

## Research Article

# SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY IN THE QUEST FOR EMERGENCE IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

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### ABSTRACT

The state must act on the economic sphere in such a way that it is subject to all the principles of justice according to their lexical order. Henceforth, the market must be guided by the principles of freedom as an end, strict equality of opportunity and be organised in such a way as to favour the most disadvantaged social position in terms of primary goods. Therefore, could such an organisation of the economic structure not be judicious for the Ivory Coast, which is in the process of socio-economic construction? The answer to this question will lead to an analysis of the articulation of social justice and economic efficiency in the quest for Ivorian emergence. From then on, this paper will propose ways of developing an economic model capable of generating more freedoms and reducing the economic inequalities that have been cited as the seeds of civil war.

**Keywords:** Economic development, Economic efficiency, Economic inequality, Social justice, Market economy.

### INTRODUCTION

After nearly a decade of military-political crisis that paralysed its economic health, Côte d'Ivoire, a West African country of 26 million inhabitants, has been experiencing significant economic growth for nearly a decade. This double-digit growth is marked in particular by the return of investors and the growth of companies. Indeed, the macro-economic situation of Côte d'Ivoire, whose GDP has grown by an average of more than 9% over the last 10 years, is excellent. The GDP is growing every year in a very low inflationary environment (less than 2%), which is very good. Especially since the population growth rate is around less than 3%. All this shows that the economic aggregates of Côte d'Ivoire are in good shape.

Moreover, Côte d'Ivoire is resolutely committed to the path of economic development with the short-term objective of achieving emergence. The term "emergence", which has been displayed as a political and economic ambition for the last decade, is the ideal to be achieved. However, what does emergence imply? This chapter aims to understand the ins and outs of this emergence from the perspective of social and economic justice. In addition, it will suggest ways of developing an economic development model that is capable of generating more freedoms and reducing the economic inequalities that have been the seeds of its fratricidal struggles.

#### 1. Côte d'Ivoire: a poorly initiated emergence

The notion of emergence, which was recently elaborated as a development objective and political programme, emerged during the 2010 elections. The term 'emerging country' refers to the most dynamic countries among the developing countries and those that are best integrated into the now globalised economy, without any exact definition being developed for this purpose, let alone discriminating elements of measurement. According to the Robert dictionary, "to emerge" means "to impose oneself on the attention by its value".

Subsequently, a formerly poor country can be considered to be emerging when it arouses interest and stands out from the mass of underdeveloped nations on the margins of global trade in goods, services and ideas. But, at what point, in its journey towards economic progress, can a country really be considered to have become emerging?

The Ivorian government has not made an effort to clarify this term. According to a press article in the French newspaper *Le Point*, dated 26 October 2020, the government has never defined economic and social criteria for this "emergence". Such an improvisation of development for the country leads to a focus on the point of progress under the economic perspective manifested by the growth of GDP and/or GNP. These indicators are supposed to reflect the increase in wealth of the country and subsequently of its inhabitants. Moreover, as analysed by an executive of the investment company Pulsar Partners quoted in the same article, "It was above all a slogan [...] But if we understand emergence as the fact that a majority of the population has access to essential goods and services and to decent living conditions, emergence has not been achieved.

In this sense, emergence as a fair improvement in national wealth, notably through indicators of which GDP is the most renowned, poorly reflects certain advances in development. However, the notion of development itself is quite polysemous. Gérard M. Meier, distinguishes it in these terms: "Development implies something more than economic growth generally defined as the evolution of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from one year to the next. It could be translated as growth plus transformation". (Meier, 1995, p. 7)

Moreover, as Aristotle already pointed out in antiquity, the wealth illustrated by the evolution of GDP must always be evaluated as a means and not as an end: "the existence devoted to profit [...] is in a way embraced by constraint and [that] wealth is obviously not the good sought after, since it is useful as a function of something else. (Nicomachean Ethics)

This thing constituted as the end of wealth and therefore of development is for the economist Amartya Sen the widest extension of freedom. This view is emphasised in the idea that 'development

can be understood [...] as a process of expansion of the real freedoms enjoyed by individuals' (2003 (1999), p. 15). Thus Amartya Sen fits into the transversality of the notion of development and linking economic growth to freedom, he argues that 'economic unfreedom, in the form of extreme poverty, can make an individual vulnerable to further infringements of freedom' (2003: 161).

