

## Political Coalition and Uncertainty in the Alternation to State Power in Africa: An Illustration from the Ivorian Case.

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### Abstract:

*On September 14, 2014, during the state visit of President of the Republic in the region called IFFOU, the chairman of PDCI-RDA asked its militants to support the candidacy of President Ouattara in the 2015 presidential elections. According Henri Konan Bédié, President of the PDCI, the objective of such a choice is twofold: Ensure the success of the RHDP in the 2015 elections and lead to a unified party called PDCI-RDR to govern Côte d'Ivoire. It being understood that these two parties will be able to establish between them the alternation to the post of president of the republic as early as 2020. Would it really be possible to achieve this alternation, especially in the current context of plurality and political division? On this basis, this article tries to question the uncertainties that structure this future alternation in a context of political plurality.*

**Keywords:** Elections, RHDP, alternation

### Résumé :

Le 14 septembre 2014, lors de la visite d'Etat du président de la république dans la région du Lifou, le président du PDCI-RDA a demandé à ses militants de soutenir la candidature du président Ouattara lors des élections de 2015. Selon Henri Konan Bédié, président du PDCI, l'objectif d'un tel choix est double : assurer le succès du RHDP aux élections de 2015 et aboutir à un parti unifié dénommé PDCI-RDR pour gouverner la Côte d'Ivoire, étant entendu que ces deux partis sauront établir entre eux l'alternance au pouvoir dès 2020. Serait-il vraiment possible d'arriver à cette alternance surtout dans le contexte actuel de pluralité et de division politique? Sur cette base, le présent article tente de questionner les incertitudes qui structurent cette alternance future dans un contexte de pluralité politique.

**Mots clés :** Elections, RHDP, alternance

### Introduction:

Côte d'Ivoire is experiencing great turbulence characterized by the strengthening of the political struggle, exacerbating social tensions. Indeed, Côte d'Ivoire was shaken in 1999 by a military coup that reinforced the seeds of socio-political instability whose most recent episodes are the armed crisis of 2002 and the post-election crisis of 2010. This succession of crises has largely affected the socio-economic production modalities of the country, Inter-ethnic social relationships for the reconstruction of social otherness and a significant increase in insecurity. Kimou (2012) says that in the district of Abidjan between 1999 and 2007, there were on average more than 4951 cases of various crimes (homicides, robberies, burglaries, armed robberies ...) against 1933 cases over the period 1989 to 1998, an increase of nearly 39% in less than ten years. The author also shows that there is a significant correlation between violent crimes (including homicides) and the unlawful possession of firearms caused by the military-political crisis of 2002 and 2010. Moreover, the post-electoral crisis of 2010 was marked by the multiplication of civilian roadblocks with the cases of assassinations, testifying to the gravity of the ethnic and identity divisions in the country.

Although in a phase of reconstruction and gradual return to normalization after the 2010 electoral crisis, the underlying reasons for the social divide are not yet completely contained, all of which poses a threat to social peace. The second round of this presidential election was marked by a deep restructuring of the political space and in particular by a strengthening of the cohesion between the PDCI of Henri Konan Bédié and the RDR of Alassane Ouattara.

In order to win democratically the party of Laurent Gbagbo (FPI), ruling party, we see the reactivation of the coalition between PDCI and RDR under the name of RHDP<sup>1</sup>. And after the elections in 2010, the candidate of RHDP, Alassane Ouattara wins<sup>2</sup> the elections against the candidate of LMP Laurent Gbagbo. In view of the facts, it is significant to point out that the union of the parties in the congregate of Houphouetists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP) made it possible to bring their candidate to the supreme magistracy.

<sup>1</sup>The literature shows that the RHDP was created in 2005, Here the intention is not to establish the history and operation of the RHDP.

<sup>2</sup> The objective here is not to explain the consequences of this crisis.

However, in view of the elections held in 2015, the pattern of political groupings is emerging with the likelihood of a single candidate from the gather of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP) to face the candidate of the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) And its allies of the Alliance of Democratic Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (AFDCI). This affirmation is confirmed and legitimized by the appeal of Daoukro since September 14, 2014 in these terms.

*"You will be the only candidate of these political parties for the presidential election of 2015 without prejudice to the irreducible who will present themselves in their own name. The objective of such a candidature is twofold: first, to ensure the success of the RHDP in the 2015 elections in the interest of Côte d'Ivoire and peace. Then, to achieve a unified party, "PDCI-RDR" to govern the Côte d'Ivoire, it being understood that these two parties will be able to establish between them, the alternation to the power in 2020..."<sup>3</sup>.*

This is the construction of a new single party PDCI-RDR although they believe that the "small political parties" of the Rhdp that are the Union for Democracy and Peace in Cote d'Ivoire (UDPCI) and the Movement of the Forces of the Future (MFA) are not excluded.

