From Colonization to Globalization: 
Difference or Repetition? 
Martial Frindethie

... since the collapse of the USSR, the dynamics of empire has changed. The World is now more multipolar and mercantile, with China and Europe emerging to compete against the US. Empire is more driven by multinational corporations, whose interests transcend those of any particular nation-state.

STEVEN HIATT—“Global Empire: The Web of Control,” A Game As Old as Empire

Crisis as Possibility or Globalization à la française

General Charles de Gaulle, this most beloved French president and iconic figure of French resistance and morality, once formulated an aphorism whose hideous veracity is only equaled by the unscrupulous zeal with which France put it into practice throughout history. “France,” he said, “has no friends, but only interests.” This Gaullist maxim, which foreboded an unchanged paradigm of philosophical disinformation, economic strangulation, military persecution, and political destabilization, if it has proven factual over time and has helped France accumulate a colossal fortune to the detriment of its former colonies, is today being challenged by most French-speaking African countries. Perhaps, the most powerful counter-hegemonic social movement of the twenty first century witnessed in French Africa is the resistance movement that has been taking place in Côte d'Ivoire since 2002. Sidiki Bakaba, an Ivorian filmmaker, has documented it in his Bare-handed Victory. It is a mobilization and struggle against French neocolonial agenda disguised under the coat of globalization. The objective of this polymorphous resistance movement is to unveil and defeat France's imperial economic and political scheme wherever it will manifest itself in Côte d'Ivoire and under whichever form it will hide. Côte d'Ivoire, the Ivorian patriotes often chant, will be the graveyard of France's deceitful policy in its former colonies. What they mean is that, at least in Côte d'Ivoire, they are determined to put an end to the French arsonist policy by which France has historically schemed to set multiple fires in Africa in order to hire itself as emergency management agency via the United Nations and the world financial institutions.

THE LOGIC OF FRENCH INTERVENTIONS IN AFRICA

No matter under which form they come into view, the various French interventions in Africa have never had a philanthropic thrust. French intrusions in Africa have always been driven by logic of maximum wealth through minimum or no effort. Historically, the French Republic has seldom won a war. In fact, the French have systematically lost most wars, even the ones that they confidently declared on their neighbors; and each time France was defeated, it turned to Africa or to the Caribbean with the most destructive designs to assuage its bruised ego and to rebuild its broken finances. An understanding of the French policy in Africa—and the Caribbean—whereby in moments of political and financial distress at home crises are implemented abroad as possibility for Hexagonal improvement could inform a discussion of the contemporary stance against France's brand of globalization in Africa in general, and in Côte d'Ivoire in particular.

In 1871, in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, a war that France declared and seemed so confident to win on its Prussian neighbor, France emerged a broken and demoralized nation with a diminished territory, a poor economy, and an injured reputation. The German Alliance had just defeated France,
annexed its territories of Alsace and Lorraine, and handed the French government a reparation invoice the equivalent of one billion dollars to be paid within three-year. Despite its drained reserves, France managed to acquit itself of the enormous bill long before the scheduled deadline. France's alacrity to make good on the German humiliating tab would have seemed a casual occurrence if almost fifty years before this event, a less powerful country, Algeria, asking that France reimbursed a loan it had owed for too long, had not paid a heavy cost for its impertinence. In fact, the immediate economic outcome of the 1789 French Revolution was catastrophic. Agricultural methods in France had remained archaic. Unlike British farmers, for instance, French farmers had not been able to develop large agricultural exploitations to sustain the local markets and bring in much-needed revenues. The small farms could hardly feed the French populations, and the price of grain and firewood had skyrocketed; bread, the quintessential French food, was being rationed. France was on the verge of famine, and an even more dangerous prospect was developing: Napoleon's hungry armies in Italy and Spain were getting irritable, and a mutiny could break any time. Subsequently, France turned to two Algerian commercial houses, Bacri and Busnach, for a loan in money and grains in order to remedy the country's hardship. However, Bacri and Busnach, too, owed some money to the Algerian sovereign, Dey Kodja Hussein, and they were waiting for France to honor its tab, so they could settle their debt with the Dey. In 1815, by the end of the Napoleonic failed war, France's debt to Algeria was about 18 million francs. Perhaps the merchants had asked Dey Hussein to recover the money from French authorities on their behalf, so that they could also settle their debts with him. Whatever the case, Dey Hussein grew impatient with France's tergiversations. In 1827, during a heated argument with Pierre Deval, the French consul in Algeria about France's long-due balance, the Dey's flywhisk flew in the face of the French consul. King Charles X, who was not very eager to pay off his delinquent debt to Algeria, seized this occasion to protest what he perceived in the Dey's gesture as lack of respect for the French Crown. Despite Dey Hussein's explanation that his gesture was in response to Pierre Deval's personal insult to him, and not a condescension directed at the king of France, 600 French ships landed 37,000 troops in Algeria on June 14, 1830. The French soldiers engaged in the most despicable acts of religious vandalism and human right abuses. They raided mosques and transformed them in cathedrals. They destroyed private properties; they raped women, and executed hundreds of Algerians. Less than a month later, on July 5, the French deposed Dey Hussein. By February 1831, Algeria became effectively a French Crown. Despite Dey Hussein's explanation that his gesture was in response to Pierre Deval's personal insult to him, and not a condescension directed at the king of France, 600 French ships landed 37,000 troops in Algeria on June 14, 1830. The French soldiers engaged in the most despicable acts of religious vandalism and human right abuses. They raided mosques and transformed them in cathedrals. They destroyed private properties; they raped women, and executed hundreds of Algerians. Less than a month later, on July 5, the French deposed Dey Hussein. By February 1831, Algeria became effectively a French settlement colony, and French authorities invited 4500 French colonists to farm the fertile coastal lands of Algeria. The French occupation of Algeria was not easy, nonetheless. Until 1962, the Algerians resisted the French. Finally, in 1962, the Algerians handed the French one of their most humiliating defeats in history. Germany of 1870 was not 1830's Algeria. France understood that it was not in its interest to delay its obligation toward the Germans. So, France paid its debt promptly and spent the ensuing years ruminating its defeat and thinking of ways to brighten its tarnished image in Europe. Many social engineers suggested that France should concentrate its efforts overseas and build itself an empire that would both replenish its depleted coffers and extend to "inferior" races its ideals of civilization.

France, it should be noted, had been present in Africa as early as 1642 and had actively participated in the slave trade that sold more than 28 millions Africans in Europe and in the Americas between 1650 and 1900. At that time, the purpose was clearly economic, and no one spoke of extending French "superior" civilization to the "inferior" races of Africa. In the later years of the 1800, however, the climate was no longer the same. By 1804 Denmark initiated an abolitionist wave that started to sweep Europe and America. In 1848, France reluctantly abolished the official practice of slave trade. Among the people who had expressed disapproval of the slave trade, was Olaudah Equiano, a former slave. Equiano was also a former slave owner who had understood that slavery could only be stopped if there could be an incentive for not practicing it. So, he tried to convince slave owners that slave trade was depleting Africa of potential consumers of European goods, and he urged Europeans to turn instead to disseminating European civilization to Africa, as they exploited the many African raw materials from which slave trade had distracted them. The functioning semantic pair was thus launched, commerce and civilization, which would henceforth be seized on as determining the scope of France's—and European—new globalizing efforts in Africa. Taking Equiano's suggestions to globalize otherwise at heart, European countries raced for the riches of Africa, Ivory, gold, timber, cocoa, coffee, rubber, palm oil, nuts, and tropical fruits, and not slaves—even though some "lawbreakers" were still trading in slaves, for seventy years went by between the Danes' abolition of slavery in 1792 and the effective stop of slave importation to Europe—became the new commodities that brought huge profits to European markets. By the late 1800, Africa became so crowded with European fortune seekers that conflicts became inevitable. To better regulate trade
in Africa and to avoid conflicts among the international actors in the region, the European powers held a conference in Berlin between November 15, 1884 and February 26, 1885, under the chairmanship of German Chancellor, Otto Von Bismarck. Although the organizers publicized the conference as a meeting for discussing issues of humanity, peace, and the "civilizing" and "welfare" of the native populations of Africa, it was definition of the rules to govern the Europeans’ claims of territories in Africa that actually dominated the talks. The Conference resolved the question of territorial conflicts among European countries by deciding that any European nation that formally gave other nations notice of its occupation of a territory would be recognized as the rightful owner of that territory. So, having defined the rules of the game, European powers rushed to slash as larger morsels as they could of the African pie.

However, still haunted by the specters of defeat, the French had yet to be convinced. Their 1870 beating by the Germans had dampened all their enthusiasm for globalizing enterprises. Furthermore, their Algerian colonies had not turned out to be what India had been to Great Britain. Algerians continued to oppose long-drawn-out resistances to the French occupation, and the North African colony had cost more headaches to France than it had brought in profits. In light of so few encouraging events, French financiers were hesitant to spend money in African adventures; they preferred less uncertain governments bonds, and French politicians preferred for their constituencies a good pot-au-feu to the bad bread that they ate during the 1870 German siege of Paris. On the other hand, the wounds of humiliation inflicted by the Germans were slow to heal, and many government officials believed that France could shine again if only it could secure for itself a large African empire. Five months after the Berlin Conference, a debate between proponents and opponents of colonial expansion was raging in the hall of the French Assemblée Nationale. The two most memorable protagonists of this debate were Jules Ferry (Ferry was twice prime minister of France, once from September 1880 to November 1881, and another time from February 1883 to April 1885) and Georges Clémenceau. On July 28, 1885, five months after being driven out of office for overseeing the failed the 1885 Chinese-French war, Jules Ferry was making a case for colonialism in the chamber of the National Assembly.

