SPECIAL REPORT

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Cote d'Ivoire: Identity, Politics, and Armed Conflict

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Executive Summary

Between 2002 and 2011, conflicts in Cote d'Ivoire were typically fought over ethnic, regional, and religious identity, land, and political power. These domains of conflict resulted from economic pressures brought on by the combined impact of economic mismanagement, mounting national debt, and global economic conditions, specifically the slump in the global price for cash crops – historically the economic mainstay of Cote d'Ivoire. The conflicts were exacerbated by the ambitions of politicians motivated to use the people's dissatisfaction with the national economic climate and latent ethnic suspicions as a catalyst into government. This special report examines this context as a way to investigate the potential for reoccurrence of violence during the Ouattara presidency and particularly during the 2015 presidential election. This report concludes that:

a. The conditions of dual sovereignty that gave rise to the Ivoirian crisis have not been completely eradicated and this may spark violence of low- to mid-level intensity during or after the 2015 presidential election.
b. The large number of armed former pro-Ouattara rebels that could not be accommodated in the government's Authority for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (ADDR) program but have reintegrated into organized criminality, is a major problem. Opposing politicians may exploit their profile as former rebels to cause violence in the 2015 elections.
c. The April 2013 municipal elections were largely peaceful because Laurent Gbagbo's *Front Populaire Ivoirien* (FPI) boycotted the elections. It is likely that the FPI, which remains very popular in the south, may enter the presidential contest in 2015 and rekindle the kind of rivalry that soured the 2010 elections and produced violence.
d. The "Young Patriots," a radical movement of pro-Gbagbo, pro-south, and anti-Muslim youths that perpetrated some of the worst violence in 2010 poses a threat to peace and stability in Cote d'Ivoire. Although the top leadership of this movement has been arrested, there is a likelihood that they may find their voice (and weapons) again in 2015 if the FPI fields a candidate from the south to run against Ouattara from the north.
e. However, the potential for violence in 2015 may be moderated by President Ouattara's statecraft, especially the building of sustainable institutions, electoral fidelity and transparency, economic and social development, inclusive government, national reconciliation, inclusive implementation of DDR, diligent and unbiased prosecution of perpetrators of past electoral crimes, and the rebuilding of damaged relationships – ethnic, religious, regional, political, cultural, interpersonal, etc. These are the planks for building a new Cote d'Ivoire and for preventing the return to violence during the 2015 election cycle.

Introduction

Contemporary within-state armed conflicts often occur disproportionately in low-income countries and typically have high human,[1] social,[2] and economic costs.[3] [4] Researchers have begun to focus on the intersection of the economy - typically discoursed in resource terms - and armed conflicts in Africa, ignoring the complicated relationships between ethnic and religious identities, intergroup inequalities, migration flows, multi-party politics, the meddlesomeness of neighbors, and armed conflict (or human security) – all of which are implicated in the conflict in Cote d'Ivoire. Since 2002, Cote d'Ivoire has witnessed sustained armed conflict, which was worsened by the 2010 post-election standoff between former President Laurent Gbagbo of the *Front Populaire Ivoirien* (PFI) and President Alassane Ouattara of the *Rassemblement des Republicains* (RDR). Although a semblance of peace appears to have returned to Cote d'Ivoire following the May 2011 inauguration of President Ouattara, some of the more important conditions that provided the fertile ground for violence in 2002 and 2010 may have ossified with the potential to create another round of violence in the 2015 election cycle.

A West African country of 21.5 million people[5] and an annual population growth rate of 3.8 percent with immigration,[6] Cote d'Ivoire is roughly the size of the U.S. state of New Mexico.[7] Like other countries in western Africa, Cote d'Ivoire is ethnically diverse with its approximately 60 ethnic groups[8] belonging to four main ethnic clusters with unique linguistic and cultural traits: Mande, Gour, Krou, and Kwa.[9] These groups are spread non-uniformly across the different regions and follow multiple religions including Islam (23%)[10] and Christianity (12%).[11] An overwhelmingly agrarian society, Cote d'Ivoire is the world's leading supplier of cocoa and the agricultural sector accounts for over 60 percent of its foreign revenue. Between 65 and 70 percent of the Ivoirian people are engaged in some form of agricultural activity.

However, since the discovery of modest amounts of oil in the 1970s and new technological innovations in oil exploration in the 1990s by international oil companies (IOCs) such as Exxon and Phillips,[12] crude oil production peaked at 60,630 bpd in 2006 and has averaged 51,000 bpd over the last four years.[13] Today, crude oil exports represents 28 percent of the government's export revenue, surpassing cocoa and coffee, the country's traditional export commodities.[14] Reliance on commodity exports including cocoa, coffee, cotton, banana, palm oil, pineapples, rubber, tropical woods, tuna, and crude oil, has exposed Cote d'Ivoire to the shocks of international price fluctuations and spawned domestic conflict. The conflict over identity embedded in the principle of "Ivoirite," for example, is inspired partly by economic pressures and partly by politics.

From independence in 1960 until 1993, Cote d'Ivoire was a relatively peaceful state under the leadership of President Felix Houphouet-Boigny (Ufua Bwanyi in the Baoule language)[15] and his *Parti Democratique de la Cote d'Ivoire* (PDCI). Its political stability was buoyed by its economic viability itself a product of the shrewd

utilization of political persuasion, a system of patronages, ethnic redistribution and appeasement, and brutal suppression of dissent by President Houphouet-Boigny as well as the very favorable international economic climate.[16] The remarkable political and economic development in the first twenty years of Houphouet-Boigny's presidency despite Cote d'Ivoire's ethnic and religious heterogeneity and at a time of great social, economic, and political ferment all over Africa but especially in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea led international observers to refer to Cote d'Ivoire as *Le Miracle Africain* or *Le Modele Ivoirian* (the African miracle).[17]

Following the dramatic fall in the global price of cocoa, coffee, and cotton in the 1980's, the Ivoirian miracle that had captured the world's imagination, began to fade. As the price for export crops fell, ethnic, religious, regional, and cultural differences amongst Ivoirians began to magnify. The austerity measures that were implemented in 1990 to reverse the sharp decline in state revenues worsened the economic situation and increased pressure on social and political units. In April 1990, the worsening economic and social conditions led to widespread protests by students and banned political opposition groups. In order to restore order, a physically weak President Houphouet-Boigny approved sweeping political reforms including multi-party democracy. The liberalization of the political space signified by multi-party political activity also made politics extremely fractious, frequently requiring appeals to ethnic, national, religious, and cultural sentiments and the involvement of neighboring states. In many ways, the politico-military violence in 2002 and the 2010 post-election violence have their roots in this historical context. They, along with other factors considered in this chapter, are also important indicators of a potential future trajectory of violence in Cote d'Ivoire.

