CÔTE D'IVOIRE'S POST-ELECTORAL CRISIS
Ouattara Rules but Can He Govern?

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ABSTRACT

The post-electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire reached its boiling point with a brief, yet devastating armed confrontation between the national security and defence forces loyal to former president Laurent Gbagbo and the Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI) who supported his rival, Alasane Dramane Ouattara. The confrontation led to the capture of Gbagbo, with French troops playing an active role, under the aegis of a UN mandate. The situation has raised questions about the legitimacy of the UN intervention and of Ouattara's ascent to power. The recourse to military means to oust Gbagbo came as diplomatic initiatives, including a resolution by the African Union to resolve the crisis peacefully, were resisted and resented by Gbagbo's entourage, while the security situation deteriorated rapidly. A key question, therefore, given the controversial UN intervention, is related to the ability of the new president to govern the country effectively and to address the main problems that have caused the descent of the former beacon of stability into political violence.

INTRODUCTION

The crisis that followed Côte d'Ivoire's presidential election reached boiling point with a brief, yet devastating armed confrontation between the national security and defence forces loyal to former president Laurent Gbagbo and the Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI) who supported his rival, Alasane Dramane Ouattara. This confrontation led to the capture of Gbagbo, with French troops playing an active role, under the aegis of a United Nations mandate. The situation has raised questions about the legitimacy of the UN intervention and of Ouattara's ascent to power.

The recourse to military means to oust Gbagbo came as diplomatic initiatives, including an African Union resolution on 10 March to resolve the crisis peacefully,

were resisted and resented by Gbagbo's entourage, while the security situation deteriorated rapidly. The intransigence of the outgoing president was predicated on his so-called resistance to imperialist endeavours, represented by Ouattara, the declared and internationally recognised winner of the election. With the forced exit of Gbagbo, thanks to the military intervention, what are the country's prospects of creating a new socio-political dispensation based on democratic norms?

Such norms are essential for the country, whose institutions have been weakened by a decade of conflict. The administrative capacity of Côte d'Ivoire, which has virtually been divided in half, as well as the ability of its security forces, appear to have been severely undermined. In addition, social cohesion has been depleted by the manipulation of national identity, which has affected the population's confidence both among individuals and between citizens and state institutions.

A key question, therefore, given the controversial UN intervention, relates to the ability of the new president to govern the country effectively and to address the main problems that have caused the descent into political violence of West Africa's former beacon of stability.

This article contends that post-conflict reconstruction is generally fraught with difficulties. But with real political will and efforts to promote social justice Côte d'Ivoire could overcome these difficulties and regain the stability that is indispensable for socio-economic recovery in both the country and the sub-region. Achieving this requires a clear identification of the main priorities and a coherent strategy to address them.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE'S POLITICAL CRISIS: WHERE THINGS FELL APART

Three decades of stability in Côte d'Ivoire under its founding father, Felix Houphouet-Boigny, and his Parti Democratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) came under threat with a controversial political succession debate, an ill-negotiated transition under the military junta that seized power through a relatively peaceful coup d'état in 1999, election-related violence in 2000 and a civil war (2002-2010).

A combination of economic decline and political manipulation contributed to the country's descent into instability for a decade. The recent post-election crisis can be seen as a result of the complexities, resistance and challenges associated with the democratisation processes in Africa since the 1990s. Though the peace process initiated in 2002 placed at its centre the holding of elections as a move towards reviving democratic transformation, its outcome raised important questions about the sustainability of political transformation in Africa based on democratic norms (Akindes 2004; Obi 2007; Collier 2005, 2009).

Equally important is the capacity of regional organisations to respond effectively to crises resulting from fraudulent elections and unconstitutional changes of government. Indeed, Côte d'Ivoire's armed conflict was triggered by a variety of causes, some located in its post-independence governance system, others in the manipulation of cultural diversity and especially of citizenship. Yet the intrusion of the army into the political scene has frustrated the chances of the country quickly returning to normalcy. This will remain a major challenge for the new administration.

While the electoral process could not bring a definitive answer to the multifaceted crisis in Côte d'Ivoire it was widely held that at least the legitimacy of the leadership would be restored and that could serve as an important step towards addressing other issues, including land ownership reforms, citizenship and youth employment.

