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YOUSSOUF DIALLO

FROM STABILITY TO UNCERTAINTY: A RECENT POLITICAL HISTORY OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE

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Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, P.O. Box 110351,
06017 Halle / Saale, Phone: +49 (0)345 2927-0, Fax: +49 (0)345 2927-502,
http://www.eth.mpg.de, e-mail: workingpaper@eth.mpg.de

From Stability to Uncertainty: a recent political history of Côte d'Ivoire[1]

Youssouf Diallo[2]

Abstract

This paper is about the internal conflict in Côte d'Ivoire (or Ivory Coast). After independence in 1960, Côte d'Ivoire has achieved rapid economic growth and political stability under the presidency of Houphouet Boigny. Yet by the end of the 1980s, an economic crisis created difficult conditions for the large majority of the population, while power and wealth were concentrated in the hands of a small minority. After the death of Houphouet Boigny in 1993, Côte d'Ivoire entered a period of turmoil characterised by power struggles, conflicts among various communities living in the country and army mutinies, which culminated in civil war in September 2002. In January 2003, the international community organised a peace conference in Paris, where the conflicting parties and the major political forces signed the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. A Government of National Reconciliation has received the mandate to realise the resolutions of the peace conference by the next presidential elections planned for October 2005. However, Côte d'Ivoire is still at a political impasse. Whether the political leaders will have the capacity to rebuild the state and achieve national unity is more than uncertain.

[1] The information in this paper comes partly from written sources, including the Ivorian press, partly from fieldwork carried out in Northern Côte d'Ivoire in 1996 and November 2001. In the interests of some informants, I omit to give their names. I am grateful to John Eidson, Deema Kaneff, Agnieszka Halemba and Veronika Fuest for their comments and suggestions on an earlier draft.

[2] Youssouf Diallo, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, PO Box 110351, 06107 Halle/Saale, Germany. Tel: + 49 (0) 345 2927 0. Email: diallo@eth.mpg.de

List of abbreviations:

PDCI	*Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire*
FPI	*Front Populaire Ivoirien*
RDR	*Rassemblement des Républicains*
UDPCI	*Union pour le Développement et la Paix en Côte d'Ivoire*
FANCI	*Forces nationales de Côte d'Ivoire*
MPCI	*Mouvement Patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire*
FESCI	*Fédération estudiantine et scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire*
MPIGO	*Mouvement Populaire Ivoirien du Grand Ouest*
MJP	*Mouvement pour la Justice et la Paix*
MFA	*Mouvement des forces de l'avenir*
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States

Introduction

According to social and political scientists, the most recent armed conflicts in Africa have not appeared to be over political differences, but rather are struggles for the control of resources. Yet, current studies have tried to go far beyond the resource-orientated inspired theories used in conflict analysis and considered the ethnicisation of the system of governance (Wimmer 1995), the changing patterns of identification that groups follow and the many forms alliances may take (Schlee 2004). Not only warlords but also other key players, such as ethnic militias, politicians or successful manipulators of identities and citizenship, play an important role in shaping intra-state armed conflicts. The 'new wars'[3], as they have come to be known, are in fact intricate politics of resources, identities and citizenship. As will be shown in this paper, the internal conflict in Côte d'Ivoire is much the same.

Conflict analysis is actor-centred. This means that the conflicting parties as well as their stakes in the conflict must be identified first. In Côte d'Ivoire's crisis, the state is the bone of contention. Because the state represents the supreme resource, power is needed for gaining access to other resources and building wealth and status. In the power struggles, the politicians are the principal actors who appeal to ethno-regional loyalties to gain support and acquire or preserve privileged positions. The politicisation of groups' identities has sharpened ethno-regional divisions, exacerbated tensions and created a cycle of violence among various ethnic communities living in the country. The same ethnic and political divisions that characterise civil society also exist in the army and police. The recent military factionalism, added to the changes in the security forces, has aggravated frustration within the army and caused mutinies, culminating in a rebellion on 19 September 2002. Since then Côte d'Ivoire has been divided into two zones, one controlled by the rebels in the northern region and the other by loyalist troops in the southern region.

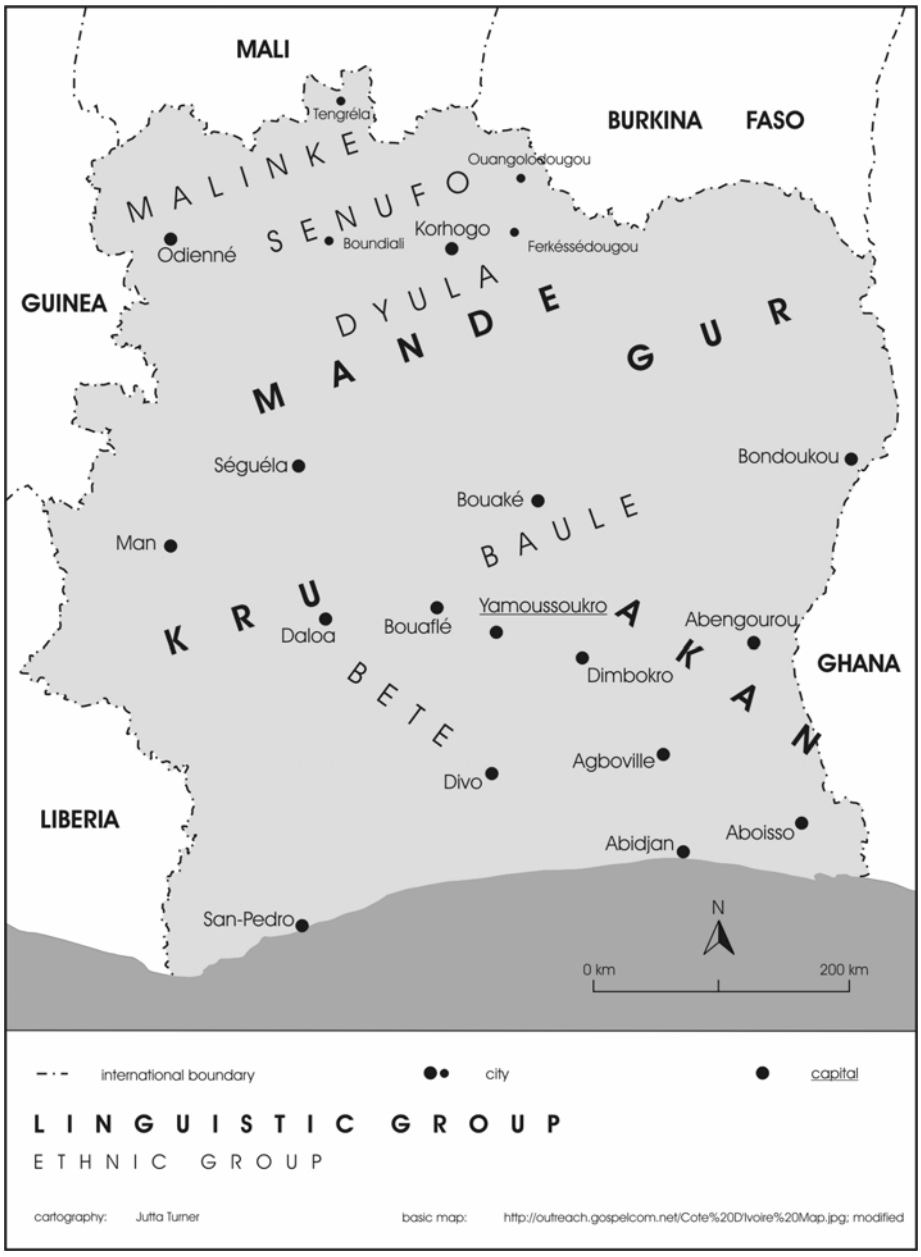
In describing the progressive breakdown of the internal situation, I start with a historical overview. Then, focussing on the period since 1999, I describe some characteristics of the conflict, its various causes and manifestations, the major players and their logic of action. Subsequent sections of the paper deal with the international response to the conflict and with the current situation since the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement was signed in January 2003.

