mostly Malinké or from the north, also feel abandoned by the regime. Many have emigrated, heading to Italy through Libya as irregular migrants in increasing numbers⁶⁸. Another display of 'exit' has been low voter turnout. This happened in the 2016 legislative election, and in the referendum on the new constitution, which was "supposed to reconcile the nation by redefining the rules of common life, but [was] of little interest to Ivorians" (Bouquet, 2017b; Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 17). For example, 85% of voters did not turn out in Bouaké⁶⁹.

Increasing protests against lack of socioeconomic development, and rising inequalities

There is a consensus in the literature that the **fruits of growth have failed to reach many, and to be distributed equally**. Income inequality, regional inequality, and gender inequality have all provoked increasing social unease, as noted by the Ivorian National Assembly⁷⁰. The country's human development indicators have yet to return to their pre-1999 levels (Elgazzar et al., 2019, p. 4).

Ivorians' daily life now frequently features "spontaneous protests against the cost of living, repeated strikes by civil servants, and sporadic rioting against corruption among state representatives" (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 10). For instance, in 2015-2016, physical and online protests arose against an increase in electricity prices, and quickly grew to include other demands on health care, commodities, corruption, unemployment, land issues, etc. The movement was driven by members of the upper-middle-class, but anger was shared across classes (Akindès, 2017, pp. xviii–xix; Berrou et al., 2019, pp. 43–44). 2018 "began with a series of popular uprisings across Côte d'Ivoire" (Heitz-Tokpa & Mori, 2017, p. 253). For example, in Soubré, in the south-west, "residents ransacked the mayor's home and the city hall" after a fire ravaged the city's market (Heitz-Tokpa & Mori, 2017, p. 253). In mining communities, local and national problems due to weak governance and to the unequal distribution of benefits have led to rioting (Allouche & Adama Mohammed, 2017; Kando et al., 2019).

⁶⁶ (Bouquet, 2017b; Ouégnin, 2017, cited in Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 11)

⁶⁷ (Konaté, 2017; Zina, 2017; cited in Miran-Guyon, 2017a)

⁶⁸ (Bouquet, 2017a; Sy Savané, 2017, Miran-Guyon, 2017, cited in Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 11). On emigrated Ivorian women who work as caregivers, see: (Ibos, 2020).

⁶⁹ (Jeune Afrique, 2018; cited in Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 17)

⁷⁰ (Assemblée nationale, 2016, cited in Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 10)

The focus on investments in infrastructure without sufficient investments in other socioeconomic dimensions has been criticised in protests, where one of the popular slogans has been: “you can’t eat bridges or tar” (Akindès, 2017, p. xix). Or, as the national secretary of Cellule 39, an association for demobilised soldiers, has warned: “infrastructure recovery is all well and good, but let’s not forget social recovery”⁷¹.

Conflicts and violence about structural socioeconomic and political issues

The post-2011 socioeconomic order and peace remain fragile, for both national and local reasons (Piccolino, 2017). This is evident for instance in the west, where “some people from Bloléquin lynched a gendarme and destroyed the prefecture building” in 2018 (Heitz-Tokpa & Mori, 2017, p. 253). It is also evident in the north-east, in Bouna and the surrounding rural environment. Since 2011, tensions have risen there “between Peul pastoralists, Lobi farmers, and the indigenous Koulango population” (Speight, 2017, p. 187). In 2016, “struggles over land use culminated in a violent confrontation between elements of the Lobi and Peul communities in Bouna that resulted in over 20 dead, 30 injured, and 1,000 displaced from their homes” (Speight, 2017, p. 187). However, fundamentally, these conflicts are less a farmer-herder conflict, and more “a conflict over authority, community membership, and belonging” that have been playing out for over a century (Speight, 2017, p. 201).

Land issues have remained a central object of conflict. Tensions and conflict around land have remained high across the country, “including conflicts between communities over ‘autochthonous rights’, between communities and the state, between investors and communities, and between autochthonous landholders and those claiming to hold ceded land rights” (Boone, 2018, p. 210)⁷².

Conflicts take on slightly different configurations in different regions. In the West, where 3,000 people had been killed in land-related violence in 2010-2011, “the flames of civil war had barely subsided”, and violence related to land continued throughout 2012-2014 (Boone, 2018, p. 206). Such conflicts also involve dimensions such as changes to what constitutes authority (Indigo Côte d’Ivoire & Interpeace, 2018a). In the north, promoting the 1998 land law would have antagonised core loyalists, whereas in the south revoking the law would have generated serious conflict. All this led Ouattara’s government to restrain its ambitions for general land certification and private land titling, and to focus on its overriding objectives of tamping down civil unrest, protecting its partisans in the rural and urban areas, and maintaining control over the national territory (Boone, 2018, p. 206).

Impunity, lack of reconciliation, and legacy of violence as a way to power

Cote d’Ivoire’s deep-seated political rifts “have never fully healed” (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 5). Reconciliation has been a crucial feature of international models for recovery and post-crisis transition in Cote d’Ivoire. However, it has not taken place – “not for lack of dedicated institutions, but for lack of genuine political willpower on all sides” (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 11). “Efforts at reconciliation between sometimes warring ethnic groups and political factions have failed” in

⁷¹ (quoted in Journal d’Abidjan, cited in Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 10)

⁷² (also see e.g. Akindès, 2017, pp. xiv–xv)

Cote d'Ivoire, which helps explain why antagonisms between political parties remain powerful (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 8).

Formal high-level attempts at national dialogue after 2011, such as the Permanent Framework for Dialogue, largely failed. Key elite players, especially Ouattara and Gbagbo, held entrenched, incompatible positions on issues such as amnesty, trials, the release of prisoners and the return of opponents who had gone abroad. This blocked political dialogue, and hence any significant reconciliation (Akindès, 2017, pp. vi–vii; Piccolino, 2017).

Impunity and victors' justice for serious human rights violations have persisted, a fact well noted by both Ivorians and external actors such as Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch. Whereas Ouattara promised to end impunity for all serious violations committed since 2002, the vast majority of arrests on this under his presidency have involved alleged offenders from the Gbagbo camp. In contrast, even though pro-Ouattara troops also committed abuses in 2010-2011, not a single member of them had been indicted by Ivorian prosecutors as of 2017 (Akindès, 2017, pp. vii–viii).

In this context, **political dialogue and reconciliation have been blocked not just at the top, but also among the population at large.** The population remains “between oblivion, denial, and an excess of memory” about successive periods of political conflict and violence, from the ideology of *ivoirité* and the political and military destabilisation after the 1999 coup, to the civil war and the political and territorial partition of the country between 2002 and 2011, and most recently the deadly post-election crisis of 2010-2011 (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 13).