Ferry invoked three arguments in favor of France's colonial expansion. Economically, within the logic of its industrial aspirations, France needed to find new markets outside Europe and the United States for its export commodities, as Germany and America had become increasingly protectionist at the same time as they had been flooding France with new agricultural and industrials products. Economists like Leroy-Beaulieu, who tried to establish a nexus between Britain's wealth and its possession of an overseas empire, and who argued that the acquisition of a colonial empire would indubitably bring economic wealth to France, supported this argument. From a humanitarian perspective, Ferry argued that, as a member of the "higher race," France had a divine right and a duty to civilize the "inferior races," perfect them, and improve their backward morals. From a political and patriotic perspective, Ferry insisted that France needed to ensure its place in the world by performing acts of grandeur. For Ferry, amidst the European rush for territorial expansion, any politics of abstention on the part of France would amount to abdication. To ascertain its position on the international exchequer, France would have to start importing its language, its customs, its flag, and its genius. Replying to Ferry, Clémenceau charged that Ferry's dichotomy of superior race/inferior race was suspect and reminiscent of the German social engineers’ discourse in the days preceding the Franco-Prussian war. The Germans, like Ferry was doing then, had argued for racial superiority. German scientists had asserted that because the French were an inferior race, France was doomed to lose the war. So, Clémenceau urged his fellowmen not to repeat this German axiom against African nations by trying to disguise violence under the cunning designation of civilization. For him, the excuse of right or duty to civilize was nothing but a right to brutality that scientifically advanced societies tend to arrogate to themselves in order to take possession of less advanced nations and torture their citizens and exploit them for the benefit of so-called superior races. Clémenceau concluded that to make civilization a justification for colonization was to adjoin hypocrisy to violence. In any case, the early 1890s witnessed the rise of a multitude of strong pro-colonialist pressure groups, such as, the Comité de l’Afrique française, the Comité de l’Égypte, the Comité de l'Asie française, or the Comité de Madagascar, all unified under the banner of the Parti colonial, which made the case for a revival of France's place in the world. Their argument was less to sell an African business venture to French investors than to sell an African empire to the state. By 1890, a colonial consensus was in place in France, which advocated a new globalizing venture based less on treaties with local chiefs, and more on forceful military approach. Against all apprehensions, the French militarized globalization in Sub-Saharan Africa turned out to be more lucrative than even pro-
The French territories did not all have the same status. They were slave colonies, exploitation colonies, settlers' colonies, or protectorates, and they were ruled accordingly. Most French colonies in the Caribbean were slave colonies, whereas in sub-Saharan Africa they were principally exploitation colonies. In exploitation colonies, France's goal was to run away with most of the resources the colonies could yield (coffee, cocoa, lumber, palm oil, rubber, tropical fruits and nuts, and various minerals) for the benefit of the metropolitan state. Also, Africans from exploitation colonies were not on the same footing as those living in settlers' colonies or protectorates. Settlers' colonies and protectorates had local rulers collaborating with a French appointed consul. The protectorate of Tunisia had a local sovereign, the Bey. In the Settlers' colony of Algeria, it was the Dey. These first attempts at globalization were, like the ones that preceded them, devoid of any real reciprocity. The native peoples of the colonies resisted them ferociously; and whatever justification the imperialist countries gave for their retreat from the colonies, they did not leave on their own good will. The cost in human and financial capital was too high for France to sustain, the determination of the colonized too strong to break. The imperialist countries left because they were simply and purely beaten and forced to recognize the autonomy of their colonies.

However, the hexagonal impulse for profit was so imperative that France devised a number of "cooperation" schemes to remain the privileged speculator in the newly independent countries of Africa. French-speaking Africa's independences in the 1960s did not preclude France from seeking to exploit its former colonies. France's politics in Africa has consistently been governed by a protectionist itch; an itch that long after the African independences, continues to make France think that it is the Promised Land, its language the quintessential language, and its culture the exemplary culture, and that by indoctrinating Africans to think so to, France can keep on transferring economic resources from Africa to France as natural and expected. Already, during the colonial system, France's protectionist impulse had mandated free entry of French goods in the French African colonies and imposed tariffs on colonial goods entering France. This decision had the obvious consequence of impoverishing the colonies while enriching the metropolis. However, the 1930s recession made it crucial, for France's economic survival, that French authorities transform the African colonies into consumer markets. France thus eased tariffs on its colonies in order to allow them to sell more easily on French markets, earn money, buy French manufactured goods, and also pay interests on their debts. At the same time, in order to avoid competition from other powers, France imposed quotas on some foreign imports to France and to French colonies. France also forbade its colonies to export certain products to foreign markets, thus forcing those foreign countries to purchase only from France products that would otherwise be available in the colonies. In addition, France placed duties on some foreign imports competing with colonial goods entering France. These duties ranged from 11% on non-colonial bananas to 110% on cocoa, passing through 34% on peanuts and palm kernels and 91% on non-colonial coffee. Although many analysts have wanted to see this pre-independence "preferential system" accorded to the colonies as having greatly contributed to keeping French Africa afloat during the 1930s economic slump and responsible for what came to be known in the 1980s as the economic miracle of Côte d'Ivoire, evidence disproves it. In fact, the market-driven economy that this colonial system fostered provided the colonies with some money, only to be returned tenfold to France. Furthermore, this market economy, which France managed to keep alive long after the African independences, was the source of many economic shocks, as it put French-speaking African nations at the mercy of international speculators.

The preferential economic systems established by France on its own—and later with the cooperation of the E.E.C., which became the E.E.C in 1975—actually sought to maximize France's profits by curbing France's diminishing returns in the colonies. Already in 1959, the French commercial system made it possible for France's African colonies to consume 28.2% of French exports while contributing to 20% of French
dangerous competitors in a range of industrial products,” and the tiny country of Mauritius, a potential
maneuvered to exclude “Asian ex-colonies from the ACP states on the ground that they would prove
French imports coming from Africa. The various conventions (Lomé, Yaoundé, Lomé 2), which reinforced
France's economic "cooperation" with its former colonies and later with Anglophone Africa and the ACP
states, did little to create real conditions of development for non-European countries. In fact, France
maneuvered to exclude "Asian ex-colonies from the ACP states on the ground that they would prove
dangerous competitors in a range of industrial products," and the tiny country of Mauritius, a potential
competitor in textiles was asked by the E.C. to voluntarily restrain from the ACP.10 The E.C. states, and
particularly France, its most aggressive member, did nothing to foster manufactures in Africa. As far as the
E.C. was concerned, Africa was to remain an eternal supplier of raw materials; and late 1980s Washington
Consensus, with its menu of one-sided depoliticization of the state that opposes social public sector
investment in welfare, job creation, environmental protection, healthcare, education, and poverty
reduction,11 offered France the blessing of the Bretton Woods institutions to carry on a game that it had
been perfecting for so long: that of draining off wealth from Africa under the semblance of reciprocal
improvement.

As it turned out, economic globalization as conceived by the Washington Consensus presupposed an
international violence. Economic globalization assumes, often on the ground of mere bureaucratic sixth
sense and no scientifically dependable instance, that, in order to improve the welfare of human populations,
the prescription is to oblige developing countries to fine-tune their economies according to the
requirements of Euro-American multinational corporations by way of liberalizations of local markets. The
result of this philosophical-economic exercise is that, as was the case in the days of the colonization of
Africa, it effectively relocates crises of economic deterioration from North to South. The World Bank and
the IMF’s persistence that developing countries open their economies to Foreign Direct Investments has
enabled the re-occupation of the countries that have resolved, half a century ago, to determine the course of
their particular developments away from the imperial ambitions of Europe. In most cases, globalization has
succeeded in reinstating European—and American—imperialism by allowing First World capitalists quasi-
ownership of Third World countries through purchases of strategic government-owned enterprises, such as,
power, water, and communication companies. The scheme works when “the imperial state bails out banks,
investors and speculators and provides political pressure to open markets, sends military expeditions to
eliminate alternatives.”12 In this grand design of recolonization disguised as globalization, resistance is
ruthlessly squashed by a variety of coercive methods. For the Third World leaders who, against the First
World’s schema, try to pursue a populist agenda that advocates national control of their country’s resources
and benefits, and who, true to their people, refuse to fall prey to the trap of corruption and the promise of
First World lifestyle, "the EHM [Economic Hit Men] game plan includes a full menu of oppositions to
ensure compliance, whether willing or not.”13

The menu includes subversion of the political process, contact with and corruption of administration
and business leaders, corruption of the military, of the media, of trade unions, and of academics, and the
stirring of ethnic and religious divergences; a menu that seems to come directly from the handbook of the
colonial era, and which begs to be verified against the inventory of treatments that countries like Congo,
Côte d'Ivoire, and Haiti, to cite only these few, have endured for daring to stand against the tripartite
collusion of the northern countries, the United Nations and the financial institutions, and their corrupt local
political puppets. In Côte d'Ivoire, this threefold conspiracy functioned along the axis of a high-level
African IMF executive, Alassane Dramane Ouattara, who doubled as a shady native informant, during his
years as prime minister of Côte d'Ivoire, his direct association with French multinationals, Bouygues and
Bolloré, and his ties with the Chirac government in France. This web of international relationships is
essential for understanding Côte d'Ivoire’s resistance to globalization à la française.

CÔTE D’IVOIRE: FROM ECONOMIC PROSPERITY TO SCARCITY

The 1970s were an age of prosperity in Côte d'Ivoire. The skyrocketing prices on international markets
of cocoa and coffee, the country's main export commodities, had created an astonishing economic boom
and established Côte d'Ivoire as the preeminent economic power in the West Africa. Signs of development
were visible in all sectors; and economic observers were not shy to compare the Ivorian economic sensation
to the Japanese miracle. They were partly right: The Ivorian growth rate was only second to Japan's.
However, this economic boom was heavily dependent on foreign capitals, as it was tied to international
speculators' willingness to pay high prices for coffee and cocoa. Attempts to diversify the economy and
launch development programs led the country to borrow external capitals, which were not always well
managed. Furthermore, the falling prices of coffee and cocoa in the late 1970s and early 1980s amplified the country's external debt and led Houphouët to turn to the World Bank and the IMF for loans to stabilize his country's economy. The period spanning from the mid-1980s to early 1990s was a time of mixed blessings for Côte d'Ivoire's economy. The exploitation of newly discovered offshore oil reserves had helped alleviate some of the country's hardships; however, the economic storm was not totally weathered. Amidst rumors of government layouts, people took massively to the streets to protest what they interpreted as the results of the grab for power of the PDCI (party in power). To save his presidency, Houphouët bent to the conditions of the Bretton Woods institutions, people took massively to the streets to protest what they interpreted as the results of the grab for power of the PDCI (party in power). To save his presidency, Houphouët bent to the conditions of the Bretton Woods institutions and invited the IMF economist Alassane Ouattara in April 1990 to chair the Comité Interministériel de Coordination du Programme de Stabilisation et de Relance Économique (Interministerial Committee for Coordination of the Stabilization and Economic Recovery Program), a committee in charge of reflecting on ways to tackle the economic crisis and find adequate solutions. Five months later, an ailing Houphouët appointed Alassane Ouattara prime minister. What happens from April 1990 onward is a series of events that read like a novel.

