



Minor conflict, major consequences?

Facing an unresolved identity crisis in Côte d'Ivoire

CAMILLA ELOWSON



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Sammanfattning

Denna rapport analyserar konfliktsituationen i Elfenbenskusten, i syfte att belysa möjlig negativ säkerhetsutveckling. Rapporten, som är skriven inom ramen för Afrikaprojektet vid FOI, diskuterar relevant dynamik och viktiga aktörer, liksom risken för ytterligare instabilitet i landet. Utgångspunkten är den utveckling som riskerar ske i Elfenbenskusten, men i fokus för rapporten står också att analysera den betydelsefulla regionala kontexten, vilket inkluderar de bräckliga Manu River-länderna. En ytterligare ambition är att utreda det internationella samfundets roll i Elfenbenskusten. Detta görs genom att studera tidigare och nuvarande internationell inblandning, liksom genom att beakta möjligt framtida engagemang och åtgärder som kan företas av internationella aktörer för att bemöta konflikten i landet.

Rapporten drar slutsatsen att hanteringen av den nuvarande valrelaterade krisen genom att endast reglera tvisten om presidentposten är en otillräcklig lösning. Så länge man inte tar itu med underliggande konfliktorsaken - frågan om vem som har rätt till ivoriansk identitet - på nationell och lokal nivå, kommer krisen i Elfenbenskusten att ständigt återkomma. Troliga konsekvenser är fortsatt repression, brott mot mänskliga rättigheter, dödsoffer, och ökad polarisering mellan ivorianska identitetsgrupperingar. En utdragen kris i Elfenbenskusten riskerar även att på nytt destabilisera regionen, och dra in den utsatta befolkningen som lever i gränsområdena i konflikten. För det internationella samfundet är det avgörande att agera samstämmigt och att se till att engagemanget blir varaktigt. Åtgärder för att snabbt skydda den civila befolkningen bör vara en prioritet för internationella aktörer.

Nyckelord: Afrika, Afrikastudier, Västafrika, Elfenbenskusten, ivoriansk identitet, xenofobi, landrättigheter, utsatt befolkning, valrelaterad kris, politiskt våld, säkerhetsutveckling, regional instabilitet, icke-regeringskontrollerade områden, drog- och vapenhandel, internationella samfundet, skydd av civila

Summary

This report analyses the conflict situation in Côte d'Ivoire, with a view to highlight potential insecurity developments. The report, commissioned by the Swedish Ministry of Defence, provides an understanding of key dynamics and stakeholders, as well as of the risk for further escalation of the instability in the country. The point of departure are the developments which could arise in Côte d'Ivoire, but the centre of interest is also to analyse the important regional context, which involves the vulnerable Mano River countries. Another ambition of the report is to examine the role of the international community in Côte d'Ivoire. This is done through a review of previous and present international involvement, as well as of considering possible future commitment and measures to be taken by international stakeholders to address the conflict situation.

The report concludes that handling the current election crisis only by regulating the contested presidential post is a solution on the surface. As long as the root causes of the conflict - the issue of who is entitled Ivorian identity - is not thoroughly addressed at national and local level, the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire will resurge. Consequences are likely to be seen in terms of continued repression, human rights violations, fatalities, and increased polarisation between Ivorian identity groups. A maintained Ivorian crisis also risks setting the region on fire, with its high number of exposed populations being drawn into the conflict. For the international community, it is key to act in concurrence and to ensure that interventions are sustained. Taking measures to rapidly protect civilians should be a priority for international stakeholders.

Keywords: Africa, West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, Ivorian identity, xenophobia, land, vulnerable populations, elections crisis, political violence, security developments, regional instability, non-government controlled areas, drugs and arms trafficking, international community, protection of civilians

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hundreds of fatalities, gross human rights violations and a refugee crisis are so far the result of the conflict over run-off presidential elections in Côte d'Ivoire, which began to escalate in December 2010. The adversaries – outgoing President *Laurent Gbagbo*, and the internationally supported candidate *Alassane Ouattara* – both claim to have won the presidential post. Both maintain an uncompromising stance, which has resulted in a worsened security climate that threatens to throw the country into sustained violent conflict. The political parties' youth leagues, militias, Gbagbo's security forces and the Ouattara associated ex-rebellion, *Forces Nouvelles*, are likely vehicles of aggression. Popular protests, state repression, and identity based tensions between local populations have already degenerated into violence. Further political instability in the form of a coup d'état or renewed armed conflict is a potential security development. Especially worrying is the fragile regional security context, as the Ivorian crisis is interconnected with the post-conflict situations and instability in neighbouring Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone. Vulnerable populations in these countries risk being drawn into the conflict and mobilised into engaging in armed struggle. Frustrations run high among the region's huge numbers of exposed youth. The Ivorian crisis has triggered acute feelings of hopelessness, and many are forced to resort to criminal activity to provide for themselves. Disturbingly, this criminality involves drugs and arms trafficking, which destabilises the whole region and further erodes government authority.

UNOCI, the UN peacekeeping mission in Côte d'Ivoire, is encountering significant challenges in its efforts to control the hostilities. The mission is lacking in troops and the slow pace of UN bureaucracy makes the UNOCI likely to continue to be unable to fulfil its mandate in the near future. A critical issue is the insufficient protection of civilians; an important part of UNOCI's responsibility where the peacekeeping mission has fallen short. The international community has so far acted in unity against Gbagbo; it is crucial that sustained and concerted action will not wane with time. France is a central, yet controversial stakeholder. Concerning ECOWAS and the AU, regional politics and weak capacity prevent these organisations from achieving rapid results. The current crisis in Côte d'Ivoire appears acute, but is not unexpected given the long-time failure in addressing the issues of Ivorian identity and nationality, which underlie the current conflict. A new president and free and fair elections are superficial answers to the Ivorian crisis. Long-lasting solutions to ensure stability in Côte d'Ivoire entail tackling the underlying causes of the conflict. Local level initiatives, in particular reconciliation efforts, are needed inevitably. It is crucial at this point in time to prevent atrocities from taking place, as these will deepen the divisions between the Ivorians and worsen the odds for future peace. This implies that protection of civilians should be a priority for

international stakeholders. Rapid efforts to manage this central task are critical for peace in Côte d'Ivoire and the region.

Côte d'Ivoire: key facts and developments

- The total population amounts to approximately 16 million people. Infected relations between different ethnic, religious and regional groups.
- 60 ethnic groups live in Ivorian territory, generally they are divided into four principal ethnicities: Akan, app. 42% (East and Center), Krou, app. 13% (Southwest), Mandé, app. 27% (West/Northwest), and Senufo, app. 18% (North, Center and East).
- Approximately 30% are Christian, 40% Muslim, and 12% practice indigenous religions (the remainder: no religion). Most Christians live in the South, while most Muslims and people with indigenous faiths live in the North.
- About four million foreigners live and work in Côte d'Ivoire (1998 census). 56% of these are from Burkina Faso and about 20% are from Mali. Around half of this 'foreign' population was born in Côte d'Ivoire. The ethnocultural and religious background of most foreigners in Côte d'Ivoire is very similar to that of the northern ethnic groups.
- Independence obtained in 1960, close links with colonial power France maintained. French-Ivorian relations broke down in early/mid 2000s, largely as a consequence of France being seen as partial in the Ivorian conflict.
- Instability, political rivalry and xenophobia accelerated in the 1990s, in conjunction with the death of independence leader Houphouët-Boigny and outbreak of economic crisis.
- The right to claim Ivorian identity is a key issue of conflict. Hostile discourse towards a part of the population viewed as 'foreigners' – mainly Muslims originating from northern Côte d'Ivoire, many of whom are second or third generation immigrants.
- Laurent Gbagbo (a southern Christian Krou) in power for over 10 years, following contested elections in 2000.
- Civil war broke out in 2002. Since then, the country has been divided into a northern part, controlled by rebel group Forces Nouvelles, and into a southern part, controlled by Gbagbo loyalists.
- Renewed crisis after failed presidential elections in late 2010. The UN fears crimes against humanity, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and genocide.
- Due to insufficient capabilities and local hostility, the UN is unable to fulfil its mandate, implying inadequate protection of civilians, among other things.
- Regional politics and weak capacity prevent rapid results from being achieved by ECOWAS and the AU.
- Links between the Ivorian conflict and instability in neighbouring countries exist; risks setting the region on fire.



1 Introduction

The presidential elections in Côte d'Ivoire in late 2010 have led to a critical security situation. A drawn-out political crisis over the run-off election has resulted in violent clashes, raising fears of a return to civil war. Political instability and periods of low-scale armed conflict have prevailed in Côte d'Ivoire since the death of long-time President Félix Houphouët-Boigny in 1993. The civil war that broke out in 2002 resulted in a status quo situation, leaving the country in an indefinite period of no war/no peace. Since then, Côte d'Ivoire has been divided into a northern part, occupied by the rebellion Forces Nouvelles, and a southern part, controlled by the government and President Laurent Gbagbo. As part of the continuing peace process, there have been attempts to organise presidential elections. These could finally be carried out in 2010, but instead they brought about a renewed crisis.

1.1 Background

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire deteriorated on 2 December 2010, when the then-incumbent President Gbagbo refused to accept the Independent Electoral Commission's (IEC) declaration that rival candidate Alassane Ouattara was the winner of the run-off presidential election, with 54 % of eligible votes. On 3 December, the Constitutional Council overruled the IEC, declaring Gbagbo winner. This prompted both candidates to hold separate inauguration ceremonies and to name their respective cabinets. Gbagbo remains in control of the state institutions while Ouattara is confined to the Golf Hotel in Abidjan, effectively prevented from exercising any powers. The international community has been unequivocal in their support for Ouattara, and made efforts to encourage Gbagbo to leave power, but these endeavours have been in vain so far.

Violence erupted in mid-December 2010 when demonstrators supportive to Ouattara were fired upon by security forces backing Gbagbo. Since then, more than 290 people have been killed¹ in ensuing clashes between rival political supporters, in inter-communal violence, and in raids on opposition headquarters and on Ouattara affiliated neighbourhoods. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has spoken of massive human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, rapes, disappearances and illegal detentions. The UN has been blocked from investigating two alleged mass graves sites.

A refugee crisis has arisen following the political conflict. The UNHCR said by early March 2011 that 75 000 people have fled to neighbouring countries, many to Liberia (Nimba County), while the number of internally displaced Ivorians in

¹ By mid-February 2011 (UNOCI website).

western Côte d'Ivoire amounted to 70 000 people. These populations need food, clean water, immediate medical aid, shelter and protection. In addition, 200 000 – 300 000 people are displaced in Abidjan, out of which around a quarter need urgent humanitarian assistance.²

The current crisis in Côte d'Ivoire appears to many as acute. Yet, the resurgence of hostilities is far from unexpected, as the conflict arises from more than 15 years of failure to deal with the key issues of Ivorian identity and nationality. In the last few years, observers have stated that the fighting between the rebels - Forces Nouvelles - and the government of Côte d'Ivoire is over. However, the social and political crisis that caused the conflict is not. On the surface, there has been a relative calm in Côte d'Ivoire, but the situation has remained tense and there are real dangers in the country. Unless enduring conflict management and peace-building is undertaken, armed violence will undoubtedly repeat over and over again. In the case of Côte d'Ivoire, these chronic conflict dynamics bear with them the risk to finally erupt on a larger scale, destabilising the already vulnerable region.

A number of factors warrant a closer look at the developments in Côte d'Ivoire at this point in time. Firstly, the key stakeholders' refusal to compromise threatens to further escalate an already tenuous security situation. Developments in the last years, with a peace process that has suffered constant blockages, have laid the groundwork for the current situation.³ Gbagbo has had no constitutional basis for his position as Head of State since 2005, and elections in the country have been postponed on six occasions. With the 2010 elections, Gbagbo now appears to begin a second "given" mandate, and the country will embark on a sixth year of unconstitutional rule. This will make Gbagbo's opponents protest even louder. A peace deal in 2007, the Ouagadougou Political Accord (OPA), raised hopes for a way out of the crisis at a crucial moment, as patience with the lack of progress was coming to an end. However, the calm and optimism brought by the OPA have been replaced with new disappointments regarding the inability of the stakeholders to move the peace process forward, with the consequence that impatience is once again reaching a dangerous level. This has given rise to a tense climate and heightened security concerns in Côte d'Ivoire. As a result, the compromising climate that the OPA initiated is ruined.⁴ The tensions around the electoral process and Ivorian nationality issues which have resurfaced in the last few years, combined with the elite players' decreasing manoeuvring space, raise questions about how far these stakeholders are willing to go to make sure that political developments follow their interest. Elections in the Ivorian context

² UNHCR website

³ Elowson (forthcoming) FOI report on the Ouagadougou Political Accord.

⁴ Interview: International representative 3. International Crisis Group (5 May 2010).

means that everything is at stake, as the winner takes all and the losers are entirely excluded from access to the wealth that state power ensures.⁵

Another key aspect is the urgent need to stem the renewed hostilities. The UN has called attention to the ongoing crimes against humanity, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and the possibility of a coming genocide. To put an end to these atrocities is important in itself, but also crucial for the future – if violence between different identity groups is allowed to take place now, it will be considerably more difficult to get the country back on its feet in the coming years. Unfortunately, the UN has faced strong challenges in fulfilling its mandate, including protecting civilians from physical violence. Meanwhile, rapid results in stopping these developments are not likely to be forthcoming from ECOWAS or from the AU.

The regional dimension also merits a study of the Ivorian security developments. Côte d'Ivoire is generally perceived as a status quo type of conflict, which has only involved a limited amount of armed violence. However, the Ivorian situation is intimately linked with the conflict past and ongoing tensions in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. A deteriorating situation in Côte d'Ivoire will have repercussions in the wider region. Only this time, the conflicts could quickly escalate into an even more serious level, considering the number of fighters and weapons that are already present there. In addition, a renewed Ivorian conflict will further erode government authority in the northern part of the country, and accelerate the disturbing development of the region as a stronghold for drugs and arms trafficking. These conditions would make it easier for criminal networks to establish themselves; there are also concerns that this situation incites organisations such as Al-Qaida in Maghreb (AQIM) to move south from the Sahel region. If this trend is allowed to continue, it will soon be too late and too difficult to reverse these non-government controlled areas into functioning, peaceful societies. Another dimension of the regional security issue is Côte d'Ivoire's status as a regional economic engine. A deterioration of the situation in Côte d'Ivoire would therefore inevitably have negative consequences for the regional stability. Lastly, the Ivorian state of affairs is also important to study in order to trace the potential consequences of unconstitutional maintenance of power. The ECOWAS region only has a few countries that can be classified as democratic and the region is sensitive to constitutional issues. Gbagbo's strategy of unconstitutional maintenance of power is serving as a bad example, which could inspire other leaders in the region to stay in power through unconstitutional means. In this way, the view that elections do not need to be respected in Africa risks being nurtured. Impunity for the powerful is established, with no real consequences for leaders manipulating peace agreements and

⁵ International Crisis Group (5 May 2010)

constitutions for their own gain. The developments in Côte d'Ivoire thereby increase the risk of further instability to spread.

1.2 The aim of the report

The aim of this report is to analyse the conflict situation in Côte d'Ivoire, with a view to highlight potential insecurity developments. More specifically, the focus of the report is to provide an understanding of key dynamics and stakeholders, as well as of the risk for further escalation of the instability in the country. The points of departure are the developments which could arise in Côte d'Ivoire, but another centre of interest is the analysis of the important regional context, which involves several neighbouring countries. Another ambition of this report is to examine the role of the international community in Côte d'Ivoire. This will be done in terms of recounting previous and present international involvement, as well as of considering possible future commitment and measures to be taken by international stakeholders to address the conflict situation in Côte d'Ivoire.

It should be emphasised that the instability discussed in this report constitute potential negative developments. These are to be viewed from the perspective of worst-case scenarios, rather than as complete assessments of the actual threat against the Ivorian internal security. The circumstances that speak against negative developments are taken into account throughout the analysis; however, they are not elaborated upon in full in this report. Thus, the aim of the study is not provide a balanced estimate of Côte d'Ivoire's future security, but to draw the reader's attention to some possible – but real – security risks.

1.3 Method

In order to respond to the queries above, this study takes as its departure two main research questions: 1) In what way do the political developments and the concerns in Côte d'Ivoire today constitute risk factors for the country's future stability? 2) How could potential instability be played out in Côte d'Ivoire?

As concerns the first question, the selection of relevant study areas for analysis is based upon the factors behind the emergence of the Ivorian conflict. Examining the conflict background is necessary to understand the key conflict issues and the relationship between the principal stakeholders today. Departing from this criterion, pertinent literature was reviewed and discussions were held with stakeholders in Côte d'Ivoire, as well as Guinea and Senegal, in order to identify some accentuated risks. These range from firm incentives among political stakeholders to pursue their self-interest, the prevalence of uncontrollable armed units and the possibility for fighters to engage in armed violence, as well as increasing volatility and tensions at the community level.

