SPECIAL ISSUE ON THE CRISIS IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

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Citizenship Question in Côte d'Ivoire and its Implications for African States

Emmanuel I. Onah

Abstract

This article examines the implications of the fall of President Laurent Gbagbo in Côte d'Ivoire for the citizenship question in that country, and Africa in general. Issues of citizenship have become problematic in several countries of Africa in recent times, especially following the new wave of democratization on the continent. In Côte d'Ivoire and elsewhere in Africa, the citizenship question has played out mainly as part of the electoral process, as incumbents and others strove to gain advantage by excluding their opponents on the basis of doubtful citizenship. This article argues that even though the citizenship question appears to be election-time issues, it certainly goes deeper, and indeed reflects some unresolved aspects of the African statehood. The solution therefore may not just lie in electoral victory and assumption of office by an erstwhile opposition as in Côte d'Ivoire, or in foreign policies of silence and denial as by most African states, but requires a more fundamental resolution of the concrete defects in the structures and dispositions of the states of Africa.

Introduction

The capture and confinement of President Laurent Gbagbo and the installation of Alassane Dramane Ouattara as President of Côte d'Ivoire was the climax of a longstanding rift that tore the country down its seams. In fact, Côte d'Ivoire has been plagued by crisis since 1993, when, following the death of President Félix

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Houphouet-Boigny, the country was thrown into a succession struggle. Since the mid-1990s, this power struggle increasingly assumed the character of a citizenship question, as Ivoirien rulers tried to exclude their opponents from elections on the argument that the latter were not bona-fide Ivoiriens. This is part of the elite burden in Africa. Classical elite theory argues that a small minority of the population – the elite, are always to be found in government, consigning the vast majority of the population – the masses, to the ruled.

In recent decades, nowhere in the world does this theory hold true as in Africa. Colonialism was in itself an elite project in Africa – just a few Europeans contriving the defeat of African territories, and even more intriguing, these few Europeans further contrived the systems of ruling the vast populations of African territories. These systems differed according to the European power administering a specific territory, but almost in all colonial territories, the system of the rule of the few Europeans over their numerous African subjects was facilitated by a divide-and-rule tactics. At independence, this divide-and-rule tactics was at the root of the deliberate policy to hand over to small black elite, sometimes from one or a few ethnic groups. These small groups of leaders became the core of the post-independence elite in their countries, dominating the politics and other spheres of life of their countries. Politics in Africa since then has understandably revolved around the elite – the opposition, themselves in a sense the counter-elite, have sought to break into the ruling elite category, either by co-optation or by changing the existing status-quo. The ruling elite themselves have sought to maintain their status and positions, at times admitting others into their categories, at other times not so inclined, sometimes even going to great lengths to stop those they do not want, from belonging.

This was clearly the pattern in most of Africa, but the success of the elite in consolidating their rule was particularly remarkable

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in few countries, particularly in Côte d’Ivoire. It is in this sense that the crisis in Côte d’Ivoire can be understood. Beyond divide-and-rule, President Boigny was adept at co-optation, and coupled with his charisma, his government was never really at great risk from the opposition. His successors, however, were not so skillful, and soon became desperate to remain in power. It was this desperation that ultimately gave rise to the citizenship question in the country: as a tool in the hands of the Ivoirien ruling elite to restrict access to political positions, as well as government jobs and contracts. It was only to be expected that the situation will get out of hand sooner or later. The first post-Boigny elections, in 1995 and 2000, expectedly were very problematic.

The situation came to a head in 2011 when President Laurent Gbagbo, in power since 2000, refused to hand over to his victorious challenger, Alassane Dramane Ouattara, following elections held in the country in November, 2010. From that time, efforts were made at home and also by the international community to let reason prevail, largely to no avail. President Gbagbo held on to power only until forces loyal to Ouattara stormed the Presidential Residence in Abidjan, the commercial capital of Côte d’Ivoire on April 11, 2011, and deposed him. With the inauguration of Ouattara as President of Côte d’Ivoire, the country seems to be returning to normalcy. Fighting between forces loyal to both men has virtually disappeared, and governmental and economic activities have normalized.

