In the immediate aftermath of decolonisation, a steadily increasing number of French nationals took up residence in Ivory Coast – a trend that contrasted with the sociological situation in many other newly independent countries in Africa. In fact, while around 6000 French nationals resided in Ivory Coast in 1950, by 1962 their numbers had increased to 11,000 individuals. Ten years later, this figure had more than tripled – a demographic development that paralleled the unprecedented economic boom of the country.\(^1\) Although there have been numerous studies on migration/immigration to Ivory Coast, very few have seriously analysed the socio-demographic phenomenon of the French presence. Apart from discussions about the political economy of French neo-colonialism, there has been no real in-depth work on the migration of French citizens to, their everyday lives in and the impact of their activities on postcolonial Ivory Coast.\(^2\)

More generally, the literature on transnational migration in the late twentieth century has largely focused on people moving from the Third World/Global South to the industrialised nations. I argue that this emphasis has resulted in turning the (e)mi-

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grants from Africa, Asia and Latin America into what has aptly been called *corps d’exception* (corpus barbarum), bodies that are inherently unable to enter modernity and fully realise their humanity. Critically engaging this bias in migration studies, I redirect scholarly attention away from these new «wretched of the earth» and suggest that late twentieth-century international migration also involved people from «developed» countries moving to countries considered «underdeveloped». While Western Africanists and demographers have studied migration in West Africa rather extensively, they have paid little attention to the presence of their own compatriots. I propose that such blindness might be the result of a scholarship steeped in whiteness. Nothing exemplifies this scholarly reality better than the discriminating usage of the term «expatriate» to refer to Euro-American migrants who work and/or live away from their home countries, especially in the Global South. This common employment of the term perpetuates the untenable differentiation between transnational migrants solely based on their racial/ethnic or national origins.

1. Unpacking a Categorial Misnomer

A first step in problematising and moving away from such a practice is to map out the shifting semantic contours of the word and to provide an etymological overview of the concept. From this perspective, it is worth noting that the term «expatriate» was used in the nineteenth century to characterise someone who had been banished from his or her homeland. Eventually in the twentieth century, the term came to signify a «person settled outside their country of origin». As Noel Castree and his colleagues have emphasised, however, the word is today «generally applied to professionals, skilled workers, or artists from affluent countries, often transferred by companies, rather than all immigrants in general». To be sure, such sociolinguistic practice is tricky, especially since a substantial number of candidates for emigration to the Global North are equally recruited among professionals and skilled workers from the Global South. Yet rarely are these migrants

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6 Castree et al., *Dictionary of Human Geography*, 57.
(of colour) studied in the conventional literature on expatriation. Moreover, with the deployment of the term «expatriate», scholars have tended to lump together white transnational migrants as diverse as an American retiree in Mexico, a British financial consultant in Hong Kong, a French government-sponsored aid worker/technical assistant (known as coopérant) in Togo, and a Spanish missionary in the Philippines—people who otherwise have little in common apart from their whiteness and the privileged positions of their countries of origin. This is why, in a pioneering study on «expatriate communities», Erik Cohen noted in the late 1970s that the «usage of the term «expatriate» is [...] strictly speaking, a misnomer». In fact, it was (and still is) a concept that is analytically as fuzzy as it is loose.7

Taking these issues of categorial fuzziness and epistemic double standard as my point of departure, I will employ Ivorian/African news reports, American travellers’ accounts and French archival materials to focus attention on the conspicuous, if scholarly «invisible», presence of the French migrants in postcolonial Ivory Coast. I argue that the French candidates for expatriation to the West African country did not fundamentally differ from other emigrants who relocated to countries other than their own, especially if we accept that people expatriate themselves because they are «in search of improved life chances».8

This study itself is part of a larger comparative and transnational project meant to enquire into the historical, spatial as well as socio-anthropological dimensions of French migration to and their presence in postcolonial Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa between 1958 and 1985. A number of questions lie at the heart of this research: Which regions of France did the French emigrants mostly come from and why? Once they arrived in Africa, where did the French migrants settle? How did the presence of a relatively large French community alter the socio-economic and cultural landscapes of their host countries? How can an in-depth study of the French in postcolonial Africa contribute to recasting the dominant paradigm(s) in migration historiography?