When it comes to the second research question, the decision was made to interpret ‘instability’ as ‘sizeable mobilised groups of people resorting to violent means in order to express a standpoint’. Having established this point of departure, a review of published sources and interviews was carried out. A number of topics emerged, among which potential insecurity developments were identified. These included various forms of violent protests, tensions between different identity groups, armed violence by the armed elements in Côte d’Ivoire, and destabilisation of the wider region.

The third element in the report considers the main international stakeholders active in the region, among these the AU, the ECOWAS, the UN, the EU and France.

Regarding the time period of relevance for this report, the centre of attention is the impending future, with a start-out point being the events following the December 2010 run-off elections and the current developments. An important focus is, however, the previous decades as well, as this report seeks to increase understanding of what paved the way to the situation today, and to raise awareness of the issues that will determine the continued security developments in the country. The first chapter of the report goes back to the 1990s, a time during which the conflict issues took shape, and the early 2000s when events in Côte d’Ivoire started to take on a more violent dimension. This decade is examined more closely in order to provide a picture of the peace negotiations, especially the signing of the Ouagadougou Political Accord (OPA) in 2007.

1.4 Outline

The report contains five principal sections. A first ambition is to provide a background to the Ivorian crisis. This includes giving an account of conflict issues, dynamics and key stakeholders, as well as recounting the significance of the latest political events, the military context and the socio-economic situation in Côte d’Ivoire (*chapter 2*). Following this, a number of accentuated risk factors are identified and examined (*chapter 3*). The report proceeds with discussing some implications of these risk factors and the current conflict context for future Ivorian internal stability. This includes highlighting potential developments as concerns instability in the country (*chapter 4*). Next, security concerns in the region are outlined, including the population living in the border areas which is vulnerable to being mobilised into escalating the conflict.⁶ Consequences, in terms of regional armed conflict and the expansion of non-government controlled areas are elaborated upon. This chapter is co-authored with Eldridge Adolfo (*chapter 5*). Following that, the current role of the international community in managing the Ivorian crisis, as well as opportunities ahead for international

⁶ Chapter 5, the Regional context, is co-authored with Eldridge Adolfo.

involvement, will be examined (*chapter 6*). The report concludes with some reflections on the issues raised throughout the report. These conclusions contain a few recommendations to be considered ahead of the ongoing escalation, as well as ahead of worst-case scenarios that could be developing in the future (*chapter 7*).

1.5 Material and delimitations

Delimitations have had to be made throughout the study. To start with, concepts such as ‘instability’ or ‘security’ cannot be easily boiled down. Even political insecurity, or political instability, is not easily defined. In this report, there have been no attempts to strictly define these terms. The focus in the report is on social and political unrest that carries with it elements of violence.⁷ Following an interpretation of instability as “sizeable mobilised groups of people resorting to violent means in order to express a standpoint”, important elements of Côte d’Ivoire’s stability are likely to have been omitted. For instance, various types of criminal offences can be argued to be rooted in political frustrations. The chapter which considers the regional dimension, touches upon this kind of instability, for instance the growth of organised crime and drug trafficking. The key ambition in this report is, however, to consider violence where traces of political mobilisation and social unrest are noted.

The material upon which the study is based consists in part of written material published by think tanks, news sources and academic analyses. However, first-hand observations and interviews with stakeholders in Côte d’Ivoire (and to some extent Senegal and Guinea) constitute the primary material used for the study. These stakeholders include non-governmental organisations and think tanks, academia, political parties and representatives from the Forces Nouvelles, Ivorian journalists, as well as international representatives and international organisations. A total of 21 interviews were conducted, primarily during April 2010. The organisation/institution/party interviewed does not appear in the specific reference, but the terms ‘national’ and ‘international representative’ are used throughout the report. This anonymity was assured in order for the interviewees to share the information more freely. A list providing details on the stakeholders interviewed can be found in the reference list, however.

⁷ The distinction between social and political aspects of unrest can be hard to make.

2 Current situation

2.1 Conflict background

This chapter will recount the conflict background, and examine pertinent issues that have created the foundation for the Ivorian crises. A situational overview follows, in terms of an analysis of the national stakeholders and the military context, the socio-economic situation as well as the political setting and developments. In addition, a look at the peace process as it stood before the current crisis broke out can be found in annex A.

2.1.1 Democratic transition and the birth of Ivoirité

Côte d'Ivoire, a very resource rich country in the region, gained independence from France in 1960. President Félix Houphouët-Boigny maintained, however, solid relations with France. For the first 20 years of Houphouët-Boigny's reign, Côte d'Ivoire's economy flourished, largely due to the fact that the investment climate was made favourable for French business interests. The autocratic Houphouët-Boigny ruled the country with a firm hand, with little tolerance for opposing views, leading to a difficult situation for political dissidents.

Stability came to an end in the 1990s, a turbulent decade in Côte d'Ivoire which saw economic recession, along social and political tensions which surfaced with the new climate of democratisation. These developments coincided with the death of the uniting figure Houphouët-Boigny in 1993. Key figures attempting to fill the political vacuum included Laurent Gbagbo, who had been imprisoned and forced into exile for his efforts to provide a political alternative, and who was seen as an advocate of multiparty democracy during the early 1990s. Another prominent political personage was Alassane Ouattara, a former prime minister with experience in international financial institutions. Ouattara was seen as capable, but as a partisan for the North and - later on - perceived by many as starting the war.

After 33 years of uncontested rule under Houphouët-Boigny, Ivorians had to face transition in a tense environment. A poisoned debate on who had the right to claim him/herself to be Ivorian emerged, with tensions revolving specifically around issues of voting rights and land ownership. A political climate developed in which leading Ivorian figures were employing an increasingly hostile discourse towards a part of the population viewed as foreigners – mainly Muslims originating from northern Côte d'Ivoire, many of whom were second or third generation immigrants. Roughly 25 % of the inhabitants are regarded as foreigners, many of Burkinabe and Malian origin; around half of these people

were born in Côte d'Ivoire.⁸ Even if they often have resided in Côte d'Ivoire for several generations, this part of the population does not have their nationality regulated.⁹ Apart from divisions between 'foreigners' and 'Ivorians', there are also ethnic, religious and regional cleavages in the country¹⁰.

A protracted power struggle ensued, with ambitious political leaders aiming to control state power, and thereby to gain a hold over resources and wealth. In order to obtain their aims, the new Ivorian leaders increasingly manipulated the population by exploiting differences in identity with an increasing xenophobic rhetoric. Divisions in terms of religion and region (Muslim Northerners vs. Christian Southerners)¹¹, and ethnicity played out in the political debate. The infamous policy of 'Ivoirité'¹² was incorporated into the electoral code in 1994¹³, and was adopted specifically to disqualify the northerners' candidate Ouattara from running for president on the grounds that he was not Ivorian enough to occupy that office. Given the fact that the Ivorian electoral politics departs from a 'winner takes all' system, the new leading politicians relied on ethnic rhetoric, ethnic politicisation and exclusionary politics for political mobilisation to ensure electoral victories. This was especially true for Henri Bedié, who succeeded Houphouët-Boigny and who won a widely boycotted presidential election in 1995. Bedié, who was from the same party as well as ethnic group as Houphouët-Boigny, enjoyed support mainly among Ivorians in the central part of the country¹⁴.¹⁵

⁸ Akindès (2004), p.11. Stewart (2008), p.165.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ The total population amounts to approximately 16 million people. 60 ethnic groups live on the Ivorian territory. They are generally divided into four principal groups: Akan, app. 42% (East and Center), Krou, app. 13% (Southwest), Mande, app.27% (West and Northwest), and Senufo, app.18% (North, Center and East). Approximately 30% are Christian, 40% Muslim, and 12% indigenous (the remainder: no religion). Most Christians live in the south, while most Muslims and people with indigenous faiths live in the north. According to a census in 1998, approximately four million foreigners live and work in Côte d'Ivoire. 56% of these are from Burkina Faso and about 20% are from Mali. The ethnocultural and religious background of most foreigners in Côte d'Ivoire is very similar to that of the northern ethnic groups (Akindès (2004), p.11, p.14. Stewart (2008), p.165).

¹¹ In reality, the identity affiliations are far more complex than this schematic picture.

¹² The concept of Ivoirité was taken on by Henri Bedié in 1993. It became part of a nationalist and xenophobic discourse on what constitutes a 'real Ivorian', leading the northern, often Muslim, inhabitants with a sense of exclusion and opposing them to southern Ivorians. Ivoirité is often seen as manifested in the electoral code from 1994, which stipulates that the president-elect must be born of Ivorian parents and must have resided in Côte d'Ivoire for five years prior to the election. Another example is a law regarding land ownership, which in 1998 limited the rights to own land only to Ivorians; this law is often also claimed to be an expression of Ivoirité.

¹³ The electoral code stipulates that the president-elect must be born of Ivorian parents and must have resided in Côte d'Ivoire for five years prior to the election.

¹⁴ Houphouët-Boigny and Bedié belong(ed) to the Parti Democratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) and the Akan ethnic group.

¹⁵ Ayangafac (2007), p.26. Antonini (2009), p.75. Interview: National representative 9.

2.1.2 Military coup and armed conflict

The ongoing power struggle fed political instability, and culminated in a coup in December 1999, in which President Bedié was overthrown by General Guéi. Guéi claimed he would not maintain a military dictatorship but promised to return the country to democratic and civilian rule; he allowed for new elections to take place in September 2000. Meanwhile, Laurent Gbagbo, leader of Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI), which has a support base mainly in the South-West, saw his window of opportunity and took steps to reaffirm himself on the political stage. Conspiring with Guéi, he managed to invalidate the eligibility of the other key presidential candidates – Henri Bedié for Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) and Alassane Ouattara for Rassemblement des Républicains (RDR). Guéi himself had decided to run as a candidate, but during these 10 months, he had become unpopular as a sitting president. The elections, pitting Gbagbo against Guéi, took place in a climate of tension. Before the counting of the votes had finished, both candidates had declared themselves winners. Massive revolts on the streets, urged by Gbagbo, led to violent confrontations between Guéi's military (supported largely by Ouattara's but also by Bedié's followers) - and Gbagbo's supporters, backed by a part of the security forces. In the end, Guéi was forced to accept defeat and Gbagbo could declare himself winner.¹⁶

Gbagbo was instituted as the new president in October 2000, but Ouattara's supporters called for new elections; a request which Gbagbo ignored. Accordingly, the tensions remained unresolved, disorder prevailed, and "the Northerners" continued to argue that they were being discriminated against. Their objections specifically concerned 'the policy of Ivoirité'; the prohibition of Ouattara to stand for presidency, on the basis – a pretext – that he was not Ivorian. There was an increasing frustration with the difficulties in being granted national ID cards among "the Northerners", who felt that they had been denied their citizenship and right to political participation. A law adopted in 1998 had changed Houphouët-Boigny's practice of letting the land belong to those who cultivate it, and instead gave property rights only to people with Ivorian citizenship. Gbagbo exacerbated tensions at the community level by stating that foreigners should give back their lands to Ivorians.¹⁷ Resolving Ivorian identity issues was not Gbagbo's priority when he came to power, and the practice of Ivoirité and the politicisation of ethnicity continued. The militaries involved in the coup in 1999, along with others frustrated with the 'Ivoirité' and with Gbagbo's takeover, went to the north and into Burkina Faso to prepare further resistance. Gbagbo, for his part, adopted a confrontational and hard-line stance

¹⁶ Ayangafac (2007), p.26. Antonini (2009), p.75. Interviews: National representative 9, International representative 3, National representative 6.

¹⁷ Interview: National representative 7.

towards any opponents, at some stages also displaying readiness to eliminate his rivals^{18, 19}.

On 19 September 2002, a failed coup against Gbagbo developed into a rebellion. Simultaneous attacks were launched on different cities, by insurgents rallying under the Mouvement Patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire (MPCI), led by Guillaume Soro. Gbagbo's response transformed the coup into a civil war, and even though the battles did not last very long, the country has since been de facto divided in two – one northern and one southern part – as the rebels have kept control of roughly half the territory.²⁰ From September 2002 to January 2003, the civil war was marked by “confrontations between governmental forces and rebels, the capturing of towns followed by massacres of civilians suspected of supporting one camp or the other, the execution of gendarmes and their families, aerial attacks by helicopters in the West, targeted kidnappings and assassinations, and large-scale sexual violence”²¹. MPCI was later joined in the conflict by two other rebel groups, the Mouvement pour la Justice et la Paix (MJP) and the Mouvement Populaire Ivoirien du Grand Ouest (MPIGO). The three factions later formed the Forces Nouvelles (FN). The MJP and MPIGO had ties to Charles Taylor, and were composed in significant part by veterans of Liberian and Sierra Leonean rebel groups. The rebel forces also had combatants from Mali and Burkina Faso, with the latter country being widely regarded as having provided support for the rebels. Meanwhile, ‘patriotic’ groups and militias emerged and aligned to defend the president, as well as to counter the rebellion and the political opposition. Mercenaries from Liberia and Sierra Leone were also recruited by these militias and by the governmental forces.²²

2.1.3 Peace negotiations and international involvement

During 2003, hostilities became less intense, and direct fighting between the parties has ceased since 2004. Côte d'Ivoire has remained in a situation of ‘no war, no peace’, however; or rather, in a state of armed peace. A cease-fire line was established in October 2002 by the Lomé cease-fire agreement, which was ensured through the intervention of ECOWAS. This cease-fire line effectively divided the country in two. Parallel administrations have since developed in the two territories, which are defended and maintained by their own armed structures. The Lomé cease-fire agreement was broken on several occasions, however, the presence of a French military force in Côte d'Ivoire at the outbreak

¹⁸ On 19 September, Guëi was killed by military close to Gbagbo, while Bedié and Ouattara escaped threats to their lives (Interview: International representative 3)

¹⁹ Interviews: National representative 1, International representative 3, National representative 9, International representative 1

²⁰ Antonini (2009), p.76

²¹ Ibid

²² Antonini (2009), p.76. Holt et al, p.292. Ayangafac (2007), p.26

of the conflict prevented the security situation from deteriorating further.²³ The French troops, known as Operation Licorne, later supported the monitoring of the cease-fire line (the zone of confidence) together with an ECOWAS peacekeeping force, which was deployed in early 2003. A UN mission, MINUCI, was established in May 2003, and replaced by United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), a full UN peacekeeping operation, in April 2004. The ECOWAS troops were subsumed under UN flag as part of UNOCI. Licorne²⁴ is still present, even if with significantly reduced numbers.²⁵

Parallel to the de-escalation of the fighting and the establishment of international peacekeeping missions, peace negotiations were initiated. In addition to the cease-fire in October 2002, five comprehensive peace agreements have been signed; in 2003, 2004 (two agreements), 2005 and 2007. To reach these agreements, there has been direct third party involvement by Ghana, ECOWAS, the UN, the AU, France, South Africa and Burkina Faso; additional support has also been lent by various African states. The peace agreements stipulated an identification process for the population which would clarify the status (and rights) of the 'foreigners' and provide nationality documents. New elections were also to be organised. Despite these efforts, the peace process has suffered constant setbacks. Implementation has not been forthcoming and sporadic violence has continued. Tensions heightened in 2004 when the government used armed violence during a demonstration by the opposition parties, possibly resulting in 150 deaths. Later in the year, the president ordered 'Operation Dignity' in an (unsuccessful) effort to take out the Forces Nouvelles and to take back the North by armed force.²⁶

As the implementation of the peace agreements did not move forward and as the use of violent means resurged, the UN applied more pressure in 2004. A sanctions regime against Côte d'Ivoire was established. The sanctions, which have been further detailed and extended to cover additional areas in the following years, are still in place. Further resolutions were taken by the UN Security Council (UNSC) in 2005 and 2006 to encourage Côte d'Ivoire to implement the peace agreement and specifically to move towards elections. On 30 October 2005, President Gbagbo's original mandate had expired, and there was no longer a constitutional basis for his remaining as Head of State.²⁷

²³ The French troops were perceived as partial by both belligerents: the Forces Nouvelles accused the French for siding with the government, while the government felt the French did not provide the support they expected via the French-Ivorian defence agreement in place (Uppsala Conflict Data Program)

²⁴ Operation Licorne is an independent operation authorised by the UN Security Council and expected to act in support of the UN peacekeeping force (Antonini (2009), p.78)

²⁵ Uppsala Conflict Data Program, Antonini (2009), p.77. Addo et al (2004).

²⁶ Antonini (2009), p.77. Uppsala Conflict Data Program. Interview: International representative 10.

