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ISCCI Summer Research Grant Report

The ISCCI Summer research scholarship allowed me to take four weeks off work to conduct extensive research on my thesis topic. I have fulfilled my objectives of conducting a literature review, the bibliography of which can be found at the end of this report, and refining my topic. My research covered three main areas. Firstly, I spent the majority of my time exploring the factors surrounding the colonisation and decolonisation of Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea from before the 1950s to the 1990s when democratic elections were held in both countries for the first time. Although my original idea of comparing these two countries was interesting and relevant, particularly concerning the events of the 1950s and 60s, I discovered that there is an inequality of material available. In particular, there is very little information available in Australia concerning the history and politics of Guinea. This may not have deterred me however, from my original task, had not recent developments in Côte d'Ivoire significantly shifted the focus of my interest.

Since beginning my research, the political situation of Côte d'Ivoire has exploded into civil war, and the French are currently playing the role of mediators in the conflict having sent peace-keeping forces as well as political negotiators. The situation is directly relevant to my original questions concerning the French rights and responsibilities pertaining to involvement in the political, economic and social affairs of their ex-colonies. I have thus changed the framework of my thesis to focus on French involvement in the civil war of Côte d'Ivoire, and will now focus more on developments in Côte d'Ivoire after the death of its president, Félix Houphouët de Boigny, in 1993. Following the progress of events in the Ivoirian conflict has constituted my second area of research during the Summer.

In addition to these two main research topics I have been examining the works of Aimé Césaire (particularly *Discours sur le colonialisme*), Frantz Fanon (particularly *Peau noire, masques blancs*), Albert Memmi (particularly *Portrait du colonisé*) and Octave Mannoni (particularly *Prospero et Caliban*) who wrote extensively on the psychology of the colonised/coloniser relationship. While their books were written before the period of focus for my thesis, their propositions concerning race relationships and the ideological as well as material impact of colonialism on colonised peoples and countries are essential to an understanding of the reasons for decolonisation and consequent development, and are still relevant today in an arguably neo-colonial world.

Thesis Plan: Côte d'Ivoire civil war – causes and solutions

Introduction

Framework of thesis

Scope – area of focus – Côte d'Ivoire – civil war

Themes

Issues at Stake

Ch 1: Background (3000)

West Africa in decolonisation

1958 vote

The French West African dependencies

Houphouët de Boigny

Economic & social policies – cash crops etc

Development

French interest and support

Other major players or interests

Influx of Refugees

Post-Houphouët collapse

Ch 2: The civil war: (2000)

Parties

Interests

Geographic area

Major events in war

Type of War (behaviour of armies)

Ch 3: Ethnicity and Nationalism (+ other problems from colonialism) (3500)

Colonial boundaries

Ivoirité problem – aims, consequences

Ivoirians joined by other Africans, fighting in traditional ethnic groups

Refugees returning home, moving on

Ch 4: The French in Côte d'Ivoire (+ other players) (3500)

French interests: historical, economic ties

Troops - peacekeeping/police-keeping and international law + mercenaries

Player & arbiter

Humanitarian intervention

Mediators – Quay d'Orsay

Reactions – rebels, government forces

Linan-Marcoussis agreement

Ch 5: Conclusions (solutions, effects, theory) (3000)

Collapsed State

Regional unity

Sovereignty

Dependency

Summary of Summer Research:

Background history of Côte d'Ivoire (and Guinea)

Before the 1950s

Production of cotton and other primary products

Under the French colonial system, colonial plantations employed African labour and grew primary crops such as coffee for export to the French domestic markets. As France wanted to reduce the textile industry's dependence on American cotton, officials soon began to pursue a policy of coercion, to enforce production of cotton in Africa, where subsistence farming would in fact have been more economic for the indigenous people. Even guaranteed prices in the metropolitan market could not prevent the food crises in Northern Côte d'Ivoire, particularly between the two World Wars.¹

WWII saw not only the drafting of Africans into the French army, but also the changing of services to meet France's war needs, mirroring the "food for victory" campaign of WWI. German occupation of France from 1942 had the effect of cutting France off from its African territories, and as the "home market" was thus lost, trade was redirected to the US, causing problems for France after the war.²

Forced labour

All indigenous people in French West Africa had to donate ten to twelve days of forced labour a year on the French plantations from the beginning of the century. The banning of this corvée system in 1944 caused problems for emergent African cash crop farmers who had trouble recruiting the cheap labour that had become necessary for production.³

Politics of Côte d'Ivoire

There were two positions for Ivoirians in the French parliament, from which they could influence the politics of the entire French empire. However, the ordinary people could only be involved in the "election" of tribal chiefs, most of whom were hereditary. The traditional chief, France-educated doctor and founder of the

