

# Migrations and Nation Building in Black Africa: The Case of Ivory Coast since the Mid-Twentieth Century

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## Introduction

In the deep crisis that Ivory Coast is currently experiencing, an essential part of the debate is focused on the issue of immigrants. Some people argue that all immigrants living on Ivorian soil<sup>1</sup> should automatically be granted Ivorian citizenship by the state. Others think that Ivorian citizenship should not be granted even to those who have been resident in the country for a long period. The debate polarizes those who believe that citizenship is a right granted by birth in a particular state and those who believe that it derives from descent. This antagonism partly explains the magnitude of the country's internal conflict, as all states of West Africa are represented in Ivory Coast by their immigrants. Even though the number of immigrants<sup>2</sup> is currently decreasing, the country still houses the highest percentage of foreigners (26 per cent of the population in 1998) in black Africa.

Born as an independent state in 1960 out of the French empire, a state which overturned all the socio-political and economic structures in place before the twentieth century, and like the rest of the countries of the French empire, the state of Ivory Coast eventually achieved national consciousness by means of associations which thought of themselves as specifically Ivorian, on the pretext that they had been created by communities which had been in place before colonization.<sup>3</sup> But what is the point of arguing about citizenship rights when there have been massive migrations in Africa since the colonial conquest, and when these have still not introduced the same concept of citizenship in all African states?

A crossroads of different peoples even before the twentieth century, Ivory Coast was the French colonial territory in West Africa where there was the

largest and most varied migration throughout the colonial period. An analysis of this case can illustrate some aspects of state-building in post-colonial Africa and some of the paradoxes of the geopolitics of contemporary Africa, as well as the socio-political challenges of regional integration.

The purpose of this article is to clarify the issue of migration in Ivory Coast and to show why Ivory Coast has become the principal pole of attraction for West African migration between the mid-1950s and the end of the 1980s. It will discuss the perception that Ivorians and immigrants have of one another and of their role in the construction of the country – a perception which is divided between collaboration and enmity. Finally, it will look at ways of escaping from approaches which generate conflict and above all at how to respond to socio-political challenges, in Ivory Coast as well as in other West African states, in order to give regional integration a chance.

### The Scale of Migration in Ivory Coast since the Mid-Twentieth Century

The history of migration in Ivory Coast shows how the colonial period marks the starting-point for massive migrations in this country, flows which have remained large in the post-colonial period, at least until the 1980s.

In the inter-war period, migrants were largely obliged to leave their country of origin to flee forced labour. From the 1940s onwards, migrants were essentially seasonal workers, as forced labour was abolished in 1946 and the 'Code of indigenous labour' adopted in 1950.<sup>4</sup> Whether or not they were organized by the SIAMO trade union (*Syndicat interprofessionnel d'acheminement de la main d'oeuvre*), convoys of immigrants from other colonies, or from Savannah regions of the colony itself, were brought to the forest zones. This stimulated coffee and timber production in the 1950s: the 'boom' in population accompanied the economic boom.

Far from falling at independence, the influx of migrants grew (see Figure 1). The wave of *coups d'état* in Africa and the political uncertainty caused by certain regimes meant that there were occasionally politically refugees. But, in general, because of the strong economic growth which Ivory Coast experienced (an average rate of 9 per cent a year from 1959 to 1979), it was above all economic refugees who came into country from 1960 to 1980, with a sharp rise in the period 1970–80 at the time of the climate crisis in the Sahel countries. During the 1970s and 1980s, there was an influx of Fula herdsmen to the northern savannahs. As in Mali and Burkina Faso, their relations with the peasants in this zone became difficult in the 1980s.

Above and beyond these significant economic factors, the demographic explosion which had occurred all over West Africa since the 1950s also

explains the magnitude of the movements of population towards those regions where agriculture was expanding. In terms of the jobs and income other than those which such an economic system allow, the economic policy for both the colonists and the post-colonial period did not anticipate the effects of the demographic revolution. Thus the cocoa, coffee, timber and, later, oil sectors – that is, the forest zone of Ivory Coast – imported the bulk of able-bodied workers including migrants. The dynamism of the port of Abidjan, from its opening in 1950 onwards, and the structural effects of economic growth in secondary towns did the rest.

Thus, since the end of the colonial era, Ivory Coast has had a classic geopolitics of migration. There are zones of emigration (the whole savannah and the Sahel) and zones of immigration (the forest regions and their peripheries). The trends thus created cause an insidious depopulation of the so-called 'poor' regions, which are reduced to simple suppliers of labour and which are therefore major areas of emigration. During the colonial period, Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), French Sudan (now Mali) and Niger found themselves in this position, to the benefit of the peanut plantations in Senegal (the seasonal movement of the so-called '*navétanes*') and then later above all to the benefit of the coffee and cocoa plantations of Ghana and Ivory Coast. In Ivory Coast itself (see Figures 3 and 4), all the savannahs of the North and the centre were depopulated for this reason: in 1998, this part of the country, which represents 60 per cent of Ivorian territory, received only 13 per cent of the immigrants and counted 27 per cent of the whole population, against 40 per cent at the end of the 1950s.

