



Political and Socio-Economic Ramifications of the Armed Conflict in Côte d'Ivoire 2002-2011

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the political, social, and economic factors that contributed to the Ivorian crisis-armed conflict and the ramifications of the conflict from 2002-2011 on Ivoirians. It applies Adam Przeworski's eclectic political theory as the analytical framework. The study utilized a qualitative research design and data was obtained from key informants from the following three regions: Abidjan, Bouake, and Odienne. Varied participants were purposively selected and interviewed from various areas: academia, and Foreign Service including diplomats, politicians, civil servants, teachers, traders, university students, and refugees ensuring diverse perspectives. The findings revealed that the armed conflict affected the political, religious/cultural, social, and economic lives and the cohesion of the Ivorian people. Also, the armed conflict retarded the progress of the country and created a sense of distrust, disunity, and discrimination. The conflict hurt the health of the Ivoirians, especially HIV/AIDS patients and the entire people's access to health facilities.

Keywords: Armed Conflict, Côte d'Ivoire, ECOWAS, Ramifications, Socio-Political

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Kalischek et al. (2023), Côte d'Ivoire has experienced consistent urban growth since gaining independence in 1960 from France (a former colony). After independence, the name Ivory Coast was changed to Côte d'Ivoire in 1986. Also, Côte d'Ivoire is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The country is situated on the western coast of Africa within the sub-Saharan region. French is the official language used to connect the diverse population. Renowned for its abundant natural resources, including cocoa, coffee, cotton, pineapple, ivory, and minerals such as copper, diamond, gold, iron, and natural gas (Löhr et al, 2021; Kalischek et al., 2023).

In 2014, the population was estimated at 20,179,602 (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2013). The population as of November 2023 is 30,629,978 (Côte d'Ivoire, 2023). The Ivorian population, November showcases ethnic diversity, encompassing over 60 ethnic groups classified into four main categories such as Malinkes, Voltas, Krous, and Akan, the latter having inhabited the country before the colonial invasion (Langer, 2005; Ouattara, 2022). Inherent religiosity characterizes Ivoirians, backed by constitutional guarantees ensuring freedom of worship. Christianity, Islam, and Animism (African traditional religions) are the primary religions practiced in Côte d'Ivoire (Aboubakary et al., 2023). The Ivoirian population, marked by diversity, youthfulness, limited literacy, and high fertility, imposes considerable pressure on healthcare professionals, who are already overburdened. This strain intensifies during crises, particularly when many health workers depart the country.

A closer examination of Côte d'Ivoire's post-independence developmental path, mirroring Africa's trajectory, reveals substantial challenges. Despite its recognition as one of the most prosperous and stable West African countries in the 1990s (Adedeji, 1999), Côte d'Ivoire experienced a shift in political stability and economic growth from independence until 2002 (Daniel, 2003). Houphouët Boigny, the inaugural president since independence in 1960, played a pivotal role in Côte d'Ivoire's progress. His policy of promoting worker immigration contributed to the nation's dominance as the leading global cocoa producer up until the year of his demise in 1993 (Global Internal Displaced Persons, 2005).



From David (2009), Houphouet Boigny's leadership style, referred to as Houphouetism, was characterized by the concentration of state power across all government spheres, fostering a personality cult, externalizing political positions, charismatic leadership, and monopolizing political thought within the presidential office. This resulted in the institutionalization of a one-party state, where all developmental projects were perceived as the president's largesse (International Crisis Group, 2005). Alternative developmental ideologies, such as the African socialist system in Ghana under Kwame Nkrumah and Ujamaa in Tanzania under Nyerere, were treated as exceptions and promptly suppressed during Houphouet Boigny's tenure (David, 2009; Verjee, 2023). In the post-independence economic reconstruction phase, Côte d'Ivoire experimented with various economic policies, leading to accusations of communism by the French government due to the exploration of socialist economic and industrial development agendas. Houphouet Boigny's vision for maximum economic, industrial, and social development at minimal cost attracted millions of African migrants to participate in plantations and industrial projects. Agreements, like the one with Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), facilitated the involvement of thousands of Burkinabes in the Abidjan-Ouagadougou railway project (Suaka, 2012; Verjee, 2023).

The establishment of the Conseil de L'Entente (Agreement Council) in the 1960s, involving Mali, Guinea, and Ivory Coast, further increased the influx of African migrants into large industrial and plantation projects. The 1960s and 70s witnessed prolonged periods of steady economic growth driven by substantial foreign investment. Côte d'Ivoire surpassed Ghana as the leading cocoa exporter in 1978, supported by a significant foreign labor force from Burkina Faso, Mali, and Guinea, comprising over 40% of the population by 1990 (Suaka, 2012; Shipilov, 2022).