¹ Allen Isaacman and Richard Roberts, "Cotton, Colonialism and Social History in Sub-Saharan Africa", in Allen Isaacman and Richard Roberts (eds.), Cotton, Colonialism, and Social History in Sub-Saharan Africa, Heinemann, Portsmouth, 1995, p 35

² Peter Anyang'Nyong'o, "The Development of Agrarian Capitalist Classes in the Ivory Coast, 1945-1975", in Paul M. Lubeck, The African Bourgeoisie: Capitalist Development in Nigeria, Kenya, and the Ivory Coast, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 1987, p 187

³ Jean Planchais, L'Empire Embrassé, 1946-1962, Editions Denoël, Paris, 1990, p. 170

Rassemblement Démocratique Africa (RDA – the first French African political party), Félix Houphouët de Boigny, was effectively elected as Côte d'Ivoire's territorial leader by 2.4% of the population.⁴

The RDA and the Communist affair

With the onset of the Cold War, the Communists were dispelled from the French National Assembly and attempts were made to destroy their allies, the RDA, particularly in its perceived stronghold, Côte d'Ivoire. Ironically, Houphouët's Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI – territorial branch of the RDA) was conservative RDA, supported by Ivoirian coffee and cocoa planters. However, always the political pragmatist, Houphouët bowed to French pressure and severed his connection with the French Communists because he understood the economic benefits of cooperation with France.⁵

1950-1960

The loi-cadre

The 23 June 1956 realist and legitimising *loi-cadre* gave individual African territories responsibility over the most difficult financial and political affairs and extended “universal” suffrage while leaving France with significant influential powers.⁶

Referendum of 1958

The *loi-cadre* was the first significant step towards a new constitution which was to consider the possibilities for future independence of the territories. The main debate over the next two years was whether the set-up under the new constitution should entail the two federations of French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa managed by a France/Africa confederation; or a Community in which individual territories would have more of an equal membership with France.⁷

Côte d'Ivoire, perhaps the most powerful of the territories, was among those in favour of individual agreements. Houphouët was mainly concerned with preventing his surplus revenues from being distributed to poorer territories as they had been in

⁴ *ibid.* p. 169

⁵ Henri Grimal, Translated by Stephan De Vos, Decolonisation: The British, French, Dutch and Belgian empires 1919-1963, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London and Henley, 1965, p. 360

⁶ Basil Davidson, Let Freedom Come: Africa in Modern History, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, Toronto, London, 1978, p. 254

⁷ Jean Planchais, op. cit., p. 190

the past. He was on the French interministerial committee that eventually rejected confederation as likely to loosen political links between France and the new states.⁸

The referendum of 1958 gave each territory the choice between ‘yes’ for the Community and possible negotiated future independence, or ‘no’ for immediate independence. Only Guinea returned a ‘no’ vote.⁹

Consequences of Guinea’s rejection

With independence, all French services were immediately withdrawn from Guinea, and their hopes of future aid effectively destroyed. This led Guinea’s president, Sékou Touré, to turn to Communist markets, aid and ideology. While a 1959 agreement allowed Guinea to remain in the franc zone and exchange ambassadors with France, the relationship never developed. One positive consequence of Guinea’s rejection of the Community was that it smoothed the path to independence for states such as Mali and Madagascar who were not forced to make the choice between political freedom and French support.¹⁰

Independence of remaining territories

As more countries gained their independence in Africa, achieving individual membership of the Afro-Asia group at the UN, and even Guinea appeared successful, Houphouët felt the growing desire for full independence in Côte d’Ivoire and neighbouring territories. He was able to adapt, and although disappointed in the French lack of faith in himself and the Community, by 1960 was the leader persuading France to grant full independence to its West African territories as well as to pledge future aid.¹¹

Industrialisation of French West Africa

From 1950, French West Africa saw accelerated development and industrialisation. However, most industries were run by expatriates, and only a very small proportion of the population was employed thereby. The French may have been worried about the effects of development transforming their client states into successful merchants.¹²

⁸ Henri Grimal, *op. cit.*, p. 373

⁹ Basil Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 254

¹⁰ Wilson, J. L. J. (ed.) “Independence in French Africa”, *Current Affairs Bulletin*, Vol. 26, No. 12, Oct. 17, 1960, Department of Tutorial Classes in the University of Sydney, p. 181

¹¹ Henri Grimal, *op. cit.*, p. 380

¹² Jean Planchais, *op. cit.*, p. 202

1960s to 1990s

France's influence as a neo-colonial power

Widespread French African independence in 1960 did little to diminish French influence, particularly in the areas of military support and cultural domination. The Côte d'Ivoire also continued to depend on French imports of coffee and other primary products at protected prices to prop up their economy.¹³