Theorizing Conflict in Cote d'Ivoire

Ethnicity, religion, region, contestations for power, and natural resources are known causes of armed conflicts in Africa. Yet, they tell only part of a complex story. The question is what other variables (including their combination) might produce armed conflict in Cote d'Ivoire in the count down to the 2015 presidential elections? One area that should be of paramount interest is the intersection of ethnicity, migration, and security in Cote d'Ivoire. This connection is important because Cote d'Ivoire is the first African state to experience the full range of problems associated with immigration especially when this is linked to the economy, socio-political and cultural adaptation, and security.

Yet, the literature on civil war and armed conflict in African states has been surprisingly mute on this link and has largely ignored the potential role that migration plays in internal conflicts.[18] In instances where migration is examined, it is generally treated as a by-product of conflict and not as an instigator of conflict in its own right. Only recently have researchers begun to show interest in this nexus[19] [20] [21] and even these works have focused non-dialectically on one category of immigrants – involuntary migrants – failing to capture the role that millions of voluntary migrants play in Africa as part of the ethnicity-migration-conflict nexus.

The gap in understanding this complex interaction is problematic especially considering the effects that migration processes have on religious, ethnic, and resource tensions, three demonstrably critical factors in Cote d'Ivoire's armed conflict.

To understand this connection within the broader Ivoirian conflict context, this chapter relies on the theory of "autochthony." High levels of population movement in Africa and increasing economic pressures have consolidated the idea of descent rather than territoriality (or the attachment to territory) as the primary form of social solidarity or bonding among Africans.[22] Although historically, this has not been the case, the situation appears to have changed dramatically following recent social transformations in Africa. Today, Africans are increasingly using descent to assert or reassert territoriality as part of their competition for economic and political access, often leading to armed conflict. Geschiere and Jackson argue that these internal struggles are "autochthonistic,"[23] which refers to disputes over inclusion and exclusion expressed through the language of autochthony – a term which literal interpretation implies "originating or formed in the place where found," "aboriginal," or "indigenous."[24] By inference, this means direct claim to territory based on descent. While autochthony provides "indigenes" relative certainties by deepening their supposedly primordial connections to ancestral land and becomes the basis for accessing political, economic, and social opportunities and rewards, they help to undermine the rights and institutional guarantees of those labeled "strangers." For example, it was this language imbedded within the concept "Ivoirite" that was effectively used by former President Henri Konan Bedie and General Robert Guei to prevent Alassane Ouattara from contesting the 1995 and 2000 presidential elections,[25] respectively, and helped to instigate and ossify ethnic and religious feuds between ethnicities in the south and the north.

The upsurge in autochthony discourses in Cote d'Ivoire in the 1990s and early 2000s and which undergirded the elections of 2010[26] is part of the "new nationalism" wave that spread across Africa in the 1990s.[27] This new nationalism is no longer directed at colonial powers, but against "familial strangers" within the same state or region. In some instances, this takes the form of xenophobia but in Cote d'Ivoire has ossified ethnic, religious, and regional differences and led to political unrests and violence. For example, within the political context, it inspires questions not only about "who can vote" but also "who can stand for election"? And as with other societies where rights to political access are curtailed, it mobilizes resistance, which in the contemporary climate of weapons proliferation leads to large-scale violence. In Cote d'Ivoire, autochthony discourse has been used (and may be used in the future) not only to exclude political competitors and hostile electorates[28] but also for economic organization (through highly selective land tenure regimes) in ways that increases ethnic, religious, and regional differences and the likelihood of future violence.

Contextualizing Conflict in Cote d'Ivoire

This section discusses the context of the Ivoirian violence beginning with the regime of President Felix Houphouet-Boigny. The goal is to provide the context for a discussion of the factors that drive conflict in Cote d'Ivoire.

Conflict in Cote d'Ivoire: How it started

From independence in 1960 until December 1993, the now deceased dictator, Felix Houphouet-Boigny ruled Cote d'Ivoire as a one-party state. His control of power was facilitated by a coalition of ethnic groups from the country's north and central regions as well as immigrants[29] who constituted a significant voting bloc to the exclusion of groups from the south and west.[30] He achieved political stability for Cote d'Ivoire through the use of a "system of ethnic quotas" that helped to establish balance between different regions and ethnic groups within government[31] as well as electoral policies that allowed immigrants to vote in national elections.[32] In 1990, for example, President Houphouet-Boigny issued residence cards to immigrants in a bid to shore up his chances of winning the election and many northern Ivoirians and Burkinabes believe that this policy led to the institutionalized harassment of immigrants by subsequent regimes[33] and metastasized ethnicity as a political tool. This policy made immigrants who mainly came from northern Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, and Burkina Faso and were overwhelmingly Muslim,[34] not only a dependable political constituency but also (at least initially) a stabilizing force. In addition, President Houphouet-Boigny used a "carrot and stick" approach where rival politicians were either co-opted through a corrupt system of patronages[35] or were brutally suppressed. His willingness to use force to achieve political stability was demonstrated in the secessionist revolt of the Sanwi king in 1969 and in the 1970 Guebie crisis.[36]

Under President Houphouet-Boigny, Cote d'Ivoire witnessed twenty years of dramatic economic growth with real annual growth rates of more than 7 percent.[37] The country's economic success was spurred mainly by the development of the coffee and cocoa sectors,[38] which were helped by liberal immigration[39] and land tenure policies that attracted national and international migrant labor to the cocoa, coffee and cotton fields located primarily in the western forest area[40] and by the favorable international economic climate. President Houphouet-Boigny's famous quote that "land belongs to those that develop it"[41] energized migrant populations to contribute labor and resources towards agricultural development. The rise in global commodity prices, including the price of cocoa, coffee, and cotton (the three Cs) in the 1970s and 1980s and investments by international partners especially France, which accounts for about one quarter of the total capital in Ivoirian enterprises and between 55 and 60 percent of the total stock of foreign investment capital,[42] facilitated Cote d'Ivoire's initial economic success.

In the late 1980s, Cote d'Ivoire's agriculture-inspired economic boom ended abruptly. At the time of the burst, between 70-80 percent of the Ivoirian population

were engaged in some form of agricultural activity. The economic decline was inspired by plummeting world commodity prices especially of cocoa and coffee, land scarcity, and rising foreign debt, [43] which produced an economic recession characterized by high levels of unemployment[44] and poverty. Unable to find work in the cities, a large number of educated youths returned to their villages (especially in the west) to find that immigrants controlled most of the arable land.[45] These youths associated the near monopoly of arable rural land by immigrants (and correspondingly the high unemployment rate) with the government's immigration policy, sparking political discontent and organized protests by students, opposition parties, and civil society groups. They demanded political reforms including multi-party democracy[46] as well as land and immigration reforms, which exacerbated tensions between migrants and indigenes. Because a significant number of residents in the south had migrated from the north, the distinction between settlers and indigenes also increased tension between the north and south.[47]

In response to the protests, President Houphouet-Boigny, by this time too old and weak to clamp down on protesters, introduced sweeping political and economic changes. In terms of the economy, the president appointed Alassane Ouattara, a Muslim from the north and at various times director at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Governor of the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO), to the newly created position of Prime Minister. Ouattara was expected to use his considerable economic management skills to redress Cote d'Ivoire's economic problems. In a sense, Ouattara's appointment also had the unintended consequence of exacerbating the tensions between the "forest people from the south and the northerners,"[48] shifting the battle from the economic sphere to the political sphere. In terms of politics, President Houphouet-Boigny introduced multi-party democracy, which enabled Laurent Gbagbo of the *Front Populaire Ivoirien* (FPI) to mount a vigorous but unsuccessful political challenge in the 1990 presidential election using highly charged autochthonic and xenophobic narratives. As it turned out, these reforms would have a major destabilizing impact on Cote d'Ivoire after the death of President Houphouet-Boigny in 1993. It brought out several themes (which will be discussed in section 2) that generated conflict in 2002 and 2010 and that continues to resonate with the Ivoirian people, today.

