

11. IVOIRITÉ AND CITIZENSHIP IN IVORY COAST THE CONTROVERSIAL POLICY OF AUTHENTICITY

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International perceptions of the West African nation Ivory Coast are usually shaped by its number one world ranking for cocoa bean export or the violence of its recent civil war, which ended in 2011. For scholars of identity and political trends, however, the country is distinguished by its understanding of nationality and citizenship, and particularly its implementation of a controversial policy of national “authenticity.” Known colloquially as *ivoirité*, the legislative acts that created the policy and its attendant administrative policies used documentary protocols to remove or preclude from citizenship certain Ivorian-born or naturalized individuals.

President Konan Bédié, who took power in 1993, created this concept of *ivoirité* to eliminate political rivals he considered non-Ivorian. In 1995, at the height of nationalist propaganda surrounding the controversy of *ivoirité*, President Bédié declared that his political opponent Alassane Ouattara, the former prime minister (1990–93), was not an Ivorian citizen and thus should not be permitted to run in the presidential election. Ouattara was declared a “foreigner,” and his nationality was identified as that of the northern neighboring country, Burkina Faso. Under the new *ivoirité* statutes, he was disqualified from office, excluded from the presidential competitions of 1995 and 2000, and indicted for alleged identity fraud. In 2010, Bédié, the founder of *ivoirité*, reversed himself and appealed to his supporters to vote for Alassane Ouattara, who was henceforth

permitted to run for election after a long battle over his nationality and citizenship issues. Bédié had done an about-face on the issue of the citizenship status and eligibility of Alassane Ouattara, who was adulated, rehabilitated, and subsequently elected president of the Republic of Ivory Coast in 2010 with the decisive support of his former detractors. How is it possible to reconcile these two narratives?

The policy of *ivoirité* affected the entire Ivorian society and was a main factor in the outbreak of rebellion in 2002, and subsequently the civil war of 2011. Aside from the well-known case of Alassane Ouattara, many individuals, particularly from northern Ivory Coast, were identified as “foreigners.” Hundreds of thousands of Ivorian nationals have families and ancestry in neighboring countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, and Guinea, and many were subjected to close scrutiny about their identity.¹ Like Ouattara, many faced challenges to their identity and have been victims of discrimination in the last two decades. Indeed, in some regards, Bédié’s policies only cemented existing prejudices about perceived national allegiance by southern Ivorians about their northern kinsmen. The *ivoirité* laws permitted government agents—particularly military, police, and judges—to consolidate their doubts about the veracity of identity documents; for example, Ivorians from the north were often suspected of being “foreigners,” and Malians were frequently viewed as “false” Ivorians.

The Ouattara experience was not anomalous but rather emblematic of the experience of an enormous sector of Ivorian society, but understanding what really motivated the policy of “authenticity” requires attention to competition for access to and control of political power in Ivory Coast. This chapter explores the concept of *ivoirité*, particularly how the implementation of regulations pertaining to documentation and proof of identity created expansive and long-lasting problems about citizenship in the life of Ivorian people and the Ivorian nation.

Before moving forward, let us question first the concept of citizenship itself as it became central in so many societies, including Africa. At some point, it is interesting to see how state institutions were instrumentalized through a political (re)construction of the concept. Accordingly, questioning the concept of citizenship means working beyond challenges individuals face when they are asked to prove their identity. Indeed, categories such as autochthony, language, and village have served to tighten the concept with birth, ethnicity, and territory. Primordialist discourses have inspired theorists of founding tribes that appeared to be relevant in the search for an identity that should be rooted in birth, kinship, language, territory, and customs (Geertz 1963; Shils 1957). This approach, instead of defining nation as *lieu de mémoire* (Schnapper 1991), challenged the constructivist theory of both nation and citizenship. For

constructivists such as Benedict Anderson (1983) and Karl Deutsch (1969), the sovereignty idea has nothing to do with nature—as at birth—only because nation is a social and historical phenomenon built up by diverse social groups (insiders and outsiders). In this theoretical perspective, state institutions endorse the historical and symbolic conception of nation as a way to build citizenship.

In the Ivorian case, however, the misconstruction of the concept by scholars gathering within the “Cellule Universitaire de Réflexion et de Diffusion des Idées du Président Bédié” (CURDIPHE), a political think tank, has significantly doomed legal rethinking of Ivorian citizenship. When these scholars constructed the concept of *ivoirité*, they actually brought up a primordialist approach to citizenship by pointing out the necessity of keeping the nation’s ethnic composition and filtering “true” from “false” citizens, and also by ignoring the historical construction of the Ivorian nation. However, tightening citizenship to belonging to an autochthonous ethnic group, or to a small territory such as a village in a country known for its long tradition of migration appeared unrealistic. In addition, laying citizenship on documented proofs in a country characterized by lack of *état-civil* (birth registration), with numerous children growing up without birth certificates and many uneducated people, was a challenge for both the state and the population.

