Governance, Institutional Reform & the State: International Financial Institutions & Political Transition in Africa

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This article argues that certain aspects of the institutional reforms which seek to achieve good governance, by treating political institutions and processes as manageable and essentially technical issues, seems instead to have contributed to the narrowing of political space and to the informalisation of politics. The argument is illustrated with reference to the recent experience of political transition in Côte d'Ivoire. The text analyses the compatibility between the institutional reforms introduced at the recommendation of the Bretton Woods institutions and the economic austerity which has resulted from recent decisions on the one hand, and on the other, the conditions necessary for the broadening of political space – the very issue on which depends the success of the transition itself. On the basis of the several observable current trends, the article concludes by raising the possibility that the transition may well result not only in the mere prolonging of past modes of political and economic regulation, but also in a gradual shifting away from a liberal pluralist model based on a participatory and inclusive ideal of politics, to an authoritarian one based on a technocratic ideal, likely to give rise to strategies of division and exclusion.

Introduction

The involvement of the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWI) in African institutional reform has led them onto a political terrain beyond their mandates. That is despite the World Bank’s attempt to depoliticise the notion of governance by defining it in managerial terms as ‘the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development’ (World Bank, 1992:1). Although framed in terms of introducing rules, procedures and institutions to increase state efficiency, the reforms proposed over the last decade have shaped politics in very profound ways. Moreover, to the extent that political processes have tended to be reduced to technical administrative procedures, the result appears as an attempt to depoliticise political processes denying the legitimacy of a wide range of local political objectives. Particularly important among these are government initiatives to put forward redistributive policies aimed at reshaping political compromises and coalitions with a view of promoting social and national unity. The consequences of such institutional reforms in situations of political transition take on particularly sensitive implications because of the institutional weaknesses that define such historical processes.
This article argues that certain aspects of the institutional reforms which seek to achieve good governance, by treating political institutions and processes as manageable and essentially technical issues, seems instead to have contributed to the narrowing of political space and to the informalisation of politics. The international financial institutions (IFIs) have contributed to a shifting away from a pluralist model based on a participatory ideal of politics, to a more authoritarian one accompanied by potentially divisive forms of intervention which draw their legitimacy with reference to a technocratic ideal (Mosley, Harrigan & Toy, 1991:16). My argument is illustrated with reference to the recent experience of political transition of Côte d’Ivoire.

**Governance, Institutional Reform & the State**

I begin by assessing the evolving Bretton Woods Institutions (BWI) perspective on governance and state legitimacy. These institutions have come to define the particular regulatory framework seen as necessary to ensure the success of their economic reforms. My discussion is set in the context of the evolving mandates of these institutions which was to bring the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund into a working relationship of close complementarity (Loxley, 1986; Helleiner, 1994).

By the end of the 1980s, the BWI had progressively entered areas that lay beyond their original mandates. These involved the formulation of recommendations for institutional reforms as a counterpart to their lending practices in the countries in which they were present to promote policies of economic adjustment. Ironically, within less than a decade, the World Bank had assumed the role of leadership in the process of redefinition of the role and functions of the state in these same countries. Over time, this reform process was to result in the construction of new normative frameworks which were to have far reaching implications not only in the social sphere but also with regard to the evolving nature of political processes and political space itself.

The improvised nature of the policy process is highlighted below in my documentation of the changing perspectives contained in the World Bank’s 1992, 1997 and 1999/2000 publications. The evolution of the Bank’s perspective has done nothing however, to lessen the continuing contradictions and ambiguity of the positioning of the BWI as they attempt to manage and monitor complex processes of institutional reform from abroad.

**1992: The Attempt to ‘Depoliticise’ Governance**

When the World Bank published *Governance and Development* in 1992, the most complete statement in this area until that time (Moore, 1993), the institution very explicitly specified that it would not enter the political dimensions of the recommendations which it put forward, for it considered these to be outside its mandate. Yet in spite of the fact that it was formulated in technical terms of good management, the World Bank’s proposal for governance incorporated and promoted a quite specific notion of the state, of its role, of its desirable evolution, proper functioning and a quite distinct conception of state-market relations (Campbell, 1997a).

Several points are worth underlining in this regard. The first is the fact that the institution was drawn onto the terrain of institutional reforms with considerable reticence. In this respect in 1992, the World Bank clearly delineated the areas that it considered to be within its jurisdiction and those beyond it:
Governance, in general, has three distinct aspects: (a) the form of political regime (parliamentary or presidential, military or civilian, and authoritarian or democratic); (b) the processes by which authority is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources; and (c) the capacity of governments to design, formulate, and implement policies, and in general, to discharge government functions. The first aspect clearly falls outside the Bank’s mandate. The Bank’s focus is, therefore, on the second and third aspects (World Bank, 1992:58, note 1).

The Bank’s initial conceptualisation of the state in its 1992 publication, Governance and Development, was very specific and could not be considered ‘universal’ or even a widely accepted one:

Even in societies that are highly market-oriented, only governments can provide two sorts of public goods: rules to make markets work efficiently and corrective interventions where there are market failures (World Bank, 1992:6).

This instrumentalist and functionalist notion of the state was elaborated by drawing on particular currents of North American political science,1 compatible with achieving a particular objective: the promotion of a specific form of development and prescribing the means to achieve this end. Hence the Bank’s 1992 document on governance foresaw how ‘mature institutional frameworks’ should evolve (World Bank, 1992:7). Distancing itself from what it considered the errors of the 1970s, the 1992 document on governance presented a non-interventionist and minimalist role of the state:

Governments now increasingly recognize the need for more restraint and for taking ‘market-friendly’ steps to deal with problems (World Bank, 1992:6).

This conceptualisation reflected the neo-classical paradigm that was at the heart of Bank strategies and has influenced its thinking since its inception and especially since the beginning of the 1980s. To summarise, this approach sees markets and the private sector on the one hand, and the state on the other, as entities competing with each other to occupy the same spheres of economic activity. Hence the withdrawal of the state permits market forces to interact more freely with a view of creating an equilibrium between supply and demand, and in such a way as to send appropriate signals to the private sector so that it can take optimal decisions concerning production and investment. It is from this quite particular perspective that the idea of ‘civil society’ can be traced as somehow outside, distinct from, and even in opposition to the state. Although this is the conceptualisation in much of the current literature on governance, and notably that of the World Bank (World Bank, WDR 1999/2000:121-122), it should be noted that it is at odds with views which see the state as the product of social processes specific to particular societies. In the latter perspective, the state is seen as ‘embedded’ in society and as a reflection of particular historical trajectories.

