

DV435 Economic and Political Geography of Côte d'Ivoire

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This poster examines the topographical characteristics, economic conditions and political economy of Cote D'Ivoire. It is divided into four sections which focus on different aspects of the coast. The first column describes the geographic features of the Ivory Coast. The second, third and fourth columns analyze the history of the colonial institutions, political and economic structure in the region.

I. 1 Location



Located in west Africa lies Cote D'Ivoire also known as the Ivory Coast. It is bounded to the north by two landlocked countries - Burkina Faso and Mali, to the northwest by Guinea, to the east by Ghana, the southwest by Liberia and the south by the Gulf of Guinea running 515km. Dependent on forced African labour for its plantations, the neighbouring countries in the north served as a source of labour for the Ivory Coast during the colonial era.

Map Credit: CIA World Factbook

I. 2 Agro-Ecological Zones

Majority of the south and south west of the Ivory Coast are evergreen forests. The central area is split between tropical forests and savannas. The north is largely covered by savannas with deciduous forests scattered around the region.



Map Credit: UT Austin Map Collection

With an annual rainfall of <1500mm the north is less favourable for agricultural activities compared to the south with >1500mm annual rainfall

Map Credit: Encyclopedia Britannica

The vast savanna vegetation in the north makes the region prominent in the production and cultivation of palm kernel and peanuts. However, agricultural population in the forest region are more than the savanna region.

The Ivory Coast is self-reliant on bananas, maize, yams etc. With rice being her main grain, it is a staple, especially in the urban areas. Some of the key food crops include cocoyam, rice millet and sorghum (National Research Council, 1993)

I. 3 Mineral Resources

Diamond, coffee, natural gas, petroleum, cocoa beans, gold, palm oil are some of the resources found in the Ivory coast. With a dominant agricultural presence, it is the world's largest producer and exporter of cocoa beans. It is also a major producer and exporter of palm oil and coffee (CIA, 2020). As of 2016, it has been predominantly producing crude petroleum, petroleum products, manganese, silver, granite, natural gas, diamond, crushed stone, cement and gold. Though untapped, deposits of iron ore, bauxite, silica sand, copper, nickel, cobalt have been discovered (USGS, 2016). With 5 gold mines all within 40-700 km from Abidjan, the de facto capital, Cote D'Ivoire has produced 20,827kg of gold (Au) in 2016.

Majority of its natural resources can be found in the southern, central and eastern regions with iron ore deposits found only in the west. Cocoa planting stretches through the northeast to the southern region of Sassandra whereas coffee production extends from the northeast of Bonoukou to the south and western areas. Diamond are concentrated only in the north at Seguela and Tortiya. Timber exploration are done mainly in the south owing to the vast forest in the zone. Petroleum refineries and powerplants are situated in the south with one powerplant located in the central city of Bouake.

I. 4 Population

The tropical region in the south of the Ivory Coast is generally more densely populated than the savannah region of the north. From the 1965 map, we can observe that most regions in northern Cote D'Ivoire were sparsely populated, however, regions closer to the borders had more settlers.

The map also shows that the central area was densely populated. The southern region has a large settlement owing to the vast number of agricultural farmers and favourable farmlands. Immigrants amount for 20% of the Coast's population, thus, immigration from the poorer borders of Burkina Faso and Mali can partially be ascribed for the increasing population growth rates (National Research Council, 1993)



Map Credit: CIA World Factbook 2020

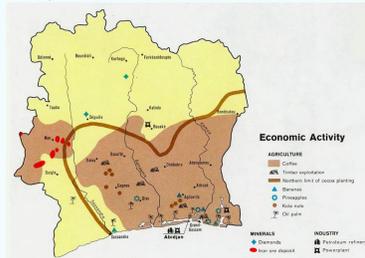
The Ivory Coast has experienced a 70.4% increase in its population from 1980 (7,900,000 people) - 2020 (26,900,000 people). It is predicted to experience a 12% increase in 2025 with an expected total population of 30.65 million. Every 19 years, the World Bank projects that the total number of urban population will double. There was an estimated 3.8% growth in urban population in 2013 (World Bank, 2015).



Map Credit: UT Austin Map Collection 1965

II. 1 Establishment of a colonial state

Ivory Coast, as it was known, became a French protectorate in 1843 after the French signed treaties with the chiefs from some Agni Kingdom including the Sanwi (Boone, 2003). It only became an official French colony in 1893 (Suret-Canale, 1964). The French rule was direct and highly centralized (MacLean, 2010). Through the Decree of 23 October 1904, the French state had a monopoly on land which gave them control over the agricultural land and forests well as the right to transfer land to settlers and traders (Suret-Canale, 1964). Around the country, they established arbitrary districts that took little to no account of common languages or cultures (Boone, 2003). They appointed Africans loyal to the French as their agents or "chiefs" to govern the rural areas. These chiefs did not function as sovereigns with authority but rather as mouthpieces of the for the colonial government aiding in spreading the influence of the French state (MacLean, 2010). Moreover, they did not have to be of the same ethnic group as those they were appointed to control; they did not even have to be from Ivory Coast.