The situation in Ivory Coast put citizenship in question by increasing requirements of documented proof of identity and selective enforcement of citizenship and migration policies, especially for purposes of naturalization through marriage, as well as ad hoc interpretations of ethnicity and descent. Moreover, new laws and claims of political leaders for *ivoirité* ignored the ascription understood as historical efforts of millions of people settled in Ivory Coast in the early 1900s to join the Ivorian political community. These laws and the theories that inspired them have thrown legitimate identity documents into doubt; have denied citizenship to people from the north who are not recognized as Ivorian; and have produced widespread statelessness. These laws empowered frontline bureaucrats similar to those described by Kamal Sadiq and Amanda Flaim (this volume), while the political debate overshadowing these changes, especially the presidential campaigns of the 1990s, resembles the U.S. debate about the validity of Barack Obama’s citizenship and whether he was an authentic American or a Muslim foreigner committing fraud (see Stock, this volume).

I discuss the relevant laws of *ivoirité* to explain how this policy was implemented; how it challenged the prevailing electoral, nationality, land, and labor laws; and how it affected the Ivorian society. I investigate how ordinary citizens navigated laws, ultimately directed at specific political elites by political rivals, by focusing on the evidence Ivorian residents were requested to produce to demonstrate their *ivoirité*.

Generally, identity documents such as birth certificates, nationality certificates, passports, and national identity cards were at the heart of the problem because they were systemically viewed as false or fraudulent for a particular class of citizens. By presenting cases of individuals (both leaders and ordinary citizens), I demonstrate how, among whom, and where identity challenges took place.

Origins of the Return to Authenticity in Ivory Coast

“Authenticity” in Ivory Coast was developed and used instrumentally by those in quest of political power. Its invocations seem to occur as certain political groups reject heterogeneous, polymorphous populations within aspiring liberal political and economic communities (Comaroff and Comaroff 2003), though this is only a partial explanation. Cultural nationalism in Africa is often expressed at a political level. In Zaïre, for example, the policy of authenticity was actually a rhetorical strategy to justify the 1965 coup d’état and to institutionalize one-man rule (White 2008, 72). Opponents of the Mobutu regime were disqualified because they were represented as nonauthentic people; they were not rooted to the country by territory (*jus solis*) or by birth (*jus sanguinis*). Authenticity has also been used as an instrument of political regulation in other countries, such as Zambia (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2004, 403), Peru (Nagano 2007), and even the United States (see Stock, this volume).

Powers of Documentation within a Controversial Authenticity Policy

This chapter shows how documents such as residence permits, national identity cards, nationality certificates, and birth certificates were powerful tools operationalizing the Ivorian authenticity called *ivoirité*. The establishment of new citizenship and documentation laws enrobed in *ivoirité* played an important role in constructing an authentic Ivorian as the sole individual to whom employment, land, and political power would be accessible. The determination by some political elites to establish a new national consciousness around *ivoirité* created a two-tiered citizenship regime: “fake Ivorians” and “pure-blooded Ivorians.” The emergence of the notion of “pure blood” in the political vernacular marks a drift to ethnonationalism subsequently codified in legislative and judicial reforms. As a result of these policies, millions of Ivorians lost their citizenship and are effectively stateless.

Moreover, many administrative documents, such as national identity cards, passports, nationality certificates, and driver’s licenses, have been subsequently deemed to be unreliable and insecure due to the concomitant expansion of

fraud (a point made by McKenzie in this volume). To address the perceived problem of fraudulence, in 2002 the government tried to use public hearings to confirm the citizenship status of individuals, but this operation foundered when it turned out that petitioners would have to go to their “village of origin” to enroll for a hearing. This concept of “village” in Ivorian society revealed the logic of *ivoirité* that was hidden behind the project. The village highlighted an ideal embedded in the imagined authentic Ivorian, insofar as he is revealed to be an individual who can substantiate deep ancestral ties with the territory through his or her roots in an autochthonous community and family. By linking citizenship with membership in a narrow community space such as a village, the government rejected the principles of an Ivorian “melting pot” and undercut existing statutes permitting naturalization and an expansive understanding of Ivorian nationhood. Indeed, because many Ivorians no longer had contact with their natal villages, and many others did not know their birth village or the villages of their parents, citizenship through these ties could not be effected. The village-based citizenship policy also overlooked the inability of naturalized citizens to indicate an Ivorian village of origin. These measures meant that West Africa foreigners, and Ivorians from the north in particular, were forcibly denied their citizenship “rights” by *ivoirité* laws and practices. Based on this policy, tens of thousands of Ivorians were stripped of their Ivorian citizenship and voting rights.