Presented from an essentially technical perspective in terms of good management, the Bank’s proposed institutional reforms are forwarded as applicable to a wide range of countries. Consequently, the particular conception of the state does not and cannot take account of the process of political, economic and social regulation specific to the historical trajectory of any particular country. Moreover, it is a notion which is put forward in abstraction of the existence of nation-states or of the issues arising from the question of national control over the development process, or the consequences for national cohesion or security of particular economic reform measures.
The essentially functionalist, instrumentalist and teleological notion of the state contained in the 1992 document, *Governance and Development* leads to the problematic idea that changes of an organisational and technical nature, will of themselves, lead to an improvement of 'efficiency'. That explains why there is a central emphasis placed on public service management; accountability; rule of law for development; information and transparency. The questions which naturally follow from this functionalist perspective are of course: 'governance' and 'capacity-building' for what? To what end? Defined by whom? The absence of answers to these questions which are masked by the emphasis on 'efficiency', just as the introduction of a particular and implicit notion of development underlying the recommendations of the multilateral financial institutions, reveal the political and ideological dimensions of the proposed reforms. As Beckman pointed out almost a decade ago, the reconfiguration of the state has among its objectives the introduction of political liberalism that is compatible with, and will facilitate, integration into the world market (Beckman, 1992). In this regard, the institutional reforms represent an attempt to find alternative bases of internal legitimacy, notably in answer to popular and national resistance to proposed economic reforms. To the extent that the latter challenged former patterns of the distribution of resources, structural adjustment measures contributed to a crisis in the political capacities of the state, a crisis which at the same time was a crisis of ideological hegemony namely – that of the legitimacy of the proposed reforms (Beckman, 1992:87).

**Proposing Alternative Bases of Legitimacy?**

If at the end of the 1980s emphasis was put on 'empowerment' and 'consensus building', in the early 1990s various organisations such as the OECD undertook studies on the 'political feasibility' of the reform measures, notably with reference to Morocco and Ivory Coast. But most central and as set out in the World Bank's 1992 publication on governance, was the notion of 'participation'. Yet the concept was defined in a very specific and rather narrow sense as the 'articulation of preferences or demand' (World Bank, 1992:22).

As observers such as Beckman had noted with regard to the notion of empowerment in the 1980s, the notion of participation was introduced to facilitate the smooth implementation of economic development strategies largely determined by the funding agencies themselves. For reasons that we shall see, this heritage excluded effective participation. By effective participation I mean the exercise of power with a view to participate in the conceptualisation or redefinition of the particular model of development introduced and the resulting strategies necessary to implement it. The Bank's notion of participation thus tended to refer to:

- a means by which to obtain local support and co-operation;
- a means to ensure popular legitimacy but legitimacy in favour of those who introduce rather than the legitimacy of those who opposed reform measures.

Where this approach is taken, the achievement of participation, with a view of creating some degree of consensus, may well take the form of an initiative from above or outside the community seeking to associate the local population to the projects destined to them. The World Bank's 1992 document on governance juxtaposed the notion of participation to that of competition, for participation, in the perspective of the Bank, is a necessary pre-condition to competition. This approach is rooted in a liberal pluralist vision of the exercise of power and a particular notion of democracy.
which has been described as ‘formal’ to the extent that it is based essentially on the rotation of political élites, the holding of elections and the existence of a multiparty system.

As I show below, because reforms of political and economic liberalisation were in certain cases introduced in the absence of constitutional reform and the existence of the rule of law, these measures have at times contributed to producing situations quite different from what was intended. For the introduction of a multiparty system in the absence of constitutional reform does not in itself, contribute to increasing the connection of citizens to decision-making processes. On the contrary, and as illustrated by the Ivorian experience, in the absence of the rule of law and constitutional reform, multiparty systems may well have the tendency to contribute to the deepening of cleavages between groups of different identities. This may be particularly the case in situations where political liberalism introduced multipartism, at least until very recently, in the absence of discussion of citizenship. Under such circumstances the tendency may well be to define citizenship on the basis of ancestry rather than residence.³

1997: The Reconfiguration of the Role of the State

In view of the careful avoidance of the ‘political dimensions’ of governance in the World Bank’s 1992 document, certain analysts were surprised to see the 1997 World Development Report completely devoted to The State in a Changing World (World Bank, 1997). Without entering into a detailed analysis here,⁴ it can be seen that while the Bank claimed simply to present a framework to increase the administrative capacity and efficiency of the state, the Report incorporated the same functionalist notion contained in the Bank’s earlier publications on governance—a very specific conception and one which has its origins in quite identifiable currents of North American thought.

Because the recommendations for redefining the role and functions of the state are presented as purely technical issues of efficiency, which allows proposals to be forwarded as universal, rather than reflecting particular values, the Bank’s view of the state did not (and cannot) take account of the particular historical and contemporary socio-political processes specific to any society.

Central to the 1997 World Bank document is that their interventions should contribute to creating an environment favourable to the free play of market forces and the promotion of private enterprise.⁵ To this end, what are defined as the economic functions of the state are clearly spelled out. On the other hand, its redistributive functions are subordinated to the state’s principal economic function which is the promotion of the private sector. Moreover, its redistributive role is seen to be conditional on its capacity to fulfil its primary economic functions.

The manner in which the state was reconceptualised, although presented as concerning essentially technical issues of efficient administration, gave rise to new normative frameworks with far reaching implications in the social and political spheres (Campbell, 2000). To summarise briefly, one may note the following:

1. The notion of ‘social equity’ no longer appears as an end in itself, even less a right, but rather as a means intended to permit and stabilise a particular economic project: the improvement of the performance and the efficiency of the private sector and maintaining the confidence of investors.
2. The notion of social justice is seen by one of the key architects of the 1997 World Development Report to be in evolution:

*While economists traditionally approached these questions using a social welfare function, development economists have often taken a different tack, emphasizing ‘basic needs’. But more recently, the focus has turned to ‘opportunities’. Social justice should not be evaluated as much in terms of equality of outcomes as in terms of equality of opportunities* (Stiglitz, 1997:78-79).

3. We are now in the presence of a process of the transnationalisation of norms which concern not only the economic, but also the social and political spheres. Not only has the locus of the production of norms shifted increasingly from the national to the multilateral level, but one may also trace a process of the shifting of boundaries between the public and the private spheres, often involving the subordination of national social rights to those of private economic interests;

4. The transnationalisation of norms takes place however, in the absence of minimum standards. In striking contrast to the binding and obligatory rules that result from the World Trade Organisation’s commercial negotiations or the conditionality agreements which the World Bank and the IMF have negotiated with numerous countries, there are absolutely no minimal norms concerning equity, poverty or social justice;

5. Multilateral financial institutions recommended that priority be given to institutional reforms proposed by these same agencies. This contrasts with organisations like Social Watch that has suggested improvements with social spending in areas such as health and education for the sectors of the population with the lowest incomes. Such spending would be considered wasteful if not preceded by recommended institutional reforms according to studies by those responsible for poverty issues at the World Bank.6

The above five points briefly point to the far-reaching concrete social and political implications of the emergence of new normative frameworks that appear to be accompanying the proposals for institutional reforms, governance and the redefinition of the role of the state as put forward by the BWI.