[3] The term 'new wars' is borrowed from Ulf Engel, "Governance in Africa's New Violent Social Spaces", lecture given at the Joint Colloquia of the MPI for Social Anthropology and the Institute for Social Anthropology, MLU Halle-Wittenberg, on 30 November 2004.

Historical Background

Many authors have written on the history of Côte d'Ivoire. Only a short outline of the historical background will be given here. Côte d'Ivoire has a diverse ecology extending from the savannah region in the north to the forest belt and the coastal zone in the south. The state, inherited from the French colonial power in 1960, includes in its boundaries a wide range of languages and ethnic groups. The Akan, the Kru, the Mande and the Gur are the four most important language groups (see map). The Agni and Baule represent the two sections of the Akan people living in southeastern and central Côte d'Ivoire respectively.[4] The Kru-speaking groups live in the west of the country and beyond the Ivorian border in northern Liberia. In Côte d'Ivoire, the Kru include the Bete ethnic group to which the current president Laurent Gbagbo and some influential members of his party belong. The Mande and the Gur-speaking groups (to which the Senufo belong) are found in the northern region that borders Burkina Faso and Mali. Among the most important Mande sections are the Dyula and Malinke in the Ivorian savannah today called 'the North' in Abidjan. In identity discourses ethnic differences are sometimes associated with differences of religion. The term 'Dyula' has thus gained currency in Côte d'Ivoire where it is used in a very general way by non-Muslims to describe both Muslims and northerners.

[4] The counterparts of the Akan, known as the 'littoral' subgroups, include small 'ethnic enclaves', speaking different languages, although sharing similarities with regard to social organisation.



Not only colonisation, but also the development of cash crop agriculture (cocoa, coffee) from which the rural landowning *bourgeoisie* of the entire southern region derives its wealth, played a crucial role in the history of the country.[5] Here, the plantation economy and education were the important means of social mobility, conferring rank and prestige. After the introduction of cocoa in 1905, many European planters settled first in the southeastern forest region. They and the native plantation-owners, including members of traditional and educated elites, utilised forced labour. Following the gradual expansion of the plantation economy to the remaining forest zone, important changes resulting in urbanisation and education occurred, first in the southeastern region, and then in the central region of Côte d'Ivoire, too.

[5] On the politics of cocoa expansion see, for example, Woods (2003).

Power and wealth were first concentrated in the hands of southeasterners. But before and after independence, other members of the Akan family and especially the Baule of the central region (Bouaké-Yamoussoukro) enjoyed the same privileges. Their representatives were business men, teachers, lawyers or doctors. Houphouet Boigny, Côte d'Ivoire's first President, is the epitome of this class.

Houphouet Boigny, a Baule planter and trade unionist, was the founder of the *Syndicat Agricole Africain* (African Agricultural Union). Houphouet was a skilled politician who later made a name for himself as the defender of the West African peasantry. Forced migration to the plantations of Côte d'Ivoire was a widespread phenomenon. The Mossi, the most important ethnic group of Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), were the most affected by this phenomenon. As the pressures for changes in the colonial territories grew, Houphouet emphasised the need for struggling against racial discrimination in the plantations and exploitation by European planters (Skinner 1964: 180). With the support of young educated Mossi, he succeeded in his attempt to end forced labour in French colonial territories through a law promulgated in April 1946 and known as the Loi Houphouet Boigny.

Following independence in 1960, Houphouet, the charismatic leader, became President by virtue of the legitimacy conferred through his historical achievements. He favoured a one-party system and formed the *Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire* (PDCI). Houphouet claimed that a single party promotes national unity in a multi-ethnic setting, whereas a multi-party system leads to ethnic separatism.[6] Therefore he tolerated no opposition party. From 1960 to 1993, the almighty PDCI dominated the political scene. The PDCI was both an urban and rural-based party with a national character and claiming to represent all ethnic groups. The new postcolonial state, under the presidency of Houphouet, brought together the ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous groups, which also had different types of political organisations, property regimes and religious traditions.

State power represents the supreme resource and, as Tessy has also clearly shown, its control is equivalent to the control of the economy of the country (Tessy 1997). In the Houphouet era (1960-1993), being a Baule and, more generally, belonging to the Akan group had a significant importance. It was advantageous to belong to this group or to affiliate oneself with the PDCI in order to acquire financial resources and influence. Houphouet managed to play an ethno-regional policy by co-opting representatives of all regions and ethnic groups in his party and offered them positions in the administration and the army. Through the "politics of distribution" (Tessy 1997: 58) and co-optation, he provided personal friends and traditional chiefs – including those from the north – with financial resources and

[6] On this point see also Busia (1967).

different kinds of services in return for electoral and political support. This politics of distribution of resources and positions, which has contributed to ease tensions, was the key to managing conflict. Côte d'Ivoire enjoyed relative stability. No military coups were attempted. Also, the presence of French troops stationed in Abidjan played a crucial role in maintaining political stability in the country.