In these and other cases discussed later, recourse to the ideology of authenticity of blood or soil and the documents illustrating such claims were used to redefine or remake the distribution of rights between newcomers, whose parents arrived from outside present Ivory Coast boundaries, and “firstcomers,” the people found in situ. *Ivoirité*, as an instrumental ideology, pursued precisely this logic. *Ivoirité* was also an invention of the 1990s, the era of democracy in African countries and the period that Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) described as the one in which nation-states elsewhere were having to come to terms with social and economic heterogeneity. In fact, this policy—understood as the reactive xenophobia that haunts heterodoxy—was in contrast to the call for capital mobility, delocalization of units of production, and mobility of labor that characterized the beginning of the 1990s. Scholarly studies have highlighted the complex identity-based roots of the crisis in Ivory Coast, and many explicitly blame the concept of *ivoirité* (e.g., Akindès 2004; Babo 2008; Bouquet 2003; Jolivet 2003). When a rebellion broke out in the northern part of the country against Laurent Gbagbo in September 2002, participants in the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement of 2003, which aimed at resolving the crisis, identified *ivoirité* as one of the major causes of the Ivorian turmoil.²

The complexity of this policy itself is also likely one of the reasons for the spectacular failure of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. According to McGovern (2011, 6), the Linas-Marcoussis approach failed because it treated a political problem as if it were a technical one to be solved by administrative action. As McGovern explains, the political and military crisis from 2002 and thereafter was not simply technical; rather, it was a complex mix of military, social, political, and economic factors.³ With the democratic winds of 1990, a competition for political power occurred among the political parties, and subsequently among Ivorian ethnic groups. These divisions, inextricably tied to land, employment, and political power, brought identity, along with the nationality issue, to the surface (Babo 2013; Boone 2009; Crook 1997). Ivoirité emerged as a policy to regulate political conflicts on the basis of national preference. In 1994, the issue morphed into a form of nationalism when Alassane Ouattara, the leader of a dissident cohort in the ruling Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire / Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (PDCI/RDA), called the Rally of Republicans (RDR), indicated his intention to run for the presidency. Hailing from the north, Ouattara was accused by PDCI/RDA leaders from the center and the south of being a foreigner (specifically, a Burkinabé), even though he was born in Ivory Coast and had served as prime minister from 1990 to 1993 (Bacongo 2007). This suggests the first paradox of the citizen who is an alien, as Jacqueline Stevens has pointed out in her chapter in this volume.

Even though *ivoirité* was one of the root causes of the Ivory Coast crisis, advocates of the concept continue to present it in sanitized form and argue that it presents little risk to society. To former president Bédié, *ivoirité* is nothing more than a cultural concept, as it “constitutes first a framework of identification that places emphasis on values specific to Ivorian society. It is also a framework for integrating the first ethnic groups that gave birth to Ivory Coast with all the external contributions that came to melt into the mold of a shared destiny” (Bédié’s speech at the Tenth Congress of the PDCI/RDA, August 26, 1995). Therefore, for its supporters, *ivoirité* is neither sectarianism nor narrow nationalism. Rather, it is the perfect synthesis of Ivory Coast’s history and the affirmation of a way to be authentic. In short, it is presented as a concept identifying difference and affirming unity. Advocates of *ivoirité* rejected criticisms, insisting that “*ivoirité* is not and will not be an egotistical current that will fold in on itself, or a fertilizer for exclusion and xenophobia” (as reported in the national daily *Fraternité-Matin*, November 24, 1996).

Yet for most opponents of Bédié, notably supporters of the RDR, underneath its benign outer image, *ivoirité* actually hides a pernicious politics of exclusion. Indeed, from the point of view of its detractors, the political conceptualization of this ideology, in which the goal is to institutionalize discrimination

between “us” and “them” or “others,” opens up a political agenda vis-à-vis “the stranger” that is both restrictive and exclusionist (Jovilet 2003). According to Dozon (2000), the concept of *ivoirité* as understood by “scholars” within the CURDIPHE (1996), a quasi-academic center for pro-Bédié propaganda, may have seemed like harmless sentimentality. Yet its superficial definition masked pernicious seeds of division. Scrutinized through the lens of cultural nationalism, the idea of authenticity carried by the concept of *ivoirité* is also too easily revealed to be *akanité*, an ideology praising Bédié’s Akan ethnic group’s values, traditions, and systems of thought. McGovern (2011, 17) presents *ivoirité* as an “intellectual apparatus” that gave metaphysical and pseudo intellectual justification to an instrumentalized xenophobia whose main object was excluding Ouattara and his political adherents from Ivorian politics. This latter view is consistent with the definition of *ivoirité* that Bédié himself gave a few years later and that vindicates the criticisms raised by its detractors. In his 1999 book, Bédié wrote: “That which we are pursuing is clearly the affirmation of our cultural personality, the development of the Ivorian man insofar as what comprises his specificity, what we call his ‘ivoirité’” (44). Thus, Ivorian people are those rooted in the southern part of the country, which he contrasts implicitly to northerners (including those from northern Ivory Coast), who are connected linguistically, religiously, and through other cultural ties to the larger societies of the West African savanna zone and Sahelian region and are “rooted” in Mali, Burkina Faso, and beyond. Bédié’s terms, such as “specificity,” “Ivorian man,” “rooted people,” and “ethnic,” imbue “*ivoirité*” with an ideology of exclusion that is ethnic, religious, and xenophobic in form (Babo and Droz 2008). Irrespective of which version or interpretation one embraces, *ivoirité* as an authenticity policy or movement, via its controversial implementation at both the political and social level, was indeed one of the main causes of Ivory Coast civil war.