A “**dialectic of humiliation and revenge** has engendered a political culture that instrumentalizes cultural identities such as ethnicity and religion that produce feelings of horizontal inequality” (Akindès, 2017, p. viii). There remains a conflict between different views of the crisis in the population: entrenched frustration and rancour about the past and present continue to fuel people's actions (through attacks and their effects on intercommunal relations), as well as their perceptions and thoughts (such as divergences in interpreting events, stances in political dialogue, or differing visions of reconciliation) undermine the reconciliation process. One social consequence has been widespread distrust and defiance in Ivorian society (Akindès, 2017, pp. x–xi). Even many teachers tasked with peace education display these perspectives⁷³.

With dialogue largely stalled at the top and grassroots levels, the Dialogue, Truth, and Reconciliation Commission (*Commission dialogue vérité et réconciliation*, CDVR), and the associated National Social Cohesion Program (*Programme national de cohésion sociale*, PNCS) have been unable to provide much of a political response to social expectations of national reconciliation (Akindès, 2017, p. ix).

As a result of impunity and of the country's political trajectory since the 2000s, violence has remained, both objectively and in people's perceptions, one effective way to gain power or resources (Diallo, 2017; Johnson, 2019). For example, intercommunal violence around land conflicts is commonly spurred by impunity for perpetrators of crimes. The legacy of wartime violence is also that it trained some young people in criminal violence, leading among others to the child gangs known as “microbes” in Ivorian cities (Akindès, 2017, pp. xv, xvii).

⁷³ (Kuppens & Langer, 2016a, 2016b, 2018, 2020)

Conversely, attempts at using peaceful means of pressure to make demands have had little success, as the case of former soldiers who used administrative channels shows (Diallo, 2017).

Violence from jihadi groups, and State response

Cote d'Ivoire was attacked in 2016 and 2020 by jihadi groups, and has seen other attacks in neighbouring regions at its borders. For example, “several incidents have occurred on the border between Mali and Côte d'Ivoire, including the abduction of a Colombian nun in the Sikasso region in 2017” (Crisis Group, 2019). Jihadists have repeatedly stated their intention to expand into coastal West Africa, explicitly naming Cote d'Ivoire. Further, jihadist groups have threatened countries that involve themselves militarily in the crisis in Mali – Cote d'Ivoire has played a key diplomatic role in setting up a regional and international intervention. Cote d'Ivoire is thus in a regional context that features the persistent threat of violent extremism and jihadist terrorism. Freedom of movement and settlement across the region, shared borders, and historical ties can facilitate the circulation of extremists, for instance between Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire (Anonymous, 2015, p. 8; Crisis Group, 2019). However, there has been no major radicalisation of Muslims in Cote d'Ivoire (Miran-Guyon, 2017b, p. 237).

In response, “**Ivorian authorities, with the help of French intelligence services, reportedly thwarted several attacks** in Abidjan” in May 2019 (Crisis Group, 2019). In May 2020, **Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso launched their first joint military operation** in the cross-border region of Ferkessedougou city, in the north-east, “reportedly killing eight suspected jihadists and arresting 38 on both sides of border” (Crisis Group, 2020b).

7. Decisive role of elites and armed forces as key actors that dominate political economy

Civilian elites

Key political leaders and their parties⁷⁴

Alassane Ouattara and the RHDP

Current President Alassane Ouattara heads the *Rassemblement des Houphouëtistes pour la démocratie et la paix* (Rally of Houphouëtists Union for Democracy and Peace, RHDP) (Crisis Group, 2020a, pp. 5–6). The support base of Ouattara and the RHDP centres on the north and the northern migrants in southern Cote d'Ivoire (Boone, 2018). This particularly includes the Malinké, a northern ethnic group (Akindès, 2017; Crisis Group, 2020a, pp. 8–9). In March 2020, Ouattara announced that he formally would not run for the 2020 presidential election. Prime Minister Amadou Gon Coulibaly was designated as the new candidate for the ruling party (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 5).

⁷⁴ This section does not mean to be an exhaustive presentation of political leaders and parties in Cote d'Ivoire. Instead, it summarises information about those actors mentioned in references that discuss the effects of political economy on development in Cote d'Ivoire and that were selected for use in the present report (as subject to the time constraints of the Helpdesk service).

The RHDP, created in early 2019, “is much less strong electorally than Ouattara’s entourage had hoped”, for two reasons. First, another major party, the PDCI, declined to support it by merging into it – this is discussed in greater detail later (Crisis Group, 2020a, pp. 5–6). Second, Ouattara’s decision to withdraw from the presidential race in March 2020 also weakened the RHDP, “because it accentuated divisions within the new ruling party” (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 6). The designation of Amadou Gon Coulibaly as candidate has not stopped these divisions. Many “party members doubt he has either the political clout or sufficient popularity to lead the party to victory”, and has been in poor health – he was evacuated to Paris in May for undisclosed medical reasons (Crisis Group, 2020a, pp. 6–7).

Henri Konan Bédié and the PDCI

Former President Henri Konan Bédié heads the *Parti démocratique de Côte d’Ivoire* (Democratic Party of Cote d’Ivoire, PDCI). The PDCI is the main opposition party (Crisis Group, 2020a, pp. 5–6). The support base of the PDCI includes members of the Baoulé, “a subgroup of the Akan with roots in the centre that is more aligned with the PDCI” (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 8).

Laurent Gbagbo and the FPI

Former President Laurent Gbagbo has kept influencing Ivorian politics despite his long-lasting absence from the country since he was detained in the Hague for the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC recently acquitted him of crimes against humanity in connection with the 2010-2011 violence, but the ICC prosecutor has appealed the acquittal (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 7). Similarly, his ally, former pro-Gbagbo rebel leader and former youth minister Charles Blé Goudé was acquitted by the ICC, pending appeal (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 7).

The ICC had until recently required Gbagbo and Blé Goudé to remain respectively in Belgium and in the Netherlands pending resolution of their cases (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 7). But in late May 2020, it authorised Gbagbo and Blé Goudé to leave their European cities under certain conditions, opening the way for their return to Cote d’Ivoire (Crisis Group, 2020b). Gbagbo’s return to Cote d’Ivoire could “lend credence to his purported innocence and the image of success in his struggle against Ouattara and Western bias”, making him “a larger than life figure ahead of elections” (Penar, n.d.).

Gbagbo “continues to hold a bastion of popular support in the country, including his home area in Western Côte d’Ivoire” (Penar, n.d.). Specifically, the support base of Gbagbo’s party, the *Front Populaire Ivoirien* (Ivorian Popular Front, FPI), centres on the country’s centre-west and some parts of the south (Boone, 2018; Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 8). The FPI is a dominant actor in the opposition (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 11).

