

## Case Study 2

# Institutions, Colonial Legacies, and Economic Development: Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire

**G**hana's development has exceeded expectations—at least after many disappointments. Côte d'Ivoire (CIV) started with many apparent advantages, but on many economic measures, Ghana has closed the large development gaps that existed between itself and CIV at independence.

### A Natural Comparative Case Study

Ghana and CIV border each other in West Africa. Their land area is similar in size at 239,450 km<sup>2</sup> (92,456 square miles) and 322,458 km<sup>2</sup> (124,502 mi<sup>2</sup>), respectively. Their populations are also similar, with 28.8 million people in Ghana and 24.3 million in CIV in 2017. Becoming independent within three years of each other and also sharing similar geographies, these adjoining countries make for a natural comparison.

One of the differences is that Ghana was part of the British Empire from 1821 to 1957, and CIV was a French colony from 1842 until 1960. (Note, however, that full colonial rule took a long time to become established throughout the territories of these countries; the French were still fighting to extend their presence into the early years of the twentieth century.)

Did these colonial histories matter, and if so, in what ways? Did their influences extend after independence, affecting later development policies for good or ill? Or have other, internal factors been more decisive? Can this help us to better understand why it is so challenging to sustain high growth, to eliminate poverty and hunger, and to achieve other Sustainable Development Goals? The experiences of six decades following independence illustrate some of the opportunities for and threats to development.

**Poverty and Human Development** In recent years both CIV and Ghana crossed the threshold to become classified as lower-middle income countries.

This reflects significant growth in both countries since independence, notable achievements for these once desperately poor countries. Ghana has had faster income growth, though average incomes remain somewhat higher in CIV. Ghana has lower inequality than CIV.

Going beyond income, as reported in the UNDP's 2018 Human Development Report, Ghana is classified as a medium human development country, and CIV a low human development country, according to the (New) Human Development Index (HDI), introduced in Chapter 2. Ghana's HDI value, at 0.592, is three positions higher than predicted by income, whereas CIV's HDI, at 0.492, is 22 positions lower. In the 1990 Human Development Report, when the original HDI was introduced, the numbers were 0.393 for CIV and 0.360 for Ghana. Both have made substantial progress, but Ghana much more so.

The HDI measures a country's overall average performance; what has happened to extreme (absolute) poverty? Highly precise and credible information on the extent of extreme poverty in these countries is difficult to find, but it is not doubted that at the time of independence, poverty was far higher in Ghana. Using some of the earliest available data from 1987, the World Bank put extreme poverty (equivalent to the international \$1.90 per day poverty line) at just 3.28% in CIV that year but 46.51% in Ghana; a comparable figure for Ghana (from a 1998 study) was 36% and for CIV (2002) was 16%. The most recent available estimates are 12.0% below \$1.90 per day in Ghana (2012 data); and 28.2% (2015 data) in CIV (2018 World Development Indicators). It appears clear that, over time, poverty has fallen significantly in Ghana and risen significantly in CIV. (A percentage below the poverty line is a relatively uninformative poverty measure; but more incisive

income poverty indicators such as  $P_2$ —which is explained in detail in Chapter 5—reveal a similar pattern.)

Going beyond income poverty measures, the UN Development Programme's Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)—also explained in detail in Chapter 5—similarly shows significantly lower poverty for Ghana than CIV. Ghana's MPI as reported in the 2018 Human Development Report is 0.132, with 9.6% of the population in severe multidimensional poverty; CIV's MPI is significantly higher at 0.236, with 24.5% in severe multidimensional poverty.

These outcomes would have surprised many who wrote at the time of independence. In 1960, Ghana had a real GDP per capita of just \$594, far behind CIV's \$1,675 (Penn World Table). In 2017, Ghana's estimated income per capita PPP of \$4,490 surpassed CIV's level of \$3,820 (2018 World Development Indicators).

Both Ghana and CIV have seen dramatic increases in life expectancy since independence. But in 2017, Ghana's life expectancy was 63, whereas that of CIV was 55. In 2017, under-5 mortality was 89 in CIV, and 49 in Ghana. Estimates of mortality at the time of independence vary, with some recent estimates showing worse mortality in CIV. Ghana is also performing much better on education. The youth (ages 15–24) literacy rate is 85.7% in Ghana (2010 data), but only 53.0% in CIV (2014 data). Thus, although both countries have made notable progress, the differences between these countries are substantial. How can we begin to understand such differences? Sometimes even recent changes in the patterns of development can have long historical roots, and we consider this first.