²⁷ Antonini (2009), p.84-88

2.2 Situational overview

2.2.1 Political setting and developments

The peace process continued to advance very slowly until March 2007, when the Ouagadougou Political Accord (OPA) was brokered. This agreement provided for power-sharing between President Gbagbo and Forces Nouvelles, with its Secretary-General Guillaume Soro appointed as prime minister. Other key components of the peace agreement included the identification of the population and the organisation of elections, a DDR process, and the restoring of state authority on the territory (*for a more in-depth account of the OPA, see annex A*). With the OPA, Gbagbo was once again established as the legitimate president, – for a period of 10 months, within which elections were to be held. However, the Ivorian elections continued to be deferred and Gbagbo has not had legal grounds for holding the presidency since early 2008.

The process of taking a census and identifying voters started in September 2008, but proved to be a complicated and time-consuming process. These factors in combination with a lack of political will has resulted in the continued postponement of elections (on six occasions).²⁸ In June 2009, enrolment finally took place, with 6,3 million people registering to vote. Nevertheless, difficulties in establishing a definitive electoral list persisted. The Gbagbo camp knew that once the list had been published, few other means could be used to further delay elections. In November 2009, a provisional electoral list was published, but it was divided into a so-called “white list” and a so-called “grey list”²⁹. The white list contained 5,3 million voters who were authorised to figure on the (provisional) electoral list. The grey list included 1 million voters whose nationality had not been possible to verify, or whose details required further clarification before they could be accepted on the final electoral list. A verification phase followed, in which the enrolled were to verify their presence or absence on the lists and provide proof of their nationality, as well as other details, thereby confirming their electoral status. In February 2010, just as the verification phase had come to an end, President Gbagbo accused the Head of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of fraud and manipulation. Tensions mounted as Gbagbo dissolved the IEC as well the government, claiming that the IEC was biased and had created a fraudulent provisional electoral list by including ‘foreigners’. This alleged fraud concerned the ongoing examination of the grey list. The IEC was accused of purposely transferring 429 030 people from

²⁸International Crisis Group (5 May 2010), p.1

²⁹Initially, approximately 2,7 million out of the 6,3 million voters enrolled could not be confirmed as Ivorians nationals. After a period of verification, examining in-depth historic national registers, around 1,7 million people could be identified. The remaining 1 million people were put on the so-called grey list (International Crisis Group (5 May 2010), p.2).

the grey list to the white list, without proper examination of their cases. This move by the president to halt the ongoing work of finalising the list caused massive nationwide protests by the opposition, which resulted in confrontations with the army and seven people killed.³⁰ This was the first time since 2004 that the Ivorian crisis caused casualties.

Within 10 days, the President re-established the IEC, appointing a new President and a new Vice-President, and a new government was formed.³¹ A few months of standstill followed, in which no major steps were taken to move forward with the electoral process. During this period, the president's camp attempted to further delay the electoral process. In particular, requests were put forward to change the composition of the local IECs (the IEC³² is dominated by the opposition). It was increasingly difficult for the IEC to remain independent, as the whole process was becoming more and more politicised, and the presidential side had little confidence in the commission.³³ Examination of the provisional electoral list – the white and grey lists – resumed in July 2010, with the enrolled voters once again verifying their status on the list. Impatience was rife during 2010, with threats of major protest marches issued by the youth wings of the political parties. However, Gbagbo renewed dialogue with his key political opponents, which calmed the militants, and in September the final voter list was ultimately agreed upon by all stakeholders. The first round of elections was organised on 31 October and the second on 28 November 2010.³⁴

2.2.2 Socio-economic situation

Côte d'Ivoire is a rich country, producing 40% of the GDP in the UEMOA countries³⁵.³⁶ Resources are plenty in the country³⁷, and for many years Côte d'Ivoire has been a top producer of agricultural products, providing for a booming Ivorian economy. However, the focus on the agro-industrial sector was not accompanied by an interest in or commitment to improving conditions for

³⁰ International Crisis Group (5 May 2010).

³¹ Interviews: International representative 11, National representative 2.

³² The IEC is responsible of organising the elections, and controls the Institut National de la Statistique (INS) and Sagem (French company), which are in charge of issuing the electoral list. The IEC consists of a national commission, 19 regional commissions and 415 local commissions. The Pretoria agreement states that the IEC should consist of two representatives from each political party/force, which means the opposition has come to dominate the IEC. This has decreased the presidential camp's confidence in the IEC. (Interviews: National representative 1, National representative 9, International representative 11).

³³ Interview: International representative 11.

³⁴ Broadcast Radio France International, 23 June 2010. International Crisis Group (5 May 2010).

³⁵ West African Economic and Monetary Union (member states: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo)

³⁶ Interview: International representative 2.

³⁷ Among these are coffee, cocoa, cotton, wood, diamonds, oil and fruit.

rural populations. Development indicators score very low, with a very difficult situation in terms of illiteracy, corruption, etc.³⁸ Côte d'Ivoire ranks 149 out of 169 on the Human Development Index and more than 50% of the rural population lives in poverty.³⁹ The war-affected western part of Côte d'Ivoire is especially vulnerable, with 80% unemployment and a traumatised population. This region is both the strongest for agriculture and the least developed, as its potential has not been fully utilised.⁴⁰

The redistribution of resources is not taking place fairly: the governing leadership has managed to enrich itself via the country's resource-base, and the gap between the elite and the impoverished population has become very wide.⁴¹ Among Ivorians, feelings of frustration and resentment towards the politicians and with the widespread corruption are predominant, as people feel exploited. The improvement of the average Ivorian's economic situation is not forthcoming, and the educational and health systems currently in place are costly and of low quality.⁴² Only 38% of the children are enrolled in schools and students receive only 3,3 years of formal education on average.⁴³ The difficult situation in Côte d'Ivoire has made many investors stay away. The economy is not reaching its full potential and there is limited creation of jobs; even people with an education struggle to find employment.⁴⁴

As the vast majority of people have only a basic educational level, they are excluded from the political discussions, which only involve the elite. This makes the local population vulnerable to manipulation.⁴⁵ Many of them do not have confidence in their local political leaders, as they do not feel represented by these politicians⁴⁶. Nevertheless, many people are affiliated to political parties, often as a means to ensure their financial situation. This dependency has resulted in people following leaders instead of ideas.⁴⁷ Observers in Côte d'Ivoire note that the daily life has become increasingly focused on money, with everything being buyable for small and big players.⁴⁸ Civil society is weak and politicised, and

³⁸ Interviews: International representative 3, International representative 5, International representative 6.

³⁹ Human Development Report 2010

⁴⁰ International representative 2, International representative 3.

⁴¹ National representative 4, National representative 5.

⁴² Interviews: International representative 6, National representative 4, National representative 10.

⁴³ Human Development Report 2010

⁴⁴ Interviews: National representative 4, National representative 7.

⁴⁵ Interview: National representative 9

⁴⁶ In many cases, local politicians do not even reside in the communities where they have political positions, but prefer to live in richer or more central areas (Interviews: National representative 4, National representative 7).

⁴⁷ Interviews: National representative 4.

⁴⁸ Interview: International representative 3.

inefficient in obtaining concrete results in raising the awareness of the population.⁴⁹

Because of this sizeable gap and the distrust in the politicians, who play on ethnic/regional/religious affiliations, people often place their faith instead in their own communities, villages and religious groups, and at times in traditional leaders.⁵⁰ In order to develop the country's agriculture, Houphouët-Boigny had invited foreign workers to come to Côte d'Ivoire, taking the approach that 'the land belongs to those who grow it'.⁵¹ However, Côte d'Ivoire has gone from having had a big 'cake' to share among a small population, to the opposite proportions, and competition for land has increased. As noted, with the difficulties in the 1990s⁵², controversies regarding who had the right to call him/herself Ivorian emerged, and were specifically infectious in relation not only to the right to vote, but also in relation to the right to own land. Today, the feeling of Ivorité remains at the community level, where access to land is a key issue.⁵³ As non-Ivorians only are allowed to rent land from "indigenous" Ivorian owners (or from the state), as stipulated in a law from 1998, these questions about "foreigners" and "outsiders" are becoming increasingly important. For instance, the Krou (Bété) originate in forest regions, and therefore have not had to struggle to ensure production. Meanwhile, the Akans (Baoulé) and the Burkinabe are traditionally seen as groups that work the soil. Burkinabe and Malians, are perceived as used to working in difficult growing conditions, and as easily managing to grow the land in Côte d'Ivoire. This situation has created tensions between the different groups.⁵⁴ Following deforestation, cacao plantations moved from the centre towards the west. The cacao growers (Akans/Baoulés and Burkinabe) followed, changing the demographics of the country. In the western region of Moyen-Cavally, 60% of the population is now non-indigenous. Their role as food producers has given them economic and political power. With the crisis, the area's native groups saw an opportunity to chase the newcomers away. However, the need for their farming skills (and thus, presence) remains in the region. This context continues to complicate the relationships between the different groups.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Interviews: International representative 7, National representative 4, National representative 7, National representative 10.

⁵⁰ Interview: National representative 4.

⁵¹ Akindès (2004), p.8-10. Stewart (2008), p.164

⁵² Rivalries between the diverse identity groups broke out, provoked by a crashing economy (implying competition for access to the limited resources), which coincided with the death of Houphouët-Boigny.

⁵³ Interview: International representative 3.

⁵⁴ Interviews: International representative 2, International representative 3.

⁵⁵ Interview: International representative 3.

2.2.3 National stakeholders and military context

The Gbagbo camp

Having led a political struggle for many years, Gbagbo only managed to obtain political power late in his life, which adds to his unwillingness to give up his presidential post now. Gbagbo's approach during the current crisis is to act as if his 'victory' is uncontested, and to give an impression of normality. Criticism against his maintenance of power is brushed off as an international conspiracy, in particular by fomenting anti-French sentiments among the Ivorians. Gbagbo's interest is to buy time, during which he intends to impose his rule as accepted, in the minds of the population as well as on the international scene. This strategy of exhausting his opponents to get his way is the same method he has successfully applied in the last few years to stay in power. Throughout the 2000s, Gbagbo has engaged in discussions, but has in fact never made substantial concessions on key issues. Likewise, Gbagbo claims today to be ready to hold discussions but only on condition that his presidential power is unquestioned. Gbagbo is likely to maintain an uncompromising approach, and continue to wear out his critics and maintain a sense of normalcy. In the last decade, Gbagbo has on several occasions shown his predisposition to raise the stakes and to take the game to a higher level, no matter what.⁵⁶ His association with hard-line stakeholders and instigators of violence indicates his readiness to engage in tougher action if so needed.

The Ivorian Security Forces

The Gbagbo government controls the security forces, which include around 10 000-15 000 troops, around 13 000-15 000 gendarmes as well as a regular police force⁵⁷. Since the reign of Houphouët-Boigny, the tradition has been to have a weak army, and the Ivorian army is generally portrayed as poorly trained, ill-disciplined⁵⁸ and corrupt. The average age of the soldiers is high, and the troops are seen as indolent or as having limited willingness to engage in fighting (often unfavourably contrasted to neighbouring Sahelian soldiers, who have a reputation for being persevering). The army is also described as divided. Some battalions consist only of Bétés, the ethnic group of Gbagbo, and have been referred to as "an army within the army". Some units are supporters of the FPI (Gbagbo's political party) and devoted to him. The loyalty of the Chief of Staff

⁵⁶ For instance, in early 2010, Gbagbo showed his willingness to raise the stakes to prevent the polls from taking place, by taking the drastic measure of dissolving the IEC and the government – and thereby ignoring the OPA –, something which provoked confrontations between the army and opposition supporters and caused the first conflict-related deaths since 2004.

⁵⁷ The figure for the police force has not been possible to obtain.

⁵⁸ An example of the difficulty to control the army was in 2004, when the troops refused to go to the front, and the police had to be sent in their place (Interview: International representative 1).

of the Defence Forces to Gbagbo is uncontested. Even if untrained and weak, there is no shortage of arms for the troops. Certain sources claim that the most well-armed troops are the aforementioned “Bété battalions”. Other (unconfirmed) information indicates that some army divisions are opposed to Gbagbo.⁵⁹

The army’s readiness to respond even to minor demonstrations by turning weapons of war on the population is a worrying factor. The security forces carry heavy arms on patrol and the army has lately shown a tendency to shoot randomly into the crowds, which can be seen as an indication of nervousness. The Ivorian security apparatus is well acquainted with reprisal, but has little experience of crowd control and containment.⁶⁰ The fact that local outbreaks of violence have been met with army repression – and resulted in deaths – fuels the population’s growing aversion towards the security forces.⁶¹

Militias and militant youth leagues

Even if Gbagbo has little support from other countries, he has the means to resort to local militia – often interlinked with Liberian fighters. The militia was previously utilised in the Ivorian conflict. Most of these irregular soldiers were fighting on the government’s side, but they were also used by the Forces Nouvelles.⁶² The militias, mostly found in the vulnerable western part of the country and in Abidjan, have not disarmed, and the political mobility of fighters within the militia has proved to be high. The militias are generally assumed to have arms caches in their respective areas, and are openly engaged in training.⁶³ Approximately four pro-government militias are still active in the west.⁶⁴ Gbagbo maintains close relations with two of them (UPRGO and FLGO)⁶⁵, possibly as a way of controlling the western region of Moyen-Cavally. This region⁶⁶, traditionally a FPI bastion, is important to secure from a strategic, economic and political point of view.⁶⁷

⁵⁹ Interviews: International representative 1, International representative 2, International representative 6, National representative 5.

⁶⁰ Interviews: National representative 6, International representative 10. International Crisis Group (5 May 2010), p.9

⁶¹ Interview: National representative 5.

⁶² Around 2000 Liberian militias fought on the government’s side (International representative 2).

⁶³ Interviews: National representative 3, National representative 5, International representative 4.

⁶⁴ These are found on the territory between Duékoué, Guiglo and Toulépleu (International Crisis Group (5 May 2010), p.10.)

⁶⁵ UPRGO: Union Patriotique de Résistance du Grand Ouest, FLGO: Front de Libération de Grand Ouest.

⁶⁶ Militarily, this region is a direct point of contact with the Forces Nouvelles occupied zone. The Moyen-Cavally region also opens the access to the region of Bas-Sassandra and to the port of San Pedro, through which some of the cacao export is shipped (International Crisis Group (5 May 2010), p.11)

Hard-line youth supporters to the political parties can be found among both camps, and are used as vehicles of violence. Gbagbo's 'Young Patriots'⁶⁸ is an experienced and well-structured grouping. It has trained for several years and is a dangerous force. Ouattara's supporters are less visible and the development of militant youth leagues sympathetic to their side is a newer phenomenon, but the youth supporters of his political party (RDR), (and of PDCI, key political party in alliance with the RDR) are well organised.⁶⁹

The Ouattara camp

Ouattara and his sympathisers, including Guillaume Soro (Secretary General of the Forces Nouvelles), maintain just as firm a position as Gbagbo. Strengthened by the support of the international community, and having previous experience of Gbagbo's manipulations and unwillingness to make concessions, they have refused to engage in discussions unless Ouattara is recognised as president by Gbagbo. Neither Ouattara - having been kept out of power by Gbagbo for more than a decade - nor Soro - having been refused any real power as prime minister in the power-sharing agreement with Gbagbo - can be expected to give in this time. Their ultimatum to Gbagbo is to leave power or face the consequences. Nevertheless, in the interest of refraining from war, Ouattara has indicated a willingness to grant governmental power to Gbagbo supporters under his presidency.⁷⁰ The current power relationship between Ouattara and Soro is characterised by mutual dependency. In the Ouagadougou Political Accord, Soro entered into a direct deal with Gbagbo, sidelining Ouattara, as a way to ensure a political role for the Forces Nouvelles.⁷¹ Soro has political aspirations for the future, and needs to strike a balance between different power segments. Being associated with warfare, he is dependent on Ouattara's political legitimacy. Ouattara is considerably older than Soro and more experienced as a long time leader; furthermore, it is he, not Soro, who is the formal winner of elections. Soro, on the other hand, has recent experience of governing together with

⁶⁷ International Crisis Group (5 May 2010), p.10-12

⁶⁸ Apart from the Young Patriots, there are two-three other organisations/youth groupings, which in different ways work to support the FPI and Laurent Gbagbo (International Crisis Group (5 May 2010), p.7).

⁶⁹ International Crisis Group (5 May 2010), p.ii, p.9

⁷⁰ France 24 (TV news channel), broadcast January 2011.

⁷¹ There was a belief that Bedié and Ouattara had made use of the Forces Nouvelles' struggle for their own ends. Leaving the political opposition behind in the Ouagadougou Political Accord was thus a strategic decision for the Forces Nouvelles leadership. This allowed them to have a say in determining the political future of their rebel group and of Côte d'Ivoire, and to ensure that the post of prime minister was not taken by Ouattara or Bedié. Talking to Gbagbo without the political parties allowed the rebel movement to negotiate concessions that could not be made in their presence (Ayangafac (2007), p.25-31.

