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Courting American Capital: Public Relations and the Business of Selling Ivorian Capitalism in the U.S., 1960-1980

Abstract

This chapter is an invitation to reimagine the roles assigned to players in the history of capitalism on the global stage. It challenges aspects of the historiography of capitalism in the twentieth century, which tend to center on historical actors and institutions of the Global North. Even when actors in the Global South are discussed, it is usually to portray them as passive victims of an intractable system. By focusing on the Ivory Coast and its economic diplomacy toward the United States, I seek to destabilize this general picture.

Keywords

capitalism, economic diplomacy, Ivory Coast, United States

Disciplines

African History | Economic History | History

CHAPTER 10

Courting American Capital: Public Relations and the Selling of Ivorian Capitalism in the United States, 1960–1980

About B. Bamba

This chapter is an invitation to reimagine the roles assigned to players in the history of capitalism on the global stage. It challenges aspects of the historiography of capitalism in the twentieth century, which tend to center on historical actors and institutions of the Global North. Even when actors in the Global South are discussed, it is usually to portray them as passive victims of an intractable system. By focusing on the Ivory Coast and its economic diplomacy toward the United States, I seek to destabilize this general picture. While American investors, corporations, and advertising agencies are still important in this story, the plans, strategies, and actions of the Ivorians take the center stage. To be sure, this is not to deny the leading role of the United States in the world capitalist economy, especially after the Second World War. As historians have shown, the United States government certainly orchestrated many of the global institutions that emerged in the wake of the war. On the other end, American businesses strove to further their operations, not just in Latin America, which had traditionally served a U.S. sphere of influence, but also in Europe, Asia, and even Africa.¹ While the U.S. government and American corporations took the initiative in numerous foreign countries, they did not always run the show, as a number of contributions in this volume demonstrate.²

This should not come as a surprise. American economic hegemony in foreign lands did not play out in a *tabula rasa*. Indeed, local agents, politicians,

and impresarios more often than not used the coming of the United States as an opportunity to strike new alliances in an effort to advance their own interests. In that, the power of the United States was contingent on the consent and even the invitation of national states and regional leaders. Geir Lundestad has explored this theme in the case of reconstruction of Western Europe in the aftermath of World War II.³ In the context of twentieth-century decolonization, one sees similar processes at work in Algeria, where nationalists sought U.S. investment in their country to reduce the influence of the French.⁴ That local interest groups were instrumental in the expansion of American capitalism abroad is also highlighted in Julio Moreno's insightful study of American business culture in Mexico.⁵

What is even more interesting is Moreno's discussion of the singular importance of advertising in the operation of an American-inflected capitalism. Unfortunately, his focus on development *within* Mexico gives the impression that the power of transnational advertising is one-directional: from the Global North to the Global South. There is a long tradition among media scholars of pointing to this phenomenon that some of them have called advertising imperialism.⁶ Unlike these scholars, I underline in this chapter a series of instances in which the government of Ivory Coast and its diplomats posted in the United States—all actors from the Global South—deploy advertising and public relations to target an audience in the Global North. This not only confirms that the circulation of information in the operation of capitalism is all-important,⁷ but it also suggests that actors in decolonizing Africa and elsewhere were willing to embrace and mobilize public relations to reach their own goals. Indeed, like Marta Musso in her work on Algeria, I highlight the efforts of the Ivorians to reduce their reliance on the French, whom, in the wake of decolonization, foreign observers and radical Ivorian activists increasingly saw as overbearing in the Ivorian drive to postcolonial modernity.⁸

The public relations campaign that the Ivorian leadership launched in the 1960s in the United States to attract investors was the cornerstone of this strategy of diversifying Ivory Coast's economic partners. The campaign lubricated the global operation of capitalism in the respective countries. Shifting the focus away from the traditional story of the Cold War or the scholarship on Franco-African relations and economic diplomacy, and the *Françafrique* paradigm, my contribution thus suggests that Francophone Africa was the arena of a different, but no less instructive, cold war that pitted the United States against France. Even more, I argue that Africans remained instrumental in

the operation and the global reach of U.S. capitalism, and not necessarily as its victims.

