



Ivory Coast — Va-PoReg Country Report

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[officially known as the Republic of Cote D'Ivoire; also known as Cote D'Ivoire]

03/10/1893 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of France]: On 03/10/1893 the Ivory Coast became a French colony.¹ On 06/16/1895 it became part of French West Africa. According to LIED no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. We therefore do not list the country as an indirect colony. Political liberties were absent according to LIED and not really present according to V-Dem's PCLI. For the relevant period, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are moderate. Simultaneously, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive. On 06/02/1946, elections for the French National Assembly were held in the territory of Ivory Coast, which at the time included Upper Volta, as part of the broader parliamentary elections. From 1946 onward, only multiparty legislative elections were held according to LIED. In 1952 universal suffrage was introduced.² This was done for the elections to the territorial assembly, a regional parliament elected by the populace.³ Winning party was the Democratic Party of the Ivory Coast (PDCI).⁴ The territorial assembly did not have much power, as the French colonial system continued to rely on central administration from Paris through appointed governors as well as divide and conquer strategies that played ethnic groups off each other.⁵ Despite these electoral reforms, the regime remained Direct Rule Colonial Regime because France continued to exercise executive control through appointed governors from Paris. The territorial assembly's limited powers and the absence of elected executive institutions meant that ultimate governmental authority remained externally controlled rather than exercised by indigenous populations through their own governmental structures. Political liberties were absent according to LIED and not really present according to V-Dem's PCLI. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent.

03/31/1957 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of France, Liberal Democracy]/Start Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of France, Liberal Democracy]: On this date, elections to the Ivorian Territorial Assembly were held under universal suffrage, after the loi-cadre (Reform Act) of 1956 had removed voting inequalities by abolishing the multiple electoral college system. This allowed for a greater measure of political participation by the citizens of Ivory Coast. The elections were won by the Democratic Party of Ivory Coast (PCDI), the local branch of the African Democratic Rally (RDA), which won 58 out of 60 seats.⁶

12/04/1958 End Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of France, Liberal Democracy]/Start One-Party Autocracy: On this date the Republic of Ivory Coast became an autonomous republic within the French Community and on 08/07/1960 a fully independent republic (Marshall 2018a). In October 1960 membership in the French Community was abandoned with the adoption of the country's present constitution. The dominant political figure since the 1940s was Félix Houphouët-Boigny, who in 1944 organized the Syndicat Agricole Africain (an African farmers' union) and helped to found the African Democratic Rally (Rassemblement Démocratique Africain—RDA), an international political party with branches in numerous French African territories (Lansford 2021: 391). Ivory Coast embarked on the path to autonomy and independence from France, with Houphouët-Boigny as prime minister and a government under the control of the democratic Party of Ivory

Coast – African Democratic Rally (Parti Démocratique de la Côte d’Ivoire — Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, PDCI – RDA).⁷ The PDCI won all pre-independence elections to various offices. It ran unopposed in the 4/59 Assembly elections, giving it control of the government and electoral rules at independence (Zolberg 1964: 75-271).⁸ From 1959 the PDCI began manipulating electoral rules to limit the ability of potential opposition groups to compete (Zolberg 1964: 264- 65, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014b: 71). In the parliamentary elections on 04/12/1959 as a prelude to independence the next year, the PDCI “was the only party to contest the election, thereby winning all”⁹ seats. In 1960, upon independence, the PDCI officially became the sole legal party in the country. Over the next three decades, the PDCI and the government effectively merged. Every five years, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, its founder and leader, was automatically elected as president of the republic for a five-year term and confirmed through a referendum. Simultaneously, a unified list of PDCI candidates was elected to the National Assembly. All adult Ivoirians were mandated to be party members, considering the PDCI as the primary intermediary between the government and the populace.¹⁰ According to LIED only multiparty legislative elections were held in 1958 and 1959. From 1960 onward only multiparty executive elections were held. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive held unlimited authority with no institutionalized constraints on decision-making power. For 1959, V-Dem’s JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, while V-Dem’s LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. For the rest of the relevant regime period, V-Dem’s JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem’s LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. Per FH, for 1972 to 1979, the country scores between 11 and 14 as not free, which we also interpret as not free. According to FH, for 1980-1983, a score between 9 and 10 makes the country not free, which aligns with our interpretation of rather not free. As classified by FH for the years 1984 to 1989, the country is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. Per FH’s evaluation for 1990, the country scores from 9 to 10 as not free, which we categorize as rather not free. Moreover, political liberties are coded as absent by LIED and can be interpreted as not really present by V-Dem’s PCLI for the entire period.