Studied on the basis of biographies or censuses, these population movements changed both the composition and also the geographical layout of the Ivorian population. Over time, Ivory Coast became the main centre of attraction for the migratory flows in West Africa. Already in 1937, migration to the Ivory Coast was larger than migration to Senegal. In 1955, Ivory Coast had more immigrants from Upper Volta and French Sudan than Ghana did. This long-term trend, from which the Ivorian authorities sought to profit at the end of colonization (see the second four-year plan of 1958–1962) was maintained and even increased after 1965 and into the mid-1980s, making Ivory Coast the principal destination for West African migrants, with more migrants than any other African or European country.<sup>3</sup> The percentage of foreigners in the total population, which was estimated at 11 per cent in 1958, was 18 in 1965, 22 in 1975, 28 in 1988 and 26 per cent in 1998 (see Figure 1).

However, from 1980 onwards, Ivory Coast, like the rest of black Africa, suffered a serious economic depression and fell back on plans for structural adjustment. Job opportunities fell. Migratory trends dropped off, although there were no large-scale returns of immigrants to their countries of origin.

Longer-standing immigrants, those who had been in the country for fifteen years or more, and foreigners born in Ivory Coast, soon became at least as numerous as more recent immigrants.<sup>6</sup> However, a close analysis of the statistics and of the accounts given by certain immigrants shows that, at the turn of the 1980s, not only did Ivory Coast start to become a stepping-stone to other destinations, especially western Europe (above all France and Britain) but also Ivorians themselves started to emigrate, especially to Europe.<sup>7</sup>

In other words, the migration issue changed. In the context of the social and economic crisis of the 1980s, the social effects of the demographic increase (the population rose by a rate of 3.5 per cent a year in the 1980s) and of the effective integration of millions of long-standing immigrants began to be keenly felt. Although these latter were still regarded as foreigners, many of them had been born in the country.<sup>8</sup>

### **Ivorians and their Long-Standing Immigrants: Connivance and Rejection during the State-Building Process**

At the end of the 1950s, as was the case with other colonies,<sup>9</sup> Ivory Coast was confronted with the question of immigration and foreigners. Acts of violence were perpetrated against Dahomen and Togolese immigrants in October and November 1958 which the colonial authorities had difficulty containing.

However, in French West Africa, whether through the promotion of pan-African ideas or through the action of federal parties like the *Rassemblement démocratique africain* (African Democratic Alliance) or the African Regroupment Party, and trade unions (for instance, UGTAN, the General Union of Workers of Black Africa), there were numerous friendly exchanges. People fought for common goals, especially since they were all in the same colonial boat. Then, it seemed, the divisions were not between 'foreigners' and 'natives' but between colonizers and colonized.

In fact, there were attempts to exploit the immigrant populations for political ends, since their desire to return to their countries of origin remained permanent since the forced displacements of the inter-war years.

Indeed, as soon as the colonial relationship was set up, the balance of power set up by the colonial system reinforced the ancient feeling among West Africans that there was an irreducible difference between them and the white colonists. This feeling was present in the fight for political independence. At the same time, colonization introduced new perceptions and definitions of the foreigner which eventually superimposed themselves on traditional ideas. First of all, there was the establishment of borders between territories. Then, above all in the inter-war period, a whole pseudo-psychological discourse grew up which classified various 'native' communities in all the colonies according

to certain labels ('the courageous and docile Voltaians', 'the recalcitrant Senegalese', and so on). Finally, there were administrative practices founded on 'the control of native populations' and 'the respect of local customs'.<sup>10</sup> These encouraged populations to identify themselves with certain territories. The post-colonial authorities were to keep these policies intact.

There was evidence of this territorial consciousness throughout French West Africa when the empire promoted the autonomy of each colonial territory in the framework law of 1956. Numerous functionaries and assistants of the colonial regime returned to their countries of origin, while seasonal migration continued to be more significant than permanent migration (see Figure 5.)

In sum, when the existing state was created in 1960, it was not the case that the values of hospitality and traditional welcome were the rule everywhere or for all people. They had already been weakened by the ideology and socio-economic policies of the colonial system. It was on the basis of those policies that nation-building was implemented throughout West Africa. When the French colonial empire was moving towards independence for its colonies, the acts of violence committed in October and November 1958 against the Dahomen and the Togolese in Ivory Coast showed how extremely sensitive the question of immigrants had become at the end of the colonial period. It also raised the question of how to integrate immigrants into colonies like Ivory Coast, into which the colonial power had directed the bulk of migrants in French West Africa.

However, from 1961 onwards, the new authorities took a number of new initiatives in this area. They wanted to free up access to the whole of Ivorian territory to immigrants as much as to local Ivorians, including all those who had moved to different parts of the country to work the land. The law on nationality of 14 December 1961 awarded Ivorian citizenship on demand to all immigrants from the former French West Africa who had come to Ivory Coast before 1960. In 1966, a bill allowing dual citizenship was drawn up which would have given the same civil rights as those enjoyed by full citizens to all nationals of the *Conseil de l'Entente* (Council of Understanding: Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Niger and Togo). Even though this bill was withdrawn by the government because of certain concerns,<sup>11</sup> every African immigrant none the less had the right to settle anywhere in Ivory Coast and to work the land. President F. Houphouët-Boigny said, 'The land belongs to him who makes good use of it.' By the same token, all foreigners were allowed to repatriate all their goods to their country of origin, without any restrictions. Finally, from 1980 onwards, circumventing the opposition expressed in 1966 and the restrictions introduced in the citizenship code of 21 December 1972 (there was a long naturalization procedure and a probationary period of ten years before the applicant could enjoy full civil rights), a

presidential decree provided that all nationals of West African states could participate in every election in Ivory Coast, just like Ivorian citizens.