But this may not yet be the end of the story. The crisis in Côte d’Ivoire may be far from over. Ouattara may now be President, but has the citizenship question in Côte d’Ivoire really disappeared simply because of that fact? And what is the implication of the Côte d’Ivoire crisis for the citizenship question in other countries of Africa? Moreover, what does the Côte d’Ivoire crisis show of the foreign policies of African states, many of which had been sucked in, and for different reasons and motives, into the Côte d’Ivoire situation.

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Background to the Crisis in Côte d’Ivoire

This crisis in Côte d’Ivoire can be seen as the direct corollary of the times and reign of the founding father and first President of the country, President Félix Houphouët-Boigny. In power for 22 years, starting from independence in 1960 and ending at his death in 1993, President Houphouët Boigny ran a very paternalistic administration that also had a pan-African outlook, allowing virtually every African that wanted to come and work in Côte d’Ivoire’s cocoa and coffee plantations\(^5\). Many took up the offer, flooding into the country in their millions to work in the fields. Majority of the immigrants were from the neighbouring countries of Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea, which were poorer than Côte d’Ivoire and, thus had citizens eager to take up the welcoming arms next door. The influx of these migrants led to even higher booms in the Ivoirian economy, making the country the largest cocoa producer in the world and one of the richest economies in West Africa. The Ivoirien economic ‘miracle’ of the first decades of independence consisted of cocoa production, growing ten-fold between 1960 and 1987, and the production of new crops, such as cotton, palm oil and rubber, increasing by 450 percent between 1967 and 1986. Even manufacturing for export grew in absolute terms, dominated by locally-processed agricultural and forestry products\(^6\). In the 1980s, however, commodity prices fell in the world market, and the Ivoirien economy was hit badly. Between 1981 and 1984, the gross domestic product (GDP) from agriculture fell by 12.2 percent, while that from industry fell by 33 percent, and services dropped by nine percent. By 1987, coffee and cocoa exports had declined by 62 percent, while the gross national product (GNP) declined by 5.8 percent in real terms, and the trade surplus by 49 percent\(^7\). President Boigny took a number of measures to address the situation, one of which was to appoint a senior official of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Alassane Ouattara, as Prime Minister, with specific instructions to handle

the economic crisis. Interestingly, Mr. Ouattara was at the IMF as a candidate of Burkina Faso\(^8\). Efforts were then made to control immigration, as unemployment was visible, with many farms already shut. Even native Ivoirians were finding it difficult to find work in the farms. In March 1990, the government rolled out new austerity measures. It reduced the producer prices for cocoa and coffee, and slashed the salaries of all state workers, in some instances by as much as 40 percent. There was also a ‘solidarity tax’ on incomes in the private sector, and 28 out of 35 state-owned enterprises were privatized\(^9\).

Skirmishes between Ivoirien job-seekers and immigrant workers were already noticeable by the late 1970s\(^10\), but while the economy was still on its feet, this did not crystallize. Now, all hell was let loose. The later part of Boigny’s rule was rife with strife. Riots were not infrequent, and in the main by workers and students. By 1990, the President was forced to open up the political space. The President had taken his opponents by surprise in his timing though, so that even though more than a dozen new political parties were registered for the multi-party elections promised for late 1990, the President’s party, Parti Démocratique de Côte d’Ivoire (PDCI), went ahead to win. Henry Konan Bédié was elected to the National Assembly on the PDCI ticket and, subsequently, he became its President. Interestingly, Laurent Gbagbo and nine others were also elected to the National Assembly on the platform of his own party, Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI). At President Boigny’s death, a succession struggle broke out among his top officials. Perhaps, the President had ruled for too long that no one gave a thought to preparing the country for life after his death. The immediate problem was the interpretation of the Ivoirien laws on the succession to the President. The Ivoirien Constitution, although not very explicit on who, among the Prime Minister and the Head of the National Assembly, would succeed the President, gave more credence to the latter. In the ensuing

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intrigues, the then Head of the National Assembly, Konan Henri Bedie, emerged President. Prime Minister Ouattara first withheld his recognition, but then after two days, he resigned. New elections were then fixed for 1995. This election was to be contested by Bedie and Ouattara among others. But as the date approached, President Bedie rolled out a new electoral law, demanding that to qualify, a presidential candidate must be an Ivoirien born to parents who must themselves be Ivoirien. The National Assembly eventually ratified this Code. Ouattara was obviously the target of this law as his mother was believed to be from Burkina Faso.