These different perspectives on development are in line with John Rawls' view that justice is the primary virtue of social institutions (1971, [2009], p. 29). Justice is therefore the primary criterion of institutions, including the economic institution. In this sense, development must have justice as its characteristic and end. As a reminder, Rawlsian justice in this sense unfolds in two movements: the principle of equal freedom for all and the principle of difference.

In the light of current development and the dynamics in which the land of Eburnia finds itself. This reveals deep social inequalities and also a stagnation or even regression of public freedoms. Indeed, while it is true that thanks to strong growth, the national income per capita has more than doubled, rising from \$1,120 in 2011 to \$2,290 in 2019. However, there are still many poor people who do not benefit from this growth. With the population having increased from 20 to 25 million in the same period, the number of poor people still stands at around 10 million, compared to 11 million ten years ago, although it must be acknowledged that the poverty rate has fallen from 55.4% in 2011 to 39.5% in 2018, according to a survey conducted by the Ivorian National Statistics Institute and the World Bank. This means that almost half of the Ivorian population lives in precarious conditions. This represents a fairly large fringe of the population that is left out of the development process.

Rawls having used the distribution of income as an aggregating index of primary goods, it is appropriate that this distribution of income be oriented more justly, particularly by an orientation towards this deprived population. Moreover, there is a link between individual income and individual possibilities and therefore individual liberties. This is why the distribution of income from growth must be able to take into account the most disadvantaged, in this case those "who belong to the income class with the lowest expectations" (Rawls, 2003, p. 90), namely the poor. In sum, it is certainly crucial for developing countries, especially our own, to seek exponential economic growth and emergence, but at what cost? It is inconceivable that such a large section of the population cannot benefit from the fruits of this growth and that economic inequalities have never been so deep. In such circumstances, how can we build a society that is well-ordered by the principles of justice, i.e. a society with an egalitarian tendency? Is it not the economic system of distribution that is at fault in the ever-increasing production of the poor?

## 2. A skewed economic market, requiring regulatory institutions

Questioning the economic system used by Côte d'Ivoire is of paramount importance. Indeed, the economic system, through its allocative function, has an influence on the needs and above all on the aspirations of the people whose daily lives it regulates according to the possibilities it offers to individuals. Its capacity to generate the primary goods synthesised by the income available to individuals considerably affects their possibilities and consequently their freedoms. A just society is one that ensures a fair distribution of social primary goods, taking into account the fact that individuals are unequal in terms of natural primary goods. Thus, it is up to the market to regulate the fair distribution of goods. Perfect market competition in this sense guarantees free choice of employment and leads to an

efficient use of workers' resources and an efficient distribution of goods among households. Fair competition thus allows firms to generate growth, and workers to enjoy the freedom of employment at the wages that suit them. Moreover, as the economist Gary Becker points out, wages are set by the conditions of competition and measure the productivity of the individual (Becker, 1957 [1971]). On the other hand, fair competition guarantees the idea of a fair price of goods resulting from the interplay of supply and demand in accordance with the theory of efficiency. This is why perfect competition is said to be "a perfect procedure as far as efficiency is concerned. (Rawls, 1971, [2009], p. 312).

