

Côte d'Ivoire's Great West: Key to Reconciliation

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Executive Summary

Western Côte d'Ivoire's land, security and identity problems make this vast border territory the country's most unstable area. Reconciliation has yet to begin there and communal tensions remain acute. Two administrative regions are especially problematic: Cavally and Guémon. Outside Abidjan, these are the two regions where the post-electoral crisis claimed the most victims and which saw the gravest violence. The Ivorian government's preference for a security clampdown there, rather than measures to address political and economic problems has done little to address instability, which could provide the spark that reignites the crisis. Since December, the government has taken some steps nationally to lower political tension and promote national reconciliation: these should be immediately extended to these two regions, which remain strongholds of former President Laurent Gbagbo.

Since independence, the central government has ignored Cavally and Guémon when distributing the nation's wealth. These two outlying regions produce a significant proportion of the cocoa that makes Côte d'Ivoire the world's biggest producer, as well as large quantities of other plant-derived raw materials. Yet they missed the "Ivorian miracle" and have remained undeveloped. Their exceptionally fertile land is both a source of wealth and their main problem. Poorly regulated and subject to fierce competition, land ownership is a recurring cause of conflict. Land is a magnet for migrants, both from other parts of the country and from abroad, who often outnumber those "native" to the area and leave them with a strong sense of dispossession.

For a long time, conflicts have been resolved peacefully through local and customary dispute resolution systems. However, the economic crisis, demographic pressures and the spread of a xenophobic political discourse in the 1990s have exhausted these systems. Land conflicts, exploited by the three major political parties that disputed the succession to President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, have increasingly provoked violence between "native" landowners and migrants.

The government of then-President Henri Konan Bédié tried in 1998 to resolve the situation by introducing a land code that was never enforced. The war in September 2002 and its aftermath then considerably worsened the conflicts. During this period, the violence that affected the west was worse than anywhere else in Côte d'Ivoire, bar the capital Abidjan, with large-scale criminality claiming dozens, even hundreds, of victims.

This was partly due to Cavally's and Guémon's strategic location, not only because they produce cocoa but also because they are at the centre of the transport network that takes the raw material to the coast for export. Whoever controls these two regions also controls the country's main source of foreign currency. Liberia's proximity is another aggravating factor. Mercenaries from that country have exported the brutal behaviour that characterised the Mano River wars and make regular, deadly incursions into Ivorian territory, taking advantage of the weakness of Liberian and Ivorian armed forces.

During the 2011 post-electoral crisis, further massacres took place in Cavally and Guémon. The gravest, with a death toll of hundreds in just a few days, took place in the town of Duékoué. Then, in July 2012, more than one year after the end of the crisis, other violent crimes were committed at the Nahibly camp for the internally

displaced, just outside Duékoué. In 2013, several incursions into Côte d'Ivoire by Liberian and Ivorian militia from Liberia claimed further victims and displaced thousands. These recent events proved just how volatile these two regions are, and showed they are likely to be the first to boil over if political tensions increase.

At the moment, serious crimes against members of ethnic groups considered to be supporters of former President Gbagbo remain unpunished, which lends credibility to allegations of a two-tiered justice system. The government in Abidjan must shed light on these crimes and take other significant measures to stabilise Cavally and Guémon.

Recommendations

To promote justice and reconciliation

To the government of Côte d'Ivoire:

1. Prioritise completion of the investigation into the destruction of the Nahibly displaced camp by:
 - a) relaunching the investigation and strengthening the capacities of the Man court responsible for conducting it by assigning several investigating judges to allow the prosecutor to focus exclusively on the Nahibly case;
 - b) calling as witnesses the administrative and security officials on duty in Duékoué at the time of the events and present at the scene of the tragedy; and
 - c) opening the communal graves discovered in March 2013 to establish whether they have any relation to the Nahibly massacre.
2. Clarify the legal status of the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission; its mandate ended in September 2013 but its president is still active despite not being officially reappointed to that position.
3. Redefine, in the event of an extension to the commission's mandate, the roles of the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Social Cohesion Program in order to eliminate overlapping of the two bodies.

To the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire:

4. Provide the Ivorian judiciary with a complete copy of its internal report on the destruction of the Nahibly camp.
5. Expand the so-called legal clinics in Cavally and Guémon to improve access to justice in the two regions.

To improve security

To the government of Côte d'Ivoire:

6. Reorganise security arrangements in Cavally and Guémon by:
 - a) replacing the commissioned and non-commissioned officers who were formerly members of the New Forces rebellion and who are suspected of serious human rights violations in the region, and, more generally, gradually replacing with more neutral elements all personnel who took part in the fighting in the region;
 - b) equipping the security forces stationed on the Liberian border with the transport, communications, health resources and English training necessary to improve communication with their Liberian counterparts; and
 - c) restoring fully the functions of police officers and gendarmes, in particular their remit to conduct criminal investigations, and equipping them with the material resources necessary to proceed with these investigations, including vehicles, properly equipped offices and standard issue weapons, in order to rehabilitate the penal system.

To the government of Liberia:

7. Strengthen the military presence on the border with Côte d'Ivoire by establishing monitoring stations, especially during the dry season between December and June, when most attacks have been launched from Liberia over the last two years.

To resolve land issues and promote socio-economic development

To the government of Côte d'Ivoire:

8. Address land problems by changing the 1998 law by:
 - a) amending the law so as to reduce the financial cost of procedures and the associated complex written administrative requirements;
 - b) facilitating and publicising the distribution of very long leases that preserve landowners' property rights while allowing tenants to secure long-term occupation of the land; and
 - c) restoring to the water and forest services the resources necessary to monitor protected national parks and forests after the reestablishment of the state's authority over these areas and the clearance of illegal occupants; as well as making provision for the relocation of such illegal occupants.
9. Launch a special economic development plan for Cavally and Guémon in order to encourage non-agricultural activities and, in this way, lower the pressure on land.

To the National Social Cohesion Program:

10. Help repair the social fabric by organising a campaign to help the victims of war and its aftermath, funded by the program's CFA 7 billion budget, by:
 - a) drawing up an inventory of the hundreds of homes destroyed during the post-electoral crisis, prioritising the homes of people who fled to Liberia and are still there, with a view to facilitating their return;
 - b) allocating emergency social aid to the many war widows living in the region; and
 - c) opening forums for dialogue and meetings between communities and supporting local mediation initiatives by opening a permanent office in Duékoué.

Dakar/Brussels, 28 January 2014

Côte d'Ivoire's Great West: Key to Reconciliation

I. Introduction

Western Côte d'Ivoire is the country's most unstable region. This vast area, which stretches along the Liberian border, from the coast to the Nimba mountains, suffers from almost all the ethnic, land, political, security and identity problems that afflict contemporary Côte d'Ivoire. Two administrative regions are especially problematic: Cavally and Guémon.¹ Outside Abidjan, these are the two regions where the post-election crisis claimed the most victims.² Deadly incidents have regularly occurred since the end of the crisis and the government in Abidjan has not adequately addressed the three main root causes of the violence.

First, Cavally and Guémon are at the epicentre of Côte d'Ivoire's land question. Conflicts over agricultural land occur throughout the country but are much more acute in this area, where the population is diverse and the land very fertile.³ In short, three large population groups dispute ownership and use of the land: people "native" to the area (the Wê group), migrants from other parts of the country and migrants from abroad. The former are traditionally landowners.⁴ They rent land to Ivorian migrants from the centre and north of the country, generally members of the Baoulé and Dioula groups,⁵ and to migrants from abroad, mainly from Burkina Faso.

These three groups shared land in a relatively fair way until the early 1990s, when the arrangement was called into question by the economic downturn, population growth, the weakening of the state and succession battles for control of power following the December 1993 death of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny.

¹ The two regions were created in September 2011 as part of a general reorganisation of local government. They cover an area that was until then mainly divided between the former regions of Moyen-Cavally and 18 Montagnes.

² According to figures published by the National Commission of Inquiry (CNE), there were 774 deaths in the two regions during the crisis out of a national total of 3,248. Most victims were in Abidjan, with 1,497 deaths. There were 977 deaths in the other twenty regions investigated by the CNE. See "Rapport d'enquête sur les violations des droits de l'homme et du droit international humanitaire survenues dans la période du 31 octobre 2010 au 15 mai 2011", CNE, July 2012, p. 12.

³ Cash crops were introduced into Côte d'Ivoire at the end of the nineteenth century. Cocoa was first planted on a commercial basis in the Bingerville region towards 1885. Cocoa and other cash crops, such as coffee, have spread from east to west, starting near the border with Ghana and towards the centre and centre-west before continuing west and along the Liberian border. The sector has attracted many migrants from within the country and abroad since the 1920s. See Robert J. Mundt, *Historical Dictionary of Côte d'Ivoire* (London, 1995) and Jacques L. Tokpa, *L'immigration des Voltaïques (1919-1960)* (Abidjan, 2006).

⁴ The Wê include two closely related ethnic groups: the Guéré, which are in the majority, and the Wobé. In the west, the name "Guéré" is generally used by the Guéré themselves and by other ethnic groups.

⁵ This is the usual classification used for ethnic groups in the west but it is simplistic and does not distinguish between the Sénoufo, the Malinké and all the other groups native to northern Côte d'Ivoire, southern Mali, northern Guinea and some southern regions of Burkina Faso. Similarly, the term Mossi – Burkina's majority ethnic group – is often used to refer to all Burkinabes.

Land is not the only source of intercommunal conflict; with time, it became a political issue linked to nationality and identity beyond economic concerns. The three major Ivorian political forces have used it to mobilise the population in presidential elections over two decades. Each community has rallied behind the party able to defend its land interests, leading to polarisation exacerbated by years of war and deadly intercommunal clashes. The perpetrators of massacres in Cavally and Guémon since 2002 remain unpunished because of the ineffective justice system and the lack of any genuine interest in reconciliation on the part of successive governments. Land conflicts and political manipulation of the issue have generated tensions, exacerbated by a growing culture of vengeance that could, at any moment, lead to further bloodbaths.

Finally, the proximity of Liberia aggravates Cavally and Guémon's chronic instability. The brutal violence of Liberia's long civil war spilled over into Côte d'Ivoire, as did thousands of refugees. Côte d'Ivoire subsequently exported thousands of refugees fleeing the post-election crisis who are still living in Liberia. The same ethnic groups live on both sides of the porous, fictional border, which has facilitated the continual movement of populations. There is therefore no chance of stabilising the west unless Liberia is associated with any settlement. This makes the task even more complex.

This report focuses on these three dynamics, which make Cavally and Guémon a continued threat for the country. Chronic instability and the failure to resolve problems could trigger a new crisis if political competition becomes fierce ahead of the next presidential election in 2015. Stabilisation will also provide an indicator of progress in reconciliation. Better mutual understanding between communities, coupled with the return of the thousands of refugees still living in Liberia, will provide a litmus test of whether reconciliation has failed or succeeded. This report is the result of several field missions – the last of which took place in April-May 2013 – to the area between the towns of Duékoué, Bolequin, Taï and Toulepleu, where some of the deadliest recent incidents in the Ivorian crisis occurred. Research was complemented by interviews in Abidjan in September and October 2013.