Implementation and Practice of Ivoirité

LAWS AND POLITICAL AND SOCIAL STAGES

Ivoirité emerged against a backdrop of political tension on the eve of the presidential elections of 1995. In this context of political competition, the concept was quickly implemented through new laws and decrees to exclude so-called foreigners from participation in national political life. Indeed, after a long campaign to highlight the distinction between “multisecular Ivorians” and “circumstantial” Ivorians, in 1994 the government of President Bédié initiated a bill and encouraged the Parliament to adopt an electoral code that limited access to the

highest offices of state to those of “pure” or “original” Ivorian identity. As a result, Article 49 of Law 94-642 of December 13, 1994 stipulated, “No one may be elected President of the Republic if he is not aged at least forty years and if he is not Ivorian birth, whose father and mother themselves are Ivorian by birth. They must never have renounced their Ivorian nationality.”⁴

After the 1995 general elections and after the fleeting hopes for national redemption raised by a military coup in December 1999, a movement of elites and intellectuals assuming the title of the “patriotic front” came out and endorsed *ivoirité* policy. Political parties, such as the Front Populaire Ivoirien, the PDCI/RDA, and the Parti Ivoirien des Travailleurs (PIT), and eventually the military junta leader Robert Guéï argued in favor of toughening the citizenship conditions for eligibility for the presidency. Thus, once again, on the eve of the presidential election of October 2000, a new constitution, including nationality requirements for candidates to the presidency that were more restrictive than those that existed previously, was adopted in July 2000. Minutes from the committee that worked on the constitutional amendments tightening the nationality requirements for a presidential candidate’s parents show that members acted under the auspices of “saving Ivorian identity.” Thus a new clause required candidates “never to have taken advantage of another nationality” (Article 35). In addition, a countermove to replace the stipulation that both “mother *and* father be Ivorian citizens” with the alternative that “mother *or* father be an Ivorian citizen” was defeated after several long debates in what was known at the time as the battle of “and” and “or.” As a result, in the wake of the emergence of the ideological form of *ivoirité*, the new constitution and the electoral code of 2000 established and reinforced the *jus sanguinis* authenticity on the political stage insofar as both parents of any presidential candidate must “be themselves of Ivorian origin.”

In Ivory Coast in 2000, the central political question thus became “Who is Ivorian?” To understand the appeal of Ivorian authenticity at the social level, we must return to the legal framework of the early independence period, combined with the long economic crisis and the attempted solutions that had raised the question of nationality. From 1960 to 1990, there was an ambiguous public policy toward foreigners that moved from *jus soli* to a sort of mix with *jus sanguinis*. First, Law 61-415 of December 14, 1961, which founded Ivorian nationality, was opened to foreigners and their children. Specific articles (6, 17 through 23, and 105) gave strength to *jus soli* for foreigners by focusing on two essential criteria for the attribution of nationality: their parentage and, above all, their birthplace. Thus, “all of those born in Ivory Coast are Ivorians unless both parents are foreigners.”⁵ In other words, to be Ivorian, an individual must have at least one Ivorian-born parent.

This article lent a less restrictive character to Ivorian citizenship due to weaknesses in the *état-civil* in the first years of independence. Moreover, it was also an occasion to take into account the large population of immigrants, whose naturalization would have been largely favored by this law. For example, Article 17 states, “The minor child born in Ivory Coast of foreign parents, may reclaim Ivorian nationality by declaration as conditioned in Article 57 and following, if on the date of his declaration, he has continually resided in Ivory Coast for at least 5 consecutive years and if his proof of birth results from a declaration from the civil state in the exclusion of all other means.” The Ivorian legislature had thus established the processes for the acquisition of full rights to Ivorian nationality. Along with this, Article 105 prescribed, “By derogation of the provisions of Article 26, people who had their habitual residency in Ivory Coast prior to August 7, 1960, may be naturalized without condition if they formulate their request within the period of one year, beginning from the enforcement of this code. They will not be subject to the incapacities predicted by Article 43.” The Ivorian nationality code thus acknowledged that historically, Ivorian society had been composed of natives and also of nonnatives, many of whom had been established in Ivory Coast for many years.