Unfortunately, Côte d'Ivoire, a democratic country with a liberal economic system, still has an economy marked by profound difficulties that make the system rather inefficient. Indeed, the analysis of the overall business environment reveals that the economic market is plagued by real obstacles to perfect competition, notably high levels of business informality and a limited degree of competition in several sectors. Formalising businesses is a challenge because of cumbersome procedures for starting a business, tax compliance, and the four other deficits described below (The International Finance Corporation (IFC), member of the World Bank Group, 2020):

First, large firms have more opportunities to overcome shortcomings in access to finance, transport and logistics, digital services and a skilled workforce. Specifically, the synthetic tax, designed to improve the tax compliance of small and/or informal enterprises, may create incentives for them to remain small and informal. Moreover, in some sectors, there are dominant positions of large groups and especially multinationals, which sometimes benefit from significant tax exemptions and some political lobbying in their favour.

Secondly, regarding competition policy, although the implementation of competition law has improved (Ivorian anti-trust law), market-based competition is restricted in several sectors, notably in real estate and the import of refined products. However, as Pierre Rosanvallon, analysing Adam Smith's theses, highlights the latter's thinking on monopoly: "It is no exaggeration to see in 'monopoly' a kind of incarnation of evil. It is to economic society what despotism is to political society. (1989, p. 72). Thus, monopoly is an obstacle to the market which should be, in Smith's eyes, 'the admirable accord of interest and justice' (Rosanvallon, 1989, p. 72).

The consequence of such a structure of competition, in this case dominated by monopolies, is that of an increase in prices compared to a competitive equilibrium on the one hand. On the other hand, this structure creates barriers to market entry for new companies. In this respect, a report by the International Monetary Fund already underlined in 2009 : At the level of prices, the lack of transparency in their setting and the absence of a competition policy often hinder actions aimed at controlling inflation. Finally, as long as the growth of the economy is essentially based on the primary sector and a real industrialisation policy is not initiated, the problems of sustainable growth and employment supply will remain. (International Monetary Fund, 2009, p. 28)

Thirdly, although significant progress has been made in the management and governance of public enterprises, their predominance in some sectors of the Ivorian economy hinders competition. Although according to the texts in force, there should be no preferential treatment offered to state-owned enterprises, which are supposed to compete with private companies under the same conditions, the situation is quite different. State-owned companies benefit from favouritism in the awarding of public contracts. Moreover,

despite significant progress in improving the business environment in Côte d'Ivoire, weaknesses persist in the regulation of business and the incidence of corruption.

Finally, the socio-political framework cannot be ignored. The unhealthy political climate and the recent instability linked to the post-electoral crisis of 2011 create a set of barriers to entry and the reluctance of investors in view of the uncertain environment. Finally, the socio-political framework induces a wait-and-see attitude on the part of investors.

This analysis of the Ivorian market economy highlights numerous difficulties that undermine fair competition, a necessary instrument as an allocative and distributive function of the fruits of social cooperation. Thus, these factors particularly influence the labour market and the possibility for individuals to freely choose their job at the appropriate remuneration. Moreover, it is from inclusion in the fabric of social production, in this case through work, that the individual can benefit from the results of economic growth and consequently improve his or her life prospects through the primary goods positively correlated with income.

Moreover, it is always in the market economy that the individual can benefit from procedural justice in the exchange of the goods at his disposal thanks to the articulation of supply and demand in a perfect competitive situation. These different characteristics reflect the importance of an efficient market economy governed by perfect competition, which guarantees justice in the distribution of goods and opportunities for individuals.

Finally, the distributive economic system is really involved in production and pauperisation. This finality corroborates Rawls' idea that 'the principled problem of distributive justice is that of the choice of a social system' (1971, [2009], p. 315). Thus, the system in question having been identified, it must be reformed in the light of the principles of justice in the Rawlsian sense.