DOMINIQUE NOUVIAN FOLLEROUX: FEMME FATALE

Ouattara's proximity to Houphouët allowed him greater closeness to Ms. Nouvian Folleroux, the woman that would become his wife and most trusted associate in the most rocambolesque financial intrigues to define the political future of Côte d'Ivoire. The circumstances in which Dominique Nouvian was introduced to the epicenter of power in Abidjan are still not very clear today. What is clear is that she became Houphouët's official mistress and the exclusive administrator of Houphouët's huge estate and part of the country's estate. Her new title gave her tremendous name recognition and financial power, even as her benefactor's popularity at home was declining. Indeed, in the early 1990s a fierce political opposition assailed the ailing Ivorian president, Houphouët. For the first time, the "Old Man," as he was affectionately called in Africa, released his grip on power. Under the pressure of the Bretton Woods institutions and France, he named Ouattara prime minister, legalized opposition parties and promised multiparty presidential and legislative elections in Côte d'Ivoire. The October 28 multi-candidate presidential election confirmed the strength of the opposition, and especially of Houphouët's old political rival, Laurent Gbagbo, leader of the socialist Ivorian Popular Front (FPI). According to international observers Gbagbo garnered more than 30% of the votes—though the official ballot count conceded him only 18.3% against 81.7% for the seating president. On November 26, 1990, eighteen opposition parties competed against Houphouët's PDCI during the parliamentary elections. Houphouët's PDCI retained 163 of the 175 parliamentary seats. If anything, the contestation of the Old Man's hitherto absolute power was the confirmation of a new era. Houphouët was a diminished man.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Dominique Nouvian Folleroux's business seemed to suffer no setback at all from Houphouët's trouble at home; au contraire. Among other things, she sold some of Houphouët's real estates in France for the amount of 19 million Euros, a transaction that, though suspicious by Ivorian authorities, put her at the center of French big business. She acquired Jacques Desange's hair salons in the United States. AICI (Agence Internationale de la Commercialisation Immobilière), the real estate office that she opened in Abidjan was attracting big clients, as she was making important friends. Her regulars were Martin Bouygues, the French king of concrete, owner at 42.9% of TF1 (the first French TV station drawing more than 31.6% of French TV audiences), owner of LCI, another French TV channel, special guest to Nicolas and Cécilia Sarkozy's wedding, and godfather of their son Louis Sarkozy; Vincent Bolloré (business partner of Bouygues) king of cigarette paper and media—it was Bolloré who paid the new French president a vacation trip to Malta on his luxurious boat as a congratulation present after the 2006 French presidential election; it was he again who lent his private Falcon 900 to Sarkozy and his then new girlfriend Carla Bruni for their December 25, 2007 vacation trip to Egypt; Dominique Strauss-Khan, former minister of finance of President Mittérand and IMF president since 2007, Bongo, president of Gabon who, like Houphouët before him, has been so close to Dominique Nouvian Folleroux as to also entrust the administration of his real estate and part of his country's property to the Gabon branch of Mrs. Folleroux's company AICI, run by her brother Philippe Nouvian. Other patrons of Mrs. Dominique Nouvian Folleroux are Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso, and Kadhafi of Libya. Hers was a network of powerful financial friends; the same network that Ségolène Royal, the Socialist candidate to the French presidential election accused on May 4, 2007, of trying to influence French elections by manipulating the news. The very network that Ms. Royal was denouncing during the French presidential elections is the association of
powerful financial interests that Mrs. Dominique Nouvian Folleroux has been able to weave since she first entered Houphouët's bedroom in Abidjan. Dominique Nouvian Folleroux was the powerful woman that Alassane Ouattara said to have fallen in love with, as he responded to President Houphouët's IMF-coerced call for help.

"OUATTARA! OUATTARA! HE'S OUR MAN.
HE CAN'T DO IT, NOBODY CAN!"

Such seemed to be the mindset of the Bretton Woods institutions and big international corporations with financial stakes in Côte d'Ivoire since about the death of Félix Houphouët Boigny, in December 1993. An excellent student of the IMF, where he first worked from 1968 to 1973 before assuming various positions at the BCEAO (Central Bank of West African States), Ouattara was very receptive to the International Monetary Fund's prescription of Structural Adjustment Programs in Africa despite the burden that these programs put on local populations. As prime minister of Côte d'Ivoire, his solutions for redressing the country's economy did more harm than good. Ouattara cut subsidies to farmers, as recommended by the WTO, at the same time as the European Union and the United States were heavily backing their own farmers with huge subsidies; he dismissed more than 10,000 employees from the state payroll. Those who were lucky to keep their jobs saw their salaries reduced by 40% or were forced to accept an early retirement package. He reduced access to early education by freezing the recruitment of new teachers. He closed students' subsidized restaurants. He eliminated transportation and basic healthcare services for students. He imposed fees on the masses for basic healthcare services. He initiated the devaluation of the CFA at the rate of 100 CFA francs for 1 French franc. He instituted the highly controversial resident cards for foreigners, which was the source of much harassment toward foreign nationals coming from neighboring African countries, and he aggressively pursued Mauritanian and Lebanese merchants for so-called back taxes in the upward of millions of CFA francs. In a word, Ouattara executed the World Bank/IMF's recommendations to the letter. These measures, as it was to be expected, frustrated the masses even further. Workers and students' demonstrations intensified; which, under his orders, were repressed in blood. Scores of students were killed and student, union, and opposition leaders, among whom the current president, Laurent Gbagbo and the leader of higher education teachers' union, Marcel Etté, were jailed and tortured amidst international outrages and unsuccessful calls for an independent investigation. Undeniably, Ouattara was a good student of the IMF. In Côte d'Ivoire, Ouattara was the praiseworthy son of a powerful institution that had reared him to serve the father unreservedly. The question was whether he was really a son of Côte d'Ivoire, concerned with the interests of his fellow citizens.

As far as the World Bank and the IMF were concerned, this question had no bearing so long as the Washington Consensus had a powerful spokesperson in the country that would guarantee the interests of its shareholders. So, under further pressure, the ailing president Houphouët had Ouattara cumulate the portfolios of prime minister, minister of finance, and interim president. During Houphouët's long sickness and his medical treatment in Europe in 1993, Ouattara ordered that all public receipts (collection of taxes, debts, and returns from the customs, the ports, and even the treasury) be directly deposited in a special account at the office of the prime minister rather than at the treasury, as it was customarily the case. This atypical management style, to say the least, quickly mixed individual assets with state property, and millions of dollars from the public treasury remained unaccounted for, while Ouattara, taking as much as two flights a week to Europe, officially to visit his sick boss—but unofficially on capital flight missions—was tucking enormous sums of money away in personal foreign bank accounts, making him one of the richest men on earth. Ouattara's mysterious fortune raised some eyebrows, even among his supporters. However, Ouattara's questionable wealth did not cause the slightest shudder among the high priests of morality who, in their immense chairs, in the temples of virtue of 1818 H Street as well as 700 19th Street, in Washington, D.C., were sermonizing the world about good governance and saintliness. Why should they care? Was it not fair that Ouattara be rewarded for being such a great agent to his masters? For Côte d'Ivoire, however, Ouattara's activities were economically disastrous. During his term as prime minister, Ouattara became one of the biggest actors of capital flight from Côte d'Ivoire toward European banks. As he raided the country's coffers, he also depleted Africa of much needed resources.

Indeed, capital flight, the bulk of the private assets—and as we have just seen with Ouattara, private and public assets can be easily mixed—that are legally or illegally held in foreign countries outside Africa, is
one of the continent's biggest impoverishers. Capital flight, reported to amount to about US$ 22 billions, is as much as half of the aid that Africa needs for its development programs. Were this money brought back to Africa, it would constitute 64% of Africa's private capital stock. As one of Africa's biggest capital jetsetters, Alassane Ouattara is, without doubt, and in proportion to the short time he spent as prime minister of Côte d'Ivoire (three years and 1 month), among the leaders who have economically siphoned the continent the most.

As the prime minister was busy outsourcing his public function to the businessman in him, thus mixing state capitals with private capitals, Dominique Folleroux —whom Ouattara had by then married during a 1991 ceremony officiated by the former mayor of Neuilly, currently president of the French Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy—was now, against all ethical propriety, lobbying for Bouygues and Bolloré to acquire state-owned EECI (Énergie Electrique de Côte d'Ivoire) and SODECI (Société de Distribution d'Eau de Côte d'Ivoire), respectively power and water companies. It did not take long for her clients to obtain satisfaction. These strategic Ivorian companies and others were sold off to Mrs. Dominique Nouvian Folleroux Ouattara's clients and friends, usually under their market values, sometimes for just one symbolic franc, all against the objection of opposition leaders and even leaders of Ouattara's previous party (the PDCI). Henri Konan Bédié, at the time president of the National Assembly, fiercely opposed Ouattara's unethical liberalization in the parliamentary chamber. As a result of Ouattara's collusion with French businessmen, 27% of the assets of Ivorian enterprises were French-owned; 240 subsidiaries and more than 600 companies belonged to French businessmen; which represented 68% of direct foreign investments in Côte d'Ivoire. The shady investments enabled by Alassane and Dominique Ouattara's, and which have mortgaged the economic and political future of Côte d'Ivoire, have been widely reported, rightly so, as quid pro quo investments.

Mr. Michel Camdessus, a Frenchman who was the president of the IMF during the last term, when Alassane Ouattara was vice-president of the IMF, is currently serving as adviser to the French president Jacques Chirac. Of the members of the political parties and groups in Côte d'Ivoire, Alassane Ouattara, an unabashed advocate of IMF policies and an ideologue of the theology of neo-liberalism, and his current wife, a French businesswoman solidly connected with business lobbies, offer the best guarantee to satisfy the conditions for security and profit for the French government, corporations, settlers, and small-enterprise owners who can have a lifestyle of comfort they cannot afford or even imagine to have in France.

For consenting to the corrupt terms of French business in Côte d'Ivoire at the detriment of the masses, Ouattara is allowed by France to realize his First Worldist jouissance by plundering his country's coffers undisturbed. This lack of probity on the part of Africa's most influential economists and leaders ought to be examined in relation to the dire future that their selfish proclivities set up for the continent. Between 1985 and 1998, the net outflows from Africa to developed countries have risen from of US$ 3.6 billion to the alarming amount of US$ 12.5 billion. Capital flight by native pillagers has contributed enormously to these outflows. This, of course, has profound depressing incidences on progress. As a result, Africa continues to service huge debts and remains unable to invest in public and private sectors; which in turn erodes, not just poverty reduction projects, but also, the confidence that honorable foreign investors have in the continent; and the cycle of poverty linked to debt servicing and fiscal deficit goes on until the corrupt agents' facility to ransack is short-circuited. In Côte d'Ivoire, it was Henri Konan Bédié, the institutional heir to the presidency, who put an end to Ouattara's capital flight activities, but not for long. Ouattara's Parisian cronies were too determined to maintain their monopoly in the country to see the latter out of the political arena.

HENRI KONAN BÉDIÉ: NOT EXACTLY THE MAN PARIS HAD DREAMED OF

On December 7, 1993, Houphouët, who for three years had been sidelined by his illness from participating actively in Ivorian politics, passed away in his native village of Yamoussoukro. The Ivorian constitution had a provision for replacing a deceased head of state. Article 11 of the constitution stipulated that in such a vacancy of power, the president of the National Assembly was to assume the duties of head of state until the outcome of new elections. Bédié was therefore the constitutional heir to Houphouët. However, bypassing the legal process, Ouattara proclaimed himself legitimate successor to the presidency. This obvious constitutional hold up provoked uproar at the National Assembly, and during an unscheduled
appearance on national TV, Bédié announced his intent to carry out his constitutional duty by finishing Houphouët's term.