Undoubtedly, this call structures the establishment of a political alternation between the PDCI and the RDR from 2020 to govern Côte d'Ivoire. It is a political game where in 2015 both parties supported Alassane Ouattara who is a member of the RDR. In 2020, the single candidate who will be supported by the RHDP in the presidential elections, will be a member of the PDCI and so on. This mode of political structuring is certainly characterized by social productions in the sense that it may generate fears. Thus, on the basis of the facts and the functioning of the actors, this new scheme of alternation to power from 2020 merits questioning whether it is certainly a political reality or myth. This is the objective of this article. It is also a matter of questioning the ideological productions that fuel the way in which relations between political parties have functioned since this Daoukro appeal.

At the methodological level, the study is based on an essentially qualitative approach aimed at a comprehensive understanding of the context and socio-political interactions between social actors. Multiple sources of data: (i) formal and informal individual interviews, (ii) in situ observation in which we perceived, memorized and noted elements of analysis especially during the 5th PDCI-RDA Congress on February 28, 2015 (iii) the documentation. In addition, the study followed the interviews of chairpersons of political parties in print and oral media. In this work, the documentation has been of considerable help.

To this end, the theoretical orientations of documentary exploration have had as disciplinary vectors, the written press, scientific articles, reports of seminars and colloquia on the question. As the main tool of investigation, documentary research was carried out throughout the work and covered a literature as diverse as varied. Individual non-formal interviews were conducted with 27 socio-political actors including 10 members of the PDCI, 10 members of the RDR, 5 members of UDPCI and MFA and two (2) civil society actors. Interviews recorded using a digital dictation machine were transcribed. The sheets developed were analyzed in a cross-sectional manner. The content analysis was chosen as a technique and the analytic categories constructed. Thus, the result of the analysis of empirical data was structured in three points: the hypothesis of the isolation philosophy of the "small political parties" of the RHDP (i), the hypothesis of relative treason in 2020 (ii), the assumption of the fragmentation of the PDCI and the strengthening of the opposition parties (iii).

### **1. The hypothesis of the philosophy of isolation of the "small parties of the RHDP"**

Since the end of the State visit of the President of the Republic to the IFFou region, there has been an increase in exchanges and communications on "Daoukro's appeal". These communications revolve around the establishment of a system of alternation to state power as early as 2020. These discourses on alternation are based on a "logic of trust". For the moment, we will refrain from defining the significant articulations of this policy which is far from unanimous, both among the various political parties of the RHDP and the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI), its allies of the Forces Alliance Democratic Republic of Côte d'Ivoire (AFDCI) and civil society. Whatever definition is given, consensus seems almost complete on the idea of building a new single party, PDCI-RDR, after the re-election of Alassane Ouattara in 2015, as in the time of Houphouët-Boigny, a real change of "paradigm" in the mode of accession to the state power.

It is therefore significant to specify that the logic of production and reproduction of this alternation of 2020 makes it possible to "jump" a certain number of locks that had previously characterized the PDCI-RDA relation and the RDR. In view of the facts, it can be admitted that it is a matter of building a new individualized relationship between the

<sup>3</sup> Speech by President Henri Konan Bédié, President of PdcI-Rdr, Wednesday 14 September 2014, in *Daoukro (Côte d'Ivoire)*

PDCI and the RDR backed by social agreement and / or social trust. This agreement or social trust was born of the elections of exit from serious crises of 2010 that have taken place in the country for several decades.

The mode of construction and deconstruction of the current political discourse makes it possible to ask the question on the evacuation or not of the social agreement which is at the foundation of the call of Daoukro. Indeed, this supposed alternation from 2020 engages various forms of representation at the level of the actors of the Ivorian political scene, notably through the principles of equity and social justice that underlie them. This dimension is central because social facts are first of all facts of consciousness before being manifest facts. For example, interviews with RHDP political parties and other types of respondents revealed a new form of symbolic and veiled production of the management of state power.

