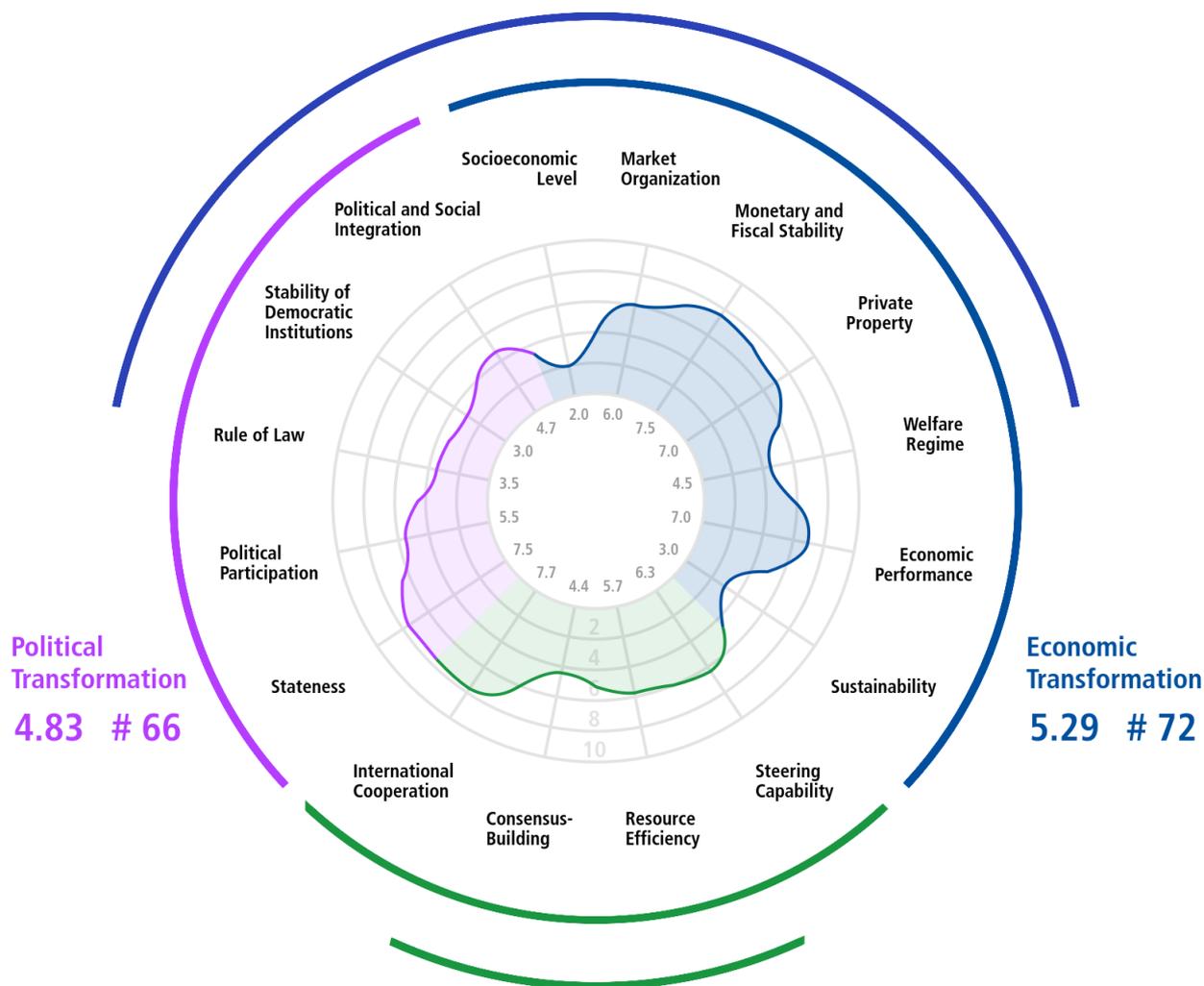


Côte d'Ivoire

Status Index

5.06 # 66

on 1-10 scale out of 137



Political Transformation
4.83 # 66

Economic Transformation
5.29 # 72

Governance Index

5.52 # 38

on 1-10 scale out of 137

This report is part of the **Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2026**. It covers the period from February 1, 2023 to January 31, 2025. The BTI assesses the transformation toward democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of governance in 137 countries. More on the BTI at <https://www.bti-project.org>.

Please cite as follows: Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2026 Country Report – Côte d'Ivoire. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2026.

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Key Indicators

Population	M	31.9	HDI	0.582	GDP p.c., PPP \$	7653
Pop. growth ¹	% p.a.	2.4	HDI rank of 193	157	Gini Index	35.3
Life expectancy	years	61.9	UN Education Index	0.479	Poverty ³	% 38.4
Urban population	%	53.6	Gender inequality ²	0.589	Aid per capita \$	76.2

Sources (as of December 2025): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | UNDP, Human Development Report 2025. Footnotes: (1) Average annual growth rate. (2) Gender Inequality Index (GII). (3) Percentage of population living on less than \$3.65 a day at 2017 international prices.

Executive Summary

During the period under review, President Alassane Ouattara further consolidated his rule, emulating first Ivorian President Houphouët-Boigny (1960 – 1993) in his technocratic and authoritarian governance style, while delivering social infrastructure and economic development to broader segments of the population. The relative success in stabilizing the economy through growth and public investment in infrastructure is a key aspect of the brand of developmental authoritarianism seen in Côte d'Ivoire.

Having started as a candidate with electoral support from no more than a third of the population, within 15 years President Ouattara has managed to secure a hegemonic role for his political movement, Rassemblement des Houphouëtistes pour la Démocratie et la Paix (RHDP), while effectively concentrating authority in the presidency. The legitimacy of the regime continues to depend on popular elections, and the principle of access to office through elections was never seriously questioned. Yet because of this, political elites went to extremes to shape electoral contests to their advantage by manipulating electoral rules, modifying constitutions and using the judiciary to exclude competitors. With the exception of the UN-monitored election in 2010, there has never been an inclusive election with all major candidates allowed to run for office. Democracy has been reduced to a very narrow set of heavily majoritarian institutions, with neither parliament nor the courts holding much influence.

There is little effort to engage societal actors or promote inclusive policymaking.

Despite these challenges, political stability has been maintained through sustained economic growth and significant investments in infrastructure development. Even amid the challenges posed by COVID-19, Côte d'Ivoire was considered one of the economies coping best in such circumstances. This success was due to domestic reforms in administration and key economic sectors, as well as substantial public investment in rural infrastructure. Favorable conditions, including initially high world prices for cash crops, also contributed to these positive outcomes. The government has also effectively thwarted the infiltration of jihadism into the country so far.

Furthermore, Côte d'Ivoire has attracted private capital through several rounds of Eurobond sales, signaling international confidence in the country's mid- and long-term economic prospects. While the government has been active on multiple fronts, some reform efforts have had limited effectiveness, particularly in promoting small- and medium enterprises, the informal sector and enforcing anti-corruption policies. Additionally, a significant gender gap persists in both the political and economic sectors.

During recent global crises, the government has demonstrated its ability to swiftly implement confinement measures, combat inflation and provide support for disadvantaged groups and sectors. This was made possible by the absence of strong opposing actors in the political system and the positive relations established with the international community over the past decade. However, the government has struggled to address crucial development challenges and promote long-term structural change. Issues like achieving more sustainable land use and secure land access for the majority of citizens remain largely unaddressed.

As the relevance of democracy is re-evaluated in the region and the international community again follows suit, Côte d'Ivoire presents itself as a haven of political stability and economic development whose limited democratic credentials may not diminish its reputation and legitimacy among its own citizens or within the international community. Despite objective indicators showing a country with low levels of human development and a history of conflict, the country's economic and political elites remain highly optimistic about economic transformation and Côte d'Ivoire's potential as an emergent economy.

History and Characteristics of Transformation

The trajectories of political and economic transformation in Côte d'Ivoire have followed different paths. After independence in August 1960, the country's first president, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, dominated political life and economic decision-making. In the 1960s and 1970s, he oversaw Côte d'Ivoire's emergence as one of Africa's few stable and economically successful countries. A broadly liberal economic system, actively integrated into the world market, was paired with an essentially authoritarian mode of political regulation.

Côte d'Ivoire's success as an exporter of cocoa – the top producer worldwide – and coffee was a major factor in its stability, as these exports quickly enabled the country to achieve an enviable level of prosperity and social development. However, the authoritarian leadership inhibited the development of a clear notion of citizenship and broader political inclusion.

When commodity prices fell in the 1980s, Côte d'Ivoire began to face serious economic and social problems. The established model of political and economic regulation – which denied political participation but guaranteed social advancement for elites and fixed producer prices for small-scale planters – had become unsustainable. Levels of popular dissent increased, and by the beginning of the 1990s, multiparty rule was introduced. Along with political liberalization came

an attempt at liberal economic reform led by a technocratic team under then–Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara. He conducted an economic reform program in the face of significant resistance from within the ruling party, the Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), particularly from the president of the National Assembly, Henri Konan Bedié.