Until the 1990s, this set of measures constituted the official framework of Ivory Coast's policy on immigration. President Houphouët-Boigny and the single party which governed Ivory Coast were determined to forge all the inhabitants of the country into one mould of citizenship 'without distinction of age, region of origin or sex, in order to create a coherent nation'.<sup>12</sup> For the new authorities, independence meant integration of immigrants based on the strategic choices made in 1959 when the *Conseil de l'Entente* was set up, including the strengthening of the position of Ivory Coast in African–French relations and in those of the West with black Africa in general. This strategic choice was the opposite of the 'federalist' Senegalese strategy adopted at the end of colonization, although the economic aspects of the Senegalese option, especially the development of plantations from 1950 onwards, were retained. This policy of attraction was a success to the extent that it attracted huge numbers of immigrants from all over West Africa, but it is surprising to note the modest number of naturalizations between 1965 and 1998: in 1998 there were fewer than 100,000 naturalizations (see Figure 2). Perhaps the immigrants were not interested in obtaining Ivorian citizenship. Perhaps naturalizations were in fact only granted very grudgingly, even under President Houphouët-Boigny. Perhaps people simply accepted their lot, whatever it was.<sup>13</sup>

In general, the majority of the Ivorian population adapted to the official position.<sup>14</sup> In villages and towns, the settlement of immigrants or of Ivorians from other parts of the country posed no problems. The recruitment of foreign labourers on plantations or in industry was also problem-free before 1980. It seems that there was a great deal of good will towards immigrants, as peasants were happy to give them the use of parcels of land without being pressurized to do so by the authorities. There was also non-African immigration too: the French colony in Ivory Coast was the largest in black Africa, almost 50,000 even by 1975, and Syrians and Lebanese were also numerous (300,000 in 1985). This hospitality not only corresponded to economic and political needs, it was also presented as being an untouchable African value. At a time of one-party and even one-man rule,<sup>15</sup> the exercise of civil rights seemed to be universally accepted.

Even if some have interpreted this official position as being one of exploitation of immigrants, immigration started to become an issue not so much for political reasons but instead as a result of social and economic concerns. The civil rights accorded *de facto* to the 'foreigners' from West Africa were not criticized so long as their 'quasi-citizenship' was understood as a way of restricting the labour market and business opportunities outside the agricultural sector. For some people by the end of the 1970s, though, it

appeared to be accentuating a *de facto* monopoly of certain immigrants in certain sectors: charcoal production, construction materials, car repair, small retail, and so on.

Moreover, until the agricultural crisis became a land crisis and a general social crisis in the mid-1980s, with the return to their villages of numerous unemployed town-dwellers, criticism and hostility were expressed only by the urban classes, usually more so in private than in public. By contrast, in the south of Ivory Coast, with the arrival of the Fula herders after the climatic crises of the 1970s in the Sahel, the countryside became the area where there were an increasing number of violent and even bloody clashes between herdsmen and peasants.

Besides these incidents between Ivorians and foreigners, which were always rapidly contained by the authorities, it is important to emphasize that, on the political level and between Ivorians, the monolithic political system did not prevent a perverse alliance being created between those in favour of integrating the West African region and those in favour of 'an Ivorian nation'.<sup>16</sup> The first movement was supported by a section of the middle class which wanted to attain positions of power within or against the one-party system: it was based on an analysis of local mechanisms of patronage to arrive at an ethnic and trans-national vision of politics. The second movement, described as 'nationalist' by the media at the time, was expressed principally at sports matches against other African countries from the mid-1970s onwards. It emphasized 'Ivorian interests' without ever saying what exactly they were. The first truly serious acts of violence committed against 'foreigners' since independence occurred after a football match between Ivory Coast and Ghana in 1985.<sup>17</sup>

These acts of violence and these expulsions of foreigners, which occurred in a number of African countries throughout the 1960s and 1970s, seemed to gain a following in Ivory Coast from the 1980s onwards. The local press highlighted criminal cases involving foreigners, thereby encouraging the stereotype of immigrants as thieves, drug traffickers, or murderers. In the mid-1980s, the climate between Ivorians and immigrant communities deteriorated progressively. The social effects of the economic crisis and the plans for structural adjustment, which pushed up unemployment and poverty in 1981–82, provided the pretext for people to complain that immigrants had 'too great a role' in Ivory Coast. Such complaints took root in ever-larger social groups, especially in the middle classes. Numerous immigrants started to leave. Thus, from the mid-1980s onwards, there was increasingly large net emigration out of Ivory Coast. How is this change of attitude to be explained?

