The socio-political crisis in the Ivory Coast consists of the sum total of military coups, coup attempts, civil war, and the series of violent clashes in the country since December 1999. These events have jeopardised the continuity of the State and the social order, and have thereby led to a break in a relatively long period of political stability in a country long considered a model. The aim of this article is primarily to understand the meaning and significance of this socio-political crisis. First, following on a long period of political stability, our theory is that this political disorder is indicative of the challenges arising from Houphouet Boigny's premature opting for hyperglobalisation. This entailed his 'model of compromise', which had been in crisis since the beginning of the 1990s, and an imposed democratisation process. Second, we need to focus on 'ivoirité', or 'Ivorianness'. We analyse this phenomenon as being a specific expression of the re-invention of the collective Ivorian persona, in reaction to the effects of more than three decades of economic openness that has served to neutralise the expression of any specific identity. Third, this compromise, through its adhesion to free trade and the market economy, brought about internal contractions and contradictions which forced the socio-political system to re-tribalise the political debate and to define new rules governing access to increasingly scarce resources.

In this socio-political crisis what meaning can be attributed to the escalation of the violence and its modes of justification? As a sign of the delegitimation of the regulatory models constructed on the 'tontine' model, the recurrence of military coups d'état in the Ivory Coast is a call to renew the political grammar and associated modalities of socio-political regulation around integrating principles which remain to be invented. ‘Ivoirité’ or 'Ivorianness' is the Ivorian version of modern nationalism. But there has been an evolution in its conceptualisation as an ideology.

Descriptors: Political crisis, Economic aspect, History, Côte d’Ivoire

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