In 1998, Ivory Coast's Industrial Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 12%, accompanied by heightened capacity utilization, expansion of facilities, and renovations. The socio-economic conditions of the Ivorians were regarded as the best in West Africa until the outbreak of conflict in 2002. According to Human Rights Watch (2002), in the 2000 Ivorian general election, General Guei and Laurent Gbagbo competed, leading to a post-election coup in January 2001 when Guei refused to relinquish power to the declared winner, Laurent Gbagbo. But Alassane Ouattara was excluded from contesting the 2000 elections. Some protests broke out and Gbagbo was sworn in as President of Côte d'Ivoire. A similar situation occurred with the refusal of the incumbent President Laurent Gbagbo. Gbagbo established a de facto government and incorporated the Rally of the Republicans (RDR) party. A pivotal event in the 2002 conflict was the Supreme Court's disqualification of key party leaders, resulting in low voter turnout and Guei's withdrawal. Guei dissolved the Election Commission and declared himself Head of State. Discontent triggered violence, leading to Guei's fleeing and eventual demise. The event marked the beginning of a decade-long Ivorian political conflict. After a brief hiatus, Gbagbo declared himself president in 2002, escalating into a full-scale war following the disqualification of RDR leader Ouattara.

In 2005, Thabo Mbeki, the then-president of South Africa, mediated the Ivorian conflict, engaging key stakeholders of the political parties (Gbagbo, leader of Front Populaire Ivoirien, Alassane Ouattara of the Rally of the Republicans and rebel factions Ivorian Popular Movement for the Great West). Movement for Peace and Justice (MJP), and Forces Nouvelle (FN) took place. However, despite these discussions, political instability persisted until the democratic elections in 2011, causing a prolonged nine-year disruption that significantly affected the country's economy and the overall stability of Côte d'Ivoire (Shipilov, 2022). The origins of political instability in Côte d'Ivoire can be traced back to the post-1993 period following the death of Felix Houphouet Boigny. During this period there was power struggle and discrimination, notably against individuals from the Northern part of the country (Daniel, 2003; Suaka, 2012; Global Security, 2001; Shipilov, 2022). Felix Houphouet Boigny, whose personal motto was peace is not a word but an attitude, Côte d'Ivoire emerged as a beacon of peace in Africa during Houphouet Boigny's leadership. Regrettably, his death signalled the beginning of instability. Eventually, it escalated into armed conflict which eventually was devastating to the once-prosperous economy established after the colonial era (Global Security, 2001).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Lens

To understand the continuum of the political and socio-economic effects of the Ivorian armed conflict, this study adopted Adam Przeworski (1970), eclectic political theory as an analytical construct. This theory proves to be very valuable for a thorough examination of the ramifications of the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire by incorporating the various theoretical perspectives to provide a nuanced understanding of the ramifications of the political, social, and economic issues in Côte d'Ivoire, a West African state, and a key member of the sub-regional body (ECOWAS).

Examining the Ivorian conflict requires a narrative approach to theoretically contextualize events. As the latter part of the 20th century witnessed numerous conflicts across African countries, exploring the intricate dynamics



involving conflict participants became imperative. While colonial influences, resource control, nationalistic fervor, and regionalism often underpin civil and armed conflicts, these factors alone fall short of providing a comprehensive understanding, especially considering the diverse ethnic and cultural realities across African nations, notably in Côte d'Ivoire.

Some of the conceptual frameworks comprehensively explain the causes, effects, and recurrence of conflicts in Africa, with a specific focus on the upheavals in Côte d'Ivoire. Notable among these frameworks are eclectic political theory, Marxist class analysis, identity, greed and grievances, and relative deprivation theories. Modern political science, shaped by Max Weber's instrumental vision of social science, prides itself on an eclectic and opportunistic methodological approach, allowing researchers the flexibility to employ various methods for knowledge advancement.

Eclectic political theory posits that civil conflicts arise from cultural, economic, social, and political differences among clans and ethnic groups within a polity. Acknowledging the complexity of conflicts, this theory asserts that a single variable cannot authoritatively explain their causes, highlighting the significance of these distinctions in influencing the expressions of conflict in Ivory Coast. Another relevant theory is the class-political theory, rooted in Karl Marx's understanding of societal structures based on economic modes of production. In the Côte d'Ivoire, this theory interprets the conflict as emerging from the development of class consciousness, particularly among the lower class in the northern regions, perceived as working-class migrants by the wealthier inhabitants in the south (Hoeffler & Reynal-Querol, 2003; Konate, 2004). The consequences of armed conflict, highlighted by Hoeffler and Reynal-Querol (2003) and Murdoch and Sandler (2002), impose significant financial burdens on a country and extend their impacts to neighboring nations. The literature indicates that armed conflicts adversely affect a country's economy, diminishing human capital, destroying physical capital, hindering the accumulation of human resources, and lowering educational standards (Konate, 2004).