In building his support in West Africa, Houphouet extended his system of clientelism to some neighbouring countries, especially to Burkina Faso. For him, the integration of foreigners was consistent with national interests. He implemented a policy of immigration whereby Côte d'Ivoire became famous for the integration of various West African communities. Houphouet liked to present himself as the defender of the interests and property of the peasants. As the plantation economy required land ownership, he declared that the land belonged to the person that cultivated it. Therefore, his government secured property in land for West African migrant groups.

From 1960 and continuing until the late 1980s, Côte d'Ivoire achieved economic growth and political stability. Observers often refer to this economic success as the 'Ivorian miracle'. Agricultural development, traditional chiefs and Houphouet's personal historical legitimacy were the pillars that supported and preserved this system of clientelism. The financing of government and development was facilitated by the appropriation of agricultural surpluses and money from the cocoa and coffee sectors.

Many observers ascribe the current crisis to the failure of the system of governance described above, though the problems in Côte d'Ivoire are extremely complex. It is true that, by the end of the 1980s, Houphouet's system was confronted with a severe social and economic crisis marked by rapid population growth and urban unemployment. It was the urban elites and bureaucrats associated with Houphouet who benefited the most from money earned from the plantation economy. Later, while the social and economic conditions of the large majority of the population deteriorated, corruption increased among urban elites. The economic recession of the early 1980s led the World Bank and the IMF to intervene and stress the necessity for the privatisation and liberalisation of the cash-crop sector. As the external pressures for economic and social reforms grew, Houphouet entrusted for the first time a new prime minister, Alassane Ouattara, an economist, with implementing the changes. Ouattara's government dissolved the *Caisse de Stabilisation* (Board of Stabilisation of Cash Crop Prices) used hitherto as an instrument of financing the state and Houphouet's party.[7]

The appointment of Ouattara, a northerner of Dyula origin, caused a lot of resentment and created tensions and heightened the competition among southern political leaders. New

[7] On this Caisse (in abbreviated form *Caistab*) see also Kanté (1994).

opposition forces emerged, stressing the need for more democracy, since they resented the so called 'Baule domination'. In 1989, Laurent Gbagbo, whose *Front Populaire Ivoirien* (FPI) was working underground, organised several demonstrations with the view of forcing Houphouet to fully implement democracy. However, it was the death of Houphouet on 7 December 1993 that has allowed democratisation and initiated a period of political reconfiguration, immediately followed by a power struggle and the rise of ethnic divisions.

Power Struggle and the Rise of Ethnic Divisions

The death of Houphouet, the uncertainties about his succession and the way in which his successor – Konan Bédié, a leader of Baule origin, the former president of the national assembly – was ultimately determined were, along with the ensuing events, symptoms of a social and political crisis. In the countryside, the death of Houphouet provided the occasion for open reactions against his policy regarding foreigners (Diallo 1999: 230). In Abidjan, a new political force called *Rassemblement des Républicains* (RDR) emerged after a split in the PDCI only a few months after the death of Houphouet. The RDR was formerly headed by the late Djeni Kobinan and now by Ouattara, Houphouet's former Prime Minister.

Houphouet was somewhat like Tito in Yugoslavia, who was able to ward off the rise of ethnic conflict until his death. Since 1993, the appeal to ethnic loyalties has come to characterise political competition. Differences between PDCI, RDR and FPI are not ideological, but are phrased in ethnic terms. Each party is identified with the ethnic group of its leader. Although these political forces share the goal of bringing together the Ivorian citizens, they assign a great significance to ethnicity in looking for support.

Another point that is worth considering with regard to the death of Houphouet is the ethno-regional factor and the widening of the north-south divide, a phenomenon manifesting itself through a differential access to power, services and wealth. The north-south divide remains one of the major political challenges for contemporary West African states. This is at the heart of the current crisis. It was under the leadership of Bédié, that the divorce between 'the North' and 'the South' took place. As a result of its failure to keep its various promises, Bédié's party lost ground in the northern region. In 1995, the year of the first pluralist elections, the RDR superseded PDCI in 'the North' and became the strongest party among the northern ethnic groups. Since that time, ethno-regional affiliations exacerbated the politics of inclusion-exclusion.

The Politics of Exclusion

Another important key to the understanding of the current conflict is citizenship, or the question of who is and who is not Ivorian. Under Bédié, intellectuals and university researchers, most of them members of the Akan group, propagated what they called *ivoirité* ('ivorianness'), a notion which distinguishes between Ivorians of 'authentic' origin and Ivorians of 'mixed' origin. *Ivoirité* is a version of an 'Akan philosophy' of nationality based on the conviction that southern ethnic groups are 'true' Ivorians, whereas 'the northerners' are 'Ivorians by chance'.

Ivoirité theory has been described as the fruit of narrow sectarianism and an expression of xenophobia since this theory led to an amalgam of Ivorians of northern origin and foreigners. Xenophobic rhetoric, conflicts between autochthons and West African communities[8] and the politics of inclusion-exclusion defined by government institutions after 1995, were all shaped by the idea of *ivoirité* (CES 2000). The issue of national identification became a matter of political interest (Dozon 2000). In 1998, for example, the government of Bédié launched a national identification campaign with the intention of distinguishing between Ivorians and foreigners. Gbagbo's FPI took up the same programme of identification in November 2001 (Dembélé 2003: 42). With regard to land ownership, the post-Houphouet government of Bédié fostered discrimination between Ivorians and foreigners. The project of the Rural Tenure Plan, launched in 1994 as part of the national programme of land management, was intended to find a solution to land disputes. Since 1998, a new land regulation has been in effect. Only Ivorian citizens can be landowners. The failure of the new land tenure policy has heightened conflicts between migrant farmers, Mossi, who formed the majority, and Ivorian planters. In the coastal region of Tabou, for example, disputes in 1999 over land turned into violent conflicts between autochthons and foreigners, leading to the eviction of Lobi farmers. There were many reports of attacks against migrant farmers, the confiscation of their properties and their eviction from the plantations in the western region as well.