The Ivoirien Crisis and Emergence of Citizenship Question
The new law on eligibility for presidential elections in Côte d'Ivoire immediately barred Mr. Ouattara from contesting in the 1995 presidential elections. Attempts by Ouattara and his supporters to challenge this new electoral code only led to his antagonists mobilizing along the lines of a citizenship contestation. Bedie went on to win the 1995 elections; but by this time, a new concept, that of ‘Ivoirite’ had crept into the country’s political lexicon. The concept of Ivoirite or ‘Ivoirieness’ literally means ‘the state of being a true Ivoirian’. Ivoirite was, thus, the ultimate outcome of the Ivoirien law of eligibility for elections. That law was, perhaps, President Bédié's way of ensuring that he remained at the helm, through the use of legal mechanisms to exclude his principal rivals from power. But the subsequent (and consequent) creation of the concept of Ivoirité was ultimately catastrophic. First, it ignited the embers of ethnicity, something that always hovered over the political landscape while Boigny ruled, but which because of the late President’s charisma and policies, was latent throughout that period of the country’s history. Ivoirité literally set the country on ethnic flame. To really understand the import of Ivoirité, it is important that we return to the beginning of the country’s history.

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11 Daddieh, op. cit. p.16.
12 Ogunbunni, op.cit, p.17
13 Hartill, (2006), Ivory coast: still a concern, Christian science monitor, in Sunday champion (5 feb) p.34
The area that is now Côte d'Ivoire is home to more than sixty ethnic groups, who today can be roughly grouped into five main regional clusters, namely, Akan, Kru, Malinke or North Mande, South Mande, and Voltaic\(^\text{14}\). The processes that led to the crystallization of the linguistic groups found in Côte d'Ivoire have been roughly sketched by Marshal-Fratini\(^\text{15}\). Colonial policy encouraged the development of cocoa and coffee plantations, and this started first in the east of the country in the 1920s and 1930s. In the 1940s and 1950s, efforts were also made to develop plantations in the central and southern regions. Although the land was particularly suited for cocoa production, the southeast was under-populated. The colonial authorities therefore encouraged migrant workers to come into the area. Migrants flooded in from the center and especially from the north, and cocoa production boomed. The migrants from the centre were mainly Baoule, an Akan sub-group, but those from the north were a mixture of Malinke, Voltaic and Senoufo.

These northern groups were mainly moslems, and many of them spoke the Mande language. These commonalities singed them out, and coupled with the fact that most of them lived in the same neighbourhoods in the developing towns across southern Côte d'Ivoire (where they also dominated the informal trade sector), they soon acquired a common identity and became known as Dioula\(^\text{16}\). The Dioula soon came to outstrip the native populations in many of the new towns, which most Dioula came to see as home subsequently. In the days leading to and following independence, disagreements and even clashes between native and migrant populations in the towns and villages of Côte d'Ivoire were not unheard of, but were certainly infrequent\(^\text{17}\). People were aware of their differences, but these differences were hardly ever the basis of mobilization. Ethnic identity was thus formal but its mobilization was kept at the minimal. For instance, President

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\(^{14}\) Crook, op.cit, p.213.

\(^{15}\) Marshal- Fratini, op.cit, pp.9-43

\(^{16}\) Lauray and Miran (2000), beyond mande mory: islam and ethniaty in cote d'ivoire, paideuma, bd.46, p.68

\(^{17}\) Ibid, p.71.
Boigny was known as Baoule rather than Akan, despite the Akan being the ‘dominant’ ethnic group in the country in the sense of their having around 42 percent of the population. In the days following ‘Ivoirité’ however, the awareness of ethnic differences was mobilized into full-blown ethnicity by all sides as a tool in the struggle for power. Côte d’Ivoire, which once prided itself as a land of common destiny, now witnessed clashes between its different peoples.