This article proposes some critical reflections as a starting point to answer these questions. Focusing on Ivory Coast, it builds on the work of an earlier generation of social scientists who produced studies in the 1970s and 1980s that explored the structures, institutions and social networks of French nationals in postcolonial Africa.9

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As a rule, however, such scholarship largely dealt either with the state-commissioned coopérants or the political economy of France’s emerging neo-colonial relations with the African countries after decolonisation. In the latter tradition, Madagascar, Ivory Coast, Senegal, and Gabon usually emerge as the countries par excellence where the intimate, if exploitative, Françafrique relations were conceived and ultimately tested.10

Insightful as many of them were, these pioneering works were hardly concerned with the possibility of comparing the moving French to African migrants on the continent and beyond. Despite their critical postures, they rarely questioned the Eurocentric knowledge apparatus that viewed transnational African migrants as immigrants while their French counterparts morphed into coopérants and expatriates – mobile professionals who, by virtue of their race and national origin, are rarely placed under the type of scholarly scrutiny deployed to understand the experience of African migrants. The article questions this double standard, combining the critical concerns of Whiteness Studies with the power of revisionist historical representation in order to approximate the migrant experience of the French residents in postcolonial Ivory Coast.11

### 2. Background to an «Invisible» Migration History

The story of migration to Ivory Coast in the twentieth century has been profusely told; and it was intertwined with French colonialism which officially began in 1893. Since it was a territory with vast economic potential but limited human resources, the land quickly became a magnet after the territory had been «pacified» and made available for colonial rule. Due to the policy of mise en valeur (colonial development/exploitation), which the French colonial state instituted after 1920, and because of the African-led agricultural revolution, the number of migrant labourers grew exponentially. In this context, the rise of the plantation economy of cash cropping caused additional immigration to the territory. By the 1960s, Ivory Coast had become the West African country with the largest concentration of foreign-born residents.12 While this historiography

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on migration to Ivory Coast has proved quite rich, the history of the white settlers has largely been neglected.\textsuperscript{13}

Ivory Coast’s striving cash crop economy had quickly turned it into the hub of France’s imperial economy so that the country attracted the «maximum increase» of French residents on the entire continent. To be sure, French migrants flocked to Ivory Coast, hoping to capitalise on the country’s attractive economic situation and to realise a lifestyle they were unable to afford in the metropole. However, not all the French who migrated to colonial Ivory Coast benefited evenly from the racialised modernity and the economic boom that took off in the post war years. In fact, beneath the glamourised life of the white settlers and their spaces of sociability, there existed a substantial number of petits blancs: poor whites whose financial means and living standards suggested that the segregation and economic differentiation in the colony were the result of a historical process, which, although shaped by colonial racism, was ontologically larger than racial politics.\textsuperscript{14}

The increasing marginalisation of the poor whites of Abidjan in the post war years underscored this reality.Arriving in Abidjan earlier in the century when the export economy of Ivory Coast was taking off, these white settlers of modest means had served as sales agents for the numerous European trading firms. However, the end of the exclusive political privilege of the metropolitans after the Second World War signalled the beginning of a downward socio-economic spiral. This was especially true for the petits blancs, who were most vulnerable to competition from a rising number of educated Africans and Levantine immigrants, and as such suffered from these developments. Taking advantage of the new opportunities that the post war economy offered to all, the now conspicuously large Lebanese community extended its share of the urban economy in places such as Abidjan, Bingerville and Grand Bassam.\textsuperscript{15} For their part, many African politicians pushed for a greater presence of their compatriots in the local economy, especially since the liberalisation of the socio-political space had somehow empowered the black majority. As a result of these conjunctures, members of both the Levantine community and the African majority climbed higher on the urban social ladder in the era of post war nationalism.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{13} One of the key exceptions is Alain Tirefort’s «Européens et assimilés en Basse-Côte d’Ivoire, 1893–1958/1960: Mythes et réalités d’une société coloniale,» Thèse d’Etat, Université de Bordeaux III, 1989.