Upon Houphouët-Boigny's death in December 1993, both Ouattara and Bedié competed for succession. Bedié ultimately emerged as the winner and proceeded to consolidate his own power, marginalizing those sympathetic to Ouattara. The Rassemblement des Républicains (RDR), a pro-Ouattara party, separated from the PDCI. In the 1995 presidential election, Bedié emerged victorious, with both the RDR and the other major opposition party, the Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI), boycotting the polls because the electoral code excluded Ouattara from running due to his “dubious” Ivorian nationality. Bedié was eventually overthrown in a bloodless coup in December 1999. Initial hopes for thorough political democratization were soon disappointed when it became clear that coup leader General Robert Guei would stand in the 2000 election and that the opposition party FPI had joined the PDCI in a nationalist policy stance, again leading to the exclusion of Ouattara. A popular uprising thwarted the rigged election of October 2000, and Laurent Gbagbo (FPI) was declared the winner over the protests of RDR supporters.

The September 2002 coup attempt and the ensuing descent into civil war took the country by surprise. The mutineers quickly took control of the entire northern half of the country, often welcomed by a local population that had felt marginalized by previous administrations. France eventually increased its military presence in Côte d'Ivoire, agreeing to police the cease-fire following a truce agreement on October 19, 2002. Several peace agreements failed to provide a durable political settlement, but after 2007, a power-sharing government with rebel leader Guillaume Soro as prime minister made the formal reunification of the country possible and cleared the way for presidential elections held in October – November 2010. However, hopes that this election would represent a first but decisive step toward resolving the conflict were dashed. The results of the elections were contested, and both Gbagbo and Ouattara declared themselves the winner.

Following a significant political stalemate, the conflict was ultimately resolved through the military victory of rebel forces, in collaboration with international troops (primarily from the United Nations and France), over loyalist forces. In May 2011, Ouattara finally assumed effective power and was subsequently re-elected in both 2015 and 2020. During his presidency, economic growth and public investment in infrastructure revitalized the economy. During nearly 15 years of President Ouattara's rule, the political landscape remained deeply divided. As of now, the aspirations for a more substantial democratization of the regime have yet to be fulfilled.

The BTI combines text analysis and numerical assessments. The score for each question is provided below its respective title. The scale ranges from 1 (worst) to 10 (best).

Transformation Status

I. Political Transformation

1 | Stateness

Since his accession to power in 2011, President Ouattara and his government have stabilized the country and managed to gain full territorial control and a monopoly on the use of force. Jihadist groups carried out two isolated attacks in the northeast of Côte d'Ivoire in 2020 and 2021, but the government massively increased its presence in the North East, and none of these groups has seriously undermined state authorities' control over the national territory.

Citizenship rights were one of the root causes of the prolonged civil conflict. For many years, important aspects of citizenship were denied to both northerners and migrant workers who had resided in Côte d'Ivoire for decades. Politicians promoted the nationalistic notion of Ivoirité, encouraging the belief that southerners were the true Ivorians, while xenophobic sentiments and actions targeted northerners regardless of their Ivorian nationality.

The electoral victory of a northerner in 2010/11 partially solved the problem, as new constitutional rules weakened the Ivoirité provisions in the electoral regulations and northerners no longer face discrimination. However, many opposition supporters still view Ivoirité as a sound policy and continue to question the legitimacy of the current nation-state.

The Ivorian population is generally very religious, and politicians are well advised to present themselves as devout Christians or Muslims. However, the separation of religion and state is protected by the secular constitution, and religious extremists do not hold political sway. This is one reason Ivorians feel less threatened by the potential diffusion of jihadist groups into their country. The threat of increased Islamist presence and its implications has so far been absent from electoral campaigns.

Question
Score

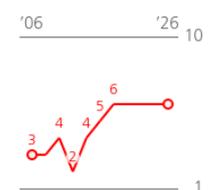
Monopoly on the use of force

9



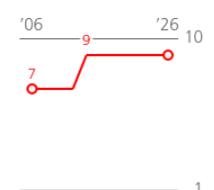
State identity

6



No interference of religious dogmas

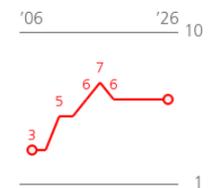
9



During the Ouattara presidency, the state has effectively re-established administrative structures throughout the country after the territorial division between 2002 and 2011. The state maintains its security apparatus and judicial services throughout the country, and public infrastructure has been improved, especially in the formerly marginalized areas in the north. The effectiveness of service delivery is more contested, and access to water and sanitation remains relatively low. About 72.9% of the population had access to a basic water source, and only 43.9% had access to a safely managed one. Access to sanitation was even lower, with 37.0% of the population having access to basic sanitation and 17.2% to safely managed sanitation. At the same time, there has been strong progress in improving access to electricity over the last decade, with 70.4% of the population having access in 2022.

Basic administration

6

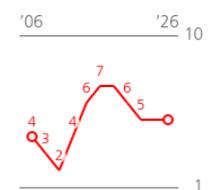


2 | Political Participation

After decades without elections or with heavily disputed presidential contests, all political actors today seem to accept elections as the main mechanism for accessing political office, and elections with universal suffrage and secret ballot are regularly held.

Free and fair elections

5



However, Côte d'Ivoire has not yet experienced a peaceful transfer of power through elections. The most recent electoral cycle (2020/21) again resulted in unrest and political frustration. Incumbent President Ouattara had previously announced his intention to comply with existing restrictions on presidential terms. However, when the designated candidate of the ruling party died three months before the elections, Ouattara decided to enter the race. This decision was based on a controversial interpretation of the 2016 constitution. Many considered Ouattara's candidacy and electoral victory illegitimate, especially since his long-standing rival Laurent Gbagbo and other prominent competitors, including former Prime Minister Soro, were barred from running for various legal reasons. Former President Bedié of the PDCI, the only remaining significant opposition candidate, ultimately withdrew. As a result, the elections saw low participation, some violence and an enraged opposition that even declared its intention to form a parallel government the day after the election.

Main political institutions regulating free and fair elections, such as the Electoral Commission and the Constitutional Court, are not considered neutral by the opposition and many civil society actors, and many doubt these institutions could guarantee high-quality electoral governance in a fully open and inclusive presidential race. During the electoral campaign, state media were biased toward Ouattara and the ruling party.

Social media is highly politicized and has contributed to the spread of disinformation and the incitement of electoral violence throughout the last electoral cycle.

Although elections take place and remain a key criterion for political legitimacy, the democratic character of the political regime in Côte d'Ivoire may be questioned and, as a result, so might the presence of democratically elected political representatives.

There are no significant veto players remaining, as the government has brought the army under control.

In late 2020, when former rebel leader Guillaume Soro called from exile – implicitly urging the Ivorian army to stand up against the Ouattara government – nothing happened.

In short, there are few veto players to undermine the effective governing power of a government that is not truly democratically elected.

For most of the time since President Ouattara took office in 2011, the right of association has been upheld. The law provides for freedom of assembly and association, which has generally been respected – no ethnic or cultural minorities are marginalized in this regard. Advocacy groups operate freely, and union activity has remained strong throughout. A vocal opposition is able to organize public rallies, hold conferences and maintain its own media outlets.

During the 2020 electoral campaign and in the wake of the disputed presidential elections, the situation deteriorated and public gatherings were prohibited. More recently, civil society actors have lodged growing complaints about harassment, denials of their requests to host political assemblies and alleged irregularities in granting permission for public gatherings.

Opposition media remain subject to occasional threats and pressures from the government, especially during electoral campaigns. Constitutional provisions for freedom of expression are therefore only partially respected in practice, and journalists remain, in principle, vulnerable to abuse by police. Public media remains firmly under the control of the incumbent government. However, there is an abundance of private media outlets that openly criticize the government. International media are also freely available in Côte d'Ivoire, and the government has never seriously considered internet shutdowns or regulation of social media – a problem given the increasing amount of hate speech on social media. The government's ability to monitor and control groups – especially on social media, the internet and outside the country – is limited. Thus, media freedom may occur not because the government intends it, but due to an inability to police it. The media law from December 2017 has made insulting the president a crime.

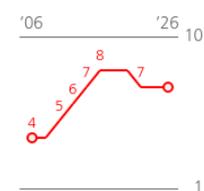
Effective power to govern

3



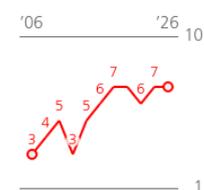
Association / assembly rights

7



Freedom of expression

7



3 | Rule of Law

Côte d'Ivoire has a long history of presidential control over the political process. The parliament has been dominated by ruling parties and coalitions and is not an effective institution for government oversight. President Ouattara has directed decision-making toward a limited group of collaborators, marginalizing even ministers from his own coalition.