A second and more debilitating consequence of ‘Ivoirité’ was the emergence of a citizenship question in Côte d’Ivoire. Again, the dynamics that led to the citizenship question can be traced back to a colonial root. At the time of opening up the Ivoirian lands for plantation production, the available labour was not enough to cultivate the land, despite colonial encouragement of migrants from the north into the farms in the south. The response of the colonial authorities to this shortage was to encourage non-Ivoirian subjects of neighbouring colonies to emigrate to the Ivoirian plantations. Transport was in fact organized for labourers from Côte d’Ivoire’s northern neighbours, including Mali, Guinea and particularly Burkina Faso. Parts of the latter had actually been attached to Côte d’Ivoire for sometime during the colonial period. The response was enthusiastic; many labourers trooped to Côte d’Ivoire from these neighbouring countries, and even Ghana.

Most of these arrivals were Moslems, and many spoke Mande. On arrival, most of them found it easy to settle among the Dioula, and were soon fully integrated. Before long, it became literally difficult to tell who was ‘Ivoirien Dioula’ and who was ‘foreign Dioula’. This fact was eventually mobilized by the promoters of Ivoirite, as a tool for “the revitalization of autochthony as the grounds for national belonging. The idea of autochthony had always existed, even if vaguely, in the minds of Ivoiriens, following the historical disagreements between natives and migrants over land for cultivation. But “Bédié’s concept of Ivoirité profoundly

18 Crook, op.cit.
19 Marshal- Fratini, op.cit, p.15
20 Launay and Miran,op. cit
21 Marshal-Fratini, op.cit, pp.13-17.
reinforced the idea of territorialized autochthony as the ground upon which citizenship should be constructed\textsuperscript{22}. From now onwards, one must show a relationship to the land in order to be a citizen. It was no more enough that one even carried Ivorien identification papers; one must point to his village to show that he is Ivorien. It was in this manner that the citizenship question emerged in Côte d'Ivoire. Ivoirité became the justification for the disqualification of Alassane Ouattara from the Ivorien presidency. But it also became the reason for those who supported him, especially those from the north, to fight. Soon, Côte d'Ivoire was in flames. New elections were slated for 2000, in which President Bédié was to square up with Gbagbo and Ouattara. But in 1999, the military struck, led by General Robert Guei, who argued that the politicians were tearing the country apart and there was, therefore, the need to halt the slide. At first, he appeared pro-Ouattara\textsuperscript{23} and for a time appeared set to abrogate the eligibility code. But when he eventually decided to run for the 2000 elections himself, the reality of the northern demographics made him retain the law. Ouattara thus remained barred from the elections.

The run-up to the 2000 elections was understandably violent, as pro-government supporters and pro-Gbagbo supporters attacked pro-Ouattara supporters and members of his party – Rassemblement des Républicains (RDR), including northerners and immigrants, in the streets. The election was eventually won by Gbagbo's FPI, and it was not surprising that Gbagbo's presidency only exacerbated the citizenship issue in Côte d'Ivoire. Marshal-Fratini has observed that even as a History lecturer and opposition figure, Gbagbo had positioned himself as champion of the 'aspirations and interests of the autochthons in Côte d'Ivoire\textsuperscript{24}. As President, the concept of Ivoirité became state ideology, and was pursued with increasingly xenophobic zeal. Soldiers seen to be pro-Ouattara were demoted, and many such down-graded soldiers soon ran across the border to Burkina Faso, where many other soldiers had been living since being exiled by General Guei earlier

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, p.18
\textsuperscript{23} Daddich, op.cit, p.17
\textsuperscript{24} Marshal-Fratini, op.cit, p.17
in 2001 on similar suspicions. All these, coupled with the efforts of the Gbagbo government to enforce a programme of national identification, served to intensify the cooperation of northerners and immigrants. Ironically, Ouattara, as Prime Minister, had introduced a 'Foreign Resident's card' as different from the National Identity card, but the Gbagbo government now elaborated the process of acquiring the cards in such ways that "the enrolment of individuals in the exercise could result in their receiving a foreign resident's card instead of the national identity card". The procedure initially required that since every Ivoirien had a village of origin, it was best that every citizen returned to his or her village to acquire the identity card. Abidjan and the cities were not to be accepted as villages of origin except for those belonging to the historically autochthonous groups. Protests against this procedure only led to the adoption of a method that allowed individuals to acquire the card in his place of residence, but who must nevertheless cite local witnesses from his village of origin to testify that the applicant and, at least, one of his parents was from that village. Local commissions were set up to verify such claims, and receipts were to be issued only until claims had been verified after which cards could then be issued to only the authentic citizens.