II. Land, a Coveted Resource Where “Might is Right”

In the west, where the soil is very fertile, the land tenure system is in such chaos that neither customary nor modern law is able to regulate it, causing thousands of more or less violent micro-conflicts. More than a simple legal question, land ownership poses a fundamental economic problem: land, the only resource available to hundreds of thousands of people in the west, is the object of fierce competition. Without other sources of income, there will be no solution in sight to the land conflict.

A. *Ineffective Customary Law and Unenforced Modern Law*

Land conflicts, which are not new in Côte d'Ivoire, have occurred as cash crops expanded.⁶ Tension was nonetheless contained from the late 1920s to the mid-1980s and only rarely degenerated into deadly violence. During this long period, land ownership in the west was not regulated by modern, written laws but by a traditional arrangement called guardianship (*tutorat*).⁷ The single-party regime of the Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) allowed this situation to continue and carefully avoided regulating land ownership with a restrictive and politically dangerous law.⁸

However, with the end of Félix Houphouët-Boigny's regime in 1993, the guardianship system gradually ceased to operate due to the combination of political tension related to succession, the economic crisis and demographic pressures. In the 1990s, land conflicts spread and became more violent and increasingly difficult to control. The authorities reacted by promulgating the 23 December 1998 law in an attempt to create a legal framework for rural land ownership and revive the old guardianship system, which had become largely ineffective.

The 1998 law establishing a rural land code had two main components.⁹ First, it recognised customary law but tried to incorporate it into a modern, written legal system by giving all landowners ten years to assert their customary rights and acquire legal title deeds. Secondly, it sanctioned the exclusion of non-Ivorians from land

⁶ In its annual political report on Côte d'Ivoire in 1928, the French colonial administration noted that: “As long as foreigners limited themselves to planting subsistence crops, there were no problems; but one day they began to plant cocoa and coffee, being more responsive than the local people to administrative pressures. It then occurred to the locals that they could take over the southern plantations on the cheap if they were able to get rid of the foreigners, and so hostilities began”. Centre d'archives outre-mer, fonds ministériel, affaires politiques, boxes 567.

⁷ The academic Jean-Pierre Chauveau gives the following definition of *tutorat*: “The term ‘tutorat’ covers the reciprocal social relations that develop when a ‘foreigner’ (or group of foreigners) and his family are hosted by a village community for an indeterminate period, which may span several generations. Transfers are effected through the assignment of land rights between a ‘customary landowner’ (‘tuteur’), who is either a native of the area (an ‘autochthonous’) or someone who holds some prior control over the land, and his foreign ‘guest’...”. See “Les transferts coutumiers des droits entre autochtones et étrangers. Evolution et enjeux actuels de la relation de ‘tutorat’”, Final Report of the European Research Project, April 2006.

⁸ For example, the land code drafted in 1963 proposed to end customary law and transfer management of much rural land to the state. This risked incurring the opposition of traditional chiefs so President Houphouët-Boigny decided against promulgating the code. Crisis Group interview, magistrate, Abidjan, May 2013.

⁹ For more on this law, see Théodore Dagrou and Antoine Djessan, *Le foncier rural en 100 questions et plus* (Abidjan, 2008).

ownership.¹⁰ For a number of reasons discussed below, this law has never been effectively enforced. In the west, approximately 98 per cent of land is still regulated by customary law (or on the basis that “might is right”¹¹) and legal title deeds cover only 2 per cent of land.¹²

Fifteen years after it was passed, many jurists, private operators and political leaders still approve of the law, saying the adoption of this well-drafted, comprehensive law was a positive development.¹³ On the ground, however, local populations have a different view. They do not see it as the main mechanism for resolving land disputes but rather as a last resort after exhausting all customary and informal dispute resolution procedures (relatives, customary chiefs, local government officials).¹⁴

Although they do not reject the law outright, many people dealing with land problems are critical of it.¹⁵ Most people are either unaware of it or do not understand it. The government has not conducted a public education campaign to explain it. Experts rightly point to complex procedures that are not accessible to mostly illiterate rural populations¹⁶ and that entail costs perceived as inappropriate or exorbitantly high.¹⁷ In addition, implementation depends on local government officials whose integrity is often dubious.¹⁸

The principle that all Ivoirians, including the Guérés, Baoulés and “Dioulas” are equal before the law does not apply in practice. The west’s customary system lays down that anyone not born in a village is a “foreigner” even if they have Ivorian nationality, which means they have no land rights in that village. The right to land ownership is only open to the descendants of a limited number of families from each village.¹⁹ The 1998 law did not resolve the issue of land ownership by Ivoirians who come from other parts of the country and this remains a significant source of disputes in the region.

In an area where as many as 45 per cent of small holders are foreigners, the law was perceived as an alarming threat to expropriate them or their heirs.²⁰ The law did not make sufficient provision for compromise between natives and others. It does provide the option of leaseholds but does not include either incentives or any particular obligations. Such leases offer significant advantages; they can be extended to 99

¹⁰ Its first article states: “... Only the Ivorian state, local authorities and physical persons are allowed to become landowners”.

¹¹ See Section II.B for more on the climate of violence around the land question.

¹² See “That land is my family’s wealth”, Human Rights Watch, October 2013, p. 16.

¹³ Crisis Group interviews, November 2012, April 2013.

¹⁴ Crisis Group interviews, land conflict mediators and victims, Bolequin, Guiglo, April and May 2013.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Crisis Group interviews, jurists and politicians, Daloa and Bolequin, May 2013.

¹⁷ Case costs incurred by a Village Rural Land Management Committee (Comité villageois de gestion foncière rurale) can be as high as CFA 30,000 (\$60); obtaining a certificate of property rights (CFA 60,000/\$80); demarcation of land boundaries by the agriculture minister’s local office (CFA 80,000/\$160), etc. The minimum monthly wage was CFA 36,607 (\$74) prior to its November 2013 increase. See “That land ...”, op. cit., p. 88.

¹⁸ One of the cornerstones of the system introduced by the 1998 law is the Village Rural Land Management Committee, under the authority of the sub-prefect, who creates these committees. Representation of land chiefs (*chefs de terres*) is compulsory. These committees supervise all aspects of land identification operations.

¹⁹ See Crisis Group Africa Report N°82, *Côte d'Ivoire: No Peace in Sight*, 12 July 2004, p. 17-18.

²⁰ Crisis Group interview, community leader, Guiglo, May 2013.

years and enable landowners to retain ownership while granting tenants the right to work the land on a long-term basis and even pass it on to their heirs.

B. “Everybody Sells to Everybody”

The 1998 law was never enforced. Regulations were enacted one year after the law was passed but the war that began in September 2002 brought everything to a standstill. In what today are Cavally and Guémon, the administration collapsed and many people left their homes and fields. The breakdown of local government and the absence of occupants of many rural properties made it impossible to enforce the law in many cases.

“Might is right” became the rule. More than two years after the end of the post-election crisis, land transactions in the west are still in chaos. The market is largely unregulated and speculation is rife. The situation is often summarised in the words: “Everybody sells to everybody”. People no longer buy land to produce but to resell it and make a quick profit. Land is often sold to several “customers” at the same time.²¹

The National Assembly recently took steps to revive enforcement of the 1998 law and, on 23 August 2013, approved a bill amending one of its articles.²² However, the amendment makes no substantive change and only extends the period in which landowners must obtain official recognition of their customary rights and title deeds by a further ten years. Lawmakers took no practical steps to make the law easier to enforce or understand. It is doubtful that this minor change will be enough to solve the land question and associated problems during the next decade.

The impact of the land problem on the west should neither be exaggerated nor minimised. Deregulation of land transactions in the region has not stopped it producing a large quantity of plant-derived raw materials. As French academic Jean-Pierre Chauveau rightly pointed out, “the recurrence of land conflicts has not turned rural life into a daily battlefield”.²³ In many cases, owners and tenants compromise or de-escalate disputes temporarily before they resurface, showing that they have some capacity for reconciliation.

The absence of regulation poses many problems that cannot all be examined in a single report, just as it is difficult to measure the real impact of land conflicts on society. The problems described below generate tension, have the potential to cause violence and are the ones most frequently mentioned by Cavally and Guémon residents interviewed by Crisis Group.

Society pays a high price for these land conflicts, the most serious of which sometimes – though very exceptionally – degenerate into deadly clashes.²⁴ Land disputes promote distrust, stress, fear and weariness. They make the work of locally elected representatives or customary chiefs harder, forcing them to spend a considerable

²¹ Crisis Group interviews, local government officials, Bolequin, May 2013.

²² See “Projet de loi relative au délai accordé par la constitution des droits coutumiers sur les terres du domaine coutumier et portant modification de l’article 6 de la loi n°98-750 du 23 décembre 1998 relative au domaine foncier rural, tel que modifié par la loi n° 2004-412 du 14 août 2004”.

²³ See Jean-Pierre Chauveau, “Question foncière et construction nationale en Côte d’Ivoire: les enjeux silencieux d’un coup d’État”, *Politique Africaine*, no. 110 (Paris, 2006).

²⁴ In February 2004, twelve people were killed in an attack on an agricultural camp near Guiglo occupied by Guérés; in April 2004, a Baoulé farmer was killed at his camp near Guézon Tahouké, etc. See the chronology of violence in the west between 2002 and 2007 compiled by Magali Chelapi-Den Hamer, *Militarized Youths in Western Côte d’Ivoire* (Leiden, 2011), pp. 237-251.

amount of time trying to resolve these problems, to the detriment of other priorities. Some community leaders, who also have a professional activity, may have to stop work once or twice every week to hold and pay for “land hearings”.²⁵

Land conflicts have contributed to the disintegration of Wê society, formed by landowners and guardians, and have created deep internal divisions that generate violence.²⁶ The Wê, mainly supporters of former President Gbagbo, saw their community's order disrupted by the war, when many young Guérés pledged allegiance to militia and political leaders rather than customary authorities.²⁷ They no longer respected their elders and now they sell plots of land without consulting the chiefs or older members of their families. There are many land disputes even within Guéré families.²⁸

In general, other communities consider the Wê to be the vanquished. The “victors” no longer respect their authority and profit from their weakness and divisions. Acting as auxiliaries of the current regular army, Dozo hunters²⁹ have forcibly seized land.³⁰ According to several local government officials and military officers, members of the Forces républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI) have tried their hand at making illegal sales of land or have installed family members or farm workers on land belonging to the Wê, often with the involvement of young Guérés.³¹

Religious sites sacred to the Wê, where ceremonies are sometimes organised, are located in the forests that cover the west. Deregulation of the land market has led to further humiliation for the Wê as some of their most sacred sites have been destroyed and planted with cash crops. The violation of these sites is another significant source of resentment and conflict and has contributed to the disintegration of Wê society, which has lost its religious bearings.³²

In the months that followed the 2010-2011 post-election crisis, the confusion over land ownership led to a major wave of migration by Burkinabes to Guémon and Cavally. Several articles reported a few thousand people migrated, but no reliable figures are available.³³ According to Crisis Group interviews, this was mainly an internal migration.