However, the FPI is divided, and Gbagbo’s potential return raises the question of internal party loyalties. Early on in Gbagbo’s absence, the FPI fragmented between those loyal to him and those interested in moving beyond his legacy, with two major camps (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 11; Penar, n.d.).

On the one hand, “Aboudramane Sangaré, Gbagbo’s friend, dismissed attempts to continue the party’s work without him” (Penar, n.d.). Sangaré and like-minded officials believed that Gbagbo would return to Cote d’Ivoire, ready to contest incumbent Ouattara after the ICC proceedings ended. Sangaré sought to maintain Gbagbo’s centrality in the opposition movement. While Sangaré died in late 2018, his legacy in this regard remains (Penar, n.d.).

On the other hand, Affi Pascal N'Guessan, who was prime minister under Gbagbo's presidency, has led efforts to move beyond Gbagbo's legacy. He took over the presidency of the FPI before the 2015 presidential election, sparking "vehement protests from Gbagbo loyalists" (Penar, n.d.).

N'Guessan then decided to contest the 2015 presidential election, and met then French president Francois Hollande in advance of the election. This created controversy and led Gbagbo loyalists to suggest N'Guessan was paid by France to contest the election, although the claim has never been verified. N'Guessan lacked both popular support and internal support in the party, with calls in the FPI to await Gbagbo's return. In addition, the rest of the opposition called to boycott the election. In the end, voter turnout was a low 55%, when it had been 80% in the 2010 presidential election. N'Guessan garnered just over 9% of the vote, against Ouattara's nearly 84%. Since then, "N'Guessan has experimented with different political alliances and has seemingly not reconciled with Gbagbo loyalists" (Penar, n.d.).

Guillaume Soro and the GPS

Guillaume Soro is a former rebel leader, who led the now defunct Forces Nouvelles rebels in the north of the country during the civil war. He was prime minister from 2007 to 2012. He then backed Ouattara against Gbagbo in the 2010-2011 post-electoral crisis, and became prime minister. However, he has refused to support the merger of the RHDP coalition parties, and has announced his intention to run for president in 2020 (Crisis Group, 2020a, pp. 6–8). He has created a political party called *Génération et Peuples Solidaires* (GPS, Generations and People in Solidarity).

Albert Toikeusse Mabri and the UDPCI

The *Union pour la démocratie et pour la paix en Côte d'Ivoire* (Union for Democracy and Peace in Côte d'Ivoire, UDPCI) is "a small regional party with a strong electoral footprint in the country's mountainous west" (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 7). Specifically, its roots are in the Tonkpi region (Allouche & Bley, 2017). It was founded in 2001 by General Robert Gueï. Following the assassination of Gueï in the 2002 coup, its new president has been Albert Mabri Toikeusse. The UDPCI has sought a national audience, but remains "perceived as a Tonkpi ethno-regional party" (Allouche & Bley, 2017, p. 147).

Toikeusse is a potential presidential candidate (Crisis Group, 2020b). The UDPCI has remained part of the RHDP following the coalition merger, but has still been affected by the fallout, as it has become split between pro- and anti-RHDP factions (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 7). In May 2020, President Ouattara used a cabinet reshuffle to dismiss Toikeusse, who was Minister for Higher Education and Science, and "appointed Albert Findé, Toikeusse's main rival within UDPCI, as minister for integration, in alleged attempt to isolate Toikeusse" (Crisis Group, 2020b).

Major deficiencies in public financing of political parties

While the legal framework governing the public financing of political parties is fairly solid, there are major deficiencies in practice. Problems include: marginalising some of the major parties; allocating insufficient amount to public financing in this area; maintaining opacity about how the allocated funds were used; political parties not publishing their accounts; deciding financing based on arbitrary preferences; not taking into account local elections when setting the basis for apportionment; and failing to set a ceiling to candidates' campaign expenses (Essis, 2020, p. 16).

Relations between key political leaders and parties

Parties that are often internally divided, in government and the opposition

Many of the major Ivorian parties are divided internally between different factions. In the opposition, many parties have been incapable of reconciling their own factions, while bemoaning the government's lack of dialogue (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 11). On the government's side, Ouattara's party has been "racked with internal disputes", as Miran-Guyon (2017, p. 11) notes in 2017 about the predecessor organisation to the RHDP⁷⁵. In addition, **the lack of democracy within parties encourages independents** to stand for elections (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 16).

Breakdown of ruling coalition in 2018, and RHDP ruling alone

It was a coalition of parties under Ouattara's leadership that helped Ouattara win the presidential elections in 2010 and 2015. Yet, "[s]tarting in 2018, in preparation for the forthcoming election cycle, the cadre of senior officials and supporters closest to [...] Ouattara tried to secure near certain victory for him by forcing a merger between his [...] party and five other parties" that, together, formed the umbrella coalition called RHDP. Their aim was to secure a majority in the first round of the 2020 presidential election, by morphing the ruling coalition into a party, the RHDP, and lessening coalition partners' power (Crisis Group, 2020a, pp. 5–6; Penar, n.d.).

However, some coalition partners disagreed with this merger. They argued that the coalition "had twice delivered power into Ouattara's hands [...], and that it was time for another party's leader to take its helm" (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 6). When Ouattara nevertheless pressed forward, members of the ruling coalition quit the arrangement, including the main partner, the PDCI, which left in 2018 (Crisis Group, 2020a, pp. 5–6; Penar, n.d.). On top of this, before eventually withdrawing from the 2020 presidential contest, Ouattara signalled for months that he might stand for a third consecutive term. This too contributed to the falling apart of the ruling coalition, as the now former coalition partners were hostile to Ouattara entertaining a third term (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 5; Penar, n.d.). The merger went ahead and resulted in the creation of the RHDP in early 2019 (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 6).

Alliances under construction between opposition parties

Opposition parties have been seeking alliances with one another. In particular, the FPI and PDCI have allied. "This new alliance poses a significant political threat to the RHDP's chance for victory" (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 7).

Gbagbo is likely to play a significant role in the 2020 election for several reasons: because he retains some popularity in his party and parts of the population; because the coalition that won presidential elections in 2010 and 2015 – led by President Alassane Ouattara – has fallen apart; and because the opposition remains divided. Indeed, Gbagbo's influence has shaped divisions in the opposition. Gbagbo's return could therefore shape coalition politics before the elections (Penar, n.d.).

⁷⁵ For a detailed discussion of the coalition that was on Ouattara's side until 2018, see: (Piccolino, 2018).

Mix of de-escalation and hostile actions by ruling party towards opposition parties

Ouattara's actions during his second mandate have displayed a mix of de-escalation and hostile actions towards opposition parties.