This explains the insistence of the international community through the many peace agreements (from the Lomé peace initiative to the 2007 Ouagadougou Peace Agreement and its four protocols) that a transparent electoral process might provide an opportunity to begin to heal the country. The elections planned for 2005 following the negotiations in Pretoria under the leadership of President Thabo Mbeki only took place in 2010. They were postponed six times in five years owing to disagreements over such issues as voter registration, the credibility of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) and the Demilitarisation, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) process.

On two of these issues, namely, voter registration and the DDR, tensions rose sharply (Zounmenou 2011). Some have argued that the ruling party was afraid of the verdict of the people and would only hold elections when it was certain of victory (ICG 2009, p 1; Tolou 2010, p 256). Rarely has an electoral process taken so long, cost so much (an estimated cost of 115bn CFA francs or US$7 per voter) and raised the spectre of all-out war in a West African country (Zounmenou 2010).

The ruling party's intention was to limit as far as possible the registration of northerners (whose citizenship was questioned) (Zounmenou 2008, p 75). As in some instances of fraudulent elections in Africa (Zimbabwe, Kenya, Togo) it was clear that whoever controlled the voters' roll could determine the outcome of the elections. For the rebel movement demilitarisation meant weakened bargaining power if the outcome of the election was contested. Yet, with the mechanisms in place, mainly the United Nations certification of the electoral results, which had been agreed upon, it was believed that the elections would be relatively peaceful. And indeed, the first round of voting proved to be so, with all parties accepting the results.

The results revealed the political weight of the three main actors, namely, President Laurent Gbagbo (38.30%), Alasane Ouattara (32.08%) and Henri Konan

Bédié (25.24%). The results also revealed clearly the socio-political configuration of the national electoral map of Côte d'Ivoire. It appeared that regional and ethnic patterns had defined voter alignment. Ouattara remained the dominant political figure in the north (Dioula), while Bédié dominated the centre (Baoulé) and only Gbagbo appeared to have moved beyond his traditional (Bété) ethnic stronghold in the west, winning significant support in the south (Abidjan) and east of the country (Zounmenou 2011; CEI 2010; EU 2011).

As was expected and, unfortunately, turned out to be the case, a run-off election between Gbagbo and Ouattara heightened tensions to extraordinary levels and caused the country to relapse into civil war. The hope of most of the incumbent's supporters that Bédié, former president and leader of the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), as well as the original brain behind *Ivoirité*, would call for a vote in favour of Gbagbo in the run-off poll was dashed when Bédié aligned himself with Ouattara, in terms of a political agreement within the framework of the Houphouëtists Rally for Democracy and Peace (Rassemblement des Houphouëtistes pour la Démocratie et la Paix-RHDP).

Even more agonising for Gbagbo and his supporters was the overwhelming support Ouattara received from opposition coalition forces in the central areas and parts of southern Côte d'Ivoire. Clearly, the electoral map was not in favour of the ruling party and its victory had become a pipe dream because of the many checks and balances put in place in order to secure the transparency of the electoral process and its outcomes.

POST-ELECTORAL VIOLENCE: THE RESURGENCE OF THE IDENTITY DEBATE

Both local and international observers (ECOWAS 2010; EU 2011; AUC 2011) concluded that, despite some tensions, the run-off election took place in a relatively stable environment. Irregularities observed during the run-up were brought to the attention of the Independent Electoral Commission, which took steps to address them. The deployment by President Laurent Gbagbo of an additional 1 500 soldiers to the north of the country and a unilateral curfew decreed to secure the elections were acceptable in the spirit of transparency. Moreover, voting materials were dispatched to various constituencies well ahead of the election date in order to avoid unnecessary delays on polling day.

Most observers recognised the fairness and transparency of the vote-casting and vote-tallying processes. But the results the CEI was preparing to announce sent shock waves through Gbagbo's supporters, who physically prevented the spokesperson for the electoral commission from declaring the winner of the run-off poll, allegedly because of 'lack of consensus' about the outcome.

When the poll results were finally formally announced the chairman of the CEI, Youssouf Bakayoko, declared Alasane Dramane Ouattara the winner, with 54.1 per cent as against Laurent Gbagbo's 45.9 per cent. However, the head of the Constitutional Council, Paul Yao N'Dré, a hardliner and one of the founders of the ruling party, immediately declared the result invalid. He went on to proclaim Gbagbo the winner, with 51.45 per cent of the vote, setting the scene for mayhem in the country.