Gbagbo, something which Ouattara does not personally have. Ouattara is also dependent on Soro's influence over the Forces Nouvelles.

The Forces Nouvelles

The Forces Nouvelles claim to currently have 45 000 soldiers, but the accuracy of this figure can be contested; in particular, the number of fighting elements is unclear. The force is made up of renegade army soldiers together with volunteers.⁷² The Forces Nouvelles are considered to have a rather good fighting capacity, as they are well organised and have persistent soldiers who are accustomed to the tougher northern climate. Irrespective of their actual numbers, the Forces Nouvelles should not be underestimated as their soldiers are well trained. However, despite their potential fighting capacity, the rebel commanders' motivation to engage in armed struggle – for ideological reasons – has waned in the last few years. Instead, their primary interest is to use their power position to control resources in the north and thereby ensure economic advantages.⁷³ The Forces Nouvelles are generally perceived as 'Muslim Northerners', however, this is not a sufficiently nuanced description. Rather, they consist of people with different regional/ethnic/religious/ political affiliations, who for one reason or another were distanced during the distribution of Gbagbo's resources. Burkinabe President Compaoré is widely considered as having been behind, and controlling, the rebellion (motivated by economic benefits, among other things),⁷⁴ however since 2007 this secondary support has been less manifest.

There are three different organisational levels within the Forces Nouvelles: the political level, the zone commanders, and the combatants.⁷⁵ The political level is headed by Soro and a civil administration. The zone commanders are militarily in charge of different zones (northern Côte d'Ivoire is divided into ten zones)⁷⁶. Some of these zone commanders are known, especially in the western part of the country, for having been tough on the population.⁷⁷ Their ideological motivation to fight could resurge following the new developments, but what is clear is that they are unwilling to give up their present power and economic benefits.⁷⁸ Concerning the Forces Nouvelles foot soldiers, they have been mostly focused on the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) process, but they

⁷² Interview: National representative 1.

⁷³ Interview: International representative 2, National representative 5.

⁷⁴ Interviews: International representative 4, National representative 5. Ayangafac (2007), p.25-31. International Crisis Group (27 June 2007), p.5-6

⁷⁵ Interview: International representative 3.

⁷⁶ The zone commanders used to be in the Ivorian army, with lower ranks. As they fought during the conflict, they received the title zone commander (National representative 1)

⁷⁷ Interview: International representative 2

⁷⁸ Interview: International representative 2, International representative 4.

could potentially be mobilised again.⁷⁹ Internal tensions within the Forces Nouvelles have been rife at times. On the one hand, zone commanders and foot soldiers have lost confidence in Soro. Complaints about being badly paid, and the perception that Soro has failed to implement the DDR programme, have undermined the support of the Forces Nouvelles leader.⁸⁰ On the other hand, rivalries between different zone commanders have also been severe. Even if not a very likely scenario, the possibility of a far-reaching splinter within the Forces Nouvelles cannot be excluded. Hard-line elements can already be found among the Forces Nouvelles.⁸¹

2.3 Security situation prior to the 2010 elections

Côte d'Ivoire finds itself in a risky situation, not only because of the current crisis. Certain threats to security have already proven real. Before discussing the risk factors, some previous security concerns are considered, in order to depict the general state of affairs of the security situation in Côte d'Ivoire and to provide an understanding of the background to which the ongoing escalation is taking place.

Several years have passed without direct fighting taking place between the belligerents. Since the OPA, security at a macro-level has further improved. However, the constant blocking of the peace process since 2003 has had a negative impact on the country's stability. Instability and other effects of the conflict are still felt in Côte d'Ivoire. First and foremost, the conflict incompatibility has not been entirely regulated and the country has in practice continued to be divided in two. Other noticeable consequences of the conflict include the circulation of small arms and light weapons. Banditry and other acts of armed criminality and violent aggression have increased in the last few years, often perpetrated by traumatised ex-combatants and other conflict affected youth. Meanwhile, the judicial system is dysfunctional, particularly in the North, where insufficient numbers of (the already ineffective) police have little scope to perform their responsibilities. Protests and disturbances of various kinds have regularly resurged and turned violent, for instance, among ex-combatants frustrated by the DDR process⁸², civil servants on strike in the North, or politically manipulated youth wings of rival political parties. The demonstrations in February 2010 are a telling example: political and administrative

⁷⁹ Interview: National representative 9.

⁸⁰ Interview: National representative 9.

⁸¹ Interviews: National representative 6, National representative 10, International representative 6.

⁸² In January 2008, and throughout the year, there were serious demonstrations by armed elements, demanding the 500 000 CFA compensation promised in the OPA as well as the correct military rank (Interview: International representative 4).

representatives were targeted and several people died⁸³. Political violence threatened to destabilise the peace process in 2007, when there was an attempt on Prime Minister Soro's life. Another problem is the lack of social cohesion among the population, with widespread distrust between communities. A consequence of this climate of suspiciousness is violent land conflicts, with frequent inter-communal clashes over land being registered in rural areas. There have also been incidents resulting from cohabitation difficulties between ex-combatants and the local populations. The general lack of trust makes people hesitant to complain to relevant structures when there is abuse, as they risk armed threat in response.⁸⁴

⁸³ The court building in Man, the house of Gbagbo's campaign leader and the Bouaké and Vavoua prefectures were destroyed (International representative 7).

⁸⁴ Interview: International representative 5, International representative 7, International representative 9, International representative 10, National representative 3, National representative 4, National representative 7, National representative 10.

3 Accentuated risk factors

Having outlined the conflict background and the current political, military and socio-economic context, a picture has emerged of a country finding itself in an increasingly precarious state. The report now moves on to examining direct risk factors in Côte d'Ivoire. These accentuated risks, discussed below, are unfavourable circumstances with an immediate bearing on the evolving situation in Côte d'Ivoire. Hence, these risk factors could contribute to escalating the situation into further instability.

3.1 Political risk factors

Gbagbo's determination to hold on to power, no matter what, has driven the political situation to its extreme. Gbagbo's persistence to secure the presidency is matched by the Ouattara camp. In a context where power means access to capital and wealth, and where there are limited resources to share, the rivalry takes great proportions. This bellicose climate, in which all candidates are driven to win at *any* cost, is a key risk factor.⁸⁵ The two presidential candidates have figured on the political scene since the 1990s, and are associated with turbulent times in Ivorian politics. As there are only these long-standing candidates at hand⁸⁶, there is a high risk of perpetuating old conflict patterns.⁸⁷ Maintaining an uneasy status quo, however, contributes to a risky climate.

Another risk factor concerns the declining faith in the OPA. The blockage of the peace process had already made the population lose the confidence for the OPA, as well as for the stakeholders involved.⁸⁸ President Gbagbo did not respect his own signature of the OPA when he dissolved the IEC and the government in February 2010. The fact that the OPA has been discredited is a serious setback, as the parties no longer have a guiding and functioning framework for rebuilding their relations.⁸⁹ This creates confusion at the local level as well. Even before the current crisis, the slow peace process gave rise to a situation where the success of the prefects in negotiating security matters with the Forces Nouvelles was dependent on their personal networking. With the OPA being increasingly neglected, this kind of uncertainty about authority between the parties on the ground becomes even more pronounced, presenting a clear risk.

⁸⁵ Interview: International representative 3.

⁸⁶ In addition, Bedié - who was eliminated in the first rounds of the elections - is still an important player in the coalition behind Ouattara. It appears as if the deal was that Ouattara and Bedié would back the other as president, in the event that there would be a stand-off between one of them and Gbagbo.

⁸⁷ Interview: International representative 6.

⁸⁸ Interview: National representative 1.

⁸⁹ Interview: International representative 7.

3.2 Military risk factors

Among the risk factors in Côte d'Ivoire are loose cohesion, weak discipline and the limited sense of allegiance among the different armed stakeholders in Côte d'Ivoire. Having several residual armed units with different loyalties in the country constitutes an accentuated risk, which is further enhanced by the fact that little disarmament has taken place.⁹⁰ Both the risk of fragmentation of the loyalist army and the disintegration of the Forces Nouvelles are factors to consider.⁹¹ A considerable number of arms are already dispersed among different units, including the militias. The readiness to use armed force, not least in the forceful and edgy army has the potential to easily escalate an unstable situation.

A further risk factor is the slow and problematic reintegration of the demobilised ex-combatants. With the political deadlock, impatient ex-combatants find themselves in a limbo, no longer belonging to the Forces Nouvelles, but also unable to return home as they have few opportunities to ensure their livelihood and still await the long-promised support. The insufficient and flawed efforts to reintegrate the ex-combatants have resulted in this category of people today constituting a volatile element, and one of the major risk factors in Côte d'Ivoire.⁹² These ex-fighters could be mobilised, motivated by opportunities to pillage, food provision and money.⁹³ Ex-combatants' hopes to soon benefit from reinsertion projects have risen in the last few years, not least with the UNOCI having initiated reintegration schemes. However, the latest political developments have dangerously failed these budding expectations.

3.3 Socio-economic/community level risk factors

The unresolved root issue of identity remains a key risk factor in Côte d'Ivoire. Due to the infected debate on who is Ivorian and who is not, the population tends to align itself according to group identity when it comes to the competition for access to resources and land. This polarisation further strengthens a group think following also other identity lines (ethnicity, religion, region), with an established perception that there are 'outsiders' and there are 'those who belong'.⁹⁴ The acceptance in the country of identity politics as part of political

⁹⁰ Interview: International representative 2.

⁹¹ Interviews: National representative 5, National representative 10.

⁹² Interview: International representative 9.

⁹³ In addition, ethnicity serves as a reinforcing mobilisation ground (Interview: International representative 7, National representative 3).

⁹⁴ Interview: International representative 3, International representative 6.

rhetoric and the impunity of those who engage in this kind of behaviour is a risk factor.⁹⁵

The socio-economic frustrations and the widening gap to politicians feed resentment and anger among the population. The perception that there is no progress only fans the fire. Irrespective of whether a president is appointed or not, miserable living conditions and widespread injustice makes a breeding ground for frustration. The popular mood cannot be disregarded and must be considered a clear risk factor. Leaders, for their part, have a hard time controlling people who harbour these strong feelings.⁹⁶ The repeated postponement of elections, with new elections dates set on a number of occasions, has led to a disproportional focus on the election as *the* way to change the difficulties brought about by the crisis. The population has an unrealistic expectation that once there is an elected president, unemployment will disappear and poverty will be eradicated. The high expectations on a 'new' Ivorian leadership, together with the passive waiting mode of the population, are a dangerous combination.⁹⁷

In a society which already suffers from a strong group polarisation, the tendency of the politicians to instrumentalise on popular concerns is a risk factor. Political manipulation is rife among all protagonists. Fearing sanctions or reprisal, political party leaders use their partisan youth groups on the sly, to engage in protests and to participate in political meetings in exchange for financial or material benefits.⁹⁸ Many young people have not had a chance to finish their studies or learn practical profession skills. With no financial sovereignty, they cannot ensure their basic living, much less afford to take care of a family; to pay health and school fees, or water and electricity bills. Lacking means and qualifications, some are forced to still live with their parents. This gives rise to a lack of self-confidence, and some youth fall into drug and alcohol abuse. These categories of Ivorians are seen as volatile elements; discontented people who are sensitive to political manipulation. Many of these youth are also in an environment where arms widely available. The concern is that the youth can easily be used to create disorder.⁹⁹ The political manipulation has given rise to a general attitude of not accepting defeat, exemplified by the widespread slogan "on gagne, ou on gagne"¹⁰⁰, among the pro-Gbagbo supporters.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ Interview: National representative 9.

⁹⁶ Interviews: International representative 2, National representative 5.

⁹⁷ Interviews: National representative 7, National representative 10.

⁹⁸ Interview: International representative 4, International representative 5; International representative 10, National representative 4.

⁹⁹ Interview: National representative 1, National representative 4.

¹⁰⁰ The meaning of this saying loosely comes down to "We will win or we will win – no other option is thinkable" (Interview: National representative 9).

¹⁰¹ Interview: National representative 9.

4 Potential security developments

The previous chapter has explored accentuated risks in Côte d'Ivoire. A picture of different risks factors has emerged, ranging from firm incentives among political stakeholders to pursue their self-interest, to the prevalence of uncontrollable armed units and the possibility for fighters to engage in armed violence, as well as increasing volatility and tensions at the community level. Adding to this overall climate of insecurity is the recent developments. Gbagbo clinging on to power, and Côte d'Ivoire caught in a continued status quo, can provoke a number of destructive reactions and consequences. In the next step of the analysis, an examination follows of some potential security scenarios for the future¹⁰².

4.1 Repression and violent protests

The turn of events since the elections means that the intensified violence risks remaining on a high level in the near future. Gbagbo will need to eliminate threats to his regime to secure his grip on power; hence, harassment of political opponents and death patrols targeting civilians will continue to be a danger. Similar disappearances and summary executions could be levied against Gbagbo sympathisers in the Forces Nouvelles controlled area. The longer the deadlock persists, the higher the risk is that both sides mobilise militias, as well as engage in the provision of the arms and the means that are needed for a hostile confrontation. An arms embargo on Côte d'Ivoire is in place. It is however easy for the belligerents to get around the embargo, and information circulates that both parties continue to buy arms.¹⁰³

The ongoing status quo will also increase the likelihood that mass protests turn violent. This includes clashes between youth supporters and the security forces, where army overreaction - firing on protestors - is likely and will lead to civilian casualties. Close connections between the state security apparatus and the Young Patriots exist, which could imply passivity on behalf of the security forces in the face of violence committed by youth supporting Gbagbo.¹⁰⁴ Abidjan is a key risk area where clashes between these youth wings could take place, especially in the municipalities of Anyama, Adjamé, Abobo (RDR bastions) or Yopougon (FPI bastion). Other sensitive areas where protests could get out of hand include the

¹⁰² The possibility that events evolve in a positive way cannot be excluded, yet the intent of this section is to examine potential negative scenarios.

¹⁰³ Interview: National representative 5.

¹⁰⁴ International Crisis Group (5 May 2010), p.8-9, p.12.

Central-West part of the country, where tensions between FPI and RDR are rife.¹⁰⁵

International pressure on Gbagbo's regime also implies that his administration faces financial strains. This hardship can be countered in the short run, but will eventually lead to a deterioration of the socio-economic situation in the country. This will inevitably affect the population, and increased suffering among the people makes an escalation into larger-scale violent protests likely. A cycle of demonstrations and repressions is a potential development. The danger of protests developing into popular revolt and nation-wide unrest cannot be excluded. Longer and more frequent intervals of serious disturbances throughout the country represent the most likely scenario, with periods of uneasy calm in between. As noted previously, Gbagbo's strategy for the near future is to attempt to establish his rule. If this succeeds, he will be able to put the blame for future unrest on Ouattara, claiming that his political rival has disturbed the normalisation process in Côte d'Ivoire. These dynamics could lead to a point where further confrontation between the two politicians will occur.¹⁰⁶

4.2 Identity based violence at the local level

The inflamed situation, in which the parties' standpoints have been taken to their extremes, is detrimental as it exacerbates the animosities that already exist in the country. The local population is polarised according to ethnic, political, regional and religious affiliations, and the power struggle between Gbagbo and Ouattara – who constitute symbols for these different identities – make the probability of local tensions erupting into clashes high. Violence between identity groups at the community level are often prompted by the issue of access to land. Western Côte d'Ivoire is a particularly sensitive area, having witnessed most of the atrocities during the armed fighting and being affected by the past conflict in neighbouring Liberia. This area is a major battle ground for land conflicts, and distrust and tensions between different identity groups, including Liberian refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees and incoming Ivorians of different ethnicities, is prevalent.¹⁰⁷

Local level fighting, involving militias, ex-combatants or manipulated youth, could also be instigated by the Forces Nouvelles or the Gbagbo camp, in anticipation of a more substantial confrontation that could end the current status

¹⁰⁵ International Crisis Group (5 May 2010), p.ii, p.9

¹⁰⁶ Interviews: International representative 2, International representative 3, International representative 4, International representative 6, International representative 10, International representative 14, National representative 5, National representative 6, National representative 9, National representative 10.