Despite the consequences of this competition, the number of French migrants to Ivory Coast actually increased; an upward trend that echoed the movement of French nationals to other parts of the French empire in Africa. These developments were caused by changes in France’s post war political economy, which had developed a renewed reliance on the African colonies as sources of raw materials and potential markets for metropolitan industries. In order to advance this project, measures were taken to improve the infrastructural networks of the colonies: ports were built, railroad lines rehabilitated while new training facilities and health clinics were constructed to attend to the well-being of the Africans.

The day-to-day management of these late colonial ventures required the expatriation of an increasing number of French nationals to Africa, especially to Senegal, Gabon and Ivory Coast, where the number of French residents doubled between 1950 and 1959 (Table 1). It was this context of employment opportunities in the colonies that

| Table 1: Evolution of French Settlers in France’s West African Territories |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                            | 1935                        | 1950                        | 1959                        |
| Senegal                    | 15,407                      | 33,628                      | 48,000                      |
| Mauritania                 | 442                         | 661                         | 1,600                       |
| French Sudan               | 3,134                       | 4,780                       | 7,400                       |
| Guinea                     | 3,487                       | 6,390                       | 9,500                       |
| Ivory Coast                | 3,755                       | 5,358                       | 11,600                      |
| Upper Volta                | *                           | 1,308                       | 3,700                       |
| Dahomey                    | 909                         | 1,712                       | 2,800                       |
| Niger                      | 417                         | 724                         | 3,000                       |
| **TOTALS OF FRENCH COLONY**| **27,551**                  | **54,561**                  | **88,200**                  |

caused the numbers of French residents in West Africa to rise. While many of the incoming French joined the ranks of an expanding colonial bureaucracy, an even greater number of them found employment within the mushrooming private companies that brokered the post war modernisation of the colonies.\(^{19}\)

At first sight it may seem paradoxical that the French emigrants began to move to Africa in greater proportions during the unprecedented economic growth that France experienced in the aftermath of the Second World War – a socio-historical development that eventually came to be known as *trente glorieuses*.\(^ {20}\) Undoubtedly, an influx of American Marshall Plan aid money and a policy of longer term economic planning spurred a boom in public works and made increased productivity the leitmotiv of the era. As a consequence, metropolitan wages rose, the welfare state expanded its interventionism and living standards generally improved. However, a closer look at post war France reveals that the post-war growth may have not been all that rosy. Therefore, what on the surface appeared as a paradox, might have only been the logical consequence of France’s economic situation. In fact, the *trente glorieuses* not only deepened dislocation and environmental problems, but also put into relief the precariousness of many lives in the French metropole.\(^ {21}\)

3. Emigration in the Midst of Plenty

Making sense of the seeming paradox of French emigration in the midst of economic growth requires a reassessment of the hegemonic narrative of the *trente glorieuses*. As some historians have suggested, this will allow scholars to «free [their] analysis from the discursive juggernaut of the dominant modernising actors» and thus envision another history of the period.\(^ {22}\) From such a critical perspective, it appears that the alleged post war growth was rather unevenly distributed across the national space and did not reach all sectors of the French economy with the same intensity. Consequently, there was considerable migratory activity within France, where people relocated to regions with more attractive economic outlooks.\(^ {23}\)
The reconstruction of the French economy after the war excluded many citizens from partaking in the emerging consumerism. The activism of l'Abbé Pierre, Father Joseph Wresinski and other proponents of social justice in post war metropolitan France are testimony to the fact that the *trente glorieuses* had marginalised many French citizens. Access to the market remained unequal, and despite the housing boom an increasing number of French nationals were forced to live in shantytowns. In this context, emigration offered an opportunity to escape from metropolitan precarity. In the 1950s and the 1960s, for instance, many French opted to relocate to the United States and Australia. Even though emigration appeared as «only one of the possible expedients to get closer to the optimum level of well-being of the general population», as a metropolitan geographer put it shortly before the war, a greater number of French chose to emigrate (temporarily) to Africa, in an effort to capitalise on their whiteness while taking advantage of France’s asymmetrical relationship with the African countries.