10/28/1990 End One-Party Autocracy/Start Electoral Autocracy: In 1990 opposition parties were legalized. On 10/28/1990 presidential and parliamentary multi-party elections were held, which cannot be considered free and fair (Hartmann 1999: 303). Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. During this period, LIED categorizes elections as not competitive. V-Dem’s EF&FI scores them as not really free or fair until 1994 and as ambiguous from 1995 onwards. While their CEI scores them as not clean until 1995 and as not really clean the remaining years. After the legalization of opposition parties in 1990, the PDCI maintained its stronghold over Ivorian politics. During the 1990 elections, Houphouët-Boigny secured a seemingly improbable 81 percent of the vote, and the party claimed all but 12 seats in the legislature.¹¹ The emerging party system was still dominated by the PDCI (Hartmann 1999: 302-303). When Houphouët-Boigny died on 12/07/1993, acting President Henri Konan Bédié took over and was elected with 96% of the vote in 1995. This was strongly contested by the opposition parties.¹² Following the conclusion of Houphouët-Boigny’s 33-year reign, the political landscape retained traits of low institutionalization and the prevalence of personalistic and informal networks. Without the charisma of his predecessor, President Bédié not only targeted the opposition and curbed press freedom but also estranged a significant portion of the population through electoral manipulation in 1995 (Hartmann 1999: 303). As classified by FH for 1990-1992, the country scores between 9 and 10 as not free, which we interpret as rather not free. According to FH’s classification for 1993-1996, a score between 11 and 14 makes the country not free, which we also place in the not free category. Per FH’s evaluation for 1997 and 1998, the country scores from 9 to 10 as not free, which we categorize as rather not free. As classified by FH for 1999, the country is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. Political liberties were not achieved according to LIED. V-Dem’s PCLI scores them as somewhat present until 1994 and from 1998 to 1999 and as present from 1995 to 1997. From 1991 to 1992, based on Polity5’s evaluation, the executive faced weak constraints, classified as Intermediate Category 1 between unlimited

authority and slight limitations. Since 1993, as per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was subject to minor institutional constraints. Until 1993, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. For the rest of the regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited.

12/24/1999 End Electoral Autocracy/Start Military Autocracy: Army revolt by junior officers led to a coup. The army overthrew Bédié and handed over power to a junta led by ex-army chief-of-staff General Robert Guéï. He created the 9-man, all-military Comité National de Salut Public (National Committee of Public Salvation) to rule (Cornewell 2000, Englebert 2004: 332, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014b: 71). According to LIED no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. According to FH's classification for the assessed regime period, a score between 11 and 14 makes the country not free, which we also place in the not free category. LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as suggesting that political liberties are somewhat present. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate.

10/22/2000 End Military Autocracy/Start Electoral Hybrid Regime: On this date a presidential election took place. Robert Guéï, who led a transitional military government after the December 1999 coup d'état, ran as a candidate in the election. All significant opposition candidates, except for Laurent Gbagbo of the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI), were disqualified from participating.¹³ Nevertheless, Gbagbo won the presidential election, but Guéï refused to validate the results. Popular uprising followed in response to Guéï's effort to steal the election. Gbagbo declared himself president in the aftermath (Cornewell 2000, Englebert 2004: 332, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014b: 71). Considering that Gbagbo's rise to power in October 2000 was the direct result of mass demonstrations that forced General Robert Guéï to step down, we code this regime change event as a popular uprising. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. The elections are categorized as not competitive by LIED. V-Dem's EF&FI scores electoral freedom and fairness as ambiguous. Their CEI scores them as not really clean. The following regime led by Gbagbo was also not democratic. As per Human Rights Watch, Gbagbo's security forces perpetrated violations against civilians, specifically targeting immigrants, their descendants, and Ivorians from the north based on factors such as nationality, ethnicity, or religion (Rocco/Ballo 2008). Per FH's evaluation for 2001, the country scores from 9 to 10 as not free, which we categorize as rather not free. Besides, political liberties were still absent (LIED). V-Dem's PCLI declares them as fully present for the whole time. In 2001, as per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was significantly constrained by institutional checks. Based on all information we classify the regime as an electoral hybrid regime. During this regime period, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate.