Under President Bédié (1993-1999), Côte d'Ivoire slipped into authoritarianism, political repression and economic corruption, leading the European Union and IMF to suspend aid. Bédié has used citizenship as a criterion for excluding Ouattara from the elections. To get rid of his rival, he put the concept of *ivoirité* forward, claiming that Ouattara was a citizen of Burkinabé origin. The Supreme Court disqualified Ouattara from the 1995 presidential elections. In 1999, Ouattara was forced into exile in France. On 27 October 1999, influential

[8] See 'Côte d'Ivoire: West Africans threatened', *IRIN*, 10 January 2001. On conflicts between Ivorians and West African communities living in Côte d'Ivoire, see also Schack (1978).

members of his party were imprisoned.[9] Since that time, xenophobic discourses, human rights abuses, inter-ethnic violence and destruction of properties have intensified, culminating in a military intervention in December 1999.

The Military Transition

Political theorists have attributed internal disorder to the failure of the central government to control rebellion and civil war (Brierly 1955). In a recent study on political instability in Africa, McGowan has also shown that military interventions continue to be a pervasive form of insecurity, despite democratisation trends since 1990 (McGowan 2003). Côte d'Ivoire is no longer an exception.

On 23 December 1999, soldiers mutinied and began looting in Abidjan, protesting against unpaid salaries and poor living conditions. On 24 December, the insurgent soldiers deposed Bédié and seized power for the first time in the history of Côte d'Ivoire. General Robert Guéi formed a National Committee of Public Salvation and added his name to the list of the potential rulers of the country. Guéi sent Bédié into exile in France, claiming, at first, that he himself was not interested in staying in power. The new government that he led, temporarily, set out to fight corruption and ethnic divisions and to restore a true democracy. Soon, however, Guéi formed his own political party, the *Union pour le Développement et la Paix en Côte d'Ivoire* (UDPCI), and decided to run for the presidency in October 2000. When Guéi ousted Bédié from power, many Ivorians noted that the situation in Côte d'Ivoire went through a somewhat positive change marked by a relatively quiet phase. In the meantime, however, there had been a resurgence of human right abuses committed by the soldiers associated with the junta against the civilian population, local journalists and students. Côte d'Ivoire was slipping into military dictatorship.[10]

In fact, the military intervention did not entail a significant redistribution of power among political groups. Under Guéi's junta, PDCI made its comeback. The new constitution, the electoral code and *ivoirité* became central political issues again. Before the election, an article on the conditions of presidential eligibility stipulated that 'a candidate must be born in Côte d'Ivoire to a mother *or* a father of Ivorian origin'. Although the 'or' was almost retained after a debate, Guéi changed the 'or' to 'and' before the referendum on the new constitution, an amendment aimed at excluding Ouattara again. As a result, the Supreme Court announced the exclusion of Ouattara, Bédié and other key opposition leaders from the presidential election. Laurent Gbagbo was the only exception. PDCI and RDR called for a boycott. When, contrary

[9] See Agence France Presse (AFP), 'Amnesty demande au président Bédié de libérer les dirigeants du RDR', 14 December 1999.
[10] See, for example, *Le Monde*, 'Côte d'Ivoire, vers la dictature', 10 October 2000.

to Guéi's expectations, Gbagbo won the election, Guéi refused to recognise the victory. The decision to keep Gbagbo from becoming president resulted in almost total insurrection, accompanied by many killings in Abidjan. Guéi was compelled to flee from the capital. He took refuge in his native region, near Man, in western Côte d'Ivoire. The Supreme Court declared Gbagbo president. Guéi returned one year later to Abidjan to resume his political activities as one of the opposition leaders.

The ousting of Guéi was immediately followed by Ouattara's demand for new elections and protests from his supporters. The security forces brutally repressed the demonstration, killing many northerners and immigrants.[11] The post-election situation became extremely volatile. On 27 October 2000, pictures of a mass grave found in Yopougon, a district of Abidjan, shocked the international community. The latter put a lot of pressure on Gbagbo, calling for an inquiry into political violence but also for a forum of reconciliation. After much hesitation, Gbagbo ultimately accepted to play the reconciliation card and set out to organise a forum of national reconciliation.

The Failure of the Forum of National Reconciliation

In September 2001, President Gbagbo set up a facilitation committee and convened a forum of national reconciliation in Abidjan, claiming from the outset that he would not be bound by the final resolutions of the forum. He appointed Seydou Diarra, prime minister under Guéi's junta, to head the committee mandated to chair the discussions.[12] Whether reconciliation could be done with intransigent political leaders determined to continue the power struggle was uncertain. But the committee said that the resolutions of a forum ignoring Gbagbo, Bédié, Ouattara and Guéi would not be respected by them. Therefore, Diarra invited the 'four big leaders' to participate in the forum.

From 9 October 2001 to 12 December 2001, political parties, trade-unions, the armed forces, the police, social forces and religious institutions sent delegations to the forum to tell their 'part of the truth' and express their frustrations. Although participants in the forum addressed the Ivorian crisis at the roots, Ouattara's nationality and the constitution became the central questions. In December, after two months of intensive discussions, the committee passed a resolution intended to end impunity, violence, corruption and the policy of *ivoirité* and submitted it to Gbagbo for approval.

In his closing address on 18 December 2001, Gbagbo went through the report of the committee point by point, but ignored the main recommendations for reconciliation. He

[11] See 'Côte d'Ivoire: IRIN Focus On the Latest Electoral Crisis', 4 December 2000.
[12] *L'Inter*, 'Réconciliation nationale – Ouverture du forum de réconciliation nationale', No. 1028, 9 October 2001.

simply expressed his willingness to follow the policy of conciliation and to meet with Bédié, Ouattara and Guéi. The 'four big leaders' were reported to have met on 22-23 January 2002 in Yamoussoukro, where they struck a secret bargain.[13] They arranged for amnesty measures to be taken with the intention of exonerating themselves from blame. Also, they agreed that former heads of state, prime ministers and heads of major government institutions would have their slice of the national cake. This would take the form of awarding to themselves life long allowances.

After the forum, Charles Josselin, the then French minister of cooperation, who had already attended the opening session, surprised the Ivorians by declaring that France was satisfied with the situation in Côte d'Ivoire. The French Embassy in Abidjan announced the payment of a financial contribution intended to cover the expenses of the forum. There was a specific interest at stake, which had brought Josselin to the forum on behalf of the European Union. The international community strongly supported the idea of a forum, thinking that a conference similar to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission would bring compromise into Ivorian politics.