What strategies did the Ivorian authorities use? Who were their American strategists? What were the ultimate dividends of their public relations initiatives? A central part of this chapter is devoted to answering these questions. While it will be hard to pin down the actual outcomes of the marketing ploys that Ivory Coast mobilized, I suggest that any effort to answer the questions will allow us to reimagine American capitalism and the role of Africa and Africans in its development in the twentieth century, especially in nonstrategic areas of the Global South. In many ways, this detour through the international statecraft of the Ivorians and their American public relations experts contributes to the decentering of the history of capitalism. It might serve then, to use a formulation offered by Jessica Gienow-Hecht, as part of a broader project to “dethrone the United States as a principal agent in international history.”⁹

* * *

In November 1959, Félix Houphouët-Boigny led the French delegation to the United Nations General Assembly meeting. Ever since his political organization—the *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain*—decided to work with the French imperial state in the early 1950s, the Ivorian politician had emerged as an influential member of the Franco-African polity.¹⁰ In 1956, indeed, he was admitted as a member of the French cabinet of the Fourth Republic. He would subsequently assume various ministerial posts in successive French governments until the independence of Ivory Coast in 1960.¹¹ While this situation added to the charisma of the Ivorian statesman, Houphouët-Boigny’s collaboration with Paris deepened the chasm between him and the more radical members of his political movement, including Sékou Touré—the leader of the newly independent state of Guinea and one of his erstwhile lieutenants. In fact, the Guinean leader had followed the lead of his compatriots in a resounding No vote to the 1958 Franco-African referendum that Houphouët-Boigny supported. This rejection of Charles de Gaulle’s brainchild vision of Franco-African relations resulted not only in the independence of Guinea but also the expulsion of the country from both the Franco-African community and the transterritorial political movement over which Houphouët-Boigny presided.¹²

The ostracization of Touré and his country was a preview of things to come. Capitalizing on his presence on U.S. soil, Houphouët-Boigny went out

of his way to give a diplomatic punch to the Guinean statesman who, because his country was being isolated by France and its allies, had made overtures to socialist countries. Touré also used his presence in the United States for the United Nations gathering to rally support from the Americans.¹³ True to his reputation as the "traveling salesman of French colonialism," Houphouët-Boigny attempted to sabotage Guinean diplomacy toward Washington, insisting that the American decision makers should assist only their "true friends." In particular, the Ivorian statesman told President Dwight Eisenhower not to provide any help to those "African countries that have asked and obtained aid from the communists. We, your friends and who have already chosen to be by your side in the Western Bloc, we should be able to count on you."¹⁴

In many ways, Houphouët-Boigny's move during his sojourn in the United States prefigured his postcolonial politics in the global arena. In 1966, for instance, he would send an envoy to Washington and hire the services of columnist Drew Pearson to undermine a plan that anticipated an increase in U.S. aid to Guinea.¹⁵ The Ivorian statesman's mobilization of the Cold War fault lines to advance his own agenda is quite remarkable. Equally significant is the premium he placed on the United States as an ally to be courted in global politics. I have elaborated elsewhere on the importance of American ideals and ideas in providing a model of development that fired the imagination of many Ivorian modernizers.¹⁶ The paragraphs below provide an additional layer to the story of the place of Washington in Ivory Coast's bid for modernity. This is achieved not only through an approach that decenters the power of U.S.-based multinationals as the primary agents of this historical unfolding but also through a foregrounding of the economic diplomacy of the Ivorians as enablers of the transnationalization of American business and capitalism in their country.

What made this conjuncture possible was not only the strident anticommunism of the Ivorian government and its embrace of capitalist ideology. It was also the case that Ivory Coast had emerged as an economic miracle in West Africa—a feat that can be dated to the postwar productivity politics and the cash cropping revolution that took place in the country. When Ivory Coast was amalgamated to the group of French colonies in West Africa in 1893, there were few signs to the eyes of the first imperial bureaucrats that the territory would become a colony with a sound economic future: there was no reliable seaport, passable roads in the hinterland did not go beyond a few miles upcountry, and many of the people and polities of the coast were reputed to be inhospitable.¹⁷ Contemporaries were adamant that this

situation impeded the implementation of colonial exploitation and its associated trading economy. By the interwar period, however, the ingredients for an agricultural revolution of sorts were put into place—especially when the colonial authorities began to create the rudiments of an economic infrastructure geared toward the world capitalist economy, and both white colonists and African entrepreneurs took up commercial farming.¹⁸