For instance, **when Ouattara announced that he formally withdrew from the 2020 presidential race, this helped defuse a potential crisis**, by “avoiding a major dispute over the constitutionality of his running for a third term”, and mitigating tensions between the ruling party and the opposition (Crisis Group, 2020a, pp. 5–6).

However, over the past months, the government has launched a campaign of intimidation against the opposition, targeting high-profile figures, which has jeopardised opportunities at dialogue and fuelled resentment (Crisis Group, 2019). Opposition politicians, including from the FPI and PDCI, have accused Ouattara's government of hampering them from competing against the RHDP's presidential candidate. Crisis Group notes these “developments are reminiscent of politics in Côte d'Ivoire in 1999, during Bédié's presidency”, where judicial action and exclusion against opposition leaders “proved to be the first step in a rapidly escalating crisis that culminated in the country's partition two years later” (Crisis Group, 2020a, pp. 7–8).

First, opposition politicians accuse the RHDP of using Ivorian courts to sideline political leaders and to “put them and their supporters behind bars on spurious grounds” (Crisis Group, 2020a, pp. 5, 7).

Regarding the PDCI, in late 2019, “a court jailed the PDCI's vice president, Jacques Mangoua, for weapons possession, releasing him three months later” (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 7).

Regarding the FPI, Gbagbo has complained about being subjected to victor's justice both domestically and internationally⁷⁶. He “remains subject to a 2018 conviction in absentia and a twenty-year sentence issued by an Ivorian national court for ‘robbery’ of the central bank following his electoral defeat in 2010”, and his ally Charles Blé Goudé was “convicted in absentia by an Ivorian court, in his case for ‘acts of torture, homicide and rape’” (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 7). Some opposition leaders argue that these sentences were politically motivated, to deter Gbagbo and Blé Goudé from returning to Cote d'Ivoire before the 2020 election, however their cases are resolved in The Hague (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 7).

Regarding Soro, in late 2019, Ivorian authorities issued a criminal warrant for Guillaume Soro's “arrest on suspicion of coup plotting, money laundering and embezzlement just as he was wrapping up a lengthy visit to Europe, causing him to defer his trip home” (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 7). Authorities also jailed 19 of Soro's collaborators, including military personnel, parliamentarians, and family members. In April 2020, an Ivorian court sentenced Soro to 20 years in jail for embezzlement, and 14 members of the military, including two senior officers, were arrested as part of the investigation into Soro's alleged coup attempt (Crisis Group, 2020a, pp. 6–7, 2020b).

⁷⁶ (Rosenberg, 2017, cited in Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 11)

The situation came before the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). Just days before the Ivorian court convicted him, the ACHPR requested that Ivorian authorities suspend his arrest warrant, arguing that it risked seriously compromising his political rights and freedoms, and that his 19 collaborators be released. In reaction, Cote d'Ivoire withdrew from the ACHPR. In May 2020, authorities continued legal proceedings against Soro (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 7, 2020b).

Second, opposition politicians complain that authorities have created a climate of harassment and intimidation. For example, PDCI officials told Crisis Group that they were "subjected to regular harassment, from high-level arrest to petty interference in party operations" (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 7). The president "declares himself a democrat, but governs unopposed" (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 16).

Key elite actors outside formal politics

A number of powerful individuals and groups are part of the Ivorian elites but outside formal politics, especially in the business world. However, the targeted, rapid literature review conducted for this report found little information on them (especially since media were not among the types of sources reviewed). A few of these figures were discussed as illustrations earlier in the report in relation to illicit financial flows, p. **Error! Bookmark not defined.** One important observation from that discussion is that **the Ivorian business elites concerned seem to typically have close connections to partner elites in the formal political system** as part of their strategies to accumulate and consolidate wealth.

Military and security forces

The national army has remained factionalised⁷⁷. It "is essentially a patchwork of cohorts recruited by successive regimes, which at different times have favoured different ethnic groups" (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 8). As a result, the different cohorts owe their loyalty to the respective political leaders "who placed them in their positions over the two past decades" (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 5).

These cohorts lack cohesion and discipline. The national army already lacked discipline and cohesion by the early 2000s. Then, the process of DDR brought into the army former rebel troops who had no military training or culture of discipline, and deserters who had subsequently joined the rebellion. This added a further layer of difficulty (Akindès, 2017, p. xii)⁷⁸. Presently, the equilibrium within the military is delicate, and vulnerable to political, ethnic, and social tensions. This creates a high risk that it could fragment along partisan lines in a prolonged political crisis (Crisis Group, 2020a, pp. 5, 8). However, for now, the security apparatus has not become "drawn into this year's electoral politics, but that might change" (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 8).

Moreover, although the Gbagbo side lost the war militarily, Ouattara's victory was ambiguous: he did not come to power through elections, instead having to rely on French and UN forces, as well as rebel troops. As a consequence, **Ouattara has remained beholden to the former rebels.** This debt puts the president in an equivocal relationship with them, and narrows his room for manoeuvre on justice and on the potential restructuring of the army (Akindès, 2017, p. xi).

⁷⁷ (Crisis Group, 2020a; Clément-Bollée, 2017; cited in Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 18)

⁷⁸ On DDR, also see: (Chelphi-den Hamer, 2015; Ehlert, 2018; Ehui, 2019).

In particular, **zone commanders or com'zones** associated with the former armed wing of the rebellion, the *Forces Armées des Forces Nouvelles* (Armed Forces of the New Forces, FAFN), still enjoy an important, ambiguous role⁷⁹. From 2002 to 2011, com'zones and the armed rebels they led “behaved in an increasingly predatory manner” (Akindès, 2017, p. xii). Those who had become com'zones profited from war and pillaging of natural resources in the territories under their control (Akindès, 2017, p. xii).

The “Ouattara regime was brought to power partly with the FAFN's support”. 8,400 of FAFN soldiers subsequently joined the national army. These soldiers then demanded more, and “became a constant source of unrest and instability”. Soldiers who felt they were not rewarded enough for their support to Ouattara “led a growing number of mutinies, threatening to destabilise the regime until their financial demands were met”⁸⁰.

This culminated in the **2017 mutinies**, when these former rebels integrated in the army revolted. In response, they were handsomely paid to return to the ranks, with each of the 8,400 soldiers receiving EUR 18,000 euros. However, many Ivorians “saw this as a reward for rebellion, and saw the soldiers as mercenaries”⁸¹.

Another group whose members have moved in and out of rebel and formal armed forces has been **dozo hunters, a group of initiated hunters**. Over the past 25 years, they have occupied positions as hunters, unofficial police, rebels in the ‘New Forces’ (*Forces nouvelles*) army – including as com'zones for the FAFN –, State soldiers in the ‘Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire’ (*Forces républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire*, FRCI) supporting Ouattara in 2011, and members of the security forces in bodies such as *gendarmerie* (Hellweg & Médevielle, 2017).