*"The alternation is only between the PDCI and the RDR, if in 2020 a candidate of the PDCI is placed, soon after it will be another one of the RDR, it is this game that we see coming".*

In the respondents' opinion, it is as if the RHDP alliance and the 2020 alternation will be based on an alliance between the North (RDR) and Akan in the center of the country (PDCI). The reflection produced by Moussa (2008) is an essential milestone. Indeed, Moussa (2008) recalls that:

*"Already under his governance, Houphouët-Boigny led the Ivory Coast on the basis of an alliance between Akan and Nordists against the population of the West. This political stratagem was supposed to establish an alliance between the Baoulés of the Akan group on the one hand and the northern populations of the labor force on the other hand, who are all parties to the conquest of the forests of the south. This political engineering of the management of social diversity came to a halt when the Nordists began expressing their frustrations in the early 1990. The explicit end of the sacred alliance between the PDCI and the groups of the north is consecrated by the drafting of a document called "Charter of the North" which expresses all the inequalities of which the northerners consider themselves victims. Thus the northerners did not feel rewarded for the true value of their political support. Indeed, under the chairmanship of Bédié, the ideology of Ivoirity allowed to develop in the political space a stratagem to oust its main political rival Alassane Ouattara, the former Prime Minister of Houphouët-Boigny".*

With regard to the functioning of socio-political relations and the functioning of social actors, the scheme described above by the author risks deconstructing the political alternation of 2020. Thus on the basis of the virulence of the current debate around Daoukro's appeal, is it significant to specify the neutralization of the "small political parties" of RHDP (UDPCI, MFA, UPCI) as early as 2020. Everything happens or is likely to happen now as if the political social reality was necessarily organized around the two major political parties of the RHDP, namely the PDCI and the RDR. This principle of symbolic isolation of supposedly "small weights" risks to produce and exacerbate inter-party rivalries on political and ethnicist grounds in a context where the struggle for the conquest of state power is a national issue. A sort of political regionalization where the people of the west will refer to the UDPCI, the north will refer to the RDR and the center will refer to the PDCI. This assertion is supported by the speech of the president of the Union for Côte d'Ivoire (UPCI), which has already announced that he will be candidate for the 2020 presidential as follows:

*"When President Bedie said that in 2020 it will be a PDCI activist who will be the candidate of the RHDP, we say that for this part we feel less concerned. If it is an alternation between the PDCI and the RDR, I as President of the Union for the Côte d'Ivoire (UPCI), I do not feel concerned by this chapter. If not globally, we think calling Ivorians, especially RHDP activists, to support President Alassane Ouattara for the 2015 election, is going in the right direction and meets our full membership. Now, if it is to say that the PDCI in 2015 supports the candidate of the RDR and in 2020 the RDR will have to support a candidate of the PDCI, you understand that I as president of the UPCI, I cannot align myself with such a position... »<sup>4</sup>*

The speech of the President of the UPCI expresses the real intention of his party for the conquest of power in 2020 and reflects the forthcoming production of a rivalry between the parties of the RHDP which can extend dialectically and simultaneously to all the social relations. The exacerbation of the inter-RHDP rivalry could capitalize the social

<sup>4</sup> Albert Mabri Toikeusse President of UDPCI., koaci.com – Tuesday 07, July 2015

energy of the endogenous living forces, focus them on quarrels of state power and thus divert them from the key problems of preserving social tranquility.

If the call which supported the candidate of the RDR in 2015 gradually settled down and tends to impose itself on the different parties of the RHDP, it is because it has hatched on favorable ground or each struggle For the preservation of the "little social peace found" and that it could be carried by a constellation of leaders of inspiration claiming an ideological posture. However, the probable isolation of "small weights" from 2020 is likely to be the equivalent of the concept of Ivoirity, which has rekindled all tensions between nationals and non-nationals under the era of Henri Konan Bedie. Indeed, the former head of state, Henri Konan Bédié, to develop an ethno-nationalist speech manufacturing an ideology of exclusion based on the Ivoirity to mask the economic decline of the country Moussa (2008).

## **2. The hypothesis of relative treason in 2020**

Daoukro's appeal makes it clear that since the creation of the political alliance to win the elections that took place in 2010, the RHDP sees the question of the alternation to the power of State as an indisputable index of the effectiveness of their political alliance and the sidelining of opposition parties. But, according to the respondents, President Bédié (PDCI) and President Ouattara (RDR) are the keystone of this alliance and they are at the center of everything. Power, decisions are incarnated in the person of these two people they say. In these circumstances, it is significant to specify that the duration of the alliance is under the age of President Bedie and "his younger brother" Ouattara. On analysis, this political reality within the alliance functions as a personalization of power within the RHDP. It then becomes evident that the realization of the 2020 alternation is a utopia.