¹⁰⁷ International Crisis Group (5 May 2010), p.10. Interviews: International representative 6, International representative 9, National representative 5.

quo. The high political mobility within the militia means that new fighting groups/networks could be formed in response to the new dynamics, and local conflicts could provide grounds for mobilisation for these fighters. If the pro-government militias extend their influence, a probable reaction would be the creation of “auto-defense” militias among the part of the population which does not associate with Gbagbo, as a means to provide for their own security. Even if it is uncertain how and to what extent, the prevalence of these armed groups could pose problems for security in western Côte d’Ivoire. The availability of small arms and light weapons in this part of the country, a border area, is ample.¹⁰⁸

Local level mobilisation here is particularly worrying, as identity affiliations and loyalties stretch across national borders. Ethnic tensions and political instability are profound in neighbouring Guinea, and the post-conflict situation in nearby Liberia and Sierra Leone increases the risk for regional instability. Refugee flows between the countries can activate conflict eruption at the local level, which can spread throughout the region. Great numbers of easily mobilised armed groups with various loyalties can be found; ex-combatants, rebel leaders, and militia are still active, especially in Côte d’Ivoire. These elements could be utilised by Gbagbo as well as by Ouattara.

4.3 Armed conflict

Given the uncompromising stance of both parties, outright military confrontation in the near future cannot be excluded. Ouattara’s as well as Gbagbo’s camp would, however, put a lot at risk by engaging in armed conflict. This would not be a wise political strategy, because (among other reasons) the population is generally tired of war and would be difficult to mobilise for this cause.

On the other hand, extensive street protests getting entirely out of hand, with an increased number of casualties, could prepare the ground for and eventually trigger confrontation between the armed units. Furthermore, if Ouattara is unable to establish his presidential power through democratic means, it cannot be excluded that he, in the long run, would resort to using the Forces Nouvelles, which could be considered ‘the president’s legal army’, given Soro’s decision to side with Ouattara. The fact remains that arms were initially taken up by the Northerners to address the identity issue, and are not likely to be put down before this matter is resolved, including the acknowledgement of ‘foreigner’ Ouattara as Ivorian president.¹⁰⁹ If no progress is made in this respect, and if international attention/measures wane, hardline Forces Nouvelles elements could be motivated to take up arms to protest against Gbagbo’s hold on power. The Forces Nouvelles

¹⁰⁸ International Crisis Group (5 May 2010), p.10-12.

¹⁰⁹ Interview: International representative 4.

have indeed a capacity to fight, even if it remains difficult to assess how strong that capacity is. Noteworthy is their limited ability to accomplish a move south by the end of 2010. An attempt to do so by certain Forces Nouvelles elements could quite easily be stopped. Moreover, it is unclear to what extent demobilised soldiers could be re-mobilised; there are also difficulties in distinguishing between civil and military Forces Nouvelles.¹¹⁰ As concerns the zone commanders, most of them are not motivated to deploy in the South, because leaving the North would mean that they would lose their economic control. On the other hand, for their part, they do not lack for the money that would be needed to buy arms. Furthermore, in the event of splinters from the Forces Nouvelles, these new and more hard-line groups would recruit among the youth and potentially be prone to engaging in armed conflict with the Gbagbo loyalists.¹¹¹

If there was to be conflict escalation, it appears likely that the Ivorian Security Forces would not, at any cost, hesitate to address the situation and to strike against the opposing forces. A likely worst-case scenario would be going back to the situation as it was in 2002, with a period of armed fighting between the belligerents, including the use of militias and mercenaries, or as in 2004 when the Gbagbo regime tried to eliminate the Forces Nouvelles with heavy force.¹¹² Even before the latest crisis erupted, voices within the FPI advocated attempts at such a military solution.¹¹³ It should be remembered, however, that Gbagbo has already unsuccessfully tried, on a number of occasions, to disarm the rebels by force. Certain observers note that given the current state of the Ivorian army, it can be doubted that Gbagbo has the military capacity available to succeed with such an undertaking. Other sources claim that would there be a total and direct confrontation between Gbagbo's forces and the Forces Nouvelles, the latter would not be likely to sustain an assault, which the Ivorian Security Forces - being a regular army with access to heavy armed force - is capable of carrying out.¹¹⁴

4.4 Coup d'état

An alternative to outright military confrontation would be a coup d'état.¹¹⁵ The motivation for such an undertaking could be found among Forces Nouvelles-affiliated soldiers who have disagreed with the last years' politics of compromise

¹¹⁰ Interview: International representative 2, National representative 5.

¹¹¹ Interview: National representative 6, International representative 14.

¹¹² Interview: International representative 5.

¹¹³ Interview: National representative 3.

¹¹⁴ Interview: International representative 2, National representative 5, International representative 14.

¹¹⁵ Interviews: National representative 5, National representative 9, National representative 10, International representative 1, International representative 2.

and power-sharing for a long time and who are now provoked by the prolonged status quo. A coup instigated by impatient hardliners could mean that all of Côte d'Ivoire would come to be under the control of the Northerners, and hence, not only would Ouattara be secured presidential power, but the Forces Nouvelles would have won the conflict.¹¹⁶ Concerning the Ivorian army, it has been loyal to Gbagbo, but this does not exclude that certain soldiers and army divisions may be inclined to support a coup. However, the Ivorian army, as mentioned previously, is not highly operational, which reduces the probability of readiness within the army for initiating a coup.¹¹⁷ Moreover, in the past, the government has frequently spread rumours about planned coup attempts, in order to justify the surveillance of possible coup makers; this may make military personnel hesitant to organise themselves for a coup.¹¹⁸ Were Ouattara to secure power, the scenario of army segments loyal to Gbagbo stepping in to protect him from losing his position is also a possibility. The army acting to take control of the state on its own is a less likely development. If a coup were to come from within Gbagbo's army, there would be much uncertainty as to how the Forces Nouvelles would react. A coup scenario – whether it be the Forces Nouvelles “winning”, the army keeping Gbagbo in power, or segments of the Forces Nouvelles or the Ivorian army taking over – would give rise to new dynamics, potentially seeing the emergence of new resistance groups willing to take up arms. A splinter within the army or within the Forces Nouvelles would further complicate the picture. A coup being carried out by such a new group would add yet another belligerent to the conflict dynamics and make the situation even more complex.

4.5 Criminality destabilising the region

The constantly postponed election has tested the patience of the population. The expectations that employment opportunities will be provided and the everyday situation will be improved once elections are finally organised has been running high. The fact that it has still not been possible to appoint a president has led to the patience running out and being replaced by an acute feeling of hopelessness, in particular among exposed groups. In order to provide for themselves, many young people have been forced to resort to criminality; especially worrying is the lucrative drug and arms trade which destabilises the region. This type of trafficking risks accelerating when Côte d'Ivoire stands without a government able to control the whole territory.

¹¹⁶ Interview: International representative 10.

¹¹⁷ Interview: International representative 2.

¹¹⁸ Interview: National representative 5.

5 Reflections on the regional context¹¹⁹

Côte d'Ivoire is part of a regional conflict complex, consisting of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone. The post-conflict context and recent instability in these countries makes this a particularly fragile region. This chapter considers regional security concerns, such as the vulnerable population living in the border areas, triggers and consequences of armed violence, and the development of areas with limited state control.

5.1 Population vulnerable to mobilisation

A particularly troubling factor of key importance is the sizeable population of vulnerable individuals in this region, who could either be used as a pool of potential fighters, or who could be mobilised into engaging in criminal activities, particularly in areas outside state control. As a consequence of the political and socio-economic challenges the four countries face, there are specific categories of populations that are particularly vulnerable to recruitment (voluntary and forced) into armed groups or into criminal networks. These include local mercenaries, ex-combatants, unemployed youth - many of whom are former child soldiers - as well as refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs). The fact that (more or less active) militias from the different countries, as well as international criminal networks, circulate freely along the vaguely controlled borders where these vulnerable populations are found, raises the security risks within the sub-region.

During the conflicts in the sub-region in the 1990's, a trend emerged where fighters from one country were often willingly recruited to fight in another country or for anyone who was ready to pay them.¹²⁰ The trend has remained with some hard-core fighters operating as mercenaries throughout the sub-region. There were several claims in Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire as late as 2009 and 2010 that cross-border mercenaries were being used for violence in their countries.¹²¹ Because the sub-region is experiencing very high rates of youth unemployment, especially among former child or young soldiers, the mercenaries can be used to mobilise these vulnerable populations as fighters. As concerns the youth, most of them are left without clear career opportunities or any other opportunities to escape poverty, and many experience social exclusion

¹¹⁹ This chapter is co-authored with Eldridge Adolfo. The chapter is largely based on an analysis by the two authors, rather than on direct sources.

¹²⁰ Usually a USD 150 initial payment, whilst the fighters were allowed to loot and "pay themselves"

¹²¹ Adolfo (2010)

and disenfranchisement. This situation makes them sensitive to political manipulation and ready to commit to anything or anyone who pays. Against this background, joining and fighting with a rebel group or militia could be a good option. Presently, most militias are dormant, but the youth/ex-combatants are to a great extent still organised, often being part of youth organisations or vigilant groups, which means fighting structures could easily be reactivated.¹²² The alternative of engaging in criminal activities is another attractive option, as arms and drugs smuggling are lucrative business opportunities. Furthermore, small arms and light weapons in the sub-region is widely available; thus, arming these people would not be a difficult task. Many ex-combatants are already in possession of arms. The large percentage of young people in the general population in these four countries indicates the seriousness of this problem and the potential for a further negative development.

This dynamic is further compounded by the fact that due to some of the artificial borders, the border regions of the four countries are often populated by groups belonging to the same ethnic families. This increases the potential for conflict diffusion, particularly as cross-border recruitment (or re-recruitment) could easily resurface. The sentiments of brotherhood that remain throughout these border-areas, combined with possible pay-back agendas lingering from the previous conflicts, could speed up mobilisation. While the “mercenaries” may be able to ignite the violence, these population categories - which are divided along identity lines, social exclusion and access to resources - could sustain and prolong a conflict.

5.2 The outbreak of violent conflict/armed violence

An escalation of violence and the outbreak of armed conflict would have even more devastating consequences than the previous wars in the sub-region, since both weapons and combatants are already widely available. The peacekeeping missions in Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire imply a substantial UN presence, but these are not sufficient to handle a simultaneous outbreak of violence in the two - or more - countries. If tensions in Guinea would escalate into conflict it would take a lot of time for peacekeeping troops to be deployed there. As witnessed with the escalating crisis in Côte d’Ivoire, the outbreak of conflict leads to huge population movements, adding to the already severe refugee and IDP situation in and around the border areas. An outright armed conflict would also have a devastating economic impact.

¹²² Adolfo (2010)

In a worst-case scenario where the Ivorian conflict would take on an outright regional dimension, concrete implications would include combatants being brought in to Côte d'Ivoire from neighbouring countries, forced recruiting of vulnerable populations, violence being inflicted upon civilian populations and ensuing looting. Conflict would also explode around land rights tensions, and would likely be ignited by the ongoing population movements. Another repercussion would be fighters using the Liberian and Guinean territory as a rear base. This could lead to army mobilisation along the borders, which in turn could be interpreted as a provocation by the governments in these neighbouring countries, and thus give rise to a particularly tense climate.

5.2.1 Elections and political systems as conflict triggers

Elections are one of the central markers to any instability in the sub-region. During the period 2010 – 2012, elections will have taken place in all four countries. In Guinea, the electoral period in 2010 was marred by violence, but a cautious positive development can initially be noted after the election of President Alpha Condé. The elections crisis in Côte d'Ivoire risks being drawn out, while Liberian elections in October 2011 are approaching. Elections in Sierra Leone are planned for August 2012.

Elections could serve as a trigger of violence, given that they increase the power struggles between rival parties. Tensions related to political conflict often spill over into identity politics where the different political groups attempt to mobilise support along ethnic lines. Because of the already existing tensions and the struggle over land – namely, which groups should have access to it and other resources – the invocation of identity politics blurs the lines upon which the actual electoral contest is based upon and dichotomises society along ethnic lines. This induces fear, and is particularly sensitive within the sub-region because of the 1990's-era conflicts, which tended to pitch one or more ethnic groups against another. Raising identity – such as ethnicity, religion, or region – in the political contest becomes a real, clear and present danger for the populations in the sub-region, and thus heightens the risk of pre-emptive mobilisation of fighters and attacks from all sides.

Another issue is that the countries in the sub-region all have various versions of majoritarian parliamentary systems, combined with highly centralised power in the hands of the president. The governments are not based on inclusive systems and this leads to a “winner-takes-all” situation. That fact that these countries have very small economies¹²³ with limited private sectors means that the best jobs are found in the public sector, universities, think tanks and NGO's and most lucrative business contracts are also found in the government tendering systems.

¹²³ With the exception of Côte d'Ivoire

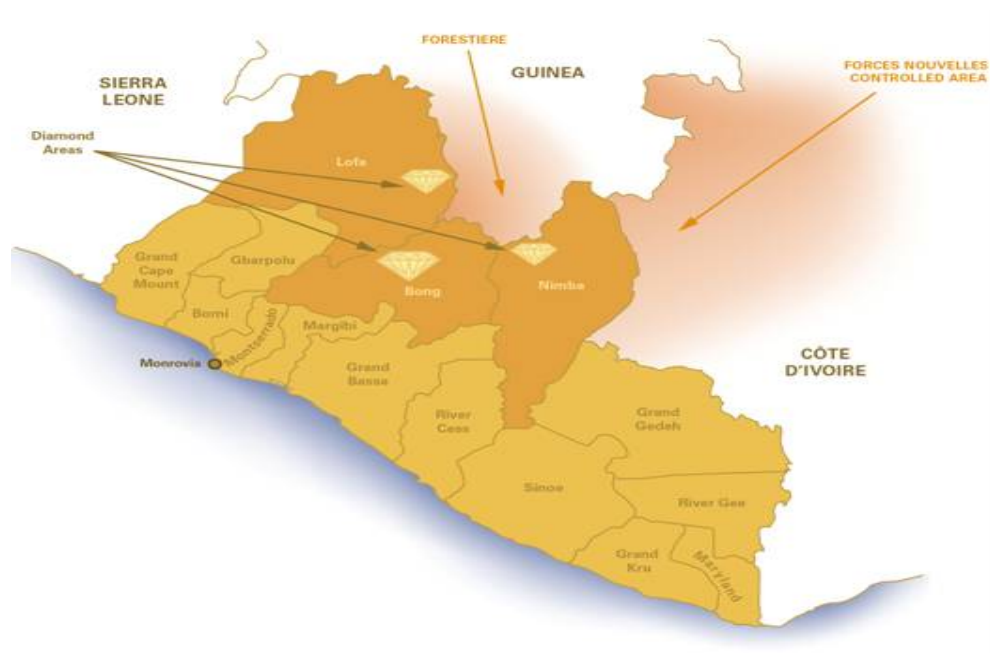
When governments change hands, it is often the case that public sector positions change (all the way down to desk officers in some instances). This combined with the high levels of corruption found in the sub-region, means that access to political power translates to access to wealth. Because of the identity cleavages, the winners often belong to a particular identity group who takes all, and this significantly raises the stakes during elections.

5.3 Non-government controlled areas

The porous borders, along with widespread corruption, have made uncontrolled movements between countries in the sub-region flow freely. This includes people as well as illicit drugs, small arms and light weapons. Apart from the actual borders, the weak states mean that the governments do not have the ability to exercise full power over parts of their territories. This has rendered certain areas beyond government control.

Particularly sensitive areas include northern Côte d'Ivoire (controlled by Forces Nouvelles), Guinea Forestière, the Lofa and Nimba counties in Liberia, and the Gola forest areas in Sierra Leone (Kailahun, Kenema and Pujehun districts bordering Liberia). Guinea Forestière is a notably resource rich area, but is lagging behind with few development efforts brought here by the central government. It is populated by a Guinean minority who claims to have been subjected to long-time discrimination. This war-affected region is still the scene of ethnic clashes. Much of the Liberian civil war took place in the Lofa and Nimba counties, and war lords still seek to influence these areas. In southern Sierra Leone, certain sentiments favouring autonomy and splitting the country can be noted.¹²⁴ The proximity of these vulnerable areas almost creates a corridor that could become ungovernable, in particular if these countries were to further lose their influence over these areas.

¹²⁴ Adolfo (2010).



Map 1¹²⁵: This map takes unstable counties in Liberia as a point of departure, but also illustrates proximate vulnerable areas in the region/areas with reduced government control (northern Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Forestière and south-eastern Sierra Leone).