If anything, this suggests that those mobile and uprooted persons in the wake of decolonisation, whom Andrea Smith has called «Europe’s invisible migrants», moved in a two-way street. Many ex-colonists were certainly «repatriated» to Europe at the end of empire, but a substantial number of them just relocated to more hospitable postcolonial nations. Ivory Coast fell into this latter category of postcolony, a reality that keen contemporary observers of socioeconomic trends in French West Africa recognised.

In order to gain a deeper insight into these migratory movements, several questions have to be addressed: How significant was the migration of the French nationals to the country after decolonisation? What local Ivorian conditions made such migratory movement possible? How did the local population view the in-coming French?

4. Being French in an African Postcolony

The attraction of post-independence Ivory Coast among France’s emigrants clearly stands out when statistics on the French demographic presence in West Africa are not only analysed diachronically, but are also compared to other Francophone countries. While Dakar had attracted the bulk of French settlers to the region prior to 1960 (the year when the French colonies gained their independence), by the beginning of the second decade after decolonisation, Ivory Coast was on its way to displacing Senegal as the prime destination for French emigrants (Figure 1). In 1965, the French presence in

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Migration, Whiteness and the French Residents of Ivory Coast


There is a strong indication that the reasons that encouraged many Africans to migrate to Ivory Coast equally attracted many French emigrants: the unprecedented economic growth of the country as well as the proactive open-door policy of the postcolonial authorities in Abidjan. At a time when most African countries were calling for tighter immigration policies after independence and the «indigenisation» of the national labour force, Ivory Coast was among the few that opposed such moves. Although some young nationalists called for indigenisation, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Ivory Coast’s first president, used what he portrayed as the threat of economic collapse to postpone the replacement of French officials with Ivorian bureaucrats.

Such a stance resulted in debates with undertones of generational conflict. As early as August 1960, French diplomatic intelligence noted that «despite the wishes of the young Ivorian functionaries, the Africanisation of the top positions does not seem to

1: Comparison of French Residents in Senegal and Ivory Coast, 1955–1975

have been sped up». Opting for a «go-slow» policy on indigenisation, President Houphouët-Boigny reportedly «refrained from making any decision regarding the recent request formulated by the representatives of the various trade unions of the civil service sector». This was in line with an argument articulated by the Ivorian statesman during the waning years of colonialism, namely that prompt replacement of the French functionaries would be equivalent to «cut-rate Africanisation» (africanisation au rabais); a policy choice that he thought was inimical to administrative effectiveness and continued economic growth.

Thus, contrary to the «indigenisation» wave prevalent in other postcolonial nations, the Ivorian leadership widely opened the country to an increasing number of migrant workers, including French professionals and petits blancs. This made the country host to the largest colony of French residents in all of sub-Sahara Africa. Although the French residents have remained invisible in studies on the foreign presence in the local Ivorian socio-demographic landscape, the French community was highly visible to many contemporary observers.

Samir Amin’s criticism that Ivory Coast was the epitome of French neo-colonialism in West Africa was certainly informed by the scholar’s sociological insight into the heavy presence of the French expatriates-in-cooperation (or state-sponsored technical assistants) in the booming Ivorian economy. Some French diplomats held a similar view, although they believed in the conceit of whiteness and the positive effect of the presence of white personnel as movers and shakers of the Ivorian economy. It is insightful that subsequent assessments of the presence and impact of French residents reached a similar conclusion, especially with regard to the continued reliance on foreign factors (such as capital, labour or technology) and the legacies of the French coopérants in Francophone Africa.

Contrary to common assumptions, however, most French residents in postcolonial Ivory Coast were not technical assistants. French diplomats in Abidjan were aware of this reality. In a sample (Table 2) they drew up in 1974 to assess the professional pro-
files of their compatriots, the diplomats estimated that out of every 1000 French residents in the country, only 100 had a technical assistant contract.\textsuperscript{37} In absolute terms, this represented some 3320 people who worked largely as teachers in the expanding network of public schools that the postcolonial state had established.\textsuperscript{38} The majority of the French emigrants (some 40,000 souls), however, were senior or junior staff members (managers, engineers, accountants) working in the booming private industrial and commercial sectors of Ivory Coast.