### Long-Run Factors in Comparative Development: Colonial Impact

**Extractive Institutions** The Portuguese built a fortress on the coast of Ghana in 1482 and named it Elmina ("The Mine"). Later, the British named this area the Gold Coast, as it was known until independence in 1957. Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) received its name from the French. These names apparently reflect how the colonial powers viewed the territories: as "coasts" rather than nations; as commodities for trade rather than people, or simply as a mine. The colonialists' priority of resources over people could not have been more obvious. Ghana suffered

earlier and more from the impact of the slave trade. But CIV also suffered ill treatment, including a brutal campaign by the French to subdue the "interior" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and impose forced labour. How do we understand this terrible colonial experience and its possible aftermath? Settler mortality rates, which are correlated with the establishment of extractive institutions by the colonial power with long-term pernicious effects (see Chapter 2, Section 2.6), were stunningly high in CIV and Ghana, each with an estimated 668 deaths per 1,000 per year, among the highest in the study by Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson (AJR); for comparison, the rate was just 15.5 in South Africa. This measure predicts poor current institutions as a legacy of colonialism; of course, that is an overall average, and these are only two countries.<sup>a</sup>

**Common Law Versus Civil Law?** As a former British colony, Ghana's legal system is based on common law, whereas the legal system in CIV is based on French civil law. Since the late 1990s, the view that common law legal systems provide a better foundation than civil law systems for the development of the financial system has been very influential, if also controversial. Authors in this literature such as Rafael La Porta and his colleagues argue either that common law better protects property rights, better enforces contracts, offers more predictability, or that it is better able to adapt to changes in economic conditions. Investment is generally necessary for economic growth (see Chapters 3 and 4), and the development of an effective financial system encourages investment (see Chapter 14). Some evidence supports the prediction that civil law countries will experience less financial development and lower rates of investment. But differences between French and British institutions besides the legal system may be important.

**Other Characteristics of British Versus French Rule** The British Empire is commonly considered to have preferred indirect rule, relying on its ability to dominate local traditional political systems rather than to create new ones (possibly related to common law tradition). In contrast, the French are

<sup>a</sup>According to the AJR dataset, which is based on work of historian Philip Curtin, the only colonies with higher mortality were Gambia, Mali, and Nigeria. By contrast, the death rate was just 14.9 in Hong Kong, and 17.7 in Malaysia and Singapore. (We examine two countries with identical settler mortalities, but in this way giving attention to additional elements.)

said to have tended to employ direct rule of their colonies, introducing their own centralised administrative structures, perhaps related to their own legal and historical traditions. Tactics might well have been similar regardless of the coloniser if conditions strongly favoured central rule or indirect rule. But where starting conditions were similar in both colonies and when local advantages of either centralisation or decentralisation were not strong, a centralised French strategy and a decentralised British strategy might plausibly have been expected.

The evidence does reflect a more decentralised rule in British Ghana and more centralised rule in French Côte d'Ivoire. Of course, this is not enough to conclude that French rule was worse in all respects; for example, French city planning apparently led to more compact and efficient cities today, on average. But if centralised rule is then transmitted to the post-colonial regime, the result can be a state with too few checks and balances. Decentralised rule, in contrast, provides better incentives and checks against large-scale government corruption (see Chapter 11 on the role of the state). The postcolonial record is complex but shows continued strong tendencies toward centralisation in CIV, although the aftermath of civil strife increases uncertainty about the future course. (With its two civil wars this century, there was concern that CIV could face a prolonged period as a failed state; but fortunately conditions have been fairly stable since 2012.) As Catherine Boone notes in her richly detailed study of both countries, the case of Ghana is subtle with initial but far from fully successful postcolonial government attempts at more centralisation, probably in part to wrest a larger share of agricultural revenues, but in 1992 there was a reinstatement of at least a ceremonial role—and unofficially a much larger role—for chiefs and other traditional village governance. This built on long traditions that were not systematically undermined under the British the way they were under the French.

Finally, some observers view post-independence CIV as having a more dependent relationship with France. Besides colonial rule having negative effects in general, close CIV dependence on its former co-ruler may have been a hindrance to its economic and political growth and development over the long run. In contrast, Ghana diversified more of its international relations, perhaps giving it somewhat

higher bargaining power in pursuing its national development interests.