In the past, during his years as president of the National Assembly, Bédié had been openly critical of Ouattara's complacent economic liberalism that widely opened the doors to foreign buyouts of strategic companies with very little regard for the country's security. At the time when French politicians, led by Minister of finance Nicolas Sarkozy, were hammering at employees gatherings and at the French national Assembly that EDF (French state-owned power company) and GDF (French state-owned gas company) were never going to be privatized because of their strategic importance to French economy, Ouattara, the prime minister of Côte d'Ivoire, was selling his country's power and water companies to the closest friends of the French government. What made Sarkozy's position so tenable in France and so untenable in Côte d'Ivoire? Could it be for the simple reason that one was dealing in one case with a country located in Europe, and in another case with a country located in Africa? It is this lack of moral reciprocity, this kind of utter injustice that the movement of patriotes in Côte d'Ivoire has taken to task. In so doing, their demonstration was also aimed at denouncing the collaborators from within who have betrayed their people for the promise of economic lactification. For, the waves of coup d'état and political instabilities that have succeeded one another in Côte d'Ivoire since 1999 are strangely laden with odors of organic betrayals. Each time Côte d'Ivoire was affected by shockwaves of military blows, Ouattara was the insider that, for the promise of a First Worldist enjoyment, betrayed the loyalty of a country he claimed to love.

Bédié, like Ouattara, believed in economic liberalism. Only insofar as one can speak in relative terms, Bédié's liberalism, however, was one that was committed to ensuring that his country would not lose total sovereignty to wealthy investors from Europe, or from anywhere else for that matter; and he was working at it by making a number of reforms. Some of the measures that Bédié took in that direction had to do with the thorough identification of the populations living on the Ivorian soil through a systematic census program, the cleaning up the prevalent anarchical land exploitation, and the regulating of landownership. In fact, from the mid- to the late 1990s, Côte d'Ivoire was the second immigration destination in Sub-Saharan Africa, right behind South Africa, with an unusually high immigrant population rate of 27% for 13 million Ivorians. The largest foreign communities were from Mali (2 millions), Burkina Faso (2 millions), Ghana (1.5 millions), Nigeria (500,000), and in smaller numbers from Benin and Togo. Though an agreement among the countries of ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) allowed a free circulation and settlement of populations from any member state, the migration to Côte d'Ivoire was almost unidirectional. The important immigrant populations from neighboring Mali and Burkina Faso, whose main purpose for coming to Côte d'Ivoire was to work the fertile land of the country or to cut and burn trees for the very lucrative charcoal business toward drier countries (Mali or Burkina Faso) had clashed several times with local populations over issues of landownership, forest fires, and severe national reserve deforestation. In 1999, a land dispute between settlers from Burkina Faso and locals from the region of Tabou (West of Côte d'Ivoire) had caused about 12,000 Burkinabé to flee their lands. This event, which took place a year after the National Assembly adopted a law that would prevent the sale of land to foreigner, invited even harsher criticisms towards Bédié's reform. Bédié's land reform did not sit well with his Malians and Burkinabé counterparts. The governments of Mali and Burkina Faso relied heavily for their national income on the money that their expatriates sent from Côte d'Ivoire. They perceived in Bédié's reform a pretext to dispossess their compatriots of lands they had been exploiting for years, and they also found objectionable the reform's obvious consequence of depleting their countries of much needed revenues. In their resentment of Bédié's method, the Malians and Burkinabé could find stronger allies in the French.

These French landlords and businessmen had seen their privileges increased and consolidated with Ouattara. Under the administration of Houphouët's prime minister, the status of the state had shifted from that of a governmental institution to the status of a non-governmental organization (NGO)—to use this term by James Ferguson. In other words, the prime minister had lost interest in state affairs and had, instead,
become a businessman, increasingly drawn to establishing private business deals and building personal wealth to the disadvantage of public welfare. In the context of Bédie's reform, the question then was whether, after having had a taste of the state of Côte d'Ivoire as a non-governmental institution, with all the advantages that this conversion entailed, France and the neighboring countries of Côte d'Ivoire, notably, Burkina Faso and Mali, were still inclined to see the administration of Côte d'Ivoire return to its rightful condition of a governmental institution committed to the welfare of the masses. This was the challenge that confronted the Bédie government in the mid to late 1990s.

Against this sociological background, it becomes clear that Bédie's demise—for he was to fall soon—was not the result of mismanagement or hostility to openness. In fact, Bédie was as open to FDIs as Ouattara had been; he was just a little more mindful of the governmental role of the state. The fact that, for the most part, Africa's openness to international trade and finance has left it at the mercy of insatiable First World capitalists and corrupt Third World collaborators should be less imputable to globalization itself than to the probity of the protagonists in the globalizing enterprise. Globalization has succeeded in places where the actors involved have shown a minimum of moral decency. Available data for Africa in the 1990s shows that countries in North Africa, and South Africa and Côte d'Ivoire had managed a low level of poverty with high level of openness. Côte d'Ivoire's numbers are 20% of poverty incidence for 40% of openness. Incidentally the data is not distributed on specific years of the 1990s, but it is easy to surmise that the incidence of lower poverty occurred during the Bédie years. Even Bédie's detractors acknowledged that between 1995 and 1999, Côte d'Ivoire had known economic growth and increase in individual wealth.

Furthermore, a Trade Policy Review of Côte d'Ivoire's trade policies conducted by the World Trade Organization (WTO) on July 4 and 5, 1995, concluded with high praise for Bédie's government open trade policies and expressed optimism for Côte d'Ivoire's future. Bédie's demise is just one more evidence that Foreign Direct Investments or private capital flows are not that private after all; Foreign Direct Investments often unleash state intervention, with all its military shock and awe. Whenever a powerful state intervenes to invade a weak state, one can be sure that some private investors from the powerful state, unhappy about their returns in the weak state, have directly or indirectly triggered the military intervention. History is littered with examples where private investors have sent their countries to war to protect or simply to increase their dividends. Bédie's lukewarm support for French interests was not what France had hoped for. Bédie was a man of France's, but not their number one man. His zeal for reforms could hurt French interests in Côte d'Ivoire. Ouattara had been more bigharted to French business with his unchecked liberalization and his gré à gré surrender of public corporations to French investors and to his French partners. With Ouattara in power, France was sure to regain its slippery grip on Côte d'Ivoire by continuing to buy under their market values state-owned enterprises and by continuing to get government contracts by bypassing any calls for bids that would put them in competition with investors from the United States, Canada, Japan, South African, China, among others. For the sake of French interests, Bédie had to be deposed.

Meanwhile, Ouattara, who had returned to the IMF in 1993 upon the Supreme Court's confirmation of Bédie as legitimate head of state, had been appointed by Michel Camdessus to serve as his deputy chairman of the institution one year later. Though at the IMF, Ouattara had not given up his presidential ambitions; neither was he willing to wait for regular elections to have his chance. The massive foreign electorate constituted by undocumented immigrants from Mali and Burkina Faso, many who had voted before in the one-party system farcical elections that had confirmed and reconfirmed Houpouhét by acclamation, and on which Ouattara, too, was relying to win the 1995 presidential race, had been compromised by Bédie's identification program. Bédie's identification program required that only established Ivorians should vote in presidential elections, though established foreign residents were still allowed to vote in legislative and municipal elections. Bédie's land reform as well as his census and civic formation projects fell under the umbrella of what he had termed ivorité. This notion, whose origin had misleadingly been attributed to Bédie, and which had even more deceitfully been translated as Ivorianess, rather than simply Ivority—as one had spoken of Africanity, Americanity, and Francy elsewhere—was said to have first appeared in 1945 in Dakar at a black students' conference. Later, in 1974, an Ivorian writer and poet, Niangoran Porquet, used it in an article entitled "Ivorité et authenticité." Ivorian scholar, Kanvaly Fadiga, defined it as the national consciousness, the common will of brotherly people who have chosen to live together on the Ivorian soil, and share together the same sufferings, the same joys, and the same hopes.
WHY FRANCITÉ BUT NOT IVOIRITÉ?

Ivoirité, as Bédie had recuperated it, was first intended to be, for the more than sixty ethnic communities of Côte d'Ivoire, a signifier of identification, a social glue that would instill in them a more patriotic stance, and consequently a stronger attachment to the state and its institutions as embodying the sum total of all individual nationalistic expressions. This was an essential societal project given the lack of fervor that the Ivorian populations had up till then expressed for the state and state institutions. Côte d'Ivoire was in most Ivorians' eyes a state-ECOWAS, a sort of Deadwood, but a rich one nonetheless, where any opportunistic member of the 15 ECOWAS nations, and even beyond, would come to seek fortune by all means necessary, with no sincere attachment to the land, but a lucrative one. The people of Côte d'Ivoire had lost faith in their successive governments as really preoccupied with safeguarding their welfare, rather than bending over to live up to an image of sanctuary country by satisfying the caprices of ECOWAS. This situation was exacerbated by Houphouët's choice, throughout his presidency, of foreign nationals as cabinet members. For instance, Raphaël Saller (France) had been minister of finance and development; Mohamed Diawara (Mali) had been minister of development; Abdoulaye Sawadogo (Burkina Faso) had been minister of agriculture; Hamadou Thiam (Senegal) had been minister of information. To better understand this level of governmental openness and the resulting mass frustration that ensued, Americans would only have to imagine Canadian, Brazilian, Columbian, Senegalese, or Antiguan nationals (who have never been naturalized or who do not even intend to naturalize) occupy posts in the United States government, as treasury secretary, HUD secretary, or secretary of health. In the 1980s-1990s a phrase that illustrated the Ivorian distrust in their government and their detachment from public property was the infamous "on s'en fout, ça appartient à l'État" (who gives a damn? It belongs to the state), a phrase that would justify any act of vandalism or spoliation of state property.