This openness was curtailed by the operational procedures that began to be imposed in the early 1970s. Law 72-852 of December 21, 1972, modified the Ivorian nationality code by introducing amendments, notably the abrogation of Articles 17 through 23 of Law 61-415. Henceforth, children born to foreign parents after 1972 no longer benefited from a simple regime of declaration, as in the past (former Article 17), to obtain Ivorian nationality. In addition, foreign parents living in Ivory Coast since colonization who did not acquire Ivorian nationality under the conditions specified by Articles 105 and 106 of the previous law of 1961 were not allowed to automatically pass Ivorian citizenship on to their children, even if the child was born in Ivory Coast.⁶

In the 1970s and 1980s, public policies toward foreigners remained less than coherent. Government employees ignored nationality requirements or implemented them with few evidentiary challenges. Numerous foreigners were present in large sections of the Ivorian economy and politics (Babo 2010) within an unclear legal and citizenship status. President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, without a clear legal foundation, hired nationals from the subregional Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to serve in the Ivorian public administration and army. Furthermore, in contrast with Article 5 of the constitution, which stipulated that “only Ivorians can and should take part in voting,” then president Houphouët-Boigny allowed ECOWAS nationals to vote in Ivorian elections. Finally, by declaring that the “land belongs to the one who

works on it,” the first president in the early 1970s provoked a gold rush for access to and proprietary ownership of land among the numerous nationals of Burkina Faso and Mali residing in the countryside who created plantations of perennial crops, principally cocoa and palm oil. Gradually, on the basis of the so-called Houphouët laws, longtime residents who were legal aliens marked their massive and durable installation in Ivory Coast (Babo 2008).

As the economic crisis became more acute in 1990, the Ivorian government passed over the supranational protocol of the ECOWAS citizenship code of May 1982 and established for the first time a temporary residency permit called *carte de séjour* for foreigners. Under Law 90-437 of May 29, 1990, all foreigners over the age of sixteen years, living in Ivory Coast more than three months (Article 6), were required to request and receive a residency permit. But in the wake of the 1995 elections, which coincided with the peak of the ethnonationalism embodied in *ivoirité* ideology, restrictive measures expanded for foreigners. For instance, under Law 98-448 of August 4, 1998, the cost of the annual residence permit tripled from 5,000 FCFA to 15,000 FCFA (approximately ten dollars to thirty dollars) for nationals of ECOWAS. Consequently, this measure fueled the demand for fraudulent (i.e., non-government-produced) Ivorian national identification cards. As a result of this new fraudulence problem, the ambiguities in the ID card significations meant Ivorians from the north of the country—such as Senoufo, Koyaka, Tagbana, and Malinke (often called Dioula)—were suspected of not being authentic Ivorians. In part, this was because they share many culture attributes and nomenclature with people from Burkina Faso, Mali, and Guinea. The operationalization of ID fraud detection was a means of excluding them from citizenship.

The policy of *ivoirité* did not end with the overthrow of Bédié in December 1999. Rather, *ivoirité* was expanded, exacerbating problems for Ivorians and ECOWAS nationals alike. After the 2000 elections, the administration of the new president, Laurent Gbagbo, decided to “clean up” the files of the *état-civil* to solve the problem of fraudulent identity documents (as reported in the national daily, *Notre Voie*, no. 1034, 2001, 5). To do so, in 2001 the government created the National Identification Office (NIO), whose mandate was to “reorganize and manage the *état-civil*, deliver national and foreigner identity documents to claimants, and regulate immigration and emigration of populations.”⁷ *Ivoirité* was thus expanded wholesale, when in 2002 the NIO interpreted its mandate under Law 2002-3 of January 3, 2002, as including the power to investigate, research, and confirm or otherwise the citizenship status of the general population at large.

The implementation of citizenship verification was not an isolated operation but one that emerged in tandem with other legislation. The government formulated a new rural land code 98-750 (passed on December 23, 1998) with a similar objective. Although the law aimed at regulating land rights; it also induced a nationalist agenda as it finally has been used to attempt to end foreigners' activities over the land in parts of the Ivorian agricultural sector (Bouquet 2003). In reality, the law clearly established a link between landownership and the ethnic and territorial identity of the farmer. Consequently, starting with its first article, the law restricted the ownership of rural land to persons of Ivorian nationality. Any farmer claiming ownership right over land had to prove Ivorian citizenship. Thus, far from resolving the crisis, the law brought into question the citizenship and thus other rights acquired by an entire class of allegedly nonnative farmers who had worked their lands for decades.