The Constitutional Council, basing its decision on Gbagbo's claims that votes had been rigged in the north of the country under the control of the Forces Nouvelles, invalidated more than 600 000 votes from seven constituencies in Ouattara strongholds. Questions of whether the 'evidence' produced by the ruling party was indeed valid and whether the council in fact completed a thorough investigation into the matter within the prescribed seven days were elements of the ensuing controversy. Surprisingly, and quite paradoxically, the council made its decision within hours of the announcement. Moreover, even regions that were not part of the initial petition were added to the list of discards to force through a controversial victory for Gbagbo (AUC 2011).

It is possible to argue that the manipulated outcome of the elections and the post-electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire were among the more complex, divisive and intricate peace-building and democratic transformation exercises in Africa after the end of the cold war (Zounmenou & Motsamai 2011). More than a post-electoral imbroglio, the contestation highlights the unresolved issues that caused the Ivorian crisis in spite of a number of peace agreements and several political concessions, which include the landmark Ouagadougou Peace Agreement (OPA).

The post-electoral conflict raised two important challenges. Firstly, it brought to the fore the challenge of ensuring that elections held in post-conflict societies do not lead to renewed instability. Secondly, beyond the controversy surrounding the legality of the Constitutional Council's decision to overturn the results released by the Independent Electoral Commission, the issue of citizenship seemed to be once again at the heart of Gbagbo's refusal to step down.

Gbagbo and his supporters convinced themselves that Ouattara, despite being allowed to stand for election, is not a 'true Ivorian' and that, as 'opponents of neo-colonialism and imperialism', they would prevail. As military leaders renewed their allegiance to the outgoing president violent confrontation became inevitable and the country slid back into war.

The unusual unanimity of African leaders (the Economic Community of West African States – ECOWAS – and the AU) and the broader international community in recognising Ouattara's victory over the incumbent, Gbagbo, was mainly premised on the certification of the election results by the UN – considered by all parties to be an impartial broker in terms of the provisions of the OPA

(Zounmenou & Handy 2011, p 15). By supporting the UN's stamp of approval of the results the international community had taken a firm stance in underpinning the legitimacy of regional efforts (ECOWAS, as a facilitator, was not only central to the peace process but was also at the heart of the electoral process) as well as the rules and procedures set out in the OPA, and agreed upon by all participants.

On 10 March 2011, despite the fact that the anti-imperialist thesis developed by Gbagbo and his supporters substantially dented the initial show of exemplary leadership in Africa's democratisation process and raised serious questions about the commitment of African leaders to, and respect for, established norms of democracy and good governance, the AU finally endorsed the election results and upheld Ouattara's victory.

AU leaders stated boldly that it is more important to protect the electoral process and its outcome than to be seen to protect one of their own. The pan-African organisation called upon the Constitutional Council to swear in the internationally recognised and regionally endorsed elected president. Again, Gbagbo, a so-called defender of pan-Africanism, ignored the AU resolution, while the threat of a renewed civil war was imminent. Indeed, it was precisely the lack of respect for previous agreements and commitments that drew Côte d'Ivoire into the post-electoral crisis that later escalated into civil war. It prolonged the agony of Ivoirians and resulted in the death of at least 3 000 people, while more than a million fled the country to seek refuge in neighbouring countries (UNSC 2011).

THE UN INTERVENTION AND OUATTARA'S LEGITIMACY

There are concerns that the United Nations's intervention in Côte d'Ivoire's post-electoral crisis went beyond its mandate to protect civilians, mainly because of the active and aggressive role played by French troops in arresting Gbagbo. This argument is predicated on the notion that France wanted a regime change in Côte d'Ivoire so as to have an opportunity to regain control over the country's resources.

Critics have also argued that Ouattarra's government is likely to defend French interests. There might be some justification in these concerns, for two reasons. Firstly, Franco-African relations in the post-independence era are complex and controversial. Though there have been many calls for change, the reality is that the process remains slow, sometimes stagnant, to the extent that any action or inaction by France on the continent is judged through this prism. Secondly, some believe that the UN's interpretation of the responsibility to protect is biased, and understandably so, toward Ouattara.