2.2 The Political Turmoil in Côte D'ivoire from 2002 to 2011

Yéo, (2022) opined that Côte d'Ivoire conflict starkly exposes the unfulfilled promises made during the post-war era of Africa, amidst the forces of globalization and the envisioned democratization of the continent as the conflict unfolded. It was marked by the emergence of rebel groups and factions originating from neighboring conflict-affected African countries, leading to Côte d'Ivoire, becoming entangled in armed conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Conakry. These are a sequence of events:

The roots of tension between the Christian south and the Muslim north gradually deepened. In March 2001, an agreement between Gbagbo and Ouattara, ensuring the participation of four Muslim politicians in the government, momentarily eased these tensions but bred discontent among certain representatives of the Christian elite. Subsequently, two unsuccessful military coup attempts occurred in the following two years, serving as triggers for the conflict's escalation. The first clashes between the government's Christian-controlled forces and the Muslim opposition erupted in 2000 (Shipilov, 2022; Oxford Analytica, 2023; Yéo, 2022).

In August 2002, ministerial posts were allocated to Ouattara's RDR party in the newly formed government, and Gbagbo initiated reconciliation efforts. However, on September 19, 2002, a coup attempt, orchestrated by RDR supporters with the backing of neighboring countries, unfolded. While loyal government forces managed to dislodge the rebels from Abidjan, the retreating rebels regrouped in Bouake, effectively dividing the country. Subsequent attempts to reconcile the factions and reunite the country proved futile. The conflict, triggered by constitutional amendments disenfranchising Ouattara in 2002, resulted in a divided nation, rebels took control of the north, while the government retained authority in the south (Shipilov, 2022).

In January 2003, a power-sharing arrangement was made, with Gbagbo accepting a peace deal. The proposed power-sharing government, including rebels and the existing government, faced challenges, and rebels accused Gbagbo of not honoring the agreement, leading to their withdrawal. In March 2004 the eruption of violent clashes as a response against Gbagbo supporters in Abidjan. This led to the deployment of the initial contingent of the UN peacekeeping force. Following this, in November 2004, hostilities reignited, giving rise to violent anti-French protests, the imposition of a UN arms embargo, and the initiation of key reforms as outlined in the 2003 Peace Accord. The conflict persisted despite several peace initiatives, including a ceasefire in April 2005 (Shipilov, 2022).

In October 2005, Gbagbo extended his mandate through a UN-endorsed AU proposal, delaying planned elections. In December 2005, Charles Konan Banny assumed the role of Prime Minister with the mandate to disarm militias, rebels, and organize elections. However, political tensions persisted, and in January 2006, Gbagbo's supporters protested against perceived UN interference, leading to the ruling party's withdrawal from the transitional government. The economic downturn, exacerbated by ethnic and political tensions, further fueled the conflict (Shipilov, 2022; Yéo, 2022).



By 2007, Gbagbo and rebel leader Guillaume Soro controlled the northern part of the country. A peace deal aimed at creating a new transitional government, organizing elections, and integrating rebel forces was brokered. Elections, initially scheduled for June 2008, were repeatedly postponed, finally taking place in 2010. The democratic election resulted in bloodshed, with Ouattara becoming president and Gbagbo sent to the International Criminal Court in 2011. Gbagbo faces trials on counts including murder, rape, inhumane acts, and persecution constituting crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court (Rosenberg, 2017).

2.3 Socio-Political Factors

The northern population in Ivory Coast faced ethnic and political disadvantages, exacerbated by legislative changes. In 1994, the new Electoral Code limited voting and presidential candidacy eligibility to Ivorian nationals with both parents being Ivorian, transforming ethnic tensions into religious divides. A fault line emerged between the Muslim-dominated north, comprising immigrants and their descendants from neighboring countries like Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali, and the Christian-dominated south (Combaz, 2020).

Yéo, (2022) stated that Ethnic and religious disparities played pivotal roles in the Ivorian conflict. The uneven distribution of power and resources, compounded by the French Colonial Administration's preference for the resource-rich southern region, fueled the grievances. Public workers educated elite among others were predominantly Southerners, whereas the northern population found its main representation in the military and police forces. This dynamic resulted in economic and educational disparities.