**Ethnolinguistic Fractionalisation** Another feature associated in the economics literature with low incomes and growth is ethnolinguistic fractionalisation, with some social scientists also pointing out the potential dangers of religious fractionalisation. Colonies were often organised without regard for traditional boundaries. In fact, both countries are fairly highly fractionalised, but CIV more so. Both countries have an Akan majority (45% in Ghana and 42% in CIV) and many smaller groups. In Ghana, the population is 69% Christian and 16% Muslim, but in CIV, adherents are much more evenly divided, with 39% Muslim and 33% Christian. CIV was torn by civil war in 2002–7, which split the country, and then again in 2010–11; and the opportunistic use of fractionalisation by political figures is an important factor.

Although scholars debate the proper way to measure fractionalisation, seven main measures are used, with CIV higher on six, in some cases substantially higher.<sup>b</sup>

### Long-Run Factors in Comparative Development: Postcolonial Development

**Extreme Inequality** As discussed in this chapter (and examined in detail in Chapter 5), extreme inequality can retard the development process. The most recent estimates show CIV has only slightly higher inequality than Ghana (measured by the Gini coefficient, explained in Chapter 5). Arnim Langer points out that the combination of high inequality in CIV, coupled with rising ethnic tensions that political actors had deliberately made worse, led to the conflict that broke out there in the early 2000s. The ability of CIV to prevent inequality from rising sharply again is likely to be important for its future stability. (Inequalities along ethnic lines as a factor in conflict is examined in Chapter 14, Section 14.5. As we have seen, extreme inequality also often has roots in colonial practices.)

<sup>b</sup>For example, according to the 1997 basic Easterly-Levine (ELF) measure, CIV was rated 0.86 and Ghana 0.71, with the range in Africa from 0.04 for Burundi to 0.9 for Congo and Uganda. On the widely cited 2003 Alesina *et al.* alternative measure, CIV is 0.82 and Ghana 0.67 in a range from 0 to 0.93. These are the usual baseline measures, but one measure of the seven points in the other direction: the 1999 measure of Fearon, on which CIV is 0.78 and Ghana 0.85.



**Current Institutional Quality** The expectation is that inherited institutions should be particularly bad in these two countries because colonialists would have had little incentive to protect property rights, encourage investment, or allow broad access to economic opportunities or political participation; instead, in stark terms, the incentive was to steal or have others steal for you. A range of recent country rankings give higher marks for Ghana, but with remarkable gains for CIV. Although all rankings of country institutional quality should be used with caution, as they can contain subjective elements that are subject to bias, when a set of independently produced indicators with different focuses all point in the same direction, they may be considered more informative taken as a group (though still never substituting for careful country-specific appraisal).

Ghana has been a democracy for over a quarter of a century, following the 1993 “return to the barracks” when the military ceased involvement in politics; it has enjoyed regular peaceful transfers of power after competitive elections. As John Mukum Mbaku of the Brookings Institution put it, “since 2000, Ghanaians have three times voted out of office an incumbent government in highly contested, but fair, peaceful, and credible elections.” In CIV, governance has apparently improved significantly since the second civil war in 2012.

Regarding corruption perceptions, according to Transparency International, neither performed well, although Ghana ranked higher. For the 2017 data, Ghana tied for 81st place with a score of 40, while CIV tied for 103rd place with a score of 36, out of 179 countries ranked. Regarding “ease of doing business,” the World Bank–International Finance Corporation 2017 rankings of 183 countries listed Ghana as 120th and CIV as 139th. Regarding democracy, the Economist 2017 Democracy Index listed Ghana (ranked 52nd of 167) as a “flawed democracy” and CIV (ranked 116th), as authoritarian. Finally, while some numbers for CIV remain low, it should be noted that they have shown significant improvement since about 2012.

**Population** Patterns of population growth are often considered an important aspect of development (discussed in Chapter 6). At independence in 1960, the population of CIV was just 3.6 million, so it grew by close to seven times (675%) by 2017, when it reached 24.3 million. In contrast, Ghana’s population

was already nearly 7 million in 1960, so it grew by a little less than four times (411%), reaching 28.8 million in 2017. Moreover, in 2016, although the total fertility rate was a high 4.0 in Ghana, it was significantly higher in CIV at 4.9, with nearly one extra lifetime birth per woman. The population of CIV will surpass that of Ghana, challenging opportunities for per capita income growth. And only 14.3% of women of childbearing age use modern contraceptives in CIV; 25.6% do in Ghana—still a small fraction but nearly twice the incidence of CIV (2018 World Development Indicators, Tables WV.1 and 2.14). High birth rates generally hinder economic development. Faster population growth is associated with slower per capita income growth and slower improvement in other development indicators; lower fertility increases family incentives and resources for education. But the geographic distribution of population does not seem to have particularly strong political implications. For example, Jeffrey Herbst classifies both Ghana and CIV as among just 7 of 40 sub-Saharan African countries with a “neutral political geography.”

