



International Conference

Theme : « Félix Houphouët-Boigny's work of peace »

Summary report

Yamoussoukro, Félix Houphouët-Boigny Foundation for Peace Research,
October 18 – 20, 2018

Introduction

On the initiative of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Foundation for Peace Research, an international conference was held from October 18 to 20, 2018 at the organization's headquarters in Yamoussoukro. Organized on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the death of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, this symposium on the theme: "The Peace Work of Félix Houphouët-Boigny" registered 115 participants, including 23 from Benin , Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo and France. The colloquium also mobilized academic institutions and various organizations such as :

- The Felix Houphouët-Boigny University
- The Alassane University Ouattara
- The Lorougnon Guédé University
- The Péléforo Gbon Coulibaly University
- The Houphouët-Boigny National Polytechnic Institute
- The Joseph Ki Zerbo Foundation
- The Hampâté Bâ Foundation
- The UNESCO
- The Academy of Arts Sciences, African Cultures and African Diasporas (ASCAD)
- The National Archives of France
- The Academy of Cultures, Religions and Dialogue
- The Center for Diplomatic and Strategic Studies in Paris
- The Network of the Francophone Employers' Group

The theme of this conference takes a particular tone when Côte d'Ivoire saw the aftermath of the municipal and regional elections of October 13, 2018, marked by the resurgence of scenes of violence in some localities.

Participants included : academics from diverse backgrounds, politicians, the prefectural body, traditional leaders, religious leaders, youth and women leaders, civil society leaders men and women of culture interested in the life and ideals of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny to lead the reflection on his work for peace. This symposium was a forum for exchange, interactive debate, participatory and constructive to decipher the work of peace of President Felix Houphouet-Boigny and draw lessons for the present and for the future.

This general report presents the opening ceremony (I), the progress of work (II), the diagnosis of obstacles to peace and development in Côte d'Ivoire (III) and the recommendations (IV).

I. The opening ceremony

A documentary film about President Félix Houphouët-Boigny preceded the opening ceremony, which was attended by the Vice-President, Mr. Daniel Kablan DUNCAN, representing His Excellency Mr. Alassane OUATTARA, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, of Mr EDJAMPAN Thiémélé, representing His Excellency Henri Konan BEDIE, President of the PDCI-RDA, Mr Jeannot Kouadio AHOUSSOU, President of the Senate, Deputy Vice-Governor of the Yamoussoukro Autonomous District, of the Prefect of Region, Prefect of the Department of Yamoussoukro, members of the prefecture, traditional and religious leaders, teachers and researchers, public and private media professionals, and students.

Two highlights marked the opening ceremony. These are the speeches and the presentation of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Prize for research.

Opening the series of speeches, Mr. KOUACOU Gnrangbé Kouadio Jean, recently re-elected Mayor of Yamoussoukro, welcomed all participants and expressed the joy of his commune to host this important scientific meeting.

For him, at a time when the horizon is darkening at the end of regional and municipal elections, this colloquium is timely to allow admirers and opponents of Felix Houphouet-Boigny to meet to reflect on his fight, his work and his philosophy of peace.

Speaking after the Mayor of Yamoussoukro, Professor Jean Noël LOUKOU, Secretary General of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Foundation for Peace Research, thanked all the personalities and participants for their presence and stressed that this conference is the

antithesis of a hagiographic enterprise that, moreover, does not suit the historical figure of Félix Houphouët-Boigny. It is, he said, from the specific case of Felix Houphouet-Boigny, to open new lines of research on the ways and means of effectively establishing peace in Africa and in the belligerent world. 'today.

Following his speech, Professor BAH Bi Youzan Daniel, Dean of the UFR Human Sciences and Society and Chairman of the scientific committee of the conference, located the stakes of this scientific meeting. For him, beyond the numerous written and oral documents, exceptional testimonies about Félix Houphouët-Boigny, it's important to continue the research, through the scientific foundations, to exploit the smallest constructions of the moral and intangible building. what is Felix Houphouet-Boigny, this man of our common history.

The address of Mr. EDJAMPAN Thiémélé, representing His Excellency Mr. Henri Konan BEDIE, President of the PDCI-RDA, followed that of the chairman of the scientific committee of the conference. Delivering the message of President BEDIE, he stressed that the memory of Felix Houphouet-Boigny must be that permanent leaven that vivifies the ebony earth every faith that we are carried away by the passion of division and clan postures. He congratulated Professor Jean Noël and the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Foundation for the search for peace, which offer the opportunity to honor the memory of this great man who has marked generations of Ivorians.