The explanation generally given lies in the long economic depression from 1980 to 1990 and the social crisis which accompanied it. Although this explanation is not wrong, it is insufficient. In reality, the effectiveness of the

decisions taken in 1960 has not been evident for a long time, since the young state in fact had no control over migratory flows because it neither controlled its own borders nor had any overall policy for integrating immigrants where they settled. The response to these issues was merely pragmatic and, for the vast majority of immigrants, was based on economic considerations alone. The authorities paid no attention to the fact that the question of immigrants depends partly on how foreigners are perceived when they do not melt away into their new environment. There is therefore a constant tension between communitarianism and assimilation. To allow everyone to settle was not enough: social inclusion, and the desire to belong to the new community, had to be deliberately promoted.

Because immigrants to Ivory Coast come above all from neighbouring countries, it is always believed that they will return home once they have made their fortunes. The 'communitarian' choices of immigrants – their decision to live together in their own parts of town or in encampments, and their way of life – have reinforced their status as 'foreigners' in their country of residence. Some Ivorians were even concerned at the high employment rate among immigrants (73 per cent in 1993): indeed, even if there are plenty of immigrants in modern sectors of the economy, they tend to put in place networks of mutual assistance which have often allowed them to enjoy dominant positions for decades, especially in the informal economy and in agriculture.

It was in this context that rhetoric about national preference started to become popular in the mid-1980s. There was an insidious press campaign against the social marginalization allegedly caused by 'foreigners'.<sup>18</sup> It was also at this time that the notion of a 'threshold of tolerance' appeared; adopted from rhetoric about immigration in France at the time, this idea supported the positions of certain defenders of 'Ivorianness', a concept which made its debut in public discourse in Ivory Coast in 1995 but which in reality dates from the 1970s.

The concept of 'a threshold of tolerance' was at the heart of a report published by the Economic and Social Committee in April 1999 which explicitly attacked the Ivorian policy of open borders. According to this concept, there is a certain percentage of foreigners above which integration is impossible and national cohesion endangered. This notion is grounded neither scientifically nor in any empirical analysis of facts and, in any case, it has no practical effect: the borders are so porous that Ivory Coast – like other countries in the region – is not able to fix its so-called 'threshold of tolerance' (even if such a thing exists), since none of these countries is in the position to measure the number of migrants coming in or going out of the country. Having recourse to traditional social networks based on cultural affinity,<sup>19</sup> immigrants simply bypass the border-crossing posts and move around more

or less as they please, quite independently of official state policy or of relations with other states.

In the 1990s, a new factor made the immigration question even more dramatic. Attacks on civilians in the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone caused involuntary or forced migrations which made a regional solution of the whole question of migration even more urgent than before. The exploitation of immigrants for political purposes<sup>20</sup> nourished the hostility of the receiving countries as much as the ethnicization of domestic political relationships, to the detriment of the nation-building project itself. Since the general election of 1980, but especially since the election in 1990, this was a recurrent theme in the struggles for power among the urban middle class in Ivory Coast.

For the immigrants, the fact that they have changed country itself reflects imbalances in their countries of origin. These include famines and poor harvests, low incomes, wars, and so on. But the immigrant always remains fundamentally attached to their community of origin: it is a fixed point in the strategy for survival immigrants have adopted by moving abroad more or less for the long term. When circumstances allow, networks of migrations are set up, involving financial transfers and even involvement in the political life of their country of origin and their country of residence. In the case of Ivory Coast, which is above all a country of immigration, financial transfers abroad by immigrants greatly exceed similar transfers by Ivorians back to their home country (see Figure 6). When legislation in immigrants' countries of origins allowed this in the 1990s, immigrants took part in the political life of their home countries without giving up their right to vote in Ivory Coast, awarded in 1980. In spite of themselves and as a result of the inadequacy of a policy based on an exclusive understanding of the nation-state in young states, immigrants find themselves caught in a pincer grip between their reason for leaving home and the various issues raised by their presence in their country of residence. They are left with no choice but to cultivate their 'national' difference, according to circumstances, precisely there where they might have been able to build a new life. This situation is the same in Ivory Coast as in other West African countries.<sup>21</sup>

In Ivory Coast, this situation put great strain on the open-doors policy which had been in place since 1960. From the 1990s, measures were taken to limit the number of immigrants, notably by means of the introduction of a residence permit in 1991,<sup>22</sup> and also by limiting their economic rights. Access to the civil service was restricted in 1991; the law on the land ownership was introduced in 1998. Initially a budgetary measure, the residence permit soon became a means for selecting immigrants and for keeping out the poorest ones by preventing them from coming to Ivory Coast. This measure shows that the state intends to monopolize and to regulate people's right to move and settle.

The land reform of 1998 was the result of a desire to reduce the pressure on

land but it took no account of 'customary' rules governing the access of newcomers to land, including Ivorians from different regions, territories, or families. The social effects of this private appropriation of the land, which was pushed heavily by the World Bank in 1991, was advantageous for local owners of capital who were in a position to relaunch the plantation economy (especially hevea and palm oil), that is, the middle classes. But the consequences were negative for the rural poor, especially young people and women, and for immigrants who had obtained land to cultivate. This decision, just like the exclusively citizen-based approach to politics, represented a break with tradition. Few people anticipated what a destabilizing effect it was to have the social cohesion of this young state.