### 3. Institutions for greater justice: the labour market

Let us emphasise at the outset, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, that it would be an extra *causam* undertaking to seek an economic theory in Rawls' theory of justice. Rawls himself took the precaution of warning the reader of this when he wrote It is essential to remember that our theme is the theory of justice and not even elementary economics. We shall deal only with certain moral problems of political economy. For example, I will ask what is, in the long run, the appropriate rate of savings, how to organise taxes and property, at what level to set the social minimum. In asking these questions, I am not trying to explain what economic theory says about the functioning of these institutions, let alone to add anything to it. Such an attempt would obviously be inappropriate here. I will refer to some elementary parts of economic theory only to illustrate the content of the principles of justice. If I do not use economic theory correctly, or if the doctrine itself is wrong, I hope that this will not harm the purpose of the theory of justice. Let us say at the outset that there is some connection between Rawlsian theses and economic concerns. This is mainly due to the fact that there are ethical implications in economics. (1971, [2009], p. 306)

Without running the risk of cogitating on a theory of political economy, it is therefore a question of proposing avenues of reflection for greater economic justice based on Rawlsian theories. John Rawls, in developing his theory of justice, had already highlighted the inability of the market to function in a situation of perfect competition due to a number of contingencies. The situation is therefore such that there is

an economic system that is deeply guilty of generating a backlog of people who do not benefit from the fruits of growth. Thus, in the face of the inability of the economic system to be a procedure of pure procedural justice, and from the perspective of seeking greater justice, the hypothesis of an economic system articulated according to Rawlsian principles of justice must be exploited. In such a perspective, all the dimensions of the economic relationship must be taken into consideration and ordered according to the spirit of the principles of justice. This will be precisely the search for economic efficiency within a certain contractuality 'as the unity of freedom and equality' (Makweta, 2013, p. 116). Since there is a lexicographical order of priority, between the two principles, the tracks discussed will be based on the two principles of justice entirely.

From this perspective, the first principle must govern economic activity. This requires, by virtue of the compatibility of the system of equal basic freedoms for all, that no obstacle be placed in the way of the individual exercising his or her freedoms under any circumstances. In this case, the legislation from the constitution onwards must be able to guarantee such a principle. This is apparently the case of the Ivorian legislation in which articles 1 to 27 of the constitution of 08 November 2016 guarantee the fundamental freedoms of individuals and equality between all.

As for the second principle, it is equally articulated. This principle requires that this fundamental equitable equality, already guaranteed by the first principle, should also apply to opportunities to access the various functions and positions in civil society, and even at political level. At this level, certain efforts remain to be made to guarantee equitable access to positions of public responsibility. However, this aspect is not necessarily the subject of this investigation. This is why the principle of difference will now be discussed after the conditions for equitable access to positions have been met.

After the public or legislative conditioning of the state in favour of the first principle and the first part of the second principle of justice, the question of distributive justice oriented by the principle of difference must be evaluated. Rawls foresees governmental institutions in charge of the redistribution system in accordance with equity and filling the gaps of economic efficiency so that there is a social minimum. It is therefore the role of government to intervene in the economic system. The government's mission in this sense can be seen as follows: the government not only preserves the usual forms of social capital, but also tries to provide equal educational and cultural opportunities to those with similar gifts and motivations, either by subsidising public schools or by creating a public school system. It also encourages and guarantees equal opportunities in economic life and in the free choice of employment by controlling the action of private firms and associations and by preventing the establishment of monopolistic restrictions and barriers in access to the most sought-after positions. Finally, the government guarantees a social minimum either in the form of family allowances and health and unemployment insurance, or, more systematically, through a graduated income supplement (Rawls, 1971, [2009], pp. 315-316) According to Rawls, the government thus has the task of guaranteeing equality of opportunity in economic life and specifically on the labour market. The aim of this mission is precisely to avoid polarisation and the creation of large groups which, in the long term, distort the capacity of the market to generate more justice, particularly in the context of the labour market. In the context of the labour market, the term "monopsony" has been used to designate such a situation. Originally established in 1933 by Joan Robinson in *The Economics of Imperfect Competition*, alongside the term 'monopoly', 'monopsony' refers to the existence of a single buyer of a specific good or service in a market. In labour markets, the term 'monopsony' is often interpreted more

broadly, defined as 'all circumstances in which firms have power in labour markets to determine wages' (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019, p. 4). Labour markets differ from product markets in that they are characterised by a number of 'frictions', i.e. factors that contribute to a 'mismatch between employee and employer' (Basu, 2009). Frictions in labour markets can greatly contribute to the market power of the employer and make labour input markets more prone to monopsony than product markets to monopoly (Naidu, Posner, and Weyl, 2018, p. 554)