Despite the satisfaction of French diplomacy, the forum of reconciliation brought no tangible results. With the ensuing events, it appeared that Gbagbo, Bédié, Ouattara and Guéi were determined to continue the political struggle and to fight each other. The situation in Côte d'Ivoire became even more unstable after the forum, with perilous complications arising from the security forces that triggered army mutinies in 2001 and 2002.

Rebellion

The mutinies and rebellion, to which this section is devoted, must be understood in relation to the prevailing socio-political situation and the changes in the security forces in the context of the army reform.

Changes in the Security Forces

The same ethnic and political cleavages that run through Ivorian society exist in the armed forces (FANCI) and the police. Underlying the security forces' problems are also the poor conditions of the two institutions. The FANCI and police suffer not only from low salaries and poor work conditions but also from ethnic nepotism (Coulibaly 2002). The recruitment of soldiers is based on ethno-regional belonging (Kiefer 2000). Despite the lack of equipment,

[13] See the Ivorian daily *L'Inter*, 'Le « deal » que les quatre leaders ont caché aux Ivoiriens – La face cachée du forum', No. 1305, 12 September 2002.

the armed forces have experienced a rapid expansion, with recruitment of young soldiers especially under Guéi's junta in 1999-2000. The majority of the soldiers, recruited according to their ethnic affiliation, were members of special paramilitary units known as *Zinzins* and *Bahéfoués*. With the help of President Taylor of Liberia, Guéi recruited a number of Liberian and Sierra Leonean fighters for his presidential guard, known as the Red Brigades (Ero & Marshall 2003: 90).

The actions of the Red Brigades and other special units, like the *Camorra* and the *Cosa Nostra*, to which Guéi delegated security, resulted in an almost military factionalism. In September 2000, soldiers of the *Cosa Nostra*, indicted for plotting with the Guéi junta, were arrested.[14] Among those who took refuge in Burkina Faso were the leaders of the current rebellion, namely Tuo Fozié, Chérif Ousmane and Coulibaly Ibrahim, also known as 'IB'. The situation in the army worsened in January 2001, when a section of the army revolted against the presidency of Gbagbo. Loyal troops subdued the rebellion, while the young northern soldiers who had led it fled and found refuge in Burkina Faso.

In January 2002, Moïse Lida Kouassi, Minister of Defence, announced a reform programme for the army. This reform, one of the bottlenecks in the solution of the Ivorian crisis, posed great challenges not only under Bédié and Guéi, but also under Gbagbo. Due to the extreme volatility of the political situation, the reform and the changes in the security forces became the destabilising factor of Gbagbo's regime. The imminent demobilisation of paramilitary units has caused resentment and exacerbated frustrations. Members of the *Cosa Nostra*, *Zinzins* and *Bahéfoués* units considered to be too close to Guéi were expected to be demobilised. Lida Kouassi also unilaterally removed northern officers thought to be close to Ouattara's party and replaced them with southerners in Bouaké. This turned out to be an error in some cases. For example, Lida Kouassi sent Colonel Michel Gueu, who was responsible for the presidential guard of Guéi, to Yamoussoukro first and, later, to Bouaké where he became one of the senior officers of the rebellion. FPI officials requested an inquiry into Lida Kouassi's role of nominating southern officers that turned out to be members of the rebellion. On 14 October 2002, Gbagbo fired Lida Kouassi.[15]

The situation in the army and the subsequent changes in the security forces, leading to the exclusion and frustration of former soldiers, triggered the armed conflict. The exiled soldiers

[14] Among the accused were General Lansana Palenfo, the former number two of the junta, and General Abdoulaye Coulibaly.

[15] In a party conference in Abidjan, Lida Kouassi supposedly acknowledged that he was pushed by Simone Gbagbo, the president's wife, who drew his attention to the concentration of officers close to RDR in Bouaké. See 'Convention du FPI. Appelé à s'expliquer sur sa gestion de la guerre, Lida Kouassi livre enfin ses secrets', *L'Inter*, No. 1743, 28 February 2004.

that led the attacks were under the command of Staff Sergeant Ibrahim Coulibaly. They began the preparation of the armed movement in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) in 2001.

Outbreak of War

On 19 September 2002, the exiled soldiers tried, without success, to seize power during the president's absence from the country. In Abidjan, the insurgent soldiers killed the Minister of Security, Emile Boga Doudou, and in Bouaké another minister was held captive. Many southern officers abandoned their posts or were killed in the attacks on Bouaké and Korhogo. But some of the superior officers of FANCI from other ethnic groups also joined the rebellion. Among them were Colonel Gueu and Colonel Soumaïla Bakayogo. The rebels met with resistance from soldiers loyal to Gbagbo's government and failed to take Abidjan. The loyalists killed General Guéi, whom they accused of instigating the rebellion.[16] Bédié and Ouattara took refuge in the Canadian and the German Embassies respectively.

On 15 October 2002, Sergeant Tuo Fozié announced the existence of the *Mouvement Patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire* (MPCI) under Guillaume Soro, ex-leader of the student organisation (FESCI). MPCI leaders claimed that they were determined not only to oust Gbagbo from power, but also to restore a new political order. In addition to MPCI, the *Mouvement Populaire Ivoirien du Grand Ouest* (MPIGO) and the *Mouvement pour la Justice et la Paix* (MJP), arose in November 2002 in the west, in the region bordering on Liberia. On 27 November 2002, the rebels attacked Vavoua and Man on 1 December. Though observers differentiate between MPCI, MJP and MPIGO, there are close connections between the three rebel movements. MJP is considered to be a direct offspring of MPCI. From the start, MPIGO decided to revenge Guei's death. MPIGO was at the same time a kind of strategic buffer force, which Taylor manipulated with the intention of protecting himself against the danger of Liberian rebels coming from the MPCI-held zone (Ero & Marshall 2003).[17]

Many other soldiers have joined the western rebellion, as have mercenaries from Burkina Faso and from the Mano River Union Region (Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea) (Ero & Marshall 2003). Traditional hunters, colloquially called *dozos*, also joined the rebel faction MPCI in Bouaké and Korhogo. Referring more specifically to the participation of *dozos* fighters in the conflict, the following question about patterns of identification and alliance arises: Why and how did it come about that the *dozos* sided with the northern rebel groups?

[16] There is no evidence to confirm Guéi's involvement in the rebellion. The loyalists eliminated this rival of Gbagbo because, in a party conference held in Abidjan a few days before the rebellion, Guéi reportedly made a speech in a menacing style aimed at Gbagbo. See the Ivorian daily *Soir Info*, 'Le général Guéi aux militants: « Si quelqu'un vous gifle, giflez-le plus fort »', No. 2412, 9 September 2002.