In factions of the army not associated with Ouattara, there is widespread discontent too.

One reason is resentment against the impunity and political double standards in favour of former rebels, and against the high incomes and lavish lifestyles of some of the former rebels. Other reasons causing discontent in the army at large include: animosity among loyalist troops against former rebels; the presence of soldiers loyal to Gbagbo who were hoping for a “rematch”; the presence of exiled troops hostile to Ouattara on Cote d'Ivoire's borders; and the many small arms in circulation (Akindès, 2017, p. xiii).

Among “**political figures who enjoy a measure of loyalty**” within the armed forces is Soro, who still has some residual allegiance from army commanders. In addition, the PDCI, as part of its own campaign, “appointed retired general Michel Gueu, who directed Soro's military cabinet when he was prime minister and still enjoys ties to the armed forces, as its new vice president” (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 8).

⁷⁹ (Leboeuf, 2017; Hellweg, 2017; cited in Miran-Guyon, 2017a, pp. 18–19)

⁸⁰ (all quotes in this paragraph from Clément-Bollée, 2017, Diallo, 2017, cited in Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 19)

Also see: (Leboeuf, 2017).

⁸¹ (Akindès, 2017, pp. xiii–xiv; Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 5; Clément-Bollée, 2017, cited in Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 19 - all quotes from Miran-Guyon)

Outside the army, **police and gendarmerie have also formally undergone security sector reforms**. The reforms have achieved some notable results in professionalising these bodies, while also being objects of power struggles and influence among both international and Ivorian actors (Leboeuf, 2016)⁸².

Key State institutions

In addition to the **executive, legislative, and judicial branches** discussed elsewhere in this report, one key State institution is the **Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)**. It is responsible for organising, administering, and supervising the 2020 elections. The current make-up of the commission is as follows (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 9):

- Three seats to political parties close to President Ouattara, as well as one appointed by the President, and one appointed by the Minister of interior;
- Six “to members of civil society who are meant to be independent (though opposition politicians have doubts as to their independence)”;
- Five to opposition parties (there were four initially, and in March 2020 the government granted an additional one to address the opposition’s complaints of bias in the IEC).

The person appointed president of the IEC is from the north of the country, where the ruling party is electorally strong (Crisis Group, 2020a, p. 9).

Civil society organisations

Religious institutions and organisations

Cote d’Ivoire “has experienced a **powerful, prolific religious awakening**, related both to the crises it has been through and to the neoliberal turn” (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 20). Religious practices and imaginaries “have become an important part of daily life for Ivorians of all ages and from all walks of life” (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 20). This has stemmed from a ‘supply’ of religion from religious organisations and leaders, but also from more grassroots dynamics, such as socialisation and community mobilisation through internet and social media (Binaté, 2017a).

Moreover, the significantly reduced presence of the State in some regions has weakened the provision for basic needs (health, education, justice and security), particularly in the west and north, creating a vacuum that religious entrepreneurs and institutions have filled, or could try to fill (Anonymous, 2015). Examples include Islamic religious schools, called *medersas* in Cote d’Ivoire (Binaté, 2016a; Indigo Côte d’Ivoire & Interpeace, 2019b), and development activities around times of religious festivals (Binaté, 2016b). The giving of gifts to children by evangelical Christian NGOs is another example (LeBlanc & Koenig, 2019). Further, when the State turns into a wrongdoer in people’s perceptions, this opens up further space for religious organisations (Gawa, 2017).

⁸² This rapid literature review found very few references focused on police and gendarmerie that discussed their political economy and the link to development. However, the issue of general public security is clearly of importance to development, and the Afrobarometer surveys showing mistrust towards security forces can offer relevant information about this (see Afrobarometer, n.d.).

Different religious organisations and individuals have had different relations with Ivorian politics, some advancing cooperation, others hostility. For example, among Christians, Pentecostals played an important role in the hard line taken by the Gbagbo regime in the 2010-2011 crisis⁸³. Ever since Ouattara's inauguration, some nationalist circles in the evangelical movement hope that Gbagbo will return to power (Anonymous, 2015; Ngimbous, 2020). Their capacity to maintain a desire for revenge and latent belligerence is real, although reduced. Among Muslims, there is wide diversity in branches, associations, and national and transnational influences. This includes is a Wahhabi current. It is also worth noting that the great majority of Lebanese in Cote d'Ivoire are close to Hezbollah (Anonymous, 2015)⁸⁴.

Conversely, a number of religious authorities but also grassroots believers have promoted peace and inclusion, as one article about Muslims on social media noted (Binaté, 2017a). However, the relations between political and religious leaders come with ambiguities. For example, since Ouattara assumed power, the leading imams in Abidjan, who head national Islamic organisations, have been close to power and regularly called upon for advice. In return, they have amassed a variety of generous benefits. "Many cadres from Islamic associations have risen up the regime hierarchy" (Miran-Guyon, 2017b, p. 237). Simultaneously, the imams have toned down their denunciations of authorities' failings, while community redistribution has ground to a halt. Yet, the Muslim majority keeps experience social hardships, and protesting (Miran-Guyon, 2017b, p. 237).

Agricultural cooperatives

Agriculture cooperatives are important actors in Ivorian political economy, but **their internal workings are rarely democratic and egalitarian, and their impact on their members, wider society, and the natural environment are ambiguous and contextual**⁸⁵.

For instance, **in the cocoa sector, the years 2000s-2010s saw a rise in cooperatives, mostly under external impetus.** In the 2000s, subsidies and tax incentives helped *cadres* (managers and executives) and large growers create cooperatives. At the same time, during the political-military crisis, many trackers and handlers who were based in areas of contact between loyalist and rebel forces "made a fortune exporting cocoa through Burkina Faso and Togo", by taking for themselves part of the tax on cocoa that escaped the government (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, p. 81). As soon as they got the chance, they converted their business in a cooperative. Then, at the turn of the 2000s-2010s, many other cooperatives were created, partly to benefit from premiums that come with certifying cocoa, partly at the behest of cocoa multinationals as these seek to secure their supply (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, p. 81).

In principle, organising the cocoa sector into cooperatives and getting industry support through certification are positive dynamics. Indeed, cocoa cooperatives have brought about some advantages compared to 2000. Local buyers' monopolies have regressed. There is greater competition between cooperatives. Growers can get more regular services, such as credit and deliveries for fertilisers. Growers wish to have such services, but as the cocoa industry pushes for them too, growers are pushed to take risks.

⁸³ (on Pentecostals, also see Gawa, 2017)

⁸⁴ Institutions connected to traditional or animist practices also play an important role in political economy. See for example the discussion of the political and military roles played by initiated *dozo* hunters, in the section p. 57.