09/19/2002 End Electoral Hybrid Regime/Start No Central Authority: On this date war broke out – the so called First Ivorian Civil War. The confrontation involved the government of Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo facing off against a domestic insurgency led by the New Forces of Ivory Coast (Forces nouvelles de Côte d'Ivoire, abbreviated as FN), under the leadership of Guillaume Soro. The rebels swiftly gained dominance over a significant portion of the northern region while engaging in combat with government forces for control of the western territories. Throughout the nation, supporters of the opposition clashed with pro-government militias. The uprising that sparked the conflict was fueled by factions aiming to demand a rerun of the 2000 election and advocate for reforms regarding exclusionary citizenship policies (Rocco/Ballo 2008: 350-354). The global community promptly dispatched peacekeepers and organized peace negotiations. While the peace agreements mediated by the international community did not fully resolve the conflict, their intervention helped contain it and improve the humanitarian crisis. This intervention also opened up

opportunities for dialogue (Bah 2010: 605). Although the violence faded, the civil war resulted in a de facto division of the country in a southern part, which was ruled by the elected government of Gbagbo, and a northern part, which was under the rule of the rebel forces (Bah 2010, Riehl 2007). Although the First Ivory Coast Civil War emerged in 2002 and lasted until 2007, we classify only the initial period until the first Agreement (Linass-Marcoussis Agreement) as no central authority. The reason for this is that the Government of National Reconciliation (GNR) was founded from then on, even though the country continued to be divided into two parts. As classified by FH for 2002, the country is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. Political liberties were coded as absent by LIED. V-Dem's PCLI states them as present. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate.

01/26/2003 End No Central Authority/Start Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: The Linass-Marcoussis Agreement, signed by conflicting parties, highlighted conflict issues but focused more on power sharing than addressing citizenship. Despite efforts to establish a Government of National Reconciliation (GNR), disagreements over appointments and power-sharing halted progress. The Accra II Agreement reaffirmed the Linass-Marcoussis Agreement and Gbagbo's authority, but tensions persisted. The Pretoria Agreement of April 2005 aimed at military and electoral issues but faced challenges with ongoing violence and stalled disarmament. The Ouagadougou Agreement of March 2007, influenced by UN Resolution 1721, shifted the peace process significantly, with Ivorian leadership. Resolution 1721, which not only granted more powers to the prime minister, but also gave Gbagbo legitimacy, as his term of office had expired. Though it didn't define citizenship, it aimed to resolve Ivoirité-related grievances (Bah 2010: 605-613). After the agreement, the election was scheduled to take place in the initial quarter of 2008, but were postponed until 2011, after the presidential elections of 2010. We classify not only the remaining period of the First Ivorian Civil War (2003-2007) as a non-electoral transitional regime, but also up to 2010, the first elections since 2000. Overall, the period since the First Ivorian Civil War is classified in different ways. AF and GWF classify a personalist rule, BR a civilian dictatorship, HTW a limited multiparty autocracy and LIED a multiparty autocracy between 2000 and 2007 and a closed autocracy between 2008 and 2010. Polity codes a state of interregnum or anarchy between 2002 and 2007 and a state of transition until 2010. During this regime period, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate. According to FH's classification for the assessed regime period, a score between 11 and 14 makes the country not free, which we also place in the not free category. Furthermore, the state of political liberties is coded as absent by LIED. V-Dem's PCLI indicates them as present in this time.

10/31/2010 End Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start No Central Authority: After several delays, the first round of the presidential election was held on 10/31/2010. President Laurent Gbagbo received 38 percent of the vote, while former Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara of the RDR won 32.1 percent. The run-off took place on 11/28. The Independent Electoral Commission announced Ouattara as the winner with 54.1 percent of the vote against Gbagbo's 45.9 percent. Gbagbo, however, rejected the results, and the Constitutional Court annulled ballots from seven northern provinces, subsequently declaring him the winner with 51.5 percent to Ouattara's 48.5 percent on 12/04/2010. (Lansford 2021: 394). As both candidates claimed the presidency, established rival governments, and relied on competing sources of legitimacy, Côte d'Ivoire entered a situation of no central authority. Both were inaugurated and formed cabinets, while the international community recognized Ouattara as the legitimate president and called on Gbagbo to step down (Ogwang 2011: 1). Fighting between supporters of Gbagbo and Ouattara (mainly FN fighters) spread throughout the country, and by March forces loyal to Ouattara controlled most of the country, with the exception of Abidjan. On 04/11/2011 FN fighters backed by French and AU forces stormed Gbagbo's compound and captured the presidential claimant and his leading supporters. Ouattara was sworn in as president on 05/11, and he reappointed Soro as prime minister of a reshuffled cabinet on 06/01. Observers attributed much of the violence