Subsequently, agriculture and the businesses related to its operation would come to dominate the economy of the colony. Even more remarkable, these transformations magnified in the aftermath of the Second World War when the French Fonds d'Investissement pour le Développement Economique et Social began implementing its modernization of France's overseas territories, including huge infrastructural projects and the mobilization of agronomic research to improve crop productivity.¹⁹ Taking advantage of the assistance of crop scientists and the high prices for commodities such as coffee and cocoa, African planters consolidated their position as leading producers of cash crops and boosted Ivorian exports. Not only did they displace the white settler planters, but in the process the local agricultural entrepreneurs ultimately turned Ivory Coast into the El Dorado of French West Africa and the poster child of capitalist development on the continent.²⁰

Even as the French colonial authorities doubled down on investment in the colonies and began an ingenious propaganda push to sell French modernization efforts, some Africans were already envisioning the enlistment of American assistance in the drive for postwar modernity. Such was the case of Kouamé Binzème—a lawyer acting as the mouthpiece of the Syndicat des planteurs et éleveurs africains de la Côte d'Ivoire. In early September 1948, he wrote to American officials who managed the Marshall Plan for European postwar reconstruction, enclosing in his letter an action plan for the economic development of Ivory Coast.²¹ The keystone of Binzème's modernization vision was the implementation of what he called the "principle of *partnership (association)* between American *capital* and African *labor*."²² This certainly was a subtle critique of the French doctrine of colonial *mise en valeur*, which he implied was unfair to the colonial subjects. More significantly in Binzème's document was the belief that American capital was the crucial means of promoting "freedom, economic progress, and social betterment for the Africans."²³

The Ivorian lawyer and the people he represented were not the only party that was interested in American dollars. Anticipating the transformations that decolonization might bring, French companies operating in the colonies had

begun the internationalization of their capital. Moreover, in a context marked by the rise of U.S. financial power and incessant calls for more private investment in the French colonies, the postwar authorities in Abidjan too could not avoid appealing the American financiers.²⁴ Houphouët-Boigny continued this open-door policy vis-à-vis American capital and businesses, especially in the wake of the *Loi-cadre* (framework law) of 1956 that devolved much power to Africans for the management of domestic issues. It was at this juncture that overtures were made to various U.S. corporations, including the Plymouth Oil Company for drilling and the Development and Resources Corporation, which ultimately became involved in the planning of key modernization projects in postindependence Ivory Coast.²⁵

From this overview of the early years of the so-called economic miracle of Ivory Coast, it is clear that the United States exerted an appeal on the would-be architects of the Ivorian economy. The examples of Kouamé Binzème and Félix Houphouët-Boigny in the postwar period, regardless of the differing positions of these leaders in the Ivorian political spectrum, encapsulate this point quite vividly. What is more is that if the American charm was only nascent in the late colonial period, the end of formal French rule would allow it to grow in Ivory Coast. As we shall see, the causes for such growth have to deal not only with what was seen as the attractive modernity of the United States but also the actions of some activist decision makers in an effort to emancipate the economy of their country from its dependence on France.

* * *

Despite its remarkable development since the Second World War, the Ivorian economy was still dominated by French interests at the time of independence. And Houphouët-Boigny, as the first president of postcolonial Ivory Coast, knew this too well. In contradiction to the conclusions of the extant historiography on his early policies, which emphasize the continuities between late colonialism and early independence, he attempted to take action—especially since the overbearing presence of the French in his country was proving to be a liability. Although the structural features of the Ivorian economy limited the outcomes of his emancipatory moves, it is worth underlining them.

On August 19, 1960, for instance, the Ivorian statesman wrote to Washington through the American ambassador in Abidjan. His aim was to solicit U.S. aid and to ask the Americans to help his government build “with [the] greatest speed [the] economic power of [the Ivorian] state and thereby to

reinforce its political independence."²⁶ This was the first installment of the efforts of the postindependence authorities of Ivory Coast in their request for direct American involvement in the postcolonial development of their country. During the immediate aftermath of decolonization, the Ivorians took other actions, including entreaties to potential investors during the state visit that Houphouët-Boigny made to the United States in the spring of 1962.²⁷

Arguably, the most remarkable aspect of the Ivorian strategy to court U.S. economic support was the deployment of public relations techniques. Aware of the power of public relations in twentieth-century transnational statecraft, Ivorian diplomats posted in Washington hired a number of publicity and public relations agencies to lobby on behalf of Ivory Coast. This was the case of former *Time* magazine correspondent Anatole Visson, who served as an agent for the country in the United States from 1960 through the early 1980s. Other public relations agencies such as the Hamilton Wright Organization of New York were also used for specific promotional campaigns whose ultimate aim was to reach out to the American financial market. By the late 1970s, no fewer than four firms had offered their services to the West African country.²⁸