Civil War in Cote d'Ivoire, 1999-2007

The first real conflict in Cote d'Ivoire started out as a mutiny on Christmas Eve 1999 when a group of disgruntled soldiers – mostly returnees from a military mission in the Central African Republic - led by General Robert Guei, rebelled against the state. The soldiers were angered by the government's inability or unwillingness to pay the backlog of wages owed to them. The insurrection forced Henri Konan Bedie, handpicked by former President Houphouet-Boigny as his successor, into exile in France. General Guei, with little resistance from soldiers loyal to Bedie, took over the leadership of Cote d'Ivoire and immediately commenced a transition program to perpetuate himself in power through the exclusion of the northern candidate – Alassane Ouattara – from the process. In response, northern military officers led by

Ibrahim Coulibaly staged an unsuccessful coup in September 2000, which prompted General Guei to dismiss several top military officers from the north and to ban all forms of political activity.[49] The exclusion of Ouattara from the political process in October by the High Court (on the instruction of General Guei) increased tension between "indigenous" Krou ethnicities and northern ethnicities including thousands of Burkinabe immigrants who were forced to take refuge in San Pedro, a coastal town.[50]

On 22 October 2000, the presidential election was conducted to the exclusion of Ouattara. After the elections, General Guei fraudulently claimed victory prompting armed resistance from supporters of Laurent Gbagbo (his primary challenger) who clashed with Soldiers. The crisis forced General Gwei to abdicate the presidency and Gbagbo assumed the presidency. Like Bedie and Guei before him, Gbagbo continued to espouse "pure" Ivoirian parentage as the basis for political and social participation and used this to exclude Ouattara - whose mother was born in Burkina Faso - and his supporters from the political process, prompting violent resistance by Ouattara loyalists. For example, in September 2002, armed rebels led by Guillaume Soro attempted to topple the Gbagbo government and in the skirmish, General Guei, his wife, and members of his family were killed.[51] Although Gbagbo's forces were able to repel the attackers, who retreated to territories in the north, this marked event led to the geo-political bifurcation of the country into two territories – north and south – and controlled by rival forces. For much of his presidency (at least until 2007), Gbagbo controlled only the south and west. The northern half was controlled by the *Forces Nouvele* (New Forces), a coalition of rebel groups led by Guillaume Soro including *Mouvement Patriotique de Cote d'Ivoire* (MPCI) a northern group with strong ties to Blaise Campoare of Burkina Faso, *Movement Populaire Ivorien du Grand Ouest* (MPIGO), and *Mouvement Pour la Paix et la Justice* (MPJ) both based in the west and linked to President Charles Taylor of Liberia.[52] While the FN controlled the north from their base in Bouake in the Baoule region, Gbagbo with the support of soldiers and armed militias (Young Patriots) controlled the south from the nation's political capital, Yamoussoukro. A U.N.-mandated French-enforced buffer zone - *zone de confiance* – separated both territories.[53]

In 2004, the French peace-keepers were drawn into the conflict when President Gbagbo ordered an aerial assault on the rebel capital of Bouake, killing nine French troops and one American civilian and injuring many others. The French responded by completely destroying the Ivoirian Air Force, which prompted anti-French demonstrations and riots in Abidjan. The crisis that followed compelled President George W. Bush on 24 September to order a standby evacuation force of U.S. military personnel from the U.S. European Command who were pre-positioned in Accra, Ghana, to assist with the evacuation of U.S. citizens and to deal with other contingencies as they unfold. On 25 September 2004, U.S. forces entered Cote d'Ivoire to assist France, which had a standby force of nearly 4000 soldiers with evacuating U.S. citizens and third-country nationals from Bouake.[54] The French came to be seen as pro-Ouattara and this strained relations with the Gbogbo government until 2007, when following the Ouagadougou accord, the Ivoirian Civil

War officially ended. In fact, anti-French rhetoric played a significant role in Gbagbo's unsuccessful re-election bid in 2010 and has intensified in the south with Gbagbo's arrest and ongoing trial at the ICC. Anti-French sentiments may have spread to neighboring states especially Ghana where critics continue to accuse France of carefully orchestrating a northern political takeover for the economic benefit of France.

Post-Election Violence, 2010-2011

On 28 November 2010, a presidential election runoff was held between the incumbent President Gbagbo and former Prime Minister Ouattara. In the first round of election held on 31 October 2010, both candidates garnered the most votes with Gbagbo winning 38 percent of votes to Ouattara's 32 percent. After the runoff, both candidates claimed victory and formed parallel governments. The U.N.-certified results announced by Cote d'Ivoire's Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) showed that Ouattara won the election with 54.1 percent of votes primarily by a Muslim, northern electorate augmented by portions of the ethnic Akan-centered political base of Henri Konan Bedie, the candidate that took third-place in the first round elections.[55] Gbagbo won 45.9 percent of the votes mostly drawn from the south, notably the Krou ethnic group areas in the south-center and west, some central-east Akan areas, and south-eastern Lagoon ethnic group areas.[56] Most of the international community including the United States endorsed the IEC election results as accurate and authoritative and demanded that Gbagbo cede the presidency to Ouattara. For example, on 25 March 2011, President Obama stated that "last year's election was free and fair and President Alassane Ouattara is the democratically elected leader of the nation." He called on former President Gbagbo to "step down."[57] On 3 April 2011, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated that the United States was "deeply concerned by the dangerous and deteriorating situation in Cote d'Ivoire, including recent reports of gross human rights abuses and potential massacres in the west." She asked Gbagbo to cede power in order that "the conflict may end."[58]