To begin with, the concept of responsibility to protect (R2P) is a broad notion, about which there is disagreement among scholars and practitioners. The concept

is based on the responsibility of states to protect their own citizens. In fact, R2P outlines possible actions by the international community in terms of providing assistance and strengthening the capacity of states and lays the framework for a resolute response by the international community to serious crises (UN 2005).

According to the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) (2001, p15) R2P is generally premised not only on the importance of prevention but also on the readiness of the international community to comply with a Security Council decision taken in terms of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter to protect civilians, with the possibility of undertaking coercive military intervention in serious cases of crimes against humanity and threats to international peace and security.

It is important to indicate that while France's role might be controversial it was played out within the framework of the United Nations's mandated peace mission. In this sense, UN Security Council Resolution 1528, adopted in 2004, provided for the involvement of UN forces supported by French troops to help Côte d'Ivoire achieve peace. In terms of the resolution, the UN's mission in Côte d'Ivoire is

> [t]o protect United Nations personnel, installations and equipment, provide the security and freedom of movement of United Nations personnel and, without prejudice to the responsibility of the Government of National Reconciliation, to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, within its capabilities and its areas of deployment.

The narrow interpretation of this mandate left the UN undecided, while the regime unleashed its repressive machinery against unarmed civilians. Indeed, as the humanitarian crisis worsened, the incumbent government, through media propaganda, called for its supporters to attack UN peacekeepers, giving the UN Mission a dilemma. The UN was reluctant to implement the mandate provided for in Resolution 1528, which clearly spelled out the necessity to use force in order to protect civilians if government forces found themselves unable to do so.

Côte d'Ivoire had not been declared a failed state and the UN still held that the country's security and defence forces had a prime responsibility to protect their fellow citizens. This turned out to be a miscalculation, as elements of the army (Centre de Commendement des Operations de Securite – CECOS – and the Republican guard), assisted by recruited mercenaries and armed 'young patriots', targeted civilians perceived to favour Ouattara.

The passing of Resolution 1975, which was adopted with immediate effect on Wednesday 30 March 2011, was a response to the request from ECOWAS to the

UN Security Council to take responsibility in Côte d'Ivoire given that diplomatic attempts had yielded little result and the intransigence of the authorities in Abidjan did not appear to hold the promise of a peaceful resolution of the post-electoral conflict.

Former rebels, now reconverted to the FRCI, with the support of some regular army officers who had defected, opened many military fronts that overstretched the capacity of what remained of the National Defence and Security Forces (NDSF), which were loyal to Gbagbo. At the same time, Abidjan became a battleground between the so-called 'Invisible Commando', led by a disgruntled army officer, Ibrahim Coulibaly (known as IB) and the Laurent Gbagbo Special Forces. The risk of generalised violence with the potential use of heavy weapons was therefore imminent.

Regardless of the debate it generated, the UN forces' resort to military intervention to neutralise the NDSF, protect civilians and provide Ouattara's forces with the logistics to capture Laurent Gbagbo was an important step towards avoiding a generalised armed conflict with serious security implications for the country and the sub-region. Although 3 000 people were allegedly killed in three months, large-scale massacre and destruction were certainly avoided. Yet Côte d'Ivoire emerged wounded and divided, with a weak state authority and capacity. The security environment has deteriorated, with armed groups still very active.

One could also argue that the rise to power, of Alassane Ouattara, following military raids on the presidential bunker to dislodge the loser of the election, does not substantially affect his legitimacy. His electoral victory was confirmed by the African Union, reinforcing the continental consensus about the electoral process and its outcome. In fact, the Constitutional Court indicated its willingness to implement the AU resolution and proceeded to swear in Ouattara as the duly elected president of Côte d'Ivoire. It is now up to the new leaders to display independent leadership and take initiatives that define national priorities while working on strategies to avoid contradictions in the country's international relations. At this juncture it is essential to explore some of the main challenges faced by the new authorities as they engage in the process of rebuilding the country.

SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN ENVIRONMENT

It would have been a mistake to believe that Laurent Gbagbo's downfall would immediately usher in a peaceful Côte d'Ivoire. The post-Gbagbo era is still characterised by sporadic violence and a dire humanitarian situation. A number of soldiers loyal to Gbagbo continue to pose threats in certain areas in Abidjan and in neighbouring countries (Ghana and Liberia). Abobo and Yopougon, residential areas in the North of Abidjan, were, until recently, theatres of armed battles

between Republican forces and the remaining pro-Gbagbo militias. In addition, the Republican forces had to confront soldiers loyal to Coulibaly.

The clandestine operations of Coulibaly's 'invisible commando' undermined the resistance capacity of the national security and defence forces and provided important support for the final assault that led to the capture of Laurent Gbagbo. As Coulibaly refused to disarm without obtaining some guarantees for his future and those of his alleged 5 000 men, fresh fighting broke out, during which Coulibaly was killed. The Republican forces are also battling to disarm the remaining combatants, most of whom are believed to be among the 4 500 mercenaries recruited by the Gbagbo administration to maintain power. Some FRCI members were accused of serious abuses against civilians.

These events highlight the current precarious security environment in Côte d'Ivoire. Thus far, according to the UN Mission in the country (UNOCI), almost 3 000 civilians have been killed and thousands more abducted. Most of the killings were described as extra-judiciary and were committed by supporters of both parties. It is also reported that more than a million people have sought asylum in neighbouring countries.

Worse still is the situation of the internally displaced, who do not have the minimum needed to survive. The security environment makes it difficult for humanitarian agencies to reach them and financial constraints limit the ability of such agencies to address their needs effectively. The UN agencies claim that up to $160- million is still needed to tackle the humanitarian challenges,which include food security, nutrition, education, protection, water, health care and sanitation for as many as two million people throughout Côte d'Ivoire. It would also allow UN agencies and non-governmental organisations to scale up relief programmes, notably in the commercial capital of Abidjan and in the west (OCHA 2011).

KEY POST-CONFLICT CHALLENGES

In addition to the need to respond immediately to the humanitarian situation Côte d'Ivoire's new leaders must identify key issues to be incorporated in the post-conflict reconstruction process. These include national reconciliation, the securitisation of the country through the reform of the security sector and eco-nomic recovery.

Pacification process

This is certainly one of the most difficult tasks for the new regime. While Ouattara has given himself a few months to restore peace and stability the process may be longer and more complex.

Restoring security implies neutralising the remaining armed groups and militias in the country. The fact that most of them have already mingled with citizens and move about freely, without uniforms, might make the task even more complicated. Mass graves are regularly being discovered across the country. It is alleged that mercenaries recruited by the former regime continue to wreck havoc in Abidjan and elsewhere.

A recent communiqué from the government highlights concerns about criminality and banditry and promises to take strong action to address the pillage and other atrocities committed against the population (Government of Côte d'Ivoire 2011). The occupation of Abidjan by former rebel commanders, even if the intention is to ensure the safety of the people, is not reassuring for the country and ways should be found to demilitarise society without further delay.

Dialogue and reconciliation

A decade of political violence and the debate over citizenship have left Côte d'Ivoire divided. While Forces Nouvelles controlled the north the south was in the hands of Laurent Gbagbo's government. The post-electoral crisis worsened that divide, with citizens losing trust and confidence in state institutions and among themselves.

National dialogue and reconciliation could achieve two broad objectives. Firstly, it could provide the opportunity to address divisive issues such as the identity problem by means of constitutional reform and proceed with national healing. Secondly, it could also provide a new framework for social cohesion with the elaboration of a new social contract or a socio-political consensus based on genuine democratisation.

The visit in June 2011 of three of the Global Elders – former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu and former Irish President Mary Robinson – to help define the contours of the forum on truth and reconciliation was an important initiative. The three met with various stakeholders including Gbagbo, Ouattara and members of religious groups and civil society organisations. They made clear their support for some form of transitional justice but warned that it should be put in place with full participation. Tutu in particular is well placed to assist in defining a reconciliation agenda given his role in and experience with the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Indeed, given the country's history, those involved in the process of reconciliation must prioritise the establishment and consolidation of trust as the key value of and precursor to broader justice.