**Education** Some scholars consider education of central importance in explaining economic growth; Edward Glaeser and co-authors even argue that improved education can result in improved institutions. Educational attainment was abysmal in both nations at the time of independence. One of the most striking postcolonial differences between the countries is the higher level of educational attainment in Ghana, where there have been greater investments in education. In the early years after independence, there was strong policy attention to providing basic education in some of the poorer areas in Ghana. In 2017, according to the 2018 Human Development Report data tables, the mean years of schooling was almost two years higher in Ghana (at 7.1) than in CIV (at 5.2). Moreover, expected schooling is now 11.6 years in Ghana, compared with only 9.0 years in CIV. However, these education gaps were significantly wider only a few years ago, as CIV has managed to broaden educational coverage in the last few years—a good sign for the future. Education is intrinsically valuable, as reflected in the HDI; it has apparently been a factor in faster growth and may even figure in later institutional improvements. Ghana has also had recent success scaling-up basic health insurance.

**Development Policies** Development policies are often framed by a country's underlying economic institutions; this can place constraints on the types of beneficial reforms and policies that a country can successfully implement. The failure of a country to implement otherwise obvious policies (such as investing in quality primary education) may not reflect failures of understanding as much as the realities of political constraints. But when achieved, well-designed and implemented policies can have very positive effects on development outcomes; bad policies can have disastrous consequences.

**Policies in Ghana** Both nations started as (and still are) largely agrarian economies, with over half of the labour force working in rural areas. But the two countries have had somewhat different policy trajectories. The general scholarly view is that in the first quarter century after independence, Ghana chose many poorly conceived and often corrupt interventionist policies. Early policies have been described as oriented toward urban industry, with inefficiently implemented import substitution to replace manufactured imports with locally produced ones (see Chapter 12). But one policy associated with the early rule of Kwame Nkrumah through to 1966 was an emphasis on basic education, which may have left an enduring legacy through difficult subsequent swings. After disastrous policies and extreme instability, including coups in the mid-1960s to early 1980s, Ghana underwent a policy transformation to become a favourite country of liberalisation promoters in the World Bank and elsewhere in the 1980s. The development process is complex and rarely proceeds linearly. In Ghana, there was relative deterioration from independence until the early 1980s; much of its economic growth took place from the mid-1980s to the present. For example, cocoa had long been an important part of Ghana's economy, but it went into decline when state marketing boards (described in Chapter 9) limited the price farmers received for cocoa, so as to subsidise industrialisation. After farmers were allowed to receive a much higher price and technical assistance was offered, output greatly increased, particularly in two spurts in the late 1980s and early 2000s. Fertilizer use and improved varieties have diffused among farmers (diffusion in Ghana for the case of pineapples is examined in Findings Box 9.1 in Chapter 9). Cocoa

growing now provides a basic livelihood for over 700,000 farmers in Ghana. By the early 1990s, World Bank analysts such as Ishrat Husain were pointing to Ghana as a country that had been doing a better job at following and implementing more of its recommended market-friendly policies than countries such as CIV. A reason given for large-scale reform in Ghana (and in explaining other countries as well) is that things got so bad that there became no choice but to embrace reform. Naturally, when according to local conditions things become so bad something "has to change"—though perhaps not always for the better. Ghana became a classic example for proponents of the controversial view that duress "causes" reform. A criticism, to paraphrase Dani Rodrik, is that it is not clear how much duress is enough to "cause" reform; and as a result, it is not very convincing when analysts simply claim that a reform did not happen because the situation must not have been bad enough.

**Policies in Côte d'Ivoire** In contrast, CIV experienced relatively faster growth in the 1960s and 1970s and then slower growth from 1980 to the present, in part due to civil conflict. Institutions that appear to perform serviceably for two decades can have underlying weaknesses that later emerge—for example, politicians treat weaknesses as a political opportunity or the system proves to have too little flexibility as new challenges emerge.