The refusal of Gbagbo to concede defeat erupted into full-scale armed conflict. The FN, which has controlled and administered the north since the Civil War of 2002, began a renewed military offensive (aided by France) to oust Gbagbo and install Ouattara. By the end of March, they had captured several key towns in central and western Cote d'Ivoire including the administrative capital Yamoussoukro without significant resistance,[59] perhaps due to the overwhelming support Ouattara received from the international community. However, the fighting in the south and inter-communal violence in the west produced many civilian deaths and many human rights abuses.[60] By early April, fighting had intensified in Abidjan, the commercial capital of Cote d'Ivoire and Gbagbo's stronghold. Many military commanders, sensing defeat, publicly defected leaving a severely weakened Armed Forces and suspected Liberian mercenaries, to continue the fight. On 4 April 2011, U.N. peacekeepers serving under *United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire* (UNOCI) used helicopter gunships to strike two pro-Gbagbo military camps, while French

forces stationed in Abidjan struck Gbagbo's home and presidential offices in Abidjan.[61] The French government defended these actions, which pro-Gbagbo groups have used to suggest western bias against Gbagbo, as actions necessary for "neutralizing heavy weapons that are used against the civilian population and United Nations personnel in Abidjan."[62] The U.N. Security Council Resolution 1975 adopted on 30 March 2011 authorized UNOCI to "use all necessary means to carry out its mandate to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, within its capabilities and its areas of deployment, including to prevent the use of heavy weapons against the civilian population."[63] The Resolution, which was jointly proposed by France and Nigeria also imposed targeted U.N. sanctions authorized under U.N. Security Council Resolution 1572 (2004) to include Gbagbo, his wife Simone, and three senior pro-Gbagbo officials.

While the conflict raged, the U.N. imposed stiff financial sanctions on Gbagbo, which made it difficult for his administration to meet routine administrative obligations such as the payment of state salaries and undermined civil-servant loyalty in the south. The crisis also led to the near total withdrawal of international businesses including banks, which paralyzed the Ivoirian bank and business sectors. On 11 April 2011 following an assault on his compound in Abidjan, Gbagbo was captured along with his wife. The violence that followed his refusal to accept electoral defeat resulted in over a thousand deaths including the 800 believed killed in the western town of Duekoue after pro-Ouattara forces had captured the town.[64] While Ouattara has rejected allegations that his forces perpetrated the killings, the killings highlight the enormous humanitarian challenges facing Cote d'Ivoire. For example, between 800 thousand to 1 million people may have been displaced by the violence. As of mid-March 2011, U.S. humanitarian assistance to Cote d'Ivoire totaled about $28.6 million.[65]

Framing the Ivoirian Conflict

Many factors have been blamed for the Ivoirian crisis, which began in the early 1990s and particularly in 2002 and 2010. These factors are examined below, particularly the effects they have on civilian populations and social institutions.

Democratization-Ethno-Nationalism-Violence Nexus

Without doubt, there is a linkage between democratization, ethno-nationalism, and violence in Cote d'Ivoire. The type of economic and political transitions ongoing in Cote d'Ivoire exacerbates this situation. The literature on African conflict is rife with evidence that democratization including multi-party processes have produced low- and high-intensity conflicts all over Africa.[66] [67] [68] [69] [70] For example, Akwetey[71] used the resurgence of violence in Ghana between 1981 and 1994 to show how democratization in Africa promotes ethno-political tensions and violence. For this reason, Hameso like Horowitz[72] argue that majority rule is often a problem, not a solution in ethnically divided African societies. This is because it permits the perpetual domination of marginal ethnicities by the dominant ones, which often

results in violence. The introduction of multi-party politics in Cote d'Ivoire only served to "ethnicize" politics and provoke greater contentions among stakeholders especially animosities between indigenes and settlers in the cocoa-growing regions, while reinvigorating explosive questions about Ivoirian identity.

In Cote d'Ivoire, ethno-political conflicts are accentuated by deep-rooted economic crisis. The fragility of the Ivoirian economy exposed the inherent fragility of the political system that was sustained tenuously by a "strongman" instead of strong institutions. With the subsequent weakness of the Ivoirian state after Houphouet-Boigny, people increasingly began to rely on the spatial form of identity or what Chabal and Daloz calls a "system of Patrimonalism"[73] as the motive-force of their economic sustenance. Pressures on the economy, however, narrowed the scope of the social enterprise to members of one's ethnic group leading to the "othernization" of people with whom one had engaged in sustained, meaningful interaction for a long time. Politicians exploited the competition for economic access that was expressed through autochthony and xenophobia in their struggle for political dominance by reframing their individual political ambitions as contests between the south (represented by Gbagbo) and the north (represented by Ouattara).[74] In essence, the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire as with most crises in Africa is both a crisis of politics and institutions and a crisis of the economy and society.[75] [76] The strength of ethnic cleavages tends to preempt competing sources of political loyalty especially where group members perceive a threat to the group's economic wellbeing.[77] Perhaps, this explains why ethnic cleavages, dormant throughout the presidency of Houphouet-Boigny, surfaced violently during periods of political transitions in 2002 and 2010.

This point is crucial especially when the character of the sub-Saharan African state is considered. Access to state power is typically a zero-sum game for ethnicities because ethnic groups that control power accumulate enormous political patronages that boost their economies. In this sense, political power becomes the basis for extending and perpetuating ethnic group privileges.[78] In prior regimes in Cote d'Ivoire, the presidency buoyed opportunities available to adjacent ethnicities leading to perception of marginalization by minority ethnicities, especially those in the north. The fact that the south is more advanced than the north in terms of social and economic infrastructure is used by northern ethnicities to justify their historic marginalization and to mobilize support for the northern candidate – Ouattara. Similarly, the changing democratic landscape especially the increasingly influential migrant population that has leaned heavily towards Ouattara, made southern politicians nervous and unwittingly created the justification for excluding them from the political process. President Ouattara may fall into the same trap as the 2015 elections nears by preying on the sensibilities of northern populations (including immigrants) and politicizing their differences with the south as a way to retain the presidency. This thinking is not novel as the history of elections in Cote d'Ivoire shows that during periods of elections, ethnic forces (which are dormant in non-election periods) re-emerge at a higher level of intensity than previous elections, leading to violence. Yet, ethnic sensibilities are accentuated by the fact that political

power can be looted (as was the case with General Gwei and former President Gbagbo), by perceptions of uneven development and ethno-sectarian marginality, and when ambitious politicians aggravate them.[79] This is why Gagnon writes that the Ivoirian crisis is "a response by ruling elites to shifts in the structure of domestic political and economic power,"[80] where, for instance, the concept of Ivoirite was invoked to "fend off domestic challengers seeking to mobilize the population against the status quo."[81]

Intermesticity

Another way to understand armed conflict in Cote d'Ivoire is to explore its internal complexities within the context of international engagements. The regional environment is populated by unlike units: formal states, proto states, and transnational communities struggling for control.[82] This complex environment has been described as intermestic.[83] The intermestic environment is central to the appropriation of space by competing constituent groups and their international allies and explains the propensity of internal conflicts to engulf whole regions or sub-regions. For example, located to the north of Cote d'Ivoire is Mali, an open door to the Sahara and the Sahel[84] in which exist a vast "no-man's land" over which neighboring states have failed to exercise effective control. This situation has allowed Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA), and Ansar al Dine to establish bases in the region. The difficult geographic terrain and the political ineptitude that has left much of the borders porous has facilitated the strategic alliance between drug traffickers interested in the Mediterranean and European drug markets and Islamist groups that need arms and money to prosecute their jihads. This alliance as well as the internal challenges of states in the region, makes the situation in Cote d'Ivoire precarious. Because Cote d'Ivoire is a microcosm of the sub-region with its ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity that has often pitched one section of society against the other (i.e. north vs south), the Ivoirian conflict cannot be explained or contained without examining the regional context as a whole.[85] In fact, just as the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire has had security, economic, political, and humanitarian impact on neighboring states such as Ghana, Liberia, and Burkina Faso, the crisis in northern Mali and the Sahel may amplify and exacerbate "political and intercommunity fractures inherited from a decade of total crisis"[86] in Cote d'Ivoire. This regional context has the potential to stymie the process of economic, political, and social change presently ongoing in Cote d'Ivoire.