By 2002, the attempts to enforce this policy by the Gbagbo government led to an increase in the impunity with which security forces harassed northern Ivoiriens. Some were beaten up on very flimsy reasons, and many others had their documents confiscated, on suspicion that they were foreigners, sometimes only on account of the sound of their names. In the face of this onslaught, many northerners fought back in defence of their Ivoirieness. As government became even more xenophobic, it openly encouraged these attacks against northerners. The take-off of the national identification process in the middle of 2002 further heated up the polity, and it was in this charged atmosphere that northern

25 Ibid, p.18
26 Ibid, p.27
27 Ibid.
elements finally launched a rebellion in September 2002 against the government. The principal demands of the rebels were the abrogation of the national identification programme and the acceptance of northerners as bone-fide Ivoirien citizens. The war dragged as the rebels of the 'New Forces' failed to capture the southern cities, but they held on to the north of the country. Subsequent peace efforts only worked to bring in UN and French Peace-keeping troops, deployed across the middle half of a bifurcated country, with the government ruling the southern half and the rebels in charge of northern Côte d'Ivoire.

**Ivoirien Citizenship as Part of Larger African Citizenship Question**

The citizenship question in Côte d'Ivoire is not the only one of its kind in Africa. In fact, Africa is now littered with citizenship issues. In East Africa, the question is now whether the Asian community in that region for a century now, can be considered citizens. In the 1970s, General Idi Amin had expelled up to 60,000 Asians from Uganda on this account. Although many eventually returned, especially after Amin had been driven from power, today, the argument is still on, and now not only in Uganda, but also in Kenya, where many of these Asians are also resident. In Liberia, Sierra Leone and several other countries of West Africa and Central Africa, the issue of whether or not to admit Lebanese and other Asians as citizens is a major dimension of the citizenship question. In 1996, the situation descended to the absurd in Zambia, following a law passed by Parliament that prevented the country's founding President, Kenneth Kaunda, from running for presidency again. Kaunda, who ruled Zambia for 27 years, had now become a foreigner, as his parents had been found to be migrant Malawian missionaries who settled in the then Northern Rhodesia, where Kenneth was born. In the 2006 elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the concept of 'Congolite' almost gained

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29 Ibid, p.26-7
30 Herbst, the role of citizenship laws in multiethnic societies: evidence from African, p.27
31 Obi,
32 Herbst, op.cit.
ground, following the opposition's efforts to mobilize the electorate by accusing President Joseph Kabila of not being Congolese. The evidence for the President being a foreigner was that he grew up in Tanzania and does not speak Lingala, commonly spoken in the streets of Kinshasa.\(^{33}\)

It is interesting to note that in all the above countries, as in Côte d'Ivoire, the crux of the citizenship question has had to do with elections. Following the new wave of democratization in Africa since the late 1990s, it suddenly matters who can or cannot vote. At issue really is the elite struggle for power, for, in many countries of Africa, those with 'doubtful citizenship' are known to bond together behind sympathetic politicians. Thus, in the 1990 elections in Côte d'Ivoire, Laurent Gbagbo, reflecting the general suspicion that immigrant support was for President Boigny, had, in his campaigns, accused the latter of using northern immigrants as his 'electoral cattle'.\(^{34}\) In Kenya similarly, in the run-up to the first multi-party elections there, Kenneth Matiba, a leading opposition figure had warned that Asians must not be allowed to acquire citizenship status, "only to dominate the locals".\(^{35}\) Here, again, Asian sentiments were suspected to be for the then government. The foregoing is in line with the theoretical position of this paper that desperate elite in the various African countries will do everything, including barring some sections of their populations, from voting or being voted for, in their bid to secure or hold power. In several of the countries mentioned above, the citizenship question is always championed at any one time by those who believe that their electoral chances are enhanced if those with 'doubtful citizenship' are excluded.