Whether government actors are subject to the law remains a matter of debate. There is no effective check on the government, as the judiciary is poorly equipped to balance the hegemony of the executive.

Formally, the judiciary is institutionally distinct, but its decisions and doctrine have always been subordinated to the government of the day. Both the constitutional and the regular branches are vulnerable to executive intervention, lack adequate resources and are riddled with corruption. Judicial reforms were only partially implemented throughout the last decades and have mostly concentrated on regulation of the private sector.

The independence of the Constitutional Court was decisively compromised by its controversial role in the electoral crisis of November 2010 and again in the annulment of most presidential candidacies in September 2020. For a long time, human rights organizations have criticized the lack of professional expertise in the judicial sector.

There is a long tradition of financial malpractices in the country, encouraged by the absence of auditing, and each new government is implicated in a number of new scandals. The fight against corruption has never been a main priority of the Ouattara government, although it ratified all relevant international conventions. In the current environment, corrupt officeholders do not face significant adverse publicity from civil society, the media or opposition parties, and they are generally not subject to legal prosecution.

At times, officeholders and high-ranking officials – including close collaborators of the president – attract adverse publicity but are rarely prosecuted. On some occasions, investigative media reports indicate massive corruption without any legal or political sanctions enacted.

According to data published by Enhancing Africa's Response to Transnational Organised Crime (ENACT) Africa, links between state actors and international criminal syndicates continue to facilitate organized crime, especially cocaine trafficking, as well as illegal gold mining and logging, money laundering, and the trafficking of children and endangered animals.

According to the latest Afrobarometer survey from 2021, 38.4% of Ivoirians believed that most public servants and 52.7% said that most police officers are corrupt. Additionally, 54.0% of respondents expressed the belief that corruption is still on the

Separation of powers

3

'06 '26 10



Independent judiciary

3

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Prosecution of office abuse

2

'06 '26 10



rise. Regarding the potential consequences of whistle-blowing or simply reporting acts of corruption, 79.6% of Ivorians believed that such actions would pose significant risks for the reporters.

Since the end of the civil war in 2011, the protection of civil rights has continuously improved. However, the security sector is still regularly accused of human rights abuses, including gender-specific rights violations and sexual violence. There have also been cases of insufficient protection for LGBTQ+ individuals and albinos against discrimination. Additionally, enforcement of legal provisions to suppress female genital mutilation has been inadequate, despite the inclusion of such provisions in the 2016 constitution.

The perpetrators of mass murder and serious human rights violations committed by various regimes from 1999 – 2011 have not been brought to justice, and the general amnesty declared in 2018 sent a strong signal that violations of civil rights would be only partially sanctioned. However, over the past decade, the government has begun to ratify remaining international human rights treaties, such as the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CPED), and to comply with the reporting requirements of such treaties, such as CEDAW, CAT and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), so legal codification has significantly improved.

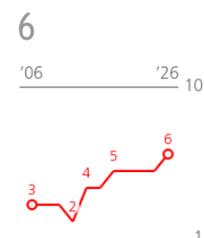
The death penalty was abolished with the reform of the Penal Law in 2015. The National Human Rights Council has also been strengthened, providing representation for civil society organizations and gaining international accreditation since 2018, achieving so-called A-Status since December 2020.

4 | Stability of Democratic Institutions

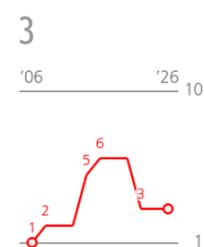
The constitution establishes a democratic regime; no elite actor questions the legitimacy of democratic institutions per se. Nevertheless, the extent to which elite behavior is primarily shaped by these institutions can be questioned, especially in light of constitutional amendments intended to prolong presidential tenure. Although elections are held regularly, it remains unclear to what extent they actually determine officeholders, particularly if political competition is significantly limited through the disqualification of competitors.

Given the dominance of the presidency, relatively little friction exists. However, this diminishes the functional quality of other institutions such as parliament and, more broadly, both horizontal and vertical accountability. The national parliament has clearly become more competitive in the current electoral cycle. Local government has very limited competencies and resources, and it is not a meaningful dimension of political participation or vertical accountability.

Civil rights



Performance of democratic institutions



Elite actors generally adhere to a narrow and legalistic interpretation of democracy as majority rule, lacking sufficient institutionalized mechanisms of accountability. This may have diminished the legitimacy of democratic institutions in the eyes of significant portions of the population, many of whom continue to perceive representation mainly in ethnic terms.

Civil society actors support liberal democracy and often side with the opposition in calling for a more inclusive approach to policymaking, including constitutional reforms or changes to the electoral commission. Yet, even with large parliamentary majorities, both the Gbagbo- and Ouattara-led governments have shown little inclination to pursue more consensual decision-making.

None of the key elite actors have a track record of being committed democrats. Limited commitment to democratic institutions became evident in 2020, when Ouattara ran for office again in the elections. The opposition initially boycotted these elections and later declared a parallel government without any constitutional or legal mandate. Since 2021, all opposition actors appear to have begrudgingly accepted the de facto legitimacy of Ouattara's government.

In a similar vein, and as a departure from past practices, neither the military nor powerful economic actors can be considered a threat to the political order.

5 | Political and Social Integration

The Ivorian party system is characterized by relatively low fragmentation and low voter

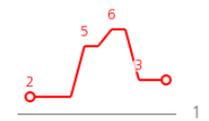
Volatility, partly due to regional and ethnic voting, has characterized Ivorian politics. Three political parties – the FPI, the RDR and the PDCI – have dominated political life in Côte d'Ivoire since the mid-1990s, with all other parties failing to exceed 5% of electoral support. Their leaders, Gbagbo, Ouattara and Bedié, have dominated politics since the early 1990s and continue to do so, although Bedié died in 2024. The FPI (PPA-CI) and RDR (RHDP) now compete under new names.

While political polarization was one of the key factors driving the country toward civil war, the PDCI has been able to form coalitions with both the FPI and RDR. To some extent, violent conflict has impeded the development of the party system, making it difficult for new parties to emerge. Occasionally, a few new parties have managed to come into existence, such as Guillaume Soros' political movement, but their primary and invariably futile objective has been to initiate a presidential electoral campaign. Although both the FPI and the PDCI have a long tradition of political participation and used to be rooted in society, all parties are substantially personalized and thus clientelistic.

Commitment to democratic institutions

3

'06 '26 10



Party system

6

'06 '26 10



Many interest groups – from cocoa planters' associations to student unions – continued to exist even during the decade of violent conflict between 2000 and 2010. However, they rarely cooperate and have very little influence on political processes. The country lacks a tradition of constructive relationships between the state and interest groups – with the exception of the economically important export sectors. Additionally, there is little faith among social actors in the state's willingness to listen to them. Advocacy groups try in vain to convince the government of the virtues of a more inclusive style of policymaking, especially regarding constitutional reforms.

Important social interests, especially religious and ethnically cross-cutting interest groups, remain under-represented. Civil society, though formally represented in many state- or donor-led schemes, has generally not been able to shape public policies – for example, in the field of land reform.

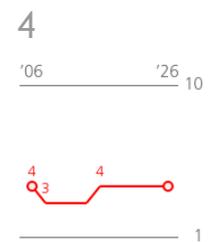
Survey data reveal a generally favorable perception of democracy as the preferred form of governance (69%). However, the specific definition of democracy remains unclear, and people's understanding of democracy is conditioned by whether they feel represented, which often means having people from their region or ethnicity in power. Nevertheless, Ivoirians unequivocally reject military rule.

These survey findings should be analyzed in the context of a historical tradition that has characterized democracy as a form of benign authoritarian rule known as "houphoutisme" or as exclusionary forms of nationalism such as those represented by the FPI and Gbagbo.

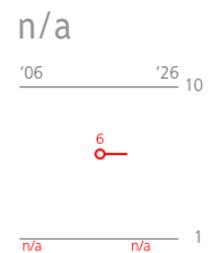
Although numerous local peacebuilding initiatives have been implemented and multiple reports indicate greater peacebuilding capacities within local communities, there is little evidence of widespread social capital that spans ethnic and other identity groups in the Ivorian social fabric. According to survey data from Afrobarometer (2023), nearly 96% of the population does not perceive any issue with living alongside individuals from different ethnic or religious backgrounds as neighbors. However, the same survey reveals that 73% of respondents believe one should generally distrust members of other ethnic groups, especially when it comes to political power.

While numerous voluntary and independent civic and social associations exist, they suffer from limited funding and organizational deficiencies.

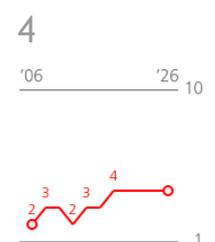
Interest groups



Approval of democracy



Social capital



II. Economic Transformation

6 | Level of Socioeconomic Development

While Ivorians tend to consider their country the economic powerhouse of Francophone West Africa, empirical evidence shows that it is one of the world's least developed countries. Côte d'Ivoire ranks 166 out of 193 countries on the 2022 Human Development Index, with a score of 0.534. The country exhibits massive quantitative and qualitative social marginalization that is clearly structurally ingrained. There are significant socioeconomic disparities between rural and urban areas as well as between the north and south.