It is therefore right that institutions are necessarily needed to achieve such an objective. In the Rawlsian perspective, two departments or institutions correspond to the objective of market regulation: the allocations and stabilisation departments. On the one hand, the allocations department is responsible for ensuring that the price system remains efficiently competitive and for preventing the formation of excessive dominant positions in the market, thus correcting the most excessive deviations from efficiency. On the other hand, the stabilisation department strives to achieve approximately full employment so that those who are looking for work find it according to their freedom. The tasks associated with these two departments could be merged into a single commission called the Competition Commission.

Thus, it will be a question of setting up a competition commission whose joint mission will be to regulate the market by avoiding the creation of a multiplicity of industries and businesses in the same sector in order to make it as diversified as possible. Through the activities of control and aid for the development of sectors dominated by monopolies, the State could participate in the revaluation of salaries and at the same time set a higher guaranteed minimum wage (SMIG), the establishment of a price control system. In addition, this commission will be responsible for the repression of unfair competition and anti-competitive practices, given the links between pure competition and the labour market. Furthermore, an essential mission of the commission is to support small companies or companies that are the least competitive in the sector by adopting development mechanisms in order to make them national champions. This initiative in favour of these companies aims at their multiplication, guaranteeing a more organised competition between small owners on the one hand, and on the other hand to participate in the fight against unemployment and the revaluation of human resources. The competition commission thus appears to be the spearhead of the fight to regulate the labour market. This commission is the consequence of the observation that the market is unable to regulate itself because of unfair competitive practices and a certain number of frictions that mar its proper functioning and therefore its justice. In such a poorly regulated market, the result is a derisory wage practice and the unfair allocation of income to the actors of social cooperation. A competition commission based on the principles of economic liberalism and an appropriate legal code imbued with Rawlsian principles of justice could rightly contribute to a fairer and more just distribution of the income from growth. However, is state regulation alone capable of achieving a fair distribution through simple market regulation?

#### **4. Minimum income as a complement to government action to regulate the labour market**

The second aspect of the pathways to reduce social inequalities is also the introduction of a minimum income for all members of the social community due to the relative complexity of the economic market. In the Rawlsian perspective, individuals who have participated in social cooperation should also benefit from the social benefits of this cooperation. However, the structure of the economic system implies the constitution of the society in strata such that

individuals benefit from income in the form of wages or sales income from either wage labour or from the ownership of the means of production. However, the system includes many individuals who participate in social cooperation but who cannot benefit from the fruits, especially with regard to income: this is the case of informal economic activity, which makes the market and its regulation even more complex. The International Labour Office has attempted to define the criteria for informal economic activity: - ease of entry into the activity - an unregulated competitive market - family ownership of enterprises - small scale of activities - use of adapted technology and high labour intensity - training acquired outside the school system (International Labour Organization, 1972)

Informal sector actors therefore participate in social cooperation but, because of their informality, cannot benefit from the services of the economic institutions outlined as possible solutions for reducing social inequalities. Thus, informal sector actors are subject to stiff competition from the dominant companies in the sector. Although they benefit from relative fiscal freedom due to their lack of regular registration, they cannot benefit from the means to expand their activities, such as access to banking institutions and asset financing. In contrast to the formal sector, those working in these informal production units mostly have a minimum wage lower than the Ivorian guaranteed interprofessional minimum wage of 75,000 CFA francs. Most of them have a primary school education, making them a low-cost and often young workforce. The labour market in this sector is therefore very unequal and favours the lack of freedom of choice of career and employment of individuals dear to Rawls (1971, [2009], p. 312). Thus, the production units of the informal sector are subject to particularly tough and unfair competition given their limited capacity for action and the weakness of legal support. As a result, the income earned from economic activity is very often derisory and cannot contribute to a fair profit from primary goods.