Beyond the question of doubtful citizenship, African countries are also bedeviled by the question of 'contested citizenship'. This is playing out particularly in countries with trans-border ethnic groups – those ethnic groups whose fractions are indigenous to two or more countries. The phenomenon of the trans-border ethnic group in Africa also has its origins in colonialism, which partitioned

\(^{33}\) Copnall, op.cit, pp.14-5

\(^{34}\) Marshal-Fratini, op.cit, p.22

\(^{35}\) Herbst, op.cit.
several ethnic groups across boundaries. Efforts were made by the colonialists to dissuade continued relations between the fractions of these groups across boundaries. After independence, even more efforts have been made to 'integrate' the members of each fraction into their respective countries. This was part of the 'nation-building project' in Africa, which, despite exaggerated claims to the contrary, only had limited success. In several areas of Africa, members of the various fractions of different trans-border ethnic groups continued to relate across the borders of their countries. In the years immediately following independence, trans-border ethnic groups in Africa was the focus of irredentism on the continent. This did not succeed though, and African borders largely continued to reflect the status quo.

Nevertheless, this continuing solidarity among members of different fractions of trans-border ethnic groups, and its perception by members of other ethnic groups in the given countries of Africa, has been a problem for the citizenship question. The members of the other ethnic groups are hardly ever sure of the true country of origin of members of their trans-border ethnic groups. Because of this, the loyalties of these members of the trans-border ethnic group were always in doubt. In the heat of the Ivoirien crisis, almost every Dioula was perceived as foreigner by other Ivoiriens. Even northern Dioula that had FPI sympathies were often treated as RDR members. As one FPI militant from the north complained, "that's the whole pattern...No one distinguishes anymore. You're from the north, you're Malian, it's the same thing, once you wear

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36 In the euphoria that followed independence in Africa, many studies were conducted that showed partitioned groups in Africa as being more integrated into their respective countries than the larger group. Niles (1994) was one such work, but even though he found members of the Hausa ethnic group to be more integrated into Nigeria and Niger respectively. It is significant that the chief of Yra'fien in Niger, when told in the course of the research, that a new coup d'état had just taken place in Nigeria replied that there was no problem with that, as an Hausa was still in charge; a sentiment that can be interpreted as a direct contradiction to niles' findings stage miles, w.f.s. (1994). Hausa land divided: colonialism and independence in Nigeria and Niger. Ithaca and London: Cornell University.

a long boubou, you’re from the north." In recent years, this uneasy relations between trans-border peoples and other citizens in the countries of Africa has been even more so, following the challenges and failures of liberalism and globalization on the continent. With falling revenues and depleting resources, African countries have largely not been able to keep up with the material needs of their citizens. Competition has become stiffer for the available infrastructure and amenities of the state. There has thus been the need in recent times, to define who deserves to enjoy those facilities. In the ensuing game of survival, it is handy for some to declare others non-citizens, on account that they belong somewhere, and so, are not entitled to the benefit of the state. This is the case of contested citizenship, whereby even the very basis of citizenship claims by a group becomes contestable. This strand of the citizenship question has afflicted several countries of Africa, but it is particularly grave in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa, where Tutsi citizenship is at the roots of the several conflicts that have afflicted the countries of the region in recent times. In West Africa, the situation is similarly grave in the Mano River region, where issues of Mandingo citizenship and those of Dioula citizenship have produced insurgencies in Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire respectively. Ironically, both the Mandingo and the Dioula are trans-border ethnic groups produced by a historical ‘Mande/Mossi dispersion’.