[17] On changing alliances in western Côte d'Ivoire see also the ICG report of November 2003.

The Emerging Role of the Dozos

The *donsos* or *dozos*, meaning 'traditional hunters' in the Dyula language, are long-standing voluntary associations of men carrying guns. They dress in traditional uniform, wearing gris-gris and accessories like a fly whisk, a whistle and a hunting knife. The *dozos* also have healing skills and they are feared. It is believed that they possess mystic powers.

The *dozos* subscribe to an egalitarian ethic. There is no social or ethnic distinction among them. To be a *dozo* is a matter of individual choice and recruitment is done by cooptation. Conditions of belonging to a *dozo* association (*donsoton*) include the ritual observance of common values based on the moral and intellectual probity of group members which includes respect, courage, cooperation and internal solidarity. The *dozos* living in a village or a group of related villages form associations. These straddle Burkina Faso, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire borders.

In Côte d'Ivoire, most of the *dozos* are from the Senufo, Dyula and Malinke ethnic groups. It is difficult to determine their exact number, though some estimates indicate a total of 40,000 traditional hunters. Their participation in public matters, which predates the rebellion, is linked to the loss of confidence in the state in establishing and maintaining security in the northern region. Before joining the rebellion of the MPCI, the *dozos* took on the role of a supplementary police force for several years. Their mobilisation began in the 1990s. According to some informants, it was in 1994, when the northern region became increasingly lawless, that Colonel Issa Diakité, a former administrative officer in Korhogo and now MPCI minister of territorial administration in the Government of Reconciliation, appealed to the *dozos* for assistance. Subsequently, they were given the assignment of combating rural banditry.

Although *dozos* associations cut across ethnic identities and required a degree of independence vis-à-vis the state, they became a matter of national interest and an instrument of political manipulation. The late Balla Kéita, a key figure of the Ivorian political scene and Houphouet's minister, had control over them. After Houphouet's death, Kéita became an adviser to President Bédié in charge of cult and religious affairs.[18] Due to Kéita's influence, the *dozos* expressed their faithfulness to Bédié during a presidential visit to northern Côte d'Ivoire in August 1999. Soon, however, a struggle occurred between the two key leaders of PDCI. This struggle, presumably over the *dozos*, demonstrated the increasing importance of these forces. Bédié reportedly gave instructions to send a number of *dozos* in the forest region

[18] Balla Kéita, a politician from Malinke origin, was a member of a *dozos* association in Korhogo. He left Abidjan after the post-electoral violence of October 2000 and went into 'voluntary' exile in Ouagadougou in March 2001. On 2 August 2002, he was murdered by unknown assailants in his presidential guesthouse in Ouagadougou. On theories of who killed Kéita see ICG report (2003: 10); see also Banégas & Otayek (2003).

with the view of looting the plantations of Burkinabé and Malian migrants. Kéita refused and as a consequence Bédié fired him in late August 1999.[19] Other accounts claim that Bédié fired Kéita because he refused to restrain the activities of the *dozos*. In any case, Bédié's government finally took measures to quarter the *dozos* forces in northern Côte d'Ivoire, their 'area of origin'.

Despite concerns about violence and human rights abuses inflicted on villagers living in areas under their control, the period leading up to Guéi's transition in 1999-2000 did not result in the quartering of *dozos* forces. When Kéita became a special adviser to Guéi after the coup of December 1999, he declared that the *dozos* would form part of Guéi's presidential guard. He gave them instructions to control the roads. As a result, the *dozos* forces became more aggressive, extending their activities beyond the northern region. Southern politicians accused northern leaders of manipulating the *dozos* as paramilitary forces playing into the hands of the northern leaders. While in opposition, Gbagbo once declared that he could not accept the fact that the country was governed by the *dozos*. General Lansana Palenfo, the minister of interior of Guéi's junta, warned the *dozos* against any interference in public affairs, claiming that order and security fall strictly under the competence of the police. Nevertheless, the activities of the *dozos* and the abuse of power led to increasing violence. The situation became worse in February 2000, when the *dozos* accidentally killed a student in Abidjan. Charles Blé Goudé, the then leader of the FESCI, protested against the fact that the government allowed the traditional hunters to maintain order in the country.[20]

After the outbreak of the war, the MPCI was able to quickly mobilise the *dozos*, who then took an active part in the rebellion. However, the total number of *dozos* fighters mobilised by MPCI and MJP is not exactly known. ICG estimated their number at 1,000 fighters, including at least 500 from Mali. MPCI reportedly recruited at least 10,000 civilians. President Gbagbo, in turn, recruited young people and ethnic militias and set out to re-establish order and sovereignty throughout the country.

President Gbagbo's Struggle for Order and Sovereignty

The ease with which the rebel fighters took control of a large portion of the territory of Côte d'Ivoire and of the largest cities of the central and northern parts of the country demonstrated that rebellions and military *coups d'état* constitute forms of instability, which contemporary governments can hardly contain. The rebellion has demonstrated the disorganisation of the governmental army and its inability to recover the conquered territory.

[19] See the interview of Balla Kéita published after his death, 'Avant sa mort, les vérités de Balla à un journal burkinabé', *L'Inter*, No.1274, 5 August 2002.
[20] See 'Les étudiants contre le maintien de l'ordre par les chasseurs traditionnels', AFP, 9 February 2000.

Anthropologists and sociologists have defined political organisations in terms of their power of coercion used to maintain law and order within a territorial framework (Schapera 1963). If the maintenance of order is one criterion for a political organisation, especially for the state, then, one might ask, what happens when qualified armed forces and police cannot maintain peace and security? The question of who is going to keep peace and order in Africa has been solved in different ways, according to varying historical circumstances (Mazrui 1967). First, the colonial pacification, that is, the imposition of peace on the colonised people, was implemented after the European conquest. Then, after independence, France and some African countries signed a convention on defence with the aim of maintaining political stability and preventing army mutinies in the former colonies. But those African leaders who rejected conventions of defence with European powers advocated the principle of *Pax Africana*, meaning that peace in Africa is to be maintained by the forces of Africans themselves (Mazrui 1967). However, the reality is different from what the advocates of *Pax Africana* had first thought.