The message of the President of the Republic was delivered by Vice President Daniel Kablan DUNCAN. He welcomed the initiative of this conference which allows the experts to decipher the work of peace of the president Félix Houphouët-Boigny in order to bring out the tools necessary for the consolidation of peace and social cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire and all over the world. Before declaring the opening of the conference, he affirmed that Côte d'Ivoire today believes in the cardinal values with which President Félix Houphouët-Boigny traced the paths of development and built the prosperity of Côte d'Ivoire.

The other highlight of the opening ceremony was the awarding of prizes to the winners of the first edition of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Prize for Research. Thus, Miss Brûl Hada Stéphanie Débora was awarded for her Master's thesis on the issue : « *Educational Policies of Houphouët-Boigny and National Integration in Côte d'Ivoire* » ; and Mr. LEOBLE Baka Celestin, for his doctoral thesis entitled : « *Félix Houphouët-Boigny and the question of Communism in Africa from 1946 to 1989* ».

After the opening ceremony, participants gathered for the start of the work.

II. Work progress

The work took place in plenary and workshop. Plenaries included testimony (A) and orientation conferences (B), while the workshops gave rise to papers (C).

A. The testimonies

This moment was marked by the interventions of personalities who rubbed shoulders with President Félix Houphouët-Boigny. They shared their experiences alongside President Félix Houphouët-Boigny.

They are, Mr. Jeannot Kouadio Ahoussou, the President of the Senate, Mr. Maurice Kacou Guikahué, Executive Secretary of the PDCI-RDA, represented by Mr. Kamagaté Brahim, Executive Secretary for Youth in the Executive Secretariat of the PDCI-RDA, and HE Mr Kakou Gervais, Ambassador, Mr Constant ROUX, Associate Professor of Medicine and Mrs Rokiatou Hampaté Ba, daughter of Amadou Hampaté Bâ.

With regard to President Jeannot Kouadio Ahoussou, he explained how, based on the teachings of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, based on the virtues of dialogue and tolerance, he was able to conduct political negotiations between the Government and the opposition, on the instructions of the President of the Republic, HE Mr Alassane OUATTARA, from April 2012 to April 2018.

As for Mr. Maurice Kacou Guikahué, Executive Secretary of the PDCI-RDA, whose testimony was read by Mr. Kamagaté Brahim, he noted that all the work of peace of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny was based on social justice.

With regard to the Ambassador, HE Mr. Kakou Gervais, he wondered what President Félix Houphouët-Boigny would have done in the current context of the reconciliation process in Côte d'Ivoire. For him, the solution to the problem of national reconciliation in Côte d'Ivoire can not be that of being economic. It would take a step that brings unity, as President Felix Houphouet-Boigny would have done.

Another testimony was that of Prof. Constant ROUX. The latter, after having recounted the beginnings of his meeting with President Felix Houphouet-Boigny, was delighted to have found a wise man, in love with justice and peace.

The last speaker, Ms. Rokiatou Hampaté Ba recounted the historical friendship that has always linked Felix Houphouët-Boigny to his father.

B. Orientation conferences

In total, four lectures were given by leading figures in research.

The first lecture given by Professor Danielle DOMERGUE-CLOAREC dealt with the theme : « The road to independence 1958-1960 : between pragmatism and disappointment ». Through a socio-historical, Professor Danielle DOMERGUE-CLOAREC described the characters of the character of Felix Houphouët-Boigny which allowed each country of the former French West Africa (AOF) to gain national sovereignty. According to her, Félix Houphouët-Boigny was able to impose his ideas of territorialization to that of federation wanted by his peers.

The second conference led by Professor NIAMKEY Koffi focused on the theme : « The question of ideologies in the political action of Houphouët-Boigny ». According to him, the first President of Côte d'Ivoire was a pragmatic man who had an aversion to ideologies that he designated as a smokescreen that blurred the view between the mind and reality. He also indicated that Houphouët-Boigny's thought conveyed in the social body through the media was intended to raise awareness and stimulate critical thinking.

Professor Simon Pierre EKANZA delivered the third lecture on the theme : « Houphouët-Boigny, model of man of peace ». Presenting President Houphouët-Boigny as man of peace out of the hands of the creator, Professor EKANZA demonstrated the qualities of strategist of President Houphouët, through its foreign policy and especially in its relations with France.

As for the fourth orientation conference, it was said by Professor DOMBA Jean Marc Palm on the theme : « Education of young people to peace, a valuable tool for the settlement of conflicts in Africa ». In essence, the speaker indicated that peace education is the mechanism through which youth can become agents of peace and conflict prevention.

During the debates that followed these various conferences, the speakers emphasized the exceptional role of President Houphouët-Boigny in the process of decolonization, his qualities of statesman and man of peace.