Although the consular records do not address it, one can support the view that the French residents were divided along ethnic and class lines. Besides the civil servants on loan to the Ivorian government, Ivory Coast hosted those who belonged to the overseas patronat – the group of entrepreneurs who had invested and created medium-size to big companies. There were also the French doctors and private consultants who had opened offices in Abidjan and other cities. These groups were joined by French nationals with few means (confer petits blancs), who competed with Africans in the booming commercial and industrial sectors, and whose presence had the potential of creating tensions within the country. In anticipation of such racial conflicts, an Ivorian official penned down an op-ed in 1962, calling for restrictions on immigration. Although his view did not gain any traction among the authorities, it caught the attention of the French diplomats in Abidjan, especially in the context of the Algerian War.\textsuperscript{39}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Sample of Professional Profiles of French Residents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Professions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Assistants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEOs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skilled Laborers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religious Missionaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minors (less than 21 yrs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Consulat Général/Abidjan to Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, 27 Aug. 1974, AP/Abidjan, Carton 37, CAD.

\textsuperscript{37} Consulat Général/Abidjan to Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, 27 August 1974, AP/Abidjan, Carton 37, CAD.


\textsuperscript{39} M. Coulibaly, «Du danger des immigrations incontrôlées», in: Fraternité, 25 May 1962, in AP/Abidjan, Carton 23, CAD.
Regardless of their positions in the hierarchy of the workforce, French transnational workers were very costly for the local national budget. In the civil service, for instance, while the annual contribution of the French government to the salaries of technical assistants remained steady at eight million dollars per year, the contribution of the Ivorian government increased from ten million in 1967 to almost eighteen million dollars three years later. When fringe benefits like housing, transportation and social services were added, the Ivorian contribution amounted to a triple of what the French authorities paid their expatriated citizens on post in Ivory Coast. With such a price tag, it came as no surprise that a technical assistant usually cost «seven or eight times higher than the per capita income of the Ivorian citizens».

In the private sector the situation was no different. In the mid-1970s, it was estimated that non-African expatriates (largely French) who represented about 5 per cent of the workforce in the industrial sector, received 40 per cent of the industrial wages. In contrast, Ivorians who represented 47 per cent of the industrial labour force pocketed only 37 per cent of the salaries in the sector.

Contemporary observers, including some French coopérants, highlighted the danger of this excessive reliance on a French workforce. While a number of them used the production of grey literatures to voice these issues, others resorted to pamphlet writing in their effort to denounce the working and living arrangements of the French expatriates, whom they accused of promoting a form of apartheid in postcolonial Ivory Coast. In appraising an Ivorian request for a loan intended for its education sector in the late 1960s, the World Bank, for its part, had concluded that Ivory Coast’s economy depended too much on the French. This was the position of American diplomats who had exhorted the Ivorian leaders, as early as 1961, to act swiftly on Ivorianisation. However, the Ivorian authorities dragged their feet as they invoked the dangers of «cut-rate Africanisations».

By the mid-1970s, however, the authorities could no longer hide behind the smoke screen of modernisation discourse. Already in the Five Year Plan of 1970 they recognised that «along with the entry of foreign investment capital and techniques, there has

developed a continuous immigration of European managers and specialists». This situation harboured «the long term risk of rejection of these expatriates by the social body, especially the educated youth». Even more damaging for Ivorian public finances was the fact that the presence of a large French expatriate community had consistently «encourag[ed] the transfer of significant amounts of savings» out of the country.\(^{44}\) Despite this knowledge, the response of the Ivorian leadership was timorous even as functionaries at the Ministry of Interior evoked the introduction of a visa requirement to curb the migration of French nationals.\(^{45}\)

