Caught in a Civilizational Fault Line?
Cote d'Ivoire vs. Ghana

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ABSTRACT: Huntington’s map of what he sees as the world’s civilizations features a fault line that cuts across Africa. Of the countries flanking this line there have been several conflicts, one of which is the armed conflict in Cote d’Ivoire from 2002–2004. A failed coup attempt soon split the country in half along ethnic and religious lines, between the Muslim north and the Christian south. This paper discusses this conflict in terms of Huntington’s prediction of clash of civilizations. Is the conflict a case that confirms his thesis, and which role has the religious divide played in the trajectory of the country’s recent bloodshed? Second, the situation in neighboring Ghana is contrasted with Cote d’Ivoire. There are striking parallels between the two neighbors: particularly their relative economic strength and stability as well as the cultural divide that runs across both countries. But whereas Cote d’Ivoire has been split along the cultural divide Ghana has not experience conflict since a coup in 1981. Why have the trajectories been so different, and is Ghana up next? From large-N studies of civil war some robust variables for predicting conflict onset have emerged. These variables seem to better explain the cases of Cote d’Ivoire and Ghana than Huntington’s thesis. Although religion did play a part in the conflict in Cote d’Ivoire, this was not mainly a religious war, and the case of Ghana shows that religious fault line does not predetermine bloodshed.

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Introduction
On Huntington’s map of the civilizations of the world a fault-line cut across Africa from west to east (Huntington, 1996). He therefore foresees conflicts where the Muslim civilization to the north and African civilization to the south meet. And indeed, there have been quite a few civil wars in this fault line: the long and bloody war in Southern Sudan and now Darfur, Ethiopia with seven different conflicts since the end of the cold war, coups in Central African Republic (2001–2002), Sierra Leone (1991–2000), Liberia (1989–2003), Nigeria (2004) and the civil war in Cote d’Ivoire (2002–2004) (UCDP, 2006). Huntington also points to Chad, Kenya and Tanzania where he has found that struggles have taken place between Muslim and Christian groups (p. 256). He states that “across the bulge of Africa, a variety of conflicts have gone on between the Arab and Muslim peoples of the north and animist-Christian black people of the south” (p. 256) and boldly adds that “wherever one looks along the perimeter of Islam, Muslims have problems living peaceably with their neighbors” (ibid.). However, several of the countries along the fault line between Huntington’s civilizational divide are relatively peaceful, such as Ghana, Benin, Togo, and Cameroon.¹

The world’s biggest producer of cocoa and once an apparent oasis of political stability, Cote d’Ivoire lie at the economic and political crossroads of West Africa and is the base for millions of foreign nationals. Whereas Cote d’Ivoire has been tormented by a bloody civil war, Ghana has mostly been peaceful. These are neighboring countries of approximately equal size and similar economies, and like several other countries in the region they both have a predominately Muslim north and Christian south. The front line of the civil war follows this divide. The focus in this paper is Cote d’Ivoire, and the characteristics of the conflict; but also a comparison to neighboring Ghana to what could explain the difference in terms of conflict albeit many similarities.

Is the conflict in Cote d’Ivoire an example of a clash of civilizations, and is Ghana therefore also in immediate risk of going down the same trajectory? The findings indicate that there are some reasons to label this a case that follows the Huntington clash of civilizations thesis, but other indicators that contradict this. Other models for predicting

¹ Benin and Cameroon have not experienced organized civil war of more than 25 battle-related deaths, whereas Togo had a coup d’etat in late fall of 1991 which did not involve different religious groups, and has since been stable (UCDP, 2006).
outbreak of civil war seem to better explain why Cote d'Ivoire was cast into war and its neighbor Ghana has stayed clear.

A melting pot that came to a boil: the conflict in Cote d'Ivoire

Despite promising political signs, the year 2002 saw the outbreak of a bloody civil war in Cote d'Ivoire, which was to result in more than 1,000 battle deaths, and many more civilian casualties and human suffering. The conflict started on 19 September 2002, when mutinous soldiers launched a rebellion against the government in Abidjan. The rebels called themselves the MPCI (Mouvement Patriotique de Cote d'Ivoire/Patriotic Movement of Ivory Coast), and comprised at the outset of about 800 soldiers. When MPCI launched its rebellion in coordinated attacks on three main cities in the country, they were initially defeated in the economic capital of Abidjan. Immediately after the Abidjan uprising, the rebels took control of the northern towns of Bouake and Korhogo, and in a lightning campaign they seized control of the northern part of the country, and effectively controlled about half the country’s territory within about two weeks of the rebellion, and established themselves with headquarters in Bouake (Nordås, 2006).

The rebels that initiated the conflict demanded for President Gbagbo to step down and for elections to be held within six months open to all Ivorians. More specifically, the group stated that it was fighting for the rights of the Muslim majority in the north, whom they felt had been discriminated against by the present government. A new law had been enacted that effectively barred the primary candidate from the north Alassane Ouattara from standing in future presidential elections because he was not born in the Cote d'Ivoire. For many Muslims, this act confirmed their belief that they were being actively marginalized from the political process (Polity, 2003).

The conflict in Cote d'Ivoire fanned ethnic tensions between north and south, as the rebels said they opposed the discrimination against mainly Muslim northerners by Christian and animist southern groups that traditionally has dominated the government (Chonghaile, 2002). The north has closer ethnic, cultural and religious links with countries to its north than it does with southern Cote d'Ivoire. The news monitor of Prevent Genocide International² states that “growing animosity between northern Muslims and Christians from the south, who back President Laurent Gbagbo, have been at the heart of Cote d’Ivoire’s crisis since a military coup in 1999.”

² http://www.preventgenocide.org/africa/cotedivoire/
Over sixty minor and four or five major ethnic groups are found in Cote d’Ivoire (US State Department, 2002), and most of the principal divisions have a significant presence in neighboring countries. Two groups dominate the south: the Baoule and Bete. The Akan-speaking Baoulé is the largest ethnic group (15-20%) and live in the Central Department, around Bouake and Yamoussoukro and in the southeast Lagoon area, and their language is widespread throughout southern Côte d’Ivoire (Gordon, 2005) and related to the Akan language of Ghana. From the fifteenth century to nineteenth century, the Akan people dominated gold mining and gold trade in the region. The Krou or Bete comprise of about 10-15% of the population and are concentrated in the southwest, and are native to some of the core cocoa-producing areas. They have ties to Liberia where the Krou compose about 7% of the population (ibid.). The two predominant groups in the north are the Senufo and the Malinke/Mande. The Senufo are predominantly an agricultural people and the Senufo ethnolinguistic group comprises diverse subgroups living in an area spanning from southern Mali and the extreme western corner of Burkina Faso and the Nafana in eastern Ghana, to Katiola (Bouale capital) in Côte d’Ivoire. The Senofou constitute about 10-15% of the population in Cote d’Ivoire. Korhogo, an ancient town in northern Côte d’Ivoire dating from the 13th century, is the Senufo capital. The Mandé are an identifiable people spread throughout the western Sahel, and they are predominantly Sunni Muslim since the 13th century (Gordon, 2005). They descended from ancient Central Saharan people, and live scattered around western Africa, without constituting a majority in any country. In Cote d’Ivoire they constitute about 10-15% of the population, and are found in the west and northwest.

Additionally, immigrants constitute a large share of the population. Of the more than 5 million non-Ivoirian Africans living in Cote d’Ivoire, one-third to one-half are from Burkina Faso; the rest are from Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Benin, Senegal, Liberia, and Mauritania (State Department, 2006). They were initially encouraged to migrate to Cote d’Ivoire to work on the large cocoa and coffee plantations, and at the time of the outbreak of conflict they constituted approximate 40% of the total population, as many of them were then second or even third generation immigrants.