Burkinabes travelled in lorries and buses from the centre west and far south west of Côte d'Ivoire and illegally occupied land, some of it in the vicinity of Taï and Bolequin. Several sources close to Côte d'Ivoire's Burkinabe community say that the main organisers of these “replacements” were Burkinabe planters present in the area for a long time and wealthy enough to exploit the land's potential. FRCI soldiers were allegedly involved.³⁴ The arrival of these new migrants strengthened the idea

²⁵ Hearings are held at the chief's home and usually take place on market days when rural people come to town.

²⁶ See Section III.

²⁷ Crisis Group interviews, civil society representatives, Bolequin, April 2013.

²⁸ Crisis Group interview, landowner, Guiglo, April 2013.

²⁹ The Dozos, an old West African hunter brotherhood, comprises tens of thousands of members scattered across Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Burkina Faso. See Joseph Hellweg, *Hunting the Ethical State* (Chicago, 2011).

³⁰ See Crisis Group Africa Report N°193, *Côte d'Ivoire: Defusing Tensions*, 26 November 2012.

³¹ Crisis Group interviews, politicians and local government officials, Bolequin, Guiglo, Duékoué, April and May 2013.

³² Crisis Group interviews, politicians and customary chiefs, Duékoué and Bolequin, May 2013.

³³ See “Guerre pour le cacao dans l'ouest ivoirien”, *Le monde diplomatique*, September 2012.

³⁴ Crisis Group interview, community leader, Guiglo, May 2013.

within the native community and pro-Gbagbo circles that the government was furthering the interests of Burkinabes who “were invading the west”.³⁵

The state has lost control over much public land, particularly protected national parks and forests. Understaffed water and forest services, disrupted by the conflict, have not actively managed these forests since the beginning of the war.³⁶ Unless they are patrolled, protected areas are illegally cultivated. Government representatives and the militias that fought each other in the west are suspected of taking protected forests as a reward and a source of illegal income.³⁷ Several local government officials allege that government representatives have joined in the illegal distribution of land and are therefore not in a position to set a good example.

Burkinabe militia leader Amadé Ouérémi stayed more than ten years in the Mont Péko forest, protected by the Forces nouvelles and then by senior politicians.³⁸ Ouérémi was driven out of Mont Péko in May 2013 and, in recent months, the government has shown some willingness to deal with the issue of protected forests.³⁹ However, by clearing them of their illegal occupants, the government risks causing another problem.

Occupation of protected forests has reduced the pressure on land, for example, in the Goin-Débé forest, to the south of Bolequin, where many Burkinabes settled with the assent of local military authorities. As a Wê political leader in the region noted, “the people who go and live there would pose a bigger problem if they settled on our land. We have no quarrel with them. It is the government’s problem, not ours”.⁴⁰

³⁵ Crisis Group interview, political and community leaders, Duékoué, Abidjan, May 2013. The “blue” press, close to former President Gbagbo, frequently denounces what it calls an “invasion”.

³⁶ In Duékoué, the water resources and forests office responsible for managing the 34,000-hectare protected forest of Mount Péko has only two employees. Crisis Group observation, Duékoué, May 2013.

³⁷ Designated as a reserve in 1974, Goin-Débé forest was first settled by Baoulé families, which were tolerated by the regime of Houphouët-Boigny, who was a Baoulé himself. The Gbagbo government cleared the forest of illegal settlers and gave plantations as rewards to militiamen. The forest is currently occupied by Burkinabes, who have not been bothered by the authorities. Crisis Group interview, local political leader, Bolequin, April 2013.

³⁸ According to several Duékoué and Guiglo residents, Amadé Ouérémi migrated from his birthplace in Burkina Faso to the Duékoué area in the mid-1980s. Initially a repairer of motorbikes, he went on to establish himself as a magician, claiming he possessed exceptional magic powers. He used the money he raised through consultations to invest in land. Nobody knows exactly how he contacted the leaders of the Forces nouvelles in the Man area but he became one of the kingpins of the rebel-controlled timber trafficking in the region. Having formed his own militia, he illegally occupied the Mont Péko forest. During the post-electoral crisis, Ouérémi acted as an auxiliary of the Forces de sécurité républicaines and even wore their uniform. Several NGOs, including Human Rights Watch, have accused him of being one of those responsible for the March 2011 massacre in Duékoué. He was driven out of the Mont Péko forest and arrested on 18 May 2013 by the Ivorian army. Transferred by helicopter to the premises of the Direction de la surveillance du territoire in Abidjan, he was later detained in an undisclosed location. Crisis Group interviews, Ivorian and Burkina Faso citizens, community leaders, UN officials and Ivorian military officers, Abidjan, Duékoué, Guiglo and Daloa, May 2013.

³⁹ For example, in July 2013, the Ivorian government sent soldiers and bulldozers to regain control of the Niégré protected forest in the south west of the country. They cleared several thousand peasants who had been illegally settled there for years. See “Côte d’Ivoire: soldats et bulldozers pour reconquérir les forêts”, Agence France-Presse, July 2013.

⁴⁰ Crisis Group interview, Bolequin, May 2013.

C. *Agriculture, the Only Source of Jobs and Income*

The authorities often see the land question as a legal or political issue and rarely as an urgent economic problem. Agriculture is Cavally and Guémon's mainstay and the only source of employment. This compels people to obtain a plot of land to rent or sell and exacerbates the pressure on land and resulting conflicts. According to the commerce minister, there are only 3,271 formal jobs outside the primary sector in the two regions, which have a total population of more than 500,000.⁴¹ These jobs are concentrated in small local industries and a miniscule formal tertiary sector. The informal sector is mainly present in the two towns of Duékoué and Guiglo where people generally have an agriculture-related activity to complement their informal sector job.⁴²

The primary sector's dominance is rooted in history. After independence, President Houphouët-Boigny froze development of the mining sector in order to promote agriculture, which he thought could foster development.⁴³ The Liberian war and its impact on Côte d'Ivoire also thwarted plans for economic diversification in the region, and instability discouraged private investment.⁴⁴ Laurent Gbagbo's regime, said to be more favourable to two regions considered to be his electoral strongholds, favoured security over economic considerations during his long battle with the Forces nouvelles. "Instead of developing the region, the FPI allowed many young militiamen to live there without working", said a local PDCI leader.⁴⁵

More broadly, the central government's negative perception of the west since independence explains why it has deliberately ignored this outlying region when distributing the national wealth. Natives of the area have long been seen as "lazy" and "only good at playing music or football".⁴⁶ Promises have been made but never kept. After the end of the post-election crisis, the two regions were seen as hostile because they had been at the heart of armed opposition to President Ouattara.⁴⁷

The regions of Guémon and Cavally, which are major producers of plant-based raw materials, with about 9 per cent of the 2012/2013 cocoa harvest and large tonnages in many other sectors, receive little in return for their major contribution to the country's wealth.⁴⁸ There has not been much public investment in infrastructure. There are two general hospitals in Guiglo and Duékoué, few tarmacked roads, only one court, recently refurbished, recurring problems with access to drinking water, etc. Private investment in infrastructure has been equally low. There are only five bank branches, all of them in Guiglo and Duékoué, and very little tourist infrastructure, with only two hotels, one in each of these two towns.

⁴¹ The trade ministry provided these figures to Crisis Group in September 2013.

⁴² Crisis Group interview, Cavally political leader, Abidjan, September 2013.

⁴³ For example, Houphouët-Boigny said that "minerals can wait because they will not go rotten". Crisis Group interview, former PDCI minister, Abidjan, October 2013.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Crisis Group interview, Guiglo, April 2013.

⁴⁶ Crisis Group interviews, political leaders, academics, Abidjan, May and October 2013.

⁴⁷ See Section III.

⁴⁸ In the 2012/2013 harvest, Cavally and Guémon produced 126,219 tonnes of cocoa, 72,220 tonnes of coffee, 98,267 tonnes of latex, 44,540 tonnes of rice, 84,390 tonnes of bananas, 89,567 tonnes of cassava and 45,252 cubic metres of timber. The National Agency for Rural Support and Development (Agence nationale d'appui au développement rural) provided these figures to Crisis Group in September 2013.

D. *Revising the 1998 Law and Diversifying the Economy*

The government has yet to revise the 1998 law. The extension approved by the National Assembly in August 2013 will not suffice to resolve the hundreds of land disputes in the west and elsewhere. The government should acknowledge this and launch a much broader review of the law, the effective enforcement of which is crucial for stabilisation.

In order for the law to be more effective and operational, it must be more attuned to what is really happening on the ground. A review must take into account the people's concerns to better identify what prevents effective enforcement, for example, the high cost and complexity of the registration procedure. This cannot be done without a broad and inclusive consultation with all communities whose livelihoods depend on land.

Once the law has been revised, many people will continue to distrust a complex document that disrupts their lives. Significant resources, such as an information and advice campaign, should accompany the dissemination and enforcement of the law. The courts also need additional human resources to resolve disputes that will certainly arise. An increase in the number of legal land titles will not signal the end of land disputes, as even a written, legal title can be contested.

Leaseholds have the advantage of satisfying both landowners who want to retain their customary status and tenants who want long-term occupation of the land. The government should provide incentives to use them.

The state must reestablish its authority over protected forests, but it should also take other measures. First, it should resettle forest occupants, lest the problem be transferred elsewhere and cause new conflicts. The government services that manage protected forests should be provided with the human and material resources they have lacked for the last ten years. Without regular patrols, there is a strong chance that these protected areas will be reoccupied by illegal squatters a few months after they have been cleared.

Pressure on land will remain high for as long as agriculture is the only source of employment in the west, even if the law manages to regulate land transactions. The government should launch a priority economic development plan for Guémon and Cavally as soon as possible to show its willingness to promote reconciliation. The plan would relieve the pressure on land in the short term and show the Wê populations that the authorities are not hostile to them and do not intend to discriminate against them. Regional economic development should be used as a tool for reconciliation.

In addition to creating more non-agricultural jobs, the plan could promote agricultural activities other than planting cash crops and abusively exploiting forests. For example, a senior local political leader has suggested surveying the west's lowlands and using them to plant subsistence crops.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Crisis Group interview, Abidjan, September 2013.

III. The Hotbed of Intercommunal Tension

With the exception of certain sub-districts of Abidjan, the west is experiencing the country's most serious intercommunal strife. Competition for land, the high level of immigration, the area's strategic position during the war and hate speech have made this part of Côte d'Ivoire the theatre of regular, large-scale crimes during the last decade. These tensions are far from resolved and the Ivorian government's reconciliation policy has so far been too weak to appease the populations.