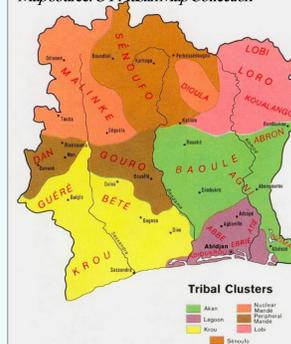
Map source: UT Austin Map Collection

II. 3 Infrastructure and agriculture

The French built roads even in forest regions of Cote d'Ivoire in order to transport goods between the north and the south, and to limit the risk of ambushes (Suret-Canale, 1964). The roads were made and maintained by forced labor. The construction of the country's first and only railway started in 1904, starting in Abidjan heading to the area of the Baoulé people. The railway connects Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso (OECD, 2006).

There were approximately 200 cocoa plantations by the 1920s, concentrated in the central western forest zone (Boone, 2003). It is important to note that these plantations were only marginally profitable, even more so after the abolition of forced labor. Smallholder farmers were the reason for the explosive growth of cocoa and coffee in Southern Cote d'Ivoire between 1920 and 1960. They relied on migrant labor from the poorest parts of the country as they were not allowed to use forced labor.

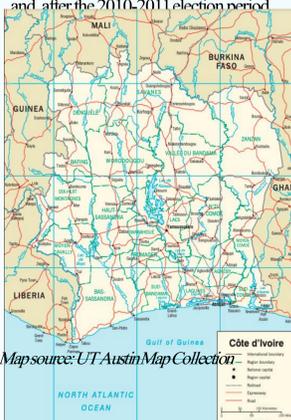
Map source: UT Austin Map Collection



Map source: UT Austin Map Collection

II. 2 Movement of Labour

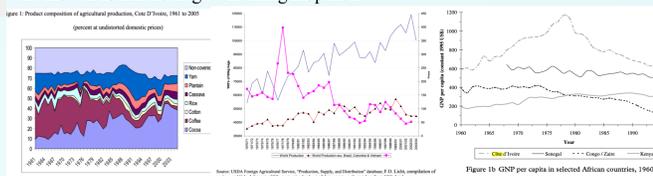
Amin (1972) categorized the colonial economy of Cote d'Ivoire as colonial trade economy. The colonial authorities were mainly interested in the country's cocoa and coffee, but they also exported forest resources such as wood (Oloruntimehin, 1974). The French authorities implemented a system of direct tax. The tax forced the locals to increase the production of cash crops and also contributed to the movement of people to plantation areas as either small scale farmers or migrant workers. Most of the labour on coffee and cocoa plantations was forced African labour (Boone, 2003; MacLean, 2010). The northern half of Cote d'Ivoire, especially Senoufoland, was regarded as a source of agricultural labor that could be used by force in the southern region of the country. Many of the laborers came from neighboring Mali and Burkina Faso (Mitchell, 2014). There were migrant labourers in the western forest regions as well. The movement of these migrants to the cocoa regions led to tensions around land between the locals and migrants which led to violence in the late 1990s, early 2000s and after the 2010-2011 election period.



Map source: UT Austin Map Collection

III. 1 Colonial Legacy and Temporal Progress

Post-1965 Houphouët-Boigny's policies were oriented toward export growth, import-substitution, small-scale industries alongside close relations with France. During this earlier period, there was major investment in industry and infrastructure which was fully subsidized by taxing agricultural exports, with successful economic growth (Somerville, 2015, p. 88). However, the dependence in international commodity price fluctuations rendered this economic dynamic unsustainable. In Côte d'Ivoire, coffee and cocoa have made up a disproportionate share of agricultural production—coffee taking up the largest share from 1961 until the 1980s and subsequently being surpassed by cocoa. It should be noted that the share of cocoa and coffee in agricultural production combined was the roughly the same in 1961 as it was in 2005, around 43%. These commodity prices fell greatly causing government revenues and surpluses to evaporate, and thereby erasing financial resources meant for industrialization, debt repayments and infrastructure after the 1980s (Somerville, 2015, p. 89). There is a direct correlation between declining commodity prices and increasing debt as well as decrease in growth during this period.



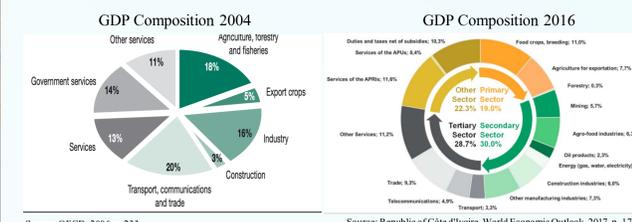
Sources: Abbot, 2007, p. 34; Lewin, et al., 2004, p. 64; Cooper, 2002, p. 94.