Moreover, the 2000 Constitution and subsequent land laws raised concerns about the rights and land access of non-Ivorians. The legislation recognized customary land transactions, aiming to reduce tensions, but complications arose, particularly for returnees seeking to assert existing customary rights and gain legal recognition (Yéo, 2022). The dispossessed, primarily Muslims from the north, faced discriminatory policies, especially since Ouattara's supporters were predominantly from the northern region. A divisive force emerged because of a perceived political strategy, which involved marginalizing the northern population based on ethnicity and religion. This tactic shattered the once-thriving societal cohesion of the nation (Zolberg, 2015).

2.4 Economic Disparities among the Ivorians

According to Andrew and Saumik (2012), Ivory Coast enjoyed remarkable economic prosperity since its independence in 1960, driven by sound economic management, positive trade relations with the international community, and effective development of the cocoa and coffee industries. However, by the mid-1980s, economic disparities emerged, particularly due to the significant resources in the southern region, where the local population leveraged these advantages (Andrew & Saumik (2012). Countries with regional disparities in development and resource allocation often witness armed conflicts, as proposed by Collier and Hoeffler, (1998). This perspective is supported by Campbell (2010, p.24), who asserts that the French Colonial Master contributed to the division and inequality between the northern and southern regions of Côte d'Ivoire with postcolonial economic realities exacerbating these disparities between the two parts (the north-south divide).

After a period of economic prosperity in the 1960s and 1970s, there was a subsequent sharp downturn that played a role in deepening the divisions between the northern and southern regions (Collette, 2011). Migrant laborers from the northern region were provided to work in the cocoa and coffee industries in the southern region, which was crucial for Côte d'Ivoire's economic growth. However, these immigrant laborers, despite working the land for generations, never gained ownership of such lands that worked on for generations.

Østby (2004) identifies unequal access to power and resources as another significant cause of the civil war, creating grievances among disadvantaged groups in cosmopolitan communities. The French Colonial Administration displayed a clear preference for the resource-rich southern region, directing infrastructural development to this area at the expense of the North.

The marginalized, primarily from the Muslim northern region, faced challenges as Ouattara's supporters were predominantly from the same northern area. This strategy was perceived as a political manoeuvre to undermine his support base, leading to the divisions of ethnicity and religion. Consequently, the once-prosperous nation experienced a decline in social cohesion (Kirwin, 2006). Ivorians bore the brunt of the crisis, and a segment of the population was amassing wealth. A United Nations panel of experts documented the manipulation of natural resources to finance and perpetuate the conflict. Both the government and rebel forces were culpable of leveraging the conflict for personal gains. Notably, cocoa, coffee, and diamonds were among the extensively exploited resources (Robert et al., 2004)



2.5 The Ramification of Conflict on Health and Resources

Betsi et al. (2006) delve into the aftermath of the armed conflict in Ivory Coast on human resources within the health sectors. Their focus encompasses the contextual and organizational challenges associated with managing human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) / acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) during the conflict (Woods, 2003). In 2004, it was observed that several territories were still under occupation by armed forces. Military authorities conducted assessments of the conflict's impact on human resources, health facility operations, and the management of HIV/AIDS issues. During this period, the public health data emphasized increased unparalleled levels of violence (Roberts et al., 2004). Aboubakary (2023) noted a significant decline in the availability of qualified staff and the cessation of health facility operations in FAFN-controlled areas during the conflict, affecting around 88% of healthcare personnel and 90% of health facilities in these regions. The departure of well-qualified personnel, including medical doctors, was particularly pronounced (Camara, 2020).

Côte d'Ivoire was already facing a low health workers to population ratio Woods (2003) estimated approximately 9 physicians and 31 nurses per 100,000 inhabitants, even before the conflict Victor (2004) emphasize the crucial role of robust health systems in achieving universal health care coverage, including critical interventions for HIV/AIDS prevention and care. The prolonged armed conflict jeopardized basic preventive and curative health care, as evidenced by a significant reduction in condom sales (Napo, 2022). Conflicts have dire consequences on accessing health facilities and healthcare services utilization in general (Yaro et al., 2023). Expressing concerns about the estimated size of the Ivorian population before and after the conflict, Betsi et al. (2012) highlight potential shifts in the distribution channels, such as condoms, during that time. The concerns on health facilities, human resources, etc raised valid fears of exacerbating the HIV/AIDS epidemic, including interruptions in existing antiretroviral therapy programs in Côte d'Ivoire (Spiegel, 2004; Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/Aids [UNAIDS], 2004).

