



Situation Report

Date Issued: 11 December 2007
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Distribution: General
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The Ouagadougou Political Accord: Imminent divorce or the renewal of vows

Introduction and overview

On 19 September 2002, an attempted coup failed to oust the Ivorian president, Laurent Gbagbo, but sparked off a civil war that has since divided the country along a fault line that divides the (mainly Muslim) north and the (mainly Christian) south. The Ivorian crisis is one demonstration of the emptiness of the promises of a post-Cold War peace dividend, globalisation and democratisation in Africa. It is also a glaring example of Africa's conflict systems, ethnic manipulation, elite fragmentation, foreign intervention and the non-implementation of negotiated peace agreements. Despite the absence of overt confrontation between government forces and the rebels after a bruising nine-month-long war, in which some 2,000 were killed, the security situation in the country is still very volatile (UN Security Council 2007). The country is awash in arms and crime is widespread (Integrated Regional Information Networks 2007). The fragile human security situation in the north of the country has been compounded by the almost complete absence of basic services and the fact that government administration in the area has not yet been restored.

The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) and the United Nations Security Council have made more than 30 pronouncements on the conflict against a backdrop of six previously negotiated agreements and a number of governments of national unity. The latest attempt to resolve the conflict is called the Ouagadougou Political Accord. On 4 March 2007, the Ouagadougou Political Accord was signed in Burkina Faso between the rebels (*Force Nouvelles*) and the government. The Accord is a direct response by both sides to the possible ramifications of UN Security Council Resolution 1721 on their political survival within the context of a stalled military and diplomatic process to solve the political crisis in the country. Security Council Resolution 1721 aimed to revive the Ivorian peace process by extending the powers of Prime Minister Banny over control of the transitional process relative to the powers held by President Gbagbo (United Nations Security Council 2006).

A direct consequence of the Ouagadougou Political Accord so far has been the nomination of Guillaume Soro as prime minister, thus engendering cohabitation in the executive between the principal belligerents in the crisis. Besides the appointment of Soro as prime minister, there have been some symbolic gestures towards reconciliation and confidence building. For the first time since his accession to power, President Gbagbo has visited the north of the country, while Guillaume Soro has visited Gagnoa, the political fiefdom of President Gbagbo. On 10 June 2007, Charles Blé Goudé, leader of the Young Patriots and previously an enemy of the rebellion, visited the headquarters of the *Forces Nouvelles* in Bouaké.

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Residence permits that were introduced by Allasane Quattara at the height of structural adjustment in the early 1990s have been abolished.

Despite these symbolic gestures, the main sticking points of the Accord have not been implemented. Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) have hardly begun, the identification process has not been completed, and the final electoral register has not been compiled. This lack of progress has not only angered the international community especially the UN (Agence France-Presse 'AFP' 2007) and the European Union (EU), but Ivorians are in a state of shock and dismay because they were told (by the president) that failure to implement the Accord would be a catastrophe for the country. With about a month to go before the Ivorians choose their political leaders, there seems to be a consensus in the country that the presidential election is unlikely to be held by the end of January 2008 as called for by the Ouagadougou accord. Mr Mambé Beugré, head of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) has said that if all goes well, elections could also be held in October 2008.

Prime Minister Soro has argued that the credibility of the electoral process is more important than adhering to strict deadlines. He also pointed out that slow implementation of Ouagadougou is a function of the lack of finance. The EU, which has been funding part of the identification process, does not seem to share his view. The European Union has blamed the lack of political will. This argument is in line with some sentiments in Côte d'Ivoire, especially the political opposition that the Ouagadougou Political Accord was first and foremost designed to accommodate the political interest of the belligerents as long as possible. Thus, non-implementation of the Accord is an attempt to keep the Gbagbo–Soro political cohabitation alive. This state of affairs does not sit well with the political opposition (*Rassemblement Democratique de Republicain* and *Parti democratique de Cote d'Ivoire*), which has seen its influence ebb since the signing of Ouagadougou.