III. 2 Sectoral Economic Organization and Current Outlook

More recently, since 2000 there has been a significant shift in Côte d'Ivoire trade dynamics—a shift that might be explained by changing global power structures. At the beginning of this century, France was the largest trading partner, accounting for 14.2% of exports and 24.2% of imports. As of 2018, France has given way to the Netherlands (11%), the United States (9%), Vietnam (6.5%) and Germany (6.1%) in share of exports, whereas China has overtaken her on imports, with a share of almost 16% in 2018. Reaching a high of \$13.9B in exports in product trade in 2013, Côte d'Ivoire was off its highs but saw \$12.7B in total of exports, compared with \$4.4B in 2000. While this is an increase of 287%, it should be noted that the rate of increase in imports during the same time period of 18 years far outpaced it at 385%. Most importantly, cocoa bean production and crude and refined petroleum continue to make up the largest share of exports in Côte d'Ivoire, with virtually no change from 26.5% in cocoa beans and 14.8% in refined petroleum in 2000 to 27.8% in cocoa beans and 14.3% in refined and cure petroleum in 2018, hinting at failed attempts of diversification (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2020). Overall, Côte d'Ivoire has seen robust growth in recent years, far outpacing its regional counterparts, and far above the growth average for Sub-Saharan Africa and indeed the world. While it is projected that the secondary and tertiary sectors will continue to take up a larger share of nominal GDP—the secondary sector has been the fastest growing in recent years—the primary sector, comprised of agricultural production and exports has only seen a slight reduction from a total of 23% of GDP in 2004 to about 19% in 2016 (Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, 2017).



Source: Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, World Economic Outlook, 2017, p. 5.



Source: OECD, 2006, p. 233.

Source: Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, World Economic Outlook, 2017, p. 17.

IV. 1 The Rise of Regionalism as a Tool of State Centralisation

The fostering of regional differences by Houphouët-Boigny was vital for the formation of a centralised state, whilst in its infancy was successful it eventually proved unsustainable and destructive. Catherine Boone (2007) argues that state builders in Cote d'Ivoire institutionalised regional differences and ethnicized regional constituencies as part of building and maintaining central authority. Richard Crook (1997) thus characterises this dynamic in Cote D'Ivoire as a 'zero-sum game' whereby controlling central power is the main goal. As outlined prior, Ivorian politics has revolved around existing regional cleavages (Boone, 2007, pg70). Houphouët political origins fits this narrative when he built Syndicat Agricole Africain by bringing together Baoulé and northern commercial farmers, leading to the marginalisation of already existing planter bourgeoisie in the south-east (ibid, pg 70). This was then expanded in the Parti Democratique de la Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI) which further included populations of the south and south-west in the periphery of their coalition, not necessarily to their benefit however (ibid, pg 70). Essentially the political class that arose in the centralised state was characterised by regional (ethnic) factions that interacted for their own benefit within the centralised system, described as a 'hub and spokes' political structure that diminished the success of horizontal alliances and kept power at the centre (ibid, pg 70). This system relied heavily on strong economic performance and control over export-crop marketing circles, and also incentivised upgrading to 'expand the pie' to enable central control (via tools such as government hiring, making-side payments, financing political deals, and curtailing political opposition) (ibid, pg 73). Thus, the introduction of state-shrinking liberal policies fundamentally reduced the efficacy of this system, and ultimately led to the collapse of this



Image 1: Former president Laurent Gbagbo under protection by UN security forces following his defeat to legitimate president Ouattara. Gbagbo had refused to accept election results that would have ceded his title, triggering the short second Ivorian Civil War. He was charged by the ICC for human rights violations shortly after, and finally acquitted in 2018.



Map: The division of the country that lasted from 2002-2011 was along the North-South, and East to west divide representative of economic and political lines (Source Unknown).

IV. 2 New Competitive Regional Politics, Land Rights, and Civil Wars

The reduced power of the state hindered the efficacy of the centre-spoke political structure, whilst not effectively removing the importance of regionalism and ethnicization in the political economy. Open economic policies led to the loss of centralised state control over cocoa-coffee exports and fostered increased power and political mobilisation across the cocoa producing south (Boone, 2007). In the Liberian border new and independent power brokers arose with the opening of the little-regulate San Pedro port (ibid, pg 74). Additionally, the collapse of the central state led to increased conflict over the allocation of property rights between indigenes and those settling productively from the north which was used by political opportunists around the notion of the 'Ivorite' (Ibid, Pg 75). In the 1990s the governments campaign defining 'ivorite' aimed at excluding those who came, even from a generation back, from Burkina Faso or Mali (Cooper, 2002). This shift was a symptom of the collapse of PDCI's ability to maintain the central state structure. Finally, when the government made it impossible for the northern presidential candidate to run in the election due to new drafts declaring he needed at least two Ivorian born within the Ivory Coast (combined with desperate economic conditions for many Ivorians) the civil war broke out from 2002-2007 along regional north-west and south lines (as seen in Image 1 and 2). The following war occurred between November 2010 and April 2011.

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