⁸⁵ (Adouobo N'Doly, 2018; Akre, 2019; Gbede, 2018; Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019)

However, **cooperatives are flawed with structural dysfunctions, leading to numerous negative effects. First, many cooperatives lack a democratic, truly distributive structure.** Many are merely family and private commercial businesses that took on the status of cooperative, but focus on their profit margins more than on growers' interests. In these, managers and leaders are very close to the founders and board chair. Boards are frequently made up of relatives of the board chair. Such teams are not inclined to defend producer members' interests. The leadership thus holds back information, partly captures premiums, and redistributes the rest poorly to members (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, pp. 9, 82–83). The trainings that cooperatives supposed provide their members are also highly questionable and of little interest to growers⁸⁶.

Second, cooperatives and certification systems for cocoa have not led to better environmental practices. International NGOs and the chocolate industry have promoted so-called sustainable labels. Yet, in reality, one of cooperatives' few successes has been to facilitate members' access to pesticides and fertilisers. While useful, these inputs go against claims about reasonable environmental practices in the cocoa sector. Moreover, the system made up of industry, certification, and cooperatives has failed to protect forests. Cooperatives do not actually check where cocoa that members bring them comes from, and thus do not exclude cocoa grown in protected areas (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, pp. 9, 82). For now, certifying bodies and agro-industries do not trace the origins of their cocoa upstream of cooperatives, and “traceability is a myth”⁸⁷.

Throughout the production and export circuit, certification leads to “an enormous system of fraud”, in which growers are the silenced losers while cooperative leaders, cocoa intermediaries supplying cooperatives, certifying bodies, cocoa exporters, and multinationals do well (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, pp. 82–84). On the ground, cocoa growers do not feel that certification speaks to them. Cooperatives' certifications lack transparency and tend to lead growers into a dead end (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, p. 9)⁸⁸.

Student unions

Student unions have been powerful drivers of upward socioeconomic mobility before, during, and after the civil war. For instance, some former student union members have gone on to work in public financial authorities (*régies financières*). However, how much members benefit from having belonged to a student union depends on individuals' pre-existing advantages, i.e. the effects reproduce social inequalities that existed in the student unions and in the rebellion. Having participated in violent student struggles in the 1990s and then in the rebellion can open the doors to the State thanks to social capital. But not all individuals can then convert this social capital into a symbolic one that would confer them legitimacy for local and national political mobilisation. That requires having accumulated enough capital during the rebellion, which in turn requires belonging to some student generations before the war. Overall then, student union activism is a pathway to the political-administrative field, but the pathway to politics and its associated social rise are only open to those with the most resources (Popineau, 2019).

⁸⁶ (Ruf & N'dao, 2013, Hadley, 2016, Uribe-Leitz & Ruf, 2015, 2019, Ruf et al. 2017, Bouessel 2017, cited in Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, p. 82)

⁸⁷ (Ruf, Salvan, et al., 2019, p. 82; also see Ruf, Uribe Leitz, et al., 2019; Sanial & Ruf, 2018)

⁸⁸ Also see: (Odijie, 2018).

Trade unions and associations

Although one author describes civil society as “apathetic and voiceless” (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 17), groupings and umbrella organisations of trade unions and associations have played important roles in protests and mobilisations. For example, in 2016, they issued notices of strikes or took strike action to demand better pay and conditions from the government (Akindès, 2017, p. xix).

Media, including press

The Ivorian press is diversified and quite free, but fragile due to its economic precariousness and its vulnerability to some partisan pressures and alignments (N.A., 2016), and suffers from a small base of consumers (Miran-Guyon, 2017a, pp. 17–18; N.A., 2016). Overall, there has been “a decline in the quality of editorial offerings, [a] steady fall in newspaper sales, and [a] passive response from professionals in the sector” (Sangare, 2017, p. 230). Many media perpetuate the country’s partisan antagonisms (Coulibaly, 2016).

Middle classes

Social differentiation has emerged over the long run of Ivorian history, with the emergence of middle categories a part of this, but **the relevance of the notion of ‘middle class’ in Cote d’Ivoire has been questioned**⁸⁹. Certainly, general and business media frequently mention the notion of ‘middle classes’, as economic actors in the markets of consumption and advertising systematically feed the media buzz (Berrou et al., 2019, p. 16). However, actual socioeconomic changes have been far less clear-cut and the relevance of the term ‘middle class’ has been challenged because it conflates two distinct realities (Berrou et al., 2019, p. 16):

- Most often, it refers to the wealthiest categories regularly getting richer. In this perspective, the ‘middle class’ focuses the wealthiest households in the population. Indeed, actors working for public institutions typically define the middle class by income levels that put people at the threshold for the 5% richest.
- It also refers to the trajectories of people coming out of poverty. However, these trajectories are “unstable and variable in duration and frequency”, with dynamics that are insufficient to increase and stabilise the basis of any purported middle class. In a country where people are still largely poor, any ‘middle class’ is juxtaposed with high poverty rates and a floating class of highly vulnerable people whose trajectory reflect the expansion of markets into the bottom of the pyramid rather than the expansion of traditional middle classes.

To better understand the middle categories in Cote d’Ivoire, a group of authors looked at the intermediate class of household incomes in the country in 2015. They started the range for middle classes at people with a *per capita* income of US\$ 4 per day, and went up to the 95th percentile of the distribution. They found that, thus defined, **the “monetary middle class” actually represents a small 26.4% of the population** (Berrou et al., 2018, p. 3).

⁸⁹ On middle classes and their lifestyles, relevant references include: (Bekelynck et al., 2017; Berrou et al., 2018, 2019, 2020; Nallet, 2018a, 2018b).

Within this middle class:

- **48.1% of household heads have no education;**
- **Nearly 60% of people are urban,** and 16% of them live in Abidjan.

The middle class is split in two, and fragmented into five subgroups when examined by education and socio-professional situation (Berrou et al., 2018, p. 3, 2019, pp. 22–23, 25, 27, 29, 33, 37):

- **79% are a low stratum made up of households that oscillate between some small prosperity and great vulnerability, comprising primarily informal independents in urban areas, and farmers.** They include a middle class emerging ‘from below’ in the agricultural sector and the informal economy, with an average income but high vulnerability to problems such as unstable incomes and insecure land tenure. Their position and living conditions remain precarious, as they do not have enough social and economic capitals to stabilise their situation and to face shocks. Some of them rely in diversifying their activities to significantly increase their income
 - **25% are farmers or informal waged employees in agriculture.** They have low incomes and education, as well as low levels of equipment, connectivity, and demand for leisure activities. While some farmers own their land, agricultural workers are highly vulnerable and need multi-activity to make ends meet.
 - **39% are informal workers,** in all sectors of the economy. They have low incomes and education, but some marked entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviours. They are often young and/or migrant.
 - **15% are pensioners and inactive people.** They have average incomes, but are less educated, and have low levels of equipment, connectivity, and demand for leisure activities. There is a greater share of women-headed households among them.
- **21% are a high, stabilised strata made up of people who owe their position to the legacy they inherited from intermediate groups who did well in the 1960s-1970s.** This strata’s lifestyles are more akin to those of wealthy groups, in material comfort, consumption (e.g. supermarkets, malls), and investment in real estate or plantations of crops such as rubber trees.
 - **4% are workers in the formal private sector,** constituting the intermediate middle class. They have high incomes and education, and are typically urban, with a number of them living in Abidjan.
 - **17% are employers, managers, cadres, and intermediate professions in the public sector.** They have the highest incomes and education, and are typically urban.