After independence, Côte d'Ivoire opted for a convention on defence, which stipulates assistance and military cooperation with France in the case of war in the country. President Gbagbo asked for the help of French troops to subdue the insurgent soldiers. The French government turned President Gbagbo's request down, because the country was faced with internal conflict, and not external aggression from a neighbouring country. To make their point in the strongest terms, Ivorian officials accused Burkina Faso of supporting the rebellion of MPCI and of having a stake in the destabilisation of Gbagbo's regime. As a result, a quarrel broke out between the two countries in October 2002. There is a long history of economic and political links between Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso but since the death of Houphouet, the two countries have a love-hate relationship. According to the ICG report of November 2003, the rebellion has received its military equipment with the help of Burkina Faso, though the full involvement of the Burkinabé government in the preparation of the attack is still not clear (Banégas & Otayek 2003). Also it is not clear whether MPCI commanders received financial help from Burkina Faso.

France's failure to meet Gbagbo's request created a lot of resentment in Abidjan. To face the assault, Gbagbo set out to modernise the FANCI and create new fighting forces. He bought new arms, recruited ethnic militias and paramilitary forces and mobilised thousands of southern youths with the help of student organisations. By presidential decree on 9 December 2002, the government recruited 3,000 youths into the army and a further 1,000 in early

2003.[21] At the same time, the informal recruitment of civilian and paramilitary forces, primarily from southern ethnic groups, was in process. ICG estimated that approximately 6,000 youths were recruited into the armed forces by Gbagbo. The students and youth movements formed a coalition called *Alliance des jeunes patriotes pour le sursaut national* and known as 'Young Patriots'.[22] Their ultra-nationalist leaders, namely Blé Goudé, Eugène Djué and Charles Groghuet, participated in the formation of urban tribal militias that have created a reign of terror in Abidjan. They organised several anti-French demonstrations, using anti-colonial slogans to denounce what is called in Abidjan 'France's complicity with the rebellion'. Gbagbo's government hired European, South African and Angolan mercenaries – estimated at 500 – that helped FANCI to recover Daloa on 17 October 2002, when the rebellion tried to take control of the cocoa belt.

However, the involvement of foreign mercenaries in the conflict did not have the desired effect, which was to restore order and sovereignty throughout the country. Moreover, the international community now condemns the employment of mercenaries. The French government, although siding with President Gbagbo, has advised him not to employ mercenaries, warning that he could be held accountable under international law. However, the French government sent peacekeeping troops ('Operation Licorne') that played a crucial role in containing the rebellion in the early days.

International Mediation

Above I have described the conflict and pointed to various factors that have influenced events. From what has been said, one can see that the conflict appears not only to be a struggle for state power and ethno-regional differences, but also a struggle for the control of the country's resources involving regional alliances. This section examines the major question concerning the intervention of international actors to end the conflict and facilitate a peace process.

The Linas-Marcoussis Peace Agreement

Fierce competition for power leads to conflict, and conflict, in the absence of mediating parties or institutions, leads to political disintegration. After the outbreak of the rebellion, President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal outlined plans for a ceasefire signed by MPCI on 17 October 2002. France agreed, within the framework of 'Operation Licorne', to supervise the ceasefire line that runs east to west and divides the country in half. Several members of the

[21] See ICG report of November 2003.
[22] On student and youth movements see Konaté (2003: 62).

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) also provided contingents to assist the French troops. On 28 October, West African leaders and the French took complementary steps to convene peace talks in Lomé under the leadership of President Gnassingbé Eyadéma of Togo. However, the negotiations at Lomé did not have the desired effect.

Given the failure of the West African mediation in Lomé and the ongoing conflict situation, France took the initiative of convening a conference in Linas-Marcoussis (near Paris) from 15 to 24 January 2003. Following intense negotiations, the warring factions reached an agreement. They signed the Linas-Marcoussis peace accord, which officially brought about the end of the armed conflict, the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of fighters, the reestablishment of state authority throughout the country, the end of impunity and the policy of *ivoirité* and the organisation of fair presidential elections. In agreement with the peace accord, the three rebel movements have a share in power as members of the Government of National Reconciliation led by Prime Minister Seydou Diarra. On 25-26 January, President Gbagbo and West African leaders ratified the agreement at the Kléber Summit in Paris. The UN Secretary General appointed a Special Representative, Albert Tévoedjré, head of the Monitoring Committee, to supervise and assess the progress made in the implementation of the accord. The government of reconciliation has the mandate to realise the resolutions of the agreement until the presidential elections planned for October 2005.

Since the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, the situation in Côte d'Ivoire has experienced significant fluctuations resulting in changes in regional alliances and political strategies. If the Ivorian officials accused Burkina Faso of supporting the rebellion, it appeared that Gbagbo had entered into an alliance with Liberian forces hostile to President Taylor. The involvement of Liberian and Sierra Leonean fighters in the western war zone marked a change in the nature of the Ivorian conflict not only in terms of inter-ethnic violence across national borders, but also in terms of competition for resources.

In February 2003, MPCI, MJP and MPIGO formed a political coalition known as *Forces Nouvelles*. They met with Taylor in Monrovia to discuss a strategy for the west (Ero & Marshall 2003: 95). The independent organisation Global Witness reported that Taylor later sent his accomplice Sam Bockarie, the former warlord of the Sierra Leonean RUF, into western Côte d'Ivoire. Significant numbers of Liberian and Sierra Leonean fighters joined the MJP close to MPCI, but also the MPIGO whose leader Félix Doh had long-standing contacts with Sam Bockarie. Several incursion attempts into Daloa and Man, in the west of the ceasefire line supervised by the French, indicated that the rebels were determined to gain access to the cocoa belt and San Pedro, Côte d'Ivoire's second greatest port. The MJP and MPIGO reportedly wanted to take control of San Pedro in order to export timber. Gbagbo, in

turn, gave his support to Liberian refugees stationed in western Côte d'Ivoire and made an alliance with anti-Taylor forces, especially with the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), encouraging them to fight the Taylor regime (Ero & Marshall 2003: 99). The intense fighting between FANCI and the rebellion and punitive expeditions against civilians ('Dyula'), thought to be close to the rebels, created a cycle of inter-ethnic violence across national borders and a humanitarian crisis in the west. Ongoing insecurity and violence resulted in lootings, killings and displacements of populations in western Côte d'Ivoire.