Bédié's Ivoirité intended to rectify this mass cynicism. It intended to create the conditions for an allegiance that would no longer be based on ethnic background—as it had until then been the case in the context of the aloof and impersonal state—but rather an allegiance that would be grounded in identification with the nation-state that was created on Independence Day, August 7, 1960. This was nothing novel. In the sphere of cultural contestations, coinages in -ité suggesting allegiance to geographical, national, racial or linguistic origins have abounded. Senghor, the only Black consecrated by France—this France so reactive to ivoirité—in its so elitist French Academy for being so French, thus so right, said in his December 11, 1974 course at the Sorbonne that it was important to struggle, to suffer, and to die, "plus volontiers pour une -ité ou une -itude que pour un -isme" (more readily for an -ity or an -itude than for an -ism)? Curiously, however, it seems that African heads of state have been more willing to struggle, suffer, and die for France's specificity than their own. An illustrative example is their unashamed gathering around the theme of Francophonie, which, as we learn again from Senghor, is no more no less than a synonym of Francité. In May 1968, during a conference at the University of Beirut, while defending the so-called peaceful and non-imperialistic nature of Francophonie or Francité, Senghor insisted that Francophonie was not a war machine constructed by European imperialism, but a mode of thinking a certain way, a mode of approaching issues and seeking solutions, a spirit of French civilization or Francité. Francophonie, Senghor declared, is Francité; and Francité, he swore had not the slightest imperialistic bent in it, but was merely the expression of French civilization and culture devoid of any political agenda; and while most African leaders accepted the word of this griot of things French that Francité would not harm a fly, yet, the same leaders were quick to condemn ivoirité as a war machine. Today, as in 1968, the most passionate defender of Francité is an African, an ex-Senegalese president, Abdou Diouf. He is the current secretary general of Francophonie. He goes around world capitals selling French culture and civilization and promoting the expansion of French business and policy; and wherever he convenes his annual gathering, a plethora of African leaders follow him—among whom Bongo of Gabon, Wade of Senegal, Toumani of Mali, and Compaoré of Burkina Faso have the privileged seats on the baseline. Lately, however, the proselytizer-in-chief of French culture, Diouf, got a blunt reminder that, despite his professed worship of things French, he was specifically an African, and African he would remain. On May 13, 2006, as he was responding to the Canadian government's invitation to speak in Winnipeg on matters relating to the pseudo-apolitical Francophonie, Abdou Diouf, this easily recognizable towering political figure who travels with a diplomatic passport and a strong following, was stopped and body searched at Toronto Airport. The diplomatic reactions that followed this humiliation of an African politician proved beyond all doubts that Francité, or Francophonie as it is often referred to, was more political than its supporters knew or would admit to know.
President Diouf’s humiliation at Toronto Airport was only symptomatic of the duplicitous nature of the North/South encounter, a reality to which Africans have never been able to respond in a synchronized way because of the North’s successful politics of Divide and Rule, and most importantly, because of African leaders big complex of inferiority. While Senegalese, the most fervent believers of Francité in Africa, were protesting their ex-president's treatment at Toronto Airport, many Ivorians were chuckling at what they perceived as a fair shock therapy to all the French-African puppets who, like the Senegalese sharpshooters of World War II, were busy fighting France’s war while the French populations were hiding in their basements, or the modern native Africans Economic Hit Men who were starving their peoples by selling off their countries’ resources to international multinational corporation in order to enjoy a little bit of white dreams. Ivorians had trouble understanding why, at the same time as Paris, with the support of some African leaders, was prosecuting Abidjan’s successive governments in the media for a so-called maintenance of Ivoirité; the same African leaders were touring the world to promote Francité. As if Francité was the natural expression of their own salvation, Francophone African leaders like Bongo of Gabon, Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, and Toumani of Mali, had been more vociferous about French nationalistic interests than they had been supportive of their own national interests.

At least, President Bédié had been aware of cultural-ideological nature of the concept. Having sensed France’s undeclared support for Ouattara just before the 1995 presidential election, Bédié activated against the latter the ideological political dimension of Ivoirité. A modification of the electoral code of Côte d’Ivoire, adopted on November 23, 1994, stipulated that only Ivorians whose parents were both Ivorian-born could run for the presidency. Bédié took this new measure not out of the blue, but precisely because he knew Ouattara. They were from the same generation. They knew where each other came from. They had followed each other’s formation and ascent. They had served for the same international financial institutions, and they knew how and why each one of them was appointed at the various posts they held. Bédié knew Ouattara as much as Ouattara knew him. Bédié knew—and Ouattara had admitted this in a sign correspondence to the Supreme Court of Côte d’Ivoire—that after his high school studies in Bobo Dioulasso (Burkina Faso) and Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), Ouattara had benefited from an American scholarship to study in the US as a student from Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso). Bédié knew that after his studies in the US, Ouattara first entered the IMF in 1968 under Upper Volta quotas. Bédié knew that Ouattara had obtained his first job at the BCEAO as an Upper Volta representative, and later served as vice-governor of the same institution between 1982 and 1984 as a functionary of Upper Volta (Burkina Faso). Apparently, Bédié was not the only one in the secret; for on August 8, 1984, on page 21 of an article entitled "Monsieur FMI," Béchir Ben Yamhed, the editorial manager of Jeune Afrique, reported that, starting November 1, 1984, the Africa Department of the IMF was going to have a new director; and that Dr. Ouattara, from Upper Volta, would be serving in replacement of Zambian Justin B. Zulu. The Jeune Afrique article even specified that Ouattara was born in Côte d’Ivoire of immigrant parents from neighboring Upper Volta. Alassane Ouattara’s Voltaic nationality was no secret to anyone, especially as he exhibited it whenever it served his purpose.

Having evolved in the same professional space as Ouattara, the sphere of international financial institutions, Bédié was well positioned to know, as Jeune Afrique had reported, the nationality of Ouattara. He was an Upper Volta citizen, who took advantage of an American scholarship as an Upper Volta student. He was first recruited at the IMF under the quota reserved for Upper Volta citizens, and later, he served as vice-governor of the BCEAO as a representative of Upper Volta, with an Upper Volta diplomatic passport. In 1985, after his military coup in Upper Volta, Thomas Sankara, the new strongman of Burkina Faso—a country that, unlike Houphouët’s Côte d’Ivoire, was not in the business of appointing foreign citizens as cabinet ministers—offered Ouattara to enter his government as minister of economy and finances, a post that Ouattara, utterly resentful of Sankara’s revolution, disdainfully rejected, preferring to remain at his more prominent and lucrative international position at the BCEAO. Sankara then asked him to resign as the Upper Volta representative. It is at that time that Houphouët, who had a profound aversion for military regimes, especially the ones operating too close to his borders, intervened, and in a taunting gesture toward Sankara’s junta, offered Ouattara an Ivorian diplomatic passport that would keep him at his post. In 1988, upon the death of Abdoulaye Fadiga, then BCEAO director, Houphouët twisted the arms of the member heads of state, and imposed Ouattara as the new governor of the institution. Bédié knew, as another journalist of Jeune Afrique had also reported, that from the time he finished his studies thanks to an
American scholarship awarded to him as a Voltaic student, and for the many years to come, Ouattara served in many capacities, in several places (Washington, Paris, Dakar), at several financial institutions (BCEAO, WAMU [West African Monetary Union], ADB [African Development Bank], UNCTAD [United nations Conference on Trade and Development]) and took part in many general assemblies as a Voltaic citizen, equipped with a Voltaic diplomatic passport. Bédie knew that by modifying the electoral code to request that both parents of any presidential candidates be Ivorian-born he was arresting Ouattara's presidential ambition; which he did.

Bédie was a cunningly shrewd politician for changing the electoral rules in the middle of the political process. Ouattara was right to have protested Bédie's unfair electoral practices. However, he challenged them on the wrong ground. It would have been more honorable of Ouattara to admit that, indeed, he had claimed Voltaic nationality to get a scholarship from the US and later to take advantage of an IMF quota system that favored Voltaic nationals; but that he had changed his nationality since then; and he could have provided documentation to that effect. He could also have maintained that, though his parents were Voltaic, he was born on Ivorian soil; and he could have challenged the Ivorian electoral rule on the ground of his birthplace. Instead, he told two momentous untruths that were totally undeserving of any prospective president. First, he denied, in the face of accumulating evidence that he had ever been a Voltaic national; he maintained that as far as he could remember, he had always had the Ivorian nationality. Secondly he denied that his parents were Voltaic, while his father had been a well-known village chief in Upper Volta. These two fabrications alone were good enough to disqualify any presidential candidate. As Bédie's operatives started to produce proofs of Ouattara's deceptions, he left the country for Paris under the pretext that his life was in danger. Bédie's Justice Department launched against him an international warrant for forgery. Just immediately, there started a vast media campaign that sought to legitimate any unconstitutional blow against the Bédie regime; a media campaign that resuscitated some of Bédie's formerly ignored shortcomings or simply invented him new ones.

HOW DOES ONE RATIONALIZE A COUP D'ÉTAT?
BY CONDUCTING IT THE NAME OF GLOBALIZATION

In Côte d'Ivoire, the first coup d'état started with demonizing the Bédie regime on two levels. Socially and politically Bédie was to be presented as an insufficient leader who could not be the unifier and leader open to human and capital flows that his predecessor, Houphouët, was. Economically, he was to be proven a reckless manager and an embezzler of public funds whose misconduct was hurting the masses. So, Bédie's notion of ivoirité served to demonize him as a divider and a xenophobic. Ivoirité, as Bédie had explained, was a formula meant to synthesize the aspirations of the multiple ethnic groups living within the borders of Côte d'Ivoire. As such, the concept was to encompass not only the autochthonous people of Côte d'Ivoire, but also, the people from all over the world who lived and worked in the country, insofar as they, too, shared and respected the values of the nationals. For Bédie, ivoirité "... la synthèse culturelle entre les ethnies habitant la Côte d'Ivoire... concerne en premier les peuples enracinés en Côte d'Ivoire mais aussi ceux qui y vivent et y travaillent en partageant nos valeurs." The cultural synthesis of the ethnic groups living in Côte d'Ivoire is primarily about the peoples rooted in Côte d'Ivoire but also those who live in the country and share our values.) Nothing in these words could hint to some official anti-immigrant or xenophobic stance, despite the fact that—and it has historically tended to be the case more in France than in Côte d'Ivoire—some frustrated fringes of the populations usually displace the inadequacies of their societies on the presence of foreigners.

Nevertheless, a powerful media campaign led by Ouattara's operatives successfully disseminated the idea that Bédie's ivoirité was a recipe to repatriate immigrants from neighboring Mali and Burkina Faso; and an apparently credible French press went so far as to link minor occasional conflicts opposing locals to immigrants as direct consequences of ivoirité, thus further exacerbating limited clashes by politicizing them. It did not take long for a country with nearly a 30% immigrant population to be indexed as xenophobic. However, the French Press’ real motive for demonizing Bédie's regime was elsewhere: Alassane Ouattara, France's preferred candidate, could not run for the Ivorian presidency on account of his doubtful nationality. Bédie is no saint, one must admit. He is only a politician, and every act he posited was politically calculated. Ivoirité in its political reach could also serve, not only to eliminate Ouattara's chances
at the presidency, but also, to contain the massive electorate from Burkina Faso and Mali on which Ouattara was counting to this effect, and which, fitted with Ivorian national ID cards since the 1970s, had hitherto voted in every election. This electorate was geographically from countries north of Côte d'Ivoire, and religiously more than 90% Muslim. Ouattara wasted no time to coalesce topography and faith to his advantage, launching this designed sentence from his self-imposed Parisian exile, "On ne veut pas que je sois président parce que je suis musulman et nordiste" [They do not want me to be president because I am a Muslim and a Northerner], thus instigating an interethnic and interreligious pandemonium.

There was no reason to link Ouattara's disqualification to the fate of the five million immigrants that lived in Côte d'Ivoire. Yet, this is what a corrupt and irresponsible national and international media did. For the purpose of the denigration campaign that Bédié was to undergo under the hostile media, Ouattara suddenly condensed all that was foreign and Muslim; and any wrong done to him—either proven or unproven—became automatically a wrong done to any of the five million immigrants or the northern Muslims living in Côte d'Ivoire. Equally, any justice rendered him could be interpreted as justice rendered to the immigrants or northern Muslim populations of the country. Curiously, however, the self-professed certified media that supported Ouattara's messianic campaign and was eager to impose him to Ivorians as legitimate president glossed over his own admission that he studied with an American scholarship reserved to Voltaic students and carried a Voltaic passport until the age of 42 with a disconcerting carelessness and an unforeseen lack of journalistic rigor. As one could read in L'Express,

"A Paris, dans ce bureau de l'agence immobilière que dirige son épouse française, Alassane Ouattara, qui admet avoir été boursier du gouvernement de Haute-Volta et détenteur d'un passeport voltaïque, étale sur une tablette les copies des documents censés confondre ses détracteurs: cartes d'identité parentales, acte de naissance, certificat de nationalité."