Questions of contested citizenship can also be situated within the elite burden in Africa. Contested citizenship reflects the failure of the African elite to utilize the power which has been at their disposal since independence to harness their countries’ resources and provide for their citizens. They have been in power for so long, yet their incompetence and corruption have made it impossible for the continent to develop. Thus, most African countries are still content with exporting primary products. It was

38 Vidal, c-(2002), "Témoignages Abidjanaises", quoted in Marshal Fratini, op.cit. p.25.
41 Launay and Miran, op.cit. p.67
then no wonder that when the crash in commodity prices came in the 1980s and 1990s, most of the economies in Africa also crashed. Even the state itself, in many places, was on the verge of collapse. Faced with the scarcities that this engendered, the elite became even more desperate to define ‘who is who’ in their countries.

The 2010 Presidential Election and Ouster of Gbagbo in Côte d’Ivoire

The crisis in Côte d’Ivoire eventually continued till 2007. Peace efforts early in the war did not yield much\textsuperscript{42}. In 2005, however, an agreement was brokered by then South African President, Thabo Mbeki, which saw Gbagbo allowing Ouattara to stand in future presidential elections\textsuperscript{43}. Then, in 2007, a new Peace Agreement was signed between the warring parties that paved the way for real peace. While the war lasted, Gbagbo had invoked a law to postpone elections that had been due since 2005. With the new peace deal, elections were now rescheduled following agreements on the other contentious issues, particularly, troop pull-backs from the fronts, formation of a unity government, and the repackaging of the national identification process\textsuperscript{44}. After a number of postponements due to logistics reasons, elections were finally held in 2010. Campaigns for the polls looked like a grand finale of sorts to the Ivoirien crisis. Virtually all the leading \textit{dramatis personae} in the crisis were involved, and the leading candidates for Presidency fittingly included Bédié, Ouattara and Gbagbo, as General Guei had been killed in the failed coup of September, 2002.

In the first elections, Gbagbo emerged victorious, with about 42 percent of the votes. Ouattara came second, with Bédié trailing in the third position. With no candidate securing more than 50 percent of the votes, the electoral law provided that the candidates will have to go for a run-off. For the run-off elections, only the two front placed runners were eligible. Gbagbo and Ouattara thus squared up for the contest, which was held on November 28, 2010.

\textsuperscript{42} Balint- kurti, (2008 april-june), the paper chase, BBC focus on african, p.27.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
This time, Ouattara won, with 54 percent of the total votes, to Gbagbo’s 45.9 percent\(^\text{45}\). The elections were certified as largely credible by the array of international observers that covered the exercise, including the United Nations Election Observer Mission (UNEOM) in Côte d’Ivoire. But Gbagbo rejected the results as announced by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), alleging that Ouattara’s supporters had cashed in on the situation in the north of the country to manipulate the votes in his favour. Instead, Gbagbo sent the result to the Constitutional Court for vetting. The Constitutional Court had the final say on the presidential election, and was composed of Gbagbo’s allies. Expectedly, the Constitutional Court faulted the results and instead declared Gbagbo winner\(^\text{46}\).

With Ouattara and Gbagbo declared winners by different electoral authorities, both men proceeded to swear in themselves as president of the country, few minutes after the other. An impasse was, thus, created following which, diplomatic efforts were made at many fronts to resolve the situation. The goal of the diplomatic efforts was to get Gbagbo to accept the election results and hand over power to Ouattara. When these efforts seemed not to be succeeding, the erstwhile New Forces, all along stationed in the north and loyal to Ouattara, and suddenly relabeled as the ‘Republican Forces’, resumed their march south from their base in Bouake.\(^\text{47}\) By March, 2011, the Republican Forces were in Abidjan. When it became clear however that they may not be able to beat the Gbagbo fighters, UN and French forces in Côte D’Ivoire joined the fray behind the Ouattara forces. On April 11, 2011, the combined forces finally stormed the Presidential Residence in Abidjan and arrested Gbagbo and his retinue, who were then taken into custody.\(^\text{48}\) Within days, Ouattara was officially sworn in as President of Côte d’Ivoire.