**1999/2000 Recasting Political Regimes**

While the 1997 World Development Report addressed the question of the redefinition of the role of the state, the 1999-2000 Report *Entering the 21st Century* pursued the scope of governance. Chapter 5 of the report formulates in the language of good administrative and fiscal management, the argument in favour of a process of decentralisation. That entails quite specific forms of political regimes and rests on a particular conceptualisation of politics, liberal pluralism, of participation and ultimately of what constitutes democratic citizenship.

The primary objective of decentralisation, is justified on the experience of the last 15 years (World Bank, 1999:107). It is a strategy to promote the devolution of powers that formerly rested with central governments and their transfer to regional or local echelons which the document defines as ‘subnational’.

The methodological framework permitting to choose the most appropriate measures to be adopted in order to implement decentralisation is presented in terms of good
management. The detailed discussions concerning the issues arising from the implementation of decentralisation whether these concern the role of fiscal transfers between levels of government (World Bank, 1999:117) or the control of debts of sub-national governments, are formulated strictly in terms of the lessons of good fiscal administration.

Hence the role of the central government is formulated in terms of 'its responsibility for the stability of the financial system' (World Bank, 1999:118). This emphasis rests on a notion that politics is the site of the management of resources, rather than a site of access to power and to the decision-making processes with a view of elaborating or determining a collective project for society. The political importance of decentralised governance is nonetheless clearly recognised:

*Successful decentralisation improves the efficiency and responsiveness of the public sector while accommodating potentially explosive political forces* (World Bank, 1999:107).

The distribution of powers, the role and functions of public institutions and electoral rules are in fact spelled out in such a way as to entail quite specific forms of regimes:

*Rules should be explicit, stable and self-enforcing. But how should a country decide what their substance should be? The answer involves three broad areas of analysis: the division of national power between national and subnational governments; the structure, functions and resources assigned to subnational governments; and the electoral rules and other political institutions that bind local politicians to their constituents* (World Bank, 1999:112).

Consequently, the proposal for decentralised governance which is to be implemented through the introduction of new rules, procedures, and the creation of structures and institutions implies a quite specific notion of the political sphere and of the desirable forms of participation.

Several elements are worth underlining. The first is that the application of economic approaches to the field of politics results in the authors of the Report considering the political sphere as a market. Decentralisation is presented as a particularly useful instrument in situations of conflict because it provides '... an institutional mechanism for bringing opposition groups into a formal, rule-bound bargaining process' (World Bank, 1999:107-108).

Moreover 'decentralisation can create competition among local governments to better satisfy citizens' needs' (World Bank, 1999:108-109). Yet the notion of interest groups, which is at the centre of pluralist perspectives, seems to have been redefined and narrowed. There is a clear wariness with regard to interest groups and electoral systems that encourage them, like proportional voting systems. In order to ward off specialised interest groups, the notion seems to have been redefined to coincide with a territorial or geographical basis. To the extent that political stability is seen to be tributary to establishing an equilibrium between 'local' and 'central' interest groups, by extension, pressure from groups which are situated other than at these levels of government or the relations of power foreseen by the rules of decentralised governance, could well risk being assimilated to destabilising forces: 'Effective governance requires stable coalitions and an executive with reasonably strong and clear powers' (World Bank, 1999:121).

*Entering the 21st Century* seems to view decentralised governance as a tool of political management. Yet if implemented its proposals might contribute to a gradual
distancing from a liberal and pluralist model based on the principle of participation, in favour of a more authoritarian view inspired by a technocratic ideal. The proposal for decentralised governance – which no doubt in practice would give rise to quite different results than appear on paper – signals an interesting moment in the thinking of the BWI concerning the conditions favourable to the social and political stabilisation of the societies and regimes where governance reforms are introduced.

First, the concept of decentralised governance which is put forward as an essentially technical term and as having universal validity, contains in fact a particular notion of the state and political practices. Political processes are reduced to processes of technical management. The result appears to be an attempt to depoliticise political issues which has the effect of potentially denying the legitimacy of a whole range of political objectives.

Second, with the introduction of the notion of decentralised governance, it is suggested that the emphasis of ‘development’ should be shifted away from the role of states and markets in favour of ‘processes, rules and institution building’, thus viewing political processes in terms of good management:

Structural aspects (of development) focus on the need for good governance, transparent decision-making, efficient legal and judicial processes and sound regulatory systems. This identification of rules and processes as a critical foundation for sustained development adds a new dimension to mainstream development thinking (World Bank, 1999:3).

Third, what is striking in this proposal is the attempt to approach development issues not only in the absence of discussion of the role of the state, but without reference either to social groups or social movements.

Finally, the project which aims at the gradual pairing down of national states (World Bank, 1999:9) may well have considerable implications for notions of social and economic rights as we have known them in the past and hence the possibility of citizens laying claims on their governments. Among the reasons for this is the fact that the services and infrastructures which formerly were the responsibility of national governments, including water, sanitation, roads, telephones, electricity and housing, are to be transferred to local levels and where possible, to be privatised (World Bank, 1999:10).

Each of these areas of social amenities, which in the past were considered public goods, are areas where new rules and procedures proposed by decentralised governance imply new legal frameworks. These potentially transform in a restrictive manner the conditions of access, and the possibility of defending rights that in the past guaranteed these services and made the protection of such rights an obligation. Ultimately what seems to be at stake is a process of redefining rights and responsibilities of citizens – the very notion of democratic citizenship.

**Political Transition in Côte d’Ivoire**

Côte d’Ivoire offers a particularly interesting illustration of the structural adjustment experience of an African country. Having played the role of ‘model student’ during the first half of the 1980s, it became the example not to be followed by the end of the same decade (Campbell, 1997c). Paradoxically, the orientation of proposed reforms had not changed. Moreover, by the end of the 1990s, two decades of adjustment were to end with a coup d’état which failed to usher in a renewal of past forms of political
regulation based on new compromises or broader coalitions. On the contrary, and after a year of political transition, the problem of broadly based political legitimacy remained unresolved and the country very seriously divided.