2.6 Social Consequences

Huyghebaert (2009) reports that 9.6% of children under 24 years old experienced lasting trauma from sexual violence during the civil war in Ivory Coast. A notable 52.17% engaged in sexual activity, with 36.67% having multiple partners, raising concerns. The prevalence of child abuse is likely extensive during armed conflicts, amplifying the risks of sexual abuse (Hoeffler & Reynal-Querol, 2003). Unfortunately, such abuse tends to persist in the post-conflict period highlights another dimension, pointing out that teenagers in western Côte d'Ivoire are raised with the belief that having a child grants them adult status. Mental health professionals express deep concern about the sexual abuse of children, seeing it as a contributing factor to psychological issues during armed conflicts and wars. Some studies suggest a nationwide 60% HIV zero-positivity rate in the post-conflict period. However, Tomkiewicz (1997) discovered, somewhat surprisingly, that children who endure armed conflicts often demonstrate better social adaptation than anticipated.

Gannage (2002) emphasizes the crucial role of parents as protective filters and positive influences for children. The children's ability to cope with trauma depends on their parents' capacity to understand and discuss the meaning and impact of the trauma. Girls who were kidnapped and gave birth in captivity may find it challenging to reintegrate into their families and communities. Reintegration is a complex process involving readjustment to family life and, at times, community reconciliation, and negotiation with families to accept the return of their children, potentially with offspring. Substance abuse becomes more complex during periods of conflict. According to Douville (2007), the use of mind-altering substances, as well as the improper consumption of alcohol and other psychoactive substances, is said to augment children's capacity to deal with the mental distress and physical pain encountered in an armed conflict. During the Ivorian crisis, children turned to locally produced alcoholic drinks, which were affordable and easily accessible. Douville (2007) contends that memories of the armed conflict persist in children's minds, and the possibility of its resurgence is a constant concern. Children find ways to express their anger, aggression, and revulsion. The pervasive pessimism, coupled with a sense of social disinvestment and a bleak future, underscores the need for a reform program to address the anger and aggression of children, 81.45% of whom show signs of mental disturbance, requiring intervention (Douville, 2007).

Cordahi et al (2002) found that 62.5% of Lebanese children and teenagers suffered post-traumatic stress disorders during the 1996 upheavals in their country. A year later, the psychological effects persisted, often linked to the loss of a parent. In Côte d'Ivoire, the high rate of psychiatric problems among young children and teenagers can be attributed to the prolonged conflict, the extent and nature of traumatic events faced, the restricted access to community resources, social disarray, and the impending risk of the country splitting into two (Cordahi et al., 2002; Akides, 2003.; Freckelton, & Karagiannakis, 2014; Gakuba et al, 2015; James et al, 2022).

III. METHODS & DATA

3.1 Study Area

The research spanned three distinct sites in Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), strategically selected to encompass a broad study area and ensure the accuracy of findings. Given the country's division, the researchers aimed to examine three sites which provided valuable insights into the disparities and commonalities of their experiences. The study specifically unfolded in three data collection areas in Côte d'Ivoire namely Abidjan, Bouake, and Odienne, each with populations of 5,060,858, 775,300, and 129,000, respectively at the initial stage in the data collection period of the study (New World Encyclopedia, 2014). Notably, Odienne stands out for its predominant Islamic community, with approximately 95% of the population adhering to the Muslim faith, while the remaining residents follow various other belief systems as in Figure 1.



Figure 1

Map of Ivory Coast

Source: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency [Accessed [online]...20/08/2014]

3.2 Research Design

Qualitative research, as defined by Bashir et al. (2008) involves participants in their natural settings and places of convenience including homes and offices (Yin, 2014). Utilizing and collecting diverse empirical materials, including personal experiences, introspective life stories, interviews, observations, historical accounts, interactions, and visual texts, this research employed a qualitative approach to thoroughly explore the phenomenon, given its focus on participants' real-life experiences (Yin, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The researchers prioritized understanding the contexts and meanings of human lives and experiences, this is one of the primary strengths of qualitative research. Purposive sampling was utilized. It was done in line or as aligned with Maree (2007); criteria-based selection relevant to the selection of participants who could answer the research questions. A purposive sampling, technique was employed to choose twenty-one (21) participants—seven from each city: Abidjan, Bouake, and Odienne. The purposive sampling facilitated the selection of participants with pertinent information and firsthand experience of the country's crisis. While



acknowledging the limitation of representing the entire population, the assumption was that the sample's mean corresponded with that of the population (Benony & Nathaniel 2000). The sampling strategy proved logical and feasible in terms of time, access, and expenses (Miles & Huberman 1994). The inclusion criteria for participants encompassed a range of factors like diversity in gender, distribution age, professional background, ethnicity, geographical location, (Punch, 2001).