The debate has shifted away from the imperative of elections as a pre-requisite to resolve the crisis toward questions about the framework, modalities and the election date. On 6 August 2007, Gbagbo's call for elections to be held in late 2007 and for the termination of the election mandate of the UN High Representative (a role now bestowed on the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Côte d'Ivoire) fuelled speculation about possible electoral fraud. In response to Gbagbo's call, the political opposition reaffirmed its *belief* in the Ouagadougou Political Accord but cautioned that any haste in calling the election would jeopardise key aspects of the agreement, especially the identification of the population (UN Security Council 2007, *Le Rebond* 2007a). Within the context of political uncertainty, Ivorian political players have been involved in de facto election campaigns, mobilisation, coalition building, political alignments and realignments in anticipation of elections.

Against this backdrop, government and rebel representatives are meeting in Burkina Faso to find ways and means to facilitate the implementation of issues such as the identification process, DDR, and the mobile courts that will issue *jugements supplétifs* of birth certificates. This seems to suggest that the participants believe the slow implementation of the Accord is more of a technical fault in the agreement rather than the lack of political will on their part.

The main reason for the slow implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Accord is the lack of political will. Successful implementation of the Accord is a critical juncture in the development of the political economy in Côte d'Ivoire. Implementation of the Accord is definitely going to affect the composition, influence and control of the security apparatus of the state. It will also create new social cleavages, create new elite coalition and, most importantly, determine who has access to the principal institutions and avenues of accumulation in the country. As a consequence, like other peace agreements before Ouagadougou, the struggle for control of institutions and the transitional process as a way of ensuring political security has affected implementation of the Accord. Those who can control and shape the transitional process are most likely to have considerable influence on the political economy of

the country for years to come. Within this context, institutions and processes (such as identification, disarmament, demobilisation, the civil register, and the electoral list) that form the bedrock of the Ouagadougou Political Accord have become highly contested. Political survival in Côte d'Ivoire is determined to a large extent by control over the security apparatus, avenues of accumulation, and manipulation of the electoral process. As such, fights over implementation of Ouagadougou are basically fights for control of the soul of the Ivorian state. At the epicenter of these fights are two diametrically opposed positions: Gbagbo's desire to hang on to power legitimised by some form of election and Soro's desire to justify the rebellion by giving northerners their identification papers and therefore a voice in questions relating to who gets what and when. But these fights are also attempts to maintain some form of future influence.

Identification

A mere eight months since it started, all major issues in the Ouagadougou Political Accord have ground to a halt. To begin with, the identification process is still far from complete. The awarding of identification papers and nationality certificates to people who were not even registered in the civil register was the principal point of discord between President Gbagbo and Prime Minister Banny. As such, Mr Banny has been blamed for the failure of the first attempt at identification by the mobile courts (International Crisis Group 2007; Coulibaly 2007a). The identification papers and certificates appeared to threaten the government's electoral chances. As a consequence, the government capitalised on the fact that the awarding of these papers contravened Ivorian law and blocked the process (International Crisis Group 2007). At Ouagadougou, it was decided there would be two modes of identification: presentation of a birth certificate and nationality certificate and, secondly, through the electoral list. However, for the purpose of accelerating the identification process, identification via the electoral list was prioritised. The identification process and disarmament are to be carried out concurrently. At the end of the mobile courts process, the IEC is expected to conduct an electoral census based on the 2000 electoral list. The operations of the mobile courts were supposed to start two weeks after the formation of a new government and to last for three months. However, implementation of the identification process has been patchy at best.

On 24 September 2007, the working group on mobile courts agreed on the *modus operandi* for the mobile courts operations. On 25 September 2007, the minister for justice officially launched the mobile court operations in two jurisdictions: Ouragahio (birthplace of Gbagbo) in the west, and Ferkessedougou (birthplace of Soro) in the north. On 25 October, Prime Minister Soro signed a decree establishing the function and attributes of the working group on identification. This decree modifies article 3 of decree n°147/PM/CAB of 29 June 2007 establishing a second working group on identification by introducing two statutory members who are representatives of the prime minister and the president (Coulibaly 2007b). In reality, no real progress has been made considering that out of 111 mobile court teams, only 33 have been effectively deployed (Ziao 2007).