In its most extreme form, Côte d'Ivoire is de facto divided into a northern and a southern part. The war economy in northern Côte d'Ivoire is rife, and Forces Nouvelles zone commanders benefit widely from trafficking. Apart from arms and drugs, the illegal exports include products such as diamonds, cotton, coffee, cacao and timber. These incomes have made the Ivorian rebel movement reluctant to hand over the control to the Ivorian authorities and to move forward with the peace process. For land-locked stakeholders, such as the Forces Nouvelles, the port of Conakry in Guinea is of specific interest. Contacts between some zone commanders, who have carved out chiefdoms in northern Côte d'Ivoire, and the Guinean junta under Dadis Camara, have previously been observed.¹²⁶

Disappointed Camara supporters and alienated junta hardliners have their stronghold in the Guinea-Forestière region. Even if these stakeholders appear to have been neutralised lately, the grievances have not been eradicated. A future

¹²⁵ Map 1 designed by Sofia Sundström, www.konfront.se

¹²⁶ Interview: International representative 3.

worst-case scenario could see anti-government Forestière stakeholders act more autonomously in this region, which borders on the territory in Côte d'Ivoire occupied by Forces Nouvelles, and consider a strategic alliance and collaboration with certain Forces Nouvelles zone commanders. These developments would break up Guinea in much the same way as Côte d'Ivoire. Thus, maintaining the status quo of the Ivorian conflict would benefit these actors' economic interests, making it possible for them to exploit and export natural resources in the resource rich areas of Forestière and northern Côte d'Ivoire, taking revenues from the population, and potentially engaging in illicit activities.

With the eroded state authority, the illegal trafficking is increasingly being established in the region, which is a serious threat to the stability. Stakeholders, such as international criminal networks, are benefiting from the weak states' ineffectual control and the conflict zones. Prospects exist for marginalised youth and non-integrated ex-combatants to get involved in this business. Corrupt government officials are also attracted by the opportunities for trafficking, which further erode the states' ability to control their territory – corrupt officials impede the states' already weak machinery from clamping down on the illicit drugs trade. This vicious circle means more people risks getting involved in trafficking. As they make their living from the illegal trade, this means that these people can be moved to use arms to protect this income, in the absence of other alternatives. Arms trafficking and availability means a spark in the tensions could quickly ignite more serious violence. Drugs and arms trafficking is also an attractive income for Al-Qaida. Certain observers mention signs of growing radicalism of Islam in Mali, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. Being part of Al-Qaida affiliated groups could be tempting for certain vulnerable youth. However, at times, these networks are used to ensure the lucrative drug trade rather than as a base for terrorism.¹²⁷

5.4 The role of Burkina Faso

The port of Conakry is also especially interesting to land-locked Burkina Faso. This situation partly explains Burkinabe President Compaoré's interest in mediating in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire¹²⁸ and the Forces Nouvelles' connection to the Guinean junta under Dadis Camara. Experts on the region emphasise Compaoré's (initial) support to the Forces Nouvelles and his great influence in

¹²⁷ Interview: International representative 4.

¹²⁸ Apart from this, Compaoré has a long time image of supporting rebels (Charles Taylor, specifically, was a long time associate) and creating destabilisation in the sub-region. Engaging as mediator is a chance to portray himself as a peace-maker, and to rebuild a good image. In this way, he develops new political clout, and evades being put before justice like Taylor. (Interview: International representative 4. Ayangafac (2007), p.25-31. International Crisis Group (27 June 2007), p.6.

ruling northern Côte d'Ivoire, which is largely motivated by economic interests.¹²⁹ These include profiting from trafficking and the war economy, as the Forces Nouvelles' illegal exports go from northern Côte d'Ivoire through Burkina Faso and onwards through countries such as Benin and Togo.¹³⁰ Burkinabe goods are also sold on the markets in northern Côte d'Ivoire. With incomes from the illegal trade, the Forces Nouvelles buy properties and businesses in Burkina Faso, creating employment, which is also a gain for Compaoré.¹³¹ Burkina Faso specifically benefits from the Ivorian conflict by being able to sell the cacao that grows in the northern part of the country to the international market.¹³² In this way, Compaoré has profited from the Ivorian crisis.¹³³ The Burkinabe president, however, also needs to ensure that the large Burkinabe diaspora (the undesired 'foreigners') can live peacefully in Côte d'Ivoire. If this population were to return to Burkina Faso as refugees, they would represent a significant burden on the state, whereas from Côte d'Ivoire they are able to send remittances - which constitute 20% of Burkina Faso's GDP.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Interviews: International representative 4, National representative 5. Ayangafac (2007), p.25-31. International Crisis Group (27 June 2007), p.5-6.

¹³⁰ Interviews: International representative 3, International representative 4, National representative 5

¹³¹ Interview: International representative 3. International Crisis Group (27 June 2007), p.5

¹³² Interviews: National representative 7, International representative 3.

¹³³ Interviews: International representative 10, International representative 4.

¹³⁴ Interview: International representative 4. Ayangafac (2007), p.28.

6 Third party intervention

The international community has reacted in unison to the recent crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. The regional organisation ECOWAS, the African Union, the United Nations, the European Union and important countries such as France and the United States have all declared unequivocal support for Ouattara. Complementary measures are being taken by these stakeholders to encourage Gbagbo to relinquish power. First and foremost, diplomatic initiatives and various sanctions have been levied against Côte d'Ivoire. Meanwhile, the need to enhance UNOCI's capacity – through reinforcements and/or complementary interventions - is currently felt on the ground. The international peacekeeping force in place cannot adequately manage to prevent hostilities from getting out of hand, partly because of insufficient capacities, and partly because it is being directly targeted with violent acts by the Gbagbo-regime and by Gbagbo militants.¹³⁵ The option of taking military action in Côte d'Ivoire in a deteriorating situation is being discussed. General views of possible tasks for such intervention have been vented, such as the monitoring of the Ivorian borders with Guinea and Liberia following the refugee flows.¹³⁶ Seeing to the latest developments, the protection of civilians in Abidjan and in western Côte d'Ivoire would have to be a key priority, just as it is for the UNOCI.

This chapter elaborates on previous engagement, present activities and possible future commitment of international stakeholders to address the conflict situation in Côte d'Ivoire.

6.1 The African Union

From early on in the Ivorian conflict, the AU has been sending mediation teams. In particular, the conclusion of the 2005 Pretoria Agreement was ensured through the AU mediator Thabo Mbeki. The AU was also assigned a role in the implementation of the previous peace agreements, for instance as part of a tripartite monitoring mechanism.¹³⁷

In response to the latest events, the AU has called for Gbagbo to step down and, on 9 December 2010, suspended Côte d'Ivoire's membership in the organisation. As the election crisis broke out, the AU responded promptly by sending Thabo Mbeki on 4 December 2010 to facilitate dialogue between the parties. This was however only a short mission which yielded no concrete results. By the end of December, Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga was named the AU lead in

¹³⁵ Interview: International representative 2.

¹³⁶ Interview: International representative 1.

¹³⁷ Elowson (forthcoming) FOI report on the Ouagadougou Political Accord.

solving the Ivorian crisis. Odinga has been part of a joint AU-ECOWAS team which has undertaken a series of dialogue efforts with the conflict parties.

On 31 January 2011, the AU Summit designated a panel of five Heads of States, charged to find a solution to the crisis. The panel – which consists of the Heads of States of Burkina Faso (potentially more pro-Ouattara), South Africa (potentially more pro-Gbagbo), and Chad, Tanzania and Mauritania (perceived as more neutral) – was to present solutions by the end of February 2011. The deadline has however been postponed until the end of March 2011. The solutions presented will become binding decisions on Ouattara and Gbagbo. Considering the AU's position, the decision is likely to present means for Gbagbo to let go of power.¹³⁸ Still, an unambiguous and explicit response should not necessarily be expected from the panel.¹³⁹

The AU monitors the situation and follows up with decisions, but generally the organisation is not well prepared to deal with escalating violence in a member state. This is partly due to capacity problems within the AU. The primary responsibility for Côte d'Ivoire is therefore naturally assumed by ECOWAS. However, if a military intervention were to be undertaken, the problem of non-francophone troops and partial neighbours within ECOWAS could be avoided by exploring options such as an AU mission, with central African countries (e.g. Rwanda or Burundi). It is clear that the AU has an advantage in deployment compared to external troops, in the light of applying local African solutions.

6.2 ECOWAS

ECOWAS has been engaged in managing the Ivorian crisis since the outbreak of the conflict in 2002, ensuring cease-fire and peace agreements and deploying an ECOWAS peacekeeping force, among other things. Since 2007, ECOWAS has come to play an essential role as the peace process took a new turn with the OPA. ECOWAS chairman (and Burkinabe President) Blaise Compaoré facilitated direct talks leading to this agreement, but in fact, the OPA is widely considered as a regional political deal between the long-time adversaries Gbagbo and Compaoré, together with Soro.¹⁴⁰

ECOWAS has responded firmly to the current crisis, calling for Gbagbo to step down and suspending Côte d'Ivoire. The regional organisation has taken a first line role, and acted with somewhat unusually clear determination. As a matter of fact, ECOWAS is becoming more accustomed to applying its policies for peace and security, and there is an increasing awareness and readiness among the member states that they, in the capacity of a (ECOWAS) community, must come

¹³⁸ Radio France International, broadcast 1 February 2011.

¹³⁹ Interview: International representative 14.

¹⁴⁰ L'Accord Politique d'Ouagadougou. Ayangafac (2007), p. 27. Antonini (2009), p.77.

together to act. In December 2010, the threat of a regional military intervention to remove Gbagbo by force was issued by ECOWAS. Meanwhile, prominent regional personalities continue to be engaged in regular dialogue with the conflict parties in an effort to find a diplomatic solution. Pledges to contribute to international prosecution of those responsible for post-election deaths have also been made by ECOWAS. Even if the organisation has acted in a unified manner, with swift and strong condemnations of Gbagbo's hold on power, this official readiness to take action should not be taken as a promise of rapid results and an absolute ECOWAS lead on Côte d'Ivoire's crisis management. Behind the façade of unity, regional political sensitivities, unofficial agendas and member states' own interests are at play; this will make stakeholders act with caution and will slow down the process. The high stakes involved with military effort makes continued diplomatic intervention likely to be the preferred option in the near future. Meanwhile, dialogue and diplomatic solutions are time-consuming. A key event determining the pace at which ECOWAS moves and the path to be taken is the Nigerian election, which is anticipated in April 2011. The timing of these elections is another factor that renders a rapid military engagement by the ECOWAS countries in Côte d'Ivoire difficult.

Furthermore, regarding the possibility of military intervention, the capacity of the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) is debatable. Assembling ESF troops is a difficulty; these troops are also in need of further training. Additionally, the ESF faces challenges regarding logistics, transportation, equipment and communication. For instance, dominant peace and security actors in the region, such as Nigeria and Ghana, do not speak French, which would be important for a military intervention. Despite these challenges, an overall assessment shows that ECOWAS troops are militarily capable and operational, and hence can be deployed if need be, even though such deployment would not be done according to the established framework. Financing should also not be an issue; the international community would be willing to contribute resources for an ECOWAS military intervention if this decision was made.¹⁴¹ It should be noted, however, that certain UNSC members remain uncomfortable with the idea of ousting Gbagbo by force, and it is unclear what kind of UN mandate the ECOWAS can obtain. As a matter of fact, ECOWAS has the mandate in its own frameworks to act, but it is nevertheless likely that the regional organisation will seek UN authorisation.¹⁴² It could, therefore, take time to negotiate a mandate acceptable for all. Presently, no formal request for such an intervention has been made by ECOWAS. Nonetheless, irrespective of the above factors, the determining factors for ECOWAS military intervention are instead the regional political will, potentially non-harmonised views on Côte d'Ivoire, and the

¹⁴¹ Elowson et al. (2010), p.54-55

¹⁴² UN Security Council report

neutrality problem that the ECOWAS countries would confront if engaging in one of their own member states.

6.3 The United Nations

UN missions have been present in Côte d'Ivoire since May 2003. The first mandate of the current peacekeeping operation, UNOCI, which came into effect in 2004, displayed an ambition to play a first line role in ensuring the implementation of peace agreements and the protection of civilians. Further UN involvement included applying pressure on the Ivorian stakeholders through the establishment of a targeted sanctions regime in 2004.¹⁴³ Strong UNSC resolutions were taken in 2005 and 2006 to encourage Côte d'Ivoire to implement the peace agreements and specifically to move towards elections. However, in 2007, the Ivorian belligerents took the peace making into their own hands with the creation of the Ouagadougou Political Accord. This was partly a strategy to outplay the UN and to escape the international pressure. The signatories did not ask the UNOCI to leave¹⁴⁴, but they managed to sideline the UN and exclude the organisation from the negotiations and the OPA. As from 2007, the new UNOCI mandate has reduced its tasks into only 'accompanying' the peace agreement (although with a continued responsibility to protect civilians).¹⁴⁵ Since the OPA, the UN's hands have been tied and the organisation has appeared very much astray.¹⁴⁶

There has been a growing frustration within the UN, having contributed a significant amount of funds for elections, but still being unable to play a substantial role in advancing the slow electoral process.¹⁴⁷ Even if marginalised, the UNOCI mandate still included certifying the results of the presidential elections, and the mission affirmed the IEC findings of Ouattara as the new president. The certification was based on a thorough assessment of the process, which included an analysis and evaluation of the result sheets of all polling stations.

In response to the ensuing crisis, the UN has attempted to regain its lost influence, and has taken a tougher stance. Diplomatic efforts and consultations have been undertaken; and UN Secretary General (UNSG) Ban Ki Moon has repeated his calls for Gbagbo to step down. The UNSG has taken an unusually

¹⁴³ See Eriksson (2011)

¹⁴⁴ It explicitly requested the gradual reduction of the forces in the zone of confidence (Antonini (2009), p.107).

¹⁴⁵ Interviews: International representative 1, International Representative 3, International Representative 6, International Representative 9. Antonini (2009), p.105, 107.).

¹⁴⁶ Interviews: International representative 5, International representative 6.

¹⁴⁷ Interviews: International representative 5, International representative 6.

firm line, apparently raising his game.¹⁴⁸ He has defied demands by Gbagbo for UNOCI's departure, and the UNSC on 20 December 2010 extended UNOCI's mandate until 30 June 2011. UNOCI has reinforced in Abidjan and intensified its patrolling, monitoring and observing activities. The mission is protecting Ouattara and his government in the Golf Hotel in Abidjan, surrounded by regular and irregular forces loyal to Gbagbo. The Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, Alain Le Roy, has insisted the UNOCI will "robustly" fulfil its mandate, breaking through roadblocks if needed, to protect civilians and the "legitimate government". The UNSC has warned all Ivorian stakeholders that they will be held accountable for attacks against civilians and will be brought to justice. The readiness of the UNSC to impose measures has also been pronounced, including targeted sanctions against persons who threaten the peace process, obstruct the work of UNOCI and other international actors, or commit serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.¹⁴⁹

Having begun to play a front-line role, the UN has made enemies.¹⁵⁰ State radio and television, which remains under Gbagbo's control, broadcasts constant hate propaganda directed against the UN mission. The UNOCI also faces real difficulties in implementing its mandate, being exposed to different types of serious violent attacks. Restrictions on the freedom of movement of UNOCI in Abidjan and elsewhere, mainly in the west, remains a serious concern, with incidents of roadblocks and aggression by regular and irregular forces loyal to Gbagbo. Among other things, this means the UNOCI is prevented from ensuring supplies, protecting civilians and from fulfilling its human rights mandate.

Concerning the possible escalation of violence, the UN states that it does not hesitate to use chapter VII. But the question is what capacity does the UN have; currently it is doubtful that the UNOCI would manage to contain even a limited escalation of street protests, attacks on government buildings etc.¹⁵¹ The French military presence (Licorne support structure) has diminished drastically in the last year, which makes the task for UNOCI even more difficult. Currently, the peacekeeping mission consists of 8 650 military and police elements, plus 500 personnel on temporary deployment¹⁵². There are also three infantry companies and an aviation unit temporarily borrowed from the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). In Abidjan alone, there are nearly 3500 UN troops and police, some 750 of whom are protecting the Golf Hotel.

On 19 January 2011, the UNSC approved Ban Ki-Moon's request for 2000 additional forces, and extended the mandate of the temporary reinforcement

¹⁴⁸ World Politics Review

¹⁴⁹ UN News Centre. UNOCI website.

¹⁵⁰ Interview: International representative 10.

¹⁵¹ Interviews: International representative 1, International representative 2, International representative 3.

¹⁵² These personnel were intended as a reinforcement capacity ahead of the elections.

force until 30 June 2011. In mid-February, the UNSC extended for up to three months the temporary deployment from UNMIL to UNOCI of the three infantry companies and the aviation unit (composed of two military utility helicopters and three armed helicopters with crews). Furthermore, the 19 January resolution approved the deployment of 60 police personnel to meet threats posed by unarmed crowds, to replace an equivalent number of UN police officers. A review of personnel deployments is due on 31 March 2011.¹⁵³ Even if these reinforcements are a good sign, a worrying issue is that UN deployment is often a lengthy procedure - it could be a matter of several months before UN forces arrive, which is likely to be far too late.

