

INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP - NEW REPORT

Cote d'Ivoire: No Peace in Sight

Dakar/Brussels, 12 July 2004: Lack of good faith on the part of all sides in the Côte d'Ivoire peace process is jeopardising the October 2005 elections and could cause the war to spread to neighbouring countries.

[Côte d'Ivoire: No Peace in Sight*](#), the latest report from the International Crisis Group, examines the political stand-off most notably between President Gbagbo and his FPI party on the one hand and the rebel Forces Nouvelles on the other, as well as the economic incentives that make war lucrative for almost everyone except ordinary citizens. If there is to be any chance of peace, the international community, and especially the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), needs to take on the spoilers more assertively and openly, and end impunity for the perpetrators of continued violence.

"No political actor has shown the will to break the impasse", says Mike McGovern, West Africa Project Director for ICG. "Diplomacy built upon the assumption that the parties aim to negotiate in good faith is doomed to failure".

The key issues addressed in the January 2003 Linas-Marcoussis Accords -- nationality, eligibility for elections, and disarmament -- are as pressing as ever, yet all are deadlocked. Opposition parties have left the Government of National Reconciliation. The Forces Nouvelles not only refuse to disarm until after elections, but are flirting with secession.

Underpinning the impasse is a shadowy system of patronage and wealth extraction that benefits the political elite, security forces, militias, and businessmen. Through an Enron-like maze of front companies and complex financial transactions, revenues from the cocoa, coffee, and timber industries are siphoned off, along with profits from cotton and weapons trading, creating a parallel state that thrives on the war economy. Further complicating the picture is a web of internal rivalries between these groups, none of which is homogenous.

Competition for diminishing resources has become increasingly bitter, and anti-foreigner rhetoric among those who consider themselves "true" Ivorians has gained momentum. Although the debate about who is, or should be, an Ivorian citizen is largely fuelled by those seeking cover for their illegal economic activities, Côte d'Ivoire is rapidly approaching a tipping point, at which the rancour risks moving to a dangerous new level.

"The combination of lawlessness and the economic consequences of the crisis could draw Mali, Burkina Faso, or both directly into the war", says Stephen Ellis, Director of ICG's Africa Program. "Regional and international leaders need to pay close attention to this dynamic, which could turn the Côte d'Ivoire conflict into a broader West African war".

Contacts: Dan Vexler (Brussels) 32 (0) 499 129 165
Jennifer Leonard (Washington) 1-202-785 1601

To contact ICG media please [click here](#)
***Read the report in full on our website:** <http://www.icg.org/>

The International Crisis Group (ICG) is an independent, non-profit, multinational organisation, with over 100 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Cote d'Ivoire: No Peace in Sight

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The January 2003 Linas-Marcoussis Accords have been badly compromised by a lack of good faith and political will. All the key issues -- nationality, eligibility for elections, and disarmament -- that they attempted to address in order to restore peace and national unity to Côte d'Ivoire and lead it to presidential elections in October 2005 are stalemated. No political actor has shown the will to break the impasse. Opposition parties have left the Government of National Reconciliation. The *Forces Nouvelles*, remnants of the armed group that attempted a coup in September 2002 and subsequently took control of the north of the country, not only refuse to disarm until after elections, but are flirting with secession.

The international community, and especially the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), needs to take on the spoilers more assertively and openly. Its diplomacy should be backed by a strong attempt to end impunity. Otherwise there is real risk not only of continued violence but that the war could spread across West African borders.

Several elements of the Ivorian equation work against a political solution. The situation is triangular, linking the political elite, the security forces and militias, and business interests connected to economic, often criminal, networks. The latter work in conjunction with the political elite and are quick to take advantage of the services of either security forces or militias. None of these groups is homogenous, and internal rivalries are aggravated by the fact that President Gbagbo and the *Front Populaire Ivoirien* (FPI) are relative newcomers to the political-business networks dominated for almost forty years by the late President Houphouët-Boigny's *Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire* (PDCI) party.

The long-term context of the crisis includes twenty years of economic downturn, an explosion of the number of unemployed (but often well-educated) youth, and competition for the illicit spoils of the state. The de facto partition between north and south has made this competition even sharper. The FPI accuses the *Forces Nouvelles* "rebels" of having risen to power by illegitimate means, while the latter accuse President Gbagbo, winner of the dubious 2000 elections, of using militias and special forces to intimidate and kill political enemies and economic challengers.