A. *Politicisation of Competition for Land*

Land is the main factor of instability and intercommunal tension in the region. But the level of violence would not have been so high without the influence of the political discourse. The scale of land conflicts began to increase at the end of the 1980s when the economic crisis forced thousands of youths out of the cities and back to rural areas. These unemployed natives of the area wanted to recover land owned by their elders but often leased to migrants for planting crops. This chaotic population movement further increased the pressure on land.⁵⁰ These youths ignored ancient practices and expressed their demands outside traditional conflict resolution structures, either directly or with the support of local political leaders.⁵¹

The return of uprooted natives coincided with political discourses that stigmatised foreign and non-native communities, culminating with the promotion of Ivorian nationalism, known as "*Ivoirité*".⁵² The FPI used land conflicts to encourage natives of the area to exclude others and demand the return of their land. It spread the message in the villages that its electoral victory would result in the automatic return of land to its owners.⁵³ In the west, this opportunistic message received a strong echo. In 1995 and again in 2001, Laurent Gbagbo's party beat the PDCI in local elections in Toulepleu, Duékoué and Guiglo.⁵⁴ The PDCI also defended its voters, mainly from the Baoulé community, for example by giving them preferential treatment to settle in protected forests or by supporting the illegal occupation of land belonging to Guérés or rented to Burkinabes.⁵⁵

In December 1997, deadly clashes between Guéré natives and Baoulé migrants took place in Fengolo, near Duékoué. These incidents prompted the president of the Republic, Henri Konan Bédié, to visit the area and announce that the government would begin work on the 1998 law, in what became known as his "Fengolo appeal".⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Exhaustion of the soil in northern Côte d'Ivoire and the Sahel and the reduction of available land in the centre-west have encouraged an increasing number of migrants to settle in the west.

⁵¹ Crisis Group interviews, local political leaders, Duékoué, Guiglo, April 2013.

⁵² In the early 1990s, Laurent Gbagbo denounced President Houphouët's willingness to give voting rights to citizens of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and described negatively these voters as "election fodder". FPI leaders and newspapers still often use this expression. See "Pour constituer son bétail électoral en vue de 2015, Ouattara naturalise Ivoiriens, 429.000 fraudeurs", *Notre Voie*, 4 March 2013.

⁵³ Regional FPI campaign managers used this argument from the mid-1990s to the 2010 presidential election. Crisis Group interviews, local political leaders, Guiglo, Bolequin, October 2011 and May 2013.

⁵⁴ The Guiglo and Duékoué town councils were led by a PDCI member from independence until the 2001 municipal elections.

⁵⁵ Crisis Group interview, PDCI leader, Guiglo, May 2013.

⁵⁶ See Anicet Patrice Gaouli Bi, "Tutorat et conflits fonciers ruraux dans l'ouest ivoirien : le cas de Fengolo dans la sous-préfecture de Duekoué", CODESRIA (Dakar, 2008).

Political tension continued to mount and, in September 2002, degenerated into an armed conflict between the government of President Gbagbo and what would become the Forces nouvelles rebellion.

With the war unleashing old land and political antagonisms, intercommunal tension increased. Clashes became extremely brutal, involving the massacre of dozens, even hundreds of civilians.⁵⁷ Such major violent incidents have occurred regularly during the last ten years, encouraged by impunity and a divisive, hateful political discourse.⁵⁸ Vengeance became the third major reason for communities to fight each other, in addition to land conflicts and political divisions.

It is hard to determine who fought whom in this strategic area. The military phase of the conflict was relatively short.⁵⁹ In order to remain in control of the strategic regions coveted by the rebellion, Laurent Gbagbo compensated for his army's weakness by creating "pro-government" militias. The Guiglo and Duékoué militias were mainly composed of Guérés. In the mountainous region, the rebellion prioritised recruitment of Yacoubas and "northerners", a term that included Ivorians from northern Côte d'Ivoire and others from neighbouring Sahel countries.⁶⁰ Clashes between militias and rebels ended following international armed intervention and the establishment of a buffer zone in May 2004, separating the "government zone" in the forested west from the rebel-controlled mountainous west.

Pro-Gbagbo militias controlled the area that is now Cavally and Guémon and acted violently towards civilians belonging to all non-native communities, often with the complicity of local military authorities.⁶¹ Civilians also attacked or denounced other civilians. Members of all communities committed and suffered violence.

The sequence of events from 2002 to the present day helps identify these intercommunal divides. The most frequent and lethal clashes took place between the Guérés and Burkinabes, which shows that conflict in the west is rooted in both land and political issues.⁶² Competition between frustrated landowners and foreign tenants who claimed ownership of land to which they had added value fuelled tensions; so too did hate speech by politicians. At the time, Laurent Gbagbo openly accused Burkina Faso of being the rebellion's main supporter.⁶³ Meanwhile, in Burkina Faso,

⁵⁷ Between 4 and 8 May 2003, "Burkina rebels" allied to the Forces nouvelles killed 223 Guérés in the Bangolo region. See Chelapi-Den Hamer, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

⁵⁸ For example, a pamphlet distributed in 2004 by the Union du Grand Ouest said: "The time for vengeance has come [...] The time has come to kill and drive the Akans out of our midst. The time has come to recover our lands. The time has come to clear our villages and towns of Dioulas (Mossi) and the AKAN who are objectively allies".

⁵⁹ Pro-government forces and the Forces nouvelles signed a ceasefire on 3 May 2003. The war was declared over on 4 July. See "Côte d'Ivoire: Intervention de M. Jean-Marc de La Sablière, représentant permanent de la France auprès des Nations unies", 25 July 2003.

⁶⁰ The researcher Magali Chelapi-den Hamer, who conducted a survey of youths and militias in western Côte d'Ivoire, asked militia members for their ethnic origin. Out of the 101 responses from pro-government militias in Guiglo, 93 were Guérés. Inversely, out of 100 responses from the Forces nouvelles in Man, 46 were Yacoubas and 41 belonged to ethnic groups in the north and neighbouring Sahel countries. See Chelapi-Den Hamer, *op. cit.*

⁶¹ Duékoué and the Moyen-Cavally region were placed under military administration from July 2005 to September 2010.

⁶² The first serious incident between the two communities took place on 7 October 2002, only three weeks after the war began. Young Guérés organised a man-hunt for Burkinabes in the villages of Blodi, Iruzon, Diahouin, Toazo and Kouibli. See Chelapi-Den Hamer, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

⁶³ On 26 October 2002, President Gbagbo said about the origins of the rebellion: "I would understand it if someone told me that a banker had fled Côte d'Ivoire and was living in a villa in Ouaga-

President Blaise Compaoré's government emphasised the dangers of *Ivoirité* and the right of people to live on land that they had worked hard to make productive.⁶⁴

The sequence of events also shows frequent attacks by Guéré civilians against Baoulés, violence involving Dozo hunters against Guéré villagers, the murder of Malians by Liberians and many more minor acts of violence. Violence also occurred within all communities, especially the Guéré community during the post-election crisis.

For example, in the village of Tinhou, several Guéré PDCI leaders were attacked by their Guéré neighbours, who were fervent FPI supporters. Pro-Gbagbo militias ransacked the house of the former infrastructure minister, Dagobert Banzio, a Guéré from this village. According to their victims, political disagreements triggered these attacks. In Blolequin, a Guéré PDCI leader was forced to flee to Liberia to escape not only the vengeance of the FRCI but also the anger of militias of his own ethnic group.⁶⁵

From early 2003, reprisals that seem only motivated by vengeance increased, encouraged by impunity. Only a few crimes committed during the war were reported or recorded. "The rare judicial investigations begun against members of the pro-government militias and the Côte d'Ivoire students' federation and Dozos were generally never concluded".⁶⁶ The absence of the rule of law and a functioning judicial system during and after the war led communities to take the law into their own hands. This is particularly visible in the region's biggest town, Duékoué, home of the deadliest intercommunal tensions.

B. *Brutal Violence in Duékoué*

Then-capital of Moyen-Cavally, part of which is now the region of Guémon, Duékoué recorded a total of 505 violent deaths during the 2010-2011 post-election crisis according to the UN. That is more than half the total number of victims in the whole region, which the same source puts at 954.⁶⁷ More recently in July 2012, one year after the end of the crisis, FRCI members, Dozo militias and young "Dioulas" destroyed the Nahibly camp for the internally displaced, just outside town.

Duékoué is a crossroads-town. With a population of about 70,000, it leads to the centre along the Daloa road, to the south-western port of San-Pedro, to the mountainous city of Man to the north and to Liberia in the west. It is surrounded by lands known to be the most fertile in the region. The most unique and strategic of all western towns, it was home to the fiercest conflict. During the war, two militia chiefs controlled the town.

dougou. But I find it harder to understand if someone tells me that a corporal has deserted the Ivorian army and lives in a villa in Ouagadougou. It is clear that they (the deserters) were housed and welcomed by the Burkina government. It's obvious". See "Gbagbo accuse le Burkina", Afrik.com, 27 October 2002.

⁶⁴ In a speech delivered on 24 January 2003, President Compaoré said: "We have always told Henri Konan Bédié, Robert Guéï and Laurent Gbagbo that when you expropriate populations, when you bar candidates from taking part in elections or when you falsify electoral rolls, you will only destabilise Côte d'Ivoire and provoke conflicts that harm the country. Unfortunately, they have not listened to us and whatever will be, will be".

⁶⁵ Crisis Group interview, Blolequin, May 2013.

⁶⁶ See "Rapport sur les violations des droits de l'homme et du droit international humanitaire commises à l'ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire", UNOCI, 10 May 2011.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. i.

Nicknamed the “genius of geniuses” by his followers, Gabriel Banao Oula Lepohi Beangohou, known as “Vieux Banao”, has been accused by the UN of taking part in atrocities.⁶⁸ Aged at least 70 at the start of the war, he handed over control at the end of the 2000s to his “second in command”, Julien Ouehan Mompheho, alias Colombo.⁶⁹ At the head of the Great Western Union of Patriots in Resistance (UPERGO) and the Wê Patriotic Alliance (APWÊ), these two men and their fighters have been accused of terrorising the town for several years.⁷⁰

Accumulated resentment at unpunished violence was without doubt one of the triggers for one of the biggest massacres of the Ivorian crisis. At least 300 people, almost of them Guérés, were killed on 28-29 March 2011 in Duékoué's Carrefour district, home of the APWÊ headquarters. Investigations and reports by the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), human rights organisations and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Côte d'Ivoire, indicate that the FRCI, created by President Ouattara ten days earlier to replace President Gbagbo's army, and their Dozo and Burkinabe auxiliaries, probably perpetrated the massacre.⁷¹ Some have suggested that town residents, victims of APWÊ atrocities, took part, in a spirit of vengeance, directly or indirectly by pointing out the homes of militia families or those alleged to be such. This was often mentioned in the interviews Crisis Group conducted in Duékoué between October 2011 and May 2013.