Almost all relevant indicators point to severe problems.

According to World Bank data, the percentage of people living below the poverty line of \$3.65 per day has decreased since the end of the civil war from nearly 60% to 37.5% in 2021. Gender inequality remains a severe problem, and the country holds one of the world's worst ratings in the United Nations Gender Inequality Index. Inequality has remained high, with a Gini coefficient of 0.353 in 2021, and the overall loss in human development due to inequality stands at 40.4% – the fifth highest value worldwide.

Although some socioeconomic problems have clearly been linked to the 10 years of protracted violent conflict (2002 – 2011) and its consequences – that is, the lack of administrative structures and the precarious functioning of education and health facilities in the north for a couple of years – many barriers, particularly in the education sector, are structurally ingrained and are very difficult to remove.

Economic indicators		2021	2022	2023	2024
GDP	\$ M	72794.6	70922.8	79618.1	86538.4
GDP growth	%	7.1	6.4	6.5	6.0
Inflation (CPI)	%	4.1	5.3	4.4	3.5
Unemployment	%	2.6	2.3	2.3	2.3

Question
Score

Socioeconomic
barriers

2

'06 '26 10

2 1

Economic indicators		2021	2022	2023	2024
Foreign direct investment	% of GDP	1.9	2.3	3.1	4.4
Export growth	%	16.9	11.9	4.8	0.2
Import growth	%	15.9	21.1	7.7	4.0
Current account balance	\$ M	-2874.1	-5393.8	-9208.0	-
Public debt	% of GDP	50.2	56.0	57.5	59.3
External debt	\$ M	29767.8	31787.4	36547.9	-
Total debt service	\$ M	1731.4	2104.9	3553.3	-
Net lending/borrowing	% of GDP	-5.4	-7.2	-5.5	-
Tax revenue	% of GDP	12.4	11.8	13.2	-
Government consumption	% of GDP	10.0	9.5	9.0	9.0
Public education spending	% of GDP	3.3	3.5	3.4	-
Public health spending	% of GDP	1.6	1.3	-	-
R&D expenditure	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Military expenditure	% of GDP	0.9	0.9	0.9	-

Sources (as of December 2025): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Economic Outlook | Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Military Expenditure Database.

7 | Organization of the Market and Competition

Although the country was once hailed as a capitalist model in Africa, the institutional framework for free markets and competition has never been sufficiently developed. This is especially true in the vital cocoa sector, where uncertainty over economic fundamentals and regulation has persisted.

The government has made significant efforts to modernize the regulatory framework, including amending the National Competition Law in 2019. However, harmonization and transparency of private investments have not progressed. A few market players dominate business activity in the country, and the Risk Tracker of the Economist Intelligence Unit suggests that vested interests and favoritism may contribute to unfair business practices. In recent years, though, the average business entry density rate has improved to the level of key regional peers such as Ghana or Nigeria. Recent

Market
organization

6

'06 '26 10



1

World Bank Enterprise survey data reveals that monopolistic and duopolistic market structures in the manufacturing sector remain but are less widespread than the average in African economies.

According to 2022 ILO figures, the informal sector dominates the economy, accounting for 92.1%, with competition from the informal sector perceived as an obstacle to private sector growth, especially in services.

UEMOA) reduces the scope of policy action allowed at the national level, especially regarding state aid and anti-competitive practices. The UEMOA Commission is responsible for addressing anti-competitive practices, but it lacks resources to effectively enforce competition rules at the national level.

The formation of monopolies and oligopolies was reformed in 2013 based on UEMOA policy norms. This legislation also led to the establishment of a commission to register and sanction monopolistic practices, but the commission, which took office in 2014, did not become active in the years that followed.

In May 2018, the government relaunched the commission, appointing 10 new members – officials from relevant ministries, representatives of the private sector, unions and consumer associations – with the task of fighting against “la vie chère” and the mandate to enact sanctions ranging from fines to the closure of businesses.

A new competition law enacted in November 2019 allows the government to set prices for consumer goods after receiving advice from the commission and within a set deadline. In response to significant inflation, the government established maximum consumer prices for certain essential food items for specific periods. Apart from this, the commission is operational but has not publicly expressed concerns related to specific industries or sectors.

The lack of effective competition is evident in several sectors of the economy, particularly in the markets for port services. In contrast, there is substantial competition in the mobile market, with three main active operators, none of which captures more than 50% of the market. An end to the monopoly on water and electricity provisions was declared in 2016. However, because of the state’s contractual obligations spanning long periods, it was not until 2020 that the Compagnie Ivoirienne d’Electricité (CIE) monopoly on electricity distribution could be terminated. Despite this, no significant competition emerged as a direct result.

Competition policy

4

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Côte d'Ivoire is a regional hub and attracts significant trade and investment. The cocoa and coffee trade is largely controlled by multinational companies. As the world's largest producer of cocoa, the country's economy is deeply integrated into the global economy.

Foreign trade follows nondiscriminatory principles as provided in the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) regional programs. However, in practice, the liberalization of the foreign trade regime remains constrained by domestic rules, administrative barriers and informal interventions by officeholders. The UEMOA Commission holds exclusive authority over the common trade policy of its members when interacting with third-party states. Since the late 1990s, the commission has harmonized trade policies to a significant degree, resulting in a common trade policy in various areas, including customs taxation at the border, bank domiciliation of trade transactions and rules of origin.

The most recent WTO trade policy reviews, conducted as a joint UEMOA review, praised Côte d'Ivoire for staying open to international trade and avoiding protectionist measures. The reviews also urged the country to further simplify its tax system and align its bound and applied rates with WTO provisions (in the WTO, UEMOA member states have individually bound their customs duties and other duties and taxes). The simple average of the most favored nation-applied total tariffs was 12.1% in 2023. Côte d'Ivoire was among the first African countries to ratify the WTO trade facilitation agreement in December 2015, but the cost and time required to trade across borders remain high compared to peer countries.

Côte d'Ivoire signed an interim Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union and began implementing it in January 2019. Since 2011, the country has been eligible for the U.S. government's African Growth and Opportunity Act and has maintained this eligibility. However, exports to both the European Union and United States have not grown more than those to the rest of the world.

A legal framework for the banking system and capital markets is in place. Supervision of the banking system falls under the mandate of the regional bank, the Central Bank of the West African States (BCEAO). Further restructuring of the financial sector remains one of the government's priorities. The West African Regional Stock Exchange, located in Abidjan, had 69 listed companies at the end of 2024, the majority of which are Ivorian. While the exchange has seen some growth in size due to strong economic growth, it has not yet become a major source of funding for private sector activity.

Weaknesses of the financial sector, which included a total of 28 banks at the end of 2023, are insufficient equity and significant exposure to a small number of borrowers. The level of non-performing loans has remained under control and was reduced to 7.2% of total gross loans at the end of 2023, well below the UEMOA average. Since

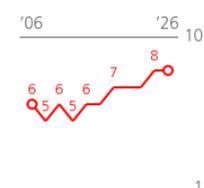
Liberalization of foreign trade

6



Banking system

8



the mid-2010s, UEMOA has initiated reforms to incorporate Basel II and III standards into the regulatory framework. The Ivorian law that strengthens prudential standards became effective in January 2018, but diversifying the lending clientele will require time, and risks remain high as existing loans mature. According to IMF figures, the average bank capital adequacy ratio, which stood at the UEMOA and Basel III minimum requirement of 8% at the end of 2016, increased to 13.3% in 2023. Following increased exposure to government securities, Ivorian banks have managed to slow credit to the public sector since 2023.

The remaining public banks, which make up the financially weakest segment of the financial sector, are undergoing restructuring. The government has implemented its National Financial Inclusion Strategy (2019 – 2024) to increase banking penetration, which rose to 37.9% according to BCEAO data from 2022. The financing of small- and medium enterprises (SMEs) remains a contentious issue between banking institutions and Ivorian small companies and entrepreneurs, as private banks lack sufficient presence in rural areas.

8 | Monetary and fiscal stability

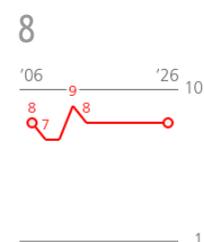
As a member of the CFA franc zone, Côte d'Ivoire cannot pursue an independent policy on currency and foreign exchange rates. Its currency is pegged to the euro, and the central bank of West African States – the Banque Centrale des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest – is fully independent with a primary focus on targeting inflation. In 2023, the real effective exchange rate against the euro was 97.0, according to the World Bank (indexed to 100 in 2010).

