

THE POLITICS OF “OTHERING”: WILL ETHNIC POLARIZATION DESTROY CÔTE
D’IVOIRE?

A thesis
submitted to the Faculty of
The School of Continuing Studies
and of
The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts
in Liberal Studies

By

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Georgetown University
Washington, D.C.
March 25, 2013

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ABSTRACT

The historically peaceful and prosperous West African nation of Côte d’Ivoire has been embroiled in an ongoing civil war for the last 12 years. Formerly a French colony, Côte d’Ivoire has a turbulent history of colonization, ethnic divisions, coup d’états, and faulty democratic institutions that have culminated in explosive civil disputes that continue to divide the country in half today. At the center of this war is a mix of grievances from various ethnic groups, and the one that rises to the top is the question of who is really Ivorian. The second President of Côte d’Ivoire, Henri Konan Bédié, created the notion of Ivoritié, an idea that was used to separate the true “Ivorians” from those who were foreigners or children of foreigners. This notion of “true citizenship” was problematic to the northern population of the mostly poor plantation workers whose parents or grandparents were immigrants from places like Burkina Faso or Mali. They felt that their “people” were being marginalized and excluded from any political participation, particularly because in 2000 the Ivorian Constitution was amended to require both parents of a presidential candidate to be born in Côte d’Ivoire. This new constitutional amendment resulted in the disqualification of Alassane Ouattara, who represented the hope of many northerners for equal political participation and social treatment. Now, almost 15 years later, Ouattara, a Muslim Northerner whose parents are from Burkina Faso has become President. After a

year of violence, he has inherited from former President Laurent Gbagbo a country divided into two, rebel groups, and a laundry list of human rights violations from not only the former President's camp but his own as well. With revenge seemingly high on the political to-do list, both Gbagbo and Ouattara's team of rebels have caught the attention of the international community with their threats of violence, suppression of the populace, or coup d'états.

In this thesis, I intend to show that public displays of Presidential ethnic solidarity are problematic, and unless leaders embrace an overarching national consciousness that does not staunchly represent ethnicity, Côte d'Ivoire will descend into perpetual chaos. I intend to investigate this problem of xenophobia and civil war in Côte d'Ivoire using an analytical lens that draws on historical material as well as psychological insights and case study methods. I intend to give a historical background of the nation, its history of colonization, ethnic divisions, coup d'états, and faulty democratic institutions. This information will serve as a foundation for my next level of analysis, which will specifically deal with how xenophobia is constructed in the minds of citizens. This is where I will draw from the insights of psychologist Frantz Fanon. He has written about how xenophobia becomes alive in the minds and souls of post-colonial Africans, and how xenophobia can potentially be avoided. Next I will look at a case study about a nation that has had to rebuild after a catastrophic genocide. Rwanda is the quintessential horror story of the extreme results of prolonged ethnic polarization. I would like to look beyond the genocide and focus on what the country has done to move past its horrific past, and how they are working to unify their nation, not as Hutus and Tutsis but as Rwandan people.

In the end, I will demonstrate that first xenophobia can come from the state, leaders can actually manipulate feeling of hopelessness into feelings of xenophobic rage, and these feelings of xenophobia can benefit the faulty leader as they attempt to monopolize power within a nation. Leadership matters and Côte d'Ivoire is stuck in a leadership trap of epic proportions. I contend that reforms in terms of political transparency are needed in Côte d'Ivoire. The people of the nation are not voting along the lines of who has a proven record of selfless performance, who will turn the economy around, or who will make education more accessible. Ivorians are today voting along ethnic lines, resulting in leaders who do not always put the population first, and whose cabinets are not always interested in what is best for the country as a whole. I argue that a new vision of leadership is needed for Côte d'Ivoire, leadership that does not represent the ethnic polarization that has gripped the country historically. If not, Côte d'Ivoire will suffer a perpetual cycle of civil conflict and violence.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND DEDICATION

First, I would like to thank my family for their constant support. Without my parents Francis and Ursuline Kimou and my four brothers Junior, Francois, Albert, and Stephane, I may have gone crazy by now! They have always been there to support all my academic pursuits and I thank God for them every day. I would also like to thank my best friends, who have been there through the worrying and the writing; I love you guys so much and appreciate the constant encouragement. I would of course like to thank my mentor Joe Smaldone. Without Joe I literally would NEVER have gotten this far. He was always fair, honest, and kind with me; pushing me to do my best and to really challenge my academic comfort zones. I never knew I could have written a thesis like this, and I doubt I would have been able to do so with anyone else but Joe. Finally I would like to dedicate this to the magnificent nation of Côte d'Ivoire. A place of warmth, history, and culture; I am so proud of my Ivorian heritage and I am humbled to have been able to write about something so close to my heart. To all Ivorians; I hope we grow to become a united people, and truly reflect the words of the Ivorian national anthem:

Fiers Ivoiriens, le pays nous appelle.
Si nous avons dans la paix ramenée
la liberté,
Notre devoir sera d'être un modèle
De l'espérance promise à l'humanité,
En forgeant, unie dans la foi
nouvelle,
La patrie de la vraie fraternité!

Proud citizens of the Ivory Coast,
the country calls us.
If we have brought back liberty
peacefully,
It will be our duty to be an example
Of the hope promised to humanity,
Forging united in new faith
The Fatherland of true brotherhood!

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CHAPTER ONE

THE BURDENS OF HISTORY: CÔTE D'IVOIRE, COLONIALISM AND THE PARADE OF PRESIDENTS

Introduction

Côte d'Ivoire is a small nation in West Africa that is nestled between Ghana to the east, and Liberia, Guinea, Mali, and Burkina Faso to the west and north. With beautiful views of the Atlantic Ocean to its south, an enchanting landscape, a diverse resume of natural resources, and a vibrant culture including music and internationally known cuisine, Côte d'Ivoire was, and continues to be, a country of great beauty and even greater potential. Unfortunately, this potential has been retarded and the natural resources drained by civil disputes and national divisions that have left the nation in a polarized state. In order to decipher accurately the current political environment in which the nation exists, one must understand the history and background of the nation. For this purpose, this chapter will serve as the foundation of the Ivorian picture that we see today. We will look at the colonial and post-colonial constructions of the nation, specifically, giving a historical background of the nation's political and social climate, with a special emphasis on how the leadership has contributed to ethnic divisions. How has Côte d'Ivoire's past - colonizers, economic policies, and specifically faulty leadership trap – influenced the divided nation that stands before us today?

Colonial Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire often referred to as “brain child of the French,”¹ was actually made up of complex social structures in its precolonial era. Although not much anthropological data

¹ Guy-Marcel W.K Kouo, *Côte D'Ivoire: What Went Wrong?* (Ann Arbor: s.n., 2003), 7.

has been documented prior to the arrival of first the Portuguese and finally the French in the 1600's, historians have identified evidence of kingdoms, chiefdoms, tribes, courts, and lineages.² These interconnecting structures made up the precolonial political and economic regulatory apparatuses that included checks, balances, and power-sharing mechanisms amongst communities. This type of network can be identified in the status of “chief,” “king,” or “elder” which can be found in almost all Ivorian villages no matter the ethnic group. Chiefs were very important people in village life, yet still they did not hold exclusive powers. Within the villages was a hierarchy pertaining to lineages and seniority, both of which had different sets of powers than the chief.

Even further, some groups of villages had Kings to whom the chiefs and the village elders were held accountable.³ These societal nuances can be used to highlight the fact that power was never attached to one person or group in precolonial Côte d'Ivoire. Power was dispersed across different groups that were independent of one another and organized internally in different ways. Still, it is important to note that precolonial Ivorian societies were indeed stateless, that is, “none had standing armies, bureaucratic organization, or centralized sovereignty.”⁴ The area was at the time a collection of small communities that were indeed separate, even with some splintering off into larger empires like the Kong, Abron, Bauolé and Agni empires.⁵ These empires would go on to establish the first “highly

² John Rapley, *Ivoirien Capitalism: African Entrepreneurs in Côte d'Ivoire* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993), 23.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ademola Araoye, *Côte D'Ivoire: The Conundrum of a Still Wretched of the Earth* (Trenton: Africa World, 2012), 22.

centralized political and administrative structures”⁶ under rulers who were strong but very distrustful of one another. These growing divisions (namely over land) between kingdoms would soon be exacerbated by the arrival of Côte d’Ivoire’s future colonizer, the French led by Louis Binger, a French commander charged with facilitating the process of exploitation.⁷

The story of French colonization is a long and convoluted one. It begins in 1637 when missionaries arrived to the beach town of Assinie, a region that was not of much importance to France at the time. In fact, with Côte d’Ivoire’s dangerously rough coastline and lack of convenient access to ports or harbors, full French exploration and exploitation were not fully implemented until the mid-nineteenth century.⁸ With the mad dash for claiming overseas territories lighting Europe on fire in the late 1800’s, there was a new-found urgency to spread French power and influence into the area by all means necessary. Attracted by seemingly endless possibilities of wealth in West Africa, “French explorers, missionaries, trading companies, and soldiers, gradually extend[ed] the area under French domination.”⁹ Beginning in 1840, a new aspect of the colonial apparatus was introduced to further the reach and exploitative agenda of the French. Treaties were being drafted by the French between themselves and the local chiefs that would guarantee the French rights like free navigation in the territorial waters and virtually unlimited use of resources for their

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Kouo, *What Went Wrong*, 3.

⁸ Robert E. Handloff and Thomas Duval Roberts, *Area Handbook Côte d’Ivoire: A Country Study* (D.C: Library of Congress, 1991), 3.

⁹ Ibid.

commercial ventures.¹⁰ In exchange for these rights, the French gave local leadership “luxury” goods like hats, crates of liquor, and ice cream.¹¹

Wielding the power of these treaties, and a growing French population, colonial expansion happened so rapidly that there became a dire need for more French administrators to manage the growth. This is why a policy of “indirect rule, [meaning the use of] indigenous leaders as [French] surrogates,¹²” was put into place. These “surrogates” were sometimes traditional representatives like chiefs or community elders, but often times they were newly established Ivorian elites chosen by the French in a policy of “divide and rule.”¹³ Here the French began affording educational and societal incentives, like overseas French education, clothing, or military training, to a select group of Ivorian elites. Even if these elites opposed the process of colonization, they believed that “they would achieve equality with their French peers through assimilation rather than through complete independence.”¹⁴ These Ivorian elites would become the cornerstone of French colonization, as we will see later on in this chapter: they would be the enforcers and supporters of the French agenda, ensuring that the vast majority of the indigenous population remained marginalized and helpless to the exploitation happening around them.

Due to their aggressive colonial policies, by 1900 the French had successfully tapped into a wealth of natural resources like gold, timber, silver, and what would grow to

¹⁰ Kouo, *What Went Wrong*, 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 13.

¹³ Handloff and Roberts, *Country Study*, 12.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

be the nation's most lucrative crop, the cocoa plant. This process of exploitation was massive and required the French colonial system to impose a policy of forced labor amongst the native population where "each male adult Ivorian was required to work for ten days each year without compensation as part of his obligation to the state."¹⁵ In 1912 the French introduced cash crops, particularly the aforementioned cocoa plant which they forced the natives to cultivate instead of the traditional food crops that sustained their communities in precolonial times. Unfortunately for the French, the population of Côte d'Ivoire was not large enough to maintain such a large demand for labor. To remedy this, French administrators recruited large numbers of workers from Burkina Faso to work on the Ivorian plantations and forests. As the French introduced laborers from other regions north of Côte d'Ivoire, a new population of migrant workers settled in the northern part of the nation.

Because the resources and most of the development was happening in the southern part of the country, towards the capitals of Abidjan and the ports in Bassam, there slowly developed regional disparities creating the line between the Ivorian elites in the south and the laborers of Malian or Burkinabe ancestry in the north. This was the beginning of the unequal social configuration that would become the Ivorian state, a web of colonial manipulation that would label one group from one region as different and less worthy of French incentives. Rather than addressing the growing inequalities, the French focused their methods of assimilation on the small southern population of elites that were slowly becoming more and more Catholic and "French" by the day. Still, most natives who were not lucky enough to be given the title and resources of "Ivorian elite" were not blind to how degrading the colonial apparatus was, and some were even ready to fight it.

¹⁵ Ibid., 14.

French domination was indeed resisted at certain points in Ivorian history. As the French population became larger and better equipped with guns, they began demanding taxes from the local population.¹⁶ This was a devastating turn of events for the local Ivorian population which once demanded “coutumes,” or “fixed annual fees paid by colonial authorities to local rulers to secure trading rights or permission to establish permanent settlements.”¹⁷ Now in a deceptive ploy to solidify their colonial aspirations, the French administrators were encroaching on the sovereignty of the locals by demanding taxes from them. These events were a huge catalyst for resistance like that of Samori Touré who had a large and well-equipped army but was eventually crushed by the rigorous campaigns of French military expeditions that put a prompt end to any resistance.¹⁸ As French expansion continued and resistance was regularly curtailed, status, power, and control in West Africa became more and more important to those across Europe.

The “Scramble for Africa” was now in full affect and to “fairly” decide how Africa would be divided, European powers like England, France, Belgium, Germany, and Portugal assembled at the Berlin Conference in 1885.¹⁹ Here, the monopoly of power that the French had in West Africa was solidified, from Côte d’Ivoire to Benin, from Mali to Senegal and Burkina Faso. The French colonial administration cemented its grip on West Africa and on July 12, 1893, Côte d’Ivoire became an official French colony.²⁰ Creating

¹⁶ Ibid., 11

¹⁷ Ibid., 243.

¹⁸ Ibid., 11.

¹⁹ Ibid., 9.

²⁰ Kouo, *What Went Wrong*, 3.

good French subjects in their newly acquired colony was important and was implemented through the process of association and of assimilation. With the tactic of association, the French allowed Ivorians to keep their own culture, as long as it was not threatening the interests of the French empire. Similarly, assimilation was the staunch stance that any African culture is inherently inferior to that of French culture. Historian Martin Meredith describes the process in his book *The State of Africa: a History of Fifty Years of Independence*:

In conducting their ‘civilizing’ mission in Africa, they had been highly successful in cultivating a small black elite to whom they accorded full rights as citizens on condition that they accepted assimilation into French society and rejected their African heritage, family law and customs. In outlook, members of the elite saw themselves, and were seen as Frenchmen, brought up in a tradition of loyalty to France, willingly accepting its government, its language and culture, and taking certain pride in being citizens of a world power.²¹

From the clothing, to the literature, to what they ate for breakfast, French colonial administrators stressed the importance of upholding the majesty and superiority of France and its culture. To do this was to degrade, erase, and ignore the former empires, communities, and cultures attached to precolonial Côte d’Ivoire. This was the true construction of the Ivorian elite, a group of individuals seen as so different from the rest of the population that they were considered “social equals by their white counterparts and were exempt from military and labor service.”²² Slowly the colonial government would place these elites into positions of leadership that were once held by traditional rulers or chiefs, gradually delegitimizing the precolonial structures of power. And to the delight of the

²¹ Martin Meredith, *The State of Africa: A History of Fifty Years of Independence* (London: Free Press, 2005), 58.

²² Handloff and Roberts, *Country Study*, 16.

French government and colonial apparatus, there was no better example of a properly created French subject than Félix Houphouët-Boigny.