The abolition of the right to vote for immigrants in 1995 showed the determination to affirm the exclusively national character of civil and political rights in Ivory Coast, where the presence of common populations on both sides of state boundaries prevents any effective border control. Habits acquired during the period of one-party rule have remained in place even now that parties must win elections. This new departure reflects a domestic political debate about how to win power, a debate conducted very openly among the middle classes as a result of the chaotic transition to democracy and pluralism in politics and the trades unions. On the international level too, the debate is open: it concerns relations with neighbouring peoples of whom it is not certain whether they are friends or enemies, especially with the collateral effects of the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. At the same time, since the death of F. Houphouët-Boigny, Ivory Coast's position within France's strategy for West Africa has crumbled, just as France's role in the development of Ivory Coast has too. The ease with which the military coup of 24 December 1999 occurred illustrates the geostrategic situation in West Africa.

Thus the policy of welcoming and integrating immigrants has failed. This policy exploited immigrants within a policy framework inherited from the colonial period, although the exploitation was less overt under the one-party system. The crisis of the social and economic model caused severe tensions in the 1980s. Contradictory concerns were expressed: there was both the rejection of the idea that Ivory Coast should be a high-immigration country, lagging behind other countries in West Africa, and complaints that the country had no policy for integrating immigrants within a nation-building project, but also a desire for Ivory Coast to play an active role, or even to be a leader, in implementing a project for regional integration. These relations of connivance and repulsion nourished one another and weighed heavily on the immigration question in the young Ivorian national community.

### The Issue of Migrations in the Construction of a West African Regional Sub-Group

From the point of view of the free movement of goods and persons, the attempts to create a regional group in the 1970s (the *Communauté économique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* [Economic Community of West Africa – ECOWA] and the *Communauté économique des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* [Economic Community of West African States – ECOWAS]) would tend to suggest that, for the Ivorian authorities, the border was not the dividing line between two sovereign states but instead a zone of shared sovereignty in West Africa. The economic, civil and political rights which were *de facto* granted to all West African nationals settled in Ivory Coast created juridical ambiguities which were analysed differently by experts before 1990. For some people, the single party, the PDCI-RDA, wanted to exploit foreigners for political purposes; for others, it was the desire to realize African unity. After 1990, the change of policy with regard to immigrants was understood by some as the expression of a profound 'xenophobia' of the Ivorians or of an 'ethno-nationalism' which treated immigrants like scapegoats.

These interpretations are excessive. Those which develop the theory of 'ethno-nationalism' because they are close to ethnographic analyses which classify Ivorian society in terms of 'ethnic groups' and 'tribes', as in the colonial period, are simplistic. They bear little relationship to the sociological complexity of this country and to the profound effects of fifty years of economic changes and socio-demographic mutations. It is much more important to study social phenomena, notably the evolution of the political views of the middle classes which vary from those who support the complete opening of frontiers to those who want to reduce the role of foreigners in the country. When the social effects of policies of structural adjustment started to make themselves felt in the 1980s and when power struggles grew more acute, the hostility of the middle classes made itself felt more strongly, both in order to 'liquidate' a part of the popular base of the former single party (for example, the demand for the right to vote to be withdrawn from non-Ivorians in 1990), and also to better resist the general economic crisis by reducing the number of people who benefited from ground rent generated by the exploitation of the country's raw agricultural materials.<sup>23</sup>

It was at this time, at the beginning of the 1990s, that the idea of regional integration was relaunched, in the Francophone countries after the devaluation of January 1994 as in the whole of West Africa (the CEDEAO [*Communauté économique des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest*] treaty was revised in 1991). The position of Ivory Coast in the West African economic area is more favourable than that of other countries (Ivory Coast has 40 per cent of the GDP of the West African Monetary Union and 27 per cent of the GDP of

West Africa, while it is the biggest trader within ECOWAS. The decision to break with the economic policies pursued between 1960 and 1989, a decision imposed by the middle classes, is therefore contradictory if not suicidal for the geopolitical and economic balance of West Africa. It will aggravate the overall situation in the region as in Ivory Coast itself if the logic of 'the exclusive nation' is not abandoned in favour of a policy directed towards the West African region as a whole. Such a regional policy would take account of the development of West Africa as a whole, as of changes which have occurred in the composition of the Ivorian population since at least 1950.

The attitude towards immigrants therefore makes foreigners foreign. All the fears and fantasies which are caused by the system of exchange developed in the twentieth century are projected onto the immigrant, to the detriment of most of them. It is essential to break out of this vicious cycle by adopting a regional approach to the question of migration and to the problems it poses.

A necessary condition for any policy on migration, whether it is national or regional, is an appreciation of the role of the immigrant (and therefore of the foreigner) in those regions where there are significant movements of population. This appreciation of the role of foreigners, in Ivory Coast as in the rest of West Africa, is based on the following elements:

- A better understanding of common populations and cultures. We have a memory of common struggles of West Africa in the recent past against all forms of subjection and domination, within the framework of a globalization process which has never been favourable to us since the colonial era. This can contribute to the establishment of a common historical consciousness in the West Africa region and it can help to improve the image of the inhabitants of each country in the eyes of its neighbours.
- Development of the role of schools and the media in improving the image of the foreigner migrant. It is through education that the negative images must be reversed, in favour of a more positive attitude towards other peoples.
- Policies for the integration of migrants should be formulated and harmonized, with reciprocal rights and duties in all places where they are present.