For example, President Blaise Campoare of Burkina Faso has been accused of funding northern rebel groups to destabilize southern-controlled governments as a way to protect the interests of the millions of Burkinabes living and working in Cote d'Ivoire.[87] In fact, it has been suggested that the decision by Campoare to host the 2007 Ouagadougou accord, was to forestall his possible indictment in the International Criminal Court for war crimes like Charles Taylor his former contemporary. Similarly, there is evidence that during the 2010/11 post-electoral crisis, Liberian mercenaries were recruited, funded, and equipped to support

Gbagbo against Ouattara.[88] [89] Influential members of the Gbagbo administration including Pastor Moise Kore (the former defense minister) and Kadet Bertin (the former military attaché of the Ivorian embassies in South Africa and the Russian Federation), may have conducted missions outside of Cote d'Ivoire to broker arms deals in support of pro-Gbagbo militias.[90] Many pro-Gbagbo fighters have continued to operate from Ghana and Liberia in violation of existing arms embargo.[91] Also, commanders continue to transport large tranches of cash across borders used to recruit additional fighters as well as to purchase weapons for the purpose of violently ousting Ouattara.[92] However, increased pressure from Ghanaian and Liberian authorities, for instance, has weakened the pro-Gbagbo militias and forced them to reorganize their political and military structures and to change their battle rhythm. Although this has resulted in less trans-border violence, there continues to be repeated contraventions of the arms embargo put in place to control the violence.[93] The threat posed by pro-Gbagbo militias operating from neighboring states underlines the larger threats posed by the failure of President Ouattara to rein-in former fighters.

Autochthony

Autochthony has been an underlying source of the Ivoirian conflict, both locally and nationally, and is intimately tied to the politico-military violence in the country. It led to ethnicity-based political mobilization and ultimately to former President Gbagbo's refusal to concede defeat after the 2010 presidential runoff elections. As the Ivoirian government continues to struggle with high unemployment and poverty rates and the reconciliation promised by President Ouattara (amidst wide claims of ethno-political witch-hunt and injustice) continues to flounder, autochthony may play an even greater role in the 2015 Ivoirian elections. The introduction of identity politics centered on the concept of *Ivoirite* changed the socio-political landscape by hardening sides to the "citizen vs stranger" debates and started the nation down an ignominious path to violence. The wounds produced by the 2002 violence deepened with the failure to achieve reconciliation prior to the 2010 elections and continue to challenge the government of President Ouattara. In fact, between 1993 and 2010, *Ivoirite* (Ivoirianess) - an ultranationalist political discourse[94] used by politicians to exclude rivals - became a slogan, a watchword, and a normative category that has created a new taxonomy of belonging. At one end of the spectrum are *Ivoiriens de souche multiseculaire* or Ivoirians of indubitable, multigenerational descent. At the other end of the spectrum are foreigners and "people who present themselves as Ivoirians." In between these two extremes are "Ivoirians by descent" and "Ivoirians by circumstance."[95] The schism between these competing identities turned this quintessential West African success story[96] into a nightmare. Thus, identity manipulation has played a major role in the Ivoirian conflict and unless this problem is addressed, may continue to undermine efforts by the new regime to create peace and stability.

Land Rights

Historically, Cote d'Ivoire lacked a system of chieftaincy control over land. Prior to independence in 1960, the French colonialists acted as final arbiter in land disputes calling on their status as "proprietor of vacant and ownerless land."[97] Land reforms were introduced by President Houphouet-Boigny through the National Policy on Forest Development, which encouraged informal land sale in contravention of custom and statutory law and led to misunderstandings about the nature of land transfers. For example, while buyers (typically immigrants) argue that they acquired permanent ownership of land through these transfers, sellers (typically indigenes) insist that they only sold the right to use land. These misunderstandings give rise to many land disputes especially involving youths returning from cities as well as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) returning from their conflict-motivated flights and attempting to recover the right to land use. Politicians, in ways that has further polarized the country, have exploited these tensions.

In 1998, the law on rural land was passed. Before this law was passed, customary land transactions had no legal weight unless a notary witnessed them. The 1998 law broke new ground by providing systematic frameworks for resolving land disputes.[98] For example, the law recognized customary rights on a transitional basis before converting these into formal deeds or contracts. Although the 1998 law aimed to reduce tensions over land ownership, the formalization of customary rights in the context of displacement complicates land disputes and increases the risk of discord. For example, in order to recover the sold or leased lands they left behind when they fled the conflict, returnee IDPs must assert their existing customary rights and ensure formal legal recognition of these rights. The caveat, for instance, "certified statement of the continuous and peaceful existence of customary land rights" does not recognize absence due to conflict.[99] This fueled tension in the lead up to and after the 2010 presidential elections and if not addressed by President Ouattara, may exacerbate tension between indigenes and migrants as the 2015 election nears.

Moreover, the 1998 land law only applies to rural land and not to the protected forests that continues to benefit from its designation as "foret classee," where many displaced persons had plantations. Many customary transactions between autochthones (indigenous inhabitants) and migrants in these forests were illegal, since the forest codes prohibit all private transactions. The absence of any legal (or legislative frameworks) with reference to protected forests, continues to fuel tensions which has rendered the existing customary, administrative, and judicial mechanisms ineffective. For example, the displacement of many customary chiefs (and authorities) has prevented them from performing their tasks leading to the proliferation of self-proclaimed leaders that the returning autochthones have violently rejected. The setting up of "comites de paix" (peace committees) to ameliorate the problem has led to confusion over the role of each in responding to land disputes. Even the "Comites Villageois de Gestion Fonciere," which were tasked under the 1998 land law with the formalization of customary rights were

constrained by the limited number of surveyors. As recent as 2009, only 23 surveyors covered over 20 million hectares of rural land.[100] These constraints mean that the law has only been partially implemented, more than 10 years after it was promulgated, with the first land certificates issued in late 2007.