CIV is widely viewed as having started down a more market-based, export-oriented path in a way that should have helped the rural agricultural sector, where most of the population and most people living in poverty were located. But this did not prevent elites from extracting what they could from the rural areas. In fact, there were a number of policy lurches. An apparently favourable tactic might have been an early policy of effectively trying to keep all the ethnic groups engaged in and benefiting from growth in the national economy. There were large migrations into CIV, for example, including the forced labour brought into CIV from Burkina Faso (known then as Upper Volta) by the French in the early 1940s. A more ethnically based politics in the late 1990s is viewed by specialists in the politics of CIV as a factor precipitating the disaster of regional and ethnic conflict in the 2000s.

**Enduring Questions** By 1990, Ghana was already being deemed a "success story" by the World Bank

and others. Is it because the nation followed the right policies? And if so, what explains why Ghana chose good policies and CIV did not? How much benefit can be attributed to the volume of aid itself?

CIV fell into a period of severe conflict in 2002–2007, and again in 2011; many lives were lost, and resources had to be diverted into managing the problems, with perceptions of prospects still damaged, despite a stretch of stability. French military involvement reflected France's ongoing unique relationship with CIV. In contrast, Ghana remained stable throughout this period. Why? And can it continue to remain stable? It remains to be seen how well Ghana comes through its recent discovery and production of oil, though initial indications were relatively favourable. In principle, new resources can help reduce poverty, directly and indirectly. But for many countries, a "resource curse" has resulted from political conflict over resource revenues and an overspecialised and otherwise even "hollowed out" economy (see Chapter 14).

Have leadership differences mattered for development of these countries? Socialist Kwame Nkrumah constructively supported education but diverted resources from cocoa exports to inefficient local industry, leading to economic disaster; under duress, socialist Jerry Rawlings embraced market-oriented policy reforms that led to short-term pain but long-term gain. Subsequent leaders have been pragmatic and at least have done relatively little harm and perhaps some good. CIV's capitalist President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, backed by France ("Françafrique"), seemed early on to be leading his country to economic success but stole billions from the public purse and led the country to ruin while clinging to power for 33 years until his death in 1993. Of course, extraordinary leadership in government or civil society can play a strongly positive role in the course of development—think of Nelson Mandela in South Africa or Muhammad Yunus in Bangladesh. But in ordinary experience, is leadership the key, or is it underlying institutions? Or popular movements? Education? Imported ideas and technology? These remain enduring questions, and answers may depend on local circumstances.

As an examination of just two countries to illustrate more general evidence in the literature, it cannot be concluded beyond doubt that institutions set up by Great Britain in Ghana and France in CIV had

a dominant effect on the successes and failures of these nations in subsequent poverty reduction and economic growth. But there is support for factors identified in the large-sample statistical studies introduced in Chapter 2, notably institutions, inequality, and, at least indirectly, education. Colonial institutions apparently had negative effects, and within colonisation, the degree of decentralisation under colonial rule apparently also mattered. The re-emergence of more decentralised governance in Ghana since 1992 may be related to less damaging British governance practices in this respect. At the same time, history is not destiny; Ghana has made notable progress. Nor are things necessarily bleak for CIV. Institutions and inequality are highly resistant to change. But the global trend is toward continued progress in human development, and other African nations such as Rwanda have made enormous economic strides that were very difficult to imagine just a few years earlier. But in CIV, the standoff following contaminated presidential elections in 2010 led to what is called the Second Ivorian Civil War in 2011. Rather than simply blame CIV, it may be possible to trace the shape of policymaking to underlying institutions—doing so may be a way to help address deeper constraints. Perhaps benefiting from the international community, between 2012 and 2018 CIV has shown signs of significant improvements in underlying institutions by several measures, hopeful signs for peace and development; it has greatly improved in most governance indices. In recent years, economic growth rates have accelerated significantly in both countries, with real per capita growth in 2017 at 5% in Ghana and 4% in CIV.

The good news is that great improvements have taken place in most countries. Comparative institutions research has done much to explain relative performance of economies over long periods of time. But in the modern period, most places in the world have access to many good productive ideas through many channels, including the market and international aid. Even failed states can be revived, and development resume. In most countries the challenge is not to initiate growth and development but to accelerate progress. Development economics research has provided many insights into how to achieve this universal goal. ■



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