The lobbying activities of Ivorian diplomats were not lost on keen contemporary observers. As early as May 1962, journalists at the *Wall Street Journal* had highlighted that a number of foreign countries, including Ivory Coast, Liberia, and Nigeria, had "signed contracts with American public relations firms" to help them "cultivate the goodwill of Americans." According to the reporters, these deals were part of a transnational campaign to "sway Uncle Sam" in favor of newly independent states.²⁹ The Ivory Coast Development Office in New York, the Ivorian embassy in Washington, D.C., and especially Ambassador Henri K. Bédié played important roles in this effort. This is revealed in a memoir written by Bédié decades later, wherein he reported that he indeed first hired the Hamilton Wright group in late 1962 to lobby on behalf of his country and brand Ivory Coast for American investors.³⁰

The publicity agents at Hamilton Wright began their lobbying campaign promptly. In particular, they followed up on their promise to the Ivorian government that they would flood American and European newspapers with ad displays that sold Ivory Coast as a sound destination for U.S. investment capital. Examples abound. In early 1964, for instance, an advertisement featuring Ivory Coast (along with other African countries) appeared in the *New York Times*. Using the heads of state of eight countries as a visual anchor, the display claimed that the highlighted countries were "profitable opportunities for trade and investment in Africa."³¹ Another ad installment in the same

issue of the paper showcased Ivorian policy choices as a "Plan for Economic Growth . . . that Works."³² In early 1965, a new ad display was placed in the newspaper. Titled "Business Opportunities in the Ivory Coast Republic," this public relations piece was part of a series that characterized Houphouët-Boigny's country as "One of Africa's Soundest Economies."³³ In 1968, yet another ad display appeared. It unabashedly claimed that "as economic progress continues in the Ivory Coast, the government welcomes American private investments."³⁴ Perhaps the culmination of this public relations campaign of the first decade of independence was the "16-page color advertising supplement" in a mid-December 1969 issue of the *New York Times*. Although the actual supplement is yet to be located, a series of announcements gives a preview of what it might have been marketing to the public: Ivory Coast as "Africa's New Rivera," next to a drawing of a happy couple splashing in the ocean, and "Africa's Economic Miracle," next to a drawing of a tractor. Each touted the investment opportunities present in "West Africa's Most Prosperous Country."³⁵

There is little doubt that these advertisements were meant to brand Ivory Coast as an attractive destination for American investment. In each of the ads, the designers made sure to include a list of investment opportunities whether in the textile or palm oil industries (cf. the January 25, 1965, ad) or in the manufacturing of cocoa butter and powdered cocoa (cf. the January 26, 1968, ad). At a time when the eyes of the Ivorian government were on industrialization, some of the ads encouraged investment in the emerging industrial sector. In late January 1971, a series of installments was featured in the *New York Times*, including one that focused attention on the newly created Atlantic port of San Pedro and one that celebrated the Ivorian success at capitalist development.³⁶

However, Ivory Coast was not alone in this deployment of international public relations tools to advance its economic agenda. For instance, the Nigerian authorities resorted to this strategy in making their country visible. Consider two examples. In October 1960, just a day after the proclamation of independence from Britain, an ad display appeared in the *New York Times*. In November 1965, another installment was placed with the revealing title "NIGERIA: A Virile Republic; A Contributor to Progress."³⁷ Similarly, starting in January 1965, the Senegalese government began to showcase investment opportunities in Senegal to potential American investors.³⁸ Thus at stake is not so much that newly independent countries targeted the United States but how they sold themselves and with what outcomes. Addressing this

issue will allow us to see the distinctiveness of the Ivorian foray into public economic diplomacy.

* * *

Paying close attention to the texts of the various advertising pieces, it is clear that the Ivorian authorities behind the ads were looking for ways to diversify the base of their country's economy. Toward the last years of the formal colonial era, youth and radical activists had been denouncing the dominant position of the French interests in the Ivorian economy.³⁹ After independence, such a critique was echoed by an increasing number of observers. In mid-September 1960 a visiting delegation of American experts drew attention to this situation. U.S. diplomats posted in Abidjan appropriated their analysis, going as far as to suggest that reliance of France was the "basic weakness" of the otherwise sound economy of Ivory Coast. They were not alone. Even some bureaucrats and analysts in the employ of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs reached a similar conclusion in 1965, especially with regard to the industrial sector of the West African country.⁴⁰ Capping these critiques was the release of Samir Amin's *Le Développement du capitalisme en Côte d'Ivoire* in 1967 and the dissemination of its main argument in the columns of the well-circulated *Jeune Afrique* magazine.⁴¹ Even though the authorities in Ivory Coast attempted to provide a rebuttal to Amin's leftist take, they knew too well that diversification was a necessity for the future of the Ivorian economy.⁴²