DDR/SSR and the Reconciliation Process

In August 2011, the Ivoirian government under President Ouattara established a DDR program as part of the national reconciliation effort.[101] The program, which started work in Bouake, Cote d'Ivoire's second largest city in the central region, is not the first attempt at DDR. In 2004 and 2007, DDRs were established in Cote d'Ivoire but failed miserably. Past DDRs failed because they lacked substantive political support and adequate knowledge of DDR processes, which allowed former fighters to relapse into violence.[102] In 2012, Sophie Da Camara, head of DDR of the United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) estimated that 60,000 – 80,000 former Ivoirian fighters need to be disarmed and rehabilitated.[103]

Following disputes over the 2010 runoff elections, former President Laurent Gbagbo boosted the army with massive post-election recruitments in order to checkmate Ouattara and the coalition of rebel forces that supported him. When President Ouattara assumed the presidency, he also bloated the army with his effort to integrate rebels into the armed forces. Yet, there are still thousands of unaffiliated former rebels with weapons still floating in Cote d'Ivoire and desperate for some kind of government reintegration support. These armed former fighters, like their contemporaries hiding out in neighboring Ghana and Liberia continue to pose enormous first order challenges for security and stability in Cote d'Ivoire. As Da Camara put it, the omission of former fighters from the reconciliation process is the "biggest threat to DDR" and to peace in Cote d'Ivoire. She says former fighters "need to find a way back into this society, this new regime, and this new country. And they have to be taken care of because those weapons are still there – they are just under everybody's beds."[104]

One of the reasons why this is a major problem is the ongoing debate about President Ouattara's promise of national reconciliation. Many former fighters who fought on behalf of Laurent Gbagbo have been disproportionately arrested for their roles in the post-election violence, fuelling belief in the south that President Ouattara is vindictive and is waging an ethnic war against southerners who mainly supported Gbagbo. For example, Patrick N'Gouvan, head of the Convention for Society, Cote d'Ivoire's main civil rights group, observes that the main challenges to reconciliation are "selective justice and official amnesia.[105]" If true reconciliation is to be achieved, prosecution of culprits must cut across board and include many of those who fought for President Ouattara such as Amade Oueremi, the Burkinabe cocoa planter and militia leader who has been implicated in the 2011 Duekeme massacre. N'Gouvan also believes that the period being investigated must expand to cover atrocities committed from 2002, which are similar to the atrocities of 2010, except in scale.[106]

State Capacity/Exogenous Shocks

Although hosts and migrants have always had a turbulent relationship, the shift towards large-scale violence has been helped by several factors:

1. The proliferation of weapons facilitated by poor border security, which enables smugglers to bring in weapons through the Malian, Burkinabe, and Liberian borders.

2. The failure of past governments to forge national unity through the creation of a strong national identity anchored on the strength of the nation rather than its weaknesses. The development of an Ivoirian identity has been impeded by the divisive influence of the three R's: religion, region (including ethnicity), and resources, which have been exploited not only by local politicians but also by meddlesome neighbors such as Burkina Faso that contributes about half of the over 5 million migrants in Cote d'Ivoire. Since the death of Houphouet-Boigny, there has been a tripartite reconfiguration of the political space based on differing objectives: for the nationalists led by Gbagbo, to consolidate a new regime and vision; for the Houphuoetistes led by Ouattara, to resuscitate a decayed or decaying social order; for the rebels led by Soro, to upend an antiquated system. The Houphouetistes are perceived as not only impelled by the need to protect the economic interests of northern ethnicities but also the interests of France, the major international investor in Cote d'Ivoire.

3. The inability of past leaders to resolve internal contradictions such as the "strong leader – weak institutions" mismatch, created a highly combustible socio-political environment susceptible to the manipulations of leaders. This deserves watching especially considering the relationship between President Ouattara and Guillaume Soro, two strong leaders whose alliance, if tested by disagreements, may not only expose the continued weakness of Ivorian institutions including the army, but also threaten the fragile peace.

The combined impact of these factors shaped past Ivoirian conflicts and continues to inform current government policies. How these issues are handled by the administration of President Ouattara is the focus of the next section.

New State-Building

Since his inauguration, President Ouattara has implemented programs to help Cote d'Ivoire move beyond the conflict, including measures to reconcile factions, improve the economy, build infrastructures and pursue long-standing peace in Cote d'Ivoire. But what are the effects of these programs? This section examines this and discusses

emerging issues that have the potential to impact Cote d'Ivoire's (and the president's) quest for long-term peace.

President Ouattara: Challenges of Nation-Building

President Alassane Ouattara was sworn-in as president on 6 May 2011 amid palpable tension in Cote d'Ivoire.[107] Although the conflict officially ended with Gbagbo's capture, the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire is far from over. As indicated in the last section, Ouattara inherited a broken political system and a nation challenged on several fronts: a deeply divided population; a large army of rival fighters many of whom opposed President Ouattara; a "rentier" economy dependent on primary product export and challenged by a decade of conflict, mismanagement, and crippling sanctions; porous borders that facilitate transnational insurgency; and severe reconciliation challenges. All of these challenges (and many more) are daunting and how President Ouattara tackles them will determine prospects for long-term peace in Cote d'Ivoire.

In a late March 2012 interview, President Ouattara pledged to build a "powerful Cote d'Ivoire" including a "strong, professional and republican army."[108] The current Ivoirian army has been a very partisan and unprofessional army and this result from several factors. First, it comprises personnel drawn from several of the fighting groups that participated in the Ivoirian Civil War. Immediately after the runoff elections of 2010, former President Gbagbo in anticipation of armed resistance to his continued rule, recruited thousands of young people from the south into the army to fight his northern challenger. When President Ouattara assumed the presidency he increased the size of the army by integrating former rebel fighters from the north into the already bloated army. Today, the new army renamed *Republican Forces of Cote d'Ivoire* (FRCI) consists of individuals without formal military training and harboring deep grudges (ethnic, religious, political, etc.) against others with whom they serve.

Second, the Civil War and post-election violence institutionalized lawlessness in Cote d'Ivoire. Individuals without formal training were equipped with weapons and mobilized to commit different types of atrocities. Today, these individuals and weapons are floating around in Cote d'Ivoire, which increases the possibility of armed violence. Without formal disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, these individuals will continue to pose a threat to peace and stability in Cote d'Ivoire.

Third, by incorporating loyalist rebels into the armed forces, President Ouattara must confront the same type of challenges that undermined DDR under the terms of the 2007 Ouagadougou Political Agreement (OPA) such as determining the selection, number, and rank of candidates as well as the criteria for promoting or firing soldiers.

Finally, the integration of pro-Ouattara militia into the army (for a president that seeks to professionalize the force) appears to be counterintuitive considering that the key DDR recommendation under OPA was the need to demobilize troops; rather than recruit new ones. Although this may be a deliberate effort to ensure the loyalty of troops to the Ouattara regime, it has prompted charges of ethnic favoritism at a time the government seeks national unification. All these mean that the reform or "building" of a professional military in Cote d'Ivoire may involve much more than the government can tackle at once. Perhaps, President Ouattara may be better served by carefully identifying the goals that must be achieved, the series of tasks to achieve the goals, and the phases of their execution.