Such a policy would be an element in the overall strategy of regional integration. Migration policy should consist of:

- A regional policy, based on acts of regional integration
- Measures in favour of helping populations who have been damaged by the fact that they do not have adapted to the territory where they live or to

their methods of production. The notion of 'return' which is sometimes invoked in order to call into question the efficacy of policies directed at integrating migrants is, in fact, an illusion. With the exception of seasonal movements of population, there is no 'definite return' but instead a 'territorial plurality' in which immigrants come and go.<sup>24</sup>

- A regional policy for the management of territory which would take into account the true value of neighbouring populations with respect to one another on the basis of the fact that they are engaged in permanent and multiple exchanges with one another. By this means, strategies for the integration of peoples would achieve more than policies for the harmonization of state policies. The common implementation of policies for the management of territory, and the direct involvement of populations in this process, could be essential elements for such an integrationist policy. They would enable new links of development to weave together populations in the respect of dignity and human rights.
- The harmonization of legislation with a view to redefining state citizenship, the way it is implemented and the way it could be extended to create a regional citizenship, with rights and duties for all.

These propositions flow from the duty to pacify the situation, above all in areas where there is high immigration. The notion of the 'free circulation of goods and persons', which is currently based too much on economics, can only be suspect in the eyes of those who do not profit directly from it or of those who, in countries of immigration, think they lose more than they gain from migratory flows.

## Conclusion

The manipulations and these reinventions of personal history or of the history of the community oblige us to have a critical attitude towards those written or oral sources, above all when the issue of foreigners and immigrants opens up questions of who is autochthonous, in a part of the world where there has been a long history of movements of population.<sup>25</sup> This situation means that the distinction between the right to citizenship for all those born in the country, and the right to citizenship only for those whose parents are Ivorian, does not apply in young political communities such as the states of West Africa.

The porosity of frontiers, inherited from colonization; the numerous common populations on both sides of state borders; the uncontrolled causes of migration, such as the demographic explosion, natural calamities, the

pauperization of the masses as a result of bad economic policies, civil wars, and so on – all these cause permanent changes to the population map, especially in zones of immigration.

Ivory Coast has been a major destination for immigrants since the colonial era. It now finds itself trapped by a nation-building process based on the paradigms inherited from French colonization. In the West African region, this is an important factor behind the geopolitical reconfiguration now underway, both in terms of the movements of population and also in terms of the strategic choice made by states to move towards regional integration, that is, towards the decline of the nation-state invented after independence.

To understand this reconfiguration and its relationship to the question of intra-regional migration, it is essential to pay much closer attention to social factors, particularly the evolution of the position of the middle classes which varies according to the economic situation and to the balance of power within it. In the Ivorian case under examination here, we have seen that those positions went from one of support for borders open to all, to a restrictive immigration policy and a reversal of the earlier promotion of immigration once the colonial system entered into crisis, a crisis which only worsened after colonialism, between 1960 and 1990. Trapped by their own development strategy, which was based on the advantages of that system, these middle classes now refuse to see the country continue to accept immigrants. It is in this framework that power struggles are defined and accentuated, not the other way around.

Exploited by those who play on cultural differences and on concepts of citizenship which have not been internalized by the majority of them, immigrants find themselves caught in a pincer between the strategies adopted to solve the general crisis in West Africa. The implementation of a regional policy for migration in West Africa could enable us to reduce the causes of political conflicts, especially acts of violence committed against immigrant communities, as well as private conflicts such as those over land. The simple need to survive, and the simple facts of economics in a society which is generally very dependent on the outside world make regional solidarity more difficult, especially in a period of economic crisis, at least if we do not emphasize our common challenges of development, our cultural links and, above all, our shared human dignity.