The executioners and the victim's families must today live in the same town and cross each other's path. Under tight security since the end of the post-election crisis, latent tension persists in Duékoué and occasionally results in violence. The town's administrative and security officials live in constant fear of new conflicts.⁷²

Administering the town is a difficult and unrewarding task. Civil servants that are appointed to jobs there must be able to work under pressure, with few resources and little support from local civil society.⁷³ When they have the chance, many economic, political and civil society figures live outside Duékoué because they are worried about security.⁷⁴

Mediation is difficult in Duékoué because the number of people willing to mediate is very small. Prominent local figures are distrustful and downhearted. Some customary, security and economic leaders hold entrenched political positions and are not open to compromise.⁷⁵ Some FPI leaders left the town and those who stayed are

⁶⁸ See UNOCI report, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁶⁹ He owes this nickname to his role before the war. An orphan raised by a Dioula family, Colombo joined the Dozo brotherhood. In this capacity, he worked as a security agent at the Côte d'Ivoire National Association of Credit Unions in Duékoué and helped the town's police in a few investigations. The nickname is a direct reference to Colombo, the famous police inspector of the television series of this name. Crisis Group interview with Colombo, Duékoué, February 2010.

⁷⁰ For example, the UN investigation team that visited the place in April 2011 “noted the existence of a well full of corpses in an advanced state of decomposition at the offices of APWÊ”. See UNOCI report, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 18 and 20-21. Also see “Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Côte d'Ivoire”, 14 June 2011, p. 14.

⁷² Crisis Group interviews, Duékoué, April 2013.

⁷³ The prefect worked for several months in the destroyed building, using his own laptop. In May, officers at the Duékoué barracks had one vehicle for more than 400 men and a few tents as accommodation. Crisis Group observations, Duékoué, October 2011 and May 2013.

⁷⁴ Crisis Group interview, former FPI leader, Abidjan, November 2012.

⁷⁵ Crisis Group interviews, local government officials and political leaders, Duékoué, Guilo, April and May 2013.

afraid of openly expressing their opinions. The many residents who voted for the FPI no longer have real political representation to defend them or speak on their behalf.

Duékoué residents are less forthcoming about the war than those of Guiglo and Blolequin. The highly-charged atmosphere imposes silence and anger, making it difficult to mediate or investigate. Several of the town's residents that Crisis Group approached refused to speak openly for fear of being "killed", in their own words. When tongues are loosened, it is often to exaggerate, tell tall stories or politically distort the facts. It seems impossible for residents to discuss the issue without becoming overwhelmed with emotions. Duékoué has also lost part of its written history because many administration documents were destroyed when government buildings, including the prefecture, were wrecked in February and March 2011.⁷⁶ This does not help shed light on past tragedies.

C. *Intense Repression, Little Reconciliation*

Since the end of the post-election crisis, attempts at defusing intercommunal tension in Guémon and Cavally have not been successful. After its military victory, President Ouattara's government, which feared resistance from pro-Gbagbo militias in this former Gbagbo stronghold, focused entirely on security. The FRCI, deployed there as from May 2011, imposed what they saw as order, often in a brutal manner, as many residents reported to Crisis Group.⁷⁷ Dozo hunters have been heavily involved in security operations. Gendarmes and police officers, suspected of supporting the former government, were disarmed and sidelined.⁷⁸

The destruction of the Nahibly camp on 20 July 2012 was the grimmest manifestation of the failure of the security clampdown – a clear indication that it poses a great obstacle to reconciliation. The camp, located just outside Duékoué, was home to more than 5,000 displaced people, mostly Guérés. FRCI soldiers, Dozo auxiliaries and Duékoué residents, including many young Dioulas, burned it to the ground, killing at least thirteen people.⁷⁹

The judicial investigation begun after the camp's destruction is at a standstill and it has not yet been established who was responsible for the operation.⁸⁰ Almost one and a half years after the event, nobody has been arrested.

On 10 October 2012, six bodies were discovered in a mass grave in Duékoué. According to the autopsy, these men, who disappeared on the day of the attack on the Nahibly camp, were killed by bullets fired from Kalashnikov rifles. The investigating judge has interviewed several people who have identified family members

⁷⁶ Crisis Group interview, local government official, October 2011.

⁷⁷ Crisis Group interviews, Duékoué, Guiglo, October 2011 and May 2013.

⁷⁸ See Crisis Group report, *Côte d'Ivoire: Defusing Tensions*, op. cit., p. 4.

⁷⁹ See "Une occasion de rendre justice", International Federation for Human Rights, March 2013 and Crisis Group email correspondence, UN expert, May 2013.

⁸⁰ Nahibly was controlled by armed men who moved in and out of the camp freely and were allegedly responsible for many robberies in Duékoué. Some said these men were pro-Gbagbo militiamen, others that they were bandits from Bangolo, to the north. A senior UNOCI official informed Crisis Group of the presence of armed men in the camp three days before the events. The murder of four Dioula in the district of Kokoma by these men is said to have provoked the attack on Nahibly. Another less widely-held hypothesis is that the camp was destroyed to eliminate witnesses to the March 2011 massacres. Crisis Group interviews, Nahibly camp survivors, academic, Ivorian military officers and local government officials, UN officials, Abidjan, July 2012 and Duékoué, May 2013.

among the corpses. Other mass graves were found in March 2013, but no bodies have yet been exhumed.⁸¹

Security has improved since the beginning of 2013. In May, the Dozos no longer manned the checkpoints, patrolled forest roads or were housed in barracks. In Duékoué, the non-commissioned officers who had been leading the security forces were replaced by more neutral officers, who are from the former regular army that served under the previous government and not former Forces nouvelles combatants. The general opinion in Duékoué is that these officers are willing to dialogue and listen and are relatively respectful of human rights. Police officers and gendarmes have returned to their former premises in several towns, such as Logoualé, and are back at checkpoints. However, they are still accused of racketeering at checkpoints.⁸²

Far from settling the scores of war, the security clampdown stalled the reconciliation process. Many Guérés have interpreted the attack on Nahibly as proof of the government's lack of political will to promote peace.⁸³ This tragedy reinforced the idea that the government has a two-tiered justice system and is prepared to tolerate impunity for members of the Forces nouvelles rebellion. The more extremist elements of the Wê community have used this argument to claim that the government is organising the genocide of the Wê.⁸⁴

Cavally and Guémon have received very little public aid. The government has not done enough to help this stricken part of the country, which is far from being a significant electoral base for it. The war caused the destruction and abandonment of thousands of homes, which are yet to be rebuilt. Some sectors of the population are extremely vulnerable, such as the many war widows who must provide for themselves, with no access to social assistance or compensation from the state. Rape victims must pay between CFA 30,000 and 50,000 (about \$87, equal or higher than the monthly income of many small peasants in the region) to obtain a medical certificate necessary to file an official complaint.⁸⁵

Some local mediation efforts, notably by religious authorities and PDCI Guéré leaders, have tried to bring communities together, but have received very little national support. The Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CDVR) has never actively begun to promote reconciliation between the peoples of Guémon and Cavally. It has yet to organise any public forums for dialogue that would allow communities to talk under the aegis of a national organisation. Although its president, Charles Konan Banny, visited Duékoué on 13 August 2012 for a ceremony of purification and prayer, the local CDVR office that opened in March 2013 is not operating. The appointment of several prominent Duékoué figures to the local commission is controversial because their entrenched political positions risk paralysing the local office.⁸⁶

⁸¹ See "Côte d'Ivoire: l'enquête sur la fosse commune de Duékoué au point mort", Radio France Internationale, 13 October 2013.

⁸² See "Côte d'Ivoire: Actes d'extorsion commis par les forces de sécurité", Human Rights Watch, 1 July 2013.

⁸³ Crisis Group interviews, Duékoué, Guiglo, April and May 2013.

⁸⁴ The word genocide is often used inappropriately by the pro-Gbabo media. For example, see "Génocide du peuple wê – La Jfpi sur les traces de l'horreur", *Notre voie*, 9 July 2013 and "Duokoué: génocide sous silence", Mediapart Blog, 3 April 2011, <http://bit.ly/1knOlb5>.

⁸⁵ See Report of the Independent Expert on the Situation of Human Rights in Côte d'Ivoire", UN Human Rights Council, 7 January 2013, p. 15.

⁸⁶ Crisis Group interviews, religious leaders, Duékoué, April 2013.

The CDVR has had to operate in an unusually difficult political, social and security environment. Its president's political affiliation has not facilitated its task. A leading PDCI figure, Charles Konan Banny is perceived by part of the Wê community as a government supporter and therefore not in a position to promote reconciliation.⁸⁷ The recurring troubles in the region and the fear of many witnesses have hindered investigations.⁸⁸ None have been conducted in Guémon or Cavally.⁸⁹ No commission representatives have visited the residents of the towns and villages where serious incidents occurred during the post-election crisis last May. Several telephone interviews allowed Crisis Group to confirm that this was still true when the CDVR's mandate expired on 28 September 2013.⁹⁰

Since then, the CDVR's status is unclear. Its mandate has officially expired but its president is still active even though he has not been officially reappointed to his post. He submitted the commission's report to the president of the Republic on 22 November 2013. Although it is of public interest, the report has not been published and only a few excerpts have been released.⁹¹ What is more, Charles Konan Banny has taken a direct part in the political debate by openly giving his opinion about the role his party should play in the governing coalition and leaving the door open to a possible candidacy in the 2015 elections. This has added to the confusion created by the conflict of interests caused by his political stance and his position at the head of an institution whose mission requires neutrality.⁹²

To add to the confusion, the government created a new reconciliation agency in May, the National Social Cohesion Program (PNCS). This agency does not officially compete with the CDVR. According to its managers, its role is more operational.⁹³ However, when its creation was announced, nothing was said about how the two agencies were going to coexist and cooperate and how the PNCS was to provide continuity if the CDVR's mandate was not renewed. In order to foster reconciliation, the government should clarify the legal status of the CDVR and its president. If it extends its mandate, it should also define more closely the remits of the CDVR and the PNCS to avoid overlapping.

⁸⁷ Crisis Group interview, community leader, Guiglo, April 2013.

⁸⁸ On its website, the CDVR states that its "objective is to seek out the truth, so investigations will be conducted impartially in order to identify the causes of the events, describe what happened and assess the consequences for the nation". See www.cdvr.ci/connaitre-laction-cdvr/enquetes.html.

⁸⁹ At a 30 December 2013 press briefing, the CDVR president suggested investigations would begin during the "operational" phase of the commission's work. He gave this press conference even though the CDVR's mandate had not been officially renewed. Although the CDVR's website mentions "preparatory phases", it does not refer to the "operational" phase. See www.cdvr.ci

⁹⁰ Crisis Group interviews, local officials, Bolequin, Petit Guiglo, Tinhou, Béhoué, April and May 2013 and Crisis Group telephone interviews, November 2013.

⁹¹ See "Point de presse: adresse du président de la CVDR aux journalistes", www.cdvr.ci.