Religious affiliations tend to follow ethnic lines. The north is associated with Islam, and the south is associated with Christianity and traditional religions. Although Muslims are found in the greatest numbers in the northern half of the country, they also

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3 Ethnologue (Gordon, 2005) lists 78 living languages in the country.
are increasingly numerous in the cities of the south, west, and east due to immigration, migration, and interethnic marriages. In 1998, Muslims composed 45.5 percent of the total urban population and 33.5 percent of the total rural population. Most Ivoirian Muslims are Sunni, following the Maliki version of Islamic law. Sufism, involving the organization of mystical brotherhoods (tariqa) for the purification and spread of Islam, is also widespread, laced with indigenous beliefs and practices. Still, only the most devout Muslims pray, fast, and give alms as required by strict tenets of Islam, and only the wealthiest perform the hajj. Catholics live mostly in the southern, central, and eastern portions of the country, although recently some animists in the north have converted to Catholicism (US State Department, Religious Freedom Report, 2005). Christian Pentecostal groups are also becoming increasingly visible in Cote d'Ivoire, as in large parts of Sub-Saharan Africa.

There is also a correlation between religious and political affiliations and social class, and exacerbating factional tensions are the large immigrant communities from the neighboring countries that have become a powerful political force. While the PDCI (Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire) representing mostly Christian Baoule people of central and eastern Cote d'Ivoire have long maintained a position of political supremacy, first President Houphouet-Boigny was able to keep the “tribalization” of his country at bay by distributing state patronage widely amongst all ethnic groups (Polity, 2003). Ironically, President Houphouet-Boigny encouraged the political efficacy of immigrant community groups when he provided them with the right to vote. Former members of the PDCI’s reformist wing formed the Rally of Republicans (RDR) in September 1994. Now, most Muslims favor the RDR, and the merchant class is mostly Muslim. Their presidential candidate was Ouattara but he was denied to run in the 2000 elections. The RDR is now strongest in the mostly Muslim north.

**Electoral and economic crisis in 1999–2000**

Falling commodity prices along with government corruption and fiscal mismanagement brought the economy to its knees by the end of 1999. At that point, the almost bloodless coup d'état by Guei and the subsequent institution of a military junta government caused the loss of foreign assistance. Private foreign investment declined precipitously. Government internal and external debt ballooned. As a result, the Ivoirian economy contracted 2.3% in 2000 (State Dept. Country Report). It was around this time that the troubles that lead to the civil war started.
Since the 1980s Gbagbo had taken a nationalist stance and was accused of surfing on the wave of xenophobia which has been sweeping Cote d’Ivoire ever since the concept of Ivorianess was introduced by President Houphouet-Boigny’s successor, Henri Konan Bedie (Sunday Herald, 2004). As the economy worsened and the hegemony of the PDCI weakened in the 1990s, the political relations between ‘Ivorité’ and ‘non-Ivorité’ communities became increasingly divisive (Polity, 2003). President Bedie, who took over at president after Houphouet-Boigny died in 1993, started the ideology of Ivorité. This ideology made splits between those who were the autochthones to the Ivorian territory, and those who were considered foreigners. The criteria for being allowed an Ivorian identity became increasingly strict, and documentation of the origin of one’s parents had to be provided to be allowed residential status. Having a name that signaled being of northern and in particular Burkina origin became increasingly stigmatizing as the xenophobic Ivority ideology became a weapon for political control and influence. In a coup at Christmas in 1999, Bedie was replaced by General Guei until elections were held in 2000. The PDCI became the second largest party in parliament after the election, but the new leading party FPI (le Front populaire ivoirien) of President Gbagbo continued the Ivorité rhetoric. Ivorité was foremost introduced to prevent a Muslim from the north, Alassane Ouattara, from running for president for the RDR” (BBC, 2003b)

Until it took the reins of government in the 2000 elections, the FPI party was the oldest opposition party in the country. The FPI is strongest in the Bete ethnic areas (southwest) of President Laurent Gbagbo a Roman Catholic from near Gagnoa in the southern part of the country. He has been characterized as steeped in the Francophone culture that former President Felix Houphouët-Boigny imposed on the country (Sunday Herald). The FPI has a socialist coloration and the president was originally associated with the political left, but gradually took on a more nationalistic ideology.

Since the electoral crisis of 2000, the European Union tried to pressuring Gbagbo’s government to seek reconciliation with both opposition leader Ouattara and former president general Guei. As a result of this pressure, the main opposition party, Ouattara’s Rally of the Republicans, participated in the March 2001 municipal elections

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4 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2710391.stm

5 At his birthplace, Yamoussoukro, Houphouët-Boigny, a devout Catholic, built a huge Catholic cathedral and a palace surrounded by a moat filled with sacred crocodiles.
and won a plurality of municipal government posts, including one in Gbagbo’s hometown. Moreover, the last three months of 2001 were dominated by the convening of the National Reconciliation Forum. This meeting, which included representatives from all major political parties and civil society, sought to outline a common ground on how to address the major social and political issues that produced the social unrest of the past two years. The proposals discussed at the National Reconciliation Forum were reviewed at a meeting of the four major politicians in Cote d'Ivoire - Ouattara, Bede, Gbagbo and Guei - held late January 2002. Nearly a month after this meeting a 24-point document was presented to the public. Included in this document was a proposal to grant Ouattara the right to apply for a certificate of nationality. Also included was a pledge by the ‘Big Four’ to abide by the rules of democratic politics, the establishment of a national electoral commission and the call for the state to end the harassment and victimization of ‘foreigners’ and citizens of northern Cote d'Ivoire (Polity IV, 2003). Despite these promising signs an attempted coup d'état in September 2002 started a violent conflict that was to continue for two years, and which is still not resolved.

Identity Politics: Primordialism, Instrumentalism, Constructivism

Conflicts are usually seen as the result of a combination of three main preconditions for group mobilization emphasized in the literature on political violence: a common group identity, minority frustration, and opportunity (e.g. Ellingsen, 2000). For a group to mobilize it needs a common identity or unifying structure (Gurr, 1993; Tilly, 1978) that can serve as a delineating principle to separate between in-group and out-group, and raise intra-group coherence. Identity can generate conflict lines; mobilize groups to conflict, as well as having an escalating effect on existing conflicts, and if the identities fail to coincide with territorial boarders, civil wars may arise (Ellingsen, 2000). Several scholars have claimed that religious identity differences can increase the risk of conflicts, and intensify existing conflicts. Horowitz (1985) argues that religious differences are more important than language differences as a social cleavage that can develop into a conflict. Seul (1999) also argues that religion frequently appears as the primary cultural marker distinguishing groups in conflict. However, there exist very different theoretical perspectives on the relative importance of the identity factor.

Huntington’s thesis about the clash of civilizations falls into the category of primordialist theories. Conflict is for primordialists rooted in differences of identity and culture in and of themselves. Cultural factors such as religion are seen as fixed characteristics
of individuals and groups (see e.g. Smith, 1996; Vanhanen, 2000) and they argue that “differences in religious traditions should be viewed as one of the most important independent variables to explain violent interactions in and between nations” (Hasenklever & Rittberger, 2000). In this is implied that the differences between groups are important and sufficient explanations of conflict.