With some exceptions, such as a burst of inflation after the CFA franc was devalued in 1994 and a temporary peak of 6.3% in 2008 due to a surge in international food prices, this has resulted in relatively low inflation rates between 0.7% and 5% throughout the last decade, with a rate of -1.1% in 2019. These rates remained well below the 3% target of the West African Economic and Monetary Union until 2020. The pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine led to an increase in inflation, which stood at 4.4% in 2023.

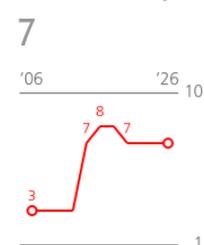
Since 2013, the debt-to-GDP ratio has shown a slight upward trend, increasing significantly in recent years from 38.4% in 2019 to 58.1% in 2024. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) perceives a moderate risk of debt distress but notes very limited space to absorb future shocks. In 2021/22, Côte d'Ivoire's sovereign ratings improved to historically high levels, with Fitch rating the country at BB-, despite rising debt, and this rating has been maintained since then.

The international crises had a major impact on the fiscal balance. COVID-related reductions in revenue and additional spending, as well as measures to contain the impact of the Russian invasion in Ukraine such as gasoline price caps, led to a budget deficit of 6.8% of GDP in 2022. According to IMF data, this fell to 5.2% in 2023, with a view to further fiscal consolidation in 2025 with an estimated 3.0% deficit.

Monetary stability



Fiscal stability



The IMF remains optimistic about public financial management and macroeconomic policies. The government has allocated more budgetary resources to infrastructure investment and priority spending by adhering to strict civil service recruitment guidelines, limiting transfers to public enterprises, strengthening customs collection and tax efforts and improving public financial management.

Notwithstanding ambitious public investment – including in education and health policies – government consumption has remained modest from a comparative perspective, accounting for 10.3% of GDP in 2023.

9 | Private Property

Property rights in Côte d'Ivoire are adequately defined but cannot be considered satisfactorily safeguarded by law, according to the World Bank. However, the country has made progress since 2011 in protecting property rights and acquiring property. Additionally, local culture generally supports property rights.

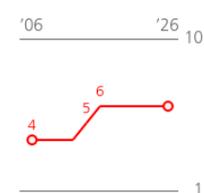
The biggest problem with property rights remains land tenure, especially the ability of domestic and foreign-born migrants to secure rights to the land they farm. With the state officially owning most of the land, informal land markets have emerged over time. The land law of 1998, which reserved land ownership to indigenous people, has not yet been fully implemented.

Very little land is actually titled; the legal provisions have remained unknown, the procedures have been too costly for many citizens or requests have simply been unsuccessful. Ivoirians might also be reluctant to pay the land tax once they have obtained their land title. Additional legal provisions from 2011, 2015 and 2019 aimed to provide mechanisms for dispute settlement and offer the possibility of land contracts even in the absence of certification. The government finally introduced the Agence foncière rurale in 2017 to strengthen communication, capacity-building and enforcement of the regulations, and to facilitate commercialization and agribusiness in the long run. Yet, providing secure access to land remains an enormous challenge.

Private companies are the backbone of the economy. The government encourages foreign investment, including in the privatization of state-owned and public firms, although in most cases the state retains an equity stake in the new company. Of the 82 state-owned enterprises, 28 are wholly government-owned and 12 are majority government-owned. In 2014, the government proposed a program to privatize a quarter of public enterprises, including 15 public or semi-public enterprises, banks and the sugar company Sucrivoire. By 2016, the Ivoirian state had ceded its shares in Sucrivoire, CIDT and the SIB bank, and by the end of 2017, Versus Bank and BHCI. However, the privatization of BHCI was canceled in 2020, and BHCI ultimately remained under majority state control. In January 2019, the government announced that, because of budgetary reasons, it was examining the possibility of further partial

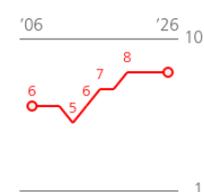
Property rights

6



Private enterprise

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privatization of 26 public firms, including CNCE, BNI and Petroci, as well as ceding state assets in 54 additional companies. According to official government data, nine of these partial privatizations have been completed, with eight processes ongoing.

Entrepreneur associations continue to complain about high domestic production costs, especially those related to electricity, poor transportation infrastructure and the banking sector. The International Monetary Fund has repeatedly expressed concern about the poor operating environment for business, but the country has significantly improved administrative procedures, created a new investment code and concentrated competencies in a single authority – the Guichet unique de formalité d'entreprises. However, other aspects of business activity, such as dealing with construction permits or paying taxes, continue to pose greater challenges.

Since 2016, the establishment of a specific commercial court has reduced the time required for business-related rulings. Furthermore, the government has approved new investment and mining codes that are business-oriented and offer significant incentives to private investors.

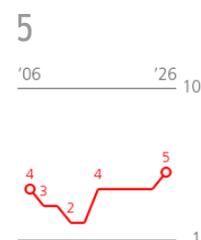
10 | Welfare Regime

The government has committed to poverty alleviation, but social protection remains incomplete. Life expectancy was 58.9 years in 2022 – one of the lowest figures worldwide. The government has made significant investments in free public education, including free materials for elementary schools. However, many children between ages 6 and 11 remain outside the school system. Public health expenditure was 1.0% of GDP in 2021. The government would need to invest substantially more to meet health-related SDGs. At the same time, Côte d'Ivoire's health performance – as measured by the incidence of malaria, tuberculosis and HIV prevalence – remained similar to that of the least developed countries, despite its higher level of development.

Employees in the public sector still have access to a relatively well-developed social security system, but only a small portion of the population is included in this category. The sizable informal sector helps reduce poverty, though the extent of its impact remains unknown.

Following the development of a National Strategy of Social Protection in 2013, the government implemented the Couverture Maladie Universelle (Universal Health Coverage) in 2014. This fee-based, publicly supported universal health insurance scheme was intended for both citizens and migrants residing in Côte d'Ivoire; however, it existed only on paper for several years. In 2019, the scheme was officially launched with a limited range of health care services. As of October 2024, a total of 15 million Ivoirians had registered, nearly half the population.

Social safety nets



PsGouv2, the main national social policy document, plans to spend 2.3% of GDP across five main areas, with half of the funds dedicated to improving living conditions through housing programs, supporting women's empowerment, and improving health care, access to drinking water, electricity and roads.

The World Bank facilitated the introduction of cash transfer programs for particularly vulnerable households, later relabeled productive cash transfer programs (PTMP), and continues to finance them for the period 2022 – 2026. Since 2023, the government has also launched the single social register (RSU) to better track targeted social spending, particularly in the sectors of health, education, social protection and youth employment. This should also help expand coverage of the PTMP by registering 100,000 beneficiaries by 2026.

Women lack adequate access to public office and educational institutions, as shown, for example, by the low percentage of women in parliament (14.2% in the parliament elected in 2021 despite a gender quota applied) and a lower female literacy rate (40.0% among women compared to 60.2% for men). Female enrollment in the education system still faces many challenges, especially in rural settings, although the situation has improved in recent years. The ratio of female to male enrollment at the primary level is now 1.0 and 0.9 at the secondary level. Women form 43.3% of the labor force.

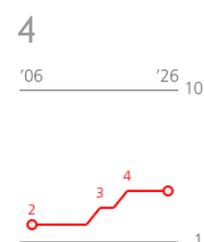
The government has been unsuccessful in enforcing the legal prohibition of female genital mutilation, even though the ban is enshrined in the 2016 constitution. Nonetheless, the practice remains prevalent in certain rural areas, with a rate of 38% nationwide and 80% in the northwest.

While equality of opportunity is protected by the constitution and other legal norms, minorities – such as people with albinism and members of the LGBTQ+ community – face discrimination and lack legal protection.

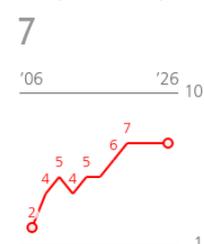
11 | Economic Performance

Côte d'Ivoire has recovered well from the decade of political-military crisis and the division of the country from 2002 to 2011. The country benefited from a strong structural foundation built in the three decades after independence. High cocoa prices and oil exploration in the Gulf of Guinea – sectors that remained largely unaffected by the conflict – spurred economic growth. Since 2011, most macroeconomic indicators have shown highly positive prospects. The average growth rate was 8.1% from 2012 to 2019, making Côte d'Ivoire one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa. The country also coped relatively well with the COVID-19 shock, experiencing 7% growth in 2021, as well as the economic fallout from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, with growth projected at 6.5% according to World Bank data. GDP per capita has steadily increased to \$7,791 (PPP, 2023), with GDP per capita

Equal opportunity



Output strength



growth of 3.9% in 2023. Public debt has risen in recent years, but debt risk remains manageable according to IMF projections (56.8% of GDP in 2023). Inflation stood at 4.4% in 2023.

The government announced success in its efforts to reduce unemployment, and the official unemployment rate stood at 2.4% in 2023, one of the lowest worldwide. This figure should be treated with caution mainly due to the relative importance of the informal sector.