to reprisals against Gbagbo supporters, although pro-Gbagbo militias were also deemed responsible for killings and other abuses (Lansford 2021: 394). We classify this period of the Second Ivorian Civil War as no central authority, because the country was again divided into two parts and two presidents were proclaimed, so that no clear central power can be identified. Our classification is in line with Polity5, which also contests a state of interregnum between 2010 and 2011. Per FH, for this regime period, the country scores between 11 and 14 as not free, which we also interpret as not free. For this year, political liberties are coded as absent per LIED and can be interpreted as somewhat present following V-Dem's PCLI. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate.

12/10/2011 End No Central Authority/Start Electoral Hybrid Regime: On this date parliamentary elections were held. The Rally of the Republicans, the party of President Ouattara, won just under half the seats in the parliament.¹⁴ The Ivorian Popular Front opted to boycott the election, alleging bias on the part of the electoral commission in favor of Alassane Ouattara. They also accused the army of intimidating FPI supporters during the campaign. Additionally, the party lamented restrictions on disseminating information to the electorate, citing the government's ban on the pro-FPI newspaper *Notre Voie* and the subsequent arrest or imprisonment of many of its journalists.¹⁵ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. LIED categorizes almost all elections as competitive. V-Dem's EF&FI fluctuates in its scoring between not really, ambiguous and somewhat free and fair elections. Their CEI scores electoral cleanliness as ambiguous. Given the persistent challenges to democracy and based on these indicators, we consider Ivory Coast to be a clear case of an electoral hybrid regime. The most recent presidential election conducted, in which incumbent president Alassane Ouattara was re-elected with 95% of the vote amidst an opposition boycott, is considered neither free nor fair. Amongst other aspects, the Constitutional Council rejected 40 of the 44 candidates for the presidential election and validated the candidacy of only four individuals.¹⁶ However, in March 2021, the members of the National Assembly were elected in transparent, credible, and peaceful elections.¹⁷ In 2022 President Alassane Ouattara won a controversial third term in the presidential election held in October 2020, amid boycotts and violence from the opposition. He faced criticism from regional and international actors for violating the constitutional term limit. In 2022, he appointed former rebel leader Guillaume Soro as his prime minister, in a move seen as an attempt to appease the opposition and promote national reconciliation. However, Soro was also accused of plotting a coup against Ouattara and arrested in June 2022. The political situation remained tense and unstable throughout the year.¹⁸ According to FH, for the time of this regime period, the country is partly free with a score of 8 to 10, which we interpret as rather not free. Additionally, political liberties were absent according to LIED. Following V-Dem's PCLI political liberties were mostly somewhat present for this time. Based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive encountered substantial institutional limitations on power. For the year 2012, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate. From 2013 to 2018, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating moderate constraints on the executive. For 2020, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. For the year 2019, and again since 2021, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited. According to our classification Ivory Coast in this period had an electoral hybrid regime.

Electoral Hybrid Regime as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional Sources (Chirof 2006, Handloff 1988, Jeffries 1989a)

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Notes

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Ivory_Coast

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_suffrage

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1952_Ivorian_Territorial_Assembly_election

⁴ <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/french-ivory-coast-1946-1960/>

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Ivory_Coast#French_colonial_era

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1957_Ivorian_Territorial_Assembly_election, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loi-cadre_Defferre

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Party_of_Ivory_Coast_%E2%80%93_African_Democratic_Rally

⁸ <http://africanelections.tripod.com/ci.html>

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1959_Ivorian_parliamentary_election

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Party_of_Ivory_Coast_%E2%80%93_African_Democratic_Rally

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Party_of_Ivory_Coast_%E2%80%93_African_Democratic_Rally

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Party_of_Ivory_Coast_%E2%80%93_African_Democratic_Rally

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2000_Ivorian_presidential_election

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_Ivorian_parliamentary_election

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010_Ivorian_presidential_election

¹⁶ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/cote-divoire/freedom-world/2022>

¹⁷ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/cote-divoire/freedom-world/2022>

¹⁸ <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/CIV>

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