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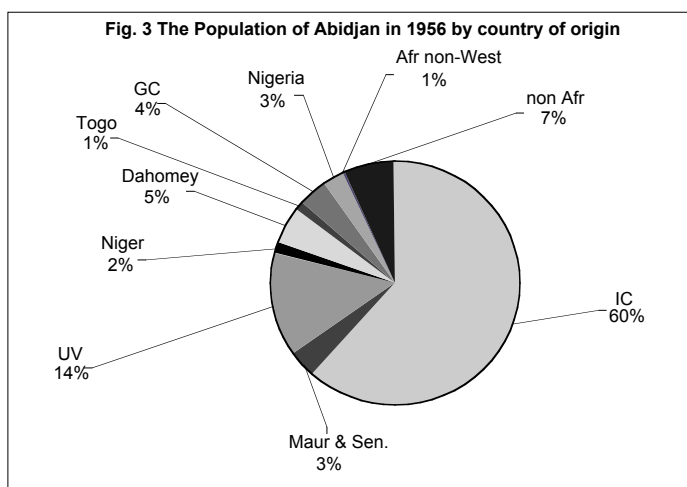
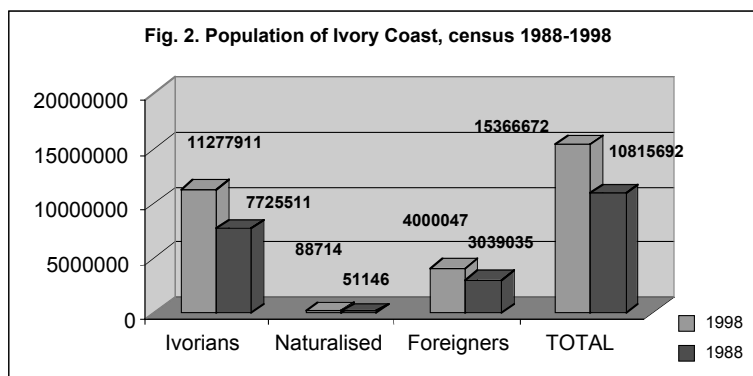
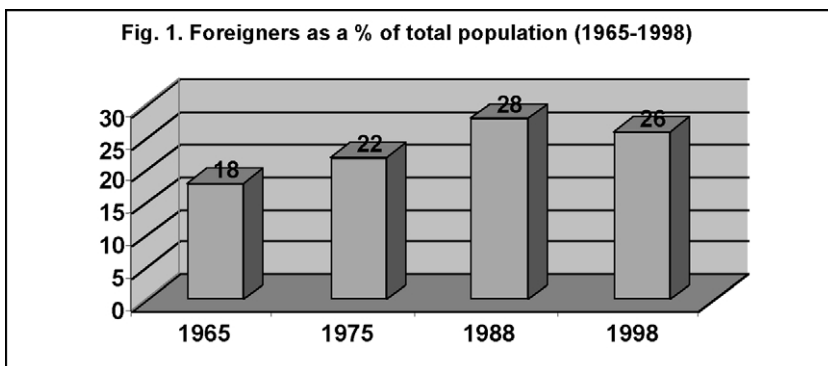
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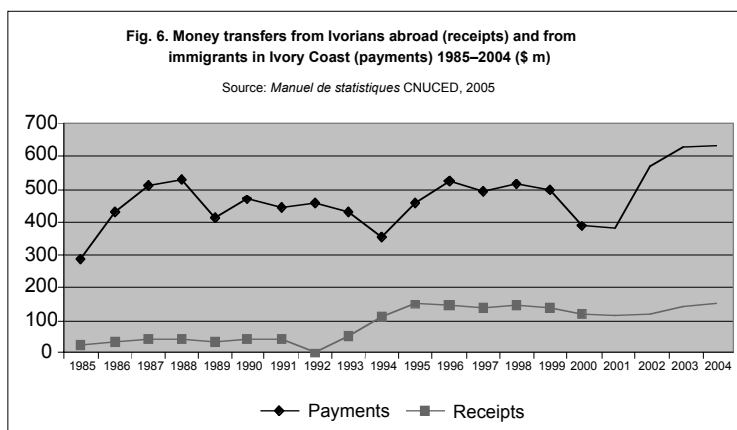
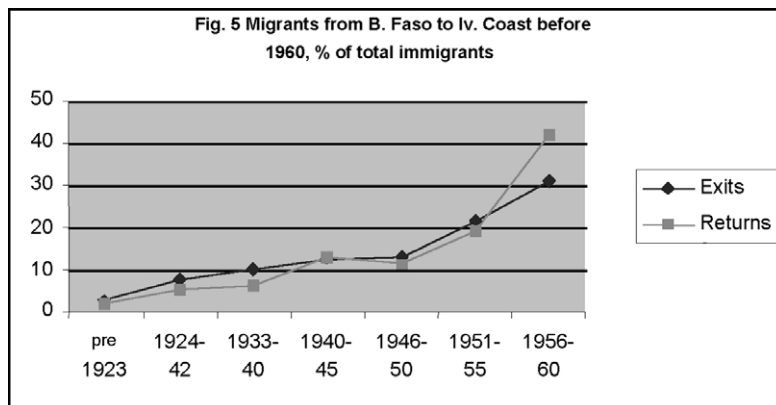
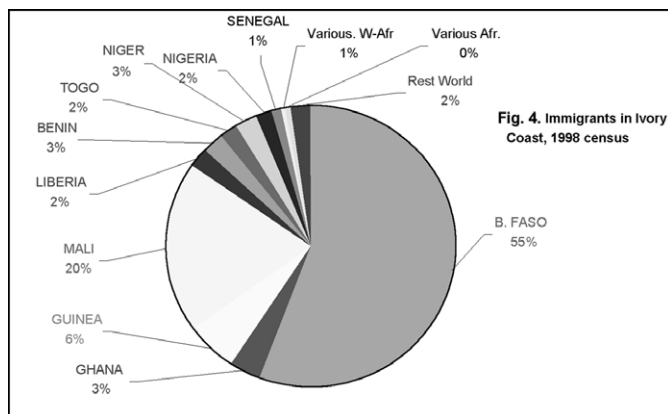
## NOTES