The Boigny Era

Following French colonial rule, Félix Houphouët-Boigny was President of Côte d'Ivoire for twenty-nine years; supposedly winning six presidential elections by over 99 percent of the vote, he saw himself as the father of the nation. In a 1988 speech he pronounced that "there is no number two, three, or four. In Côte d'Ivoire there is only a number one: that's me and I don't share my decisions."²³ Boigny centralized power around his needs and decisions in the new Ivorian state so much so that his influence was virtually unopposed. This consolidation of power was supported by the French who saw Boigny as a great middle man for their postcolonial ambitions of continued resource exploitation. Boigny is a pivotal player in Ivorian politics, making it important to outline how his continued relationship with the French was cultivated, and how his ethnocentrism was put on display, for this is the foundation of Côte d'Ivoire's leadership trap and ethnic divide.

It is important to note that World War II had a great impact on postcolonial Côte d'Ivoire. The establishment of the Vichy government after the surrender of France to Germany was an indication that France may not be the powerful "purveyor of a so-called higher civilization."²⁴ These sentiments resonated among many Ivorian intellectuals who began analyzing the new Vichy regime's racist Nazi theories, particularly the regime's inclination to increase forced labor practices amongst the local population. Still, Ivorian

²³ Meredith, *State of Africa*, 379.

²⁴ Handloff and Roberts, *Country Study*, 16.

intellectuals spearheaded the development of political consciousness within the Ivorian population, even establishing communist study groups and discussing the advantages of aligning with the Free French and General Charles de Gaulle, as opposed to the radically racist Vichy government. These instances of mobilization and political maturity aided in establishing a new Ivorian nationalism. This sense of nationalism and national mobilization against the continued exploitation of their people and resources led to demands for a revised colonial relationship between Ivorians and the French. This pressure for change led to the Brazzaville Conference of 1940, led by De Gaulle and the Free French, a calculated attempt to appease the growing colonial skepticism and dwindling desire to continue being instruments in exploitation. There were a few distinct measures that were decided upon in regards to the political future of Côte d'Ivoire at the conference. Firstly, "the conference committed the French government to respect local customs...end labor conscription...and open positions in the colonial administration to Africans."²⁵ The last part of the aforementioned colonial "policy revisions" was the only real change that came about, and in 1945 a national election was held to choose the two delegates for the French Constituent Assembly. For this inaugural election, French citizens living in Côte d'Ivoire voted for one delegate while Ivorians were able to vote for another delegate separately.²⁶

Although there was a very limited group of individuals that were allowed to make up the African electorate in this election, those who were able to participate choose the wealthy and French-educated leader of the African Agricultural Union, Félix Houphouët-

²⁵ Ibid., 17.

²⁶ Ibid.

Boigny. Boigny, born in 1905 into a prosperous Bauolé family in the then small village of Yamoussoukro, was a Medical School graduate who parlayed his family's large landholdings in Yamoussoukro into a lucrative cocoa planting business. By 1944 he was one of the richest men in the country.²⁷ After his election as deputy in the French Constituent Assembly, Boigny spearheaded a campaign against French discriminatory treatment, and fervently opposed and fought to end the policy of forced labor. In 1946 he was successful in this task; the implementation of the law known as the "Loi Houphouët-Boigny" ended the policy of forced labor throughout the colony, further propelling Boigny into the position of Ivorian liberation leader.²⁸ Another momentous change occurred to solidify Boigny as the leader Ivorians needed for successful independence from the French: reforms were implemented by the French granting freedom of speech, association, but most importantly the freedom of assembly, that opened the doors to the new notions of political parties. Created in 1946, Boigny's party Parti Democratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) became the first political party to be established and recognized in black Africa.²⁹ Boigny and the PDCI were large supporters of the policy of local self-government and total political, economic, and social equality between Africans and Europeans.³⁰ This sense of equality was missing, particularly with colonial economic policy that gave European farmers incentives like free labor and higher prices for their crops as compared to those grown by Africans. With these continuing discrepancies, the hope for change that came

²⁷ Meredith, *State of Africa*, 62.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Handloff and Roberts, *Country Study*, 19.

from the Brazzaville Conference was quickly being replaced by stronger anticolonial sentiments and a growing desire for independence.

In 1947 Boigny and fellow Francophone West African leaders assembled political forces to create the Rassemblement Democratique Africain (RDA), which “soon emerged as the dominant political force in French West Africa, and Côte d’Ivoire, where African and European planters were in direct competition,”³¹ turning Côte d’Ivoire into “the most fertile ground for recruiting a militant African party.”³² Soon Boigny became the leader of the RDA and in turn was put on a watch list by the French colonial government, creating an openly antagonistic relationship between the PDCI and the colonial administration. The French felt threatened by Ivorian attempts to mobilize, particularly around a man who was becoming the voice of the anticolonial movement in Côte d’Ivoire. In fact, the French were so threatened by the mass demonstrations, strikes, and boycotts on French goods that Boigny and his party were leading, that they “dismissed PDCI supporters from government jobs, and jailed most party leaders...leaving [the PDCI] close to collapse.”³³ Although Boigny began his political career as one of the loudest supporters of African equality and upward mobility in the face of colonial oppression, the potential disintegration of his political party caused him to re-prioritize and refocus his relationship with the colonial administration. Much to the chagrin of many Ivorians, Boigny would soon become one of the most loyal supporters of the French.

³¹ Ibid., 20.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

By the latter part of 1946 Boigny had adjusted much of his policy towards French colonial rule. He first cut ties with the French Communist Party, and then dropped all plans for military resistance to the colonial administration, and expelled from Abidjan many high profile leaders of the RDA including the Secretary General who was at one point his close confidant in the fight for equality. Boigny became a calculated puppet in the eyes of many Francophone African liberation leaders; he was now focused on cooperating with the colonial administration through “political concessions” and virtually complete economic cooperation with France and members of the French business community.³⁴

Côte d’Ivoire in turn grew to be one of the wealthiest colonies in the Afrique Occidentale Française (AOF) which included Mauritania, Senegal, French Sudan, French Guinea, Upper Volta, Dahomey and Niger. Although Boigny became increasingly loyal to De Gaulle and the French colonial administration, a wave of liberation movements was growing in the AOF, causing France to come to the bargaining table with even more colonial reforms. This time, the changes came in the form of a 1958 referendum which gave the AOF colonies the option of remaining in the community and upholding the French constitution or becoming completely independent.³⁵ Boigny voted to remain within the community, “further confirming the almost mystical feeling of brotherhood with France that more than fifty years of cultural assimilation had instilled...among the economic and political elite.”³⁶

³⁴ Ibid., 21.

³⁵ David Lea and Annamarie Rowe, *A Political Chronology of Africa* (London: Europa Publications, 2001), 125.

³⁶ Handloff and Roberts, *Country Study*, 23.

This vote did not come as a surprise, as Boigny and the elite of Côte d'Ivoire enjoyed perks from the French colonial apparatus that guaranteed them money, power, and respect. It was clear that in order to maintain their lifestyles as the upper echelon of Ivorian society, complete cooperation and support of the French and their economic policies was necessary. Boigny even urged a group gathered in Abidjan to continue to support a resolution to “make Africa the most splendid and most loyal territory in the French union,”³⁷ further maintaining his position as France’s trusty collaborator in exploitation. Still, Boigny and his supporters in Côte d'Ivoire could not curb the wave of independence that was spreading amongst the AOF colonies, and when Senegal and Mali declared themselves independent in the summer of 1960, the restlessness of the Ivorian population was too strong to ignore. Côte d'Ivoire gained independence from the French on August 7th 1960 much to the disappointment of Boigny.³⁸

Even still, his loyalty to the French never dwindled in the face of Ivorian independence; on the contrary this new process of state building allowed Boigny to cement his consolidation of power into the new constitution and all political facets of Côte d'Ivoire. He ran a single party political machine that supported the popular notion that competition between various parties would be a waste of time and a distraction from the real developmental issues at hand. This ideology would systematically concentrate power in the hands of Boigny and his brain child, the PDCI. This power allowed Boigny to ensure that his supporters, particularly those who were a part of his Baoulé ethnic group, were able to

³⁷ Meredith, *State of Africa*, 63.

³⁸ Godfrey Mwakikagile, *Africa after Independence: Realities of Nationhood* (Huntington, NY: Nova Science, 2001), 99.

hold lucrative positions of power within his administration. He would ensure that he was surrounded by loyal political cronies who he afforded various privileges and plush amenities. These amenities became larger and more extravagant as Côte d'Ivoire grew to be known as the Ivorian Miracle, implementing “strong state institutions supporting private sector growth,”³⁹ a strategy that in the 60’s and 70’s made the country into the leading producer of cocoa, pineapples, and palm oil.

To no one’s surprise, Boigny’s connection to the French government had a huge influence on the success of the Côte d'Ivoire’s economy during most of his presidency: “Much of the success had to do with French export policies, external economic connections to French markets, and the [French] desire to demonstrate that they could transform the country to surpass neighboring African countries that had forced Europeans to leave.”⁴⁰ The French poured into Côte d'Ivoire, with the French population growing by 40,000 in about 15 years.⁴¹ This community was important to the Boigny political machine as their monetary support opened the Ivorian market up to a large group of European consumers.

So much money and aid was coming into Côte d'Ivoire that Ivorians could not help but take notice of the opulent lifestyles of Boigny and his tight political inner circle. Starting with Boigny’s ostentatious home in which “over three million francs [had] been spent out of French aid funds...from chandeliers and antique style furniture...to embossed chinaware and

³⁹ Paul Collier, *Wars, Guns, and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places* (New York: Harper, 2009), 156.

⁴⁰ Molefi Kete Asante, *The History of Africa: The Quest for Eternal Harmony* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 331.

⁴¹ Ibid.

cutlery for over 1,000 guests,”⁴² no price was too great for the President. Then there was his extravagant display of Baoulé pride with the establishment of his home village Yamoussoukro as the second capital of the country. He spared no expense in transforming the humble village into a pseudo-capital with the construction of highways, extravagant glass buildings, a large and very posh French Hotel and Resort called Le President, and of course the infamous Basilica Our Lady of Peace. The massive cathedral, one of the largest in the world, was rumored to cost the nation close to \$300 million USD.⁴³ The maintenance of his and his cronies’ opulent homes, travels, and cars, coupled with the squandering of money on pretentious and ethnocentric displays of grandeur, it was no wonder that the Ivorian population was growing restless of Boigny’s policies and pretentious antics.

By 1980 the “Ivorian Miracle” had ended due to a severe drought and the decline in prices for the nation’s number one export, cocoa, virtually bringing the Ivorian economy to a complete halt.⁴⁴ The people noticed and “popular manifestations of discontent with the regime’s rigid policies, as well as with declining revenue, high urban unemployment, and the atrophied one-party political system”⁴⁵ spread throughout the capital Abidjan. A need for change was pulsating throughout the nation. Boigny and his administration were feeling the heat, and with his old age and declining health, he knew he had to pick a successor quickly. A supporter of constant amendments to the Ivorian constitution, Boigny once again amended article 11 of the patchwork document, making the President of the National

⁴² Meredith, *State of Africa*, 71.

⁴³ Ruth Nora Cyr, *Twentieth Century Africa* (Lincoln, NE: Writers Club Press, 2001), 249.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 250.

⁴⁵ Handloff and Roberts, *Country Study*, 30.

Assembly the person who would take over the presidency if the current President died while in office.⁴⁶ It was a calculated move that placed Boigny's handpicked successor in the perfect position for the Presidency. A fellow Baoulé technocrat, Henri Konan Bédié, became the second President of Côte d'Ivoire on December 7th, 1993 when Boigny died at the age of 88.⁴⁷ Unfortunately for him, Bédié would not enjoy the thirty plus years of plush leadership that his predecessor had. On the contrary, his time as President would usher in a period of instability, coup d'états, and a parade of presidents that would change the course of Ivorian history forever.

The Parade of Presidents: Bédié, Guei, Gbagbo, and Ouattara

Henri Konan Bédié was born into a large Baoulé family in 1933, and grew into an up and coming intellectual by earning a scholarship to attend school in Paris where he would become the President of the Association of Ivorian Students in France.⁴⁸ This position, along with his Baoulé ties, caught the attention of Arsene Assouan who was at the time the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Boigny administration.⁴⁹ This early connection with the Presidential administration allowed Bédié to solidify himself as a part of the new generation of political players in Côte d'Ivoire, parlaying him later into the position of Ambassador to the United States, Minister of Economics and Financial Affairs, followed by the position of Speaker of Parliament, and eventually climbing to the ranks of President of the National Assembly. After Boigny's death and Bédié's accession to the presidency, there

⁴⁶ Ibid., 32.

⁴⁷ Cyr, *Twentieth Century Africa*, 250.

⁴⁸ Kouo, *What Went Wrong*, 72.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

was much speculation about when the first truly democratic election would be in Côte d'Ivoire, seeing as many were skeptical that the past elections making Boigny President for over thirty years were legitimate and not rigged by the government and the French. The year 1995 was the year when the Ivorian population would get the chance to choose their future leader, but not before Bédié could make some of his own constitutional amendments.

The northern people of Côte d'Ivoire, a predominately Muslim, Malian, and Burkinabe population from the days of Boigny's open policies on cross-border labor recruitment, were becoming disenfranchised with their marginalization. They supported Alassane Ouattara who was Prime Minister in the Boigny administration, before Boigny got rid of the position altogether. With a seemingly impenetrable Baoulé dynasty being solidified with the strategic placement of Bédié as President, northerners looked to Ouattara for a new future, particularly with the 1995 election date quickly approaching. Nonetheless, like his predecessor, Bédié was not a fan of political opposition, and with Ouattara being a front-runner in the next election, saw to it that his potential accession to the presidency would be curtailed by a new electoral code that stated that "the President elect must be born of Ivorian parents, and must have resided in Côte d'Ivoire five years prior to the election."⁵⁰ This is when the infamous notion of "Ivorigité" was introduced into the political arena in Côte d'Ivoire, where now there was a question of who was truly Ivorian enough to hold the post of President. This new code was seen as a direct assault on the presidential aspirations of Ouattara who Bédié claimed was not only the son of immigrants but who himself was born

⁵⁰ Abdul Raufu Mustapha and Lindsay Whitfield, *Turning Points in African Democracy* (Suffolk, UK: James Currey, 2009), 39.

in Burkina Faso.⁵¹ This attack on legitimacy was duly noted by a population that already felt ostracized for not being southern, catholic, or part of the ethnic groups that made up the Ivorian elite. This new electoral code split the PDCI into two, with Ouattara emerging as the leader of the Rassemblement Democratique des Republicains (RDR) and Bédié remaining as head of Boigny's PDCI. Although Ouattara emerged as a political leader with a following of supporters that rivaled Bédié's, the new electoral code was not dismissed and he was not allowed to run for President in 1995, leaving Bédié virtually unopposed and solidifying his next presidential term.⁵²

With the notion of "Ivoryité" creating a greater schism between citizens throughout the nation, Bédié also had to deal with the economic chaos following Boigny's death. Poverty had gone from 10 percent in 1985 to over 32 percent in 1993, leaving the World Bank to label the nation as one of the seventeen most indebted countries in the world.⁵³ People were unemployed, restless, and ready to fight for change. Land rights in particular had become a huge point of contestation between ethnic groups in the rural areas. With access to land becoming one of the most stable sources of food and income during the Ivorian economic downturn, the struggle for ownership became more violent than ever. Clashes between ethnic groups began happening in the rural areas, causing many to pit "natives" against "foreigners." This led to the National Assembly implementing a law in 1998 that land would only be owned by Ivorian citizens and that non-Ivorian citizens would

⁵¹ Kristian Harpviken, *Troubled Regions and Failing States: The Clustering and Contagion of Armed Conflicts* (Bingley, UK: Emerald, 2010), 238.