Another significant area of contention remains the ongoing discussions about the possible trial of Gbagbo. One might argue that in the current context

his trial is likely to polarise the country. It is not the right step to take at this point without knowing how the reconciliation process will proceed. Ivoirians thus face the dilemma of hosting simultaneous retributive and restorative justice processes, as was the case in Sierra Leone (Lamin 2005). A prosecution of Gbagbo and his aides that takes place alongside a reconciliatory programme increases the chances of clashes among those who might be dissatisfied with the outcome of both processes. The process is potentially explosive in a context where the administration of justice and the rule of law have been undermined by a decade of political crisis. If a trial takes place in that environment the risk of abuse will be high and the new government might face difficulties with its credentials for promoting democratic norms.

Finally, the appointment as head of the TRC of Charles Konan Banny, former governor of the West African Central Bank and prime minister under Gbagbo, has not met with unanimous enthusiasm. Banny is a member of the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire, which is allied to Ouattara. There are concerns that his political colour may undermine his neutrality in the process and lead the country on the path of 'victor's justice'.

Restoring the authority of the state

It is clear that Côte d'Ivoire emerges from the conflict with a weak state apparatus and limited state authority across the country. The redeployment of the administration stipulated in the Ouagadougou Agreement was not completed because of the absence of trust between the former rebels and Gbagbo's government. It was hoped that the 2010 elections would restore the legitimacy of the leadership and the authority of the state. For this to be effective it is essential to focus on reforming the security sector as an entry point to laying sustainable foundations for peace and democracy in the country. This implies three major undertakings including the demilitarisation, demobilisation and reintegration of former soldiers, the depoliticisation of law enforcement agencies (administrative reforms) and the restoration of civilian control over the new armed forces.

The DDR process is likely to be the most challenging. There is particular concern about the identification of soldiers, given the fact that former rebels have now been renamed as republican forces while the former national and security forces were recently heavily involved with militia groups. Perhaps the provisions of the Ouagadougou Peace Agreement might still be relevant. The current political dispensation might help complete the DDR process, which was initiated, but was undermined by the lack of trust. The integrated command centres that were established for former combatants could still be reactivated. In addition, the national army must be reconfigured. Currently there are numerous people with the

means to wage war. They are the national army (FDS), particularly the Presidential Guard and Special Security Operations Forces (Centre de Commandement des Operations de Securite – CECOS), the armed young patriots and numerous militia and rebel groups.

The UN has also reported that close to 4 000 mercenaries from neighbouring countries took part in the conflict and would have to be identified and neutralised (UNSC 2011c). A key difficulty for previous attempts at integration was the ranking of former combatants – different criteria are used to rank them and it is unclear whether all parties are willing to amalgamate. Another challenge relates to the difficulty of transforming former zone commanders (Com'Zones), who have consolidated patronage networks into regular units committed to the defence of the territory and its inhabitants.

Finally, there is the question of whether the hand of justice will reach members of the Forces Nouvelles implicated in the reports of various human rights groups for the crimes they committed. Such a complex process is unlikely to be completed in the short term as numerous other affiliated institutions such as those involved in law enforcement must be included.

For the time being, Côte d'Ivoire lacks a clear and coherent post-conflict strategy. There have been examples of countries where former adversaries have amalgamated successfully into one unit, one of them being South Africa, which managed to integrate elements of Umkhonto weSizwe and the South African Defence Force to form the South African National Defence Force.

A critical question that has been raised is who will drive, supervise and coordinate the process. Up to now this has been done by the UN mission. Since Ouattara came to power, a robust and committed government involvement has become essential. The appointment in July 2011 of the former Forces Nouvelles de Cote d'Ivoire leader, General Soumaila Bakayoko, as the new head of the army was an important step in the restructuring of one of the key sources of instability in the country since 1999. The move was widely expected to have a significant bearing on Ouattara's attempts to unify and consolidate a new Ivorian army and stabilise the country in the aftermath of the recent civil war.

General Bakayoko has the unenviable task of unifying the disparate forces and groups that have participated in the various conflicts since 2002. While President Ouattara is clearly prioritising the restoration of state security one major issue confronting Bakayoko and, for that matter, Ouattara, is how best to determine the future of the former heads of the armed factions. Some might be integrated into the new structures but close attention must be paid to those who might be discharged and might quickly become domestic security threats to the new administration.