In such a circumstance, the minimum income for social cooperation actors is justified because they participate in one way or another in this social contract. Moreover, given the vagaries of the market and especially the economic handicap of Côte d'Ivoire due to the large informal sector, the minimum income is fully justified. Thus, as Rawls already showed;

A price system based on competition alone does not take needs into account, which is why it cannot be the only basis for distribution [...] There are good reasons to oppose the determination of total income on the basis of competition alone, because it ignores needs and the requirement of a decent standard of living. [...] Indeed, this is probably what the difference principle requires. But once a correct minimum has been reached through these income transfers, it may be perfectly fair to determine the rest of the total income through the price system, provided that the price system is relatively efficient and free from monopolistic restrictions, and that excessive externalities have been eliminated. Rawls emphasises the idea that distribution based on market competitiveness cannot ensure the satisfaction of individual needs and an appropriate standard of living for each individual in the interest of all. Individuals should therefore be assured of an income to meet their needs and an appropriate standard of living. This means a sufficient allocation of primary social goods, i.e. a sufficient income that is equally distributed, unless an unequal distribution is in the interest of all and the greatest interest of the poorest in accordance with the difference principle.

Finally, it should be noted that the idea of a basic or minimum income also complements the government's regulatory action on markets to make them more competitive and thus able to reflect greater procedural justice because they are true to price. Such a conjunction of the state and the market with a view to greater cross-sectional

satisfaction of the most disadvantaged strata brings to the fore the concept of 'social democracy', that is, according to Philippe Van Parijs, 'a type of society which combines with a market economy the strict protection of individual freedoms and social and fiscal legislation which redistributes income to the benefit of the most disadvantaged'. (1991, p. 87). The state regulates social life by ensuring that social reforms are compatible with respect for fundamental freedoms. It is at the service of the community and seeks the happiness of its citizens. To this end, citizens become key players in their own development through their participation in political and economic life. Such a perspective would thus make it possible to reduce inequalities and the possible seeds of a new fratricidal conflict.

## CONCLUSION

In the quest for Ivorian emergence, the question of respect for Rawlsian principles of justice as a condition for the emergence of Côte d'Ivoire arises. Indeed, it has been noted that there is relative confusion in the notion of emergence as a political and economic project over the last ten years. The consequence of this confusion is a singularisation of development around growth, but such a perception of development is to deny that it does not immediately lead to an increase in freedoms and a reduction in socio-economic inequalities. Thus, the same causes would produce the same effects, notably social demands and transversal crises. The non-definition of such a notion would constitute a serious breach of the definition of political economy because "A doctrine of political economy must include an interpretation of what is the public good based on a conception of justice. This must guide the thoughts of the citizen when considering matters of social and economic policy" (Rawls, 1971, [2009], p. 300).

Clearly, the state of Côte d'Ivoire needs not only to clarify this notion but also to orient the economic market according to the principles of justice. This regulation by the state of the economic distribution structure will be done in particular by the establishment of a competition commission guaranteeing procedural justice of the market, with the consequence of greater regulation of the labour market and the increase of individual resources on the one hand, and on the other hand by the adoption by the state of a minimum income as a complement to government action to regulate the labour market.

Ultimately, social justice is a necessity and must be applied to the economy because of the failures of its inherently unjust internal mechanisms to provide individuals with an increase in their freedoms and opportunities. Furthermore, by applying it to the economy, it allows for the reduction of inequalities and a fairer redistribution of social wealth with a touch of the most disadvantaged in our societies. The state therefore has a role in controlling and regulating economic structures with a view to more inclusive development.

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