Additional statutes expanded the authenticity program into other sectors. Restrictions were also imposed in the labor sector. The so-called *ivoiritaire* laws, for example, sought to restrict foreign access to employment. According to the Constitution Act of 1960, only a person with Ivorian nationality could work in public service. However, Section 4 of the Decree of 1965, requiring a job applicant to provide a certificate of nationality, had been ignored under the first presidency, which led to the hiring into public administration of many "foreigners," as well as de jure Ivorians who lacked papers. But as of 1990, under the *ivoirité* ideology, hiring a foreigner in the public administration required exceptional authorization reflecting the government policy designed to control the presence of foreigners. Furthermore, unlike the former flexible practices, appointment of an expatriate was no longer the prerogative of only the minister but required communication to the cabinet justifying the recruitment. Authenticity also expanded from the public to the private sector. Under the new ideology of *ivoirité*, laws further restricted companies' ability to hire foreigners. For instance, Law 9515 of January 12, 1995, of the Labor Code (Article 95), allows aliens to occupy, on the basis of a contract, only positions that are not occupied temporarily by Ivorians.

From 2004, changes in the management of the employment of foreigners were significant in terms of both financial and administrative requirements. Documentation requirements burdened employers with visa fees of one month's gross monthly wage of the worker under consideration. For those already working in Ivory Coast, a period of six months was granted to the employer to document the status of all foreign agents. Any company that evaded the law was subject to sanctions.

Ivoirité, as stated earlier, emerged principally to target Ouattara. Once he was disqualified from competing in the elections on the grounds of his dubious citizenship status, the immediate political objective was accomplished. In this light, it is abundantly clear that the primary application of ivoirité was intimately intertwined with Ouattara's political career. He appeared for the first time in the Ivorian political sphere in 1989, at the peak of an economic crisis. President Houphouët-Boigny, cornered by the perverse effects of the economic recession, faced a wave of popular dissent. To the surprise of most, including his own party PDCI/RDA, he appointed Alassane Ouattara as prime minister in 1990. Although Ouattara was a renowned economist, familiar with the intricacies of the world economy, he was largely unknown to the Ivorian public. Notwithstanding his seeming anonymity, he had risen quickly through the ranks of the ruling party, was integrated at the center of decision making, and was effectively second in command after the president. His rapid political rise provoked his "opponents" in his own party to weaken his policies.

First among Ouattara's opponents was the former president of the National Assembly, Konan Bédié. At the political level, he advanced the rhetoric of the "Ivorian preference" or "Ivorians first" in late 1993 and applied it immediately by disqualifying all prominent politicians whose citizenship status was or might be in doubt. For Bédié, fanning the flames of Ivorian pride, already damaged by the persistent effects of the economic crisis of the late 1980s, was a strong mobilizing opportunity. In return, a large part of the Ivorians agreed with this policy.

The reliability of Ouattara's identity documentation was first questioned on the eve of the 1995 election. An administrative officer contested the identity documents, arguing that Ouattara had presented two different cards that bore two different names for his mother. On one card her name was Nabintou Cissé, whereas on the second card the name was Nabintou Ouattara. If the first could possibly be Ivorian, according to the officer, the second was certainly Burkinabé; the officer concluded, therefore, that according to the Nationality Act of 1961, Ouattara may not actually be Ivorian. At the very minimum there was reason to doubt his Ivorian nationality. Later, in 2000, when Ouattara decided to run for president, the regime emphasized his father's nationality. Ouattara's father was suspected of being Burkinabé because, although he was born in Ivory Coast, he inherited the seat of a traditional Mossi kingdom located in Sindou (Burkina Faso). When Ouattara was fifteen, he returned along with his father to Sindou and completed his schooling in Burkina Faso. When Ouattara's father died, he

was buried in Sindou, further evidence that Ouattara's opponents used to claim his father was indeed a foreigner. This assumption fueled the debate around the choice of "and" or "or" in rewriting Article 35 of the Ivorian constitution, which polarized Ivorian society throughout the year 2000.

Building on these matters, another controversy appeared pertaining to a critical document, namely, the nationality certificate. Indeed, since the passage of the new constitution of July 2000 and the electoral code, all candidates are required to prove their Ivorian identity along with the birth origin of their parents. Ouattara was required to demonstrate his Ivorian nationality by providing a nationality certificate, but the executive branch interfered with a fair review. The minister of justice issued a note asking all judges to require in advance the authorization of his office before releasing any nationality certificate to Ouattara. In 1999, prior to this notice, a judge of the town of Dimbokro, where Ouattara was born, delivered a nationality certificate to him. Testimony from Epiphane Zoro, the judge who delivered the certificate, reveals the political interference:

A few days after I delivered the document, I was summoned by the minister of justice. At this time I realized that this was not an ordinary case. All the heads of jurisdiction were present. The first person to speak was to be the chief of staff, the director of civil affairs. He said: "Mr. Zoro, sit, thank you for coming. We have here a document, it seems that it is you who have signed it, but if we look closely, it seems that there is one of the clerks who imitated your signature. Because we have the sample of your signature here and on the document the signature is slightly different, we believe that it is an imitation." I said at that time, I had issued approximately 12,000 certificates of nationality, because there were the public hearings and that by signing, it might be a slight difference. I confirmed then that it was me who had signed. They told me: "It is you who have signed up, but we are convinced that someone copied your signature. In addition, the clerk did not explain to whom these documents belong. This is probably why you have signed. These documents are those of Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara, president of the RDR. We do not tell you and you signed by error." I replied that the clerk had explained to me. I said that I had signed with informed conscience because I thought that there were no contradictory elements. Everyone was disappointed. Then, they came together, ignoring me completely. They said they will accuse a clerk, because it is easier to pursue a clerk for criminal forgery. (*Nord-Sud*, July 25, 2013)

The following day the minister of public administration announced on public television that the certificate of nationality held by Ouattara was fake. Ouattara was then indicted by the regime for identity fraud. After a long deliberation, the president of the Supreme Court announced that Ouattara was prohibited from contesting the presidential election. Specifically, he determined that Ouattara was prohibited because fraudulent documentation of Ivorian citizenship had cast doubt on his identity. What was challenged in this particular case was the credibility of both the procedure of the judge and the citizenship of the applicant, a challenge similar to that by those alleging a conspiracy to fraudulent manufacture the U.S. citizenship of President Barack Obama in the United States. The difference is that the “birther” movement came from those largely outside the government, and not those running it (see Stock, this volume).

Ouattara’s experience illustrates the wider problem affecting Ivory Coast in the past several decades. Like Ouattara, many people who had been granted Ivorian nationality, as well as Ivorians from the north, were affected by this form of discrimination based on doubts about their *ivoirité* expressed as doubts about their documents. People from the north especially were told they were not “truly Ivorians” and therefore found themselves victims of identity conflation with nationals of Mali, Burkina Faso, and other countries of the West African subregion. Many were denied their rightful citizenship via the actions of public officers. Ivorian public officers behaved like Americans (see Stock and McKenzie, this volume). At U.S. borders or in U.S. consulates or embassies, government bureaucrats have often used racial or ethnic stereotyping to verify a claimant’s case. Similarly, Ivorian officers were directed not only by the policies, but also by the sentiments and prejudices that affected their judgment on a case. One of the most widespread actions I learned of during field research concerned the behavior of police officers and soldiers at the innumerable roadblocks and checkpoints or at border crossings; identification documents (national documents for Ivorians and residence permits for foreigners), birth certificates, and nationality certificates of alleged foreigners were torn up or destroyed just because these people either bore a name that originated to the north or neighboring countries or wore traditional clothes of northern or foreign societies, a pattern that occurs in many other countries noted in this collection.

From 1994, against the backdrop of the ethnic political struggle and under the pretext of tracking and enforcing the residence permit requirement, many foreigners and northern Ivorians were victims of harassment by security forces. The experience of one personal friend, whom I identify by the pseudonym Tabsoba, illustrates the social application of *ivoirité* directives. “Tabsoba” is a well-known patronym from Burkina Faso. Tabsoba’s father migrated to Ivory

Coast in the early 1960s and settled in the city of Bouaké (Center), where he married a local who belonged to the Baoulé ethnic group. In 1995, when Tabsoba went to the police station to procure her national identity card, an officer insulted her and rejected her claim when he learned of her name. He stated that she would instead have to apply for a residence permit. When she stated that she was Ivorian, the policeman asked her to prove it. She then said that her mother was Baoulé and explained that she spoke that language, hoping that would convince the officer. After she spoke Baoulé, the policeman insulted her mother and asserted that such women sold their Ivorian nationality to foreigners by marriage. He ejected Tabsoba from the office but demanded that she return with her mother in order that he could convey his opinion to her directly.

Many Ivorians who have one foreign parent are referred to colloquially as an “or” and suspected of being not “truly Ivorian.” But this term and the attendant forms of social discrimination also apply to those who have two native parents and who originate from the northern part of the country. During my fieldwork on the issue of *ivoirité* in 2000, I met a judge on duty for a public census in a village in the south, in the region of the Agni ethnic group; he had encountered a very instructive case in 1999, when *ivoirité* policy reached its peak. He described how the principle of the public census required that all applicants for a nationality certificate establish nationality by proving kinship ties related to the territory of an Ivorian village. In his experience, the judge first heard of an applicant named Amangoua V., who gave the names of his parents as Amangou B. (father) and Badou J. (mother) and designated Arrah as his village. After considering this information and the local ethnic names, the judge quickly assumed this applicant to be without any doubt Ivorian and delivered a nationality certificate without supplemental verifications. In the course of the work, he then encountered an applicant named Sekou C., a name originating in the north and more broadly in neighboring countries. When the judge asked him where was he from, Sekou C. replied that he was born in the same village, Arrah, and that many people both in the village and in nearby areas knew him. He added that he could even speak the local Akan language, Agni. The judge then asked him for information about his parents and where they came from. When Sekou C. explained that they came from the northern Ivory Coast and had settled in Arrah more than thirty years ago, the judge stated that there was serious doubt about his nationality and refused to issue a nationality certificate. This and many similar cases illustrate how many Ivorians are the social victims of the application of *ivoirité* ideology.