Contrary to primordialists, instrumentalists see identities as being used instrumentally by political entrepreneurs to achieve political or economic goals. In this perspective, cultural differences in and of themselves do not really matter. Identities are simply created or maintained instrumentally by opportunistic leaders as a basis for collective action when there are clear competitive advantages attached to an identity (Carment, 1993: 138). Consequently, conflicts that occur on the basis of religion really occurred for other reasons, such as political and socio-economic differences. In this perspective, conflicts are therefore political, and basically motivated by ‘greed’ or material or territorial interests, rather than ‘cultural’, ‘ethnic’ or ‘religious’.

The bridging perspective, constructivism, offers a middle position between primordialists and instrumentalists. Wendt (1994) argues that interests (the focus of instrumentalists) are dependent on identities (focus of primordialists), and that they both have roles to play in explaining action. Constructivists argue that the combination of both pre-existing group demarcations and sinister political entrepreneurs and the changing political and societal settings are catalysts for mobilizing groups to violent conflict. Identities need a material or substantial basis upon which they can reverberate and be enforced as social facts in the minds of people (Hasenklever & Rittberger, 2000), and contrasting identities are therefore assumed to be a necessary but not sufficient factor for conflicts to occur.

Huntington can clearly be placed within the primordial framework. The association of people into broad cultural communities translates, somehow, into conflict in Huntington’s argument, through what seems as close to inevitable animosities stemming from the defining of out-group from in-group. Although researchers may accept in ways the broad presentation of the world in terms of religious traditions, the focus on religion over other factors such as economic and political power, and the link from civilizations to conflict, is where the critics find the clash of civilizations thesis highly problematic.
Huntington’s clash of civilizations thesis

Huntington’s (1996) main claim is that a paradigm in which the world is understood in terms of civilizations will be the leading after the cold war. He argues that this way of looking at the world has advantages over the realist view of the world as comprising of nation states (p. 34), as a dichotomy (us-them) whether in terms of the west vs. the rest or the rich vs. the poor; and as one world of harmony and the chaos or anarchy paradigm; although he concurs that both the anarchy and the realist paradigm are close to reality (p. 35). This realism, however, he sees as a problem, because the anarchy approach does not give “clues for understanding the world” (ibid. 35). The world might be chaos, he writes, but it is not entirely without order. He argues that the nation states will remain the most important actors in world affairs but “their interests, associations and conflicts are increasingly shaped by cultural and civilization factors” (p. 36).

Huntington sees the post- cold war world as world of seven or eight major civilizations: Western, Latin American, African, Islamic, Sinic, Hindu, Orthodox, Buddhist, and Japanese. In terms of location of fault line wars Huntington states that at the global level the primary clash of civilizations is between the West and the rest, while at the local level it is between Islam and the others (p. 255).

Religion is the central defining characteristic of civilizations in Huntington’s view (Huntington, 1996: 47). Huntington argues that cultural commonalities and differences shape the interests, antagonisms, and associations of states but also groups if people within states. What this results in is twofold: cultural factors and religion in particular are more important motivations than other factors. Whereas economists base their reasoning on the rational “economic man” Huntington as a ‘culturalist’ interprets the world in terms of the “religious man”. One key question is whether symbolic politics triumphs rational choice, or whether religion becomes somehow the new rationality? Second, the conflicts of the future will occur in the fault lines of the civilizations, and local conflicts between groups and states from different civilizations are most likely to escalate to full-blow wars (p. 29).

There is no clear or definite definition of what are the necessary or sufficient prerequisites for a conflict to be civilizational. To define what constitutes a fault line conflict, the most parsimonious definition is that the protagonists have different civilizational adherence, hence different religion. This is the main proposition as to what really constitutes a civilizational war. How deep religion has to stick in the protagonists
(i.e. do the people involved in fighting have to be practicing religious people for instance), is not clear from Huntington’s work. He does however point to examples where civilizational conflicts have been fueled by rise in religious fundamentalism (p. 256). However, the impression from both Huntington’s general message of the nature of civilizations and the majority of the examples used do not indicate that strong religiosity per se is a necessary prerequisite for a conflict to be a civilizational clash. Whether the split between the factions has to be perfectly synchronic with religious belonging is also not clearly stated in Huntington’s work, although it is indirectly applied from the logic of his argument.

However, when describing fault line conflicts, Huntington gives a list of characteristics to separate them from what he sees as other forms of conflict. Huntington (1996: 252f) states that with respect to the issues of the fault line conflicts they are sometimes “struggles for control over people”, but most frequently “the issue is control over territory” (ibid.), typically symbolically important sacred land for one or both parties. Hence, apart from religious symbolic meaning of land for the participants, one could say that this does not distinguish clearly civilizational conflicts and other conflicts, as most conflicts are either over people or land, or a combination of the two.

The fault line conflicts also tend to be harder to solve than other conflicts. They are often vicious, bloody and protracted since fundamental issues of identity are at stake; Huntington ascertains (1996:252f). Neither party will accept something short of victory, and therefore peace deal are often broken, and the conflict may go on for a long time as “off-again-on-again wars” (p. 253). Fault line wars share many characteristics of communal wars generally, but are distinguished by that they “almost always between peoples of different religions” (p. 253). Unlike communal conflicts that “tend to be particularistic in that they do not involve broader ideological or political issues of direct interest to nonparticipants” (p. 252), fault line wars are between groups which are part of large cultural entities, and therefore they are more likely to spread and involve additional participants – kin groups in other countries or parts of the world (p. 254).

To sum up, some of the likely indicators one can use to determine whether a conflict falls into the categorization as a conflict in line with Huntington’s prediction of a clash of civilizations is foremost that the two sides of the conflict have to belong to different civilizations. Second, one can use the degree to which religion informs and motivates the actors as a stricter prerequisite. This can include both that the issues in the
conflict have a central religious dimension, and that the rhetoric used to describe or discuss the conflict includes clear references to the religious divide. Third, although a conflict might not start off as a clash of civilizations, it could perceivably develop into such a conflict if the stakes are increasingly framed in terms of religious differences.

**Is the Cote d’Ivoire conflict a clash of civilizations?**

According to Banégas (2006) Cote d’Ivoire “has been floundering in a poisonous morass of identity politics” ever since the outbreak of war in 2002 (p. 535). He argues that the inter-community relations have changed in nature since the outbreak of the conflict: They have been radicalized at both local and national levels, and the disputes that he saw as originally grounded in problems of land and economics have become political and also cultural. By today the motives for hatred have also gained religious aspects. Being considered a ‘stranger’ or foreigner has become ethnicized, and “criteria based on area of origin, culture and religious affiliation have become the prime markers of identity” (Banégas, 2006: 541), replacing the former identification according to socioeconomic criteria. Anyone with an identity as a northerner or a Muslim can now be considered a ‘stranger’ and a representative of the ‘enemy within’ (ibid.). Do these observations mean that Cote d’Ivoire has been caught in a fault line and become a victim of a clash of civilizations?

Huntington’s ‘clash of civilizations’ thesis has been tested by several researchers since it first appeared in 1993 (see e.g. Russett, Oneal & Cox, 2000; Henderson & Tucker, 2001; Fox, 2001; Chiozza, 2002; Roeder, 2003; Tusicisny, 2004). Several large-N studies find limited support for the thesis, but Roeder reported that for the period 1990–1999 the results strongly support the claim of the clash of civilizations thesis as “contacts between civilizations within states were more likely than were contacts that do not cross linguistic or religious lines to escalate to more intense conflicts” (p. 509). However, conducting quantitative tests of the thesis is not without problems. In this paper I do not intend to use this case as a test of the thesis – that would not be an appropriate test. However, the case of the conflict in Cote d’Ivoire is discussed on the basis of the propositions of the thesis.