At the time of the 24 December 1999 coup, widespread opinion both inside and outside Côte d’Ivoire agreed with the interpretation that under the leadership of former President Konan Bédié the country appeared headed for civil war. In this context, General Robert Guéi’s ‘épreuve de force’ was seen by many as a step that might prevent the situation from worsening. By 22 October 2000 presidential elections however, quite the opposite interpretation seemed the case. It was the latter’s attempt to remain in power which appeared as the immediate, although partial explanation for bringing the country once again to the brink of civil strife. The holding of the legislative elections on 10 December under the threat of secession of the northern region, as a result of the disqualification of one of the country’s potential leaders, left the country more fractured than it has ever been before.6

Those who followed the events during the first twelve months of political transition were no doubt struck as much by the volatility of the situation as by the inadequacy of traditional political analysis to account for the turn of events. For rather than being led by identifiable political leaders, the political situation was on several occasions completely turned around by political forces and pressures coming from below. This was clearly the case at the time of the December coup, as it was when General Guéi attempted to hold onto power when he had in fact been defeated in the October 2000 election.

The locus of political power appears at least in part and under certain circumstances to have clearly shifted out of the traditional arenas. Those who officially hold political office seem incapable of bringing political solutions to the critical situation facing the country. However, this phenomenon seems largely unaccounted for, or at least unaccounted for in any systematic manner. Moreover, other factors which shape political space and which condition the transition process, namely the policies of bilateral actors and multilateral agencies, appear surprisingly absent in available accounts.

With the benefit of hindsight, a revisiting of the Ivoirian adjustment process helps contextualise the current situation. It permits drawing attention to certain shortcomings of the last twenty years of structural adjustment – shortcomings that may be shown to have implications for the present. In this regard, past policies and analyses which attributed the responsibility for slow growth to poor internal policies in spite of deteriorating terms of trade (World Bank, 1994:30 and 166) yet continued to recommend further liberalisation, neglected to take into account the complexity of the conditions for reform. Notably, they failed to consider the interaction between the choice of these policies, international prices, market forces and the external environment on the one hand, and the internal political constraints of the adjustment process on the other. The analyses of the BWI systematically neglected the historical links specific to the Ivoirian experience, between the interventions of the state, the operation of markets, the patterns of social and political redistribution, and the modes of economic growth. They failed to take into consideration the implications of prolonging a system of selective social, political and economic redistribution. As a result, they ignored the conditions necessary to construct new coalitions – even though such coalitions are indispensable for the success and durability of the reforms which external lenders themselves, wished to see implemented.
While underlining the complexity of the processes at hand, and without presenting any particular set of factors as determinant in explaining the diverse set of events that shaped a period of political transition, it is useful to contextualise the Ivoirian experience within the framework of the reform process that has characterised the country over the last decades.

Structural Adjustment as Political Process: the Boigny-Bédié Legacy

The Ivoirian adjustment experience has always been an eminently political process. It has shaped and continues to condition the choice of development strategies open to the country and the means by which these are to be implemented in the domestic sphere, as well as the place which the country occupies on the world market. Ultimately, through these strategies, it has conditioned the possibility of the prolonging or redefining particular kinds of social, political and economic regulation specific to Côte d’Ivoire.7

In this regard, there appears to have been an interesting correspondence during the first two decades of adjustment. That was between on the one hand, the nature of the liberalisation process and on the other, the capacity of those in power to short-circuit particular measures and in this way to prolong existing forms of political and economic management.

This would explain the success of the strategies for maintaining power on the part of the dominant alliances until the 1999 coup. That power was maintained in spite of the persistence of patterns of the redistribution of economic resources which appeared incompatible with the objective of economic renewal and financial reform, and in spite of the announcement of the broadening of the political arena from 1990.

Over time however, the insistence on the part of multilateral financial institutions for further liberalisation of strongholds of the former Bédié ruling faction, and notably the circuits of selective redistribution provided by institutions like the Caisse de Stabilisation et de Soutien des Prix des Produits Agricoles (the country’s key marketing board), represented an increasingly direct challenge to the past forms of social, political and economic regulation. The growing constraints imposed by the BWI on those in power were undoubtedly important factors which permit contextualising the ‘derive autoritaire’ and growing repression in Côte d’Ivoire which led to the military uprising in December 1999.

The dilemma for those in power until their overthrow in 1999 was that if they respected the reforms recommended by the BWI, they would have been denied precious resources which were critical for political regulation, notably those of the Caisse. If they did not respect these reforms, they risked the withdrawal of resources that were essential to economic recovery. Moreover, it was indeed the constraints arising from the particular form of the regulation of political power that prevented the spontaneous emergence of new political compromises (Losch, 1997).

The apparent impossibility of reconciling these contradictory imperatives and the awareness of this impossibility, are important elements in explaining why the political leadership of the Bédié regime was so extremely intolerant of any form of opposition.8 This intolerance ensured that the former ruling class was unwilling, and increasingly unable, to forward new mechanisms of social and political regulation that would necessarily have entailed a renewed pattern of the redistribution of resources – and consequently would also have challenged the political basis of the regime.
Although the intransigence of the Bédié government ushered in its overthrow, the contradictory imperatives behind its intransigence remained in place after its fall. Moreover, as we shall see, the legacy of the dilapidation of public funds by the former regime was to make the challenges of transition all the more difficult.

With the death of Côte d’Ivoire’s first President, Houphouët-Boigny in late 1993, after over 30 years of power, the country’s leadership was passed on to the latter’s constitutional heir, Henri Konan Bédié. In spite of the apparent stability of the first Republic, the ‘dérapage politique’, which characterises contemporary Côte d’Ivoire, can be interpreted, as a belated manifestation of the pressures built up during the years of solitary rule of the country’s first President (Losch, 2000:206). The alliance with French colonial interests in the 1950s, the elimination of opponents after 1958, the instituting of a single party régime in 1960, the arbitrary use of disgrace and rehabilitation (Diarra, 1997), are at the heart of a ‘logic de cour’ which made impossible the emergence of debates concerning alternative forms of government and the future of the country. Until 1990, Ivoirian political life was essentially characterised by in-fighting aimed at conquering or consolidating positions of power within the ruling party, the Parti démocratique de la Côte d’Ivoire (PDCI). The latter served as the ‘passage obligé’ in order to hold public office, be it a high rank within the civil service or in a state owned company. Moreover, the struggle for succession to the presidential seat began as early as 1980 (Losch, 2000:207). Bédié’s coming to power to complete Houphouët-Boigny’s mandate (1993-1995) and his continuation in office subsequent to the election that year, did nothing to break with the former political logic – quite the contrary. In this regard, there was a certain degree of incredulity in October 1995 when former President Bédié decided that in order to win that year’s elections convincingly, he would be attributed an inflated 95 per cent majority. His victory was not in doubt in any case because the electoral code had been modified to exclude the only realistic opponent, former Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara by disqualifying him on the ground of supposed ‘non-Ivoirité’.11 As Losch (2000:208-9) notes:

The President’s lack of political legitimacy which was linked to the absence of electoral competition in the 1995 poll – due to Ouattara’s first exclusion and the opposition’s boycott – the challenge presented by liberalisation to the economic basis of political power, led to the regime’s ideological escapism into ethnornationalism. The choice made to focus political debate on the theme of ‘Ivoirité’ which implied a retreat into notions of identity, considerably narrowed the possibility of rising to the height of the new challenges (my translation).