\(^{45}\) Ochai, (2011, maya) Gbagbo’s Day, Newswatch, pp.24-27
\(^{46}\) ibid
\(^{47}\) A resolution in Abidjan.(2011, April 15). African Confidential, ud.52, No. 8
\(^{48}\) Ochai, op.cit
Gbagbo's Fall: Implications for the Foreign Policy of African States

While it lasted, the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire drew in several African countries on different sides. Now that the crisis seems at its end, it is only imperative that the policies that led these various African countries to take the positions they took on Côte d'Ivoire be examined. To start with, the events in Côte d'Ivoire exposed a worrisome but continuing inability of African countries to take sustainable positions on some of the most contested issues on the continent. African countries have been afflicted with citizenship matters since the days of independence. In recent years, this issue has become more conflictual. Yet, in all these years, it has not dawned on African countries that a common approach is needed to handle citizenship matters whenever they crop up in any one country. In the circumstance, most of these countries have simply taken the view that the citizenship question in African countries is the internal affairs of the respective countries. Second, events in Côte d'Ivoire show how particularistic interests continue to guide the foreign policies of African states. For instance, a number of these countries, especially Côte d'Ivoire's neighbours, were evidently less than altruistic in their positions and actions throughout the crisis. Some of them, like Burkina Faso and Mali, obviously acted to protect their positions as the sources of most of the immigrants that were at the root of the trouble. Other neighbours like Ghana were afraid that the trouble in Côte d'Ivoire would lead to the influx of refugees across its borders. The active anti-Gbagbo roles of Burkina Faso and Ghana's energetic neutrality therefore, were only the result of their interests. The interest displayed by a few other countries even show that the old Cold War links were still strong in Africa. Throughout the Ivoirien crisis, Gbagbo was supported by South Africa, as well as Angola, Zimbabwe and even Uganda. In the years of the cold war, these countries were in the socialist camp, a cause which Gbagbo then espoused. This may also explain why countries like Nigeria were

49 A resolution in Abidjan, op.cit.
50 Ivory coast: Things fall apart.(2011, April-June). BBC focus on African, p.5
in the forefront of the move to oust Gbagbo from power after the Ivoirien elections.

Ideology may have kept people like Gbagbo distant from the Nigerian establishment in the years preceding his presidency. The Ivoirien crisis may, therefore, have been only an opportunity for pay-back. The events in Côte d'Ivoire, especially in the last days of Gbagbo, also reflected the weakness of African states, especially with regards to solving African problems. African countries were helpless in the face of the debilitating impasse created in Côte d'Ivoire by Gbagbo's rejection of the internationally certified election results, and looked on while the crisis took its toll. Diplomatic efforts by President Zuma did not yield much results, and Nigeria's President Jonathan, at the head of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), insisted on the principle that attempts to steal elections must be met with military force, if necessary, to install the rightful victor, a position also accepted by the African Union. But it was former colonial master, France, that mustered the strength to drive Gbagbo out. After this had been done, it was then left for African governments to issue perfunctory statements concerning the 'sovereignty and territorial integrity' of their states.

In the final analysis, the Ivoirien crisis has shown that African regimes are unresponsive and irresponsible. Politics in Africa has largely only produced 'big men' in the various countries, and these are often divorced from the very people they claim to govern. Most often, the desire for power in Africa is not so that good governance will be provided to the people, but mostly only so that the rulers will line their pockets with ill-gotten wealth. This is why the big men of power in Africa, the elite, always find it difficult to give up power. Thus, although Gbagbo had stayed in power beyond the maximum number of years possible, he still found it necessary to continue to hold out. The speed with which normalcy is returning to Côte d'Ivoire after his ouster is only

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51 A resolution in Abidjan, op. cit.
52 A resolution in Abidjan, op.cit.9
symptomatic of the relief (and hope) with which the African masses welcome regime change in their countries.

**Conclusion**
The foregoing has shown that the citizenship question in Africa is a time bomb that could destroy the tenuous foundations of the African state. This potential is real for virtually every African state, yet, not even in the foreign policies of African states have much sustainable attempts been made to tackle the issue. Instead, the approach has variously been that of denial or self-interest. In the circumstance, the citizenship question in several countries in Africa is becoming intractable, and politics in many of these states is now coalescing on the basis of insiders and outsiders. The solution to the citizenship question in Africa does not lie in the changing circumstances of insider and outsider, but rather in changing the focus of power in African countries from one that only provides for the few elite to the one that caters for the interests of the generality of the people, such that it will no more matter who is an insider or who is an outsider.