On Huntington’s (1996) map of the world of civilizations he places Cote d’Ivoire in the African civilization (p. 26–27) with the northern border of the country being the border against the Islamic civilization. However, his civilizations have no clear-cut boundaries, and as people can redefine their identities the precise borders of the
civilizations may change over time (p. 43), although they are for Huntington “the most enduring of human associations” (ibid). Interpreted in terms of religious dominance, the civilization border passes through the country, as Muslims dominate the northern and north-western parts of the country, and Christian and animists dominate the south.

The clash of civilizations thesis implies not only a pattern of conflict, but argues causality from religiously determined civilizations to conflict. In order to rightfully claim that a conflict verifies the theory there should therefore be an element of the conflict occurring because of religious differences. A strict criterion would be that the conflict was essentially over religious issues, disagreement over which religion should be practiced, or a fight for a religious principle. A less strict criterion is that the religion functions as an organizing principle around which the mobilization occurs. This principle can be divided further into the degree to which the protagonists strictly follow the religious divide, the degree to which this divide hold symbolic or personal significance to those involved in or initiating fighting, and the degree to which the reference to religion is actively used in recruitment, justification, and impetus on either side. The dynamic of the conflict once it is underway should also be considered, along with the argument by Huntington that what sets fault line conflicts apart from communal conflicts it their propensity to spread because groups are allied within a large civilization, and other members of in the kin civilization will tend to get involved. These are the criteria by which the conflict will be judged.

In the following I discuss the cause in the issues, the actors, and the dynamics of the Cote d’Ivoire conflict to see how it fits with Huntington’s notion of fault line clashes of civilizations. I also examine the values on the grassroots in Cote d’Ivoire, and compare those to the situation in Ghana. This is the first cut at the following comparison of the two countries to investigate why the two countries have differed so much in terms of violent conflicts.

The issues
What is the conflict in Cote d’Ivoire really about, and how central is religion to the reason for fighting? Most commentators do not believe that the civil war was a religious conflict. The motivation that Guillaume Soro, to main rebel leader, states in his memoirs (Soro, 2005) is a sense of injustice, democratic deficit and discrimination of the northern parts of the country by the south. He downplays the role of religion as the dividing line for him in the years prior to the conflict. His political orientation is leftist rather than
nationalistic or religious. Although Soro portraits the identity divide as something far from his consciousness in his younger years and even today, Langer (2005) argues that a “a growing northern consciousness was an important change that contributed to the escalation of ethnic tensions at the beginning of the 1990s” (p. 32).

The competition for dwindling resources for cocoa growing put economic strains on the country. Langer (2005) point to three factors seen by Kaplan as causes of Cote d’Ivoire’s crisis: the Malthusian factors of demographic and environmental stress and tribalism. Houphouet-Boigny’s system of ethnic quotas and focus on economic incentives to co-opt and appease opposition fell apart with his death and the subsequent economic downturn. The negative economic environment then exacerbated tensions related to land issues between ethnic groups, and the communal tensions were increasingly perceived as a conflict between north and south (Dembele, 2003).

When the conflict is discussed in academic works it is most often framed in an instrumentalist view of ethnic conflict, where pre-given ethnic groups are given voice in clashes over control of economic resources (Collett, 2006). Power struggles between elites and economic problems were both factors that contributed to the outbreak of the war. However, although the economic antagonisms is often cited as the underlying causes of the conflict, the questions of ethnicity and national identity (Ivority) were the focal points of the civil war (ibid.). Whether the socioeconomic or the cultural division is the basis of identities in Cote d’Ivoire are basically two sides of the same coin. The centrality of the religious divide is often downplayed in retrospective analyses of the period leading up to the conflict. Collett (2006) claims that the north-south divide “was created by the transformation of political and ethnic identity rather than the politicization of pre-given ethnic identity” (p. 628) thereby arguing more for an instrumentalist view of the conflict, where the cultural identity is seen as less important than for primordialists and even constructivists. Other, such as Langer (2005) takes the cultural divisions as given facts, and claims that political and economic horizontal inequalities are what mobilized the groups to conflict. The cultural divisions are seen as real and important, but they increase in significance due to grievances that follow the identity groups. He therefore argues in line with the constructivists, but does not give the religious dimension any leading role as the issue in the conflict.
The grassroots

Survey research can give a unique insight into how the proposed clash of civilizations is reflected in populations. If Huntington was right in his new classification of the world into separate civilizations largely dependent on religious association, one should assume that populations would increasingly associate themselves with ‘their’ civilization and religious belonging, and that issues of religious culture should become increasingly important for their lives and how they perceive values and issues concerning their personal lives and not at least political and social life. If conflicts will increasingly be found in the fault lines of civilizations we could also assume that people will become increasingly skeptical to the ‘other’, and feel threatened by people of different civilization belonging.  

If there are already perceived threats associated in some way to the question of cultural and religious identity, terror management theory suggests that the identity and communities will become stronger, more conservative, less open, and hostilities to out-groups may rise. It is therefore interesting to see how people felt in terms of issues of religion and political and their own identity.

The PEW Global Attitudes Project (http://pewglobal.org) conducted a survey in both Cote d’Ivoire and neighboring Ghana in 2002, the year the conflict broke out in Cote d’Ivoire. In fact the survey in Cote d’Ivoire was conducted just few days prior to the conflict outbreak. This gives a unique opportunity to evaluate the religious attitudes of the public towards issues related to religion and religious clashes. Some interesting patterns emerge from the two surveys: with a sample of 708 individuals drawn at random from Abidjan, Yamoussoukro, Bouake and surrounding areas the overall impression is that people in general were more satisfied with their household income, family life, and job than were the Ghanaians, but the two populations were almost equally dissatisfied with the state of their country, although the Ghanaians were slightly more satisfied with the national economic than were the Ivorian.

On questions of what they saw as very big problems in their country, the reports about increasing xenophobia in Cote d’Ivoire is supported. 76% of the Ivoirians asked answered that they should be more restrict and control the entry of people into the

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6 It has also been argued that the clash of civilizations thesis could be a self-fulfilling prophecy, and that animosities and fear of the ‘other’ should also be interpreted with this in mind, rather than being a result of psychological processes of identity per se. Research on terror management theory within the field of psychology has also shown that people, when reminded of their own inevitable death (e.g. by experiencing traumas and violent conflicts), will cling more strongly to their cultural worldviews, and are more attracted to strong leaders who express traditional, authoritarian viewpoints. They will also be hyper-aware of the
country than what they did at the time. The percent saying in Ghana that ethnic conflict was a very big problem in their country was slightly higher than the equivalent percentage in Core d'Ivoire (58 vs. 56% respectively) which is somewhat more surprising considering the conflict that erupted in Cote d'Ivoire. However, a dramatic difference is apparent between the two countries when it comes to evaluate whether ‘terrorism’ is very big problem in their country (a term that was used more in relation to religiously based groups and particularly Islamic fundamentalists): In Cote d'Ivoire 63% of the people in the survey identified terrorism as a very big problem in their country, versus only 26% in Ghana, a difference of 37 percentage point between the two populations! Also, more Ivorians than Ghanaians see religious and ethnic hatred as the greatest danger to the world as a whole. This lends some support to the theory that the conflict was related to a clash of civilizations, as the Ivoirians seem much more concerned about these issues than their counterpart in Ghana.