State of politics in independent French West Africa

The "democratic" leaders who had pledged to free their people from the tyranny of colonial rule were soon seen to be mainly concerned with adjudication between elites and personally benefitting from French support. However, Houphouët's dictatorship led his country to become one of the strongest economies of West Africa.¹⁴

State of development in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea

Côte d'Ivoire's economy flourished, although it was based on the fluctuating prices of coffee and cocoa, while Guinea's saw a steady decline, despite its rich mineral deposits. The latter country is still in dire need of changes to its social and economic structure. Côte d'Ivoire's economic success discounts its inequality of distribution. Women and the substantial village population were particularly disadvantaged, but the standard of living and work prospects here were still far superior to those in neighbouring countries from which flowed thousands of seasonal labourers, immigrants and refugees. A policy of Ivoirisation was pursued, whereby Côte d'Ivoire citizens were to replace foreigners, including other Africans, in employment. However, restriction of immigration has been difficult and politically unacceptable. Although by 1987 Côte d'Ivoire had the highest minimum wage of West Africa, falling coffee and cocoa prices were to force many small planters back to subsistence farming.¹⁵

Influence of the rest of the world

The EEC (now EU) and the US have been major donors of financial and technical aid to the Côte d'Ivoire. Investment has also been forthcoming due to perceived Ivoirian political stability. A number of World Bank development projects have been of dubious benefit both in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea.¹⁶

¹³ Peter Anyang'Nyong'o, *op. cit.*, p 208

¹⁴ Basil Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 329

¹⁵ Peter Anyang'Nyong'o, *op. cit.*, p 205

¹⁶ Tchetché N'Guessan, "The Socioeconomic Impact of the World Bank and the African Development Bank on African Countries: The case of the Ivory Coast", in Werner Baer and John F. Due (eds.), Brazil and the Ivory Coast: The impact of international lending, investment and aid, Contemporary

The Civil War of Côte d'Ivoire

The civil war of 2002-03 in Côte d'Ivoire has its roots in the problem of Ivoirisation which began with independence in 1960 but was popularised during the 1990s and has been steadily growing more extreme. At first the idea was to replace all foreign workers with Côte d'Ivoire nationals, especially in those roles perceived as more prestigious such as in management and the public service. However, preventing immigration from neighbouring poorer countries was politically unacceptable in a situation whereby foreign Africans in Côte d'Ivoire, although earning little and living in poor conditions were nevertheless better off than in their country of origin. Many originally seasonal labourers, such as the Mossi from the Upper Volta, remained in Côte d'Ivoire and have been living there since the 1950s and 60s. However, the resurgence of the Ivoirisation movement saw the Christian government of the South taking citizenship away from many of these immigrants as well as from Muslims in the North of the country who had been there for decades.

Deeper than the problem of ethnicity however, runs the question of survival in Africa. Ivoirisation began and has continued because of the problems in distributing meagre resources, particularly of land and water, even in the relatively rich country of Côte d'Ivoire. Those in power try to find ways of preserving a certain standard of living for their own kind. The artificiality of a nationalism which relies on Western-drawn borders cutting across traditional ethnic and religious lines is a source of anger for many of those now demanding equal rights.

The civil war began with a military uprising against President Laurent Gbagbo in September 2002. The leader of the uprising, General Robert Gueï, head of the previous military stratocracy and member of the Western Yacouba tribe, was killed during the first hours of the uprising, which only further incited his followers. The MPCJ (Mouvement patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire – *Patriotic Movement of Côte d'Ivoire*) are mostly Muslim and control the North of the country. They are calling for the resignation of the president, democratic elections and rights for Northerners. The MPIGO (Mouvement populaire ivoirien de Grand Ouest – *Ivoirian Popular Movement of the Great West*) and the MJP (Mouvement pour la justice et la paix – *Movement for Justice and Peace*) entered the fray later. They mainly comprise people

from the ethnic groups of the Yacouba and are apparently backed by Liberian rebels of the same tribe. They are calling for similar measures as the rebels of the North, hoping for elevated tribal rights.