⁵² Mustapha and Whitfield, *African Democracy*, 39.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 38.

have the option of renting the land from its “indigenous owners”.⁵⁴ Of course, this exacerbated the issues stemming from who is truly Ivorian and who is not, leaving much of the population to believe that their existence in the nation would never be legitimized by the government.

Corruption, ethnic divisions, inter-party clashes, and an unstable and divided military led to the 1999 coup d'état that left Bédié in exile in France and placed a new political player in the position of head of state. On December 24, 1999, a group of soldiers mutinied over their lack of pay and their impoverished living conditions.⁵⁵ They quickly took up arms and placed the former military leader Robert Guéï as their spokesperson and leader. Guéï, born in Western Côte d'Ivoire, was a French-trained military general who in the Boigny administration was promoted to Chief of Staff.⁵⁶ It should be duly noted that Guéï and Bédié never got along; particularly because when Bédié became President he looked to Guéï for military support in curtailing any anti-Bédié demonstrations that became increasingly common in the late 1990's.⁵⁷ With Guéï declining to make the Ivorian military a political tool which took sides and publicly demonstrating bias towards Bédié's corrupt regime, Guéï was quickly put on the list of potential enemies. So it was to no surprise when Guéï was chosen to the head the bloodless coup d'état that led Bédié to flee, first to neighboring Togo and eventually France.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 39.

⁵⁵ Davide Abbascia and Giusto Poggi, *Côte D'Ivoire (Ivory Coast): Election Crisis and Aftermath* (New York: Nova Science, 2012), 84.

⁵⁶ Alan Rake, *African Leaders: Guiding the New Millennium* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001), 70.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

With power vested in the hands of Guéï and the newly-placed junta government, the new leader quickly dissolved Parliament, the Constitutional Council, and the Supreme Court, promising to “maintain respect for democracy, eradicate government corruption, re-appropriate funds seized in corrupt dealings, re-write the constitution, and hold transparent elections within a year.”⁵⁸ Guéï also assured Ivorians and the world that he had no aspirations for the presidency and was merely setting up the foundation for installing true democracy in the divided nation; but as the election approached Guéï changed his tune. With a stronger lust for presidential power, Guéï, backed by Tia Kone, his former advisor and then head of the Supreme Court, declared that only Guéï, the FPI candidate Laurent Gbagbo, and three other much less popular candidates were allowed to run. This again excluded northern candidate Ouattara and former President Bédié, two of his most threatening opponents to Presidential power.

With domestic and international confidence dwindling by the minute, it was again no surprise that the military proceeded to mutiny once again against the very man they picked to fight for them. In May 2000, disillusioned soldiers who were disappointed that Guéï was now showcasing the same sentiments of xenophobia and corruption as Bédié, mutinied against him, leading to a bloody battle between armed militants, rebels, and everyday citizens.⁵⁹ This battle caused Côte d'Ivoire to descend into a state of complete violence and virtual anarchy. Still, amidst a virtual all-out war, elections were finally held on October 22, 2000, after which Guéï quickly pronounced himself the winner against Gbagbo and his FPI party. Gbagbo, ready to fight for presidential power, immediately

⁵⁸ Abbascia and Poggi, *Election Crisis*, 84.

⁵⁹ Mustapha and Whitefield, *African Democracy*, 41.

claimed that the election had been rigged by Guéï and quickly initiated large street protests led by his supporters in the southern cities.⁶⁰ These large groups of protestors clashed with other protestors who saw this election as faulty due to Ouattara's continued exclusion, leading to hundreds of deaths and a continued state of political division and social unrest. Still, Gbagbo's presidential win was soon ratified by the Supreme Court under international pressure and on October 26th, after Guéï fled as violence against his regime escalated, Laurent Gbagbo became the next President of Côte d'Ivoire and Alassane Ouattara once again retreated in defeat.

Gbagbo inherited a still very divided country, and although he was the self-proclaimed winner of the presidential post (it was reported that only 35 percent of the electorate voted⁶¹), "his win [could] be attributed mainly to popular resentment toward and repudiation of the Guéï junta, rather than overwhelming political support for himself...he was a chance beneficiary."⁶² Gbagbo would need to immediately incorporate opposing interests, goals, and priorities in a nation that was not only divided, but very suspicious of their leadership. In 2001 a National Reconciliation Forum was formed, where leaders from all major parties participated in discussions on how to break barriers and remedy the growing ethnic and religious divisions. These efforts were still seen as superficial to Ouattara supporters who resented Gbagbo's refusal to hold another election allowing Ouattara to finally participate as a legitimate Presidential candidate. There was also still the problem of the divided military that culminated in an attempted coup in 2002 where "rebels,

⁶⁰ Abbascia and Poggi, *Election Crisis*, 87.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁶² *Ibid.*

made up of units of aggrieved soldiers, predominately of northern ethnic groups, were opposed by loyalist units, predominately southern in their ethnic makeup,⁶³ who were able to stop the coup from happening, and stop northern rebels from taking over government buildings while Gbagbo was on an official visit in Italy. Although the attempted coup was blocked and military conflict practically ended in 2002, the country remained tense.

Still, not wanting to threaten his presidential power with a new election against Ouattara, but wanting to ease international pressure calling for reconciliation, Gbagbo signed a French-brokered peace accord in January 2003: The Linas-Marcoussis Accord (LMA) “allowed Gbagbo to remain in power, but provided for the creation of an interim government of national reconciliation under a consensus Prime Minister.”⁶⁴ There would also be external aid that would “ensure ethnic and regional balance in the military...and required the disarming of all armed forces, the expulsion of foreign mercenaries, and the creation of an international LMA monitoring group.”⁶⁵ Gbagbo’s government would in turn open up to the idea of incorporating former rebel leaders into its administration including young emerging northern leader Soro Guillaume who would become the Prime Minister. This new coalition government was seen as a symbol of reconciliation that the citizens of the country were still not feeling in their day- to-day lives, and with Gbagbo pushing elections back further and further, those feeling marginalized still remained in the political periphery.

⁶³ Ibid., 91.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 92.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

It was not until 2011 that Côte d'Ivoire would see another election, this time truly showcasing to the world that the ethnic divisions and xenophobia that has gripped the country for decades were indeed a matter of life or death. In the next chapter we will use the historical foundation of this chapter to dissect the issue of xenophobia and ethnic polarization in the nation. I will specifically deal with why xenophobic violence happens, how xenophobia is constructed in the minds of citizens, and what role leadership plays in such behavior. I will also draw from the theories of psychologist Frantz Fanon, who writes about the detrimental nature of postcolonial African elites and how they often contribute to civil unrest in their nations.

CHAPTER TWO

CONSTRUCTING XENOPHOBIA: THE PROBLEM WITH THE NATIONAL BOURGEOISIE

Introduction

To understand the socio-political picture of Côte d'Ivoire's cycle of civil unrest, one must evaluate the xenophobic sentiments that have been at the root of this decade long violence. A perceived fear of the "other" has led to a nation divided, political instability, and faulty democratic institutions, but how exactly did this fear turn into violence? Côte d'Ivoire's problem with xenophobia is not a new one. Anti-Muslim and anti-foreigner attitudes have played a leading role in the deterioration of peace in the political and day-to-day life of the nation. The politics of hate and the maintenance of ethnic divisions have manifested into deep-seated resentment between "foreigners" and "natives," resulting in the tense divide that has violently paralyzed the nation into a seemingly unending civil war trap. In this chapter I intend to unpack why xenophobic violence happens, particularly looking at what factors can help create a ripe environment for such peculiar behavior.

In the case of Côte d'Ivoire, I will attempt to show that leadership has been a leading factor in the propagation of xenophobic sentiments in the nation. I will analyze these xenophobic views in order to prove that they have been cultivated by the nation's leaders. Specifically, I will use insights from psychologist Frantz Fanon who explains how postcolonial African leaders prioritize maintenance of their newly acquired wealth and political power over holistic national development. He argues that these new elites are actually the most detrimental factor to improving the livelihood of a nation because of their fervent feelings of entitlement and greed. In this chapter I will contend that the former

leaders of Côte d'Ivoire, or “national bourgeoisie” as Fanon describes them, have protected their wealth and political power by pushing xenophobic agendas, proving that faulty leadership plays a much bigger role in causing xenophobic violence than most would imagine.

Potential Causes of Xenophobia

Xenophobia is often defined as a “dislike, hatred or fear of foreigners,”¹ which can oftentimes create an environment of suspicion, jealousy, and entitlement between the native population and the “other.” Xenophobia can even grow into an established culture, one that uses racist and derogatory language and radically exclusionary acts to maintain the status quo, or establish a new status quo. As Jamie Bordeau explains in her book, *Xenophobia: the Violence of Fear and Hate*, this peculiar behavior is something that is becoming more prevalent throughout the world due to globalization. She insists that since the “population and cultural identities of countries on every continent are shifting as a result of...mass immigration,”² there has unfortunately been an increase in ethnic clashes or intergroup hostility. Still, these changes in the societal make up of nations affect countries differently—some may take them in stride or even welcome such diversity, but others may shift towards a xenophobic culture. This begs the ultimate question, what makes certain groups more prone to xenophobia than others? Specifically, what hypotheses would be useful in describing the xenophobic violence that has rocked Côte d'Ivoire?

¹ Browyn Harris, “Xenophobia: A New Pathology for a New South Africa?” In *Psychopathology and Social Prejudice*, ed. Derek Hook and Gillian Eagle (Lansdowne: UCT Press, 2002), 169.

² Jamie Bordeau, *Xenophobia: The Violence of Fear and Hate* (New York: Rosen Publishing Group, 2010), 5.

Firstly, psychologist Elizabeth Cashdan would argue that ethnic affiliation does not automatically lead to xenophobia. In her piece entitled “Ethnocentrism and Xenophobia: A Cross Cultural Study,” she uses the research of various academics to prove that there is more to xenophobia than ethnic affiliation, meaning “ingroup favoritism is not a necessary concomitant of outgroup hostility.”³ According to Robert John, who Cashdan uses to prove this point, although “genetically similar people tend to seek one another out and to provide mutually supportive environments such as marriage, friendship, and social groups,”⁴ there is oftentimes a traumatic shared experience that will propel a particular group towards feelings of xenophobia. He insists that xenophobia “require[s] activation by a particular experience.”⁵ This hypothesis, according to Cashdan, is why certain groups react to foreigners differently. When a nation goes through a traumatic experience or era such as a devastating natural disaster, or a civil war, there is an added pressure that causes people to grow overly suspicious and hostile towards those whom they deem as different. This traumatic experience, coupled with an already stressed economic and political environment, can cause natives to ferociously defend what of theirs is left from those outside their circle.

An example of this shift would be the September 11th attacks in the United States. John argues that prior to this American “collective experience,” there was not the strong hatred for Muslims or those with the physical characteristic and cultural similarities to the

³ Elizabeth Cashdan, “Ethnocentrism and Xenophobia: A Cross Cultural Study,” *Current Anthropology* 42, no. 5 (December 2001): 760.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Robert John, “Ethnocentrism, Ethnopreference, Xenophobia: Peace in Race Relations—A New Understanding,” *The Occidental Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 2.

hijackers that attacked the nation. But, from that day on “American nationalism and patriotism were... reinforced and manifested in the U.S.,”⁶ aiding in the shift from ingroup affiliation to outgroup demonization. Although there was an established difference in culture or beliefs between the average American and a devout Muslim from the Middle East living in the US, the shared fear of the September 11th attacks propelled much of the nation towards an intense distrust, fear, or hatred for this particular demographic, even resulting in the random and gruesome killings of non-Al Qaeda affiliated American citizens who looked like “terrorists”.

Another applicable hypothesis for xenophobic violence involved feelings of privilege which can cause a native population to feel entitled to access to national resources before foreigners. To gauge this feeling of entitlement, I will analyze the case of South Africa which erupted into a string of violent and targeted attacks towards immigrants in 2008, resulting in the death of over 70 people.⁷ One particular hypothesis emerges from the work of Cindy Warner and Gillian Finchilescu, involving the notion of illegitimate competition between South Africans and immigrants in the nation. In their article “Living with Prejudice: Xenophobia and Race,” they survey a group of West and Southern African immigrants who speak candidly of their experiences with xenophobia, particularly in the townships. A major aspiration that was vocalized by these immigrants was their desire to move to South Africa because of the better educational and economic opportunities: they were interested in “finding a job, a partner and being able to buy things like cars and cell

⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁷ Norman Duncan, “Reaping the Whirlwind: Xenophobic Violence in South Africa,” *Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice* 3, no. 1 (March 2012): 105.

phones.”⁸ But with these aspirations the immigrants realized they were competing with poor South Africans who wanted the same things - A cell phone, a wife, a job that paid enough to sustain life in the townships, that is what everyone wanted and for this reason South Africans thought that they should be first in line for these goods and opportunities. Their status as the indigenous people of the land, a status that they had fought to make legitimate in the eyes of the apartheid government, was now being challenged by individuals whom they believed were not legitimate beneficiaries to the spoils of the new nation.

Warner and Finchilescu report that the immigrants they surveyed felt ostracized by these feelings of entitlement, particularly amongst those who were unemployed in the townships: “participants identified a sense that foreigners are perceived to be benefiting from the sacrifices made by many South Africans during the struggle against apartheid and resent this,”⁹ with one participant recalling words from a neighbor in the township; “they say, 'We lose our jobs, our girls, our money. This job that you can do I can do it. I fight for this country this freedom is for me!’”¹⁰ According to Warner and Finchilescu, this sense of privilege stems back to the apartheid era and how South African men in particular felt stripped of their masculinity because apartheid inherently “created circumstances that deprived many men of traditional ways of demonstrating power, such as being the

⁸ Cindy Warner and Gillian Finchilescu, “Living with Prejudice: Xenophobia and Race,” *Agenda Feminist Media*, no. 55 (2003): 42.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

breadwinner, and having a say in governing the community.”¹¹ This is why there was xenophobic violence at that particular time: there was and arguably still is a race for scarce resources, and after fighting for freedom from apartheid, the idea that South Africans must now compete for these resources is dangerously frustrating.

Another hypothesis that is complementary to illegitimate competition would be that of relative deprivation. The relative deprivation hypothesis describes the “subjective feeling of discontent based on the belief that one is getting less than one feels entitled to.”¹² In essence, natives should be afforded more opportunities to improve their livelihoods (land, education, loans, etc.). The potential for xenophobia can be measured against how many people have jobs, homes, and other indicators of upward mobility in an improving or flourishing economy. The worse these factors are for the native people, the more likely it will be that they to look to foreigners as scapegoats for their immobility, which could ultimately result in feelings of hostility and in turn xenophobia. Since most of the population in countries like Côte d'Ivoire or South Africa have very little access to decision makers, feelings of hopelessness are left to fester and bubble over which can often result in resentment towards those who are not only different from them, but those that they have access to as well. Relative deprivation, like illegitimate competition, is a theory that has to do with entitlement, particularly in a nation where resources are not abundantly available to the masses. Who should have access to what, when, and how much? These two hypotheses spotlight the need for natives to feel secure, a security that only their government can assure them through policies and socio-economic program implementation.

¹¹ Ibid., 43.

¹² Duncan, *Violence in South Africa*, 108.