When asked more specifically about the role of religion the Ivorians in general were more supportive of a claim that religion is a matter of personal faith and should be kept separate from government policy, and they value highly that they can practice religion freely. However, several questions related more specifically to the role of Islam were asked to the Muslim populations of the two countries. Here there are also some interesting differences.

The Muslims of Cote d'Ivoire felt that there were “serious threats to Islam today” to a much large degree than their Ghanaian counterparts (68 vs. 35%). They were also more inclined to want Islam to play a very large role in political life in Cote d'Ivoire and a considerably large portion of the Ivorian Muslims wanted religious leaders to play a large role in politics, and 22% also felt that Islam at the time played a very large role in the political life of the country. The Muslims of Cote d'Ivoire also had a stronger ‘civilizational solidarity’ than the Muslims of Ghana. More than half of the Ivorian Muslims said they felt “more solidarity today with Islamic people living around the world”. The most astonishing difference is however that the more than five times as many of the Muslim respondent than the counterparts in Ghana felt that suicide bombing and other forms of violence against civilians could often be justified in order to defend Islam.

possibility of external threats, and may be more hostile to those who threaten them.
7 In Cote d’Ivoire this concern is only second to that of AIDS and infectious diseases.
8 The sample here is smaller than the total, and they might therefore not be as representative of the Muslim population as a whole. The percentages should therefore be interpreted with caution, although bid
25% of the Ivorian Muslims answered that this could often be justified versus only 5% of the Ghanaians. Almost three quarters of the Ivorian Muslims would feel that suicide bombing could be justified at least on some occasions, whereas 44% of the Ghanaians are not completely opposed. These findings indicate that the Ivorian Muslims at the time just a week before the outbreak of the civil war were significantly more radicalized than the Muslims in Ghana, and that they were less opposed to violent means, and also felt more strongly as a part of a larger Muslim community that the consider under threat.

The actors
The four major politicians previous to the conflict in the Cote d'Ivoire have been identified as Ouattara, Bedie, Gbagbo and Guei – the Big Four. Much of what happened in the period leading up to the conflict was largely dependent of the relations between these actors, and their different agendas. Henri Konan Bedie, was ethnic Baoule and a Catholic, and succeeded Houphouet-Boigny as president, although the Prime Minister, Alassane Dramane Ouattara felt he was next in line to succession. Bedie was the first to systematically play out the notion of Ivority which has escalated to a strong xenophobia in the country. Bedie was forcibly removed from power by General Guei who was a southern Mande who first opposed the idea of Ivority. His entry into Ivorian politics was celebrated by the general population, and after his Christmas coup he was refered to as Santa Claus, and the coup as a Christmas present. Ouattara is since 1999 the leader of the party RDR. According to his own web page he was born in Dimbokro in central Cote d'Ivoire, just east of Yamassoukro, but he is frequently presented simply as a Muslim from the north. His parents were immigrants from Burkina Faso (Sunday Herald). This fact was used as an opportunity to limit his access to power in the following elections. Although the Prime Minister at the time, Ouattara was prohibited from standing for elections as president due to the re-definition of who could rightfully claim to be a true Ivorian.

In the conflict itself the two opposing sides are on the one hand the President, Gbagbo, and the rebel leaders. The rebel strongholds in the north are controlled by the so-called opposition New Forces, led by Guillaume Soro. This group is the coalition of three former rebel groups, the MPLA, the MPIGO and the MJP. Largely Muslim, the

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9 In terms of religious practices the distinction between the two countries is not as strong. The Muslims of Cote d'Ivoire are not more conservative than the Ghanaians in terms of enforcing the use of hijab and having a stronger emphasis on religion in schools etc.
New Forces are based in Bouake, where according to a Sunday Herald report “men with Kalashnikov rifles stroll through the market or showily flex their muscles from passing jeeps. Few have complete uniforms. Many wear T-shirts bearing images of Che Guevara and Osama bin Laden”. (Sunday Herald). Guillaume Soro, the young leader of the MPLA, was born in the village of Diawala, in the far north of Cote d’Ivoire, just a few kilometers from the Malian border. He was a student leader in Abidjan, studied law in France, and before that he attended Catholic schools - and indeed today is still a practicing Catholic (BBC, 2003). In his younger years he even planned to become a Catholic priest. This fact does not rime with the Huntingtonesque characterization of the clash of civilizations. Soro rather emphasizes the common Ivorian identity as something that he felt strongly related to. He attributes this to his childhood when he moved around in the country with his family, and the fact that he socialized with student from different groups, learnt different local languages, and therefore saw himself as an Ivorian rather than as a representative of a particular cultural sub-group.

On the government side since 2000 the key actor is President Laurent Gbagbo but also his influential wife Simone Gbagbo. The president but particularly also his wife Simone Gbagbo are neo-Pentecostal Christians who portray the conflict in the Cote d’Ivoire as one of Christians vs. Muslims in order to rally their followers. Simone Gbagbo holds a strong political influence in Cote d’Ivoire. Her influence on the rhetoric of the regime and various aspects of Ivorian politics should not be underestimated. The soldiers who first took up arms against the regime are said to have been militaries that had been recruited during the brief interlude when general Guei held power. Gbagbo later wanted to demobilize them from the military and rather replace them with members of his own ethnic group (Langer, 2005). The ethnic identity is therefore at the center stage, but this corresponds also to religious identities, and this identity can bridge a larger group of people and support base for the two sides of the conflict. One potential interpretation of the later division into a Muslim north and a Christian south is therefore that this is a strategic move to create a stronger support base on either side. The religious dimension and rhetoric, however, seems to be more pronounced from the government side than from the rebels.

10 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2793729.stm
Religious state policies
The state religiosity in Cote d'Ivoire is ambiguous, and the constitutional separation of
religion and state is not evident in practice. On the one hand the government claims to
provide religious freedom, but on the other hand the Muslim communities in the country
frequently report that they have been repressed or discriminated against because of their
religious belonging. Although there is no official state religion in the country, for
historical and ethnic reasons the Government informally favors Christianity, particularly
the Roman Catholic Church. Many senior government officials, including all heads of
state since independence, have been Catholics (US State Dept., 2001).

Population growth and movement accentuated ethnic distinctions between the
groups of the Sahel and those of the forest zone in the south, those distinctions have
often been expressed in terms of religion (e.g., northern Muslims and southern
Christians). Numerous Catholic schools were founded in the country in the early 1900's,
during French colonial rule, and citizens who attended these schools generally received
good educations and came to make up a disproportionately large part of the country's
elites.

The US state department stated in its report for Cote d'Ivoire in 2001 that “the
new Constitution, which was approved by referendum in July 2000 and implemented on
August 4, 2000, provides for freedom of religion [but that] the government at times
limited this right in practice.” (US State Dept., 2001). The Constitution that was
suspended following the December 24, 1999, coup d'état provided for freedom of
religion, and the previous government generally respected this right. However, the status
of respect for religious freedom deteriorated somewhat during 2000, and violent clashes
between security forces, Republican Rally (RDR) militants, and Ivoirian Popular Front
(FPI) supporters, led to the death of hundreds of persons, most of whom were Muslims
(ibid.). The security forces detained, questioned, and, on at least one occasion, beat
Muslims. The government monitored minority religions for signs of political activity it
considers subversive or dangerous. The result has been that some Muslims believe that
their religious and ethnic affiliation make them targets of discrimination by the
Government with regard to both employment and the renewal of national identity cards
(ibid.).

The Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA) sums up the performance of
Cote d'Ivoire on religious freedoms. It finds that both in terms of government regulation
of religion, government favoritism of religion and social regulation of religion in Cote d'Ivoire is above the mean levels in Western Africa and the world as a whole, and above the levels in neighboring Ghana (ARDA, 2006). In practice the government does not respect the freedom of religion, and the relationships between religions in society are not generally amicable (ibid.). Some of this is a result of the conflict, as the ARDA indexes are based on the 2003 religious freedom reports of the US State Department (US Stat Dept., 2003) when the religious tensions were augmented. The US state dept. state that after September 19, “the Government targeted persons perceived to be perpetrators or supporters of the rebellion, who often were Muslims” (US State Dept., 2003). But the State Department also reported in 2003 that “strong efforts by religious and civil society groups have helped prevent the crisis from turning into a religious conflict”. In some respects, although there are clear religious tensions in Cote d'Ivoire, there are efforts made to counteract the negative effects of framing the conflict as a ‘religious war’, although the policies seem to diverge.

The dynamics and escalation processes
In fault line wars, like other communal wars, Huntington argues follow patterns in which “the identities which were previously multiple and casual become focused and hardened” (Huntington, 1996: 266). The conflict which might have been started not so much as a religious or civilizational war, by time increasingly takes the form as a civilizational clash, and each side of the conflict will then make the distinction between the forces of virtue and the forces of evil:

As violence increases the initial issues at stake tend to get redefined more exclusively as ‘us’ against ‘them’ and group cohesion and commitment are enhanced. Political leaders expand and deepen their appeals to ethnic and religious loyalties, and civilization consciousness strengthens in relation to other identities. A ‘hate dynamics’ emerges, comparable to the ‘security dilemma’ in international relations, in which mutual fears distrust, and hatred feed on each other. (Huntington, 1996: 266)

This dynamic can also to some extent be found in the conflict in Cote d'Ivoire. Particularly from the government side, or forces connected to the government side have resorted to religiously inspired characterizations of the enemy as evil, devils and vampires. Hate media have emission messages of xenophobia which have been paralleled with the ‘mille collines’ radio in Rwanda during the genocides in 1994. Although reports
of such hate media has been found on both sides, the radio channels connected to the Ivorian government have received the most attention. The outbidding of ethno-nationalist rhetoric and hate messages in the media went from bad to worse as foreign radio and television (who could have provided a diversification of the information) and local radio stations close to the RDR were forbidden or physically hindered from emission. The media spread messages that have been accused of encouraging and trivializing violence.\textsuperscript{11}

Prophetism has had a long tradition of playing a role in politics in Cote d’Ivoire. Ivorian ultranationalism and FPI’s rhetoric is according to Banégas (2006) “situated within a religious imaginary of deliverance” (p. 546). The enemy is often described as ‘evil’, ‘a devil’ or ‘a vampire’ and this language is evident in popular newspapers close to the government (ibid.).\textsuperscript{12} This, according to Banégas, falls into a general trend sweeping over Africa in recent years, the discourse of the new Pentecostal churches that have based their appeal on the need to struggle against “the forces of evil” (ibid.). Both the President and the first lady are known for their adherence to evangelical Christianity. The reverberations between the politics of liberation and the idiom of deliverance can therefore be important, and parallel the liberation theology seen elsewhere in the world. Reference to salvation and the power of the Spirit to fight a war against the forces of evil has been observed as an important part of Gbagbo’s rhetoric (Mary, 2002) and Banégas interprets this as a “fight to the death, with aspects of a total war against an enemy who is both within and without” (Banégas, 2006: 547) – the enemies are ‘foreigners’ or outsiders in the country, and the previous colonial masters.

The notion of Ivority has been most to blame for increased xenophobia and animosities. This notion gained momentum prior to the outbreak of the civil war in 2002, and has continues since. It has contributed to a hardening of the division between the north and the south, and an ‘ethnification’ of political camps (Banegas & Losch, 2002). This radicalization of the question of who constitute true Ivorians was largely the result of an instrumentalization of the debate by leading politicians to gain political power, but as Banegas & Losch point out, this debate also resonated preexisting social tensions

\textsuperscript{11} Lately directed not only towards the rebels, but increasingly towards the French in what has been framed as a second war of decolonization.

\textsuperscript{12} An important new destabilizing force since 2003, the pro-Gbagbo movements calling themselves the ‘Young Patriots’ have put the blame mostly on the French to explain Cote d’Ivoire’s general misfortune, but also on the external aggressors and ‘foreigners’, which in this context may include people from the north or Muslims in general.
linked to the urban employment crisis, and particularly the agrarian crisis which manifested itself by a virulent mobilization around the concept of autochthony (p. 148). The ‘other’ (foreigners and northerners) becomes a scapegoat and a valve in the quest to rid the country of its problems, and the conflict becomes a confrontation between the “Christians of the South” and the “Muslims from the north” (ibid: 150).

This analysis reflects the constructivist theoretical point of view. Although the crisis might have occurred for other reasons than identities per se, the identities become increasingly important as the conflict proceeds, and by the time the violence breaks out the identities have become important and gain momentum by themselves. As the constructivists would argue, the identities are not a sufficient explanation, but none the less they are important, and the instrumental use of identities would not have translated into conflict unless the mobilization finds a sounding board in the population.

The government engaged itself in systematic politics of stigmatization simultaneously of what they saw as aggression from an ‘enemy outside’ (particularly Burkina Faso and later France) and the ‘enemy within’ (Northerners or Muslims connected to Burkina Faso and other neighboring countries). This resulted in what Gbagbo called “nettoyer les quartiers précaires”, the majority immigrant shantytowns of Abidjan, by the security forces. The perception of the ‘foreigner’ became ethnic, and the criteria for identification of foreigners was founded on autochthony and ‘culture’, read religion, more so than the economic and social criteria that previously had marked the differences (Banégas & Losch, 2002: 154). Unfortunately, as Banégas & Losch point out, the foreigner is no longer only the immigrants; they are the “Dioula”, the northerners or the Muslims (ibid.). In this context the ultra-nationalistic radicalization became explosive.

The political radicalization seen in the media fed on a strong rhetoric of a fight against the forces of evil. According to Banégas & Losch (2002: 155) this rhetoric borrows from two registers: the post September 11 fight against international Islamic terrorism and the neo-Pentecostal fight against the devil (the rebels were for example stigmatized as sorcerers). Verses from the Bible were frequently used in this discourse, and the influence of a millenarian discourse was and still is evident in the high circles of power. Particularly the influential wife of the President Laurent Gbagbo, Simone Gbagbo, is a feverish born again Christian.

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13 Equally, in the rebel held zones, similar violence was reported by Amnesty International.
One of the predictions implied in Huntington’s (1996) thesis is that conflicts that are clashes of civilizations will run a higher risk of spreading across borders due to kin group alliances and intra-civilizational solidarity. The BBC (2003) reported that the government of Cote d’Ivoire claimed the first mutineer rebels (the MPCI) was supported and directed from abroad, with the backing of a foreign country. The most usual suspect was Burkina Faso, the country of origin of many of the foreign nationals in Cote d’Ivoire. The BBC found that no evidence was offered to support the claims, but it was clear that the rebels were getting funds from somewhere. Guillaume Soro (2005) have discussed the role of Burkina in the conflict by admitting that the country was a meeting place for the rebels before the conflict started, but that they never received funds from the country. The conflict in Cote d’Ivoire has not spread to include Burkina Faso or other neighboring countries directly, hence, the prediction of Huntington does not seem to hold in this case. Several explanations could pertain to this: One explanation is that Burkina is a land-locked country that depends on trading routes through Cote d’Ivoire. Risking a conflict between the two countries would therefore not be an economically viable strategy. One could also interpret this as an indicator that the conflict is not so much about religion; or more probably, that this case shows that religion or cultural ties does not in this case trump strategic economic interests and alliances.