Before tracing how the heritage of the theme of ‘Ivoirité’ came to occupy centre stage during the period of transition (Politique africaine, 2000),12 it is important to refer briefly to other characteristics of the period preceding the 1999 coup.

The amendments which had been made to the Constitution and to the electoral law during the Bédié period were not the only signs pointing to the absence of ‘the rule of law’. In the face of popular indignation, the former régime did not hesitate to bring in new legislation forbidding unauthorised public meetings. As resistance grew, repression was used in an attempt to compensate for the absence of political legitimacy and control. During the last months of the Bédié régime, arrests were made of members of A. Ouattara’s party, the Rassemblement des Républicains (RDR), including its Secretary General, Henriette Dagri Diabaté and four elected members of National Assembly. The manner in which trials were conducted, the resulting imprisonments and the constant increase in political repression provoked interna-
tional condemnation of the régime, and led both France and the United States to express concern over the state of democracy in Côte d'Ivoire (EIU, 1st quarter, 2000:12).

With regard to the lack of economic transparency, while the origins of this heritage are deeply rooted, practices in this area were clearly perpetuated during the Bédié régime. Two examples may be given by way of illustration. Since the Presidency of Houphouët-Boigny, not only was the management of public accounts characterised by a striking lack of transparency, but the National Assembly exercised no budgetary control over these accounts. In fact, a decree signed in 1967 by the President (decree no. 67-575 ) dated 15 December 1967, reinterpreted the law no. 59-249 of 31 December 1959 (a new article 12 ) by which the Minister of Economy and Finance became the single agent responsible for the State's operations budget.13 The 1967 decree not only modified the nomenclature of the public accounts, but it also authorised the transfer of deficits resulting from the misappropriation of these accounts, to the balance of State's Budget Général de Fonctionnement (BGF). The Minister of the Economy and Finance alone could decide whether the expenses incurred outside the budget by the government and hence by President Houphouët-Boigny, could be considered as unexpected expenses and hence covered by the BGF. The Minister of Finance at the time, who had assumed his functions in 1966 when the decree did not yet exist, was the candidate to succeed President Boigny in 1994, Henri Konan Bédié.

The capacity to prolong practices which kept critically important circuits of public finance outside of budgetary control, was one of the most central characteristics during the first twenty years of the Ivoirian adjustment experience. In view of the manner in which the political system operated, it was not only economic but also tight political constraints that conditioned the adjustment experience from the beginning. If one accepts the hypothesis that the nature of adjustment was compatible with the prolonging of a specific mode of political and economic regulation based on selective redistribution, this contributes to explaining in a more satisfactory manner the 'lateness' or the 'failure' (Chamley, 1991) of Ivoirian adjustment. It also accounts for certain characteristics specific to this process which have all too often been described as distortions, dysfunctions, or pathologies. As an example, one could cite the case of the selectivity with which austerity reforms were introduced over the first 15 years of adjustment. This was done in such a way as to leave unbudgeted certain key institutions in the complex circuits of Ivoirian public finances (the Caisse de Stabilisation et de Soutien des Prix des Produits Agricoles (Caistab), the Caisse Nationale de Prévoyance Sociale, the Caisse de Péréquation, etc.) or the 'non-transparency' to use Demery's term in his 1994 study of Côte d'Ivoire for the World Bank, as he described the manner in which thirty or so privatisations of public enterprises were undertaken between 1987 and 1989 (Demery, 1994).11

Moreover, with regard to the circumventing of the measures ostensibly introduced to reduce the role of the public sector:

As Fauré and Contamin have so persuasively argued, ... there was in fact a convenient coincidence between the need to reduce the scope of state patronage and a political agenda aimed at redistributing the opportunities which remained whilst renewing presidential power. This did not mean that the President was slavishly following a World Bank agenda; on the contrary, as a close analysis of the fate of the reforms during the 1980s shows, the President in fact spent the decade evading or circumventing the logic of the structural adjustment programmes.
... Many of the parastatals which were supposed to be abolished under the restructuring programme in fact survived through reintegration into the public service as EPN (Établissements publics nationaux) (Fauré and Contamin, 1990:37; Crook, 1995:14-15).

These illustrations seem to underline the importance of internal constraints, as well as the possibility of side-stepping certain reforms during the 1980s. They consequently help explain the prolonging of a particular mode of political and economic regulation. These issues are central characteristics of the Ivoirian adjustment experience and reveal its eminently political nature.

The issue of the lack of economic transparency brings us to the concern of critical financial constraints facing those who had the responsibility of leading the country through transition. The legacy of the Caisse de Stabilisation is a good case in point.

Although the World Bank had called for better budgetary control of the Caisse for many years, this did not happen until after almost two decades of adjustment. By that time, the Caisse’s funds had been exhausted.

From the time of the country’s independence (1960), the Caisse which had been created by the French colonial administration in the 1950s, played a central role both in establishing producer prices and acting as the intermediary in the marketing of major export commodities. The fabulous surpluses from the rich coffee and cocoa sectors which, for the period 1975-1989 generated revenues estimated at over 2000 billion CFA francs, supplied what had come to be called the former régime’s ‘caisses noires’. It was only in the 1990s and notably, at the end of 1995, that increasingly stringent reform of this institution was put forward as a condition of access to a $15 million structural adjustment loan for the agricultural sector. By that date, it had become clear that the BWI would no longer tolerate such a lack of transparency considered incompatible with the objectives of the subsequent (1994-97) and (1998-2001) structural adjustment loans. Consequently, after two years of tight negotiations, the ‘filière café’ was finally liberalised in October 1998, and the marketing of cocoa liberalised in August 1999. The Caisse itself was dissolved by a decree on 20 January 1999 and replaced the same year by the Nouvelle Caistab whose role was limited to simply registering contracts and supplying information for the sector.

The Caistab (Losch, 1999) was only the tip of the iceberg concerning the managing of public resources which was extended to other cases. It played a pivotal role in this post-colonial rent economy driven by export crop production, characterised by a highly asymmetrical mode of social, political and economic regulation in which the state acted as the locus and agent in a pattern of selective redistribution. The latter however, bore little relation with the sphere of production and has been described as disconnected from it. This type of process had numerous characteristics but central among them was a pattern of income distribution which had little bearing with either production or productivity. This characteristic was made possible in large part through the existence of multiple sources of parallel accumulation or coulage in the shadow of the state and to the benefit of those who in principle were there to serve it. In view of the generalised nature of the haemorrhaging of public funds, the pervasive nature of such practices was a secret to no one and consequently could hardly have been unknown to the country’s principal bilateral and multilateral creditors over the twenty years of adjustment until the 1999 coup d’etat.
Accompanying the legacy of divisive strategies elaborated and formalised at the end of the 1990s around the notion of ‘Ivoirité’, the heritage of the Houphouet-Boigny and Bédié régimes was the absence of financial and political transparency, of popular legitimacy and of the rule of law. These absences contributed to the downfall of the regimes that had historically been characterised by the BWI and others as stable and economically prosperous.