The building of a powerful Cote d'Ivoire involves the development of a multi-pronged approach to development. In terms of the economy, President Ouattara appears to be putting his vast economic background to good use. When he assumed office in 2011, the Ivoirian economy was "bankrupt"[109] and GDP was estimated at -5.9 percent,[110] the result of a decade of war. The cost of living was astronomically high especially for a nation with very high unemployment and poverty rates. Under President Ouattara's stewardship, however, the economy appears to be rebounding. In 2012, for example, the GDP was projected to rise to 8.6 percent[111] fuelling optimism that Cote d'Ivoire is on the right economic track. Based on last year's performance and the mechanism his government has put in place to stimulate economic growth, President Ouattara believed that Cote d'Ivoire will achieve a GDP of 8 percent in 2013, which will help to bring the present inflation rate of 4 percent down to 2.3 percent by the end of the year.[112] But that did not happen. Opposition groups who criticize the high unemployment rate as unacceptable for a president who promised "50,000 jobs" during the elections counters optimism about Cote d'Ivoire's economic rebound.[113]

Macroeconomic indicators

	2010	2011(e)	2012(p)	2013(p)
Real GDP growth	2.4	-5.9	8.6	5.5
CPI inflation	1.7	4.9	3.6	3.1
Budgetary balance % GDP	-2.3	-2.5	-2.8	-3.5
Current account % GDP	4.6	3.0	3.7	0.7

Source: National authorities data[114]

President Ouattara is pinning his hope of economic transformation on several factors. First, apart from the north that suffered neglect due to lack of state investment during the decade-long conflict, much of the infrastructure in the south including the airport, seaport, and roads suffered very minimal damage.[115] Perhaps, owing to the relative preservation of vital infrastructure in the cocoa producing regions, cocoa export which was suspended in the months preceding Gbagbo's arrest have fully resumed. Second, President Ouattara has continued to receive the support of the international community. France, for example, offered assistance worth $578 million consisting of a 350 million Euro budgetary aid to help fund

emergency social expenditure and to pay the salaries of civil servants, and a 50 million Euro bridging loan to help pay off debt to the World bank and the African Development Bank (AFDB) which will enable them provide new lending to Cote d'Ivoire. The European Commission (EC) of the European Union (EU) offered a 180 million Euro ($260 million) grant-based "recovery package" to support basic social spending for health, water, sanitation, and agriculture, and to clear Ivorian debt arrears to the European Investment Bank.[116]

However, efforts to address Cote d'Ivoire's economic and security challenges are in part dependent on the promised national reconciliation. Shortly after his inauguration, President Ouattara promised to unite the diverse opposing forces in Cote d'Ivoire and to use the process to harness the creative capacities of Ivoirians. Yet, the nation continues to be profoundly fragmented[117] a fact that is masked by President Ouattara's complete immersion in issues of the economy. As Doudou Diene observes "the political dialogue remains the fundamental condition of the economic and social recovery of Cote d'Ivoire."[118] At the center of the political reconciliation debate is the issue of justice for the victims of the violence. The Ouattara government promised judicial accountability for violations of human rights as well as other crimes during the crisis, even dating back to 1990 and to establish a process of transitional justice in the form of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC would document massacres, crimes, and other human rights violations committed by all parties to the conflict including those committed by pro-Ouattara forces.[119] Yet, since the end of the violence, only supporters of former President Gbagbo have been charged with election-related crimes although there are clear indications that supporters of both candidates actively perpetrated gross human rights violations. The gap between what is promised and what is actually done runs contrary to advice giving to the Ouattara government by a group of elder statespersons[120] that "accountability for human rights violations should be applied to all those involved," urging the government to avoid "victor justice."[121]

Finally, President Ouattara appears to be steadily building state legitimacy and operational capacity especially with the non-violent conduct of delayed municipal and regional elections on 21 April 2013, the appointment of ethno-regionally diverse individuals to fill numerous government posts, the reunification of the national territory, and extension of state authority to the north. Despite these successes, there are numerous challenges that the administration must address before the presidential elections of 2015 in order to avoid a repeat of the 2010 post-election violence.

Emerging Concerns

The Ouattara government is beset by a number of challenges, including growing public apathy towards politics and politicians. For example, in the 21 April 2013 municipal and regional elections (boycotted by Gbagbo's PFI), which marked the first time in a decade that Ivoirians are able to elect their local leaders, independent candidates won more seats than either of the ruling coalition's two main parties.

Results released on 26 April 2013 showed that independents won 72 seats compared to 65 seats won by President Ouattara's RDR and the 49 seats won by Bedie's PDCI.[122] For Landry Kuyo of the *My Way Network*, a youth organization that promotes political participation, the results reflect the population's frustration with President Ouattara and the political parties. According to him, the "population does not have confidence in the political parties … They want to hear from the candidates who will develop their neighborhoods, not from politicians. That is why the independent candidates appeal to them."[123]

Another formidable challenge is how to stop the wave of violent crimes including robberies spreading through Cote d'Ivoire especially in areas close to the country's eastern and western borders. For example, in the weekend of 18 June 2013, an attack by a gang of armed men in Blody, a small village on the outskirts of Duekoue, resulted in the death of one person and injuries to others. The gang equipped with heavy weapons including AK-47s and dressed in military fatigues opened fire on a truck and a microbus full of passengers before robbing them. Local eyewitnesses say the attackers may belong to the militia of the infamous Amade Ouremi, a pro-Ouattara fighter who is being detained by the Ivoirian military.[124] This incident indicates the danger that failure to disarm and demobilize former fighters pose to the fragile peace in Cote d'Ivoire. The issue of DDR characterized the failures of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement (2003), the Accra III Agreement (2004), the Pretoria Agreement (2005), and the Ouagadougou Political Agreement (2007) to entrench peace in Cote d'Ivoire, which was partly responsible for the 2010/11 post-election violence. It also brings to the fore, the need to coordinate Cote d'Ivoire's border security with neighboring states especially Ghana, Liberia, and Burkina Faso as the 2015 presidential election nears.

The decision by President Ouattara to grant full Ivoirian citizenship to immigrants that entered Cote d'Ivoire before 1961 is also creating anxiety especially in the south where indigenes and migrants are still locked in unresolved land disputes. Since 2011, over 600,000 immigrants especially from Burkina Faso have been discreetly granted citizenship.[125] This decision has the potential to reintroduce and reinvigorate autochthony debates (and ethno-religious tensions) in the period leading up to the 2015 presidential elections.

Finally, the perception in Gbagbo strongholds that the Ouattara government is an extension of French imperial rule, unless effectively countered, may mobilize public resentment against President Ouattara who is seen in the south (and also by critics in neighboring states) as a French (or Western) stooge following a tightly scripted neo-colonial agenda. In Ghana, for example, the belief is widespread that Western (particularly the US and France) support for Ouattara is not only economic, but also cultural. President Obama and President Sarkozy are children of immigrants who also had to grapple with issues of citizenship on their way to the presidency of their respective states and therefore "have an affinity for Ouattara from this shared background."[126] This is a potent political and cultural problem that may worsen with each new attempt by French and UNOCI officials to show overt bias to rival political

groups in Cote d'Ivoire. Unless President Ouattara is able to find a way to effectively counter this perception without alienating these international allies, it may grow into broader anti-West motions in a region that Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and other extremist/Islamist groups seek to penetrate.