- 1 In a debate between President Gbagbo and radio listeners, one listener, Mr Bernard Zongo, said that Ivory Coast owed everything to Burkinabes and condemned violence perpetrated against them in these words: 'They have been despoiled even though they have contributed to the

Figures



IC = Ivory Coast  
 UV = Upper Volta  
 Maur & Sen = Mauritania & Senegal  
 GC = Gold Coast (Ghana)  
 Afr non-West = from outside West Africa  
 Non Afr = Non-African



- economy of Ivory Coast.' This listener concluded that Burkinabes should be given Ivorian nationality in reward for having worked in Ivory Coast, and that they should enjoy the same rights as Ivorian citizens. Among other things, President Gbagbo replied, 'If to be a worker in a country was enough to claim its nationality, then France would be our homeland.' (interview with President L. Gbagbo, *Africa*, 1 (22 June 2006)).
- 2 The percentage of immigration was 3.7 per cent in 2005 and 4 per cent in 1990 (*Statistiques choisies sur les pays africains*, 2006, p. 7) and more than double between 1975 and 1980.
  - 3 On these early associations, see Kipré (1986, vol. 2).
  - 4 See the special issue of the journal *Présence Africaine* devoted to this theme at the time: *Le travail en Afrique noire*; edn spécial de *Présence Africaine*, Paris, 1951.
  - 5 Immediately after decolonization, in April 1961, agreements were signed between Ivory Coast and Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) to facilitate and improve the recruitment of seasonal agricultural labourers. Although these agreements were denounced by Upper Volta in 1962, this immigration became greater every year, with arrivals far outstripping those who returned home (less than 25 per cent of these labourers returned home after 1964). On average, between 1961 and 1985, 85 per cent of those who emigrate from Upper Volta chose Ivory Coast rather than Ghana (8 per cent) or any other country (7 per cent).
  - 6 In 1988, foreigners born in Ivory Coast represented 49 per cent of immigrants; this figure had risen to 51 per cent by 1998.
  - 7 Forty thousand Ivorians emigrated in 1990 to the rest of Africa and Europe, as against less than ten thousand (of which 80 per cent were students) in 1975. This is according to an unpublished report of the Ivorian Ministry of the Interior, drawn up before the general election in 1990.
  - 8 Cf. Kipré (2005a)
  - 9 Cf. Sylvie Bredeloup (1995)
  - 10 On this aspect of colonial policies, see M. Mamdani (1996).
  - 11 Trades unionists expressed their fear that it would adversely affect access to salaried employment if all nationals of the *Conseil de l'Entente* had the same rights everywhere. In the other countries of the *Entente* too, the project was opposed 'in the name of nation-building'.
  - 12 'The Ten-Year Plan for Social and Economic Development, 1965–1975'.
  - 13 As a consequence of the present political crisis, the law of 17 December 2004 and the decree of application of 31 May 2006 have prorogued for twelve months the legal provisions of 1961 on obtaining citizenship.
  - 14 Of the 306 ministers in the twenty-three governments between 1959 and 1993, 7 per cent were from non-Ivorian communities without there being an open criticism of this. However, the minutes of the Committee for the Reform of the Educational System in 1973 do reveal 'a desire to limit the presence of foreigners in national life'. Some of the participants at the Seventh Congress of the PDCI-RPA (*Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire- Rassemblement démocratique africain*) in 1980 made similar suggestions but even more explicitly.
  - 15 Ivory Coast was a one-party state from 1960 to 1990.
  - 16 In 1996, Kragbé Gnagbé, who wanted to create an opposition party, denounced indiscriminately 'the theft of Bété peasants' land by foreigners with the 'complicity of the central government', 'French control of Ivory Coast,' 'the dictatorship of Houphouët Boigny', and so on. He even tried to organize an armed insurrection against the regime.
  - 17 During a football match between Ivory Coast and Ghana, fights broke out in the Kumasi stadium. These were followed on 2 September 1985 by violent attacks in Abidjan against the Ghanaian community: ten thousand of the three hundred thousand Ghanaians living in Ivory Coast were then repatriated at their own request.
  - 18 On the situation of Burkinabes in Ivory Coast, see Bendraogo (1999).
  - 19 All the border regions of Ivory Coast share populations with their respective neighbouring state.
  - 20 These immigrants can be a 'captive' electorate for the powers that be. This has been denounced by opposition parties all over West Africa since the beginning of democratization in the 1990s.
  - 21 For various testimonies by immigrants on the theme of participation in elections in various countries in West Africa, see *PANOS infos*, 11, 2 septembre 2002.

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- 22 This initiative was taken by the Prime Minister of the day, Alassane Dramane Ouattara.
- 23 The debate on land rights became sharper in the 1980s, above all in forest regions, at a time when numerous town-dwellers, particularly young people, tried to return to work the land in their villages. This 'return to the villages' increased in the 1990s.
- 24 The agreements signed in April 1960 between Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso, or between Burkina Faso and Mali in 1963, or again between Togo and Mauritania in 1965, were quick to fail because immigrants continued to move around anyway, according to their own assessment of the risks and advantages of moving abroad.
- 25 Cf. Kipré (2005b).