Conclusion

The concept of *ivoirité* shaped the authenticity ideology that surrounded Ivorian society in the 1990s. This policy triggered documentation reviews that undermined Ivorian citizenship for millions and continue to pose problems in Ivorian society. The implementation of regulations on proving identity created a long and deep crisis about citizenship in Ivory Coast. In order to materialize the nationalist and ethnic ideology of *ivoirité*, laws were amended and created anew to regulate elections, nationality, land tenure, and labor. As a result, people have to present government-authorized citizenship and village documents to run for president, claim land rights, and obtain employment in administrative positions.

In practice, the new authenticity policy meant that citizenship was self-evident for a part of the population but in question for others. As a result, ordinary citizens were compelled to navigate laws originally directed at particular political elites by political rivals. The hurdles for politicians were laid down for many others, who were forced to provide specific and often impossible-to-obtain evidence to prove their *ivoirité*. In this process, state officials such as police officers on the street, judges during public hearings, and political elites would selectively invoke fraud, especially for citizens from the north, in failing to recognize as valid evidence of citizenship documents such as birth certificates, nationality certificates, passports, and national identity cards.

The policy of *ivoirité* tried to decisively alter aspects of Ivory Coast public and civic life, especially access to political office, economic activity, and citizenship. It did not bring peace to Ivorian society. Instead, it created deep divisions between populations and conflict over jobs, and land, as political power fragmented and became ever more contested over a period of twenty years. Societal fracturing occurred mainly because *ivoirité* erected a legal framework and enabled the application of practices by public agents against those considered “nonnative” Ivorian; identity documents and social connections were equally contested and imperiled. Despite the discriminatory patterns of this policy, this particular branding of authenticity was supported and endorsed by a large part of the population, who remain convinced by the discourse of national preference erected by different administrations since 1990.

The discourse has become so deeply rooted within the population that, even though Alassane Ouattara is currently president, during the last presidential electoral campaigns of 2010, Ouattara was portrayed as the candidate of foreigners. Many Ivorians believe that he actually received support from naturalized, or “inauthentic,” Ivorians and from people who were on the electoral lists

fraudulently, and that he mobilized these groups to win the election. For example, the former governor of the district of Abidjan claimed that most fraudsters were Burkinabe (20 percent) or Malians (63.88 percent), as reported in the national daily *Le Patriote*, on August 25, 2010.⁸ This conviction garnered credence by the recent adoption without debate of Law 2013-653 of September 13, 2013, pertaining to nationality, land access, and statelessness. On the basis of this new legal framework, in October 2014 25,000 out of 700,000 stateless people, largely from Burkina Faso and living in the west and center of Ivory Coast, applied for Ivorian nationality. Despite Ouattara's success at the ballot box, and the new legal recognition of those previously excluded, the controversy about identity intensely increased within Ivorian society, especially on the eve of the 2015 presidential election.

NOTES

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1. By foreigners I mean mainly people who are from the West African states and who are invariably considered foreigners regardless of their citizenship, documents, and Ivorian nationality.

2. See Annex III of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement.

3. For more details on the Ivorian crisis, see Akindès 2004; Babo 2010; Blé 2005; Bouquet 2003; Dembélé 2003; McGovern 2011; Soro 2005.

4. *Official Journal of Republic of Cote d'Ivoire*, December 29, 1994.

5. Article 6, *Official Journal of Republic of Cote d'Ivoire*, December 20, 1961.

6. In fact, some restrictive measures were contained in the previous law of 1961. At that time, legislators had established a narrow dual standard—the requirement about parents' nationality and the requirement about residing in Ivorian territory. The 1961 law required that Ivory Coast be their place of birth and their place of residence for at least five consecutive years. This means that the authenticity policy can be traced all the way back to the early 1960s—the openness regime of the first president was not quite as open as some scholars have claimed. Ivorian lawmakers gave force to *jus sanguinis*.

7. Article 3, Decree no. 2001-103 of February 15, 2001.

8. President Ouattara came to power via a bloody civil war that he won with the strong support of ECOWAS and French military troops. Nationality code law no. 61-415 of December 14, 1961 (modified 1972, law no. 2004-662 of December 17, 2004, no. 2005-03/PR of July 15, 2005, no. 2005-09/PR of August 2005). The involvement of outside militaries in the war on Ouattara's side only confirmed, for a large number of Ivorians, that Ouattara is not truly Ivorian (Babo 2013).