Reconciliation Process and Governance under Alassane
Ouattara since the End of Post-electoral Crisis in 2011

Who is Ivoirian? The Ivoirian State for whom and for what? These were the questions which tore apart the country during the 1990s and 2000s. Côte d'Ivoire's post-electoral crisis from November 2010 to April 2011 led to the death of at least 3000 individuals and the violent removal of then president Laurent Gbagbo, who refused to recognize the internationally certified results of the election. Legitimacy[1] is indeed a key issue in any discussion on the reconciliation process. The word "reconciliation" is in itself a problem, as well as the word "post-conflict", as they carry the risk of a teleological progress toward pacification[2]. Reconciliation however is understood as a process, not a permanent state that could be reached[3]. How has the Ouattara presidency dealt with the issue of reconciliation in the post-conflict context?

First, in short, it can be argued that President Ouattara tried to circumvent the issue of reconciliation by focusing mainly on economic growth and, to a lesser extent, on diplomacy. To reconcile ivoirians after these decades of divisions, economic and social conditions must improve. As an inheritor of Félix Houphouet-Boigny, Alassane Ouattara stressed the need for Côte d'Ivoire to regain his place in West Africa as the economic hub of the region. Therefore, most of his efforts have been on raising money from international institutions to bolster public and private investments, stressing the need to develop "entrepreneurship", and improving the "business climate". Undeniably, this strategy worked from a macroeconomic standpoint, as since 2012 the country is getting close to double-digit economic growth, in a context of rising prices of agricultural commodities. However the economic and social conditions of a large share of the population did not improve[4]. Ouattara's diplomacy is also focused on the economy[5]. The president became president of the ECOWAS from 2012 to 2014. Due to the Malian crisis, the ECOWAS presidency was also a way to bolster Côte d'Ivoire's status in the region.

The Ivoirian government also focused on mitigating the security challenges related to a post-conflict environment. Indeed, radical supporters of former Laurent Gbagbo, especially militaries of the former power who were exiled in Ghana, fomented attacks to destabilize the regime[6]. There is also still unrest in the west. These attacks are fueled by local grievances and tensions. However, overall, there is a consensus to say

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[1] Even if his victory at the presidential contest in 2010 was certified by the United Nations, it is undeniable that from the get go his presidency lacked legitimacy, as an important share of the citizens -Laurent Gbagbo received 46% of the votes in his runoff against Alasanne Ouattara- felt he was installed in power by the International Community, especially France.

[2] Banégas, R., 2012, "Reconstruction 'post-conflit'", Dossiers du CERI, pp.1-10.

[3] Charbonneau, B., 2013, « Côte d'Ivoire : possibilités et limites d'une réconciliation », Afrique Contemporaine, n° 245, p. 111-129.

[4] Interviews conducted in May 2015 with 18 local researchers, diplomatic staff, state representatives and local NGOs representatives revealed a consensus on this affirmation.

[5] 5 He travelled to many potential country partners such as Morocco (which dates from the Houphouet-Boigny's era), but also new partners, such as Turkey, and Saudi Arabia.

[6] See reports of the United Nations Group of Experts on Côte d'Ivoire http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1572/CI_poe_ENG.shtml

that Côte d'Ivoire's security situation has largely improved. This focus on security gave less results in terms of security sector reform. The numbers of reintegrated combatants announced by the government and the quality of reintegration are questionable. The government also tried to "institutionalize" the reconciliation process through the creation of the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but the sincerity of this move can be questioned. The results were very disappointing. The president of the Commission (Charles Konan Banny) is suspected of having used the Commission as a springboard to run for the highest office. Furthermore, the Commission never had a sufficient budget[7]. Since December 2014, a National Commission for Reconciliation and Compensation for Victims (CONARIV) is more focused on victim compensation, although some fear that it was a political move before the presidential election in 2015.

Retributive justice was certainly the most contentious issue of the last 4 years. Laurent Gbagbo was transferred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2011. 83 individuals close to Gbagbo were trialed in 2015, as hundreds of them were jailed. During these trials that were criticized as biased, the wife of Laurent Gbagbo was sentenced to 20 years. However, former rebel commanders who backed Ouattara during the post-electoral crisis have been accused of committing serious crimes as well[8]. The recent indictment of two former commanders has been seen as only a political move before the 2015 presidential election. What is called a "victor justice" is certainly a major impediment to reconciliation. Moreover, these actors could be in the years to come a threat to the stability of Côte d'Ivoire, as they have stockpiled arms for more than a decade. In conclusion, this analysis of the answers of Alassane Ouattara to the post-conflict environment demonstrates that the reconciliation process has not really started. The peaceful proceeding of the 2015 presidential election won by A. Ouattara with 83% of the vote should not hide these realities.

For Ouattara, the answer to the question of reconciliation is mainly the "emergence" of Côte d'Ivoire. However, the results of the security sector reforms are scarce. The initiatives of transitional justice did not launch a real process of reconciliation. Indeed, two camps in the Ivoirian Popular Front (FPI) argued as to whether the party created by Laurent Gbagbo should participate in the presidential election of 2015[9]. As Laurent Gbagbo might never come back to Côte d'Ivoire, with his trial to begin in January 2016, it is unclear if the FPI will remain a dominant political party. The alliance of the political parties of Ouattara and Henri Konan Bédié (respectively RDR and PDCI) will probably disappear when these individuals will retire[10]. Therefore,

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[7] The government even created in 2013 a de facto rival of the Commission, the Social Cohesion National Program (PNCS).

[8] Amnesty International., 2011, "Ils ont regardé sa carte d'Identité et l'ont abattu : retour sur six mois de violences post-électorales en Côte d'Ivoire", 69 p.

[9] The conflict is between Affi N'Guessan on one hand, the president of the FPI, who wants run for the presidential election. On the other, those who claim that they are "loyalists" to Gbagbo refuse to participate in the election. These « frondeurs » in the FPI joined an emerging political movement, the National Coalition for Change (CNC), created on May 15th, formed of diverse opponents to Alassane Ouattara, especially those in the Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire who refuse an alliance

[10] Henri Konan Bédié, president of Côte d'Ivoire between 1995 and 1999, and president of the Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), backed Ouattara for the presidential election in

one of the most difficult issues for Côte d'Ivoire beyond the election of 2015, which Ouattara won easily against any substantive opposition, is how the younger generation will deal with political divisions. During his second term, Alassane Ouattara will have the opportunity to make the reforms that could lead to a substantive political and social process of reconciliation.

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the framework of the Rassemblement des Houphouetistes pour la Paix (RHDP), in which the party of Alasanne Ouattara (Rassemblement des Républicains) and the PDCI were allies.