The middle classes, particularly those in informality, have a conflictual relation to the State. Their emergence takes place at least partly through strategies that are at the margins of the public frameworks of State, law, and tax, and people in the informal economy have a complex relation to State institutionalisation. One reason for this is that these ‘strugglers’ are largely outside the tax regime, but also outside the formal system for redistribution, while remaining subject to indirect taxes. Another reason is that informal groups, especially those in urban areas, are under the greatest community pressure to redistribute income between households (Berrou et al., 2019, p. 34). In solidarity networks, they are able to help the poorest

members, but have trouble getting financial help themselves⁹⁰. Since public services are deficient, integrating them into formal redistribution systems could reinforce their feeling of being at others' beck and call (Berrou et al., 2019, pp. 34–35).

Still, **Ivorian middle classes display very little political involvement**. Three factors limit their political expression (Berrou et al., 2019, pp. 43–44):

- they are highly heterogenous, so have diverging interests and configurations;
- they have little experience of collective mobilisation;
- they remain bruised by the costs of the political and military crises in the 2000s, which leads them to generally favour the status quo as long as the ruling power guarantees stability and access to prosperity.

This starkly reduces their capacity to put pressure on the political sphere. The exception to this is middle class groups that mobilise for collective demands on the basis of their socio-professional identity, such as public civil servants, waged employed in the formal private sector, and members of the military. Other than this, middle classes' essential motivations are to pursue personal, fairly material interests – e.g. living standards, housing, security –, and to protect their strategies of personal and family promotion. However, members of the middle classes near unanimously denounce rising inequalities and corruption, and some of the have joined in protests such as those against an increase in electricity prices in 2015-2016 (Berrou et al., 2018, p. 3, 2019, pp. 43–44).

There tends to be politically opposite relations to politics and power between the newer and older parts of the middle classes. Newer members of the middle classes are more in favour of democracy and human rights than older ones. Still, the inertia of the middle classes in effect supports the regime in place as long it ensures their prosperity and wellbeing (Berrou et al., 2019, p. 45).

Immigrants with longstanding presence

Lebanese community and immigrants

The Lebanese constitute a large community in Cote d'Ivoire, with one estimate putting their number at roughly 60,000-100,000 persons – the higher end of the range would make Cote d'Ivoire the main host country of Lebanese in Africa, and the fourth in the world (Anonymous, 2015, p. 5; Czajka, 2017, p. 11). According to estimates, they control over 50% of the Ivoirian economy, have almost 4,000 companies, employ over 300,000 people, and contribute 15% to tax revenue (Anonymous, 2015, p. 5). They include “at least some very wealthy individuals” (Czajka, 2017, p. 11). For example, in the 2015 SwissLeaks scandal, around two third of the 382 bank accounts held by Ivorian residents in tax havens belonged to Syro-Lebanese expatriates, who used the accounts to place large wealth (Czajka, 2017, p. 11).

⁹⁰ (Kroecker, 2016, cited in Berrou et al., 2019, p. 34)

French community and immigrants

There is a large community of French residents in Cote d'Ivoire. For example, according to the French government, there were 15,212 French nationals with residency in Côte d'Ivoire in 2014. One quantitative study deems it likely that many of these French immigrants earn high incomes in the formal private sector and in international organisations (Czajka, 2017, pp. 10–11).

Immigrants from West Africa

There is a consensus in the literature that immigrants from West Africa (coming typically from francophone countries) have made major contributions to Ivorian growth and development since independence, particularly in agriculture – see the relevant sections of this report on this (see e.g. Flan, 2018).

Remainder of Ivorian society

The literature found in this rapid review identified the remaining parts of the population in Cote d'Ivoire – in short, **the non-mobilised middle classes and the poor** – as being part of, and contributing to, the country's political economy. But it usually did not conclude that their roles in the political economy had a decisive effect on development, other than through more structural demographic, social, and economic change, or through mobilisations about socioeconomic or political issues that are limited in time and/or space, and that they do not necessarily initiate (e.g. political clientelism).

Foreign organisations and countries that are influential in Cote d'Ivoire

Large foreign companies play a central role in Ivorian economy, particularly in its main agricultural commodities for export – this is discussed in earlier sections of this report, e.g. in relation to cocoa.

Another important set of actors is **the countries, such as Mauritius, and organisations, such as Mossack Fonseca, that have acted as havens for individuals and corporations** that engaged in illicit – though not always illegal – financial flows (see the section on tax avoidance, p. 16).

Multiple international and regional organisations have relevance to, and some influence on, political economy and development in Cote d'Ivoire, including:

- Global international organisations:
 - **the World Bank** – the World Bank has strongly praised Cote d'Ivoire's recent macroeconomic trajectory, even describing the country as being 'at the gates of paradise' in a 2018 report (cited in Miran-Guyon, 2017a, p. 10)⁹¹;
 - **the IMF**, as Cote d'Ivoire has been using the IMF's extended credit and fund facilities (for a total amount of over US\$ 1,1100 million in special drawing rights in 2020, with an immediate disbursement of US\$ 133.4 million approved at the end of 2019), as well as US\$ 886.2 million under the rapid credit facility and the rapid financing instrument in response to the COVID-19 crisis in 2020⁹²;
 - **the UN system**, including the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel⁹³, which has engaged among others in development activities, peacebuilding⁹⁴, and electoral support⁹⁵.
- African regional organisations⁹⁶:
 - **WAEMU**;
 - **ECOWAS**;
 - the **African Union**, including the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights;
 - the **African Development Bank**;
- Among other regional organisations: **the European Union, and its member States** (Boone, 2018; see e.g. Crisis Group, 2020a, pp. 5–6; Elgazzar et al., 2019).

In aid, France, the World Bank group, the USA, the EU, and the IMF were the top five donors, according to the latest OECD-DAC data, for 2017-2018 (see See: Chart 3, p. 60)⁹⁷.