Still, these hypotheses of collective trauma, illegitimate competition, and relative deprivation do not explain why other countries that have immigrant populations and poverty have not experienced xenophobic violence. To help answer this I look to Jonathan Crush and Sujata Ramachandran's study entitled "Xenophobia, International Migration and Human Development." In it, they conclude that although ethnic affiliation may be natural, and that "conditions of economic and emotional insecurity simply exacerbate these natural tendencies,"¹³ there is a way to counter xenophobic culture. They use the theory of psychologist Gordon Allport who suggests the contact between natives and immigrants can be handled in ways that lead to tolerance, cooperation, and even unification. Allport's theory outlined "four broad conditions under which contact between groups would result in greater harmony and understanding between them:"¹⁴

First, the groups in question should have or perceive equal status. Second, the contact should be effective in that the groups must work together, relying on each other to achieve a common goal. Third, he emphasized the need for inter- group cooperation rather than competition. Fourth, he suggested that inter-group contact will be more effective if it is supported by authorities and the guidelines that shape these interactions are clearly provided.¹⁵

In short, although there is a place where xenophobia can take root, there is also a way to manipulate our interactions with those deemed as the other to create an atmosphere of collaboration. This is a strong hypothesis as to why violent xenophobia happens in a particular place and time. If there is no force, whether political or societal, to help change the trajectory of the interactions between the foreigner and the native, frustrations can lead

¹³ Jonathan Crush and Sujata Ramachandran, "Xenophobia, International Migration and Human Development," *United Nations Development Programme: Human Development Reports* (September 2009): 40.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

to tension, tension to resentment, and resentment to hatred. There needs to be a mediator, charged with ensuring that policies, laws, and social institutions take threats of xenophobia seriously.

When applying these hypotheses to Côte d'Ivoire, it is first difficult to pinpoint one particular shared experience that may have propelled the country into a state of xenophobic violence. Compared to the September 11th attacks, or even the long road to end apartheid in South Africa, the closest Côte d'Ivoire has gotten to a national traumatic experience would be emerging from French colonization. A time of exploitation and shared feelings of inferiority, the colonial era in Côte d'Ivoire was indeed a time of suffering. As Dr. Martial Frindethie reminds us in his book *Globalization and the Seduction of Africa's Ruling Class*, Ivorians were taught during this time that they were “inherently inferior to Europeans and were, therefore, to submit to Europe’s tutelage if they hoped to reach a level of perfection.”¹⁶ Colonization proved to be a debilitating force in Ivorian history that left many citizens yearning for a sense of self and a way to reinvigorate their pride in their homeland and themselves. The time following the end of French colonization was ripe with hope, with new possibilities for growth and development away from colonial apparatus. This is where a true sense of patriotism or national consciousness was to be cultivated, in the vulnerable time in which a nation is emerging from the dark age of colonization. Even still, from the forced labor, to the complete economic submission to the French, colonization was indeed traumatic, but it is not what propelled the nation into xenophobic violence.

¹⁶ Martial Frindethie, *Globalization and the Seduction of Africa's Ruling Class* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers), 48.

What propelled the nation towards these pervasive feelings of xenophobia were the leaders who would become the “founding fathers” of the nation: the elite that took over after independence, they were the ones who would shape public sentiments and take away hope from the poor and the frustrated, and they were the ones who would turn citizens against each other. Feelings of illegitimate competition or relative deprivation are also indicators of poor economic circumstances for people within the country; people are hungry and jobless, and they look at others who have food and jobs with jealousy and resentment. But while people were starving following the economic crash of the 1980’s, Ivorian elites were building megamansions in the capital, putting on million dollar weddings for their children in Paris, and building ostentatious basilicas in their hometowns. And as “jobs dried up and incomes fell, young men were forced to consider working the land,”¹⁷ which by the mid 1980’s was owned and being fully utilized by immigrants who had settled into the nation under Boigny’s push to open the country to immigrant labor (by the 1980’s 40 percent of the Ivorian labor force were immigrants).¹⁸ This created an environment ripe with competition and spite, a state of jealousy that the leadership failed to address. Instead, as we will see later in this chapter, the elites would use public frustration as a way to propagate xenophobic ideas to “true” Ivorians and in turn circumvent the fact that they were to blame for the economic disparities among citizens.

This leads me to my next point, a point that is evidentially missing from much of the literature on xenophobia. Leadership matters. If a newly established nation, or one that is

¹⁷ Paul Collier, *Wars, Guns, and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places* (New York: Harper, 2009), 156.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

emerging from an era of trauma does not have the proper leadership that takes combating xenophobia seriously, the nation is more susceptible to erupting into violence. In this next section, I will attempt to dissect the importance of leadership, particularly looking at why the leadership in Côte d'Ivoire has been using the politics of othering to advance their political agendas. Using Frantz Fanon's theory on the inept national bourgeoisie, coupled with the insights into xenophobic violence discussed above, I will contend that Côte d'Ivoire's government has been saturated with kleptocrats who are maintaining their power, wealth, and prestige by exploiting the frustrations of their people. Prejudice is now a political tool in Côte d'Ivoire, and with the ongoing propaganda and public displays of xenophobia disguised as nationalism by those at the top of the political totem pole, xenophobia runs the risk of becoming disseminated, institutionalized and tolerated.

The Problem of the National Bourgeoisie

By 1960 Côte d'Ivoire was a one-party political machine, filled with ostentatious civil servants and flagrant public displays of nepotism and ethnic solidarity. It was important for the first President Félix Houphouët-Boigny to ensure that a fellow Baoulé brother would be president after his death, and even more important for President Henri Konan Bédié, his successor, to continue on this legacy. These groups of elites had to ensure that the power and prestige they were entitled to would not be challenged, and by any means necessary they were to maintain this political dynasty for decades to come. It became necessary to demonize those who they perceived to be a threat.

When a leader representing a group of immigrant Muslims from the north of the country emerged, these incumbent elites took the frustrations of the people and turned them into fear of the other, thus instigating an era of xenophobia that grips the nation until this

day. To show how important the influence of faulty leadership has been in creating a xenophobic environment in Côte d'Ivoire, I will use the writing of leading scholar and psychologist Frantz Fanon who explains how the elites of many post-independent African nations are severely detrimental to those nations' development. He explains how these cults of political power, as seen in the Boigny and Bédié eras, can exploit the trust of their people by manipulating their fears and grievances. I intend to demonstrate that it is these political elites, these specific types of political machines that are creating xenophobic divisions for their own personal, political, and economic gain.

To begin this analysis, Fanon describes these political elites as the “national bourgeoisie,” self-proclaimed African nobility that were educated, trained, and bred in the likenesses of the colonial power:

The European elite decided to fabricate a native elite; they selected adolescents, branded the principles of Western culture on their foreheads with a red-hot iron, and gagged their mouths with sounds, pompous awkward words that twisted their tongues. After a short stay in the metropolis they were sent home, fully doctored. These walking lies had nothing more to say to their brothers.¹⁹

These elites are essentially a group of individuals who desired to emulate the colonial bourgeoisie in etiquette, speech, and influence. Fanon stresses the fact that the national bourgeoisie always begin as fervent opponents of “forced labor, corporal punishment, unequal wages, and the restriction of political rights.”²⁰ As we saw earlier, Ivorian President Houphouët Boigny, before becoming an ally to the post-colonial French government, fought hard to end the forced labor of the Vichy government in colonial Côte d'Ivoire. He was the

¹⁹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), xliii.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 97.

self-proclaimed savior of the people and drew much of his public support from disenfranchised Ivorians who wanted to see independence from the colonial administration. This is how the national bourgeoisie establish unwavering support: they are the freedom fighters of the colonial era, they are the eyes, ears, and voices of their fellow patriots. Fanon stresses that this pedestal on which the national bourgeoisie are placed by the people is what makes them so dangerous. They are trusted to the point of blind complacency because their status as fighters against the colonizers affords them opportunities to dictate who future enemies will be, what they will look like, and where they will come from.

Instead of being the “coordinated crystallization of the people's innermost aspirations, instead of being the most tangible, immediate product of popular mobilization”,²¹ they become mere shells of what they initially wanted their people to believe. The desire to mobilize their nations around a new national consciousness, one that represents freedom from colonial oppression, becomes slowly eclipsed by a new end goal which is to replace the colonial administration in terms of access to riches and holistic political power. The elite begin to realize just how powerful their status as freedom fighters is, and they use it to solidify their control over resources that they think they are entitled to. Fanon stresses that the national bourgeoisie “is an underdeveloped bourgeoisie...[who are] not geared to production, invention, creation, or work,”²² but are geared towards misusing political pull by doing things like amending the constitution to reflect their own political desires and lining their pockets with new access to the nation’s bank account.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 98.

True nationalization, which Fanon describes should be “organizing the state on the basis of a new program of social relations...[or] placing the entire economy at the service of the nation or satisfying all its requirements”²³ is stifled. Instead of creating economic policy and social programs that will center the state firmly upon the needs and desires of the people, the national bourgeoisies looks to “nationalization” of the nation’s agricultural, economic, trading, or banking sectors as merely the transfer into “indigenous hands of privileges inherited from the colonial period.”²⁴ That is the core issue of the national bourgeoisie for Fanon: they are not looking to build legacies of positive development, but are looking to fill their administrations with kleptocrats. Instead of truly developing into the role of leaders, the national bourgeoisie are preoccupied with the pleasantries of luxurious living and posh accoutrements that they grew up envisioning – a lifestyle that was once only afforded to the colonial administration was now theirs for the taking. Fanon describes the national bourgeoisie as merely mimicing “the Western bourgeoisie in its negative and decadent aspects without having accomplished the initial phases of exploration and invention,”²⁵ gravely misunderstanding the true ebb and flow of building a nation, the work, the sacrifice, and the fact that the people’s needs are to be at the core of their policy. Instead these elites are playing catch-up, working to eradicate decades of exploitation.

These young nations are vulnerable, as the majority of the people are reaching out for the support of the elites who look like them, who should have the same goals as they do, and again, the national bourgeoisie play this to their advantage. As the former freedom

²³ Ibid., 100.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 101.

fighters of the nation, the national bourgeoisie bask in the fact that they are trusted, respected, and looked up to, meaning that they are able to blind the population to their ulterior motives. To ensure that they are continuously supported by the people, the national bourgeoisie begin emphasizing their slogan to "Replace the foreigners,"²⁶ to look at the French, English, or Portuguese as the conclusion of a sad era that will end only with the placement of natives in their former posts. They show their people that it is time for the nation to reclaim its land and its riches, they give passionate speeches about national unity and brotherhood, and are happy to see that "the urban proletariat, the unemployed masses, the small artisans, those commonly called small traders, side with this nationalist attitude."²⁷ This nationalist attitude rears its ugly head very soon, for as government officials grow richer, the standard of living for most of the nation does not change. The urban population begins to resent its lack of opportunities, and instead of addressing these grievances, Fanon argues that the national bourgeoisie exploits their desire to partake in this new national economy by reiterating the "Replace the foreigner" slogan. Fanon uses the case of Côte d'Ivoire when discussing how the national bourgeoisie contribute to xenophobic sentiments:

Whereas the national bourgeoisie competes with the Europeans, the artisans and small traders pick fights with Africans of other nationalities. In the Ivory Coast, outright race riots were directed against the Dahomeans and Upper Voltans who controlled much of the business sector and were the target of hostile demonstrations by the Ivorians following independence.²⁸

Because these "small traders" from Burkina Faso or Benin (formerly Dahomey) were competing for the same business as Ivorian traders and merchants, the national bourgeoisie

²⁶ Ibid., 105.

²⁷ Ibid., 103.

²⁸ Ibid.

saw an opportunity to use foreigners as a way to deflect their own extravagant lifestyles amidst the declining Ivorian economy of the 1980's. These petty traders and merchants urged the government to remove the foreigners for the sake of nationalism; they wanted to replace the foreigners just like the national bourgeoisie had done with the French, but they were not in competition with the Europeans, they were competing with their fellow Africans and their fellow Africans were no longer welcome. This is why Fanon named the chapter on the national bourgeoisie "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" – it symbolizes the manipulation which many elites in independent Africa used to mask xenophobia and racism by propagating notions of superficial patriotism or nationalism. This chapter is essentially the blueprint to how many nations like Côte d'Ivoire end up embroiled in civil disputes with xenophobic underpinnings:

1. A group of liberation leaders takes over power at the end of colonization.
2. This group turns nationalization of the economy into exploitation of the economy for their personal benefit with a disregard for true national development.
3. To ensure that their positions of power are not threatened this group uses foreigners as scapegoats to blame for the fact that the people remain economically stagnant
4. They push xenophobic sentiments onto the native population to turn against these for foreigners so they can deflect any blame for their faulty leadership.
5. Under the guise of nationalism citizens begin to resent the other for making their lives harder and taking resources that belong to them.

While there would be a switch "from nationalism to ultra-nationalism, chauvinism, [to] racism,"²⁹ the national bourgeoisie ignore the need for peace between natives and foreigners and exacerbate divisions by implementing policies to marginalize those deemed as "other"

²⁹ Ibid.

(as we will see in the next section on *Ivorité*). As Allport's theory affirms, if there isn't a group of elites in power strong enough to address potential eruptions of xenophobic violence, then the scapegoating will lead to hostility. An example of this would be post-Mandela South Africa, an era thick with economic setbacks and a growing immigrant population, in which xenophobia quickly took root due to the lack of proper leadership. Referring back to Crush and Ramachandran's characterization that "xenophobia is perpetuated through a dynamic public rhetoric that actively stigmatizes and vilifies all or some migrant groups,"³⁰ it is important to remember that this public rhetoric can be controlled by the leaders if they make it a priority to do so.

Unfortunately, in Thabo Mbeki's South Africa, this public rhetoric and these extreme cases of xenophobic violence were figuratively swept under the rug, with official statements coming from the ruling ANC party insisting that these "attacks were criminal, not xenophobically motivated...South Africans were not xenophobic and anyone who said so was themselves being xenophobic."³¹ A group of individuals charged with maintaining law, order, and peace within their nation were too busy trying to cover up their faulty economic policies by ignoring the real facts: that many South Africans "blamed the [attacks] on the ANC government's poor service delivery record since 1994," which were described as "the failure...to deal with endemic poverty, joblessness, lack of shelter and basic services had led to the scapegoating of foreign migrants by frustrated citizens."³² These South African political elites were, according to Crush and Ramachandran, suffering

³⁰ Crush and Ramachandran, "Human Development," 6.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

³² *Ibid.*, 16.

from “xeno-denialism,” which resulted in further divisions in the nation while pointing the finger away from their national failures. Their faulty leadership caused more deaths and did not shine a light on the growing and dangerous divisions of the nation. Instead, they manifested Fanon’s point that the national bourgeoisie were more worried about their status and political legacies than addressing real issues within the nation.

Although Fanon’s theory on the national bourgeoisie is an attractive one, it leaves many questions unanswered in terms of solutions. Paul Beckett poses this question in his piece “Frantz Fanon and Sub-Saharan Africa: Notes on the Contemporary Significance of His Thought,” where he argues that although “one can agree with every point of his condemnation of [the national bourgeoisie],”³³ he cannot agree with the “assertion that they are dispensable and unnecessary.”³⁴ Indeed Fanon insists that the national bourgeoisie are a useless bunch; with no ability to impact the democratization or stabilization of their respective countries, they are in essence leeches and should be erased from national history. Instead Fanon insists that there needs to be “a violent insurrection aimed at destroying everything touched by colonialism [so that] a new species of man will be created,”³⁵ and that includes the national bourgeoisie which Fanon considers to be representative of the colonial era and are thus hurdles in the fight for a new national culture.

³³ Paul Beckett, "Frantz Fanon and Sub-Saharan Africa: Notes on the Contemporary Significance of his Thought," *Africa Today* 19, no. 2 (1972): 67.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Justin G. McCollum, "Review of *the Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon," *The Forum: Cal Poly's Journal of History* 1, no. 1 (2009):115.