The Period of Political Transition

It is important now to reflect on the compatibility between the nature of the institutional reforms recommended by the IFI’s and the economic constraints resulting from their policies, and the conditions necessary to permit the broadening of political participation during the transition period. In view of what I have noted about the former régime, the broadening of political participation was crucial to permit the emergence of new social and political compromises and a widening of political power. Two different types of understanding appear to have been at work regarding political and economic liberalisation in the transition period that took place during 2000.

For the multilateral agencies, the central issue at hand during the transition period was prompt economic redress in the short term. Consequently, for these agencies the evaluation of the credibility of the transitional government’s performance rested on issues such as:

- the rapid reimbursement to the various creditors of the country’s outstanding debt, without supplementary delays or new possibilities of rescheduling;
- the rapid redress of the current deficit;
- the clearing of the deficit of public accounts;
- the continued privatisation of services and companies which formerly were part of the public sector;
- the reform of the civil service, etc.

For the Ivoirian population and political parties however, the period of political transition was viewed as a period of critical passage towards more broadly based political legitimacy. This was to be achieved through presidential and legislative elections with a view of returning a constitutionally elected Assembly to power. It is particularly important to analyse the compatibility of these two different perspectives by examining how debates were formulated, how they evolved and the context in which the events took place.

With regard to its creditors, the transitional government found itself in a most unenviable situation. When General Guéi came to power, the state coffers were empty. Moreover, in an attempt to establish good relations with its international creditors, the transitional government reversed its decision of 13 January 2000 to suspend reimbursements which it had initially announced as necessary in order to pay the salaries of civil servants and the military. With an external debt estimated in 1998 at $14.7 billion, the country was faced with a debt service ratio of 28.3 per cent. By September 2000, the Ivoirian external debt was estimated as representing 132 per cent of the GDP. While this situation is similar to that of certain other African countries,
what was unique was the severity of the Ivoirian public accounts deficit, initially estimated at $844 million, but subsequently re-evaluated as much higher by the Minister of Finance of the transitional government. In this context and further to the IMF’s February 2000 mission, multilateral lenders decided that expenses which had previously been projected for the year 2000 for the Bédié régime, were too high and they imposed an even lower ceiling to public spending. Furthermore, the IMF refused to release the second tranche of the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) which was due in March 1999. This resulted in the country not being eligible for the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative that allowed for more favourable treatment in Paris Club negotiations. Finally, it should be noted that the country’s principal bilateral creditors (France, the United States, and Canada) all suspended their aid during the transition period, as did the European Union further to allegations of the misuse of funds by the former Bédié regime. A summary of the situation provided by a British source reads almost as an understatement: ‘The transitional government without doubt has inherited an economic crisis’ (EIU, 1st quarter, 2000:14).

For the Ivoirian population, the transition period represented a critical moment that was to permit the enactment of a new constitution, the holding of elections and the re-establishment of a democratically elected National Assembly, suspended in December 1999. Popular expectations vis-à-vis the transitional government, the Comité national de salut public (CNSP) were, extremely high. It is important to summarise several of the key characteristics of the transitional period. Briefly, the debates leading up to the referendum which approved the Constitution, took on a quite particular form in which political parties and leaders played a very active role mediating the transitional institutional mechanisms – sometimes to the point of reversing their decisions. Responsibility for the preparation of the new Constitution was attributed by the CNSP to the Commission consultative constitutionnelle et électorale (CCCE) in February 2000. The text was to be prepared by the Sous-commission constitutionnelle.

Of the numerous issues which could potentially have been the object of public debate, including the possibility of introducing a bicameral legislature, changing the age limit of the President, or lowering the voting age, one theme dominated all discussions: the criteria of eligibility to stand for the presidency. The debate here focused on a more or less restrictive interpretation concerning the obligation that both or only one of the candidate’s parents be recognised as Ivoirian. After having come out on 27 April in favour of a more inclusive interpretation as contained in Article 35 of the proposal by which either the father or the mother of the candidate need be Ivoirian, General Guéi switched to side with a more restrictive formulation (both parents needed to be Ivoirian). It was shortly after this that rumours began to circulate that General Guéi would himself be a candidate to the presidency. First, however, the proposed new Constitution containing the more restrictive clause concerning presidential candidates was approved during the 23 July referendum. While there are various explanations of the course of events they have been interpreted widely as representing a strategy to exclude from the leadership race once again, a key political figure, A. Ouattara, the leader of the Rassemblement des Républicains (RDR). His parental heritage is in part Burkanibé.

More generally, the tenure of constitutional debates during this period was characterised by intense electoral competition between different parties and leaders, the object being to gain access to the presidency. Consequently, the different positions
taken during the debates over constitutional matters, whether concerning the eligibility of candidates to the presidency or the issue of the distribution of 'carte d'identité' appeared often as the expression of electoral competition in which it became difficult to distinguish ideological differences from political tactics.

Beyond their electoral character which clearly translated an intense struggle for power, transition period debates focused essentially on the means by which resources could be channelled for reconstruction rather than the desirable outcome of this process. Two examples in this regard are quite striking of a broader phenomenon. In late April 2000, the transition government's Minister of Youth and Sports, General Mathias Doué announced that in the future, his policies would rest on three priorities: communication, transparency and accountability. In view of the absence of public funds, he favoured:

developing a new partnership between the state and the private sector in which the latter would progressively take the relay in the financing and promotion of sports, while the State would limit itself to instituting the regulatory framework and providing the necessary incentives (Boni, 2000:1 and 12; my translation).

That declaration was important for the extension of the language of good management of public affairs and a call for the privatisation of responsibilities which formerly rested with the state, then also applied to other social and economic issues such as social exclusion and poverty. For, according to the same source, 'The eradication of the phenomenon of street children is among the expected results of this reform because', continued the General, 'we do not want any more begging' (Boni, 2000:12).

It is feared however, that the absence of necessary resources, and the difficulty to promote political manoeuvrability with popular scrutiny over decisions concerning issues as deeply rooted as the origins of children begging and poverty, will influence the type of solutions put forward and the nature of state interventions adopted to implement them. This might well amount to using the language of good governance in an attempt to make the symptoms of deep social problems disappear notably, by introducing repressive measures, rather than attempting to deal with the origins of such issues which are as critical as they are complex.