Successful demobilisation of former combatants could advance markedly the

post-conflict peace-building process. In spite of the challenges clear foundations have been laid for the demobilisation of former soldiers. It remains to be seen whether the appointment of a former rebel leader as the national army chief of staff will dent the image of respectability and responsibility projected by such an institution.

Economic recovery

Even though most of Côte d'Ivoire's economic infrastructure was spared by the conflict there is no denying that economic activity was put on hold. The various financial and economic sanctions imposed on the regime have had a serious impact on the economic environment. The banking sector was closed and all export activities came to a standstill.

Because of the importance of Côte d'Ivoire to the regional economic framework the economic impact of the crisis there has been felt most keenly by the members of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). Côte d'Ivoire's is the largest economy in West Africa after Nigeria's and is critical to the overall development of the sub-region (World Bank 2011).

The most urgent task for the Ouattara administration is to revive economic activity and restore investor confidence. Measures to reopen the financial administration have seen the banks resume their activities, while important ports such as Abidjan and San Pedro have begun to export cocoa. But it is crucial for the country to have a coherent post-conflict economic management strategy that identifies the challenges affecting the vital economic and financial system, including the cocoa, coffee and oil sectors, which have been crippled by corruption and mismanagement.

While the fact that the government recently convened a seminar to draw up a roadmap for the next six months might be seen as encouraging, the most fundamental issue is the implementation of that roadmap.

There are currently many pledges to assist Côte d'Ivoire in its post-conflict reconstruction process. For example, France has already approved a €400-million emergency assistance while the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have pledged €70-million. The European Union has pledged to allocate €175-million to improve infrastructure.

Two major problems generally arise from external financial support to countries emerging from conflict. Firstly, many donors make pledges without disbursing them, leaving governments unable to meet the high expectations of the people. Secondly, financial assistance without a critical needs assessment might not have much impact on a country's recovery.

CONCLUSION

Since 2000 violence has affected between 19 and 25 per cent of African elections (in Gabon, Guinea, Northern Ghana, Niger Delta, Nigeria, Lomé, Togo, Kenya and Zimbabwe among others) (Bekoe 2010). Election-related violence is becoming an increasingly significant threat to the democratisation process in Africa (Matlosa, Khadiagala & Shale 2010). Yet coherent and peaceful electoral engineering has become increasingly crucial for the promotion of democracy in divided societies and for peace in countries emerging from armed conflict and those affected by chronic political and economic instability. Irregularities in elections undermine the legitimacy of the leadership and the stability of a country's democratic system.

The experience of Côte d'Ivoire highlights the dramatic consequences of fraudulent elections and political manipulation. Far from being a neo-colonial problem the crisis in the country was caused by local leaders who failed to plan a comprehensive and peaceful transfer of power, resorting to political machinations to maintain their power and authority illegitimately.

A decade of instability has contributed to the deterioration of the socio-economic and political environment. Côte d'Ivoire now has the opportunity to chart a new course in its post-independence dispensation. The new government should seize the momentum to develop adequate policy responses to some of the structural causes of conflict in the former beacon of stability; mainly the national identity issue and socio-economic difficulties.

The resumption of economic activity depends largely on the restoration of security and efforts to promote good governance. None of these objectives is achievable in the absence of a well-defined post-conflict reconstruction strategy grounded on genuine political will to wipe away the suffering of the citizens.

It has become conventional in transitional societies or countries emerging from armed conflict that once elections are held and the president is sworn in 'democracy is said to have been established' and development partners can move out (De Zeeuw & Kumar 2010). Subsequently, the elected regime is faced with great socio-economic challenges that could undermine the fragile peace. This problem manifested itself in Burundi and in Liberia under Charles Taylor in 1997, where the regimes elected after the conflict were faced with intensified armed opposition from various rebel groups and rising social discontent.

At its 270th meeting, held on 5 April 2011, the AU Peace and Security Council issued a communiqué in which it said that 'a new page has been opened in the history of Côte d'Ivoire, which should be turned to good account in order to consolidate the newly-found peace, promote and deepen reconciliation and facilitate the socio-economic development of Côte d'Ivoire' (AUPSC 2011). This feeling expressed by the AU should be seen as a call to the new authorities to take necessary measures to consolidate peace in Côte d'Ivoire.

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