Still, Beckett argues that although "closing the door to this group is easy to say...[these] words represent no more than the statement of an unsolved problem,"³⁶ with Fanon contributing "virtually nothing to a solution."³⁷ In essence Beckett argues that Fanon's radical recommendations are unrealistic and not attainable; particularly when a call for violence cannot be acted out in a vacuum, this "violent insurrection" can leave these nations in worse positions that they were before. Similarly, Helmi Sharawy addresses Fanon's ideas of violent peasant-led revolutions in his "Frantz Fanon and the African Revolution, Revisited at a time of Globalization":

The peasants, according to Fanon, are a revolutionary class ready to embrace the revolutionary system and capable of retaining a communal spirit while upholding precolonial creeds and legacy. Unlike city dwellers, the peasants are not subjected to westernization. Unlike the national bourgeoisie, they have no feelings of inferiority. Their folklore supports the notion of resistance and their impoverished status makes them ripe for revolutionary ideas.³⁸

Sharawy would call this "revolutionary romanticism,"³⁹ because Fanon is ignoring the fact that this peasant class may not be inherently revolutionary, there is the chance they will be as greedy and entitled as the elites who parade around in expensive cars and fine French suits. Just like it cannot be assumed that the national bourgeoisie will be better leaders for their citizens, one cannot assume that the citizens are revolutionaries because of their class.

Agreeing with the concerns of Beckett and Sharawy, I argue that Fanon missed the mark when stressing the importance of erasing the national bourgeoisie from the path

³⁶ Becket, "Sub-Saharan Africa," 67.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Helmi Sharawy, "Frantz Fanon and the African Revolution, Revisited at a time of Globalization," (September 2003): 4, www.codesria.org/IMG/pdf/sharawi.pdf (accessed March 8, 2013).

³⁹ Ibid.

towards true decolonization; these individuals are indeed important, they were the eyes and ears of the people in the face of colonization and their utility should not be lost. They can indeed be useful but they need to be held more accountable. More measures of transparency should be put into place, and they too must be able to bend to the needs of their citizens. They should not be violently removed and replaced by grassroots revolutionaries, particularly because one cannot assume these “revolutionaries” differ from the national bourgeoisie. Instead everyone, the government, the opposition, and the radical revolutionaries should be limited in power through a more active and politically conscious public. In this next section, I will address the infamous “Ivrité,” a perfect example of what happens when unlimited ethnocentric leadership and a single party political system that does not meet the people halfway comes together to create state-guided xenophobia.

Ivrité and the Ouattara Affect

What happens when the interactions between natives and foreigners are handled in such a way as to exacerbate rivalries, jealousies, or feelings of indigenous entitlement? In this section I intend to shine light on another hypothesis that has not been adequately explored, that of the influence that a nation’s leadership has on xenophobic violence. Houphouët Boigny promoted the use of inexpensive African laborers from countries like Burkina Faso and Mali, a relaxed immigration policy that ushered thousands of foreigners into the rural and urban sections of the country. Particularly in the northern regions, there was a growing population of individuals whose parents or grandparents were not native Ivorians. This population, as I spoke about earlier, was deemed illegitimate early on in the Bédié administration because the then-President felt threatened that their mobilization would push him out of office and replace him with his long-time opponent Alassane

Ouattara. Bédié saw it as his mission to rectify and reverse the perceived attack on his administration that was happening in the early 1990's. This perceived attack was his fear of losing the power, wealth, and prestige of himself and the PDCI, a status that had been built around particular ethnic groups and their maintenance of power.

As the leader of a nation that would soon face its first democratic election, Bédié had two options: he could choose to engage in a fair and clean campaign season followed by transparent elections, or face his fear of Ouattara's political take-over by exploiting vulnerable ethnic divisions within the nation to block him from running once and for all. Bédié chose to do the latter, exemplifying Fanon's point that "the national bourgeoisie prove incapable of achieving simple national unity and incapable of building the nation on a solid, constructive foundation."⁴⁰ The unification of the nation, between his supporters in the south and Ouattara's supporters in the north, was not as important as his desire to maintain the wealth and power he had inherited from the Boigny era. In order to maintain this status, Bédié knew he would need to pull at the heart strings of "true Ivorians," make them feel his fear, make the threats to his administration translate into threats against every single Ivorian in the nation; to do this he would introduce a new political discourse that would delegitimize and label a large section of the Ivorian population as the "other."

One way to delegitimize a section of the population (in turn delegitimizing their leader) is to point out the glaring overpopulation problem in the nation, particularly in the urban areas where most of the development and infrastructure happened. As Fanon said, colonialism does not exploit the entire nation, and "the nationals who live in the prosperous regions realize their good fortune and their gut reaction is to refuse to feed the rest of the

⁴⁰ Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 106.

nation.”⁴¹ The southerners who considered themselves the “true” Ivoirians were the nationals Fanon spoke of, the home base of the national bourgeoisie; they were beginning to feel a change in the social landscape of their nation. The population of the nation was ballooning quickly, from three million people in 1960 to almost 13 million in 1990, and by 1998 26 percent of the nation’s population was foreigners, mostly West African nationals.⁴² This spike in population in a nation that had crashed in the last 10 years following the Boigny era of economic success, coupled with the burgeoning political presence of northern leader Alassane Ouattara, was enough to create a new political plan of action for Bédié. He saw an opportunity for exploitation and he took it in an attempt to sabotage an Ouattara takeover. For the first time in almost 40 years of independence, a northerner was seen as a true threat to power; a northerner who was outside the national bourgeoisie paradigm was gaining ground and throwing off the established political equilibrium of the nation. This was a threat that Bédié and his administration wanted to deflect, thus introducing the notion of Ivoirité which Bédié claimed was “solely aimed at creating a sense of cultural unity among all the people living in Côte d’Ivoire.”⁴³ Ivoirité, a blueprint for identifying who could be considered a true Ivoirian, is the complete opposite of what most would consider unity: it is a dangerous and malicious way of institutionalizing xenophobia for the purpose of retaining power, wealth, and prestige. Ivoirité created two types of citizens, “pure” and “mixed heritage,” meaning Ivoirians who were born in the nation and born of two Ivoirian parents

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Thomas Jaye, Dauda Garuba and Stella Amadi, *ECOWAS and the Dynamics of Conflict and Peace-building* (Dakar: Codesria, 2011), 89.

⁴³ Akanmu G Adebayo, *Managing Conflicts in Africa's Democratic Transitions* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2012), 307.

(pure), and everyone else who did not fall into this category (mixed heritage).⁴⁴ This state-sponsored ideology was meant to spread. The government wanted the people to latch on to it, they wanted the “pure” Ivorians to internalize these two types of Ivorians and to remember that they were the real ones – the ones who deserved the land, the businesses, and mostly importantly to Bédié, only pure Ivorians are the ones who deserve to be President.

A group of Ivorian intellectuals from Bédié’s PDCI party formed “Cellule Universitaire de Recherche des Idées et Action Politique du President Henri Konan Bédié,” essentially a think tank used to produce propaganda that pushed Bédié’s politics into the larger population. An important piece of literature that the group produced was one defending Ivorité and calling on pure Ivorians to be proud of their heritage in the face of foreigners:

The individual who claims his Ivorité has as his country the Côte d'Ivoire and is born of Ivorian parents themselves belonging to one of the autochthonous ethnic groups of the Ivory Coast. It is not being segregationist to want to expose one’s true roots...The foreign presence menaces to rupture the socio-economic equilibrium of our country...the Ivorian people must first affirm their sovereignty, their authority, in the face of the threat of dispossession and subjection.⁴⁵

Bédié used this type of propaganda to make him seem like part of the masses. He wanted the true Ivorians to look at him with trust and to separate themselves from the others as Bédié was separating himself from Ouattarra. This is why the national bourgeoisie are so dangerous; they can never see the consequences of their xenophobic propaganda, the potential for violence between those whom they put against each other is not their immediate concern. When leaders push the fact that one group is threatening the livelihoods

⁴⁴ Sara Rich Dorman, *Making Nations, Creating Strangers: States and Citizenship in Africa* (Leiden, the Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2007), 45.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 46.

of the native population, they are instilling a fear and a need for defense in the minds of many citizens. It creates a sense of urgency, and “instead of inspiring their people to be confident and...cradling them with its power and discretion, the State...flaunts its authority, harasses, making it clear to its citizens they are in constant danger.”⁴⁶ When a group of people think that they are in constant danger, they will look to defend themselves against the “other.” This is where eruptions of violence can emerge, and is why this kind of flagrant xenophobia disguised as nationalism is the root of the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire today. This xenophobia spreads quickly throughout the psyche of Ivoirians and as Fanon points out, proves “how easy it is for young independent countries to switch back from nation to ethnic group and from state to tribe - a regression which is so terribly detrimental and prejudicial to the development of the nation and national unity.”⁴⁷

The notion of Ivorité would not die with the Bédié administration; it would continue to linger throughout Ivorian society alongside the Gbagbo presidency as well. What is different about this administration was the international pressure for new elections, elections where Ouattara would finally be allowed to add his name to the ballot. The elections of 2010 “were to be the elections that would put an end to the crisis, to finally turn the page on Houphouët Boigny’s inheritance and to set Côte d'Ivoire on the path of peace and development.”⁴⁸ These pivotal elections had been postponed six times to the chagrin of Ouattara, the RDR, and his supporters, but finally on October 31, 2010 Ivoirians were able to

⁴⁶ Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 111.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴⁸ Araoye, *Still Wretched of the Earth*, 371.

go to the polls and choose one of the 14 candidates running for President.⁴⁹ As expected, neither Gbagbo nor Ouattara was able to garner over 50 percent of the vote, leading to a runoff election between the two of them on November 28, 2010 where it was reported internationally that Ouattara won with 54.10 percent of the vote.⁵⁰ The celebrations of Ouattara were abruptly halted as Gbagbo's camp claimed fraudulence, particularly in northern regions of the country where they suspected tampering with election results.⁵¹ With these new allegations to deal with, the Independent Elections Commission was unable to announce the election results within 72 hours (according to the Ivorian Constitution), thus forcing Paul Yao N'Dre, head of the Constitutional Council, to deem the election results "null and void" and declared Gbagbo as the winner of the election.⁵²

Violence immediately erupted in Côte d'Ivoire. An election that was supposed to finally unify this divided nation had further embroiled it in chaos and violence. Western powers intervened soon after Gbagbo declared himself president-elect, eventually supporting his removal after a publicized standoff in the Presidential Palace in Abidjan. Gbagbo's removal (supported by U.S. President Obama, the UN Security Council, and French President Sarkozy), along with his family and political cabinet's detention and alleged torture, has further divided the nation. As one group rejoices in the presidency of their candidate, the other mourns the detention of theirs, making the political and social environment no less tense or divided as it had been since Boigny died in 1993.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 372.

⁵² Ibid., 373.

What kind of leader is needed to reunify a country after civil disputes, coup d'états, xenophobic conflict, and violent elections have rocked its foundation for over a decade? In this next chapter I will look at Rwanda as a case study of postconflict (particularly ethnocentric conflict) reconciliation. I will look particularly look at President Paul Kagame and his administration's work to unify their nation as one people.

CHAPTER THREE

A NEW NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS: THE CASE OF RWANDA

Introduction

“I didn’t know you were from Rwanda!” I said to my favorite taxi driver as we drove down Nelson Mandela Boulevard in Cape Town, a city he has called home since just after the genocide ended in his birth city of Kigali. “Wow! So you were there during the genocide? What was life like? Are you Tutsi or Hutu?” With a look of complete exasperation, he turned his face away from the road and almost yelled at me: “I am no longer Tutsi or Hutu, we are all Rwandans and that is it! PERIOD!” A statement so loaded and deeply rooted in history, I was embarrassed at how utterly insensitive the question must have been. Now, 19 years removed from those infamous one hundred days, Rwanda is for Rwandans and not Tutsis and Hutus, but how? How has the country gone from the targeted slaughter of almost a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus to a new national consciousness that emphasizes unity and continued reconciliation? In this chapter I will attempt to analyze how the post-genocide government’s focus was put on the Rwandan people as a whole, a grieving people, and not Hutus and Tutsis. Through government sponsored initiatives like the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission and the Gacaca “court” system, Rwanda has been able to reverse “genocide ideology” by pushing for unity and a shared sense of self. In the end I intend to show how these post-conflict steps contributed to the formation of a new unified Rwandan identity, and how Côte d’Ivoire’s leadership can take note as there needs to be a push for a new national consciousness in their reconciliation process.

Rwanda: A Historical Perspective

Known as “the land of a thousand hills,” Rwanda’s majestic landscape and tranquil lakes have for decades been revered and well visited by tourists from all over the world. Africans and Europeans alike would come to the magical country with hopes of enjoying the Congo-Nile crest or the Virunga Mountains. So popular was the country that it was considered “a tropical version of Switzerland” by historian Martin Meredith¹. The grandeur of its beauty has been well documented, but so has its efficiency as one of the only African nations to see steady growth immediately following independence. The period between 1965 and 1989 proved to be the most successful for the small East-African nation, with low inflation and a GDP that was growing by about 5 per cent every year.² Rwanda was proving to be exemplary when it came to post-independent African stability and growth. Rwanda had all the makings of a real success story, but still, it was not perfect and there were divisions that cut deep, long before a machete was picked up and a genocide began.

Hutu and Tutsi, two terms that were virtually unknown to the Western world before one of the deadliest genocides began, became heavy with macabre undertones in the early 1990’s. According to historian Martin Meredith, the makings of this ethnic division came via the myth that “the Tutsi were invaders who had overrun Rwanda in the precolonial era and enslaved the Hutu, therefore [they] had no legitimate status in the country.”³ These myths were indeed supported by written testaments from various Europeans in the 19th century who would document their findings and observations of the Rwandan people. It is

¹ Meredith, *Fate of Africa*, 27.

² *Ibid.*, 485.

³ *Ibid.*

without coincidence that the “inherent difficulties of recreating the history of oral societies, as well as the distortions introduced by the Eurocentric and often outright racist accounts by the first colonizers, missionaries and ethnographers”⁴ would become the building blocks on which the Belgians based their colonial policy. Implementing a colonial policy that stressed ethnic polarization in hopes of pacifying one ethnic group at the expense of the other, the Belgians left no stone unturned in their attempts to uplift the Tutsi group. The “native administration” was padded with cooperative Tutsi leaders whose control of much of Rwanda’s land, educational and political incentives were slowly increased in scope and size.⁵

Under [Belgian] control, the exclusive beneficiaries of these new sources of power were people of Tutsi descent. During most of the colonial period, the [Belgians] were convinced that the Tutsi were more intelligent, reliable, hardworking--in short, more like themselves--than the Hutu...[they] instituted a system of rigid ethnic classification, involving such ‘modern scientific’ methods as the measurement of nose and skull sizes, and the attribution of obligatory identity papers stating one's ethnicity.⁶

The Belgians were thus taking arbitrary facts, figures, and tainted observations to divide a people for their own gain. Access to education, health care, and other basic social services that should be offered to all Rwandans was reserved for the Tutsi people.⁷ This exploitative system of colonial maintenance changed the social and political landscape of Rwanda, as the people’s perception of one another was now shaped by hatred and jealousy. Even the

⁴ Peter Uvin, “Prejudice, Crisis, and Genocide in Rwanda,” *African Studies Review* 40, no.2 (September 1997): 93.