See: Chart 3. Top Ten Donors of Gross ODA for Côte d'Ivoire, 2017-2018 average, US\$ million, Source: (OECD - DAC, n.d.), https://public.tableau.com/profile/thielemans.v#!vizhome/OECDDACAidataglancebyrecipient_new/Recipients

Some **individual foreign countries** also influence Ivorian political economy and development. Below are highlights about individual foreign countries mentioned in the literature as having influence on Ivorian political economy and development. This is by no means exhaustive, and

⁹¹ (Boone, 2018; to see how the World Bank has been engaging on and with Cote d'Ivoire over the past five years, see e.g.: Carranza et al., 2017; Christiaensen & Premand, 2017; Cirera et al., 2017; Donald et al., 2020a, 2020b; Duran et al., 2020; Elgazzar et al., 2019; Fall & Coulibaly, 2016; Gebregziabher, 2018; Lonie et al., 2018; Morisset, 2016; Nguyen & Dizon, 2017; Streck et al., 2017; World Bank, 2015, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d)

⁹² (to see how the IMF has been engaging on and with Cote d'Ivoire over the past five years, see e.g. IMF, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020)

⁹³ (see e.g. Crisis Group, 2020a, pp. 5–6; Novosseloff, 2018a, 2018b; Ricard, 2016)

⁹⁴ (see e.g. Collin et al., 2017; Ezzo, 2018; Faria et al., 2019)

⁹⁵ (see e.g. Smidt, 2020)

⁹⁶ (see e.g. Boone, 2018; UNECA, 2015; Crisis Group, 2020a, pp. 5–6; Elgazzar et al., 2019)

⁹⁷ For discussions and critical analyses of aid, donor practices, and their impact, in various sectors, see e.g.: (Assoumou et al., 2019; Bassett et al., 2018; Bekelynyck et al., 2017; Burke et al., 2016; Collin et al., 2017; Falb et al., 2015; Falconer et al., 2017; Grajales, 2020b; Piccolino, 2017)

merely reflects available publications that could be used in the time available. Some important actors are thus missing, such as the **USA, and Burkina Faso**.

Former colonial power France keeps playing a major political, economic, commercial, financial, monetary, diplomatic, and military role in Cote d'Ivoire – this is a matter of consensus across the literature⁹⁸.

In addition to the aspects already mentioned elsewhere in this report, one important issue is that France maintains significant influence over the currency used in Cote d'Ivoire, and across the WAEMU more broadly, through its dominant role in the issuance, exchange rate, and policy of **Franc CFA**. A new currency, the **Eco**, to replace it was announced in late 2019 and is supposed to be introduced in the third quarter of 2020, although the specifics have remained fuzzy and debated. Some supporters of the Eco have presented it as a way to decrease or remove France's hold on the currency, but again, depending on the final set-up, whether this happens remains to be seen⁹⁹.

Other specific countries discussed in the literature include: **China** (Aurégan, 2015, 2017; Banga, 2018); **Ghana** (Augé, 2018; Babo, 2019); and **Turkey** (Binaté, 2019).

Lastly, **international NGOs in the areas of development, humanitarian aid, and environmental protection** are significant actors too in Cote d'Ivoire, although they are less influential than the other foreign actors discussed previously. International NGOs were discussed where relevant in other parts of this report.

⁹⁸ On the role of France, see e.g.: (Banégas, 2017b; Banga, 2018; Cumming, 2017; Pacquement, 2015)

⁹⁹ (for excellent discussions of CFA France and Eco, see e.g. Avom, 2019; Diagne, 2019; Jacquemot, 2016; Nubukpo, 2020)

8. References

Where a reference was available in more than one language, the English version was prioritised over the French one.

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Selected references about specific regions or localities

- On the north: (Carranza et al., 2017)
 - On the north (Savanes, incl. Korhogo): (Bassett, 2017; Heitz-Tokpa, 2019; Heitz-Tokpa & Mori, 2017)
 - On the northwest (Odienné): (Binaté, 2017b)
- On the east:
 - On the east-north (Bouna): (Speight, 2017)
 - On the east-centre (Abengourou): (Djezou, 2016)
- On the west: (Indigo Côte d'Ivoire & Interpeace, 2018a; Pritchard, 2016)
 - On the border regions with Liberia: (Conciliation Resources, n.d.)
 - On the Mountains region: (Kadet, 2015; Schwartz, 2016)
 - On the Tonkpi area: (Allouche & Bley, 2017; Kando et al., 2019)
 - On the Cavally region: (Samba et al., 2020)
- On the centre:
 - On the centre-north:
 - On Bouaké: (Zina, 2017a)
 - On the centre-west (High-Sassandra, Daloa):
 - On Daloa area: (Balac, 2016)
 - On High-Sassandra: (Barima et al., 2016; Indigo Côte d'Ivoire & Interpeace, 2019a; Zanh et al., 2019)
 - On the centre-south:
 - On Gôh-Djiboua (formerly Fromager) district: (Montaz, 2017)
- On the south: (Amin et al., 2015)
 - On the south-east (South Comoé): (Grajales, 2020b)
 - On the Abidjan district: (Akre, 2019; Banégas, 2017a; Becerra et al., 2020; Cardoso et al., 2016; Cutolo & Banégas, 2018; Djane, 2019; Indigo Côte d'Ivoire & Interpeace, 2015, 2017a, 2018b; Josset et al., 2020; Konaté, 2017; Kouamé Konan, 2016; Kouamé, 2017; Nallet, 2018a, 2018b; N'Dri et al., 2018; Richard, 2018; Schilling, 2017; Schilling et al., 2019; Schilling & Dembele, 2019)
 - On the south-west (San Pedro):
 - On Sassandra area: (Koné et al., 2017)
 - On Soubré area: (Ladji, 2017)
- On multiple sites in the north, south, centre, east, or west, through comparative studies: (Colin, 2017a; Colin & Tarrouth, 2017; Comoé & Siegrist, 2015; Fauret et al., 2018; Gonedélé Bi et al., 2019; McCauley & Posner, 2019; Nassa & Akablah, 2019; Tarrouth & Colin, 2016; Van Bockstael, 2019)

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Key websites

- Afrobarometer – Cote d'Ivoire: <http://afrobarometer.org/fr/pays/cote-divoire>
- *Côte d'Ivoire: The return of the elephant?* (2017). *Afrique Contemporaine*, 3(263–264, special issue). https://www.cairn-int.info/numero.php?ID_REVUE=E_AFCO&ID_NUMPUBLIE=E_AFCO_263
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- Interpeace – Resources – Côte d'Ivoire: <https://www.interpeace.org/resource/?type=0&programmes=cote-divoire&language=0&theme=0>
- UN Development Programme – Human Development Indicators – Côte d'Ivoire: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/CIV>

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