The ad campaign has to be placed within this larger context—all the more so since the calls for weaning Ivory Coast's economic development from its reliance on French investment and assistance continued through the 1970s, notably among Ivorian academics who were becoming more and more vocal against Houphouët-Boigny's visions and Francophilia that they readily called neocolonialism.⁴³ The ad display of January 1971 underlined this intent of diversifying foreign investment: "The Ivorian economy is oriented toward foreign trade and international investments. Of course, France, the old colonial power, is still very much the principal economic and financial partner, but her relative importance is constantly diminishing in favor of other industrialized countries, mainly the United States, which is now the Ivory Coast's second biggest trading partner. American interests are represented in the major banks established in the Ivory Coast and in insurance companies."⁴⁴ Indeed, as early as 1964, Ivorian economic planners had made overtures to American businesses that resulted in U.S. entry into Ivory Coast's budding energy

sector. While this conjuncture led some French impresarios to accuse the Ivorian leader of distancing himself from France to become the “right-hand man of the Americans” (cf. “*l’homme des Américains*,”), the bid to appeal to the United States continued.⁴⁵ In 1965, Chase International Investment and Lazard Freres & Co. of New York pulled their support together to become the “principal sponsors of a new development finance company” that aimed to boost Ivorian industrialization.⁴⁶ By the late 1960s, “interest for Ivory Coast in certain American economic circles,” according to a French diplomat, had become quite “indisputable.” In fact, reported the French chargé d’affaires, roughly “a third of all visas granted by the Embassy of Ivory Coast in Washington were connected to business trips.”⁴⁷

The diversification of economic partners could also be conjugated with the policy of expanding the range of cash cropping products. Since the colonial period, the economy of the country had banked on coffee and cocoa. While these became the engine of the so-called Ivorian miracle, such reliance came with obvious limitations, including food shortages and vulnerability to commodity price volatility. Within the country itself, the planners of the postindependence economy promoted the cultivation of food crops such as rice, yam, cassava, and banana. To break the dominance of coffee and cocoa, the timber industry was further expanded.⁴⁸ The Ivorian authorities also sought foreign assistance in the development of new cash crops, including a variety of palm products and rubber. The ad campaign of the late 1960s was deployed for this cause, as exemplified in July 1967 and 1968, when two ad displays on behalf of SODEPALM—an Ivorian state company—were placed in the *Wall Street Journal*. The underwriters of the announcement invited interested parties to bid for land clearance in coastal Ivory Coast in view of the creation of coconut and oil palm plantations.⁴⁹

Another type of advertising that promoted the idea of diversification of the Ivorian economy was sponsored by third parties that had already become involved in the Ivorian bid for modernization. Placed in numerous periodicals in early October 1968, this form of endorsement reinforced the idea that the Ivorian economy was reliable. By associating the name Ivory Coast with established financial institutions, the ads invited, if obliquely, other companies to trust the country.⁵⁰ Given the complex nature of public relations and especially its reception, it is hard to gauge definitively the outcomes of Ivory Coast’s advertising campaign in the United States. What is certain is that the Ivorian authorities continued to appeal to American investors through the 1970s and even the early 1980s.⁵¹ And such sustained effort seems to have

borne some results. Although France was still a major player in Ivory Coast's economy, American economic and financial role had improved tremendously. This became clearer by the end of the decade. In 1977, for instance, Houphouët-Boigny's country had emerged as the United States' second trading partner in West Africa. More significantly, the country had become the first destination of U.S. direct private investment in Francophone West Africa.⁵² As it turned out, this development that facilitated Ivorian easy access to international capital markets had a price tag, especially since American investment in Ivory Coast came in the form of commercial loans that weighed on the country's worsening foreign debt crisis.⁵³