[In Paris, in the office of the real estate agency that his French wife manages, Alassane Ouattara, who admits to have held a scholarship from the government of Upper Volta and a Voltaic passport, displays on a little table copies of documents that are meant to prove his critics wrong: parents identity cards, birth certificate, certificate of nationality.]

Only journalists with premeditated purposes could be so blind as to pass over facts that begged so deafeningly for a minimum of objectivity.

Objectivity, however, was far from being the primary concern in the design to topple Bédié. Whoever has closely followed African politics, on the other hand, will know that African leaders are, in their great majority, corrupt officials, strongly encouraged by greedy northern political and business operatives to steal from their peoples or to embezzle foreign aids with impunity, insofar as these northern officials can be secured enormous benefits. One will recall how former French president Valérie Giscard d'Estaing and his cronies allowed former Central African Republic's Emperor Jean Bedel Bokassa to remain in power for many years so long as he permitted them to plunder the uranium and diamond mines of his country. One will also recall how successive French presidents, from Giscard d'Estaing to Jacques Chirac closed their eyes on the financial follies of dictators like Mobutu from Congo/Zaire, Bongo from Gabon, Eyadema from Togo, Papa and Baby Doc from Haiti, as long as these corrupt leaders made their countries the economic playgrounds of French multinational corporations. The rulers of Côte d'Ivoire, from Houphouët to Bédié, passing through Ouattara and Gueï, have all treaded in the muddy waters of France's organized crime, whereby they would cede their countries' resources to France under their market values in return for huge commissions that often came in the form of freedom to embezzle with assurance of no audits; this is, until the crooked leaders start acting like renegades. Bédié offers an interesting case study to this paradigm. Of all the misappropriations of funds in which Bédié and his close associates were involved, there is one that he would always remember the most as the scandal that helped kill his presidency.

Between 1992 and 1997, the European Union approved several grants to Côte d'Ivoire; which were earmarked to improving the healthcare system and supporting the country's decentralization program. Most of the aid vanished in government members' bank accounts. Between 1992 and 1997, two different governments had been in control in Côte d'Ivoire, the all-powerful government of Prime Minister Ouattara (1990-1993)—which, under an ailing Houphouët, saw the prime minister cumulate the portfolios of interim president and finance minister with that of prime minister—and the Kablan Duncan's government under
Bédie's presidency (1993-1999). Though the member states of the European Union acknowledged that the
misappropriation of the European Union's grants spanned over a five-year period, which should include at
least one year of Ouattara's administration, curiously, no mismanagement was imputed to the Ouattara
government. The reason for this was quite simple. Ouattara had been good to French business in particular
and to European interests in general, though at home much had been said and written on the illicit source of
his huge personal fortune, on his elitist style, and on his arrogance toward the middle class that his blind
support for the IMF and the World Bank's forced structural adjustment was exponentially pauperizing.
Bédie, on the other hand, was becoming an annoyance to France and to the European Union in general. His
much-heralded reforms were not to the liking of France. Land reform threatened big French landowners,
especially many who acquired their lands through deceitful means. Bédie's project of identification, by
regulating the flow of immigration along the borders of Côte d'Ivoire, threatened France's own politics of
immigration, which sought to keep West Africans away from French borders in particular, and from
European coasts in general. For a long time, Côte d'Ivoire had been the basin of African immigration. Many
West Africans with dreams of better lives away from home—who could have tried their luck in Europe—
had settled in Côte d'Ivoire, and had found in the Ivorian social and economic haven, not only more than
the economic prospects they could envisage in France, but also, better social political and religious
integration than could be imagined in Europe. So long as these African immigrants could remain in Côte
d'Ivoire, they were millions less souls for the European Union's immigration systems to worry about.
Furthermore, Bédie's identification policy—termed as Ivoirité—was susceptible of disqualifying France's
greatest ally, Ouattara, and thus killing France's hope of returning the state of Côte d'Ivoire to the status of
non-governmental organization (NGO), a status which though disadvantageous to the Ivorian masses, had
made so many French businesses wealthy and France's balance of payments affirmative. So, five years after
passively watching successive Ivorian governments indulge, among others, in the spoliation of the
European Union's grants, France was suddenly struck by some pang of conscience and decided to act on
behalf of the oppressed masses that were being shortchanged by their leaders.

So, France, leading the European Union, ordered an audit of the management of the grants during 1995
and 1997, which was coincidentally the period concerning only the Bédie government, despite the widely
reported fact that the scandal traced as far back as 1992, that is, as far back as the Ouattara administration.25
The audit of very limited scope undertaken by the European Union, though it appeared somehow
commendable, was in fact one more artifice in a series of carefully choreographed ruses meant to sully
Bédie's government and justify any military blow to come. The audit, conducted in November and
December 1998 by the audit firm 2AC, uncovered that more than $30 millions, of an $88 million package,
have going missing. This revelation coincided with the Cologne (Germany) announcement of debt reduction
for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and caused the European Union to freeze its budgetary help to
Côte d'Ivoire. The story of embezzlement of international aid by the Bédie government made a big splash
in Europe and was disseminated by all the conceivable French major TV networks and newspapers.
Nevertheless, some voices in Europe expressed suspicion about the timing of this revelation.30 The experts
of the European Union could not have been blind to the embezzlement going on for five years. They were
well aware of the misuse of fund. They just chose to ignore it because the time was not right yet to blow the
whistle. Bédie's misappropriation of international development aid from the European Union became public
only when came time to justify a coup against him. The revelation of the scandal coincided with the time
when the question of Ouattara's nationality became a burning issue in Ivorian politics, culminating with
Ouattara's self-imposed exile in France. Now, Bédie had on his hands, not only multiple not-so-peaceful
demonstrations organized by Ouattara's followers, the ire of the World Bank, the IMF, and the European
Union, but also, the incensed populations of Côte d'Ivoire prompted each day by a hostile national media
and a French gregarious media that has always mechanically aligned itself with the international policy of
French politicians. A few weeks after Ouattara turned up on the doorsteps of his Parisian friends and
partners, on December 24, 1999, Bédie was deposed by the military. On January 3, 2000, Bédie went in
exile in Paris via Lomé and went to live in his private apartments on rue Beethoven, in the luxurious 16th
arrondissement. Ouattara, as for him, returned to Abidjan triumphantly, persuaded that Robert Guei, the
new strong man of Abidjan, who had been his army chief of staff during his days as prime minister, was
warming up the presidential seat for him. Ouattara was wrong. General Guei decided to hold on to power.
He promised to maintain excellent relationships with France, honor Côte d'Ivoire financial obligations
toward the Bretton Woods institutions, and return power to civilians as soon as he had swept the house and
put things in order.
Gueï must have been very reassuring and unthreatening, for not a single time were there talks of French citizens being in danger in Côte d'Ivoire. None of the 20,000 French nationals living in the country was asked to leave by the French authorities. How could they be in danger? After all, was not Gueï close very close, to Ouattara? Was not Ouattara himself the man of the IMF and the World Bank, thus the man of France and of the West in general? In fact, "respectable" French newspapers, like *Le Monde* and French radio stations, like RFI, were literally dispatching Gueï's version of the coup, presenting the despot as a hero who was forced by moral imperatives to take power in order to rectify injustices caused by Bédié; and while powerful African leaders like Obasanjo of Nigeria and Mbeki of South Africa saw no reason to justify Gueï's military coup, and while they were strongly condemning the military overthrow in Côte d'Ivoire as illegitimate and were calling for the restoration of Bédié's power, France wasted no time, through its minister of cooperation, Mr. Charles Josselin, to recognize the new praetorian regime and to announce its willingness to work with Gueï.

However, Gueï misinterpreted France's support as a support for him instead of temporary regency of Ouattara's throne. Mysteriously, the question of Alassane Ouattara's nationality, which had been a sticking point during the Bédié administration, resulting in Ouattara being disqualified from the 1995 presidential race, and which according to Gueï was at the foundation of the December 1999 coup against Bédié, resurfaced on the occasion of Gueï's presidential ambition. Like his predecessor, General Gueï pressed Ouattara to settle the issue of his doubtful Ivorian citizenship. On September 12, 2000, Gueï's lawyers produced some papers intended to disprove Ouattara's assertion that he had never availed himself of another nationality. Among the papers exhibited were Ouattara's marriage certificate to an American woman named Barbara Davis, in which he declared himself a citizen of Upper Volta and stated at the time of marriage, in 1966, that his mother was no longer living; a fact that contradicted his earlier declaration that his mother was a living eighty-year-old Ivorian woman by the name of Hadja Nabintou Cissé. There were also a 1978 bank account document and of a 1980 property sale certificate in which Ouattara declared himself to be a citizen of Upper Volta. For Gueï, all these discrepancies spoke more of Ouattara's immorality and criminal mind than they could shed light on his honesty. Gueï threatened to charge Ouattara with falsification, and once again, the Supreme Court of Côte d'Ivoire rejected Ouattara's candidacy to the presidential election on the ground of suspicious nationality.

Members of foreign press did not remain silent to this nth injustice perpetrated against the misunderstood savior of the Ivorian flock and took it upon them to lecture the Ivorian people about what great opportunity they were missing by persecuting the great messiah come from the IMF. Nevertheless, unencumbered by the criticisms of international media that have lost all credibility even in the rare cases where they happen to get the news right, General Gueï barred Ouattara from the October 22, 2000 presidential election. As a result, five contenders vied for the presidential seat, General Robert Gueï for the military junta, Laurent Gbagbo for the socialist party FPI, Francis Wodié for the PIT, Mel Théodore for the UDCI, and the independent Nicolas Dioulo. Halfway through the ballot counting, Gueï attempted to load the dice to his advantage by stopping the count and declaring himself the winner while, the early returns had Gbagbo leading the race. Gbagbo's supporters took to the street to protest Gueï's *coup de force*, and with the support of the Defense and Security Forces of Côte d'Ivoire, they drove Gueï to hiding. A few days later, the Supreme Court declared Gbagbo the winner of the presidential race with 59.36% of the votes, against 32.7% for Gueï, 5.7% for Wodié, 1.5% for Mel, and .8% for Dioulo. Ouattara's RDR contested the results, demanding that the election, which saw only a 37% participation and did not include Ouattara, be redone, this time with Ouattara's participation. This protest by the RDR remains the Damocles Sword hovering over Gbagbo's presidency that would be used to rationalize all the conceivable *coup bas*. Laurent Gbagbo, the saying goes, was elected in calamitous conditions—59% of the votes with a participation rate of only 37%, and above all without Ouattara, the darling candidate of France and of the Bretton Woods institutions, he who, more than anyone else before, made French multinationals in Côte d'Ivoire so wealthy by selling them the country's strategic companies under the excuse of satisfying a World Bank/IMF program called the Washington Consensus. Therefore, against Gbagbo, all blows are permitted, even the most contemptible ones.