As previously noted, the potential authorising of ECOWAS to take military action in Côte d'Ivoire is a difficult matter within the UNSC. Some council members remain uncomfortable with the prospect of using armed force to oust Gbagbo as threatened by ECOWAS. Some note the risks involved and the inevitable setback it would cause to the larger issue of peace consolidation in the country. Others evoke the inevitable impact on civilians and likely realise flaws. Russia and China have in the past expressed reservations about the use of force in essentially internal matters.¹⁵⁴

6.4 The European Union

Over the years, the EU has not played an active role in the management of the Ivorian crisis in terms of official diplomatic intervention. Yet, in its capacity as an important development partner to Côte d'Ivoire, assistance to the implementation of the OPA has been provided.

Since 2005, the EU has also applied a sanctions regime on Côte d'Ivoire, which was extended with the outbreak of the current crisis. In mid-December 2010, the EU imposed further sanctions, targeted against Gbagbo and 18 individuals associated with his regime; "those impeding the reconciliation and electoral process" in Côte d'Ivoire. The sanctions include a travel ban and a freeze of assets held in the EU.

In the last few years, the EU has observed how the UN has been largely outplayed in Côte d'Ivoire. This is likely to feed a growing realisation among European countries that it would be valuable if EU took a more pronounced role. The EU Lisbon Treaty has provided the framework which allows the EU to be more unified, and thus, have more weight now and in the future.

Regarding military contributions, the EU has been hesitant. Military involvement by Europeans in the region is sensitive, especially in Côte d'Ivoire considering

¹⁵³ UN Security Council report

¹⁵⁴ UN Security Council report

its recent history and infected relations with France. There is a deeply rooted reluctance towards French influence, and Gbagbo would try to make any European attempt to become a player in managing the crisis look like a French effort to 'reconquer' Côte d'Ivoire. Moreover, EU military intervention is likely to be locally understood in terms of 'a partial West taking action to protect Ouattara'. An EU-force would risk being exposed to the same level of hostility and severe violence that the UNOCI is facing at the moment, if not more. The UNOCI is (supposedly) to be perceived as a neutral force, while the EU military involvement would largely be interpreted as French intervention – which is far worse in the eyes of many Ivorians.

An EU military effort would thus be a very problematic issue. Still, the issue of foreign military intervention largely depends on how the situation deteriorates. Whether foreign troops are accepted by the local population or not, will depend on the level of conflict. As the security situation has already escalated drastically, and risks moving beyond control, the issue of local and regional conflict resolution and local acceptance could soon become less relevant.¹⁵⁵ In the event that a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) mission would come into question, the EU would have to have the commitment and capacity to continue such a mission all the way to the end. Otherwise, the EU would lose credibility.¹⁵⁶

While local acceptance for European military intervention is problematic, the EU Delegation in Côte d'Ivoire notes the opinion among many Ivorians that the EU does not engage much in the country and that more involvement is desired. This could indicate an acceptance among certain stakeholders of further EU presence. However, the question of military intervention is more an issue concerning what the EU wants than what Africa wants. The decreased willingness for deployment in Africa among many member states means that obtaining financing for an ESDP mission by the EU and the member states is problematic. Agreement amongst the European states on taking military action would be politically difficult. Certain EU members, such as France, have strong interests which would arguably be likely to guide any military effort. Substantial involvement by France - in one way or another - would be a necessity, as the EU cannot do without the French local knowledge of Côte d'Ivoire.

In the context of increased international intervention, the EU emphasises the need for collaboration with ECOWAS, the UN and the AU. Unilateral action by the EU is not a viable option. Regarding the option of military involvement, however, there are presently few if any clear ideas about how such collaboration could work. If the situation in Côte d'Ivoire de-escalated to low-scale violence, the option for the EU may be to continue with its current training and mentoring

¹⁵⁵ Interview: International representative 1.

¹⁵⁶ Interview: International representative 1.

of regional troops. Capacity is strengthening with the new ECOWAS standby force contribution, but more needs to be done, in particular as concerns the police and civilian elements of the ESF.

6.5 France

France has a complex and difficult relationship with Côte d'Ivoire. The history between Côte d'Ivoire and its former colonial power, France, is of particular importance. Starting out from an extremely strong connection between the countries, the relations have become severely damaged and infected. France no longer seeks an official role in Côte d'Ivoire, yet, French political influence can hardly be challenged among international actors. French economic interest in Côte d'Ivoire is also a key factor. A French military force, Licorne, is based in Côte d'Ivoire as the remnant of a previous bilateral defence agreement.¹⁵⁷ Licorne is now present in the country in its capacity as an independent operation authorised by the UNSC, expected to act in support of the UNOCI in the event of a deteriorating the security situation. The Licorne was originally conceived as a rapid reaction force, meant to support the UN peace-keepers in the event that they do not manage to maintain the stability. Lately, the mandate of the Licorne has been scaled back, and its responsibility is now rather expressed in terms of 'securing the activities of UNOCI'.¹⁵⁸

In response to the current crisis, the French administration has accredited Ouattara's choice of Côte d'Ivoire's envoy to France (which provoked Gbagbo's regime to cancel the accreditation of the French ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire). Apart from this, the French have (officially) maintained a low-key political role, emphasising their joint actions with other international stakeholders. President Sarkozy declared in early January 2011 that there will be no military intervention by French troops in Côte d'Ivoire. France knows that its presence in the country is an extremely sensitive matter, and is not willing to risk further infection of the relations, which could threaten their limited legitimacy to stay in Côte d'Ivoire. With the recent crisis, Licorne has continued to patrol and also protects the airport. However, a primary focus of the Licorne during an eventual escalation of violence – likely to be given priority before their responsibility to support UNOCI – would be to protect and evacuate threatened French nationals.¹⁵⁹ Around 15 000 French citizens are based in Côte d'Ivoire. In the last few years,

¹⁵⁷ France's bilateral defence agreement with Côte d'Ivoire was signed in the 1960's and has not been denounced or revised. Hence, it is still legally valid. However, in practice, the agreement is not applied as it is considered as 'frozen' due to political circumstances. The agreement regulates the presence of the French soldiers, who were originally directed to protect the 'new independent' state institutions, to support the development of a national army, and to protect Côte d'Ivoire in case of an external aggression (Interview: International representative 14).

¹⁵⁸ Interview: International representative 14.

¹⁵⁹ Interview: International representative 14.

there has been a steady down-scaling of the French troops (presently numbering around 900-1100), which are now almost exclusively based in Abidjan.¹⁶⁰ If France were to send more soldiers to Côte d'Ivoire, this would be severely questioned by the French National Assembly. Public opinion in France has changed, and the French population is no longer in favour of paying for Licorne but wants the troops to leave Côte d'Ivoire. The French government, however, has claimed to want to hold out to the end of the peace process.¹⁶¹ In particular, France needs to sustain their business engagement, by being able to guarantee the safety of French nationals who are engaged in business in the country.

For France, the relationship with Côte d'Ivoire is still important for several reasons. If the country would degenerate further, and French influence were to be completely lost, this would be a symbolic blow for France's influence in all of Francophone Africa. In order to provide a more complete picture of French engagement in Côte d'Ivoire, some more details of the historical, political and economic links should be added.¹⁶² Côte d'Ivoire constituted the crown jewel among France's colonies, and contrarily to many other independence leaders, Félix Houphouët-Boigny's strategy was to maintain the solid relations with France in the post-colonial period, nurturing the tight economic and political links.¹⁶³ The strong bonds were retained between the countries from independence in 1960 up until the early 2000s. Under the long-standing bilateral defence agreement, the Licorne were based in Côte d'Ivoire at the outbreak of the conflict in 2002. Their presence prevented fighting from deteriorating further and the Licorne later supported the monitoring of the cease-fire line. The French troops, however, were perceived as being biased by both belligerents. The Forces Nouvelles accused the French of siding with the government while the government felt that France did not provide the support they expected considering the existing defence agreement. Peace negotiations in Paris, under the lead and design of France, led to a first peace agreement (the Lina-Marcoussis agreement) in 2003. The Ivorian stakeholders, however, showed little recognition of this agreement, which was perceived as having been imposed by France as a partial third party. Demonstrations against the agreement erupted in Abidjan, during which French interests and establishments were deliberately attacked. The way the peace accord came about – France had essentially

¹⁶⁰ Antonini (2009), p. 77-78. Interview: International representative 2. Addo et al (2004).

¹⁶¹ Interviews: International representative 2, International representative 3.

¹⁶² The following section does not intend to give a thorough account of French-Ivorian relations. For more on the interlinked history between the countries, see for example the FOI report '*Beyond FranceAfrique – the foundation, reorientation and reorganisation of France's Africa politics*' (Karl Sörenson, 2008)

¹⁶³ For the first 20 years of Houphouët-Boigny's reign, Côte d'Ivoire's economy flourished, due in large part to the fact that the investment climate was made favourable for French business interests. Houphouët-Boigny also had a particular political status in France, occupying ministerial posts in several French governments (Meredith (2006). Akindès (2004), p. 8-10)

determined the conditions for the peace process – was personally humiliating for Gbagbo, making him feel as if Côte d'Ivoire was still a colony. The relations between Gbagbo and French President Chirac worsened. In the following years, French efforts to direct the peace process continued through the UN.

With the strong French-Ivorian history, France benefits from an exclusive first hand say on the international community's policy on Côte d'Ivoire. It is difficult for other stakeholders to drive peace efforts in this country; for example, UNSC resolutions and declarations on Côte d'Ivoire have been elaborated by France.¹⁶⁴ France has, however, stopped actively pushing the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire since the relations broke down. Firstly, France was severely shaken by the serious confrontation with the Ivorian army and the Ivorian population in November 2004.¹⁶⁵ These events ripped apart the unique French-Ivorian relationship for all future; following this, direct involvement by the French decreased. Still today, many Ivorians have a hard time accepting France, which they often perceive as an economic coloniser with ulterior political motives.¹⁶⁶ Additionally, relations at the level of the political elite remain rather complicated, and the Ivorian elite largely reject France's conception in Africa.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, in 2007, President Sarkozy embarked upon a new foreign policy course in Africa.¹⁶⁸ This implied a 'rupture' of the traditional Franco-African relations, and means that France has lowered its previous ambitions to maintain an exclusive position in regards to its former colonies, Côte d'Ivoire included.¹⁶⁹ Meanwhile, France finds itself in a complicated situation – the country will be exposed to criticism if it takes an active stance towards Côte d'Ivoire, as well as if it remains inactive. Furthermore, apart from the political and business links resulting from the close French-Ivorian history, the countries are attached through an extensive network of personal connections. The relations are multifaceted, for example including Ivorians who (have) benefit(ed) from a privileged situation due to their connections with France, and diasporas of ordinary people which are present in both countries. These aspects all play a role for determining France's policies towards Côte d'Ivoire, and with such intricate relations, interpreting France's choice of action is often more complex than it appears at first look.

¹⁶⁴ Interview: International representative 4.

¹⁶⁵ An Ivorian air attack was launched on French peacekeepers and resulted in 9 deaths. French military forces subsequently clashed with Ivorian troops and government-loyal mobs, and destroyed the entire Ivorian Air Force. Those incidents were followed by massive violent anti-French protests in Côte d'Ivoire, leading to several casualties.

¹⁶⁶ Interview: National representative 4.

¹⁶⁷ Interview: National representative 9.

¹⁶⁸ Relations between France and Côte d'Ivoire have somewhat improved with President Sarkozy, who does not try to control Côte d'Ivoire in the same sense as President Chirac. Sarkozy realises the need to focus on domestic priorities, such as unemployment and other issues of immediate concern for the French population (Interview: International representative 4).

¹⁶⁹ Interview: International representative 2.

As concerns the business relations, the privileged economic position accorded to France investors during Houphouët-Boigny's reign is maintained. France continues to pursue its economic interests and French investors dominate the Ivorian market in important sectors, such as water, electricity, transport, communication and infrastructure; some claim that as much as 50% of the Ivorian wealth is controlled by France.¹⁷⁰ With an obvious interest in making other investors stay away, the no war/no peace situation in Côte d'Ivoire is likely to have benefited French economic interests. The issue of which Ivorian stakeholder holds government has not been of key importance for France, as long as sufficient stability and business relations are guaranteed. However, with the current crisis, France's relations with the Gbagbo regime have become too damaged. Further volatility will make business difficult; for France it is necessary to have a Ouattara government in place to achieve the required stability. Supporting Ouattara throughout will also facilitate the granting of future contracts to French investors under his presidency. Taking the lead in implementing a peace package is however undesirable for France, in the sense that it would be a costly financial responsibility. Furthermore, this would not only bring foreign implementation actors but international investors would come along as well, which would be perceived as threatening the privileged French business position.¹⁷¹

6.6 The United States

The US has no history of playing an active role in Côte d'Ivoire. However, with the current crisis, in line with other international stakeholders, the Obama administration has taken a firm stance against the Gbagbo regime's hold on power. The US has shown a robust engagement, by taking a number of specific measures. As a carrot, Gbagbo was offered a "dignified exit" and refuge in the US in case he gave up power. As Gbagbo did not react on this invite, on 6 January 2011, the US proceeded to impose financial sanctions on Gbagbo, his wife and three members of his inner circle, in addition to the travel ban which has been in place since the end of December 2010.¹⁷²

For the US, stability in this part of Africa is a strategic importance which is becoming more accentuated. The activities of Al-Qaida in Maghreb (AQIM) and its potential connections to the drugs and arms trade are in the US sphere of interest. The US has representations throughout West Africa and the Sahelian region, and in some places its diplomatic presence is increasing; close cooperation with key actors such as France has also intensified. In addition, the

¹⁷⁰ I-Télé (TV news channel), broadcast January 2011.

¹⁷¹ Interview: International representative 6, National representative 4, National representative 5.

¹⁷² All Africa Newsagency

US is one of key stakeholders in neighbouring Liberia. These factors make a sustained US position and engagement towards Côte d'Ivoire probable.

6.7 International financial institutions

Key financial institutions have acted concurrently with the major international stakeholders. On 22 December 2010, the World Bank suspended financing for Côte d'Ivoire. The Central Bank of West Africa States (BCEAO) has blocked Gbagbo's access to Côte d'Ivoire's funds and instead handed Ouattara the control of state resources. At the same time, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has said it will only work with a government recognised by the United Nations. The African Development Bank will be reviewing its lending programs for Cote d'Ivoire. Still, temporary strategies for the Gbagbo regime to escape the financial hardship can be found. In the short term, new money can be printed. Certain observers also report that ideas to create a new currency for Côte d'Ivoire are being considered.¹⁷³

¹⁷³ Interview: International representative 14.

7 Concluding remarks

This report has analysed the conflict situation in Côte d'Ivoire, with the aim of highlighting potential insecurity developments. Key dynamics and stakeholders, as well as the risk for further escalation of the instability in the country have been elaborated upon. The focus has been on developments which could arise in Côte d'Ivoire, but regional instability has also been taken into consideration. In addition to discussing potential security scenarios, the report has examined the role of the international community in Côte d'Ivoire, in particular with the view to tracing future commitment and measures to be taken by international stakeholders to address the conflict situation. Having examined these topics throughout the report, a number of concluding remarks can be made. These remarks contain a few recommendations, to be considered ahead of the ongoing escalation as well as ahead of the worst-case scenarios that could be developing in the future.

Firstly, the report has shown that it is **essential to regard the conflict in a historical perspective**. Only with an insight in past dynamics does it become possible to analyse the various stakeholders' positions and actions. Understanding the origins of the crisis means the complexity of the conflict can be grasped, and that the issues at stake can be appreciated. This allows seeing beyond the common perception of Côte d'Ivoire as a relatively harmless low-intensity conflict. **The potential for severe violence then becomes clear.**

The most serious scenarios described in this report perhaps do not seem likely today. However, only some months back, prior to the elections, few foresaw the outbreak of an acute crisis; even less its persistence and intensity, and especially not the high number of casualties. In the same way, many were surprised by the outbreak of the conflict in 2002, and taken back by the scale of the anti-French hostilities in 2004. Negative security developments can spring up quickly; also the regional situation, which is currently relatively calm, has the potential to change rapidly. Consequences throughout the wider region can be severe. **The key point here is the link between development and security – an extreme concern is the very high number of disillusioned youth who no longer have a belief in their future.** With this high percentage of the population risking to be drawn into violence and illicit activities, Côte d'Ivoire and the vulnerable neighbouring countries could become increasingly ungovernable areas. **Similar circumstances to those in Guinea-Bissau, or parts of the Sahel countries, which harbour - or are entirely penetrated by - criminal networks of various kinds, could come to prevail.**

Given the above reasoning, a *second* concluding remark is that **it is of outmost importance that the international community keeps Côte d'Ivoire high on the agenda**, in order to avoid further surprise. **In the short, acute perspective, robust international military forces are required in Côte d'Ivoire to protect**

civilians. An international presence also serves to calm the reoccurring turmoil and is needed to prevent further escalation. Providing security for the population of a major capital, as well as of the explosive western Côte d'Ivoire and elsewhere in the country is a demanding task. In addition, the international troops need to serve as an interposing force to prevent the Ivorian armed elements from attacking each other. Another urgency is to protect key political personalities. To this must be added the need to ensure the safety of the own personnel. **As the security situation risks deteriorating rapidly in Côte d'Ivoire, the key issue is time.** The question is whether the UNOCI and other international stakeholders will manage to address the evolving events within an adequate time frame.