⁹² See "Charles Konan Banny: le PDCI-RDA ne peut être à la remorque de ceux qui l'ont rejoint", *Le Patriote*, 23 September 2013 and "Charles Konan Banny, candidat à la présidentielle de 2015, annonce la presse ivoirienne", Agence de presse africaine (APA), 23 September 2013.

⁹³ The PNCS is led by Professor Mariétou Koné, an academic who is little known by the general public and who has no political affiliation. At the launch of its program on 10 May 2013, she said that the agency first aimed to help all those who had lost "their home" and "their belongings", in order to "consolidate social cohesion". See "Lancement d'un Programme national de cohésion sociale en Côte d'Ivoire", APA, 10 May 2013.

D. *No Stabilisation Without Impartial Justice*

The absence of justice in the west during the last decade has become a significant trigger for violence. Forced to take justice into their own hands, communities have resorted to self-defence. The lack of impartiality and the perception of a victor's justice at the expense of one community impede reconciliation. The government should respond to year-long calls by human rights associations and prioritise completion of the inquiry into the Nahibly case, if it wants to show it is taking an even-handed approach and providing justice for all.⁹⁴

UNOCI must publish its internal report on Nahibly for transparency's sake and to provide new information to the prosecutor in charge of the case, who must be given the necessary time to conduct this difficult investigation. More investigating judges should be assigned to the Man court to allow him to focus exclusively on the Nahibly case. The administrative and security officials on duty in Duékoué at the time of the event and present at the scene should be called as witnesses. The alleged mass graves identified in March 2013 should be opened and an investigation should be launched into whether or not they have any relation to the destruction of the camp.

Reconstruction of the justice system in Cavally and Guémon is the first indispensable step to provide access to justice. The government has taken too few tangible initiatives to rebuild the justice system in these regions. The two most significant such initiatives are due to the efforts of the international community and local organisations. In Guiglo, UNOCI and the Côte d'Ivoire Association of Women Jurists have begun a "clinic" where experts give legal advice to the public.⁹⁵

Last June, a court began to operate in Guiglo, which has gone a decade without a legal system. It was fully funded by the European Union and UNOCI. The Ivorian authorities should complement this initiative by providing another key link of the justice system, ie, restoring police officers and gendarmes to their functions. These two security forces are an important element of the judicial system and their replacement of soldiers and Dozo hunters would indicate a genuine return to normality for many Ivoirians.

The government should revise security arrangements for the region and prioritise reconciliation and improving relations between the security forces and the people who voted for Laurent Gbagbo in November 2010. Forces nouvelles combatants, whether rank and file or commanding officers, that operated in the west should be gradually replaced by more neutral men who have played no military role in this part of the country.

Duékoué should be the focus of particular attention. Local initiatives to promote dialogue between communities should be supported by the new agency responsible for promoting reconciliation, the PNCS. The government should intensify the efforts it has dedicated to promoting reconciliation since the beginning of December 2013,⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Last March, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and two Ivorian organisations, the Ivorian Human Rights Movement (Mouvement ivoirien des droits humains, MIDH) and the Ivorian Human Rights League (Ligue ivoirienne des droits de l'homme, LIDHO), called for justice to be done in this case in a report entitled "Une occasion de rendre justice".

⁹⁵ There are six of these clinics in Côte d'Ivoire. Staff provide advice but no legal representation. Crisis Group email correspondence, UN official, November 2013.

⁹⁶ These efforts led to a meeting between FPI and RDR delegations at the former's party offices on 9 December 2013. This was the first such meeting for a decade. In early January, President Ouattara asked his justice minister to consider the prompt release of pro-Gbagbo activists in order to promote "a return to a definitive peace". On 17 February, Marcel Gossio, former Abidjan harbour

by formulating a special economic development plan and a social assistance policy to help the most vulnerable victims of past and recent clashes. A special program for the many war widows should be created with funds from the PNCS's CFA 7 billion (around \$10 million) budget. The PNCS could also help by prioritising the reconstruction of homes destroyed in Cavally and Guémon, in particular those of people who are still refugees in Liberia in order to prepare and facilitate their return. Finally, the medical certificates that rape victims must provide in order to file a complaint should be provided free of charge.

master and one of the Gbagbo regime's leading figures, was authorised to return to Côte d'Ivoire after three years in exile. See "Rencontre historique entre le FPI de Gbagbo et le RDR de Ouattara", RFI, 10 December 2013; "La justice examine la demande de libération rapide de pro-Gbagbo", AFP, 9 January 2013; "Retour de Marcel Gossio en Côte d'Ivoire: le début d'une véritable normalisation?", RFI, 18 January 2013.

IV. A Dangerous Border

The third factor of instability in Cavally and Guémon is their proximity to Liberia. The border between the two countries was for a long time badly demarcated.⁹⁷ Related communities live on either side of this porous border, which has facilitated the spillover of Liberian violence into Côte d'Ivoire. Despite increased surveillance by impartial forces and massive deployment by the Ivorian army, the border remains dangerous and security is poor. And it will stay that way for as long as Liberia leaves the eastern part of the country in a state of destitution.

A. *Ethnicity and War: A Mirror Image*

Côte d'Ivoire's Guérés are called Khrans in Liberia while the Ivorian Yacoubas, who live in the western mountains, are related to the Liberian Gios. The Liberian war that took place in the 1990s began on Ivorian territory. It was with President Houphouët-Boigny's support and thanks to free passage through western Côte d'Ivoire that Charles Taylor, leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), attacked Samuel Doe's government in December 1989.⁹⁸ The ethnic relationships between the two countries were used by the three main actors in the Liberian war, including the Ivorian president.⁹⁹ Houphouët chose the Ivorian army's chief of staff, General Robert Gueï, a Yacouba, to supervise arms delivery and provide logistical support to NPFL fighters.

The Liberian conflict gradually penetrated Côte d'Ivoire's social and political life. From the mid-1990s, the FPI used it as an argument for mobilising the Guérés during elections.¹⁰⁰ Local party officials presented themselves as opponents of President Houphouët-Boigny and, as such, supporters of Samuel Doe, the Khrans and the Guérés. Liberian refugees came to Côte d'Ivoire. They were initially placed with host families, usually of Guéré origin,¹⁰¹ and as they became too numerous to be absorbed

⁹⁷ Created in 1847, the Republic of Liberia demarcated its eastern border in 1874 after an exploration mission. Assuming the border remained unverified, France organised its own expeditions and changed the border through an 1892 bilateral treaty. It gained yet more land in 1907 with the integration of the town of Toulépleu into the Ivorian colony. In 1958, Liberia contested the existing border, in vain. In 1969, Presidents Tubman and Houphouët-Boigny signed a border agreement definitively confirming the current border. Crisis Group email correspondence, academic, October 2013.

⁹⁸ Houphouët-Boigny's decision to support Taylor against Doe was mainly motivated by the murder in 1980 of the husband of his goddaughter, Daisy Delafosse. Adolphus Tolbert, President William Tolbert's son, was killed by Doe's men in 1980. Taylor used Côte d'Ivoire as a launching pad for his military operation and for transporting arms and the spoils of war. Arms were unloaded at Man airport, then transported to Liberia via the town of Danané. See Frédéric Grah Mel, *Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Biographie*, tome 3 (Paris and Abidjan, 2010), pp. 182-183 and Crisis Group interview, Ivorian military officer, Daloa, May 2013.

⁹⁹ Charles Taylor was supported by the Liberian Gios and the Ivorian Yacoubas. The Gios were critical of Samuel Doe for the 1985 horrific execution of one of their leaders, General Thomas Quiwonkpa. President Samuel Doe, a Khran, incorporated Ivorian Guérés into his army and administration during the 1980s. Houphouët-Boigny also used ethnic links. His then-army chief of staff, General Robert Gueï, a Yacouba, supervised the delivery of arms and logistical support for Charles Taylor, with whom he remained in contact until the early 2000s. See Frédéric Grah Mel, *op. cit.*, pp. 184-185 and Crisis Group interviews, local political leaders and local government officials, Duékoué, Bolequin, May 2013.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Crisis Group interview, local political leader, Bolequin, May 2013.

into local society, they were settled in refugee camps, such as Nicla, near Guiglo. These camps played an important role in the armed Ivorian conflict that started in September 2002.

Laurent Gbagbo's supporters recruited Liberian trainers there to introduce the first Ivorian militias to the rudiments of war.¹⁰² Military and mystical training consisted of spiritual preparation for combat, including the making of amulets to "protect against bullets".¹⁰³ Other Liberians who crossed the border and actively participated in the fighting joined the Liberian instructors recruited in Côte d'Ivoire. Many of them were transported to Côte d'Ivoire by recruitment networks that were gradually put in place over time. Regional leaders, who were often FPI party officials, supported these networks connected to the Ivorian presidency.¹⁰⁴

The Forces nouvelles rebellion also recruited Liberian mercenaries. The Great West Popular Ivorian Movement (MPIGO), one of the two rebel movements active in the west at the start of the rebellion, was composed of Ivorians loyal to General Gueï but also included Sierra Leone and Liberian nationals. Several MPIGO military operations were led by Liberian and Sierra Leonean leaders from the Mano River wars.¹⁰⁵

Dormant since the March 2007 Ouagadougou Political Agreement, the Liberian networks were reactivated during the 2010-2011 post-election crisis. Mercenaries crossed the border, either spontaneously or through structures created by Laurent Gbagbo's government. In March 2011, they participated in massacres and looting in Duékoué, Guiglo and Bolequin.¹⁰⁶ These mercenaries were also used to control Abidjan, principal theatre of the war. The involvement in the "battle of Abidjan" of Liberians, some of whom were arrested in 2012 in Liberia, proved that the issue of Liberian mercenaries could, in the event of extreme tension, spill over borders into the west.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Crisis Group interview, Ivorian parliamentarian, Abidjan, November 2012.

¹⁰³ In Côte d'Ivoire, the Liberians of Grand Gedeh county are known for their attachment to "tradition" and nature and their mystical knowledge is greatly valued. This mystical aspect of the war would partly explain the extremely brutal fighting in western Côte d'Ivoire. In order to kill an enemy who was bullet-proof, "it was necessary to use other means such as fire, drowning or the removal of certain organs; it was necessary to kill the body but also the soul, and this depends on mystical preparation". Crisis Group interview, Ivorian parliamentarian, Abidjan, November 2012.

¹⁰⁴ Crisis Group interview, pro-Gbagbo militia leader, Abidjan, October 2010. Also see Crisis Group Africa Report N°82, *Tackling Liberia: The Eye of the Regional Storm*, 30 April 2003.

¹⁰⁵ Killed in May 2003, Sam "Mosquito" Bockarie, whom a BBC journalist met in Danané a month previously, participated directly in the fighting alongside the Ivorian rebels. See Comfort Ero and Anne Marshal, "L'ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire: un conflit libérien", *Politique africaine*, no. 89 (Paris, 2003), p. 92 and Crisis Group email correspondence, journalist, July 2013.