Although the rhetoric from the government side in particular is increasingly pointing to religion in understanding the conflict in Cote d’Ivoire and although the conflict is mainly between a largely Christian south and a largely Muslim north, there are several reasons not to see this conflict as a clash of civilizations. First of all, the main rebel leader is himself not a Muslim and he does not emphasize the role of religion in the rebel movement’s ‘raison d’etre’. He does, however, find that the government side uses religion as one of the labels on northerners/foreigners that he sees a discriminated and marginalized by the ruling regime. The conflict certainly was not a clash of civilizations primarily in the beginning, but religion is being increasingly mentioned in relation to the conflict dynamics and the characterization of the protagonists. In this sense the clash of civilizations thesis could risk becoming more of a self-fulfilling prophecy in this conflict, particularly if the regime decides to ‘play the religious card’ more actively to gain support for their cause. The mainly Muslim rebels could in the future be increasingly demonized.

14 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2662655.stm
in light of the ongoing ‘war on terror’. So, although religion cannot explain the outbreak, it could have something to say for the continuation of the conflict.

**Divided but unequal: Cote d’Ivoire vs. Ghana**

A strict interpretation of Huntington’s primordial view of conflicts as essentially inevitable when contrasting religious identities exist, leads us to assume that Ghana should also have experienced violent conflict between its religious groups, particularly since there is a religious division in the country. What can explain the different outcomes in the two cases, and can the case of Cote d’Ivoire still be called an example of what Huntington predicted – or are other modes of explaining of the conflict more convincing? If Huntington’s model of conflict since the end of the cold war was possible to use for prediction of conflict, then there should have been also a conflict in Ghana. Clearly, the model can only take us so far. Other factors that come into play seem to be crucial and better able to predict wars. A recent article by Hegre & Sambanis (2006) summarizes the findings from the large-N literature on civil wars to find which variables best predict conflict outbreak. An examination of these variables for Cote d’Ivoire and Ghana respectively can shed some light on why the countries differ in terms of conflict experience.  

Several factors are seen as important predictor of conflict from large-N studies of civil war. Sambanis & Hegre (2006) come up with a list of the 20 most robust variables in the civil war literature. They confirm the finding that large populations and low per capita income increases the risk of civil war. They also find other robust relationships: “civil wars are more likely to occur in countries with recent political instability and inconsistent democratic institutions; countries with small militaries and rough terrain; countries located in war-prone, undemocratic regions; and countries with low rates of economic growth” (ibid.: 351). What does this mean for the Cote d’Ivoire of 2002 versus Ghana? On most indicators found to be robust predictors of conflict the likelihood of conflict in Cote d’Ivoire exceeds the risk in Ghana of 2002:

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15 In the next version of this paper I plan to do a prediction for the year 2002 for both Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire to see how their scored on conflict risk fro a robust large-N model (based on an updated dataset equivalent to Hegre et al. (2001) to see if the large-N model rightly could predict conflict in Cote d’Ivoire and not in Ghana. The discussion for now only discusses the robust variables in general without systematic comparison of predicted probabilities.
1. Population
The two countries are of approximately the same geographical size and populations. Cote d'Ivoire in 2002 had a total land area of 122,780 square miles, and a population of almost 15.4 million; whereas Ghana is approximately 92,000 square miles, and its population in the same year was 19.5 million (US State Dept. 2002). Given only population size, Ghana should be slightly more at risk. Both countries are split between a Christian southern and a Muslim northern population. However, the share of Muslims in Cote d'Ivoire (approximately 39%) is larger than the share in Ghana (approximately 16%) according to a 2000 government census. However, the Muslim community in Ghana has protested these figures, asserting that the Muslim population is closer to 30 percent (US State Dept., 2002).

2. Economy
The BBC country profile characterizes Ghana as a well-administered country by regional standards, that is “often seen as a model for political and economic reform in Africa” (BBC Country profile). Cocoa exports are an essential part of the economy; and Ghana is the world's second-largest producer, second only to its western neighbor Cote d'Ivoire. The profile of a model African country also nicely parallels the description of Cote d'Ivoire prior to the civil war. Cote d'Ivoire was once considered the economic miracle of the region, and West Africa’s richest country. Besides being the world's largest cocoa producer, a commodity that produced enormous economic returns, Cote d'Ivoire is among the largest producers of coffee beans and palm oil. The BBC profile states that “for more than three decades after independence under the leadership of its first president, Felix Houphouet-Boigny, Cote d’Ivoire was conspicuous for its religious and ethnic harmony and its well-developed economy.” (BBC Country profile). In addition to income from cocoa Ghana has a gold belt in the south west of the country which accounts for 32% of the country's exports (BBC, 2005). The GNI per capita for Cote d'Ivoire in 2000 was $650 (in current US$) (World Bank). The equivalent number for Ghana at the time was $330 (ibid.). Low rates of economic growth is one of the factors that does have a bearing on the case of Cote d’Ivoire at the time of conflict outbreak, or rather a downturn since the previous golden years of economic boom.

3. Political instability and democracy
Anocracy or institutional inconsistency is another factor that seems relevant when predicting conflict. According to the 2003 Polity report on Cote d'Ivoire, the degree of
executive constraints in the country “had been in flux since the 24 December 1999 coup led by General Guei and the subsequent electoral victory of Laurent Gbagbo on 25 October 2000”. Not only had there in 2002 been a relatively recent coup, but there was substantial political instability since then. In 2001 Cote d’Ivoire was coded as having a transitional government since 1999 when its Polity score was -6. The new polity score just prior to the outbreak of the conflict was a +4. Both scores are within the range that typically is defined as an anocracy, and the recent instability clearly was an indicator that the country was at risk of conflict outbreak. There had been recent instability in Cote d’Ivoire with the Christmas coup, and the electoral crisis in 1999-2000. However, there were also signs that things were improving: Despite the serious ethnic and political problems facing this country, there were some promising signs in 2001 that the Cote d’Ivoire would soon return to the stability that defined the pre-1999 era. However, the conflict erupted before the country reached regime stability.

4. Militaries

The military in Cote d’Ivoire was certainly small and also ill equipped before the war broke out. The army had also become politicized, as the three last Presidents (Bedie, Guei and also Gbagbo) had wanted to change the ethnic composition of the military to favour their own ethnic group (Langer, 2005). The Ghanaian military on the other hand is recognized as one of the most professional (ranked #4 by the United Nations in 2006) and up-to-date armed forces in West Africa. Ghana has, as the country has been peaceful, been able to commit a large proportion of its armed forces to international peacekeeping operations, mainly conducted in Africa, but large Ghanaian forces are also frequently posted across the world as elements of United Nations peacekeeping forces. Cote d’Ivoire spent a slightly larger portion of it income on the military, however. Still, the military was changed in composition according to the ethnic group in power, and there was therefore a substantially larger uneasiness among the military ranks regarding their employment situation prior to 2002. Rather than difference in terms of the size of the militaries, there was rather a different level of professionalism and politicizing of the militaries in Cote d’Ivoire and Ghana, where the Ghanaian military was the better organized and more stable.