All chosen participants possessed extensive training, experience, education, and recognition as experts in their respective fields. The researchers focused on illuminative data, emphasizing a critical mass that addressed the research questions and questionnaires (Patton, 2002). The purposive sampling method enabled the researchers to select participants capable of providing the needed information, representing a diverse cross-section of Ivorians, including males and females of African descent aged twenty (20) and above. Most participants were French speakers, with few English speakers, all potentially having experienced or possessing significant knowledge about the conflict. Participant categories spanned academics, diplomats, politicians, civil servants, teachers, traders, researchers, university students, and refugees ensuring diverse perspectives in the study (Babbie, 2001). The service of a professional French Interpreter/translator was sought for and utilized in the study. The selection of these categories provided an opportunity for interaction with a broad spectrum of participants in Côte d'Ivoire in West Africa.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection took place in Côte d'Ivoire where a presumed high rate of political and socio-economic effects of armed conflict occurred between the periods 2002 and 2011. Instruments for data collection included a tape recorder, field notebook, and interview guide/schedule. One-to-one interviews were conducted due to their flexibility, aiming to gather rich descriptive data and understand participants' knowledge construction about the political as well as the socio-economic ramifications of armed conflict in Côte d'Ivoire between 2002-2011. Before the interviews, the participants were contacted to confirm the appointment date and were briefed on their rights. Moreover, informed consent forms were provided to the participants and assured them that participation in the study was strictly voluntary. The interviews were scheduled to accommodate participants' availability, conducted over three months, in 2014 and followed in 2018 with each session lasting 45-60 minutes. Interview venues were chosen based on participants' preferences, recorded with consent, and, when needed, translated for accuracy during transcription. The interview questions underwent cross-checking by researchers for suitability, applicability, and instrument stability. Pre-testing ensured question validity. Data gathering utilized a voice recorder and field notes, helping researchers focus and track follow-up questions. The recorder ensured accurate record-keeping throughout the data collection process as suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2017).

3.4 Data Analysis

In examining the field data, the content analysis technique, as outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2017) as well as Anand and Barnighausen (2004), was employed to comprehend the underlying themes and perspectives. The process began with the verbatim transcription of interview responses, followed by a meticulous reading to identify common and interconnected themes. The subsequent grouping of prominent themes facilitated a comprehensive interpretation, considering any variations present (Nag & Ahmed-Malik, 2023).

The subsequent phase of analysis concentrated on categorizing common themes and pinpointing variations, leading to the formulation of themes and narratives grounded in the participants' expressions and experiences. This qualitative data analysis methodology contributed depth and significance to the findings, influencing the structure of data presentation and discussion. Adherence to ethical principles, by Burgess (1989, p.16), was rigorously maintained throughout the research endeavor. This encompassed safeguarding confidentiality, preserving anonymity, respecting participants' rights, and upholding their access rights. The participants were furnished with pertinent information about the research and their anticipated involvement, allowing them the autonomy to decide whether to participate or otherwise. Formalizing their decisions involved the use of informed consent forms and the researchers obtained the participants' consent largely orally. Ethical protocols, notably voluntary participation, were rigorously followed, ensuring that the interview process posed no risk to the participants. Anonymity was rigorously upheld, withholding the participants' identities (Berg, 2004). Participants were reassured regarding the confidentiality of their information, aligning with the guidelines proposed by Wiles et al. (2006). Explicit permission for interviews was obtained from participants, aligning with the principle that researchers should transparently communicate the study's objectives, potential risks, and benefits to participants. This was accordingly carried out (Jenet et al., 2008).



IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Findings

The study has two main aims (purposes) to analyze the political, social, and economic factors that influenced the armed conflict and the ramifications of the conflict on the people of Côte d'Ivoire. In this regard, some specific questions were posed, and the study participants responded to the questions. Thus, the direct responses of the participants are reported verbatim what the researcher found from the study field (Côte d'Ivoire). This was the first question posed to the participants:

What are the causes of the armed conflicts in Ivory Coast from 2002 to 2011?

