

In the 18th century the country was invaded by two related ethnic groups—the Agnis who occupied the southeast and the Baoules who settled in the central section of the country. In 1842 Admiral Bouet-Williaumez signed treaties with the kings of the Grand-Bassam and Assinie regions, placing the Grand-Bassam region under a French protectorate. French explorers, missionaries, trading companies, and soldiers gradually extended the area under French control inland from the lagoon region. However, pacification of the country was not accomplished until 1915.

Ivory Coast officially became a colony of France in 1839. Captain Binger, who had explored the Gold Coast frontier, was named the first Governor. He negotiated boundary treaties with Liberia and the United Kingdom (for the Gold Coast) and later started the campaign against Almamy Samory, who waged war against the French until 1898.

From 1904 to 1958 Ivory Coast was a constituent unit of the Federation of French West Africa. It was a colony under the Third Republic and overseas territory under the Fourth Republic. Until after World War II governmental affairs in French West Africa were administered from Paris through Governors General and territorial governors. The philosophy of French policy in West Africa was mainly one of "association," which meant that all Africans in Ivory Coast were officially French "subjects" without rights to representation in Africa or France.

During World War II a harsh and racially conscious Vichy regime remained in control until 1943, when members of General de Gaulle's Provisional Government assumed control of all French West Africa. The Brazzaville conference in 1944, the first Constituent Assembly of the Fourth Republic in 1946, and the memory of the loyalty to Free France displayed by Africans during the war led to far-reaching governmental reforms in 1946. All African "subjects" were granted French citizenship, the right to organize politically was recognized, and various forms of forced labor were abolished.

After World War II Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the present President of Ivory Coast, stood for election to the first Constituent Assembly and won a narrow victory. He represented Ivory Coast in the French National Assembly from 1946 to 1959 and devoted much of his efforts to interterritorial political organization and amelioration of labor conditions, until a turning point was reached in relations with France with the *Loi Cadre* of 1956. This Overseas Reform Act transferred to elected territorial governments in French West Africa a number of powers previously reserved for metropolitan administrators and removed remaining voting inequalities.

In December 1958 Ivory Coast became an autonomous republic within the French Community as a result of the September referendum that brought Community status to all the members of the old Federation of French West Africa except Guinea. Ivory Coast became independent August 7, 1960, and thereafter permitted its Community membership to lapse. It was admitted to the United Nations on September 20, 1960.

The contemporary political history of Ivory Coast is closely associated with the career of one man: Félix Houphouët-Boigny, President of the Republic and leader of the Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), the only political party in Ivory Coast. He was one of the founders of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA), the leading preindependence interterritorial political party in French West Africa. The RDA established constituent units in all the French West African territories except Mauritania, as well as in the Congo (Brazzaville), Chad, Gabon, and Cameroon. It became the dominant party in Mali, Guinea, Niger, and the Congo (Brazzaville).

Houphouët-Boigny first came to national political prominence in 1944 as founder of the Syndicat Agricole Africain, an organization that won improved labor conditions for African farmers and formed a nucleus for the PDCI. Houphouët later served as an Ivory Coast Deputy in the French National Assembly from 1946 to 1959. In April 1959 he became the first Prime Minister of his country, and in the first general elections after independence he was elected President.

Houphouët reinforced his position as a dominant figure in West Africa by leading Ivory Coast, Niger, Upper Volta, and Dahomey into the Conseil de l'Entente in May 1959. His importance in the African political spectrum stems not only from the economic importance of the Ivory Coast but also from his still close association with those who served under him in the RDA. He has maintained that the only true road to African solidarity is through step-by-step economic and political cooperation with recognition of the principle of nonintervention in the internal affairs of sister African states.