Throughout the transition period, in spite of mounting social difficulties, multilateral financial institutions maintained policies of extreme austerity while calling for good governance and budgetary discipline. According to a press release of AFP dated 8 September 2000, further to its meeting on 12 July, the Board of Governors of the IMF made public the following communiqué concerning the situation in Côte d'Ivoire:

The members of the Board] strongly regret the accumulation of arrears (on debt) and underlined the need to normalise relations with creditors as quickly as possible.

The IMF has at present suspended advancing a second tranche of a loan destined for structural adjustment and granted in March 1998. The Board of Governors 'noted with preoccupation that the economic and financial situation in Côte d'Ivoire had considerably deteriorated in a climate of political and social tension.'

The IMF regretted in particular the important loss of control over the introduction of policies, notably in the area of governance and budgetary discipline (AFP, 8 September 2000; my translation).22
A second, quite different example also serves to illustrate the apparent narrowing of the political space or the ‘informalisation’ (Gombay, 1999:151) of political issues which appears to result from the attempt to treat these as essentially technical matters. It concerns the critical issue of Ivoirian identity or the notion of citizenship.

During the constitutional debates, it came as a surprise to certain observers that the leader of the Front populaire ivoirien, Laurent Gbagbo, whose party is linked to the French socialist party (PS), sided with President Guéï in adopting a restrictive notion of citizenship (and potentially a very politically divisive one), as illustrated by the criteria for candidates to the presidency. Gbagbo sided with President Guéï in endorsing the new Constitution during the July referendum rather than calling for a boycott (Libération, 26 September 2000:14).23

More generally, the FPI’s (Front Populaire Ivoirien’s) position on issues of citizenship and immigration during the transition was summarised in an interview with Gbagbo. Responding to a question in which he was asked whether immigration was a chance or a handicap, the leader of the FPI who came to power after the presidential elections of 22 October, replied:

*As in all countries which have had immigrants, it is first a chance and today, it is a handicap. We are going to create an office of immigration which will have a technical role for it is not a problem which concerns politicians (‘un problème politique’). First, in order to know precisely the proportion of foreigners in our population: 26 per cent, 35 per cent or 40 per cent? (sic). Whatever the answer, their number is very important, therefore they must be managed (il faut les gérer).*

*Those who wish to become Ivoirians should be shown clearly the way to proceed. The others must have a ‘carte de séjour’ drawn up under transparent conditions which do not presently exist. Fraud concerning ‘carte d’identité’ must be avoided. I am for a ten year ‘carte de séjour’ in order to solve the problem (Libération, 26 September 2000:14; my translation).*

That position was in striking contrast to the much more inclusive approach to national identity based on cultural diversity found in the FPI’s political programme published in 1998 and prefaced by Laurent Gbagbo (FPI, 1998: 84-85).

The issue at stake here is not the partisan one of comparing the particular position taken by any party on a particular question. The pressing more general question which must be asked is why there has occurred such a drastic narrowing of political space and why such a specific and restrictive pattern of political transition emerged? How can one explain the narrowing of political channels or places for debate beyond those essentially devoted to electoral competition and a managerialist approach to political process? How can one explain the process of the informalisation of politics, of pushing politics on to the streets or underground?

Far from wanting to suggest that there are simple answers to these questions, this article has attempted to suggest the need to bring in other dimensions specific to the Ivoirian political heritage. While these are multiple and include the impact of the country’s continuing strong political, military and economic ties with France, throughout the post independence period, and the country’s position in the region, what has been emphasised here, is the importance of contextualising the evolution of this particular heritage in the light of the process of structural adjustment and particularly of institutional reform which characterised the country over the last twenty years.
In this regard, the manner in which the reform process has been conceptualised by the BWI over the last decade, namely in terms of a technical approach aimed at improving efficiency, contributed to reducing the possibilities for a renewal of public debate permitting the emergence of a badly needed consensus around common values and strategies. This has clearly stood in the way of the reappropriation of debates concerning the objectives of the reform process itself. In turn, the emphasis on electoral competition hampered the possibility for the renewal of the social and political compromises and coalitions constructed around the notion of common interests and the broadening of the social and political basis of power. A process of fracturing was the result: At the end of the period of transition, northerners have never been as distant from southerners, ‘foreigners’ from ‘nationals’.

More precisely, the notion of political process put forward by multilateral financial institutions as being synonymous with multiparty electoral competition, and the essentially functionalist and instrumentalist notion of the state, introduced the problematic idea that organisational changes of an institutional nature would of themselves improve efficiency and the performance of government. In this context, political processes are reduced to technical administrative procedures. This results from an attempt to ‘depoliticise’ political processes, which denies the legitimacy of a wide range of political objectives, notably government initiatives to promote redistribution, social equity, national unity and to advance human rights, including economic and social rights of their citizens. For as Coussy (1994:238) suggests:

*The assertion that there exist ‘indisputable’ norms which flow inevitably from economic theory, is the principal rhetorical method used by foreign advisers to dispossess states of that which explains the very essence of political power (that is, their capacity to undertake negotiations and to propose compromises depending on the objectives pursued and existing relations of power (my translation).*

**Conclusion**

This account of political transition in Côte d’Ivoire has illustrated that in the context of the narrowing of political space, the debates around constitutional reforms appeared to have been formulated in terms of strategies of electoral competition instead of the reconstruction of political links and coalitions around a common political project. The adoption and reinforcement, throughout the transition, of positions that renewed with the past, although understandable in terms of the legacy of the logic of the reproduction of power, and the narrowness of the corridor of transition, contributed to making the situation increasingly unstable and volatile.

In view of the country’s political heritage, it is difficult to see how the holding of elections of any kind, could contribute to creating greater social cohesion and to the reinvention of a common political space or project. There is the impression of the lack of correspondence between the proposed institutional reforms, which were formulated essentially in technical terms of good management, and the country’s pressing need to re-establish a government based on broadened political legitimacy, to reintroduce a situation of the rule of law, to reinvent links permitting social and political cohesion on a national basis in order to elaborate a project to rebuild society and reset the economy on new foundations.

These are complex issues which must be approached with considerable modesty. However, their complexity must not be used as a smokescreen to hide the need for careful analysis. The apparent absence of political solutions to the current crisis, just
as the lack of correspondence between the nature of the reforms proposed by the BWI and the challenges entailed in reinventing political space, raise critical issues. These concern the ambiguity of the positioning of the multilateral financial institutions as they attempt to manage processes as complex as economic and institutional reforms from abroad, by attempting to reduce the analysis of historically determined social and political trajectories to questions of simple administrative procedures, presented as universally valid. Above all, and as the turn of events and the violence which has accompanied them indicate, these issues bring us to the central point: the lack of political responsibility on the part of these institutions for the measures which they propose and for the political processes of which they are a part.

