

VITI, Fabio (dir.). — *La Côte d'Ivoire, d'une crise à l'autre*. Paris, L'Harmattan, 2014, 240 p., bibl.

The contributions to this volume focus on Côte-d'Ivoire from 2002, when an abortive coup effectively partitioned the country in two, to 2012, when the government's refusal to accept the results of an election led to a military siege of Abidjan and the forceful reunification of the country. The chapters were originally presented at a conference in Pavia, Italy, which attempted to place these events within a longer-term perspective. Although half of the contributors are anthropologists, the others come from a wide array of disciplines in the social sciences—political science, economics, geography; the authors also constitute an international array of Europeans and Ivoirians.

Some of the chapters concentrate more narrowly on the events of this turbulent decade. Giulia Piccolino focuses on the legalist rhetoric of the Gbagbo regime, foreshadowing its rationalization for its rejection of the results of the 2012 election. Marco Wyss provides a balanced evaluation of French military intervention during the crisis, highlighting its positive contribution in preventing bloodshed but also its negative effect in calling into question the impartiality of the role of the UN peacekeeping force. In a very different vein, Magali Chelpiden Hamer examines the destructive effects of the crisis on Ivoirian schools, both in terms of the interrupted scholarization of a generation of youth and of the controversial and partisan political role of the FESCI, the student union.

By attempting to place these events within a longer-term perspective, the other authors take a "retro-prospective view" to use the language of Kouamé Sylvestre Kouassi, in order to evaluate the extent to which the problems at the root of the crises have in any real sense been resolved. The overall verdict, as F. Viti suggests in his introduction, is pessimistic. K. S. Kouassi sees the crises as a symptom of the failure of democratization in post-Independence Côte-d'Ivoire. Jean Marcel Koffi discusses the way in which economic downturn and political instability have fueled on another; while economic stagnation has fueled political violence, such violence has in turn discouraged foreign investment, launching a spiral of economic and political failure. Armando Cutolo provides a fascinating account on how demagogues who dominated "street parliaments" during the Gbagbo regime have recycled themselves as Pentecostal preachers whose messages employ a hermeneutic of secrecy to prophecy Gbagbo's return.

Not surprisingly, land tenure emerges as one of the principal issues fueling political conflict in Côte-d'Ivoire. Essays by Jean-Pierre Chauveau and Jean-Philippe Colin on the situation in the southwest and by Noël Kouassi on the southeast show how similar issues of ethnic and intergenerational tensions have played out very differently in different regions. Indeed, it is surprising that they are not placed consecutively in the collection, and that comparisons are left entirely to the reader. In the southwest, in spite of outbreaks of violence, land transactions actually increased during the period, fueled by attempts to negotiate and renegotiate terms in a situation of uncertainty. In the southeast, where young men would violently (but not lethally) enforce a curfew, uncertainties hinged less on rights to land than on performances of public deference and the acknowledgment of relations of dependence.

The collection ends with a deliberately controversial and provocative essay by Fabio Viti which, by its very placement, unfortunately draws attention away from the other essays in the volume. F. Viti argues that recent crises are indeed a continuation of a pattern of violence that has characterized Côte-d'Ivoire since its inception as a colony and its brutal "pacification" followed by a long period of reliance on forced labor. After independence, the authoritarian regime of Houphouët-Boigny was also marked by the violent repression of dissent. F. Viti contrasts the reprehensible silence of (especially French) academics to their recent and overwhelmingly one-sided partisan intervention. Unfortunately, F. Viti does not restrict his critique to a condemnation of poor judgment, lack of objectivity, or even pusillanimity, but suggests that these academics are guilty of bad faith and reacting to the decline of French influence, intellectual as well as political and economic, in Côte-d'Ivoire. Such an accusation is unsubstantiated and, I suspect in most if not all cases, unfair. As such, as an ending to both his individual essay and the book as a whole, it detracts from the impact of his otherwise very convincing essay and, more generally, from the other contributions to the volume.