The overall potential for further economic growth is perceived as strong. This could be achieved by strengthening the tax base (12.0% of GDP), increasing productivity in the agricultural sector and attracting more foreign direct investment, which has so far been moderate at 2.2% of GDP.

12 | Sustainability

Sustainable or green growth receives sporadic attention. The country has only recently begun to develop a framework for environmental policy needed to formulate nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and, regarding formal mechanisms, to monitor sustainable development goal (SDG) objectives.

Although ambitious goals to reduce emissions have not yet been achieved, the government recommitted in 2022 to increasing the share of renewable energy to 45% by 2030. That year, the government launched the Abidjan Legacy Program, aiming to enhance long-term sustainability across major value chains while protecting and restoring forests and lands, as well as improving communities' resilience to climate change. According to the World Bank, the country is still not investing enough in adaptation, despite visible signs of rising sea levels at the coast and new diseases affecting cocoa plants. The World Bank has estimated the cost of necessary investments to reach national climate goals at \$22 billion, which would equal an annual average cost of about 2% of GDP.

In 2020 Côte d'Ivoire adopted a revised National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy 2020 – 2030, which aims to strengthen the legislative and regulatory environment for disaster risk reduction and the technical capacity of institutions at both the national and local levels. Given the country's extreme climate vulnerability, the track record of existing adaptation policies has been poor, according to the IMF. A national early warning system has yet to be implemented.

A National Adaptation Plan and a new law on climate change have been in preparation since 2023, but the country still lacks a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework. Coordination across the institutions overseeing policy implementation in the sector is fragmented and differentiation of roles remains unclear.

Environmental
policy

3

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The country continues to depend on commodity exports, but decades of fiscal pressure on producers have led them to adopt extensive cultivation methods, which has nearly destroyed the stock of virgin forest, despite strict regulations restricting commercial logging and agricultural encroachment since the 1990s. Approximately 40% of smallholder cocoa production takes place in protected areas. In 2018, producer associations and the global cocoa industry launched the “Initiative cacao et forêt,” which uses satellite imagery to detect cocoa production in protected forest zones. In October 2019, the Ivorian government enacted new legal regulations (Forest Code) aimed at offering stronger protection for the remaining virgin forest, while still allowing agro-industrial use of protected areas that have already been depleted. Although enforcing environmental regulations remains challenging, recent data from the Global Forest Review of the World Resources Institute indicate that deforestation is not currently ongoing.

In terms of educational infrastructure, Côte d'Ivoire has a poor record. Since independence, the country has emphasized importing skilled individuals rather than developing its own training capacities. Expenditure on education has never been very low, reaching at times close to 5% but averaging 3.5% of GDP throughout the past decade and standing at 3.4% in 2023.

The literacy rate in Côte d'Ivoire has grown significantly in recent years, though it started from a very low baseline, and the U.N. Education Index for Côte d'Ivoire (0.421) underscores the considerable challenges the country continues to face in advancing universal, quality education. The net enrollment rate for primary schools was 90.3% in 2018, while the rate for secondary schools was 40.2%.

Many schools lack basic infrastructure such as drinking water, electricity, toilets and teaching materials. Additionally, the state continues to spend a disproportionate amount on administration compared to equipment and physical infrastructure. Gender inequality in education is significant, as shown by lower literacy rates among women and lower enrollment rates across all sectors (see the section on equal opportunity for further information).

The state does not invest in research and development. Universities have not recovered from the 10 years of political-military crisis, and there is little space and limited capacity for research.

Education policy /
R&D

3

'06 '26 10



Governance

I. Level of Difficulty

It is difficult to distinguish between structural constraints and those that are man-made and result from the actions of political leadership, especially since the same individuals have governed the country for the past 30 years.

In 2011, the Ouattara government inherited a country already impoverished, with low human development, a shrinking educated labor force, a highly polarized political process and violent social conflicts. One reason for the violent escalation of the conflict was the scarcity of land and an unsustainable agricultural strategy. However, with nearly 15 years of political stability now, the legacy of war has become less relevant for political decision-making.

Côte d'Ivoire had the most developed economic infrastructure in Francophone West Africa before the civil war. That production in the cocoa sector rose rapidly compared with the pre-2002 period shows the country is still benefiting from favorable climatic, geographical and structural conditions, though not in a sustainable way. In addition, the country has only recently begun to exploit its mineral resources such as oil and gas.

Global pandemics had relatively mild effects on Côte d'Ivoire, both during the Ebola and COVID-19 outbreaks.

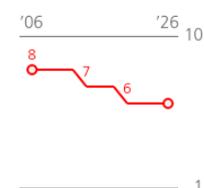
Traditions of civil society have always been weak and were further diminished during the extended civil conflict from 2002 to 2011. Voluntary organizations are primarily concentrated in the economic sector, where independent planter associations have existed since colonial times. However, these activities generally lack a civic or public engagement component.

The climate of intimidation and the militarization of public life since 1999 have effectively stifled the potential for greater civic participation in public affairs. Elements of civil society such as student unions became drivers of polarization and confrontation.

Since 2011, the framework conditions for civil society activism have clearly improved, and a 2014 law protected their status. However, a recent decree from 2024 increased financial reporting standards for NGOs. In general, the number of active civic associations remains quite low.

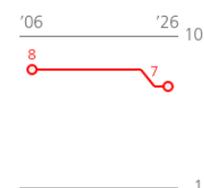
Structural constraints

6



Civil society traditions

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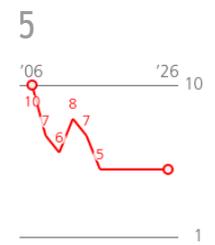


There are more than 50 ethnic groups in Côte d'Ivoire. After years of social harmony and encouragement of migrant labor by citizens of neighboring countries – initially by colonizers and later by the late President Houphouët-Boigny – successor governments have exploited ethnic resentments to gain political advantage.

Ultimately, the country plunged into a violent conflict with an explicit ethnic dimension. Although open military conflict was halted in late 2004, violence between communities continued, especially in the villages of the western cocoa belt. A new period of massive violent conflict followed the electoral crisis of 2010/11. While open violence has ceased since 2018 – with the exception of some isolated incidents during the presidential electoral campaign in August 2020 – Côte d'Ivoire remains a divided society where one segment of the population has sought to use its political dominance to establish a populist-nationalistic regime based on citizenship restricted to southerners. While Gbagbo and FPI cadres have all returned and rejoined the political process, the division of the political elite remains pronounced, as the Ouattara government did not make any attempt to be more inclusive than its predecessors.

In contrast to the political class, ethnic divisions are less pronounced among the broader population and there is no open mobilization along ethnic lines. However, the political class can easily manipulate ethnicity for political ends – they often do so.

Conflict intensity



II. Governance Performance

14 | Steering Capability

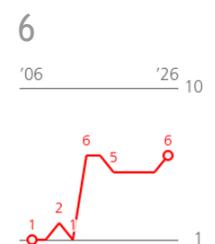
During the past few years, the Ouattara government has focused on economic reform and social policies. The broader strategy has aimed to strike a fair balance between promoting private investment, addressing the reorganization of key sectors and giving due attention to long-neglected priorities such as physical infrastructure, education and basic health services.

Overall, the government has developed a coherent agenda with strong support from the western international community, as confirmed by its handling of the COVID-19 crisis and its response to inflation following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The government is also focused on promoting local value chains in the cocoa sector, thereby reducing reliance on the export of mostly unprocessed cash crops. So far, though, the strategic priority has been to secure better prices for cocoa by bargaining with multinationals alongside Ghana, which certainly offers short-term benefits.

Question
Score

Prioritization



The government has certainly not prioritized addressing politically contentious issues, apparently hoping that economic growth and improved infrastructure would lower grievances – a calculation that ultimately proved correct, although the elections did not offer a level playing field. The strategy might also have helped immunize northern populations against jihadist mobilization.

The government has successfully implemented most of its reform agenda, addressing the reorganization of key sectors and prioritizing the implementation of large infrastructure projects – especially roads and electricity – as well as education and health. It has shown notable progress in improving access to electricity and increasing the literacy rate. Additionally, the government has effectively mobilized and allocated additional funds to combat the consequences of COVID-19, with all four special funds operational within three months of the pandemic's onset on the continent. With nearly 15 years in power, the government apparatus appears to be functioning effectively, extending state power to peripheral regions in the west and north that have historically been marginalized and heavily impacted by civil war and territorial separation.

The government has also apparently become much more effective in managing the security apparatus after years of mutinies and conflicts within the army. This was confirmed in the run-up to the presidential elections, when former rebel commander and disqualified presidential candidate Soro called for the army to withdraw its loyalty from the government, without success.

Other areas that required more reform, such as judicial reform, decentralization or the fight against corruption, were not prioritized and thus were not thoroughly implemented due to the technical complexity of the issues as well as the political resistance of key actors within the government.