Hardly had Gbagbo been sworn into office than accusations of ethnocentrism and xenophobia started flying his way, and the "crimes" once imputed to Bédié and Gueï became his daily lot. Gbagbo had announced a
program that disturbed French interests: *Refondation* (Reconstruction). It is true that the greatest distinguishing feature between imperial rule and independent government is the externality of the former. In colonial societies, the power to rule was taken away from local populations and entrusted to another state with which these populations had absolutely nothing in common. All happened as if "the ability to decide a country’s destiny, its collective mind, had been cut out surgically and transplanted into another mind in London, Paris, Brussels, The Haye or Washington;" a fact which in the France-Africa relationship, and for what concerns here, in the France-Côte d’Ivoire relationship, had persisted throughout all the governments that had preceeded the Gbagbo administration. Gbagbo had decided that the transfer of power, thought, and responsibility from Côte d’Ivoire to the metropolis that had hitherto defined the France-Africa relation and made French African governments non-governmental organizations at the sole service of France’s interests with no regard to the interests of the Ivorian people had to come to an end through political, economic, and social purgative *Refondation*. *Refondation* was meant to dig into the foundation of the Ivorian society in order to correct the structural flaws that were slowing or impeding progress and, thus, undermining the social growth of the Ivorian people.

Economically, among other resolutions, *Refondation* wanted to review the terms of renewal of a number of conventions ceded to France multinationals under their market values by the Ouattara government, conventions the clauses of which French firms had hardly abided by, and which were to fortunately come to expiration around 2004. Among these were the exploitation of Côte d’Ivoire Telecom conceded to France Telecom, the exploitation of Côte d’Ivoire’s power (EECI) and water (SODECI) companies conceded to Bouygues, the exploitation of the railway system conceded to Bolloré, and which was in dire need of modernization. *Refondation* also meant reassessing some construction contracts by which French firms were fleecing the Ivorian economy by overpricing their services. For instance, the contract of a third bridge to be built in Abidjan was ceded to the French Bouygues, although a Chinese company (COVEC) would build the same bridge for 1/3 of the price. "friendship," which had not changed since the days of the colonial era, was to liberate the Ivorian economy by doing away with France exploitative and manipulative."friendship," which had not changed since the days of the colonial *exclusif*—this French policy whereby French colonies could only buy from France and sell to France at prices fixed by France—in order to stretch a hand to all who were willing to be partners of good faith rather than abusing speculators, as has usually been the case with France. It was obvious that if such reassessing was to happen, the pressure exerted by France on Côte d’Ivoire cede all its development deals to French multinationals without any bid for contracts would be fruitless; and French firms would henceforth have to openly compete with other multinationals (American, British, Canadian, Chinese, Japanese, South African, etc.) for a chance to obtain contracts in Côte d’Ivoire. This could be economically hazardous for France, especially as 2005 was announcing new privatizations, such as the privatization of the Ivorian oil refining company (SIR) and number two Ivorian cellular phone company TELECEL. In an open competition, French multinationals, which have proven in the past to be driven by no other concerns but exponential returns at all cost, would have very little chance of securing further contracts in Côte d’Ivoire. Actually, in an open competition, French multinationals risked losing everything to Americans, British, Canadians, or South African, Japanese or Chinese.

Perhaps, after all, *Refondation*’s pretensions were only a tale, the bluff of a nostalgic socialist out of touch with the realities of the moment. Perhaps, France had nothing to fear from *Refondation*, as Gbagbo had practically inherited a country on its knees, a country that, because of the disastrous politics of the PDCI in the previous forty years, was more dependent than ever on international aid, and especially on France. Without France, its colonial and post-colonial guarantor, where could *Refondation* get the money it needed for its program of development? After all, the devaluation of the CFA, the depreciation of coffee and cocoa, the country’s two major exports, the European Union’s and the World Bank/IMF’s refusal to lend any more money to Côte d’Ivoire after the Bédié administration’s much-publicized financial scandal had left Côte d’Ivoire no other alternative than to be on the good side of France, which could then intercede with international financial institutions to garner some much-needed loans and grants on behalf of Abidjan. Gbagbo could not be serious. He could not run the risk of losing France’s support at such a crucial moment by threatening French multinationals’ monopoly in Côte d’Ivoire. Gbagbo had anticipated the dilemma of not receiving any external financial help. To remedy it, he initiated a measure of austerity that consisted in working at eradicating poverty with a secured budget (a budget that could not rely on any external help); he named it *le budget sécurisé*. Also, he undertook to fight corruption in taxes and at the customs. Gbagbo’s determination, earnestness, and visible success caused the World Bank to unconditionally return to doing...
business with Côte d'Ivoire. In 2002, the IMF, the European Union, and the African Development Bank followed suite. This made it possible for Abidjan to have the necessary financial resources to implement its program of Refondation. France's fear started to materialize, especially as to signal France's loss of esteem in Côte d'Ivoire and Refondation's resolve to rectify its cooperation with France, and with all partners for that matter, a South African Company had just beaten French Bolloré at a bid for the construction of a new airport in San Pédro, south-west of Côte d'Ivoire. French multinationals had no intention of competing fairly with other countries. In the past, it had been easy for France to buy influences in French Africa by financing the campaigns of politicians sympathetic to French interests or by bribing local officials. Refondation was undercutting this practice and leaving French multinationals, which hitherto garnered enormous dividends for France's economy, at the mercy of other international competitors. France had no intention of loosening its grip on Côte d'Ivoire, the wealthiest former French colony in sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, Côte d'Ivoire's stance, if left unchallenged, could be infectious. Other French financial havens could start questioning the validity of their "cooperation" with France; and should they, like Côte d'Ivoire, have the audacity to voice the anomalous makeup of that cooperation, France-Africa relations could be in great danger of vanishing forever. This was not about to happen, for, as Koureyssi Bâ observed so fittingly, the French policy in Africa, characterized by deceit, lawlessness and violence, remains unchanged no matter which party is in power in Paris. Furthermore, France can always rely on the servile devotion of its puppets and its docile locals informants who do not care about their legacy in history, and who are ready to draw a dagger into the back of any brother who dares to say no to the master.33 Ouattara, who had dreamed of being president of Côte d'Ivoire at all cost, had no problem driving the dagger in the back of Laurent Gbagbo, France most annoying killjoy in Africa. Convinced that France would back any subversive coup against Gbagbo, this is what Ouattara had to say in 2001 to a freshly elected group of mayors from his party:

Nous n'attendrons pas 5 ans pour aller aux élections. Après tout, dans certains pays, il y a des coups d'État et les gens s'accomodent bien de ces personnes pendant une certaine période. Nous avons des monarchies dans le monde et les gens acceptent bien qu'une personne non élue représente le peuple dans sa totalité. Pourquoi devrions-nous attendre 5 ans pour que vous ayiez ce à quoi vous avez droit et surtout ce que les populations réclament ? Nous avons certaines relations extérieures. Nous avons commencé à les actionner. J'aimerais vous dire aussi que nous avions convenu avec le maire Adama que nous aurons des réunions périodiques pour qu'ensemble, nous puissions développer assez rapidement une stratégie pour la conquête du pouvoir.34

[We will not wait 5 years to go to the elections. After all, in some countries, there are coups d'État, and people get used to the situation after a while. We have monarchies in the world, and people accept that a person who has not been elected represent the country in its totality. Why should we wait 5 years before you get what you deserve, especially when the populations are asking for it? We have external contacts. We have started to activate them. I would also like to tell you that with Mayor Adama we have agreed to have periodic meetings so that, very quickly, we can all develop a strategy for the conquest of power.]

So, in the night of September 19, 2002, France triggered one of its bloodiest punitive campaigns against Côte d'Ivoire. A group of deserters from the Ivorian army, who had been training in neighboring Burkina Faso, simultaneously hit the cities of Bouaké and Abidjan with a brutality never experienced in the country. More than 100 unsuspecting members of the Ivorian defense forces in Bouaké were executed in their beds along with their families. Scores of wandering civilians were shot. Emile Boga Doudou, the Ivorian minister of interior who had just returned from a visit to his French homologue Sarkozy a day earlier, a visit during which he had raised the question of Ivorian deserters being trained in neighboring Burkina Faso, was executed in his bed, along with members of his family and his domestics. General Guet, the former president and his wife were assassinated. It was a night of carnage. Gary K. Busch has detailed the operational organization of that atrocious nightly attack on Côte d'Ivoire.

In September 2002 about 650 rebels loyal to General Robert Guéi, attacked both Bouaké and Abidjan from neighboring Burkina Faso while Gbagbo was in Rome to meet the Pope. Their operation was supposed to last five days maximum. They were hoping to seize power and force Gbagbo to exile; but they were ill armed and disorganized, and soon the defense force of Côte d'Ivoire cornered them and reduced them to half. It was then that the commander of the French army in Côte d'Ivoire requested a cease-fire so that he could evacuate the French citizens and a few American nationals living in Bouaké. During the 48 hours allotted the French army, three Antonov-12 flew from Franceville (Gabon) to supply the rebels in armament. Other planes and truck brought in armament and mercenaries from Liberia and Sierra Leone,
and the rebel force, which was previously estimated at 320 troops, grew to 2500 mercenaries armed with kalachnikovs and other weapons that had never been part of the Ivorian armory. The French army also supplied the mercenaries with sophisticated communication equipments that kept them always aware of the movements of the Ivorian defense troops. The French then retreated gradually leaving the rebels in charge with Eastern Europeans mercenaries as technical advisers. Once the rebels were well positioned, Chirac then activated the international pressure machinery through the United Nations to obtain a resolution entrusting France with a peacekeeping mission in Côte d'Ivoire. While tergiversations were taking more time than needed at the United Nations, the rebels were multiplying their fronts not just in the Northern part of the country, but also in the Western parts, recruiting more mercenaries from Samuel Doe's civil war troops as well as mercenaries from the RUF in Sierra Leone. The rebels' indiscriminate killing and raping of thousands of children, elderly, and women led to mass exodus toward Yamoussoukro and Abidjan. Gbagbo had dared to defy France, and France had launched against his regime the biggest firepower ever delivered on Côte d'Ivoire. Now the United Nations, through the Security Council, could play its partition by blessing France's direct intrusion in the country.