This was how a participant commented on the factors that account for the Ivorian conflict:

The causes of the armed conflict are attributed to historical, economic, political, and social. The poor management of the legacy of President Felix Houphouët Boigny in the aftermath of his death in 1993 by the political leaders Alassane Ouattara, (prime minister) and Henri Konan Bedie (president of the national assembly). Therefore, when Konan Bedie ascended to power, there ensued a leadership dispute between Alassane Ouattara and Konan Bedie. The Northerners of the Ivory Coast (Malinkes, Senoufos) believed that they were marginalized as a result of their ethnic backgrounds. The majority of the inhabitants of the North (Malinkes) to the Rassemblement des Républicains (the Congress of Republicans), those of the West (Gueres, Betes) belong to the Front Populaire Ivoirien (the Ivorian People's Front) and the inhabitants of the Centre (Baloues) belong to the Parti Politique en Côte d'Ivoire (The Political Party in Ivory Coast). Economically, the unemployment of the youth constituted one of the causes of the armed conflicts witnessed in Ivory Coast (Participant 1, Conflict Management Consultant).

Another participant shared slightly different perspectives largely on land as a cause of the crisis:

The causes of the armed conflict are political and ethnic problems. In the political domain, leaders wanted to become the Head of State of Ivory Coast by hook or by crook, north has been excluded from the running of the country for a long time. Northerners have been left out of political control'. The problem of land claims in the rural areas when the Ivorians tried to regain their land after the 1998 law, disputes arose pitting the natives against the settlers. To round up one could say the causes of the armed conflict in Ivory Coast are ethnic problems are ethnic problems, rural land settlement, inequitable distribution of wealth and regional disparities (Participant 2. Sustainable Development student (masters)).

This participant puts the cause of the Ivorian crisis (armed conflict on identity issues (politics):

The cause of the armed conflict is related to identity due to issues of nationality and land claims in rural areas. We also have other causes such as Poor management of political power, Prevailing corruption in the Ivorian society, Discrimination, nepotism and tribalism, and Conflict of interest manifested by political leaders (Participant Sustainable Development Officer).

A participant from the Business sector was interviewed and the responses are reported verbatim:

The causes of the armed conflict are the quest for power by the main political leaders, in Ivory Coast, and the rejection of democracy because it is inadmissible to consider a coup d'état constitutional because we were 10 months away from the elections. There is also a high rate of unemployment among the youth, and this is what fanned the flames of all the crises. They have paid heavy prices for the crises. There is also the refusal to accept the results from the polls. We witness contestation in both factions. The faction of Gbagbo was declared winner by the constitutional council and that of the Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP) was backed by the electoral commission. The Ivorian crisis is a result of the manipulation of ethnicity and religion. Ivorians in the north support the RDR, those of the south and the west support the Front Populaire Ivoirien (Ivorian Popular Front Party) (FPI) and those of the Centre the Parti Democratique de Côte d'Ivoire (Democratic Party of Ivory Coast)

(PDCI) People blindly follow their political leaders and support them wrongly (Participant, Business Manager).

A security officer said this on the causes of the armed conflict in

In reality, what brought wars to Ivory Coast was discord between politicians who disagreed after Houphouët Boigny's death. The leaders of the political parties were fighting for power (Participant, Security Officer).

From the participants, it can be deduced that the causes of the armed conflict in Ivory Coast are a result of the struggle for power, land claim, corruption, identity, electoral processes, unemployment, discrimination, and interest of some Western countries, notably France, xenophobia, and succession problem (political transitional). The next section addresses the effects.

What are the social, cultural, political, and economic effects of the armed conflict?

Besides the causes of the conflict, the researchers also examined the ramifications of the crisis.



In this regard, several participants were interviewed, and they shared their views, opinions and experiences on the armed conflict that turned Côte d'Ivoire into chaos or the north and south divide. How the armed conflict affected the people of Côte d'Ivoire as shared below:

On the political level, one equally realised that the country was divided into two, the North and the South. The emergence of new political and military forces such as the Mouvement des Patriotes de Cote d'Ivoire (MPCI) the Movement of Ivorian Patriots, the Mouvement pour la Paix et La Justice (MJP) or the Movement for Peace and Justice, the Mouvement des Patriotes pour le Grand Nord (MPGO) or the Movement of Patriots of the Great West, the Forces Nouvelles (FN) the Forces de Defense et de Securite (FDS) or the Forces for Defence and Security, and militias. This conflict triggered the emergence of a certain political elite. The extradition of President Gbagbo and Ble Goube the president of Congrès Panafricain Des Jeunes Et Des Patriotes (Young and Patriots Panafrican Congress (COJEP)) to the International Court of Justice was another contributing factor. Also, there is the arrest of some leaders of the FPI, notably Mrs Gbagbo, who were apprehended and are still detained to date (Participant, Conflict management consultant).