A *third* remark concerns recent calls for military intervention to depose Gbagbo. The risks and the stakes involved with deploying troops with a mandate to depose a political leader are high. To get rid of an undesirable political figure by military means could be a tempting way out. However, this risks being a short-term solution. Those who believe that the situation will stabilise just because the issue of the presidential post is solved will be disappointed. Ensuring free and fair elections are far from all that is needed to bring about a stable Côte d'Ivoire. **To content oneself with designating one of the presidents to Head of State is a superficial solution in Côte d'Ivoire and is likely to result in continued instability.**

Instead, the root cause behind the conflict, i.e. failed nation-building, must be considered. The current crisis appears acute, but it is not unexpected as it stems from more than 15 years of failure to address the issues of Ivorian identity and nationality. Nation-building is complex, and this is why Côte d'Ivoire has struggled for such a long time to accomplish their goals of organising elections, regulating the nationality of the population, integrating the army and the Forces Nouvelles into one joint force, and unifying the country. To ensure the population identity documents, the right to vote and the right to buy land is necessary but not sufficient to solve identity based conflicts.

For a long-lasting solution, the underlying causes of the crisis must be addressed. In particular, **genuine reconciliation initiatives among the local populations are needed, where the different identity groups in the country are recognised and valued.** This is a fundamental step to creating a durable peace in which people are not susceptible to being mobilised and opposed against each other. In fact, holding presidential elections before the nation-building has been properly dealt with, rather leads to solidifying the cleavages between the groups. Apart from reconciliation efforts, **other local level initiatives** are needed to strengthen the population and to provide for a stable Côte d'Ivoire in the future. This includes **democratisation projects, education and awareness-raising, the building of a strong civil society, programmes stimulating the local economy and anti-corruption measures.** These initiatives will mitigate local tensions and equip the population to resist irresponsible leaders and political

manipulation. Few mechanisms to address local conflict and to build up capacity among vulnerable local populations are however to be found in the programmes of legitimate regional actors such as ECOWAS and the AU. The UN has invested in Côte d'Ivoire's future by supporting community projects for populations at risk, partly through the Peace Building Fund. The EU and bilateral actors can also choose to support income generating projects and other similar initiatives.

As a *final* concluding remark, the **imperative for international stakeholders to continue to demonstrate unity and act concurrently** should be underlined. Making one or a few driving international actors shoulder the majority of the responsibility for Côte d'Ivoire has previously resulted in a failed peace process. Instead, if several organisations and countries share the responsibility in a clear way, by complementing diplomatic measures and by contributing resources, a genuine international pressure will be signalled. It is, furthermore, **essential that this commitment does not wane when new acute crises break out in other countries. Gbagbo's strategy to win time and convey the impression that the situation has normalised can succeed if the international community does not engage in a durable and consequent manner.** In response to developments at the political level, the international community should maintain its pressure on Gbagbo. Yet, it is important to bear in mind the risk associated with giving the impression that Gbagbo has been ousted by the international community – this can give Gbagbo more legitimacy and thus be counter-productive. Continued support for ECOWAS, which has legitimacy in the region, is vital, but regional politics will prevent the organisation from acting swiftly and expectations regarding what can be achieved by this regional actor should be realistic. **The most crucial objective at this stage is to prevent atrocities from taking place, as this will deepen the divisions between the Ivorians and worsen the odds for future peace. This implies that the protection of civilians should be a top priority for international stakeholders.**

Acronyms

AQIM	Al-Qaida in Maghreb
AU	African Union
BCEAO	Central Bank of West Africa States
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
ESF	ECOWAS Standby Force
FAFN	Forces Armées des Forces Nouvelles
FDS	Forces de Défense et de Sécurité (Ivorian Defense and Security Forces)
FLGO	Front de Libération de Grand Ouest
FN	Forces Nouvelles
FPI	Front Populaire Ivoirien
ICC	Integrated Command Centre
IDPs	Internally Displaced People
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MPCI	Mouvement Patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire
MJP	Mouvement pour la Justice et la Paix
MPIGO	Mouvement Populaire Ivoirien du Grand Ouest
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPDDR	National Program of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
OPA	Ouagadougou Political Accord
PDCI	Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire
RDR	Rassemblement des Républicains
UNSG	United Nations Secretary General
UN	United Nations

UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOCI	United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UPRGO	Union Patriotique de Resistance du Grand Ouest

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Annex A

The Ouagadougou Political Accord

The OPA was the reference frame for the peace process up to the presidential elections in November/December 2010, but in light of current developments, the agreement appears increasingly invalid. This annex gives an account of the implementation of the OPA, in order to provide a picture of where the peace process stood before the eruption of the latest crisis.

Implementation challenges for the OPA

Since the signing of the OPA, a certain normalisation and calm returned to Côte d'Ivoire. Nevertheless, a closer look reveals that progress of the implementation was for most part made only on details, issues in the periphery or on symbolic matters.¹⁷⁴ The key provisions have remained blocked. The implementation has been stuck on certain controversial issues, with the parties contesting the dispositions and having different interpretations on the order of implementation of the key provisions: whether full disarmament must take place before elections or whether the elections deadline is more important, whether the new army should be fully integrated before the elections or if confidence within the army should be rebuilt little by little, whether there can/should be reunification¹⁷⁵ after or before the elections, whether the id-cards can start to be distributed before the census is finished etc.¹⁷⁶ The impasse in implementing the OPA means that the peace process has been largely blocked. The challenges have involved difficulties in proceeding with the identification process, the postponement of elections, delays in restructuring the security and defence forces, and inefficiency in restoring state authority.

Elections/Identification

The lack of a comprehensive census and registration of the Ivorian population is at the core of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. In order to hold elections, it has become necessary to determine who is a citizen, and who is entitled a national identity card and a voting card. Efforts to facilitate the identification of the population

¹⁷⁴ Interview: International representative 1.

¹⁷⁵ Including the full establishment of the treasury, tax collect and customs offices in the north. Presently, there are banks and customs offices in Korhogo and Bouaké, tax offices can be found in all 10 zones in the north. (Interview: National representative 1)

¹⁷⁶ Interview: National representative 6. Interview: National representative 1. Interview: National representative 3.

were launched following the OPA, with mobile courts¹⁷⁷ issuing documents valid as birth certificates, which are needed to obtain a national identity card¹⁷⁸. These efforts were, however, largely insufficient, being incomplete or partial, and did not manage to entirely address the problem of lacking administrative documents attesting to the identity and nationality of the population. Identification has also been ensured through the undertaking of the electoral census and the establishing of the electoral list, on which people with birth certificates could register. National ID cards have not been supplied in Côte d'Ivoire since 1998, and these could only be delivered (together with the voting card) once the electoral census and electoral list had been finalised - to those people who have the right to figure on the list.¹⁷⁹ After a complicated, drawn-out process, the electoral census and the electoral list were finalised during autumn 2010, and identity documents have been delivered. Nevertheless, it can still be questioned how thorough this process has been and how many people in Côte d'Ivoire still remain unclear about their national status.

The defense and security forces

The OPA stipulates that a restructured and unitary armed force is to be realised through the creation of an integrated operational structure, the Integrated Command Centre (ICC). The ICC is meant as the embryo of the new army, and was planned to consist of 5000 soldiers from the Forces Nouvelles and 5000 from the Ivorian army. According to the OPA, this force is to stay in the barracks, having as its responsibility to ensure the security of all of the territory. In addition, a joint gendarme and police force was planned for within the ICC. The ICC was intended to be under the joint command of the Chief of Staffs of the Forces Nouvelles and the government forces.¹⁸⁰ The mission of the ICC included the implementation of the National Program of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (NPDDR). In addition to the NPDDR, which is stipulated to lead the DDR efforts at the state level, the OPA also assigns a role in the DDR process to the Civic Service, in coaching and training youth who have been implicated in the armed conflict for future military and civil jobs. The previous Gbagbo government committed to contribute a fixed monthly allowance and subsidy to ex-combatants of the Forces Armées des Forces Nouvelles (FAFN) and to militias to ensure the demobilisation process, and that after this

¹⁷⁷ Through the mobile courts, judges consider whether people who were/claim to be born in Côte d'Ivoire, but who have not been declared at the registry office, are entitled the birth certificate.

¹⁷⁸ People in possession of certificates of nationality can also be issued a national identity card (L'Accord Politique d'Ouagadougou)

¹⁷⁹ Interview: International representative 11, National representative 8. L'Accord Politique d'Ouagadougou.

¹⁸⁰ Interviews: International representative 4, International representative 8, National representative 1, National representative 10. L'Accord Politique d'Ouagadougou.

step ensure that their needs are taken care of, until their reinsertion into the Ivorian Forces de Défense et de Sécurité (FDS) or into civilian life.¹⁸¹

Concerning the new army and the DDR process, implementation has not moved forward at the desired pace. For a long time, only small efforts were made; a major concern is the lack of funds, but there has been a lack of will and aptitude as well.¹⁸² The ICC was never fully operational and the integrated army was deployed only in small numbers; the Forces Nouvelles zone commanders have thus remained in charge of security in northern Côte d'Ivoire. The ICC also suffered from serious logistical constraints.¹⁸³ There was no clear orientation for how the army would be reunified and functional on the ground. The recruitment of the 5000 troops from the FAFN proceeded very slowly, possibly because the FAFN does not have the numbers or the capacities needed. For instance, the soldiers' education and age did not match with what was requested. Another problem was that many are not in possession of an ID card, and therefore cannot prove that they are Ivorians.¹⁸⁴ Integrating the army was also complex because of the lack of confidence.¹⁸⁵ The lack of social cohesion means that the soldiers feel like two separate forces, even at the level of implementation, where they often would receive separate orders. Thus, no real unification took place in practice, but only on paper. The issue of military rank was another stumbling block, with disagreement regarding how to formally rank the Forces Nouvelles soldiers with informal qualifications, defining who is superior to whom, and what responsibilities they should be granted in the new army.¹⁸⁶ As for the mixed police/gendarme brigades, these were announced but never became operational; there was also no clear plan or definition of responsibilities between these units.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, the Northern protagonists demanded that Gbagbo's army also regroup, so that the ICC would also be effective in the South, however the Gbagbo-loyal troops refused to restructure and become part of the ICC. The ICC was thus only ever feasible in the North, while the police/gendarme in the South would have remained.¹⁸⁸

The DDR process has also encountered challenges. Few arms were collected¹⁸⁹ up until mid-2010.¹⁹⁰ The Forces Nouvelles have been hesitant to disarm before

¹⁸¹ L'Accord Politique d'Ouagadougou

¹⁸² Interview: National representative 6, National representative 1, National representative 9.

¹⁸³ Interview: International representative 9, International representative 7, International representative 1, International representative 2, National representative 1.

¹⁸⁴ Interview: International representative 9.

¹⁸⁵ Interview: National representative 10, International representative 1.

¹⁸⁶ Interview: International representative 9, National representative 3, National representative 9.

¹⁸⁷ Interview: International representative 9.

¹⁸⁸ Interview: International representative 1.

¹⁸⁹ The success in arms collection is however difficult to measure, as there was no figure of how many arms existed at the outset of the assembly process.

¹⁹⁰ Interview: International representative 8. Institute for Security Studies (17 June 2010)

the election, knowing that by giving its weapons away it would stand without a guarantee before a government they perceive as untrustworthy; disarmament would be relinquishing an essential tool of pressure likely to affect their bargaining power.¹⁹¹ Disarmament advanced in the latter part of 2010, and was assessed as having proceeded sufficiently for elections to take place. The disarmament has not, however, been entirely completed. As for the Ivorian army, it has refused to disarm, and disarmament came to be accepted as equalling withdrawal from the frontline to the barracks.¹⁹² Government militias have equally not been fully disarmed. There are few incentives to hand in the arms among the Forces Nouvelles as well as among the militias. The previous government lacked the necessary funds that were promised to the demobilised and access to weapons means power to ensure an everyday livelihood by criminal means.¹⁹³ Zones commanders and soldiers who were ready to demobilise were not assured that they would be taken care of and given something concrete to engage in, and they were wary of the risk of being caught in a limbo during the continued political deadlock.¹⁹⁴ Due to the lack of funds, reinsertion projects have been few and slow in forthcoming and those initiated are often inadequate.¹⁹⁵ A dilemma with the DDR packages has been the difficulty in knowing who is really entitled to the benefits. The number of people on the DDR list has been growing, leading observers to suggest that ‘everyone’ who is unemployed has a claim to have the right to the DDR packages. Frustration has also been rife with the risk of DDR money being unevenly distributed between the militias and the Forces Nouvelles.¹⁹⁶

Restoration of state authority

When the conflict broke out, civil servants and other state employees, such as teachers and medical personnel, left their positions in rebel occupied territories. The OPA calls for political and institutional normalisation in Côte d’Ivoire, including the reinstallation of state administrative capacities and of public service delivery. According to the peace agreement, the police and gendarme forces are in charge of the safety of redeployed prefectural corps, and the FDS and the FAFN are to put elements at the disposition of the ICC for this purpose. The need to redeploy fiscal and customs administration was also stressed, as it was seen as a precondition to accelerating the restoration of state authority and the

¹⁹¹ Interview: International representative 2, National representative 3. Institute for Security Studies (17 June 2010)

¹⁹² Interview: International representative 9.

¹⁹³ Interview: International representative 9, National representative 9. Institute for Security Studies (17 June 2010)

¹⁹⁴ Interview: International representative 1, International representative 9.

¹⁹⁵ Interview: International representative 5, International representative 9, National representative 2.

¹⁹⁶ Interview: International representative 4, International representative 1, National representative 4, International representative 9, National representative 9.

redeployment of other parts of the administration.¹⁹⁷ The implementation here has been relatively successful as most state personnel are redeployed¹⁹⁸. However, they are often ineffective in their jobs, lacking logistical means and resources.¹⁹⁹ Furthermore, maintaining basic order is a task for the prefects, but they are limited in carrying out their work. The number of police in place is insufficient, and Forces Nouvelles zone commanders are still the real authorities in charge of security. As long as the Forces Nouvelles are not yet in the barracks, the prefects are dependent on negotiating all matters with the zone commanders.²⁰⁰ A further problem blocking the implementation is that the Forces Nouvelles still collect all revenues, taxes and customs in the North, which means the state treasury is deprived of this income.^{201 202} In this way, the territorial division is cemented and institutionalised. The Forces Nouvelles have claimed that the circumstances do not allow for tax collection by the state; because people are still largely unidentified, there is no complete register and it is administratively impossible to control tax payment.²⁰³ The Gbagbo loyalists have argued that the Forces Nouvelles have no will to stick to the OPA deadline and to give up this income to the state, but instead take the opportunity to enrich themselves.²⁰⁴ This situation has facilitated illegal trade and smuggling. The problem is linked to the dysfunctional DDR process, as the zone commanders and the Forces Nouvelles have not been funded in any other way and therefore remain dependent on their own means.²⁰⁵ On the other hand, if the state had had access to the revenues from the North, it would have been easier for it to pay for the DDR.²⁰⁶ The efforts to establish customs offices and other state agencies/representations has also been complicated by the difficulty of what to do with those people in the North who have served as “volunteers” (paid by the Forces Nouvelles or by the population) to deliver services in the absence of state representatives.²⁰⁷

¹⁹⁷ Interview: International representative 4, National representative 3, National representative 1, National representative 6 (L'Accord Politique d'Ouagadougou, Ayangafac (2007))

¹⁹⁸ A few people with key functions are lacking, within the judiciary, the penitentiary system and the financial system (Interview: International representative 7).

¹⁹⁹ Interviews: International representative 5, International representative 7.

²⁰⁰ Interviews: International representative 4, International representative 11, International representative 7.

²⁰¹ The Forces Nouvelles have their own banks in the north. There is a state treasury in place, but it does presently not collect. Customs offices only exist in one town in the north (Interview: International representative 7, National representative 3, National representative 1).

²⁰² Interviews: International representative 7, National representative 3, National representative 9.

²⁰³ Interview: National representative 1.

²⁰⁴ Interview: National representative 3.

²⁰⁵ Interview: International representative 7.

²⁰⁶ Interview: National representative 3.

²⁰⁷ Interviews: International representative 7, National representative 1.