¹⁰⁶ These mercenaries, brought there by Isaac Chegbo, whose camp was located in the Gamma district of Guiglo, participated in the 25 March 2011 attack on Bolequin prefecture and killed more than 50 people "including women and babies". See UNOCI report, op. cit., p. 14.

¹⁰⁷ Starting in mid-December 2010, several dozen Liberian mercenaries were housed in Abidjan University student halls, including the one known as the "red hall". They were also housed in a hotel in Bingerville, located in the eastern outskirts of the economic capital. There, they trained at the Technical Military Training School (EMPT) as well as in the botanical gardens. Liberian militias were also involved in meetings at Bingerville to plan violent operations against pro-Ouattara elements. Local government officials, advisers of President Gbagbo and several senior army officers attended these meetings. On 11 May 2012, fighting broke out between the Ivorian army and some of these fleeing mercenaries. According to the UN Panel of Experts, 95 of these mercenaries fled Abidjan at the beginning of May along with more than 200 Ivorian pro-Gbagbo combatants. On 24 May 2011, the Liberian police arrested several of them in the Liberian town of Fishtown. Crisis Group telephone interviews, students, December 2010; Crisis Group email correspondence, diplomats,

There is no proof that these networks were reactivated before the post-election crisis in order to prepare for the defeat of President Gbagbo, which it was possible to predict from early November 2010 given the balance of electoral forces after the first round of the presidential elections on 31 October 2010.¹⁰⁸ However, it is striking to see the speed with which the networks were up and running just two weeks after Laurent Gbagbo was declared president-elect.¹⁰⁹

This proved that the Liberian networks established during the 2002 war could be quickly revived in the event of serious unrest, and that although they are weaker, they remain dangerously active. If the political situation in Côte d'Ivoire again descends into armed conflict, it is likely that Liberian mercenaries will once more be used to control the west and take over Abidjan.

B. *A Dangerous and Insecure Border*

Since the end of the post-election crisis in April 2011, there have been frequent and regular attacks on Ivorian territory from Liberia, mainly targeting Cavally, which is closest to the border. The first attack took place near the town of Taï in September 2011.¹¹⁰ The most recent was against the village of Petit Guiglo, about 100km to the north west of Taï, in March 2013.¹¹¹

These attacks were carried out by mixed commando units composed of Liberians and Ivorians, mostly refugees in Liberia. Many former members of the pro-Gbagbo militias fled to Liberia after the post-election crisis and still live there today.¹¹² These attacks show that some of Laurent Gbagbo's supporters believe the military option is still on the agenda. They also indicate that political tension remains high and reconciliation has failed in the west.

These groups are not only interested in plunder, making easy money or combatting boredom by crossing the border for a shooting match. Their political motivations are sometimes very clear. The ambush of the UNOCI convoy on 8 June 2012 definitely targeted what pro-Gbagbo extremists view as occupation forces. The attack on Petit Guiglo first targeted the Burkinabe "district". In order to clearly show that the attack was directed against foreigners, Burkinabe houses were systematically

December 2010. See "Letter dated 18 November 2011 from the Panel of Experts on Liberia addressed to the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1521 (2003) concerning Liberia", pp. 27-30 and "Course-poursuite entre mercenaires libériens et FRCI: plusieurs villages victimes d'exactions à l'ouest", *L'inter*, 12 May 2011.

¹⁰⁸ Laurent Gbagbo received 38.04 per cent of the vote. The four candidates of the parties in the coalition of the Rassemblement des Houphouëtistes pour la démocratie et la paix (RHDP), which comprised the Rassemblement des républicains (RDR), the PDCI, the Union pour la démocratie et la paix en Côte d'Ivoire (UDPCI) and the Mouvement des forces de l'avenir (MFA), won 59.81 per cent of votes, 32.07 of which were for Alassane Ouattara.

¹⁰⁹ The ceremony took place on 4 December 2010.

¹¹⁰ Located some 30km from Taï, the villages of Nigré and Zriglo were attacked by armed men on the night of Thursday to Friday 16 September 2011. Seventeen people were killed.

¹¹¹ Between 8 June 2012 and 13 March 2013, nine armed attacks were reported in the two regions of Cavally and Guémon. The most spectacular was led by a commando unit of at least 80 men and resulted in 26 deaths, including of Ivorian civilians and UN forces, on 8 June 2012. See "Letter dated 12 April 2013 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1572 (2004) concerning Côte d'Ivoire addressed to the President of the Security Council", pp. 61-62.

¹¹² According to an Ivorian officer, one of the main Ivorian militia chiefs, Oulaï Anderson, who led the attack on Petit Guiglo, during which he was killed, possessed a refugee card issued by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Crisis Group interview, Ivorian officer, Duékoué, May 2013.

burned and destroyed, as were those of Malians, fewer in number, who also lived there. Homes belonging to Guérés accused of cooperating with the enemy were also wrecked.¹¹³

These attacks also testify to the difficulty of controlling such a long and porous border. They prove that a security response will never be enough to deal with the problem, the roots of which are economic and political. The massive presence of Ivorian and international military forces in the region has not so far been able to stem the violence.

In September 2011, UNOCI set up eight military camps in the west of the country, including one in Taï and one in Toulepleu. There is no doubt that its patrols, reinforced after the 8 June 2012 attack, act as a deterrent, but the UN force finds it difficult to prevent attacks because it lacks the capacity for effective intelligence gathering.¹¹⁴ Moreover, UNOCI's role is not to intercept and neutralise attackers, nor to replace the Ivorian army. In addition, it is also cautious about providing military support to Ivorian army units commanded by officers who, like Losseni Fofana, are suspected of having participated in serious human rights violations in the region.¹¹⁵

The Ivorian forces deployed after the June 2012 attacks, which currently number more than 600 men,¹¹⁶ are under-equipped and poorly trained. In May 2013, soldiers on duty at the border complained of frequent bouts of malaria and dysentery, diseases that they do not have the modern medicines to treat. They denounced a chronic lack of food and transport. The teams stationed in the villages of Petit Guiglo and Zouhou were left there for one week without any means of transport. They had no advanced communications equipment and were often forced to walk to find a place in the forest to "get a signal on their telephones" to report to their commanding officers. These units were composed of very young men and visibly suffered from a lack of leadership.

Despite these security flaws on the border, Ivorian and Liberian "rebels" now seem to be very weak. As the UN Secretary-General noted in his 28 June 2013 report on the activities of the UN Office for West Africa: "There was a reduced number of cross-border attacks along the border between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire as a result of the continued efforts of the Governments of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, with the support of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI)".¹¹⁷ These joint efforts are not the only reason for the reduction. Neutralisation of communications between pro-Gbagbo exiles in Ghana and Ivorian and Liberian militias in Liberia has been a determining factor.

This ideological and financial cooperation was very important to plan several attacks. The UN Panel of Experts on Côte d'Ivoire has abundantly documented this in its two most recent reports.¹¹⁸ The days of easy money seem to be over for the exiles

¹¹³ Crisis Group interview, community leader, Petit Guiglo, May 2013.

¹¹⁴ Crisis Group telephone interview, UN expert, January 2013.

¹¹⁵ Losseni Fofana has always denied accusations of war crimes by human rights organisations, including Human Rights Watch: "We were not responsible for the Duékoué massacres. There, each community had its army. Communities were settling scores but we put an end to this", he told *Jeune Afrique* in October 2011.

¹¹⁶ Crisis Group interview, Ivorian military officer, Daloa, May 2013.

¹¹⁷ See "Report of the Secretary-General on the Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa", 28 June 2013, p. 3.

¹¹⁸ In its 12 April 2013 report, the panel noted: "Damana Pickass provided the funds that were used for the attack on 8 June 2012 near the locality of Para Sao, western Côte d'Ivoire, in which seven

in Ghana. In exile for more than two years, it is difficult for them to find large funds and distribute them. They are under the surveillance of the Ghanaian authorities, which finally agreed to the demands of their Ivorian counterparts and extradited several of them, including Charles Blé Goudé and senior army officer Jean-Noël Abehi.¹¹⁹ They have also officially threatened with extradition anyone in the country who becomes involved with activities that destabilise the region.¹²⁰

The Ivorian and Liberian militias no longer receive much money from Ghana and currently do not have a leader. Killed during the attack on Petit Guiglo, Oulaï Anderson, alias Tako or “Tarzan of the west”, was one, if not the last, of the charismatic leaders still active in the pro-Gbagbo militias in exile in Liberia. The other Ivorian leaders in the pro-Gbagbo militias are no longer active.¹²¹ It is more difficult for the Liberian militias to establish themselves in Côte d'Ivoire and successfully mobilise troops on purely Ivorian issues.¹²²

Without sophisticated weapons and a charismatic leader, these armed groups no longer pose an immediate threat to stability in Côte d'Ivoire. They are incapable of establishing themselves on a lasting basis within the country or of creating a permanent hotbed of rebellion. However, they remain a security threat for populations in Cavally haunted by memories of the war. Even though it was carried out with makeshift equipment, the March 2013 attack on Petit Guiglo displaced more than 7,000 people.¹²³ It left in its wake ghost villages, misery, abandoned crops and vacant land, all factors that could potentially cause land conflicts and new intercommunal tensions. On the Liberian side, refugee camps are a breeding ground for mercenaries and frustrated, idle young men.

C. *A Poor Neighbour*

The shortcomings of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), which do not have a permanent presence along the border, mean ensuring security is a challenging task. Deployed after the June 2012 attacks, Liberian soldiers were withdrawn in January 2013 and have not been replaced. In May, a very small number of AFL soldiers were stationed less than 30km from the border, according to several statements collected by Crisis Group.¹²⁴ In the village of Zouhou, the last settlement before reaching the Cavally River, which separates the two countries, one can see that Liberian forces have abandoned the border. It is through this border crossing that Oulaï Anderson's men infiltrated Côte d'Ivoire to attack Petit Guiglo. At this point, the Liberian bank of the Cavally River is covered by thick forest and there is no human presence on the Liberian side.

United Nations peacekeepers from the Niger and 26 Ivorian civilians were killed”. See “Letter dated 12 April 2013 ...”, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹¹⁹ See “Extradition des pro-Gbagbo du Ghana: John Dramani met fin au débat”, *Le Patriote*, 30 May 2013.

¹²⁰ Crisis Group interviews, diplomats, Abidjan, April 2013.

¹²¹ Gabriel Vieux Banao, 75, is now too old to make war. Maho Glofehi joined the other side. Colombo is a fugitive and is wanted by the FRCI. Known for his connection with Duékoué, he is no longer capable of unifying the different local branches of these militias. Pastor Gammi lives in Ghana. Crisis Group interviews, Ivorian military officers, Daloa and Abidjan, May and October 2013.

¹²² Crisis Group interviews, political and military leaders, Bolequin, April 2013.

¹²³ See “Nouveaux déplacements dans l'ouest”, Humanitarian Bulletin number 3 of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 31 March 2013.

¹²⁴ Crisis Group interviews, Ivorian military officers, Zouhou and Petit Guiglo, May 2013.