While they remained anonymous in their criticism, many Ivorians denounced the very practices of French expatriation to Ivory Coast as conducive to neo-colonialism and demanded that they end. At times, the expression of grievances took the form of death threats to the French expatriated community in Ivory Coast as revealed by a letter to the Director of the French Aid and Cooperation Mission in Abidjan in 1973. «You must understand that the colonial era is over, and that the French must return to their country of origin!» the missive began, and then it added: «Remove your technicians, and your teachers, because we need technicians from friendly countries, of Africa or Asia. You came to enrich yourselves in our country and to exploit us. You must understand that the current Government does not represent the people of Ivory Coast, the revolution will break out one day, and the traitors of Africa will be punished. It is time, before you are murdered here, to leave quickly with your technicians.»\(^{46}\)

Signed by a certain Corbeau Noir (Black Crow) in the name of the Ivorian military, the missive was the tip of the iceberg of dissatisfaction with and hostility to the Ivorian model of development that relied so heavily on foreign human capital. Although the French diplomats dismissed the angry correspondence as an «isolated act», they nonetheless decided to undertake «discreet investigations to identify the author of the threats».\(^{47}\)

The hostility to the prolonged French presence in postcolonial Ivory Coast was shared by a relatively large segment of the Ivorian population, especially by the left-leaning intellectuals and nationalist students. While it would take many more decades for the built-up anger against the French residents to explode, the partisans of indigenisation found alternative outlets to vent their frustrations.\(^{48}\)


\(^{45}\) Consulat Général/Abidjan to Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, 27 August 1974, AP/Abidjan, Carton 37, CAD.

\(^{46}\) Corbeau noir [pseudonym] to Directeur de la Mission d’Aide et de Coopération, 13 November 1973, AP/Abidjan, Carton 53, CAD.

\(^{47}\) Lettre anonyme de menaces adressée au Chef de la Mission Permanente Française de Coopération en Côte d’Ivoire, 26 November 1973, AP/Abidjan, Carton 53, CAD.

Already in 1969, by organising public demonstrations in the streets of Abidjan, they had called for job openings to benefit the national citizenry.\textsuperscript{49} These subalternist attempts to force the government into action continued over the years. In 1978, for instance, they distributed anonymous tracts through the delivery network of the country’s leading newspaper, calling for further reforms. While the authorities lambasted the act as «a highly damnable practice, which would not be tolerated any longer», the government recognised the magnitude of the discontent. Therefore, President Félix Houphouët-Boigny and his lieutenants organised a round of \textit{Journées de dialogue} in the later months of 1978 in an effort to contain the brewing socio-political crisis.\textsuperscript{50}

Although less spectacular, the government’s response to popular pressures had begun earlier. In February 1970, it had signed a convention with the French authorities on the movement of persons, which required nationals from either country to possess a government-issued identification document (I.D. card or passport) in order to enter the other country. Additionally, the candidates for expatriation had to show that their repatriation was guaranteed. Finally, any cross-border migrant from either country who was planning to work in the other nation was required to secure a work permit before leaving his own country.\textsuperscript{51}

Despite these measures, the Ivorian border police had a hard time controlling the flow of French migrants, especially since many of them entered the country as tourists and then disappeared from the radar of the Ivorian authorities. Under these circumstances, Ivory Coast security services began to arrest young French travellers, who presumably lacked financial support, and urged them to leave the country.\textsuperscript{52} To crack down on the uncontrolled practice of employing French and other foreign professionals, the Ivorian government also expanded the prerogatives of the Labour Ministry, which was transformed into the \textit{Ministère du Travail et de l’Ivoirisation des Cadres} (Ministry of Labour and Ivorianisation of Senior Officials) in the mid-1970s with the task of reducing foreign domination over the economy.\textsuperscript{53} By the end of the decade, with dissatisfaction still high among job-hungry young Ivorians, a charter on Ivorianisation was adopted. And in an attempt to foster «national solidarity», the government not only required that big private corporations use local Ivorians in their administration, but it


\textsuperscript{52} Consulat Général/Abidjan to Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, 27 August 1974, AP/Abidjan, Carton 37, CAD.

also mandated that employers secure official authorisations before employing any foreigner in managerial positions.54

There is reason to believe that these actions produced some results. In the early 1980s, for example, the proportion of French workers in the industrial and commercial sectors was brought down to 4 per cent. More generally, the number of French residents in Ivory Coast, which was estimated to range between 45,000 and 50,000 in 1980, had decreased to 30,705 by the mid-1980s (Figure 2). While the criticisms against slow indigenisation continued and local elites still pressured for more vigorous measures, it appeared, at least in the eyes of some observers, that the policy of Ivorianisation was bearing some fruits.55

![Graph showing the evolution of the French Residents in Ivory Coast, 1965–1990.](Figure 2: Evolution of the French Residents in Ivory Coast, 1965–1990.