⁵ Ibid., 95.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

political representation that the Belgians introduced to the native population was controlled by Tutsis: various positions for natives to represent their people in the Belgian political infrastructure was controlled by Tutsi elites and tribal leaders.⁸ This only deepened the divide between these ethnic groups, for one was deemed worthy enough for political participation, while the other was marginalized in an attempt to maintain the colonial structure. This of course would become the backdrop for the laundry list of grievances that would fuel the 1994 genocide. A Hutu leader named Gregoire Kayibanda verbalized it best, describing Rwanda as “two nations between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy, who are ignorant of each other’s habits, thoughts and feelings as if they were dwellers of different zones, or inhabitants of different planets.”⁹

By the 1950’s the Tutsi elite were beginning to show interest in claiming parts of Rwanda and the Belgians changed their tune and gave monetary and military support to the Hutu in their desire to stop a potential Tutsi-Belgian power struggle.¹⁰ The Hutu in turn were able to reverse decades of oppression and marginalization through this newly acquired status. The seeds of vengeance were growing, and in 1960 these turn of events put the Hutu in place to have the upper socio-political hand in Rwanda, spurring the “Hutu Revolution” which proved to be the beginning of the descent into a grisly sequence of events. This revolution began with the formation of a new Hutu political party called “Parmehutu” which

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Meredith, *Fate of Africa*, 487.

¹⁰ Philip Verwimp, “Death and Survival during the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda,” *Population Studies* 5, no. 2 (July 2004): 233.

was intended to uplift and resurrect the strength and dignity of the Hutu people.¹¹ By the early 1970's Rwanda had a new President in Hutu extremist Juvénal Habyarimana, a man who used anti-Tutsi propaganda freely. He became the face, voice, and vehicle for the Hutu power structure, even forbidding his soldiers (who were only allowed to be Hutu) from marrying Tutsi women.¹² And as reported in a Physicians for Human Rights statement, he also fostered "ethnic politics to divert attention from the nation's poverty and intra-Hutu political divisions."¹³

In the first decade of Habyarimana's rule Rwanda's main export, coffee, saw a plummet in prices, leaving many farmers without revenue and many young people without jobs, further exacerbating the issues of social tension and fears that would eventually manifest themselves into a situation of scape-goating.¹⁴ The Hutu leadership would exploit the fears and circumstances of its citizens to further demonize the Tutsi population and label them as the source of all problems in Rwanda. It was clear that the Hutu power structure would continue to use the same tactics that once were implemented to maintain their own marginalization. It was of utmost importance for them to ensure Hutu power was permanent and impenetrable through Tutsi marginalization and suppression. Another tactic that aided in this mission of Tutsi suppression was the way that Belgians classified everyone by ethnicity in their identification cards. Years later, all Rwandans would continue to carry

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Uvin, "Genocide in Rwanda," 98.

¹⁴ Catharine Newbury, "Background to Genocide: Rwanda," *A Journal of Opinion* 23, no. 2 (1995): 14.

identity papers that organized the population into two virtually separate entities. This system of ethnic classification via identity papers would later become an integral part of the mass murders that happened in 1994, resulting in road blocks and check points where Tutsis were killed on the spot after Hutus verified via these papers their ethnic identities. With that, the early 1990's saw the rise of Hutu power propaganda that was indeed spreading like venom. Tutsi leaders knew a crisis period was upon them, they also knew that the Hutu power base would only grow, so they needed to mobilize fast. In 1990, a faction of Tutsi rebels based in Uganda attacked Rwanda, precipitating a civil war between them and the Rwandan military. The civil war would last almost three years and would result in the deaths of over 2,000 Tutsi people.¹⁵ The conflict of course would not end here; on April 6, 1994 the plane of President Habyarimana was shot down, killing him and the President of Burundi.¹⁶ On this infamous day, the country officially fell into the crippling grip of genocide.

The next one hundred day arrested the country in a sea of massacres and a seemingly never-ending flow of dead bodies. With the death of the Hutu president, it was agreed that all Tutsis were indeed “cockroaches” and had to be exterminated – men, women and children alike. The state apparatus was replaced by a killing squad; there was no rule of law, just free reign to slaughter as many Tutsis as possible; no remorse, no sense of Rwandan unity. There was a Hutu ideology that fueled this genocide, a mental state that took over to the point where a psychological neurosis occurred in the minds of people who once called Tutsis friends, neighbors, even husbands and wives. The psychology behind this neurosis

¹⁵ Verwimp, “Death and Survival,” 233.

¹⁶ Ibid.

was deeply rooted in the “ideology of the ‘social revolution’ [which was] the notion that Rwanda belongs to the Hutu, its original inhabitants, who had been brutally subjugated for centuries by the foreign masters, the Tutsi.”¹⁷ The Hutu created a sense of fear in their community that there could be another generation of Hutu oppression if Tutsis were not exterminated once and for all. This “prejudiced, ethnic ideology [hid] inequality and oppression under the veil of joint belonging to the imagined community of the Hutu,”¹⁸ resulting in a severe sense of blind complacency and violent cooperation in the mass killings of people who shared their land. There was no shared history during these notorious days of genocide, no feelings of kinship or of shared identity, there was only a sense of severe and violent disconnection from those who were once neighbors, friends, colleagues, and even family members.

Lists were drawn up to identify Tutsis and moderate Hutus, machetes and other weapons of murder were stockpiled and distributed to Hutu citizens, even radio stations were used to disseminate propaganda and push the killing agenda. Hutu leaders took the airways to push their fellow “brothers and sisters” to take their responsibilities in the genocide, “to assist the armed forces to finish the work.”¹⁹ Even asking Hutus: “who is going to do the good work and help us finish them completely... [because] the graves are not yet full.”²⁰ From church leaders to professors, Hutus took up arms in order to fight the supposed good fight against the Tutsi enemy. Even doctors charged with healing the

¹⁷ Uvin, “Genocide in Rwanda,” 98.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Meredith, *Fate of Africa*, 509.

²⁰ Ibid.

nation's sick and helpless became killers: "a huge number of the most qualified and experienced doctors in the country...participated in the murder of their own Tutsi colleagues, patients, wounded and terrified refugees,"²¹ with "the most horrific massacres occur[ing] in maternity clinics."²²

During this time there was an offensive, led by a young military and political leader named Paul Kagame, which was moving its way slowly to Kigali in hopes of ending the massacres that were happening across the nation. Paul Kagame, born in 1957 into a Tutsi family was only two years old when the violent Hutu Revolution took place, where thousands of Tutsis were killed, and tens of thousands fled into exile to countries like Uganda where Kagame and his family took refuge in 1961.²³ While growing up in a Ugandan refugee camp, Kagame began showing interest in the politics of his adoptive home, and was amongst the first young men to join Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) in its guerrilla war against Ugandan dictator Milton Obote (who had toppled Idi Amin in 1981).²⁴ When Museveni became President of Uganda in 1986, he made the young Kagame his chief of military intelligence, putting Kagame in a position of influence, particularly amongst the almost one million Rwandan, mostly Tutsi, refugees that were living in exile in central Africa. Kagame represented a population of Rwandans who were ready to return to their homelands; unfortunately these efforts would be thwarted by President Habyarimana who insisted that "Rwanda was already suffering from severe

²¹ Ibid., 515.

²² Ibid.

²³ Philip Gourevitch and Paul Kagame, "After Genocide," *Transition* 72, (1996): 164, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/stable/2935367> (accessed March 1, 2013).

²⁴ Ibid.

overpopulation... [and] that there was nothing to discuss with the exiles because there was simply no room for them in the country.”²⁵ Habyarimana not only refused to welcome Tutsi refugees back in Rwanda, he implemented ethnic quotas which were intended to relentlessly limit opportunities for military training, education, or political involvement to Tutsis still living in Rwanda.²⁶

Habyarimana was essentially engaging in a type of reprisal political platform, where those who were once at the bottom would be at the top, and the Tutsi who the Belgians so admired and put on a pedestal would become the bottom of society. Not accepting this fact, Kagame and some of his fellow exiles formed the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) in 1987 “as a political and military organization with three primary objectives: the abolition of the Rwandan dictatorship, the return of the refugees, and the establishment of a pluralistic government of national unity.”²⁷ The RPF would go on to launch “lightening attacks” from Uganda which pushed Habyarimana to sign a peace accord in Arusha, Tanzania which “provided for the return of the refugees, the integration of the RFP...and the establishment of a transitional government of national unity.”²⁸ Still, Kagame, the RPF, or the Arusha Peace Accords could not stop what would happen following Habyarimana’s death. The brutal execution of over 800,000 Rwandans in less than 100 days; three quarters of the Tutsi population and just over ten percent of the total Rwandan population was left dead in the

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 166.

streets, rivers, schools, hospitals, and churches across the country.²⁹ With his country destroyed, Paul Kagame and the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RFP) re-entered their nation from their bases on the Ugandan border and were able to slowly take over the Hutu power bases in Kigali. On July 18th he and his armed supporters declared the civil war and its genocide over.³⁰

Eradicating Genocide Ideology

The genocide ended in 1994 under the leadership of Paul Kagame and the RFP. But the psychological neurosis or brain washing that pushed neighbors, friends, coworkers, and even family members to massacre almost one million of their fellow Rwandans was still evident during the months and years following. As a Tutsi, Kagame and his party chose to share power early on in an attempt to steer far away from ethnic polarization and create a more inclusive vision of what “new” Rwandan citizenship should look like. Kagame’s new political leadership team immediately following the genocide was considered a “government of national unity” and included many Hutu ministers.³¹ This was an important first step down the path of reconciliation and new Rwandan national consciousness. Next, Kagame and his administration began by officially labeling the aforementioned state of psychological neurosis as “genocide ideology.” This is defined as “an aggregate of thoughts characterized by conduct, speeches, documents, and other acts aiming at exterminating or inciting others to exterminate people based on ethnic group, origin, nationality, region,

²⁹ Meredith, *Fate of Africa*, 523.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 522.

³¹ *Ibid.*

color, physical appearance, sex, language, religion, or political opinion.”³² Broadcasted hate speech, anti-Tutsi or Hutu propaganda, and other tactics seen during the genocide were attributed to genocide ideology and were seen as a major threat to the reconciliation process. With the continued lingering sentiments of genocide ideology permeating throughout Rwandan society, Kagame knew that there would be no real forward movement without a complete attempt at social reengineering. When asked if he truly believed that full reconciliation was possible in a country like post-conflict Rwanda, the leader replied:

It is possible. It has to be carried out in the form of education. People are not inherently bad. But they can be made bad. And they can be taught to be good. I believe in that also because of what I have seen in my experiences with the RPF. I have seen people change. I believe there are mechanisms within society—a way of addressing their concerns, a form of participation.³³

Kagame’s aim was to use the stories and shared suffering of the Rwandan people as educational lessons of what could happen again if the people did not drop their ethnocentric perspectives and replace them with a new Rwandan identity. His emphasis on Rwandan participation was central to the creation of a new Rwandan citizen. He understood that without a national understanding and recognition of what had happened during those infamous 100 days, Rwandans would continue to see themselves as separate entities with separate grievances instead of unified citizens with similar lived realities. With a staunch stand against ethnic polarization, the eradication of genocide ideology would go on to become a cornerstone of the reconciliation process that is still going on in the nation today. Kagame and his administration have worked to reverse vehemently the pervasive genocide

³² Nigel Eltringham, “The Past Is Elsewhere: The Paradoxes of Proscribing Ethnicity in Post-Genocide Rwanda,” in *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence*, ed. Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 273.

³³ Gourevitch and Kagame, “After Genocide,” 170.

ideology that threw the nation into turmoil and replace it with a unified identity, one based on shared grief, loss, hope, and advancement as a whole people.

There was a conscious decision on the part of the Kagame administration to destroy the pedestal that Rwandans once put their ethnic groups upon. As Rwandan expert Mark Amstutz put it, “rather than celebrating religious, tribal, or ethnic distinctions, the current regime has emphasized initiatives that emphasize the ‘Rwandaness’ of its people.”³⁴ This “Rwandaness” is the focal point of post-genocide Rwanda and is being maintained through a strong campaign to end genocide ideology. To begin this purge, the Genocide Ideology Law was passed in 2008, giving the state a blueprint to work from in terms of identifying and prosecuting groups or individuals who are engaging in “any behavior manifested by facts aimed at dehumanizing a person or a group of persons.”³⁵ Although this law provided the Rwandan government with a solid platform on which to identify perpetrators of genocide ideology, many critics contend that its vagueness leaves the law susceptible to political abuse and a suppression of freedom of speech.³⁶

Still, one must understand that this law is a foundation that is necessary in such a sensitive nation as post-conflict Rwanda. There are measures that must be taken in order to ensure that certain seeds are not planted, particularly when these seeds have historically been proven to grow into an elongated period of mass killings, tortures, and rapes strictly

³⁴ Mark Amstutz, “Is Reconciliation Possible After Genocide?: The Case of Rwanda,” *Journal of Church and State* 48, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 547.

³⁵ Lars Waldorf, “Instrumentalizing Genocide: The RPF's Campaign against Genocide Ideology,” in *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence*. ed. Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, 2011), 55.

³⁶ Amnesty International, “Safer to Stay Silent: The Chilling Effects of Rwanda's Laws on 'Genocide Ideology' and 'Sectarianism,’” August 31, 2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR47/005/2010> (accessed February 11, 2013).

based on ethnicity. Without the proper and often rigid legal infrastructure necessary to monitor activities of potential perpetrators of violence, a nation recently embroiled in genocide can easily fall back into the trap of divisionism. I would compare the Genocide Ideology Law to that of the post-9/11 Providing Appropriate Tools Required (to) Intercept (and) Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001, otherwise known as the Patriot Act. A necessary evil when considering that the US had just been attacked by terrorists, the Patriot Act is very similar to that of the often-criticized Genocide Ideology Law. In both instances, these acts and laws limit the freedoms of citizens to monitor and uphold the security of the greater population. These types of laws must be respected and understood as necessary safety measures in very fragile post-conflict situations, and although “an inherent tension exists between security and individual rights,”³⁷ in many instances the security of the collective must be taken more seriously, particularly following such catastrophic manifestations of violence.

Kagame and his administration also went on to address the issue of identity cards, a colonial apparatus that was later used as a means of mass killing. The psychological attachment that Rwandans had to their ethnic labels was at the center of genocide ideology and fueled the violence that had fellow Rwandans massacring each other for one hundred days. To move beyond those infamous days, the government decided to remove a person’s ethnicity from the identification cards in an attempt to create a sense of shared identity and continued reconciliation.³⁸ This stripped the institutionalized power from these ethnic labels

³⁷ Mark F. Smith, “Government Relations: The USA Patriot Act,” *Academe* 89, no. 6 (2003): 93.

³⁸ Amstutz, “Is Reconciliation Possible”, 547.

and proved to the citizenry of the nation that their government was taking the eradication of any aspects of genocide ideology seriously and in turn was working to create a safe environment that cultivated unity and not hatred.

Kagame's administration emphasized the need to "cultivate human values by teaching human rights and tolerance and encouraging respect for all persons."³⁹ And the government did so by changing many aspects of Rwandan society, the national flag being an example, which was changed in 1991.⁴⁰ Even the national anthem was changed, with the old version praising Hutu power and superiority, Kagame ensured that the new national anthem simply spoke of the country's beauty and addressed its citizens as Rwandans and not Tutsi or Hutus.⁴¹ Still, with the elimination of the ethnicity classifications on identification cards, the Genocide Ideology Law, and the re-vamping of the national flag and anthem, the Kagame administration looked for larger scale initiatives to fight genocide ideology. In the next section I will discuss how the process of reversing this severe psychological neurosis in Rwanda was supported by the research findings and initiatives led by the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission.