Yet, Gbagbo's Refondation was not merely a rumination posture against France. Evidently it intended to rectify Côte d'Ivoire's anomalous relationship with France. The rosy economic definition of liberalization that treats Foreign Direct Investment as "...a decentralized process wherein each foreign company takes the investment decisions of the others as beyond its control..." is exploded in French Africa. There, nothing is meant to remain beyond the control of French multinationals whose barons have vouched to filter all non-French multinational investments' access to the continent to the point of reducing them to nothing. "Exploding" is not just a figure of speech, as the daily conflagrations caused by heavy French artillery and the frequent turning out of black corpses scare Anglo-Saxon and Asian investments out of French Africa, while France remains curiously present before, during, and after the cannon roars. From the perspective of most French investors in Africa, Foreign Direct Investment should have nothing to do with each firm forming "...an expectation about the host country's eventual trade policy and [evaluating] the profitability of its own potential foreign investment accordingly." Instead, the host country should be bomb-pressured to accepting the level of protection and the terms of profitability dictated by France. It is unfortunate that, in economic circles, the kinds of quid pro quo foreign investments that have made French multinationals and a few corrupt nationals wealthy while impoverishing most Africans by a relocation of their economic resources are still treated as epiphenomenal or isolated episodes involving a small number of disreputable industrialists. French multinationals' brutal practices in Africa are systemic, and they ought to be examined as such. The much-publicized Elf-Aquitaine affair has now shown that French multinationals' dirty economic practices run deep into the French government no matter which party is in power. Gbagbo's Refondation was principally a program of poverty reduction through a distribution to the masses of healthcare and education services and the creation of jobs; a program that fell well within the United Nations Millennium Development Goal (MDG) for Africa. The French-supported rebellion put Gbagbo's poverty reduction program at a standstill, and the passion with which Koffi Anan's United Nations defended the French actions and supported France's subsequent direct intervention in Côte d'Ivoire was mind-boggling. The victim was presented as the victimizer, and the victimizer was made both judge and Jury of the victim. This collaboration of African leaders such as Ouattara and Kofi Anan with a brutal European force against their people, though revolting, nevertheless has an explanation. In all times, Africa has had local collaborators who enabled the exploitation and impoverishment of the continent by Western powers, so long as these local informants could be left to collect a few morsels alongside their plundering Western masters. At the time of the question of Côte d'Ivoire, Kofi Anan had his own scandals at the United Nations hovering over his head, and the oil for food humiliation in which his son, using the father's influence, was deeply involved, and for which Anan needed France more than ever to testify on his behalf. This could only happen if he took care of France's interests in Africa, no matter what the consequence could be for the African people. Anan and Ouattara were only repeating an ancient gesture called North/South collaboration. Unfortunately, It would be utterly hypocritical for anyone who unreservedly condemns the resistance organized by the Ivorian Patriotes to pretend to speak in favor of poverty reduction and growth in the Third World, and especially in Côte d'Ivoire. It is obvious that France's gangster-like intervention in Côte d'Ivoire has undermined progress by any theory of economics. I shall point to some of the consequences of France's disquieting intrusion in Côte d'Ivoire as they relate to the arming of the most pessimistic economics theories for the Third World and the undercutting of all development theories ever to cast any promising outlooks on poor countries.
To proponents of dependency theory—the theory that winners and losers are two inevitable sides of the same coin of development—the Chiraquian martial incursion in Côte d'Ivoire to protect lamenting French multinationals terrified of international competitions makes factual the hypothesis that as economic trade grows between rich and poor nations, global income inequality grows, too. In the kind of liberal commerce that, in the wake of the Washington Consensus, has characterized the "exchanges" between Côte d'Ivoire and France, and in which the French government and the French army, following an age-old tradition, have figured more like bullying middlemen than state institutions, profits have been unashamedly unidirectional. So, this explaining that, the convergence theory—the theory claiming that someday, in a happy future, the last shall meet the first, and that rich countries will experience dwindling returns and be caught up by poor countries—is belied. If the economic trends, as we observe them today, keep up, convergence theory becomes, for the proponents of global equality, wishful thinking, an unrealizable fancy. The impossible possibilization of convergence theory is pushed even further back into the dominion of bleakness by the doing of rich countries that have specialized in altering, in poor countries, all the control variables in which advocates of endogenous growth have invested so much optimism. How so?

Against convergence theorists' pessimistic outlooks for rich countries and optimistic perspectives for poor countries, proponents of endogenous theory would argue that humanity is only at the beginning of useful discoveries, and therefore, rich countries will always be able to subvert the menace of diminishing resources and remain dominant just by the significance of the scientific, technological innovations that they make at home. This is possible because rich countries have traditionally been able to control certain variables, such as, fertility rate, level of human capital (education), and government spending. These controlled variables are referred to as conditional factors. Traditionally, the control for these variables has been absent in poor countries. So then, the factors that come to be known in rich countries as conditional convergence factors (insofar as the conditions for their control are present) become unconditional convergence factors in the Third World (insofar as the condition for their control are absent). No one, however, would dispute the fact that conditional and unconditional convergence factors are not natural occurrences. They do not respectively appear in rich and poor countries by Devine design. They are not the making of an omnipotent Big-Other who assigns them, in that order, to civilized capitalist societies on the one hand, and to primitive territorial populations on the other hand. Conditional and unconditional convergence factors are not inherently attributed to one group of people who are in control of all their intellectual faculties as opposed to another group subjected to lobotomy. Conditional and unconditional convergence factors are created and manipulated by greed, ruthlessness, and brutality, which are not necessarily signs of intelligence. Therefore, before proponents of endogenous theory rest assured that any responsibility for failure and economic decline is entirely organic, perhaps, it would be wise to situate responsibility. On the levels of human capital and government spending, the multiple muscled interventions of France in West Africa have always, intentionally, turned conditional and unconditional factors on their heads in a theatrical diagram that made perfect sense for France while disturbing any prospect of planned development for the African nations. This viciously masterful manipulation made conditional factors unconditional for national social engineers while at the same time keeping them conditional for French business. Bare Hands Victory becomes enlightening in disclosing France's responsibility in that regard; but Bakaba's documentary can only expose the symptoms of a bigger infection in Africa. In Bare Hands Victory, Côte d'Ivoire is but a case study of a more pervasive hexagonal will to power determined to make profits by all means necessary.

Is it only by killing Africa's human capital that the rest of the world could give the black continent a chance of turning the tides of global inequality? France seems resolved to spin the grim images of Ivorian youth falling under French multinationals' hired guns into a neo-classical resolution of income inequality; one which would eerily assert, on account of the role of population growth in the race for development, that "we are saving them from themselves." If growth is a race between increases in population and capital stock, this pessimistic-optimist argument would thus go, then, wars—which have been more exogenous than endogenous in French Africa—by their ensuing effects of population decrease, will lead to better distribution of wealth in Africa. How depressing! And how disingenuous, too, to link the slaughter of the dynamic and educated force of a country to its chances for progress! In fact, until an international outcry puts an end to the incendiary practices of the hired armies of imperial nations, the butchering of the young brains of Africa will continue to widen the technological gaps between North and South—one of the major...
causes of global inequality—and maintain an East-West-East-East-bound spread of technology and industrialization. It is not by accident that most Third World countries, claim appurtenance to the Orient when they cannot establish their belonging to the Occident. Have not theorists of economic geography told us that the Occident, with its temperate climate and smoother terrains, is blessed by the gods and has all the best prospects for development? Nevertheless, has African geography really been a hindrance at any time in history for opportunists resolute to plunder the riches of the African continent? Have not European explorers, as far back as the sixteenth century, defied the negative endowments of Africa and pushed deep into the heart of darkness to dig up Africa’s iron ores, its gold, its diamond, to cut its timber, to bleed its rubber trees, to remove its elephants’ defenses, to practice their shooting ability on its game? Have not European speculators designed ingenious methods to transfer Africa’s human capital and riches to the Occident despite Africa’s much-heralded negative endowments? Why has Europe become so paradoxically impotent when it came to developing infrastructures in the continent that would benefit African populations? And what to say of this so-called poor continent that yet continues to stir up so much interest in greedy multinationals? Geography and poverty have nothing to do with the underdevelopment of Africa. In fact, to be fair, Africa is victim of its wealth and a globalization gone mad.

1 Sidiki Bakaba, director, Bare Hands Victory (Abidjan: Kepri Creations, 2005).
3 Olaudah Equiano, The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa the African
5 Ibid., 327.
6 Jules Ferry, "Les fondements de la politique coloniale," discours prononcé à la Chambre des députés: le 28 juillet 1885
9 Actually, as Fieldhouse notes, evidence points to the contrary. All of black Africa within the European Community's preferential economic system in the 1980s had a lower per capita growth rate than South Asian countries which were not part of the system (105).
10 Ibid.
13 Steven Hiatt, editor, "Global Empire: "The Web of Control," in A Game as Old as Empire: The Secret World of Economic Hit Men and the Web of Global Corruption (San Francisco: Berret-Koehler, 2007), 12-29.
18 Alemayehu and Geda, 305.
Had not Sarkozy, as French minister of finance and industry, reassured EDF and GDF union members worried about privatization prospects in the following terms on April 4, 2004?

EDF et Gaz de France ne seront pas privatisées. Pourquoi? Parce que EDF et Gaz de France ne seront pas et ne seront jamais des entreprises tout à fait comme les autres . . . du fait de leur importance pour l’indépendance nationale, de leur rôle dans le service public de l’électricité et du gaz.

[EDF and GDF will never be privatized. Why? Because EDF and GDF will not be and will never be ordinary companies . . . given their importance for national independence, given their roles in public distribution of electricity and gas.]


The review concluded that

Members congratulated Côte d’Ivoire on its pursuit of macroeconomic stabilization and trade liberalization, and noted the positive effects registered to date. They nonetheless encouraged Côte d’Ivoire to make additional commitments and bind more tariffs so as to ensure that current reforms continue. Participants expressed their conviction that the consolidation of reforms in the goods and services sectors would attract new investment and ensure sustained economic growth.


In a letter to his family, Frantz Fanon expressed his regrets of choosing to fight for France during WW2, complaining that he was wrong to enroll to fight for the freedom of French people while French farmers themselves were not ready to fight for their liberty. See Black Skin, White Masks (videorecording)

Jeune Afrique, issue 1231 (August 8, 1984), p. 21


Ibid., 44.


Où ont disparu les 180 millions de francs que l’Union européenne a versés à la Côte d’Ivoire? Cette aide, destinée essentiellement au programme de santé, a été systématiquement détournée entre 1992 et 1997, comme l’attestent plusieurs audits récents de la Commission européenne et un rapport accablant de l’Inspection des finances ivoirienne, dont L’Express a pris connaissance

[What happened to the 180 million francs that the European Union disbursed to Côte d’Ivoire? This money especially earmarked for healthcare has been systematically diverted between 1992 and 1997 as indicated by several recent audits by the European Commission and a report of the Ivorian finance inspection obtained by L’Express.]

Ibid.

Il est scandaleux que les députés européens n’aient pas été informés de ces détournements, qui concernent des secteurs aussi sensibles que la santé. Je ne comprends pas que la délégation sur place et les quatre experts du Fonds européen de développement détachés auprès de l’administration ivoirienne n’aient rien vu. Cela pose un problème de compétence. A moins qu’il n’y ait d’autres explications
[It is outrageous that the members of the European Parliament had not been informed of these embezzlements that touch such sensitive sectors as health. I cannot understand how the delegation on the ground and the four experts of the European Development Fund assigned to the Ivorian administration did not detect anything. This raises a question of competence. Unless some other explanations exist.]

31 David Kenneth Fieldhouse, *The West and the Third World: Trade, Colonialism, Dependence and Development* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 72
34 Ibid.
35 *La guerre de la France*, 11-14.
37 Ibid.
38 Much of my discussion here will rely on Glenn Firebaugh’s summary of the theories of world stratification as he laid them out in *The New Geography of Global Income Inequality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003),170-84.
39 Firebaugh, 170.