The depth of the talks makes it possible to know that the natural absence of Presidents Bédié and Ouattara will infuse negative contents into the alliance because "everyone aspires to be president of the republic one day" in the opinion of the respondents. Consequently, we will witness the ideological production of political betrayal behaviors, the singular forms of social production of otherness linked to political aspirations in the country. This is reinforced by the remarks of the President of the UDPCI. Indeed, Albert Mabri Toikeusse said in 2015 that "Daoukro's Appeal is not an agreement and I hope to be the candidate of the said political alliance in 2020". The values and principles of democracy guarantee alternation to state power. This process at the head of state power even poses itself as one of the undisputed principles of democracy. To this end, if the RHDP alliance were to impose its viability on the Ivorian society, the exercise of what is rightly called "alternation to state power as early as 2020" Implement without the solid construction of respect for trust given. If this condition is constructed, the alternation of which the RHDP alliance speaks becomes a distinctive mark of respect for the word and a pledge of openness of the different parties of the RHDP, already by speeches of treason on the horizon. These data are reinforced by the remarks of the President of the UDPCI in these terms:

"Daoukro's appeal is a call and not an agreement. We are linked to the RHDP by an agreement signed in Paris. Beyond that, there are no other agreements that bind us. We have each declared that our candidate in 2015 is Alassane Ouattara. We are in favor of a unified party whose conditions will be discussed. 2020? Depending on the evolution of our alliance, decisions will be made. We had a Congress and on the occasion of this Congress there were resolutions that asked us to prepare for 2020. Mabri Toikeusse is preparing to be a candidate in 2020. Now, if there are any discussions we should have, we will have them. But I hope that I will be the candidate of the Houphouetists *in 2020*"<sup>5</sup>.

This speech by the President of UDPCI highlights the sustainability index of the RHDP political alliance and produces germs of treason and / or confidence on the horizon. The socio-political crises in the country have made the Ivorian political game, a game where it is increasingly difficult to trust others. Confidence has given way to doubt and suspicion. Imagine how laborious it would be to live in an alliance where trust would no longer exist. It would be an unbreakable alliance by 2020 on the pretext that "everyone aspires to be president of the republic" in the opinion of the respondents. However, the key informant's speeches in the study predict that 2020 appears to be the breaking point of the RHDP alliance, because there will be a plurality of vision. This makes it possible to predict that each political party that is a member of the alliance will build its own vision for the conquest of state power. Under these conditions, the resilience of the members may be low, which could lead to relative betrayal. Interviews with RDR militants reveal a veiled distance from the Daoukro agreement. The same answers were also received with respondents from the PDCI. While the two leaders (Alassane Ouattara and Henri Konan Bédié) talk about alternation, the major concern of 78.56%

<sup>5</sup> Albert Mabri Toikeusse President of UDPCI., koaci.com – Tuesday 07, July 2015

of RDR respondents and 57.79% of respondents of PDCI-RDA is who will be the candidate of their different party in the presidential election of 2020. This situation makes it possible to objectify the presence of the hypothesis of a betrayal in the collective and individual consciousness of the militants.

### **3. The hypothesis of the fragmentation of the PDCI and the strengthening of the opposition**

The investigations made it possible to observe the distance of several cadres of the PDCI to the activities and ideologies of the party, since the “call of Daoukro”. Indeed, since the announcement of the idea of alternating state power in 2020 by President Henri Konan Bedie, the PDCI is experiencing a sort of flight from some of its cadres.

On the analysis, the significant dispersion of the members of the PDCI is linked to an idea of rebellions against the call of Daoukro and the political alternation of 2020. To this end, it is useful to take a closer look at the categories of thoughts that the party actors mobilize to act as the products of a fragile social relationship. This dissociative character which structures the party of Felix Houphouët Boigny since the “call of Daoukro” shows that this party still holds under the weight of the president Bedie. Thus, the absence of President Bédié will accentuate the dispersion of certain members of the party to join other parties such as the RDR, the UDPCI, the FPI and so on. Under these conditions, what can be the sustainability of the RHDP alliance for alternation in 2020 when it is known that the alliance must necessarily rely on the agreement and consensus of the party members. Confirmation of the hypothesis of the weakening of the PDCI, the party which is the first heavyweight of the RHDP alliance, will undermine the achievement of the political alternation of 2020. Under these conditions the alliance parties will go to Elections separately.