The French army is ostensibly in Côte d'Ivoire to enforce cease-fires and protect foreign civilians, but the French ambassador is known to be close to Laurent Gbagbo and significant questions have been raised over the French ability to be objective. Many accuse the French of trying to intervene when it is too late and with little understanding of the issues. The Ivoirian president gained UN Security Council support, but the rebels claimed he has no legitimacy and have no such option of seeking a UN mandate. Most recently (as of 01/05/03), a unity government has been constructed as provided for by the France-sponsored Lina-Marcoussis peace agreement. Laurent Gbagbo retains his status as president, but the Muslim Seydou Diarra is now the Prime Minister. The rebels have 9 of the 41 seats of parliament, and politically, the situation appears to be reaching a resolution. However, in real terms fierce fighting continues, particularly in the west of the country where Félix Doh, the leader of the MPIGO, has been killed, possibly by rebels previously fighting alongside him.

Césaire, Fanon, Mannoni and Memmi

Mannoni, Octave, Prospero et Caliban: Psychologie de la colonisation, Editions universitaires, Paris, 1984

Mannoni's central premise is that rather than judging the "natives" by European measures of development and intelligence, we should understand that the indigenous people are a different race, have a different culture, and hence a different concept of reality to that of Europeans. He believes indigenous people can be psychologically analysed to explain their behaviour. In a sense, he considers that they were partially accountable for the "colonial situation". In particular, he develops what he calls a "dependency complex", supposedly inherent in the Malagasies, which leads them to fall naturally into the role of the colonised people. Today, Mannoni would perhaps argue that the poor countries are psychologically in need of dependence on Western countries.

Césaire, Aimé, Discours sur le colonialisme, Présence Africaine, Paris, 1955

Césaire has a very negative response to Mannoni's thesis, as he does toward all those who do not agree with his urging of "black power". He rejects Mannoni's concept of the "dependency complex". In fact, Césaire's analysis is rather closer to that of Mannoni than he would perhaps like to admit. He too sees Negroes as a race apart from the white people who cannot be judged on the same scale. The difference is in the importance he attaches to the positive aspects of this race. Césaire is the father of "negritude", by which one learns to be proud of one's African origins, rather than trying to change to be like Europeans, to measure one's worth against that of Europeans. On the one hand, Césaire is racist, appears to detest all things European, and can only be excused because his attitude is a reaction against the injustices and inhumanities played out upon himself and his people throughout colonialism. On the other hand, the concept of negritude accepts European definitions of the Negro race. What the Europeans saw as negative qualities, the Negro transforms into positives, but the qualities themselves would appear to remain. There is a 'yes' to black people being closer to the earth, to nature, to "primitivism", a 'yes' to a black soul with tribal instincts, and while these qualities are portrayed in a positive light, the idea is at one with Mannoni's concept of a specifically black personality. Césaire would say that the solution to the problem of modern exploitation lies in regional unity, and that Africa as a block could defy Europe and the US.

Fanon, Frantz, Peau noire, masques blancs, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1952

Fanon is at once more temperate, more complex, clearer and more convincing than either of the two authors above. He is passionate on many issues, but *Peau noire, masques blancs* is one of his earlier works, and he is less fundamentalist in his ideas on many issues than he was to become. He rejects Mannoni's thesis and praises the courage of Césaire, and yet he does not fully agree with the concept of negritude. Fanon does not want to be classified as a Negro but as a man. He dislikes the classification of Negroes as a separate race whether positive or negative, and so does not feel comfortable with the idea of negritude, admirable as it is as a rebellion against colonialism, because it takes the fact of blackness as a positive quality which sets Negroes apart from Europeans. Fanon understands Negroes who try to turn themselves into white people, but he cannot accept this. Nor can he accept, although again he understands, the despairing Negro who accepts his position of inferiority. His premise requires more of a general transformation of thought amongst Europeans. He wishes them to become entirely colourblind. Today he would demonstrate the futility of racial hatred against any ethnic group and deplore both the fracturing of Africa along old tribal lines, and the reliance on European intervention.

Memmi, Albert, Portrait du colonisé, Petite Bibliothèque Payot, Paris, 1973

Memmi does not take it upon himself to criticise those writers who came before him. However, he is concerned with the origins and effects of images, the perspectives colonising and colonised people have of each other. He shows how European classifications can be viewed in a positive or negative light and demonstrates the same progression as Mannoni from admirer of European values, to rejection, to a return to tradition, hate of European values and eventual revolution. He does see differences between the psychology of the colonised and the colonisers, but unlike Mannoni, he does not see this as inherent in their race, but as a direct social result of the state of colonisation. The fashionable notions, as he calls them, of "dependency complex" and "colonisability" must be the result of colonisation, not the cause. Like Fanon, he dislikes classifications, either positive or negative, but goes further toward explaining where they come from. He may not be a follower of Césaire's negritude, but can understand it. Memmi would today show how ongoing exploitation is justified according to the old colonial myth that Africans create problems for themselves which can then only be solved using superior European political, military and economic skills.

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