The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission

Today there is a new Rwanda. A Rwanda for Rwandans has become a political goal and Kagame and his RFP party have concentrated on rebuilding this sense of national unity. The post-genocide reconciliation process was vital to forming a new Rwandan identity

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ James Tyler Dickovick, *the World Today Series: Africa 2012*, 47th ed. (Lanham, MD: Stryker-Post Publications, 2012) 191.

⁴¹ Ibid.

because to become reconciled is to “overcome alienation, division, and enmity and to restore peaceful, cooperative relationships based on a shared commitment to communal solidarity.”⁴² Without a common identity and system of values, a nation can never be truly unified, and a post-genocide nation can never be safe. So just how did Rwanda move to the point where its citizens call themselves Rwandans and not Tutsis or Hutus, and more specifically what did the Kagame administration put into place to ensure that this new identity was felt and cultivated throughout the nation?

A good start when looking at government supported reconciliation efforts includes the creation of The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC). According to the national website for the commission, its aim is to “serve as an institution that strives to promote peace, unity and prosperity in Rwanda, through the preparation and coordination of national programs aimed at building national unity and reconciliation amongst all Rwandans.”⁴³ Since its inauguration in March of 1999, the Commission has facilitated the flow of communication between Rwandans as well as being a vehicle for addressing grievances that still linger and in turn hinder the development of national “Rwandaness.” One could call this the national think tank behind Rwandan reconciliation. With policy papers, research, and summits, the commission “initiates studies, organizes consultations, and seeks to strengthen domestic peace and security.”⁴⁴

⁴² Amstutz, “Is Reconciliation Possible”, 545.

⁴³ National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, “NURC: Mission Statement,” <http://www.nurc.gov.rw/index.php?id=69> (accessed January 6, 2013).

⁴⁴ Amstutz, “Is Reconciliation Possible”, 547.

An example of the work of the Commission includes what has been named the “Rwandan Reconciliation Barometer.” This is a “national public opinion survey that intends to track progress on the road to reconciliation in Rwanda by means of a structured quantitative research instrument.”⁴⁵ Specifically, this survey includes face-to-face interviews with thousands of citizens in the thirty districts of the country, in which Rwandans are questioned about various aspects of their day-- to day lives and how they think the government-led reconciliation process is manifesting itself. At the core of the survey was the question of whether the people of Rwanda saw themselves as unified Rwandans in their ever developing post-genocide society?⁴⁶ In order to gauge such a monumental and heavy question, the commission framed the survey around different political and social sectors. Below are only three examples of the dozens of queries and (some results) that came from this survey:

Political Culture: “Survey questions and statements measured confidence in public institutions, trust in leadership, and the respect of rule of law and courts.”⁴⁷ The Commission looked to gauge how the people felt about their leadership. Did Rwandans feel as though they could trust those who were charged with protecting them, as well as aiding them through a very involved and convoluted process of reconciliation? As a leader, Kagame was considered to be one who worked hard at political and social reconciliation, and the Commission was there for checks and balances, to ensure that the voices of the

⁴⁵ John Rucyahana, “Rwanda Reconciliation Barometer,” *National Unity and Reconciliation Commission* (2008): 9, <http://www.nurc.gov.rw/researches/rwanda-reconciliation-barometer.html> (accessed January 2, 2013).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Rwandan people were never obstructed no matter their opinion or perspective. Public confidence in the leadership of Rwanda was and still is considered vital to reconciliation; without which factions can slowly emerge and threats of divisionism can reappear.

Human Security: “Respondents reported relatively high levels of physical and economic security; a majority felt that great strides have been made in all respects since 1994; and there was significant approval of the overall direction of the country (more than 90% overall)”⁴⁸ The commission looked to the more tangible aspects of Rwandan life: did the citizens feel secure? Did they feel as though there was opportunity for upward mobility, and not just in economic terms, but did Rwandans truly feel as though they had the tools to focus on reconciliation? The importance of the social state of the citizenry has never been lost on the work of the commission. There is an understanding that runs deep throughout their work emphasizing the fact that without a population that feels secure, reconciliation will always be a difficult goal to achieve.

Citizenship and Identity: “explores the indicators of national and individual identity, attitudes regarding citizenship, and the prevalence of shared cultural values. Respondents exhibited a strong preference for a national Rwandan identity (more than 97% overall) and national values.”⁴⁹ This is at the core of what it means for Rwanda to be truly reunited towards the goal of reconciliation, for without a sense of unity and shared identity the divisions that spurred the genocide will be forever open to exploitation. That is why the Commission stressed these types of inquiries on a local level, because “reconstructing local social networks and political relationships rather than promoting the broad and abstract

⁴⁸ Ibid.,10.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

values of ethnic coexistence and tolerance”⁵⁰ is much more relevant to the holistic understanding of the reconciliation process. This commission and its work on the Reconciliation Barometer brought things down to a more tangible and digestible size for many citizens, and emphasized the importance of their voices on such an important matter, the unification of their nation.

This “Reconciliation Barometer” is one of many stepping stones to understanding what the people of Rwanda are thinking and feeling about their political and social surroundings and how they are forming their new identities away from the paradigm of ethnocentricity. To do this effectively, the Kagame administration has taken reconciliation to a level of analysis and quantitative research. He and his administration look to the NURC to be the pulse of the reconciliation process and the vehicle towards a more modern measurement of human values systems in Rwanda. At the top of the list of missions for the NURC is the urgency “to promote the spirit of Rwandan identity and put national interests first instead of favors based on ethnicity, blood relations, gender, religion, region of origin, etc.”⁵¹ In order to truly promote a Rwandan identity, the Kagame administration had to take its NURC findings from various studies and surveys and apply it to the people. They took gaps in the Reconciliation Barometer and joined forces with groups like the American international conflict transformation non-profit Search for Common Ground, in order to analyze and implement various corrective measures.

⁵⁰ Hugo Van Der Merwe, Victoria Baxter, and Audrey R. Chapman, *Assessing the Impact of Transitional Justice: Challenges for Empirical Research* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2009), 146.

⁵¹ Rucyahana, “Rwanda Reconciliation Barometer,” 19.

An example of a corrective measure that the NURC and Search for Common Ground are engaging in includes addressing a pattern found in the Reconciliation Barometer survey which indicated that “a percentage of respondents (almost 39.9%) believe that there are people in Rwandan society that would still perpetrate acts of genocide if given the opportunity.”⁵² To address the potentiality that genocide ideology may be manifesting into physical acts, the aforementioned groups have come together in joint radio shows to educate the rural community on reconciliation. These radio shows are educational in nature, but also highlight the personal experiences of the citizens as tools for better understanding their needs and opinions on reconciliation in their communities. This is the work of the NURC, to ensure that the notions of reconciliation are accessible to all Rwandans.

Fatuma Ndangiza, former secretary general of the NURC, stressed the commission’s mission, “we believe that reconciliation will not come through forgetting the past, but in understanding why the past led to political turmoil and taking measures, however painful and slow which will make our ‘Never Again’ a reality.”⁵³ The importance of understanding why is the foundation of the many reports that are produced by the NURC, reports like the “Reconciliation Barometer” and the “Social Cohesion in Rwanda Survey,” put the pieces of Rwanda’s genocide puzzle together. It allows for an analysis of what happened and why, leading to a better understanding of what can be done never to replicate such a macabre sequence of events. It emphasizes what the citizens of Rwanda can do to avoid ethnocentric

⁵² Ibid., 11.

⁵³ Jennie E. Burnet, *Genocide Lives in Us: Women, Memory, and Silence in Rwanda* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 151.

exploitation and propaganda in order to ensure that unity prevails and the term “Rwandan” is a lived reality and not an empty promise.

The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission is a new type of reconciliation tool within the African context. It couples research, analysis, and a quantitative approach with tangible on-the-ground action that brings reconciliation to life while still taking into consideration the many factors influencing the new Rwandan identity. What is important about this commission in terms of helping create the post-genocide “Rwandaness” is that it is one hundred percent about the people of the nation. It is not bogged down with opinions of politicians or the elite; this commission speaks to and for the people of Rwanda. The commission takes the people’s grievances, their fears, and their triumphs into consideration when attempting to plan for further initiatives geared towards a more peaceful and united Rwanda. This commission maintains its mission of creating a true Rwandan identity through initiatives that push for reconciliation, education, and awareness for the collective past, present, and shared future as Rwandans. When a people see that their government is trying hard to maintain peace and unity, it is easier for the reconciliation process to proceed.

The creation of this Commission signified the seriousness of the government and that this process of reconciliation merited a new type of operational approach. It was truly time to look at the people and how logistically speaking, their history and present could be analyzed in order to aid the collective process of reconciliation; that is why this commission is so vital. It is redefining “Rwandaness” by showing the importance of this newly established identity. It is showing the Rwandan people that they are important and they are seen, heard, and considered. This whole apparatus is and continues to be about the people; all the reports, all the surveys, all the educational programs are not merely for show, they

are for serious analysis and consideration when implementing programs that further the reconciliation process.

Another example of such a program that has emerged from the research of the NURC is the establishment of solidarity camps, also known as ingando. When Chi Mbako, a Harvard Law student, interviewed participants of these solidarity camps while on assignment in Kigali, they explained to him that “the most important teaching I learned at ingando is that the Rwandan people are Rwanda’s most important resource. Everything ingando gave us, we really wanted. Knowing that everyone is our brother—we really wanted this,”⁵⁴ these camps are considered ways of re-education, mostly for members of the former army or identified genocide perpetrators, on ways they can re-integrate themselves into the new Rwandan society.⁵⁵ Members of the Commission run these camps and “see it as their job to instill a sense of shared citizenship among Rwandans”⁵⁶ There is an emphasis placed on encouraging Rwandan nationalism and of course fighting the persistent threats of genocide ideology. These types of initiatives again highlight the purpose of reconciliation, it is not a fake façade put up to impress the Western world, but it is a true concern and ongoing goal of Kagame’s administration to create this new Rwandan unity that was so lacking before. With this being said, in this next section I will focus on the community-based judicial process known in Rwanda as gacaca, and how restorative rather than

⁵⁴ Chi Mgbako, “Ingando Solidarity Camps: Reconciliation and Political Indoctrination,” *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 18, (2005): 201.

⁵⁵ Santosh C. Saha, *Perspectives on Contemporary Ethnic Conflict: Primal Violence or the Politics of Conviction?* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2006), 90.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

retributive justice has also helped contribute to the formation of a new unified Rwandan identity.

Post-Genocide Gacaca Tribunals

April 7th, 2005 was the 11th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide. This day of mourning and reflection was commemorated by a ceremony where President Kagame spoke on Rwanda's past, present and future. Kagame, a constant advocate of unity and loyalty to a Rwandan identity, spoke on his support for the Gacaca tribunals considering it "the only remedy that can help us to become human beings and Rwandans again."⁵⁷ What is it about this type of restorative justice model that would make the Kagame administration confident in its abilities to form a new Rwandan identity? In this section we will take an intimate look at the restorative justice paradigm represented by the Gacaca tribunals and dissect how they have contributed to creating a unified post-conflict Rwandan identity.

When most individuals think of reconciliation in Rwanda, they think of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) which was established by the UN Security Council in order to "prosecute civic and political leaders responsible for instigating the genocide, and to punish the most serious offenders of the deadliest mass killing in modern time."⁵⁸ This retributive justice model was unfortunately unsuccessful in the case of Rwanda, being costly and some would say fruitless. Rwandan expert Mark Amstutz even considered the ICTR to "have been modest if not disappointing...as of 2005, the tribunal had arrested some seventy genocide suspects, tried twenty-five and convicted only twenty-

⁵⁷ Amstutz, "Is Reconciliation Possible," 559.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 552.

two.”⁵⁹ The ICTR was also not about reconciliation, it was based on retribution and identified and separated the perpetrators from the victims using information that was sometimes arbitrary or inefficient. Unfortunately reconciliation and the formation of a new Rwandan identity were difficult to create in a judicial process that focused on punishment and not rehabilitation. For one, the ICTR was not located in Rwanda, but took place in neighboring Tanzania, an expensive and oftentimes time-consuming trip for people who had neither to spare. Secondly, the ICTR was never conducted in the Kinyarwanda language, a language that unifies the nation linguistically, making it difficult for most Rwandans to follow let alone use as a symbol of closure and healing.⁶⁰

So how was the reconciliation process to move forward in terms of identifying and addressing the atrocities that happened at the hands of Rwandans, but still focusing on the mourning and unification of the country? That is where the Gacaca system of justice comes in. Gacaca, which is the Kinyarwanda word meaning “justice on the grass,” is a “judicial process in which the Rwandan public tries and judges those who wish to confess or have been accused of genocide crimes.”⁶¹ This process was very important to Rwanda’s culture because it was how disputes between family and community members were reconciled in precolonial times, typically elders of the family or community would listen to the grievances and deliberate on what would be the best resolution.⁶² This type of judicial

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 553.

⁶¹ Allison Corey and Sandra Joireman, “Retributive Justice: The Gacaca Courts in Rwanda,” *African Affairs* 103, no. 410 (January 2004): 81.

⁶² Ibid.

system lies deep within the shared Rwandan identity; it is where communal history and culture came together to form an environment for dialogue within a sense of shared experiences.

With the failure of the ICTR to restore hope, trust, and rebuild the Rwandan identity, and with the Rwandan judicial system obliterated due to the genocide, the Gacaca court system was officially put into place as an alternative means of justice in June 2002.⁶³ According to the Kagame administration, the aim of these “grassroots courts” is to first push forward many of the remaining trials that were piling up in Rwanda’s already overextended justice system. But more importantly, these courts were intended to expose the ugly truth behind the genocide. The process of healing would never be complete until all were able to hear the suffering that their fellow Rwandans endured during those one hundred days. These traditional courts, all of which took place under large trees, were almost as intimate and organic as those community meetings of elders back in precolonial Rwanda. The people, not the judges or the political leaders and elite of the nation, were the most important part of the Gacaca system. The heart-wrenching stories of survival, of murder, of rape, and other casualties of the genocide enabled victims to regain their power but still realize that in the safety of their community, they are part of a collective, a group of individuals brought together in mourning and mutual support and recognition. These traditional systems of restorative justice were important because “in order to heal, members of victimized groups...need to engage with their experience... they need to receive

⁶³ Ibid., 82.

empathy, support, and affirmation from each other”⁶⁴ This experience, this process of healing enabled the spirit of being Rwandan to reconstruct itself; the unity that was missing during those horrific moments of murder, were once again found under the trees of Gacaca courts.

With the ICTR, the strategy was based upon retributive justice, which “places a premium on individual rights and the prosecution and punishment of offenders.”⁶⁵ By contrast, the Gacaca system of justice puts emphasis on community, healing, and a base onto which Rwandans can build their identities as one people, who can sit under a tree and engage in dialogue with one another as their ancestors did many decades ago. This restorative strategy does not focus on retribution or vengeance, but rather on transforming relationships built on distrust and suspicion into kinship, mutual mourning and shared experiences of exploitation and victimization. It is important to understand that this system of justice is purposefully very different from the Western notions of a court system; it is intended to emphasize the traditional culture of Rwandan society away from Western influences. For example, when perpetrators are seen in front of the Gacaca judges and the community at large, they do not have to provide any type of physical proof; their testimony will be enough for the judges to make a decision, a far cry from the traditional Western paradigm of a court system.⁶⁶ This distinction also aids in the establishment of a Rwandan identity because it highlights a precolonial culture of which all Rwandans are a part and can be proud.