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Endnotes

1. This point is developed in B. Campbell, ‘Quelques enjeux conceptuels, idéologiques et politiques autour de la notion de gouvernance’, in Bonne Gouvernance et Développement, Institut Africain pour la Démocratie, Dakar, 1997, pp. 65-94.

2. OECD. In the Preface of La faisabilité politique de l’ajustement en Côte d’Ivoire et au Maroc, OECD, March 1994 (p. 4), one may read:

   Such a delay concerning the study of the political consequences of adjustment is all the more paradoxical in view of the fact that in several cases, governments have had to delay programmes or modify them because of the turmoil caused by certain stabilisation measures. ... Consequently (concludes the Preface) the study will certainly be of interest to those concerned with reconciling adjustment with social and political stability in developing countries (my translation).

3. These issues are developed by Karuti Kanyinga in ‘Subjects of the State: Citizenship and Governance in Eastern and Southern Africa’. Paper commissioned for the International Development Research Center Consultative Meeting on Governance, 7-9 September, Ottawa (unpublished).


7. Such a view is in striking contrast with one which gives priority to responsibility for the well being of the state’s citizens.

8. In these elections which gave an overriding majority of seats to the FPI, a minority to the PDCI and in which the RDR refused to participate, 29 of the 32 northern electoral districts boycotted the electoral process completely. According to the preliminary figures of the Commission nationale électorale, participation would seem to have been around 34%. Le Devoir, Montreal, 12 December 2000. Source: AFP.

10. According the Economist Intelligence Unit, as of 1995, at least 20 opposition journalists had been imprisoned for offending the President of Côte d’Ivoire; several others had been removed from political life on the dubious grounds that their parentage was not ‘pure’ Ivorian and at all levels of Ivorian life, opponents were under threat. These trends were to increase considerably over the following years. The London based human rights group Amnesty International had challenged the former government over its intolerant stance which it alleged, had put more than 200 opposition supporters behind bars within a year as of September 1995. The same source continues:

Whatever the cause of Mr. Konan Bédié’s behavior may be, he seems determined to build himself a cast-iron edifice of political security, even if it costs Côte d’Ivoire its relatively good reputation for democratic and human rights (EIU, Country Report, 3rd quarter, 1996:4).

11. A. Ouattara had been Houphouet-Boigny’s Prime Minister from 1990 to the latter’s death in 1993.

12. On this issue in particular and more generally for an analysis of political transition in Côte d’Ivoire, more extensive analysis may be found in the special issue ‘Côte d’Ivoire, la tentation ethnonationaliste’, Politique Africaine, no. 78, Karthala, Paris, July 2000.

13. This information is drawn from an article entitled ‘Les Caisses noires de la Présidence’ by Mamadou Koulibaly published in Le Jour, Abidjan, 1998.

14. ‘Public enterprise reform changed gear in the 1987–91 period, with greater emphasis placed on divestiture, and not simply on restructuring. Between 1987 and 1989 almost 30 public enterprises were privatised. Several divestiture techniques were used, usually involving direct negotiations with potential buyers. These privatizations were conducted with little transparency, and little strategic study was pursued prior to privatisation. In short, the privatizations were not well managed’, Lionel Demery: ‘Côte d’Ivoire: fettered adjustment’ in Adjustment in Africa, Vol. 2, Lessons from Country Case Studies, U. Husain et R. Faruque (eds.), World Bank, 1994, pp. 101-102. When the privatisation of Énergie Electrique de la Côte d’Ivoire took place in November 1990 and the Compagnie Ivorienne d’Électricité was created in which 51 per cent of shares were to go to SAUR, a subsidiary of Bouygues, it would appear that certain members of the government sub-committee responsible for privatisations were directly involved in the purchase of shares via certain investment committees. This incident suggested to certain British observers the existence of an ‘old boy network’ actively in place in the distribution of shares and goods which had previously belonged to the public sector (EIU, Country Report, no. 4, 1991:14-15).

15. In its attempts to press the government to disengage from the Caisse, the World Bank had produced a review of Ivorian agriculture in February 1995, in which it reported that measured in French francs, planters’ earnings had fallen in real terms, even though in absolute terms they might have increased by a total of over 50 billion CFA. Between 1970 and 1988, it added that the Caïstab had accumulated CFA Fr. 2.3 trillion, mainly through export taxation. However, the Caisse’s board had proved incapable of guaranteeing producers prices or of doing anything to prevent rural impoverishment when world agricultural prices were low, as they were between 1987 and 1993 (EIU, Country Report, 2nd quarter 1995:15).

16. The agreement reached in July 1995 was only reported in late August. It was expected to lead to supplementary loans from France ($60 million) and Germany ($20 million) in support of the reform (EIU, 4th quarter, 1995:15).

17. The audit undertaken by Arthur Andersen at the request of the BWI revealed the extent to which the funds of the Caisse had been dilapidated during its final years. In 1997, the Caisse declared a profit of 10.3 billion CFA francs but the auditors suggest that the figure was 71.2 billion. For the first four months of 1999, the Caisse declared a deficit of 3 billion CFA francs while the auditors put forward a profit of 23.5 billion (Jeune Afrique, 14-20 December 1999:80-81).

18. For an excellent up to date account of the role of the Caïstab which is resituated in a broader historical analysis of the political economy of Côte d’Ivoire, see: Bruno Losch, ‘Le complexe café-cacao de la Côte d’Ivoire. Une relecture de la trajectoire ivoirienne’ (2 volumes). Doctoral dissertation. Faculté des Sciences économiques, Université de Montpellier, 1999.

20. In the months following the coup, in the context of the visits organised by President Guéi, the Ivorian press revealed the state of advancement of the Herculean construction projects undertaken by former President Bédié in his native village, Daoukro, in 1997, in the very middle of the country’s financial crisis and estimated the cost at approximately one hundred billion CFA francs. The press also underlined the size of the home of the former Minister of the Economy and Finance, Niamien N’Goran at Pépréssou, *Fraternité Matin*, Abidjan, no. 10653, 29-30 April - 1May 2000:2.

21. According to another source, by the end of August there existed ‘... a situation of quasi-state bankruptcy (a deficit of back payments and unrecorded commitments of 500 billion CFA Francs, superior to the operating budget)’ (my translation); François-Régis Mahieu, ‘Une indépendance économique pour la Côte d’Ivoire?’, *Le Monde*, 25 August 2000:V. To this must be added the situation created by falling export receipts during the transitional period.

22. The same communiqué notes that the absence of a programme supported by the Fund has as well, contributed to the fall in foreign aid and that the economic situation has also been affected negatively by a deterioration in the terms of trade.

23. One possible interpretation of the FPI’s position rests on electoral considerations which suggest that, just as for General Guéi, approval of the new Constitution would exclude A. Ouattara, the leader of the RDR from the presidential race.

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