The Potential for Conflict during the 2015 Presidential Election

Considering the forces that inspired violence in Cote d'Ivoire in the past and particularly during the 2010 election cycle, it is likely that the 2015 election cycle will not witness violence on the scale of the 2010 post-election violence. This means that the potential for large-scale violence in Cote d'Ivoire following the 2015 elections is low to moderate. It is low because Ivoirians may have learned from the past and may have no wish to return their country to those "dark days." Moreover, with the peaceful conduct of the 21 April municipal elections in which independents as opposed to the incumbent's party won the majority of seats, there is reason to believe that the foundation for less fractious elections where incumbents can lose and concede to their challengers, has been laid. However, the threat may increase exponentially from low to moderate principally because the African political environment is always subject to multiple shocks including election-day manipulations. Ethnicity, corruption, thuggery, and religion loom large over the African political space and these may contribute to political violence in the 2015 election cycle.

The main threats to the fragile peace in Cote d'Ivoire in 2015 are likely to result from three sources:

Former Fighters

There continues to exist in Cote d'Ivoire, a large body of former fighters who have not been disarmed, demobilized, or reintegrated either into the security forces or civil society. Many of these former fighters supported President Ouattara but have reintegrated into organized criminality and are victimizing hapless members of their communities. Armed former fighters may have perpetrated the 18 June attack on Blody, a village close to the war-ravaged town of Duekoue.[127] Similarly, the perpetrators of the July 1, 2013 attack on a convoy of government officials in northern Cote d'Ivoire that resulted in the death of a soldier are believed to be former combatants.[128] The attack, which may have targeted the head of the Authority for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (ADDR), Fidele Sarassoro, underlines the threat that ex-combatants continue to pose to peace in Cote d'Ivoire. If the activities of former fighters who continue to operate across the country and increasingly in the west and north are not checked through some form of inclusion (including DDR), they may see the 2015 elections as their opportunity to be heard and provoke violence.

The FPI

President Ouattara's victory has alienated some of the more powerful political forces in the south that were pivotal to the Gbagbo government. In the April 2013 municipal elections, these people who constitute the leadership of FPI boycotted the elections in protest over Gbagbo's continued prosecution and what they consider as the government's persecution of pro-Gbagbo groups. Their non-participation in that election may have contributed to the peaceful nature of the elections as well as its outcomes. It is likely that the FPI will participate in the 2015 presidential elections and if this is the case, the elections have the potential to be fractious with some or all of the past political rhetoric re-emerging to heat up the polity. The threat from this group may increase exponentially if Ouattara's government fails to rehabilitate former fighters who may be persuaded to support the FPI and if the promised national reconciliation continues to flounder.

The Young Patriots

The "young Patriots" or *Congres Panafricain des jeunes et des Patriotes* (COJEP) supported former President Gbagbo in the 2010 post-election violence. Charles Ble Goude, a former Secretary-General of the *Student Federation of Cote d'Ivoire* (FESCI), who is popularly known as the "street general," founded the group in June 2001. On 17 January 2013, Goude was arrested under a CPI arrest warrant in Ghana by members of the Ghanaian police and Interpol agents and returned to Abidjan to stand trial for war crimes and for being a danger to state security. However, since his arrest, not much has been heard about the *Young Patriots* whose ideology is shaped by their opposition to the forces of "neo-colonialism and imperialism" represented by France and local politicians like Ouattara. They are also opposed to migrant labor, which they insist take away local jobs and livelihoods and to northern politicians who are predominantly Muslims. Membership of the group is limited to people between 20 and 32 years and of "pure" Ivoirian descent – that is people whose parents are Ivoirian. Since the arrest of Goude and indeed since the fall of Gbagbo, not much has been heard from this group. They have not been targeted for DDR and may be lurking for another opportunity to stake their political, ideological, and autochthonistic/xenophobic claims, which may come during the 2015 presidential elections.

Conclusion

On 21 April 2013, Cote d'Ivoire successfully conducted municipal and regional elections without devolving into violence. Although former President Laurent Gbagbo's political party - the FPI - boycotted the elections and voter turnout was low (about 36 percent), the fact that Cote d'Ivoire could manage the process peacefully despite persisting deep polarizations, suggests that the country is slowly but steadily recovering from its decade of violence. More importantly, the fact that independent candidates won the majority of seats also suggests a political

maturation unseen in most parts of Africa. There is room, still, for Cote d'Ivoire to continue to grow and to build credible institutions that will sustain peace beyond the 2015 election year. In order to achieve peaceful elections in 2015, the Ouattara government must robustly engage Cote d'Ivoire's many challenges.

The bitterness of the 2002 Civil War and the 2010 post-election violence have yet to give way to the healing that reconciliation and unification brings. President Ouattara promised national reconciliation premised on judicial accountability for violations of human rights and sundry crimes perpetrated by individuals and groups that supported both Gbagbo and Ouattara. Yet, several years after the promise, speculation (of course backed by some evidence) is rife that only supporters of Gbagbo are being prosecuted for the violence. This is not only sending the wrong signal to the population that might (or political power) is "right," it also has the potential to increase skepticism about the political process and increase tensions among the various units in Cote d'Ivoire. If it is considered that the 2015 presidential elections is just around the corner, then, the failure to achieve national reconciliation should be serious cause for concern.

Concerns about reconciliation dovetails concerns about security. Since 2002, Cote d'Ivoire has become a militarized state. Weapons of varying destructibility abound, especially in the hands of untrained, unemployed, and poor people. Many ex-combatants, in the absence of formal disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, have reintegrated into organized criminality and are attacking unarmed civilian targets including unarmed government officials. Others are roaming the streets with weapons under their beds hoping for some government-sponsored reintegration program but prepared to use violence to make a living, if necessary. For example, on 10 June 2013, hundreds of former New Forces fighters protested worsening living conditions in the western town of Man and demanded reintegration into the Ivorian national army.[129] Based on the above, it is clear that the current peace in Cote d'Ivoire is still very fragile and needs guarding especially because presidential elections are typically very fractious in Africa. The presence of a large contingent of armed former fighters supported by dangerous ethno-sectarian logic and inflammatory political rhetoric in highly charged environments has the potential to produce low- to moderate-intensity violence in Cote d'Ivoire in 2015. Along with economic growth, DDR, and electoral fidelity, the Ouattara government can prevent violence from occurring in 2015 by rebuilding the social relationships that were badly damaged by violence in 2002 and 2010 and which until the 1990s was the engine room of Cote d'Ivoire's economic prosperity. This is the surest guarantee for a future of political stability, economic growth, and social development.

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Chapter 15: Political Contestation, Identity, and Conflict in Guinea