C. Communications

In total, the work recorded 55 papers divided into five thematic areas.

Axis 1 : The peaceful struggle for independence

The four (4) papers presented in this theme focused on the strategy of Houphouët-Boigny based on consultation and the refusal of the use of violence, in the struggle for independence. This strategy integrates the contribution of the press to the political struggle of Houphouët-Boigny.

Axis 2 : External peace : diplomacy, cooperation, conflict reduction and mediation in Africa and in the world.

In this area, seven (7) communications were recorded. The speakers highlighted Felix Houphouët-Boigny's work of peace, through its foreign policy, both in Africa, in France, and in the rest of the world. The various papers and discussions that followed show that this foreign policy is based on multilateralism and an integrationist vision within the framework of African Unity.

Axis 3 : Civil peace: rule of law and democratic culture, defense policy, national integration

This axis gave rise to sixteen (16) papers which dealt with the trajectory of the President Félix Houphouët-Boigny's regime in the management of political power in Côte d'Ivoire. The various interventions showed, on the one hand, that President Félix Houphouët-Boigny was able to guarantee peace, social cohesion and political stability in Côte d'Ivoire by a fair redistribution of the fruits of economic growth. On the other hand, the work has highlighted the qualities shown by President Félix Houphouët-Boigny in the face of the reinstatement of the multiparty system and the political enigmas of the deaths of Ernest Boka and Victor Biaka Boda.

Axis 4 : Religious peace: secularism, religious tolerance, interreligious dialogue

The fourteen (14) papers presented in this section have made it possible to detect the religious foundations of Félix Houphouët-Boigny's philosophy of peace, and subsequently the tolerance and interreligious dialogue that this philosophy has made possible.

Axis 5 : Economic peace: economic institutions, major works, development strategies

The fourteen (14) papers that dealt with this theme focused on President Félix Houphouët-Boigny's fight against regional disparities and the impact of this policy on people's lives. They put particular emphasis on the various agroindustrial development projects initiated by President Houphouët, including the creation of state-owned companies (SODESUCRE, SODEPRA, etc.) and the rotating organization of Independence Day.

This policy had a positive impact on people's lives and fostered the development of localities, through improved infrastructure, access to drinking water, electrification, women's empowerment, employment young people, reducing rural exodus and poverty. However, participants regretted that this development policy initiated by President Félix Houphouët-Boigny was not pursued by his various successors.

III. The diagnosis of obstacles to peace and development in Côte d'Ivoire

During this symposium, participants diagnosed obstacles to peace and development. These are obstacles related to political governance, economic governance and the socio-cultural and educational domain.

A. Barriers related to political governance

- The instrumentalization of the press for political purposes ;
- No separation of powers (confusion between executive, legislative and judicial powers) ;
- Weakness of the judicial system ;
- The instrumentalization of ethnic groups and religions for political ends ;
- Nepotism, clientelism and corruption ;
- Mismanagement of different crises ;

B. Barriers related to economical governance

- Mismanagement of public funds ;
- The unequal distribution of the country's wealth ;
- The question of rural land and conflicts between pastoralists and farmers ;

C. Obstacles socioculturels et éducatifs

- The bankruptcy of the school and university system ;
- The weakness of the health system ;
- The rise of verbal violence and hate speech ;
- Insufficient promotion of traditional values and local languages ;
- The development of communitarianism ;
- The culture of impunity ;
- Indiscipline and incivism ;

IV. Recommendations

Following the diagnosis of obstacles to peace, the conference made the following recommendations :

- Privilege dialogue in the resolution of any dispute in Côte d'Ivoire
- Promote social justice
- Make the preservation of social peace, the priority of any political action
- To sensitize and educate people to the culture of peace

General conclusion

The work of peace of Felix Houphouët-Boigny makes sense today, 25 years after his death. In the current political context in Côte d'Ivoire, marked by the resurgence of political tensions and discourses of ethnic division that were believed to be over after the episode of the 2011 post-election crisis, Félix Houphouët-Boigny's ideals of peace are more relevant than ever. The international conference, which mobilized for three days participants from various backgrounds tried to decipher the monumental work of President Felix Houphouët-Boigny, in the search for peace.

If at the time of Houphouët-Boigny, the Ivorians could find forbidding his speech of peace rehashed during each of his interventions, the successive crises that cross Ivory Coast since his disappearance configures a topicality to his speech of peace. Did not President Félix Houphouët-Boigny say : « *Happiness, truth, we only appreciate it when we have lost it. Let's make sure that we never have to lose it but to constantly increase it through daily work and effort.* »

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