To get to the heart of Côte d'Ivoire's problems, it is necessary to understand their economic dimension, and in particular, in terms of the old dictum, to "follow the money". The political impasse is exceptionally lucrative for almost everyone except ordinary citizens. Major government figures have been accused of using state monies, especially from the Enron-like maze of interlinked institutions within the cocoa marketing system, for personal enrichment, purchasing weapons, and hiring mercenaries. Members of the *Forces Nouvelles* have been accused of monopolising lucrative economic activity, including the trade in cotton and weapons. Some observers have gone so far as to say that the killings of perhaps 120 citizens attempting a peaceful protest in Abidjan on 25-26 March 2004 originated in a power struggle between the ruling FPI and the opposition PDCI over who would control the lucrative rents emanating from corruption at the port.

It is not just leading politicians who may gain from the current situation of neither peace nor war. Many others, from businessmen close to the government to municipal political bosses, benefit through business interests that are frequently protected (or expanded) by militias of otherwise unemployed youth styling themselves as "Young Patriots". These "patriots" themselves can become quite rich. Militia leaders drive in expensive cars with numerous bodyguards and are said to receive as much as \$80,000 a month from the presidential coffers. At the same time, members of the security forces use roadblocks throughout the country to stop civilians and shake them down.

The Linas-Marcoussis Accords are the product of compromise and thus contain elements displeasing to every party. However, calls to scrap or renegotiate them miss an important point. As some in Côte d'Ivoire ask, what improvements would a new document make? The key issues addressed in the Accords are as pressing as ever. The problems lie in their application, and the sophisticated strategies of the two sides that range from the legalistic (pitting the constitution against the Accords) to the demagogic. Diplomacy built upon the assumption that the political actors aim to address these issues in good faith is doomed to failure. Low-level insecurity can be good for business.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Government of National Reconciliation:

1. Prioritise the elements of the Linas-Marcoussis Accords central to holding the October 2005 presidential elections and implement these within the shortest possible time, specifically articles 1 and 2 of Annex I (citizenship and identification), articles 1 and 2 of Annex II (the electoral system), and articles 1 and 2 of Annex III (eligibility for presidential election), and pursue Annexes VI (human rights) and VII (disarmament) in collaboration with ECOWAS and United Nations partners.
2. Resume control of the crossing points on the border to Liberia, and impose order in the zone under government control.

To the *Forces Nouvelles*:

3. Return to the Government of National Reconciliation.
4. Resume attendance at quadripartite meetings of armed forces.
5. Disarm without preconditions at the appropriate point in a process of applying the Linas-Marcoussis Accords.

To the RDR and PDCI Parties:

6. Resume membership of the Government of National Reconciliation.
7. In the case of the PDCI, assume a mediating role within the Government of National Reconciliation appropriate to its position between the *Forces Nouvelles* and the FPI.

To President Laurent Gbagbo:

8. Reinstate all ministers who are members of the Government of National Reconciliation and permit them to assume full control over their portfolios.
9. Ban, discouragem and dismantle all militias, particularly those with a close connection with the *Présidence*.

To the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR):

10. Broaden disarmament to include all non-official armed forces, including pro-government militias or ?parallel forces?.

To the Gbagbo Government's Army (FANCI):

11. Resume attendance at quadripartite meetings of armed forces, reinstate command and control and actively enforce a ban on militias.

To French Licorne Forces:

12. Move as quickly as possible to withdraw from highly visible and exposed public functions as ONUCI becomes able to take them on, and reconfigure as a rapid deployment force.

To the UN Mission (ONUCI):

13. Ensure full deployment of the remaining 3,000 troops as soon as possible, begin to patrol the Liberian border in conjunction with UNMIL, and organise quadripartite meetings to include Licorne, *Forces Nouvelles* and FANCI.
14. Proceed with the establishment of an independent radio station to counter the effect of inflammatory broadcasts by local media.

15. Attack the problem of impunity by insisting that Côte d'Ivoire ratify the statute of the International Criminal Court or otherwise indicate its acceptance of ICC jurisdiction with effect from 19 September 2002.

To the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS):

16. Make clear the deep level of regional concern by assuming a higher public profile, thereby undercutting the government's claim that President Gbagbo is supported by African leaders and opposed only by France, and use all available means to keep Guinea out of the conflict.

Dakar/Brussels, 12 July 2004

Copyright 2004 International Crisis Group