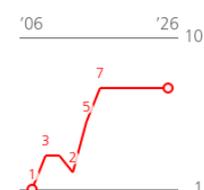
Within the government apparatus, it would be difficult to clearly identify reform advocates and status quo defenders. The broader economic reform agenda faces no obvious opposition within the cabinet.

The country has been governed by the same president, along with a key group of technocrats, for more than a decade. These elite individuals have maintained their authority by successfully adapting to changing conditions. However, it remains unclear to what extent policy learning and innovative approaches are encouraged within the policymaking process, as well as where institutionalized mechanisms exist to support such innovation.

The government has demonstrated a pragmatic approach, clearly learning from evaluations of previous reforms. For example, in the cocoa, cotton and cashew sectors, this has resulted in a reassessment of the state's role in managing the cocoa market and regulating prices.

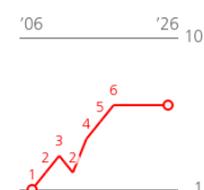
Implementation

7



Policy learning

6



The government also surprised many by announcing in late 2024 the departure of the French military contingent, anticipating a growing anti-French mobilization in the region and country. This step probably did not result from more institutionalized mechanisms of policy learning but demonstrated the flexibility to engage in policy change.

15 | Resource Efficiency

As President Ouattara has led the government since 2010 and relied on a stable core team of ministers and advisers, there is relatively little turnover among top government officials, especially compared with other African states.

Budget policies and their transparency have been praised by the IMF, and most observers agree that budgetary consolidation will likely succeed – even in the face of pandemic- and war-related dynamics.

The management of cocoa markets has involved successful coordination with neighboring Ghana, officially launched in March 2018 by both presidents. The objective was to extract a surplus paid by global market actors to producers in both countries. Additionally, the Ivorian government forwarded the “living income differential” to local farmers at the beginning of the 2020/21 harvesting season. This was accompanied by a significantly increased minimum farmgate price, albeit in the context of the presidential electoral campaign.

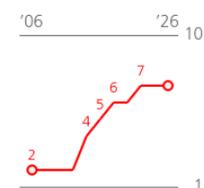
Decentralization is not a priority for the current government, and the country has a weak tradition of decentralized governance. This presents a challenge not only for increasing demand-driven local governance but also for developing a coherent strategy for economic development and transformation that aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Currently, 80% of economic activity occurs in the capital city of Abidjan, highlighting the government’s inefficient use of economic potential outside the capital.

The government has apparently managed in recent years to adopt a more centralized style of policy coordination, which may also reflect the strong personalization within Ouattara’s presidential system and his increasing capacity to marginalize competing networks. The government appears to be an efficient apparatus, and conflicts between departments rarely reach the public.

Coherence in policymaking, however, might result more from the concentration of decision-making in the hands of the president and a technocratic advisory team – rather than from any formalized coordination mechanism.

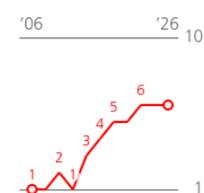
Efficient use of assets

7



Policy coordination

6



The severe economic downturn during the years of political-military conflict led to higher levels of generalized corruption – both petty and bureaucratic – and venality at all levels of public administration, especially in judicial proceedings, contract awards and customs and tax issues. The highly publicized arrests of top managers in the cocoa sector and public officials in the context of the toxic waste scandal during the 2010s certainly did not result from any systematic anti-corruption policies. In some of these cases, the state was even unable to present sufficient evidence, and the accused had to be released without charge.

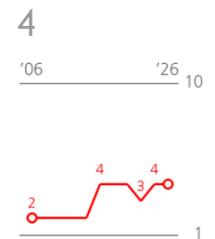
Initially, it appeared that the fight against corruption featured more prominently on the Ouattara government's agenda. The president, previously the only person required by law to declare his interests and assets, required his ministers to sign an anti-corruption oath but was soon accused of appointing his own close family members to top government positions. In 2014, a presidential decree extended the asset declaration requirement to all top politicians at the national level, including parliamentarians, district governors, mayors and top managers of public companies and institutions (later included as Art. 41 in the 2018 constitution). Although approximately 5,600 people were affected, it remains unclear what the consequences of such declarations might be, given the lack of public transparency and control over property changes during public officials' tenure. By January 2024, only 84% of the required officeholders had declared their assets. In any case, as the declarations remain confidential, watchdog organizations indicated that this might only strengthen the accountability of these individuals to the president.

A National Plan on Good Governance and the Fight Against Corruption was launched in 2013, along with a new institution, the High Authority for Good Governance (HABG), which has operated since 2014. Legal proceedings in the first corruption case prepared by the High Authority for Good Governance began in December 2019 in Abidjan. Since 2020, the authority has become more active and handles up to about 120 cases per year, reported by concerned citizens to the authority.

The additional institutions intended to oversee the use of public funds – the Inspecteur General des Finances and the Cour des Comptes (established as an autonomous body in 2018) – face various challenges in preventing abuse and corruption. Each year, the Cour des Comptes publishes auditing reports on government expenditure, highlighting specific gaps in accounting procedures. Investigative journalists are the primary actors exposing misconduct, implicating both current and former ministers. However, in most instances this does not result in legal or political consequences.

According to the 2004 law, political parties are required to submit annual financial reports to the Cour des Comptes, but parties never sent such reports, including information about how they spent the subsidies granted to all parties that received at least 10% of the popular vote in the legislative elections.

Anti-corruption
policy



The effectiveness of the government's anti-corruption policies and institutions remains unclear. The HABG participates in official investigations and publishes annual reports about its activities in prevention, awareness-raising and investigation. However, it is not a judicial body that can effectively sanction corrupt practices. Watchdog organizations have criticized the government for the lack of political mobilization around the need to fight corruption.

In April 2021, a new Ministry for Good Governance, Capacity-Building and the Fight against Corruption was established. In September 2023, however, the ministry was dissolved and the incumbent minister, Zoro Ballo, was appointed president of the HABG.

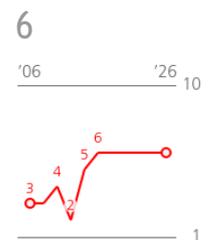
According to the most recent Afrobarometer data, 60.3% of the population believes the government needs to do much more. However, it remains unclear whether the government truly considers the fight against corruption a priority.

16 | Consensus-Building

The political leadership that has ruled the country since 2011 has expressed a general commitment to democratic and economic transformation. However, the implementation of this agenda does not reflect a broad political consensus. The previous Gbagbo government was not anti-democratic in its ideology; however, the debate over Ivoirité (nationalism) arose from conflicts between different notions of democracy. On one side was a narrow, exclusionary concept based on descent, the rights of autochthonous Ivoirians and the majoritarian principle. On the other side was a more tolerant, inclusionary notion of citizenship. Many Southerners and their parties (FPI and PPA-CI) continue to adhere to this narrow understanding, driven by the belief that Ouattara is not Ivoirian and that the state has been captured by foreigners. Once in power, the Ouattara side has largely continued the legacy of interpreting democracy primarily in majoritarian terms, although not based on ethnicity. As a result, hopes for a more inclusionary interpretation of democracy have been disappointed. The recent electoral cycle (2020 – 2021) – with term limit evasions, electoral violence and the formation of parallel governments – casts doubt on whether democracy, even in its narrowest form, is genuinely accepted by all elite actors, including the president himself and his ruling party.

The Ouattara government is considered a staunch defender of a liberal economy, but its policies have become quite mainstream and have strengthened state intervention. This is evident in several areas, including the cocoa sector, large infrastructure investment projects, the strong promotion of public health and basic public education and, certainly, their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is less clear to what extent the government perceives its economic agenda as leading to any substantial transformation. The opposition has not been vocal on economic policies, and there is significant consensus on economic development and strategies to move forward.

Consensus on goals



It is less clear to what extent the government itself pursues a strategy of democratization, although democracy as a long-term objective is not contested. Within the political elite, no actor or party challenges democracy as such, and even the more radical opposition parties appear to have been successfully co-opted into the political system after many years when people expected violent rebellion.

There is still some uncertainty about the extent to which military actors would accept the supremacy of a different government; however, the army has not acted as an anti-democratic force in recent years. Although there have been isolated jihadist attacks in the northeastern part of the country, no local jihadist movement has yet emerged to challenge the democratic order.

Both the former Gbagbo government and the current Ouattara administration have done little to depolarize existing cleavages. Côte d'Ivoire is nearly a textbook example of the violent politicization of ethnicity. Between 2001 and 2006, individuals were harassed or killed because of their ethnic and linguistic affiliations by death squads tolerated or even armed by the government. The subsequent decline in killings and ethnic violence was mainly due to the significant international military presence in the country, rather than any change in political management by Ivorian actors. The political-military division of the country, although it formally ended in 2009, was a physical manifestation of sociocultural cleavages. The post-electoral crisis of late 2010 and early 2011 saw new waves of ethnically motivated killings, with both sides – and their allied militias – involved.