In the dry season, the level of the Cavally is very low at this point and it is possible to ford the river. The absence of border posts on the Liberian side allows militias to cross at many places along the river. When the water level is too high, the militias sometimes build bridges out of lianas. One such bridge was discovered and destroyed by Ivorian soldiers at the beginning of 2013.¹²⁵ In order to detect and prevent such infiltrations, the Ivorian army is currently trying to establish an intelligence network among the general population. On the Liberian side, there is absolutely no intelligence or early warning system.¹²⁶ If an attack is prepared on the Liberian side, Ivorian forces usually hear about it too late.

Ivorian soldiers in advanced positions say they have no contact with their Liberian counterparts.¹²⁷ This lack of communication leads some Ivorian soldiers to think that the attackers receive support from the Liberian security apparatus. It also sometimes allows the Ivorian army to blame its own failures on its neighbour's incompetence. This mutual ignorance contrasts with the good understanding at senior levels of the Ivorian and Liberian militaries. Senior officers regularly hold joint meetings to try and identify solutions to border security problems.¹²⁸ For the moment, these efforts have not been successful in the field.

The weakness of Liberian institutions, especially the justice system, leaves the perpetrators of violence in Côte d'Ivoire with too much margin for manoeuvre. The arrest and release of Isaac Chegbo, nicknamed Bob Marley or "Child Could Die", is a striking example of the failures of the Liberian justice system.¹²⁹ The UN Panel of Experts on Liberia identified him as one of the main leaders of the militias operating along the border. Arrested by the Liberian authorities in April 2011, he confessed to taking part in the post-election violence, but was released on bail in February 2012 after a bizarre legal mix-up.¹³⁰ The UN Panel of Experts said that, shortly after his release, Chegbo attended meetings with other Liberians to plan attacks on Côte d'Ivoire. His case is not unique. The Panel of Experts reported that three individuals accused of being mercenaries were mistakenly released from Gbarnga prison on 19 April 2012.

The economic and social situation in Grand Gedeh county, on the border with Côte d'Ivoire, is not conducive to peace and security. The county is isolated due to a lack of roads and has a subsistence economy. During the rainy season, it takes more than ten hours to travel the 450km between its capital, Zwedru, and Monrovia. Inhabitants of this region, the birthplace of former President Samuel Doe, feel a strong sense of marginalisation and even discrimination. It is administered by officials who are often not very competent or notoriously corrupt.¹³¹ Local Ivorian officials deplore the incompetence of their counterparts, with whom they would like to cooperate.

¹²⁵ Crisis Group interview, Ivorian military officer, Bolequin, May 2013.

¹²⁶ Crisis Group interviews, Ivorian officers and UNOCI officials, Daloa and Bolequin, April and May 2013.

¹²⁷ Crisis Group interviews, Ivorian military officers, Zouhou and Petit Guiglo, May 2013.

¹²⁸ One of these meetings led to the organisation of joint military manoeuvres between 24 December 2012 and 3 January 2013. Ivorian defence ministry communiqué, 27 December 2012.

¹²⁹ See Crisis Group Africa Report N°177, *Liberia: How Sustainable is the Recovery?*, 19 August 2011, pp. 14-16.

¹³⁰ Isaac Chegbo was released on bail in February 2012 but the prosecutor dealing with the case was not informed. "Liberian authorities release mercenary on bail", Associated Press, 17 April 2013.

¹³¹ See "Poor governance: Constraining national reconciliation in Grand Gedeh", The Fund for Peace, March 2013.

D. *Building Capacity in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia*

Ensuring security at the border begins by reorganising the Ivorian forces. This is the national government's responsibility and it should do so while bearing in mind the need for a gradual reduction of UN forces on its territory. FRCI units stationed in the west should be provided with transport, communications equipment and medical supplies. This process began when the interior minister, Hamed Bakayoko, visited the region on 17 April. Following this visit, the units based in Béhoué were supplied with vehicles and materials to rebuild the offices of the Côte d'Ivoire Forest Development Company and establish a permanent operational base there.¹³² These efforts should be extended to all security forces present in the region.

Building a robust intelligence network in the region is difficult because some former rebels hold senior military positions, leading the population to view them as "enemies" and to refuse to cooperate with them.¹³³ The gradual replacement of these officers with more neutral members of the army is necessary to improve relations with the local population. Intelligence is key to preventing attacks and ending the circulation of firearms in the region.

Liberia should immediately assume responsibility for securing its eastern border and stop delegating this task to the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). The border with Côte d'Ivoire has been insecure for several years now. Despite repeated calls for action, including from Crisis Group, the Liberian government has left the issue unaddressed.¹³⁴ It should stop being passive, take this seriously and organise surveillance along its eastern border.

Its security forces should begin by redeploying troops several times each year, as happened after the June 2012 attacks. Even if they do not have the means to maintain permanent control of the border, they should increase surveillance in the dry season when the climate is particularly favourable to attacks because of the very low level of the rivers that separate the two countries. Seven out of nine attacks reported to the UN between 2012 and 2013 took place between March and June, in the middle of the dry season.

Increased cooperation between the FRCI and the AFL should begin with an increase in joint operations, whether that involves training or joint patrols. The good understanding at the senior command level of the two armies should be extended to the rank and file. Information sharing should not only involve senior officers but also take place in the field. The Ivorian army should deploy some units with a certain understanding of English, even basic, in the west, so as to improve communication between the two armies and help establish an early warning system.

Liberia, which had an economic growth rate of 8.3 per cent in 2012, should use part of the fruits of this growth to end the isolation of Grand Gedeh. Opening up the area, a measure Crisis Group previously recommended, should begin with the construction of infrastructure, including a road between Monrovia and Zwedru, the county's main town.¹³⁵ Economic development of this region would reduce the sense

¹³² Previously, soldiers were billeted in the homes of residents or in Bolequin's disused buildings. Crisis Group interview, Ivorian military officer, Béhoué, May 2013.

¹³³ Crisis Group interview, members of the Guéré population, April 2013.

¹³⁴ See Crisis Group Africa Report N°171, *Côte d'Ivoire: Is War the Only Option?*, 3 March 2011, p. iii.

¹³⁵ See Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°88, *Liberia: Time for Much-Delayed Reconciliation and Reform*, 12 June 2012, pp. 9-10.

of discrimination experienced by much of the population and would help launch a genuine strategy for national reconciliation. Both governments are concerned about security and urgently need to formulate joint economic development plans. Such plans would fit in with efforts to improve regional integration and could receive support from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Finally, Ghana should maintain strong pressure on the hardline supporters of Laurent Gbagbo who still live in the country in order to neutralise the networks that fund destabilisation operations in Côte d'Ivoire.

V. Conclusion

At the end of 2013, President Ouattara and his party took practical steps to ease tension and promote reconciliation. For the first time in a decade, the Rassemblement des républicains (RDR) agreed to meet FPI leaders at the latter's historical headquarters in Rue Lepic, Abidjan. President Ouattara appealed to political exiles to return "without fear" in order to "build the nation". He also appealed, at the beginning of January 2014, for the rapid release of certain supporters of former President Gbagbo. His government should continue along this path by giving the Great West regions, the most affected by the war, all the attention they deserve.

Côte d'Ivoire's government should stop considering its outlying regions as a threat; they may carry little electoral weight but are nonetheless worthy of investment in public services and economic development. Guémon and Cavally should become the crucible of reconciliation. It is in these two troubled regions, both neglected by the state since independence, that not only the battle for reconciliation but also the battle for state building will be either won or lost.

Dakar/Brussels, 28 January 2014

Appendix B: Acronyms

AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
AFP	Agence France-Presse
APA	Agence de presse africaine
APWÊ	Alliance patriotique des Wê, Wê Patriotic Alliance
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CDVR	Commission dialogue, vérité et réconciliation, Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission
CFA	Communauté financière africaine, African Financial Community
CNE	Commission nationale d'enquête, National Commission of Inquiry
CODESRIA	Conseil pour le développement de la recherche en sciences sociales en Afrique, Council for the Development of Research in Social Sciences in Africa
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EMPT	Ecole militaire préparatoire technique, Technical Military Training School
FIDH	International Federation for Human Rights
FPI	Front populaire ivoirien, Ivorian Popular Front
FRCI	Forces républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire, Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire
JFPI	Jeunesse du Front populaire ivoirien, Ivorian Popular Front Youth
LIDHO	Ligue ivoirienne des droits de l'homme, Ivorian Human Rights League
MFA	Mouvement des forces de l'avenir, Movement of Forces for the Future
MIDH	Mouvement ivoirien des droits humains, Ivorian Human Rights Movement
MPIGO	Mouvement populaire ivoirien du Grand Ouest, Great West Popular Ivorian Movement
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
PDCI	Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire, Côte d'Ivoire Democratic Party
PDCI-RDA	Parti démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire – Rassemblement démocratique africain, Côte d'Ivoire Democratic Party – African Democratic Rally
PNCS	Programme national de cohésion sociale, National Social Cohesion Program
RDR	Rassemblement des républicains, Rally of Republicans
RFI	Radio France Internationale
RHDP	Rassemblement des Houphouëtistes pour la démocratie et la paix, Rally of Houphouetists for Democracy and Peace
UDPCI	Union pour la démocratie et la paix en Côte d'Ivoire, Union for Democracy and Peace in Côte d'Ivoire
UN	United Nations
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNOCI	United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire
UPERGO	Union des patriotes résistants du Grand Ouest, Union of Patriots for Resistance in the Great West

Appendix C: About the International Crisis Group

The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 150 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a twelve-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers are distributed widely by email and made available simultaneously on the website, www.crisisgroup.org. Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The Crisis Group Board – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring the reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. Crisis Group is chaired by former U.S. Undersecretary of State and Ambassador Thomas Pickering. Its President and Chief Executive since July 2009 has been Louise Arbour, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Chief Prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda.

Crisis Group's international headquarters is in Brussels, and the organisation has offices or representation in 34 locations: Abuja, Bangkok, Beijing, Beirut, Bishkek, Bogotá, Bujumbura, Cairo, Dakar, Damascus, Dubai, Gaza, Guatemala City, Islamabad, Istanbul, Jakarta, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Kabul, Kathmandu, London, Moscow, Nairobi, New York, Pristina, Rabat, Sanaa, Sarajevo, Seoul, Tbilisi, Tripoli, Tunis and Washington DC. Crisis Group currently covers some 70 areas of actual or potential conflict across four continents. In Africa, this includes, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe; in Asia, Afghanistan, Burma/Myanmar, Indonesia, Kashmir, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan Strait, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; in Europe, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, North Caucasus, Serbia and Turkey; in the Middle East and North Africa, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel-Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Western Sahara and Yemen; and in Latin America and the Caribbean, Colombia, Guatemala and Venezuela.

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Appendix D: Reports and Briefings on Africa since 2011

Central Africa

Burundi: From Electoral Boycott to Political Impasse, Africa Report N°169, 7 February 2011 (also available in French).

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