There were multiple reasons for the sharp decrease of the number of French residents in postcolonial Ivory Coast. For one, public pressure and the action of the Ivorian authorities certainly had their impact. However, these processes were not the only factors and their significance cannot be dissociated from the historical context of the 1980s. Firstly, in the early years of the decade, the electoral victory of the Socialists in France signalled an attempt at restructuring the French cooperation apparatus. This policy, which was led by Jean-Pierre Cot, the minister charged with cooperation and development in the Mitterrand government, attempted to abolish the distinction between Francophone African countries and other nations of the Global South. One of the con-

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sequences of this new move was the diversion of a sizeable number of coopérants away from a country like Ivory Coast. More dramatically, however, it was the economic crisis of the 1980s and the collapse of the Ivorian economic miracle that caused the French candidates for expatriation to elect other regions of the world as their prime destination. By the new millennium the country had ceased to be the number one destination for French expatriation outside the industrialised countries. With the emergence of Asia as a key engine of the twenty-first century, India and China now attracted the greatest number of French emigrants to the Global South. It might be worth investigating if whiteness remains a key factor in the life experiences of these emigrants.

5. By Way of Conclusion: Toward a New History of the «Moving» French?
The migration history of the French residents of Ivory Coast illustrates the need to recast the conventional narrative of transnational migration. In contrast with the dominant scholarship on migration in the Global North, which has been rightly criticised as having largely «paralleled public debates in their interest», this study on the French colony in Ivory Coast demonstrates that a country of immigration such as France was also a country of emigration. This point is increasingly proposed by scholars, such as Nancy Green who has recommended that researchers of migration issues revise their perspectives on the history of migration to Europe. The call for «reversing the immigration paradigm» appears even more obvious today when an even greater number of French youth are opting for expatriation. As this article has shown, however, this phenomenon is not new: French coopérants and mobile professionals have constantly migrated between France and Francophone Africa since the era of decolonisation and postcolonial nation building.
More fundamentally, I have argued that the industrial countries in the Global North were not the sole destinations of the French transnational migrants since many of France’s emigrants found their ways into Africa. By failing to pay attention to the presence of French migrants in Ivory Coast, sociological, demographic and other types of scholarly discourse on migration have not only rendered the French «invisible», but they have also perpetuated the representation of moving Africans as corps d’exception.

This article calls on migration scholars of postcolonial France to follow the lead of Anne-Meike Fechter and take inspiration from some of the theoretical and methodological insights of Whiteness Studies and postcolonial theory. This is particularly important because these paradigms have the potential to help (re)turn the scholarly gaze at white bodies and tease out the contemporary legacies of Euro-American colonialisms. Should researchers engage these schools of studies, migration scholarship might be rescued from an unconscious racialist epistemology that still informs the practices of many of its students.


Conspicuous, Yet Invisible: Migration, Whiteness and the French Residents of Ivory Coast, 1950–1985

This article focuses on the recent history of French residents in (post)colonial Ivory Coast. I argue that the majority of the French candidates for expatriation to the territory were not fundamentally different from other emigrants, mostly Africans, who relocated to the West African country to improve their chances for a better life. Although the French have been invisible in the scholarly literature on immigration to Ivory Coast, largely due to the mystique of their whiteness they were quite visible in the local landscape. The essay illustrates the benefits of a renewed and robust engagement with the «statistical fact», social structures and historical privileges of these transnational «white tribes» of Africa. More generally, it suggests that people from the Global North have consistently migrated to the Global South as both temporary migrants and long-term immigrants.

Abou B. Bamba
Department of History/African Studies
Gettysburg College
US–Gettysburg, PA 17325 (United States)
E-mail: abamba@gettysburg.edu

ABSTRACT