⁶⁴ Ervin Staub, “Genocide and Mass Killing: Origins, Prevention, Healing and Reconciliation.” *Political Psychology* 21, no. 2 (June 2000): 376.

⁶⁵ Amstutz, “Is Reconciliation Possible,” 554.

⁶⁶ Corey and Joireman, “The Gacaca Courts in Rwanda,” 83.

Furthermore, the goals of the Gacaca system of justice are not traditional in the sense of prosecution and punishment, but instead they focus on mending relationships and emphasizing the worth of all those involved: “this is why the restorative paradigm seeks to minimize distinctions between victims and victimizers by emphasizing the need to distinguish the offender from the offense.”⁶⁷ To emphasize the notion of unity and “Rwandaness,” suspects found to be guilty by Gacaca tribunals were expected to participate in community service and even contribute to the National Fund for Assistance to the Survivors of Genocide and Massacres (NFASGM). This fund can be considered as the nation’s community pool of monetary resources for the victims of the genocide, particularly those who are the most at risk of marginalization including women, children, and handicapped persons.⁶⁸

Aside from contributing to the NFASGM, perpetrators would be given lesser sentences if they were completely honest, showed genuine regret and sorrow for their acts, and sought forgiveness and reconciliation with the larger community.⁶⁹ The importance of the community is amplified in the Gacaca system of justice – without the approval and forgiveness of the community, there would be no moving forward. This type of justice gave the collective society power and stripped it off of particular individuals. These nuances make it clear why President Kagame emphasized the Gacaca’s importance in making so many separated people consider themselves Rwandans again. He knew that a process so

⁶⁷ Amstutz, “Is Reconciliation Possible,” 555.

⁶⁸ John Torpey, *Politics and the Past: On Repairing Historical Injustices* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 264.

⁶⁹ The United Nations Outreach Program on the Rwanda Genocide, "Background Information on the Justice and Reconciliation Process in Rwanda," (March 2012), <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/about/bgjustice.shtml> (accessed January 7, 2013).

deeply saturated in Rwandan history, coupled with its emphasis on collective grieving and mutual respect for one's lived experiences would result in a stronger sense of community and understanding.

The Gacaca courts were not dehumanizing but are actually helping the nation realize that they suffered as one people and not groups: the killings took a toll on the nation of Rwanda and it was up to the Rwandans as a people to build it back up. The Gacaca courts were a means of reinstallation of society through community building and reconciliation, allowing victims and perpetrators to stop dividing themselves and realize that the mourning process was a national one and not divided between perpetrators and victims. It was a safe and nurturing space to rebuild lives and in turn rebuild a national identity. This is the true essence of Rwanda, a nation torn apart by the hands of its own citizens, put back together with those same hands. The Kagame administration took away the power of division and replaced it with the power of unification and reconciliation. By addressing the pervasiveness of genocide ideology through the creation of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission and the implementation of the Gacaca courts, Kagame and his administration made the people the focus. Their lived realities were the backdrop for a reconciliation process that transformed how Rwandans would see themselves and recognize each other.

Today Rwanda is for Rwandans and there is more growth to come; there are more people to educate, more communities to unite, more healing that needs to be done. There are more initiatives and state-sponsored programs that can be implemented to continue down the path of constructing the Rwandan citizen. Still, the nation has come a long way, and it is thanks to a true concern for the unity of the people that today my taxi man Francis calls himself a Rwandan and not a Tutsi. Rwandans will continue to look for strong leadership as

much of the citizenry continues to be re-educated about their own “Rwandaness.” But with continued emphasis on the people’s healing, re-orientation, and re-education from the leadership, Rwanda’s future generations will be examples for Côte d'Ivoire of how a shared sense of unity and identity is of utmost importance to national growth and security.

CHAPTER FOUR

NEW LEADERSHIP AND NEW BEGINNINGS IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Introduction

Leadership matters in Côte d'Ivoire. Today, the fragile nation needs a leader who can unite the country without engaging in public displays of ethnocentric loyalty. These displays, as seen throughout the foundations of past presidencies, have resulted in political dogma and pervasive xenophobic propaganda which has left the development of the country completely arrested since 1999. Côte d'Ivoire is utterly divided, even after many Western governments like the Obama administration or international bodies like the United Nations have commented on the peace or stability of the new Ouattara administration, it has become increasingly impossible to ignore the fact that Ouattara still represents the ethnic divisions that have gripped Côte d'Ivoire for the past sixty years. Many graphic accounts of murders or torture of Gbagbo supporters and former cabinet members at the hands of military militias who support Ouattara have come to light since his inauguration.

This begs the ultimate question of whether or not this administration will bring an end to the ethnic division, or merely continue the legacy of ethnic division? In this chapter I will discuss how this administration is indeed continuing this legacy of division and will give my opinion on ultimately how to overcome this ethnocentric leadership trap that has come close to destroying the nation. Keeping in mind the examples of how President Paul Kagame was able to implement social reforms intended to unite Rwanda, I will attempt to outline what I perceive to be the best course of action for the nation. Côte d'Ivoire is still a land of great potential and wealth and this thesis will culminate with how this potential and

wealth can begin to eclipse the xenophobia and ethnic divisions of the past six decades. To do this, the nation will need new leadership.

Revenge and Reverse Xenophobia

The arrest and detention of former President Laurent Gbagbo in April 2011 was not the end of the civil dispute that left thousands dead and a nation at odds. The xenophobic sentiments that propelled the nation into this cycle of resentment, jealousy, and hatred have continued into the presidency of Alassane Ouattara, leaving many southerners and Gbagbo supporters feeling as if they are targets for reprisal attacks. With Gbagbo currently on trial for war crimes at the International Criminal Court in the Netherlands, it is leaving many of his supporters to wonder where the justice is for those who have been targeted by Ouattara's Forces Républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI). The FRCI, which was created by Ouattara as a security task force in March 2011, has been reported by Amnesty International not only to be comprised of mostly northerners who had taken up arms in the fight for Ouattara's presidency, but also as those at the heart of violent attacks and gruesome ethnocentric killings across the nation. Gaëtan Mootoo, a researcher for Amnesty International West Africa, reported:

Human rights violations are still being committed against real or perceived supporters of Laurent Gbagbo both in Abidjan and in the west of the country...Alassane Ouattara's failure to condemn these acts could be seen as a green light by many of his security forces and other armed elements fighting with them to continue. Alassane Ouattara must publically state that all violence against the civilian population must stop immediately.¹

¹ Amnesty International, "Côte d'Ivoire: Both Sides Responsible for War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity," (May 2011) <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/report/c%C3%B4te-divoire-both-sides-responsible-war-crimes-and-crimes-against-humanity-2> (accessed March 17, 2013).

Ouattara has indeed been vocal about his commitment to reconciliation, particularly during a 2011 trip to meet with President Obama where he told reporters that he is “the president of all Ivorians, without distinction of race, religion or region.”² Still, many in the international community are not seeing the correlation between these promises of socio-political reunification and any action on the ground. For example, the *New York Times* reported in September 2012 that Ouattara and the Ivorian Press Council had decided to suspend six newspaper publications that were pro-Gbagbo, and essentially representing many southern ethnic groups. Raphael Lakpe, chairman of the National Press Council, defended the President’s decision to suspend the publications for up to two weeks because they were publishing pieces that were “contrary to national reconciliation.”³

A well-known tactic amongst authoritarian governments, suppression of the press in Côte d’Ivoire garnered much attention from international communities including the United States Embassy in Abidjan and Reporters Without Borders who “expressed concern over the suspensions...saying the country is best served when a diversity of opinions are freely expressed through the media.”⁴ The Committee to Protect Journalists also urged Ouattara and his administration to end violent suppression of Ivorian journalists and “to reinforce the rule of law, the impartiality of justice, and the promotion of national reconciliation by

² The CNN Wire Staff, “New Ivory Coast President Committed to National Reconciliation” *CNN Wire Online*, July 28, 2011, <http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/07/28/ivory.coast.ouattara/index.html?iref=allsearch> (accessed March 17, 2013).

³ The Associated Press, “Ivory Coast Newspapers Stopped,” *The New York Time*, September 14, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/15/world/africa/ivory-coast-newspapers-stopped.html> (accessed March 17, 2013).

⁴ Ibid.

ending the persecution of journalists and media outlets that were favorable to former leader Laurent Gbagbo.”⁵ The disconnection between promises of reconciliation and the actions of the Ouattara administration go deeper than this, with Amnesty International reporting that the war crimes committed by Ouattara’s militias and security force (FRCI) are virtually equal to those that Gbagbo is on trial for at the ICC, further aggravating the feelings of reverse xenophobia and an unfair bias towards the new and Western-backed Ouattarra administration. As one of the only organizations on the ground immediately following Gbagbo’s arrest, Amnesty International issued a statement saying that the organization remained:

Concerned about the safety of those close to former President Laurent Gbagbo who have been arrested since April. Most, if not all these people remain detained incommunicado without any contact with their families and lawyers and some were reportedly held in life threatening conditions, notably 23 people including military and police officers held in a small cell in a military camp in Korhogo. In the West of the country, in the last weeks, several villages where ethnic groups live who are considered to be Gbagbo’s supporters, have been attacked by the security forces and other allied armed elements. The authorities claimed that they were looking for arms and mercenaries. As a result, some people were beaten and many were forced to flee in the bush and are living in life-threatening conditions. These people have received little or no protection from either the new security forces or the peacekeeping forces of the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire.

From his cabinet members, to his wife, Ouattara’s forces have reportedly tortured, raped, and illegally detained much of Gbagbo’s administration, close political allies, and family. The atrocities continued as many Gbagbo supporters in smaller southern towns reported that as a way to identify what ethnic group a person was from, they would be asked for their documentation showing their full names. This was the way the FRCI or armed militias could decipher what ethnic group the person was from before killing them, an accusation

⁵ The CNN Wire Staff, “New Ivory Coast President.”

that was proven to be true as one witness to a massacre reported that “some of these identity cards were found beside the bodies.”⁶ These attacks by Ouattara’s security forces are leaving the larger population frightened and vulnerable to reprisal attacks and killings. A sense of revenge and reversed xenophobia has enveloped the country, and just as Gbagbo is held accountable by the ICC for attempting to block Ouattara’s quest for the presidency, his supporters and those tied to mostly southern ethnic groups are also living in fear for their safety. Just as we saw in the case of Rwanda after the Belgians stripped the Tutsi of political power in favor of a Hutu leader who eventually used this new found power to ensure that the Tutsi would never be above them again, many are worried that the Ouattara presidency will be one clouded with entitlement, revenge, and reverse xenophobia. Indicators of continued ethnocentric violence towards southern Catholics, and the continued illegal detention of those tied to Gbagbo’s political administration, are proving to many that the Ouattara government will continue on the legacy of ethnic polarization in Côte d’Ivoire.

I argue that Ouattara will never be the kind of leader the nation needs; neither will Gbagbo, Bédié, or any other leader from the Boigny generation. All these leaders fought their way to political power via coercion, nepotism, or manipulation because they deemed themselves entitled to the presidency. Ouattara and the parade of presidents Côte d’Ivoire has seen since independence in 1960 represent an era that must pass, an era saturated in the ethnocentric model of legacy and authoritative government. They have all been so closely tied to their respective ethnic groups and regions that it has become seemingly impossible to separate an Ivorian president from his ethnic affiliation. Ouattara has for almost twenty years represented a particular section of the Ivorian population: he has personified hope for

⁶ Amnesty International, “Côte d’Ivoire: Both Sides Responsible.”

this particular section, but never for all Ivorian people, just as Boigny, Bédié, and Gbagbo represented the historically elite southern Catholic section of the nation, but never all the Ivorian people. The Ivorian people must be weaned off of this political legacy of ethnic representation, and guided towards true a true democracy based on what the leader can do and not which ethnic group he or she represents.

Overcoming Faulty Leadership with Transparency

A young woman is changing the face of Kenyan politics today. Ory Okolloh, a Kenyan-born Harvard educated lawyer, created the blog Mzalendo, a website which provides an unprecedented look at the work of Kenya's parliament. She is attempting to make accessible to the public information on the voting patterns and governmental activity of their parliamentary leaders, information that was previously unavailable to Kenyan citizens. This website is essentially a database where Kenyans can look up their constituency's Members of Parliament (MPs), their profiles, their speeches, even providing MP scorecards that will "allow citizens to make value judgments about MPs performance based on their accessibility their [public appearances] and Constituency Development Fund sending."⁷ This website was also pivotal in the recent Kenyan elections, outlining in English and Swahili the stances of each candidate, their proposed economic policies, and overviews and commentary from their Presidential debates. It is not merely a place where citizens can obtain information about the political environment of their nation, it is a communal space

⁷ Mzalendo (2012), Mzalendo Re-launches with Detailed MP Profiles, Searchable Hansard, Scorecards and Much More [Press Release], Retrieved from http://info.mzalendo.com/media_root/file_archive/Mzalendo_launch_press_release.pdf (accessed March 22, 2013).

for Kenyans to share opinions, discuss their views, and engage in dialogue pertaining to how they want to see their nation shaped.

Of course, this website is not perfect, and it does not guarantee that all leaders will become political saints, but what it does create is the notion of accountability. Leaders must be held accountable for their actions, for corruption, their faulty policies, or their nepotism. If the people are not engaging in this dialogue, it will be easier to blind them while leaders continue to engage in activity that does not consider those at the bottom. The early 1990's saw the rebuilding of post-conflict Rwanda, and although Paul Kagame implemented strong initiatives like the Gacaca courts or the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, this generation of Ivorians, particularly those with the means, education, and resources must create infrastructure like the Mzalendo blog to engage the Ivorian population. It is time to demand more from leaders, to hold them accountable, and the ability to track their progress or stagnation will put pressure and an added reminder that they work for the people, the people do not work for them. Leaders who are held accountable will work harder to prove that they are worthy of representing the people, and if the citizens see through their actions or policies that they are using their power for evil, they will have to answer to the people via true democracy.

Transparency is how Ivorians are going to overcome this ethnic polarization. The country needs a good leader committed to the people, and not to their ethnic group. Ivorians will not be able to elect such a leader until they realize that leadership is beyond ethnic affiliation. It is beyond who is entitled to becoming president; good leadership and good governance are concerned with economic policy, vision and innovation, social equality, and a true love for the entire nation's population. With a website or newspaper that watches,

checks, and tracks the activity of Ivorian leaders, citizens will grow to understand the difference between true change and political dogma. I propose that Ivorians in the diaspora partner with young people on the ground to develop a similar database that Okolloh has created in Kenya. This will enable Ivorians to look up the activities of their MP's, governors, or president on a daily basis, and compare it to their own grievances to see if the people in office are working to make the lives of their fellow Ivorians any better. This will not only shine light on officials who are potential political leeches or future dictators only concerned with their riches and the advancement of their own people, but could potentially create a new generation of leaders that understands accountability and good governance.

Many would say that Côte d'Ivoire is not ready for such measures, that the president is still banning newspapers, so how could they possibly open themselves to such an invasive and foreign way of tracking their actions? Pressure, these leaders must be pressured to prove why they are in these positions of power. If they cannot handle the pressure of change, they must move aside and let a new generation of leaders enter, leaders who understand that ethnic affiliation is not the basis of leadership, xenophobia is not a political platform, and national theft is not an economic policy. Ethnic polarization is a direct result of faulty leadership in Côte d'Ivoire; xenophobia has been a product of the political aspirations of past presidents. The people must rise up and demand better leadership, a better future, an Ivorian Spring of sorts. It must happen soon before the parade of faulty leadership in Côte d'Ivoire indeed destroys the nation.

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