A sustainable development officer has this to say:

The armed conflict led to the rising poverty in Ivory Coast (more than 50% of poor people lived on less than 1 dollar in 2008). Growing corruption, since the government was incapable of controlling the nation and monitoring activities that were going on in rebel camps. Rising criminality due to the circulation of light weapons. High rate of unemployment since many companies were relocated and even shut down. Mistrust between the people of the North and those of the South has witnessed an increase since 2011. Ivoirians are now leading a dog-eat-dog kind of life. Factions within political parties Front Populaire Ivorian (FPI) and Parti Democratique de Côte d'Ivoire (Democratic Party of Ivory Coast) (PDCI). (Participant, Sustainable Development Officer)

Another participant shared different views.

Politically, armed conflicts triggered mistrust among Ivoirians. Ivoirians lack confidence in one another, talking about reconciliation but this is not sincere, Ivoirians look at each other with mistrust.

Economically, the Conflicts have retarded the growth of the country leading to economic revival, poverty and Life is expensive. One realised that poverty has increased with the two-armed conflicts.

Many infrastructural structures were destroyed. We do have hospitals, schools, roads and even universities such as that of Bouake which were brought to ruins. There was weapon circulation during the 2002 crisis. Criminality has soared, a lot of mugging or robbery. Robbery has increased and there still exist armed aggressions. Young people who have not been recruited into the army have hidden weapons and are just waiting for the next crisis to bring them out. Gbagbo was the head of state, and the economy was under his control there was a deduction of some sums of money from the salaries of civil servants called "effort de guerre" or war effort. The northern part was controlled by the rebels and there was much embezzlement of diamonds and gold (Participant, NGO field officer).

This was how an Ivorian security officer commented on political, social, and economic effects:

There is no more agreement and jovial interaction as it was before the crisis in Ivory Coast. There are people in some factions who do not want to see people from the other factions. The bellies of Ivoirians are rumbling with fear and increasing insecurity in Ivory Coast.

Today we are lagging due to a drop in prices of cocoa. At the time when the country was divided into two, those of the rebel faction took and sold cocoa to Burkina Faso while the government was struggling to solve the problems of Ivoirians (Participant, Security Officer):

4.2 Discussions

The findings have shown that the Ivorian armed conflict affected the country's economy negatively and the overall stability of Côte d'Ivoire (Shipilov, 2022). Also, the armed conflict in Côte d'Ivoire affected the political life of the country because of the disagreements of the leading politicians. Moreover, the death of the first president (Houphouet Boigny) in 1993 led power struggle and acts of discrimination, notably against individuals from the North. The responses of the participants of the study confirmed such power struggles among and between the leading politicians. Thus, the findings of the study are consistent with what other researchers and scholars found about armed conflict in Côte d'Ivoire (Daniel, 2003; Suaka, 2012; Global Security, 2001; Shipilov, 2022).

Socially, the armed conflict in Côte d'Ivoire negatively affected the social cohesion of the people as the country was sharply divided between the North and the South and divided along religious lines with frequent clashes between



the government's Christian-controlled forces and the Muslim opposition which erupted in 2000 (Combaz, 2020; Shipilov, 2022; Oxford Analytica, 2023; Yéo, 2022).

Theoretically, the study was guided by the eclectic political theory which argues that civil conflicts arise from the people culturally, economically, socially, and politically alongside differences between and among the various clans and ethnic groups within a country. This theoretical argument is well-connected and applicable to the Ivorian armed conflict which was fought along those lines. Also, in the Côte d'Ivoire, this theory interprets the conflict as emerging from the development of class consciousness of the people especially among the lower class in the northern regions, of which many of them are perceived as the working-class migrants by the rich and the wealthier inhabitants in the south. These observations of the study are consistent with other studies findings (Hoeffler & Reynal-Querol, 2003; Konate, 2004).

In addition, the study found that the Ivorian armed conflict has serious ramifications on the health of the natural and human resources of Côte d'Ivoire. The findings revealed that the armed conflict affected the management of HIV/AIDS during the conflict (Woods, 2003) due to the level of violence across the country which eventually affected the people's (Ivorians) access to health facilities (hostels, clinics among others Roberts et al., 2004).

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that the armed conflict of Côte d'Ivoire contributed significantly to the underdevelopment of the country the conflict retarded the development pace of the country in terms of human resources loss, natural resources, and the political and socio-economic lives of the people. It recommends a culture of inclusiveness irrespective of the origins of the people and the need for political tolerance and respect for the Ivorian Constitution on election results and tenure of office. The spate of third-term drives should be checked by Ivorian Presidents and politicians.

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