The administration of President Ouattara has not systematically fueled ethnic tensions. However, it has done little, if anything, to depolarize cleavages. Ethnic divisions remain salient in most parts of the country – also due to the contested land regime. Elections in 2015 – 2016 and 2020 did not lead to a new major outbreak of violence, and the political salience of ethnicity might have declined somewhat recently, but few local observers believe the government is concerned with strengthening a broader societal consensus.

The government restricts civil society's involvement in the policymaking process as much as possible. In 2016, constitutional reform took place with the participation of hand-picked academics and influential personalities, but without broader consultation with civil society. In 2019 – 20, when the government was compelled to reform the electoral commission, civil society fruitlessly urged the government to engage in a comprehensive discussion of institutional reforms. Subsequently, all non-governmental actors involved rejected the minimal reform steps.

Civil society has been unable to find a role in combating corruption. Except for trade unions, the current government – unless directly pressured from outside, as in the accreditation of the National Human Rights Commission or with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) – does not proactively involve civil society actors.

Anti-democratic actors

4

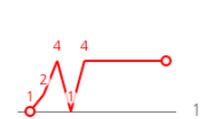
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Cleavage / conflict management

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Public consultation

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From the government's perspective, reconciliation has been achieved, most visibly by the return of former President Laurent Gbagbo and many FPI cadres to Côte d'Ivoire. "Reconciliation" meetings took place between Ouattara and Gbagbo in 2022. Earlier, in 2018, the president pardoned 80 former FPI politicians, including Simone Gbagbo, the former president's wife, who was convicted of war crimes and imprisoned for up to 20 years.

In many ways, elites might have found ways to resolve their differences. It is much less clear how the many human rights violations that occurred between 2002 and 2011 have been addressed. The work of the National Reconciliation Commission, chaired by former PDCI Prime Minister Charles Konan Banny (2012 – 2014), remained contested. The National Commission for the Reconciliation and Compensation of Victims and the National Program for Social Cohesion worked between 2015 and 2017 to identify victims of past violence and provide reparations. However, victims complained about the small sums made available and the government's assumption that reconciliation had been successfully completed.

The general perception in Côte d'Ivoire is that the Ouattara government, rather than engaging seriously in reconciliation, imposed severe punishments on the "former enemies" due to widespread human rights violations and later granted them pardons – a move that has drawn protest from many human rights defenders in Côte d'Ivoire.

17 | International Cooperation

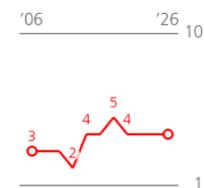
The government has managed its relationships with the international community well, with the president having worked for the IMF in the past. International funding has contributed to reaching the objectives set by the government, although most external funding occurred on a non-concessional basis. As Côte d'Ivoire aspires to become an "emergent economy," both the previous and current National Development Strategy (2021 – 2025) rely not heavily on concessional development loans but on mobilizing private capital. Major infrastructure gaps have thus been filled in recent years by leveraging the country's international reputation.

The government has clearly prioritized maintaining good relations with donor organizations – dominated by Western actors – while other international actors such as China have been more important as trade or investment partners.

The current president and the core ruling team are well aware that the international community was essential in securing his access to office and that the country's stability will depend on the government's ability to maintain international trust and reputation. This does not exclude the possibility of inconsistent policymaking within the administration.

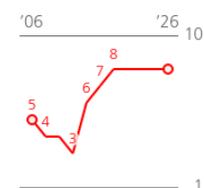
Reconciliation

4



Effective use of support

8



President Ouattara, as well as his prime ministers, has been considered a reliable partner by the international community. International trust in the economic reform program is certainly much greater than confidence in the government's capacity to promote a more inclusive democratization agenda, yet it is unclear how much this remains a core priority for development partners in a changing geopolitical environment. Ouattara's decision to stand for a third term in the 2020 elections dealt a severe blow to his credibility, not only at home but also in parts of the international community.

The country's relationship with France has undergone various stages. The former colonial power remains Côte d'Ivoire's main economic partner and bilateral donor and maintains a permanent military base in Abidjan, although this will be phased out. The current government is on good terms with France, and given the instability in the region, Côte d'Ivoire's strategic importance for Western powers and France is likely to increase even more. The U.S. has apparently been considering establishing a military base in the north of Côte d'Ivoire, replacing the base it had maintained in Niger until 2024.

In terms of international legal obligations, the government has made some effort to comply with the requirements for reporting to the various human rights protocols the country previously signed and ratified, and it has so far fulfilled nearly all requirements. It has ratified the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement but has never been actively involved in dispute settlement.

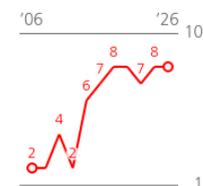
In 2017, Côte d'Ivoire accepted a decision by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea to award a disputed maritime area, where gas reserves are explored, to neighboring Ghana. Côte d'Ivoire was the only African country to accede to the Rome Statute after 2010, joining in 2013. However, the International Criminal Court had a significant impact on the country as former President Gbagbo and his militia leader Blé Goudé faced trial in The Hague. They were eventually acquitted in early 2019.

Regional bodies such as the Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine (UEMOA) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) play a prominent role in Ivorian politics. Both organizations were influential in bringing down the Gbagbo government in 2011, and Gbagbo's nationalist policies had concerned leaders in Sahel countries with large emigrant communities in Côte d'Ivoire – though his anti-French stance won him supporters in neighboring Ghana.

ECOWAS welcomed Ouattara's victory. Since then, Ouattara has sought to play an active, constructive role in regional politics and maintain good relationships with neighboring countries. ECOWAS also refrained from commenting on Ouattara's third-term bid and congratulated him on his successful re-election in November 2020.

Credibility

8



Regional cooperation

7



President Ouattara played a key role in advocating for ECOWAS military intervention in Mali and initially showed a strong interest in promoting military cooperation with neighboring governments in Burkina Faso and Mali to combat jihadist groups. At the same time, Côte d'Ivoire was widely regarded as one of the main advocates for ECOWAS economic sanctions against the military regimes in the Sahel, a move that also faced criticism within Côte d'Ivoire. Given the major crisis facing ECOWAS, the Ivorian government has not demonstrated regional leadership in addressing the situation in recent years.

After Gbagbo's defeat in 2011, relations with Ghana and Liberia were temporarily strained due to the apparently tolerated presence of former top FPI officials in these countries and, in the case of Liberia, the continued influx of militias. However, since 2014, bilateral relations have greatly improved with both neighbors, especially during the tenure of Ghanaian President Akufo-Addo (2017 – 25).

Côte d'Ivoire has maintained a relatively low profile within the African Union (AU). The Ivorian government has rejected the decision of the African Court on Human and People's Rights to consider the Ivorian electoral law a violation of human rights.

Strategic Outlook

Côte d'Ivoire's trajectory is increasingly characterized by the consolidation of a competitive-authoritarian regime. From the perspective of President Ouattara and the ruling elites, this shift appears to be viewed as a necessary step toward political stability and economic growth. Yet with the 83-year-old president running what is effectively a one-man show, it remains unclear whether centralizing power in the presidency is a sustainable path to stability. The absence of generational renewal among the elite adds to the uncertainty about the medium-term prospects of this political model. Whether the political class is capable of organizing open competition without triggering violence is still in question.

Hopes for comprehensive institutional reform have faded. Power has become increasingly centralized, with little sign of meaningful power-sharing or decentralization. The president and his party continue to wield considerable control over opposition leaders and political movements, facing minimal checks from constitutional veto players, civil society, or the once-powerful security apparatus. Even in the face of pandemic-related pressures and inflation following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, large-scale protests have not materialized. There is broad political consensus, however, on the need to confront jihadist threats spilling over from the Sahel.

At the same time, the Ivorian government remains one of the region's few reliable Western partners in advancing a liberal, development-oriented agenda. President Ouattara's commitment to market-friendly policies is not in doubt, nor is his administration's ability to modernize infrastructure. The country has seen strong economic growth, driven by technocratic governance supported by both the presidency and international backers. Still, the economy remains heavily dependent on environmentally unsustainable cocoa production and other agricultural exports. Poverty and low levels of human development persist, underscoring the need for major investments in health care, education, and digital infrastructure. Tackling corruption will also be essential for preserving the political system's legitimacy and fostering social cohesion.

The government continues to embrace core principles of the market economy while seeking to build a developmental state, maintaining strategic control over prices in key agricultural sectors and selectively privatizing production and services. Future economic and political prospects will hinge in part on regional and global conditions. Neighboring Sahelian states such as Mali and Burkina Faso are grappling with weak state control, prolonged conflict and open hostility toward Western influence. Maintaining strong economic and social relationships with these neighbors will be a significant governance challenge, as it requires protecting Côte d'Ivoire from the impact of war economies, criminal networks, violent conflicts in the region and the spread of anti-Western propaganda.