This situation will lead to the emergence of political nurseries that will decide to be independent candidates for the presidential election of 2020. In other words, these political nurseries will find it difficult to respect the orders of the alliance. This idea is supported by the remarks of a member of the PDCI in these terms:

*"If President Bédié does not manage to channel the cadres within the party, the PDCI will tear apart like the FPI today and this will cost the party a lot ... and this dispersion will put at risk Alternation of 2020. For each party will stand for election "*. In these cases, the RDR risks making every effort to retain its power by reinforcing the break-up and the quarrel between the PDCI and the opposition in general. For, as underlined by Loada<sup>6</sup> (1995), "there is a strategy of stifling institutional opposition, under the auspices of consensual democracy, whose aim is to consolidate the foundations of the enterprise of domination underway, Advent of the single party ". Also, the stated will of the RHDP which is to erase the real opposition on the Ivorian political scene by 2020 will be called into question. In these conditions, if the opposition propose a good project of society to the people, it risks recovering the management of state power. Even if it is true that "The ruling party merges with the state and the head of state is the state. »<sup>17</sup>, The alternation of 2020 is likely to be hardly won by the ruling party (RHDP). Yet this is what Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (2013) demonstrates in these terms:

*"Experience has shown that when opposition political parties are effectively united in coalitions and alliances, they succeed in reversing the balance of power. The example of Senegal where a strong mobilization has allowed the fall of Abdoulaye Wade and those of some countries of Latin America are clear illustrations. Similarly, in Benin, Nicéphore Soglo had lost power in 1996 only because he had almost all the leaders and political parties against him in the country. In Mali, in 1992, the Alliance for the Republic and Democracy (ARD) brought together 11 parties around the Alliance for Democracy in Mali (ADEMA) and independent personalities, ie Who do not belong to a political group, took Alpha Oumar Konaré to power and maintained him until 2002. Its successor, Amadou Toumani Touré (known as "ATT"), an independent personality, will benefit from the establishment of the Alliance for Convergence and Change (ACC), a grouping of 28 political parties. This does not forgive, When one knows that in certain countries like Cameroon and DRC, the ballot is the majority in a round for the presidential, and it is proportional and takes place in a single round for the legislative and the municipal " Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (2013.p 93).*

With regard to the functioning of the Ivorian political sphere for the conquest of power, we must take into account the fundamental position of the opposition. Indeed, as we observed in 2010, the second round of the presidential election precisely was marked by a profound reconfiguration of the political landscape and in particular by a strengthening of the cohesion of the opposition bloc of the time. This pattern is likely to emerge on the side of the opposition by 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Loada (1995) « Burkina Faso, les rentes de la légitimation démocratique », A M-G. Loada, in *L'Afrique politique*, Paris, Karthala, 1995, p 219.

<sup>7</sup> See « périodes électorales en Afrique. Quand les pouvoirs se nourrissent de l'ignorance des populations », *Le pays* n° 3848 du 13 au 15 avril 2006, p31

And if this does not happen, the superficial fragmentation of the PDCI that can be seen in 2015 could be reinforced. This situation will play in favor of the opposition or the RDR by 2020 because In the opinion of the respondents "the Ivorian political mentality has changed".

### **Conclusion :**

These remarks on the political alternation as early as 2020 within the RHDP is part of a gap between "Daoukro's call" that structures this alternation and the speeches of the different parties that are members of this alliance. The text was based on several examples or illustrations relating not only to the speeches of the actors members of the alliance RHDP, but also to the opinions of actors not members of this alliance. The comprehensive perspective in this study has enabled us to understand that the social stakes of political change are characterized by uncertainty. To this end, the study made it possible to note the persistence of the speeches valorizing the recovery of the power of State as early as 2020 by each political party member of the RHDP since the "call of Daoukro". The study made it possible to observe the construction of a new individualized relationship between the PDCI and the RDR guaranteed by a social agreement. This new relationship within the alliance, since Daoukro's appeal, is not inclusive insofar as it reveals the symbolic rejection of the "small political parties" of the RHDP alliance. Moreover, the relative fragmentation of the PDCI and the betrayal behaviors revealed by the study are indicative of a plurality of political vision by 2020. However, as Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (2013) In the following terms: "There can be no alliance, (...) if the parties have not worked seriously on the political model, because the alliance is not possible with groups and actors who have Completely different political visions" (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2013.p36). Although in a phase of unity of the RHDP member parties and the actual choice of a single candidate for the 2015 presidential election after the electoral crisis of 2010, the effectiveness of an alternation in 2020 is still far from reality.

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