On 26 April 2003, the ECOWAS convened a meeting between Gbagbo and Taylor in Togo, where they made an agreement on 3 May 2003 and accepted to secure the border region. Before the ceasefire, the MPCI and MPIGO made the decision to clean up the western province and to expel the uncontrollable Liberian and Sierra Leonean fighters from the border. During one of those campaigns, the Liberian fighters and Sierra Leonean hunters (*Kamajors*) ambushed and killed Félix Doh on 25 April 2003. Sam Bockarie was killed one month later on 6 May.

To realise the resolutions of a peace accord normally requires cooperative political decisions by rival leaders. In Abidjan, Gbagbo has created obstacles, making it impossible for the government of reconciliation to put into action the resolutions of Linas-Marcoussis. Up to September 2003, the government was still incomplete. FPI officials also continued to undermine the accords. Gbagbo refused the candidate proposed for defense by the National Security Council set up at Accra on 8 March 2003, and unilaterally named the ministers of defense and interior on 13 September. Protesting against Gbagbo's decision and his obstacles to the implementation of the Accra agreement, the *Forces Nouvelles* withdrew from the government of reconciliation. Intense international pressure finally convinced them to resume their duties in the government in December 2003.

The Current Situation

Taken as a whole, the current situation is neither peace nor war.[23] Whether the political forces are willing to achieve peace and national unity is more than uncertain. Although a major aspect of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement concerns the disarmament and demobilisation programme of the belligerents and the re-establishment of state authority throughout the country, it appears that both parties have no intention of disarming. Despite the spectacular announcement by FANCI and the *Forces Nouvelles* of the official end of the war on 4 July

[23] The recent developments since the negotiations in Accra (Ghana) in July 2004 are not included in this paper.

2003, the conflicting parties are on a war footing. Gbagbo and the rebellion have obtained further weapons.[24]

In Abidjan, the struggle over key positions continues to be pervasive since the Accra agreement in March 2003. The Abidjan port has been a bone of contention after the struggle over the state media between Gbagbo and Guillaume Soro, the minister of communications in the current government. The port of Abidjan is one strategic place from where arms were sent to Gbagbo's allies in western Côte d'Ivoire (Ero & Marshall 2003: 97). After having refused the person proposed by the PDCI minister, Gbagbo named his own candidate as a director of the port. PDCI suspended its participation in government activities in March 2004, leading to an impasse. The political impasse intensified when seven political forces, namely RDR, MPCI, MFA, MJP, MPIGO, PDCI, UDPCI, formed a new coalition, called the Group of Seven (G7), and suspended their participation in government meetings. The aim of G7 was to force President Gbagbo to fully implement the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. In order to achieve this, G7 organised on 25 March a demonstration in Abidjan, which the armed forces brutally repressed. According to the Report of the UN commission of inquiry on these recent events, an indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians by the security forces occurred on and following 25 March.

Despite international disapproval of these events, Gbagbo did not condemn the killings. In May 2004, he fired three ministers, including the MPCI leader Guillaume Soro and the PDCI minister, Patrick Achi, whose intervention was at the heart of the port's problem. After four months of inactivity, and following intense negotiations and international pressures, the conflicting parties accepted to meet in Accra on 29 July 2004. The idea of negotiations in Accra had been proposed by the UN Secretary General in June during the African Union summit in Addis Ababa. The meeting in Accra, which confirmed the Linas-Marcoussis accord, saw the participation of Gbagbo and many West African leaders. Expressing their immediate concern about the impasse over the implementation of the accords, Ghanaian President John Kufuor and his colleagues put the *Forces Nouvelles* and President Gbabgo under pressure. All the participants at the Accra negotiations called for a full implementation of the accord, starting with the reinstatement of the ministers fired by Gbagbo, the modification of the conditions of presidential eligibility and the disarmament of fighters planned for 15 October 2004.

In early August 2004, the government of reconciliation resumed its activities in a way that was satisfactory to the international community. However, a major concern remains regarding the security situation in Côte d'Ivoire, including the factionalism, the criminalisation of MPCI

[24] See ICG report of November 2003.

commanders and troop indiscipline, as a result of their activities in bank hold-ups and human rights violations. The military factionalism and the incipient warlordism took a dramatic turn on 20-21 June 2004, when, after violent clashes between IB's men and Soro's men in Bouaké and Korhogo, three mass graves have been found in the vicinity of Korhogo.[25]

Several years of violence and human rights abuses perpetrated by the conflicting parties since 1999 continue, in spite of different agreements, to plunge the large majority of the population into great suffering.

Conclusion

In this paper I have explored the recent political history of Côte d'Ivoire. In exploring this history, as it has developed throughout the recent years, I first noted that the country was once famous for its economic growth and political stability. Then, the paper outlined the main features shaping the political developments since 1999, and gave an account of the power struggles and the current rebellion. The problems of Côte d'Ivoire are extremely complex and it has not been my intention to reduce the complexity of the current situation to the north-south divide. However, the conflict appears to be a struggle for state power, which represents the supreme resource, enabling the control of the country's economy (ICG 2004).

After being humiliated in Somalia and Sierra Leone, the United Nations were hesitant to take direct responsibility in sending international peacekeeping troops to Africa again. Now, the organisation is willing to take decisive action. On 4 April 2004, the UN Operation to Côte d'Ivoire (ONUCI) started its deployment with the goal of supervising the disarmament of the factions scheduled for 15 October 2004. In addition to the rebels' forces, the programme of disarmament targets an estimated number of 12,000 pro-governmental fighters. However, a major challenge remains in terms of the forthcoming presidential election planned for October 2005. After the negotiations in Accra in July 2004, at which the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement was confirmed, FPI officials have made it clear that Gbagbo will not call for a change on conditions of presidential eligibility before the disarmament of rebel fighters. The international community should expect new resistance on these points. The *Forces Nouvelles*, on one side, and President Gbagbo and his followers, on the other side, are suspicious of each other. The politicians are manoeuvring in processes of elimination. Out of the four major players in Ivorian politics, two leaders are in Abidjan (Gbagbo and Bédié), Guéi has been killed and Ouattara went into exile again.

[25] *Soir Info*, 'Découverte de charniers à Korhogo', No. 2989, 12 August 2004.

The situation remains volatile and the country is still divided into two zones controlled by the rebels and the loyal troops respectively. Considering the lack of political will and the coming impasse, one might ask whether the rival leaders are willing to restore peace and order and to achieve national unity in Côte d'Ivoire. Bearing in mind the endless strategies of politicians, the international community must take more decisive action in establishing peace.

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