The transformation in the oil and gas sectors of Ivory Coast singularly put into relief some of the most insightful points regarding the Ivorian effort to court American investment, especially at the time when the country's economic growth was losing momentum. Not only had the successive oil shocks of the 1970s demonstrated the vulnerability of Ivory Coast to foreign oil, but the same global conjuncture also had forced American commercial banks to look for ways to recycle their surpluses of petrodollars.⁵⁴ It is quite telling that this was the very moment when U.S. private investment in Ivory Coast began to focus on the expansion of the Ivorian oil/petroleum sector. Although it is premature to point to a direct correlation, one cannot miss the coincidence of U.S. involvement in the nascent Ivorian oil exploitation industry paired with the latest advertisement campaign that Ivory Coast mounted in the late 1970s that specifically invited American money interests to invest in oil exploration and drilling in the country.⁵⁵

Consider the new advertising pieces that the Ivorian Ministry of Economy, Finance, and Planning placed in the *New York Times* in February 1978. With a short, catchy title, the main display announced, "Ivory Coast with Oil," calling attention to the discovery of oil deposits "large enough [. . .] to satisfy all the country's needs by 1980." Even more, the new resource would "help develop the country's industrial base, by enabling us to build a petrochemical industry, so important in achieving overall economic progress."⁵⁶ Adjoining this display was an inset that laid out clearly the advantages that investing in Ivory Coast offered, including the "large facilities for transferring capital from Ivory Coast, a very supple taxation, [and] exoneration of entry taxes on materials or raw materials used for production."⁵⁷ The use of ad displays that marketed the oil sector to potential American investors continued through the early 1980s. In 1983, as Houphouët-Boigny prepared for another state visit to the United States, a new series of ad displays were released. In addition

to New York City's celebrated daily paper, the *Washington Post* served as an outlet for one of these latest installments.⁵⁸

To ensure that the advertising of Ivorian oil resources was effective, authorities in Ivory Coast kept tight control over the dissemination of information. Although a consortium of companies led by Exxon affiliate ESSO Côte d'Ivoire had discovered offshore oil deposits as early as 1974, the government did not publicize it immediately. Rather, it opted for "holding off on official announcement," presumably until there was confirmation that the find was commercially viable. That confirmation came in 1977, even though the exact size of the deposit remained in dispute.⁵⁹ In an attempt to spin matters and "probably to sustain investor and lender confidence in the Ivory Coast," Paul Gui Dibo (Ivorian minister of mines) and Adama Toungara (director general of the Ivorian national oil company) reportedly made "insistent demands on the exploration companies to make the most optimistic statements possible."⁶⁰ The oil companies seem to have heeded the demand—at least, with regard to the release and the strategic management of the information *within* Ivory Coast.⁶¹

In the United States, the initial media coverage of the Ivorian oil find was anything but effusive. Yet the Ivorian information campaign appeared to have piqued the interest of some potential investors. Indeed, not only did a number of American firms begin to enquire about the Ivorian oil sector, but some of them, including Chem-Oil Industries Limited, even sent representatives to visit the Ivory Coast.⁶² Moreover, in the early 1980s, another consortium led by the American company Phillips made a discovery of an even larger deposit of oil and gas off the Ivorian shores.⁶³ Thus, by the time production came on line and Ivory Coast began dreaming of becoming an oil exporter, it was clear that U.S. firms were playing a key role in the country's oil and petrochemical industries.⁶⁴

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Admittedly, there is nothing unusual about advertising in the operation of capitalism. Media scholars have long recognized this fact, leading some to dub advertising "an entrenched institution bent on keeping the wheels of capitalism rolling."⁶⁵ What is intriguing, however, in the current analysis is the deployment of this marketing tool by a postcolonial country from the Global South to advance its own agenda in the Global North. In fact, while global communication scholars have usually been interested in mapping the transnational media flow, it is almost without exception in the other direction. As

this contribution has demonstrated, Ivorian economic planners were active in appealing to American capital investment through their mobilization of mass marketing techniques. While the United States is still important in this story of the mediated operation of capitalism, it is also clear that a focus on the agency of the Ivorians succeeds in decentering the narrative away from American historical actors. This is much in line with the insight of historian Stefan Schwarzkopf, who has cautioned us not to assume that the rise of the "American century" necessarily led to an Americanization of the world through the expansion of U.S. mass marketing ploys.⁶⁶

To be sure, the emergence of the United States as a global power opened new opportunities for many businesses in the world at large. But the reverse was also true. In an era marked by the maturation of capitalism, the United States itself was not immune to the redeployment of advertising from abroad to sell foreign goods or to simply brand countries as a safe and attractive destination for American capital. The case of deploying Ivorian advertisement campaigns in the United States to tap American investment capital is but one example in this fluidity of media flows that facilitated the growth of twentieth-century capitalism.