16 The United Nations has often relied on Ghanian forces to conduct peacekeeping operations, in countries as diverse as Rwanda, Kosovo, and Lebanon.
5. Terrain
Rough terrain seems to play a role in predicting conflict in large-N studies of civil war. Cote d'Ivoire has some terrain characteristics that could be considered ‘rough’ namely densely forested southern part and undulating, hilly in the west (State Dept. country profile\(^\text{17}\)) and the north-central region of Côte d'Ivoire in the region with the rebel stronghold Korhogo is also mountainous, possibly also with diamond deposits. Also on this indicator would the conflict risk of Cote d'Ivoire possibly be higher than the equivalent in Ghana which consists mostly of low plains with dissected plateau in south-central area. However, there is little indication that the terrain played a significant role in the outbreak of the conflict in Cote d'Ivoire.

6. Regional effects
Also in terms of the regional surroundings the predicted probability of conflict in Cote d'Ivoire would be higher than that of Ghana in and around 2002. Cote d'Ivoire had a neighbor with conflict across the border in the west, Liberia, where the LURD (Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy) rebels had been fighting the government since 2000 (Uppsala/PRIO dataset), and in Guinea to the north west the RFDG (Rassemblement des forces démocratiques de Guinée: Rally of Democratic Forces of Guinea) had been fighting a war with its government the two previous years 2000-2001 (ibid.). The three other neighbors (Mali, Burkina Faso, and Ghana) did not have an ongoing or recently ended war. Ghana’s regional surroundings were more peaceful as the two neighbors besides Cote d'Ivoire (Togo and Burkina Faso) were both at peace.

The regional effect on the conflict in Cote d'Ivoire seems however to have been more central in keeping the conflict going than the actual outbreak of conflict. When the first rebel group signed a truce with the government in late 2002, there appeared two other rebel groups in the west of the country, close to the Liberian border. These groups were reported to come partly from Liberia and Sierra Leone. BBC (2002) reported that “some of those fighting for the two new rebel groups came over the border from Liberia to fight”; an also soldiers who had been involved in the Liberian conflict there were reported to be fighting in Cote d’Ivoire as part of the two new movements (The Movement for Justice and Peace (MJP) and The Ivorian Popular Movement of the Great West (MPIGO)). In this sense the weakened state in Cote d’Ivoire since the outbreak in

\(^{17}\) Online at: [http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2846.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2846.htm)
September 2002 increased the possibility for other groups to form rebellions (Nordås, 2006). Both the MJP and the MPIGO said they were fighting to avenge General Guei's death (in the early days of the rebellion) and that they wanted President Gbagbo out of power (BBC, 2002).

Colonial legacies

A seventh point which has not been highlighted by the large-N summary of Hegre and Sambanis is the colonial legacy. This point has however figured in several contributions to the large-N literature and the impact of different colonial legacies have been launched and tested as a potential explanation as to why some countries in Africa have experienced ethnic conflict and others not. For instance, Blanton, Mason & Athrow (2001) find that the colonial legacies of the former British and French colonies differed substantially, and that this could affect the likelihood of conflict.

The French and the British created substantially different systems of ethnic stratification. Specifically, Blanton, Mason & Athrow (2001) theorized that because the “indirect, decentralized rule of the British fostered an unranked system of ethnic stratification, while the French style approximated a ranked system” (p. 473) the British former colonies should experience more ethnic conflict as unranked systems foster competition between ethnic groups which can readily spiral into conflict. They therefore posited that the British colonies would be more at risk of conflict and experience more intense conflicts than former French colonies. This hypothesis completely contradicts what happened in the very comparable cases of Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana. The findings in the study of Blanton, Mason & Athrow is that much variation in the ethnic conflict in African countries is explained by the colonial legacy, and that British colonies fare far worse than their French counterparts.

The observation about the different colonial legacies resonates to some extent the findings based on case study comparison of the grassroots in the two countries conducted by MacLean (2004), only the transformation process from this observation to conflict in the case of MacLean argued the complete opposite likely outcome. MacLean (2004) has done a comparative case study based on extensive field work in two neighboring regions in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire respectively. The two countries were French (Cote d'Ivoire) and British (Ghana) colonies respectively, and whereas Cote d'Ivoire gained its independence in 1960 Ghana was independent a few years earlier, in 1957. MacLean wanted to study how the grassroots associations and the values and
attitudes in the two populations differed, and what cues that could give about the different conflict-escalation processes in the two countries. Her main conclusion about the system differences in the countries echoes the reasoning of the Blanton, Mason & Athow study, as she finds that the system in Cote d’Ivoire is clearly more hierarchical and centralized than the system in Ghana. However, contrary to what one might expect, this does not lead to lower interethnic competition in Cote d’Ivoire, quite the opposite.

Findings of differences in local level democracy between the countries in the work by MacLean does however resonate the argument that past association with Britain as opposed to other colonial powers, is more conductive to democracy, which again could dampen the risk of conflict (see e.g. Hegre et al, 2001). Although the grassroots associations in Cote d’Ivoire are generally more interethnic than the associations in Ghana, this difference masks some important traits in particularly democratic values and knowledge that contradict the assumed effect of ethnically homogenous associations – to lead to interethnic hostilities – in Ghana. Mac Lean (2004) found that the strong clientilism in Cote d’Ivoire worked against the local democratic capacity in the country. Democratic values were not as central to the thinking among the Ivorian grassroots compared to the grassroots in Ghana. The clientilism worked in a way that took the local conflict up to the central level of politics rather than being solved locally. Hence, relatively small local conflicts more easily gained the potential of becoming national conflict. The structure of civil society in that sense was more conductive of accelerating conflict although the organizations were inter-ethnic. The rich local organizational life in Ghana on the other hand functions according to MacLean (2004) as schools in democracy and they are more vibrant (meeting more frequently etc.) than their counterparts in Cote d’Ivoire. Also, they usually have a flat organizational structure, not strong hierarchical structures as in Ivorian organizations.

**Conclusion**

Huntington’s primordial view that clashes of civilizations are not only likely but almost inevitable in the post cold war world certainly cannot explain the different outcomes in Cote d’Ivoire and Ghana. The conflict was not best predicted by of the thesis of Samuel Huntington (1996), warning against the clash of civilizations in their fault lines. However, the conflict has increasingly been understood as informed by religion in its continuation. Maybe Huntington’s view of clash of civilizations is more a framework that might become important as conflicts proceed. Power relations mediates whether conflicts
occur, but once the conflict is underway, some of the conflict that involve different identity groups might feed on the dynamic of the conflict to increasingly seem like clashes of civilizations. The main factions in the conflict did mostly represent different religious traditions, and the front lines correspond almost perfectly to the fault lines map presented by Huntington (1996). In almost all media sources giving their summary of the conflict, the conflict is presented as one between the Muslim north and the Catholic or Christian south. The case of Cote d’Ivoire fits nicely into the view presented by Huntington, and proponents of the clash-thesis might flag this conflict as a confirmatory case. In some respects they are correct to do so. However, several indicators show that interpreting this conflict as a clash of civilizations conflict is not accurate. First, this conflict was not primarily around religious issues. Second, the main rebel leader who instigated the rebellion in 2002 is himself not a Muslim, he is Catholic. The story of the conflict is not a result of direct religious issues, but questions of political gains and power, and economic security in times of instability and economic downturn. These factors that are also highlighted by the quantitative literature of civil war better predicts not only the conflict in Cote d’Ivoire but also why we have not experienced similar conflicts in neighboring Ghana. Although statistical models of civil war cannot capture all eventualities and trajectories to conflict, and the robustness of many findings are low (Hegre & Sambanis, 2006), the statistical models for explaining civil war should fare quite well in explaining the different trajectories of Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire.

Bibliography