Prime Minister Soro has argued that the slow implementation of the identification process was due to the lack of finance (Coulibaly 2007c). While visiting Côte d'Ivoire on 17 November 2007 to discuss application of the Ouagadougou Political Accord and financial support to the process, Louis Michel (EU Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Assistance) declared that he did not believe the difficulty in implementing the peace process was caused by financial constraints (Coulibaly 2007c). The offices of the EU and the prime minister seem to be embroiled in a bitter quarrel. The quarrel is about how to manage the CFA7,6 billion that the EU has given the prime minister's office for the mobile court process.¹ This fund was first placed under the mandate of Charles Konan Banny. Of the 7,6 billion CFA francs given to Banny's office, Soro inherited 2 billion CFA francs. Thus, with a fair amount of money already spent, the EU is wondering what else can be constraining the identification process. According to newspaper reports in Côte d'Ivoire, the two billion CFA francs has been spent on 'logistics expenses', such as buying four-wheel-drive vehicles (Foungbé 2007a).

The Ivorian government estimated that implementing every issue of the Accord would cost 138,8 billion CFA francs. The Ivorian state is expected to contribute more than 49 billion CFA francs, while 89.8 billion CFA francs is expected from various international donors. At a July roundtable meeting with the international donors, 180 billion CFA francs was promised by all donors including the EU. By mid-November, the Ivorian state had disbursed 25.3 billion CFA francs. The minister of the economy and finance, Charles Diby Koffi, has however promised to disburse the entire 49 billion CFA francs by the end of the year ((Foungbé 2007a).

Voter registration

Since voter registration is to a large extent contingent on successful completion of the identification process, it has also not happened. Nonetheless, the IEC has taken some steps toward preparing for elections. In order to enhance the transparency of the electoral process, the IEC presented a computer disc containing the voters roll used for the 2000 national elections to each political party for their review and comment (UN Security Council 2007).

Like the identification process, voter registration was an issue of intense debate before it even started. The fact that the National Institute of Statistics, and a technical agency appointed by government, were going to have a principal role in conducting the elections has raised many eyebrows. First, it has been argued that since the 2000 electoral list will form the basis of registration, the process will be inherently flawed and that the 2008 electoral list will merely be a re-adjustment of the 2000 list that already excluded many Ivorians. However, the director of the National Institute of Statistics (NIS), Pr. Mathieu Meleu (a member of President Gbagbo's *Party Front Populaire Ivorian*), explains that the 2000 list will merely serve as an example to accelerate the enrolment procedure of future electorates. While admitting that the NIS is susceptible to error when drafting the electoral list, he urged politicians to forget about the 2000 list, saying that the list was the concern of technicians and that they (politicians) should concentrate on political mobilisation (Bony 2007).

Moreover, the fact that the IEC will be supported by the NIS, which is under the political tutelage of the ministry of planning (the minister is a close Gbagbo confidant) has raised speculation that Gbagbo is attempting to influence the electoral process. The abolition of the post of UN Special Representative for Elections by the UN pursuant to pressure from Gbagbo has compounded this speculation. Bédié and Quattara oppose any attempt to give the NIS a chance of even slightly influencing the elections (Yahmed 2007). Furthermore, the appointment of *Société d'Application Générales Electriques et Mécaniques* (SAGEM) as the private technical agency that will carry out the issuance of identity cards has not gone down well with many Ivorians, especially some factions within the *Forces Nouvelles* and government. The minister of the interior, Désiré Tagro, has argued that SAGEM should report to the NIS. He points out that SAGEM should be technically subjected to the NIS because of its experience and knowledge of the local terrain. The *Forces Nouvelles* argued that, since the NIS is under the political control of the government, having SAGEM report to the NIS might impede transparency of the identification and electoral process (*Le Nouveau Réveil* 2007). Disagreement within the *Forces Nouvelles* over the choice of SAGEM and its role in the electoral process could explain the abandonment of the recent Monitoring and Evaluation Committee meeting in Burkina Faso by Louis Dacoury-Tabley from *Forces Nouvelles*. Disagreement over SAGEM's role is animated by two divergent positions: on the one hand, there are those who argue that SAGEM should merely support the expertise of the electoral division of UN mission in Côte d'Ivoire in carrying out its mission; others argue that SAGEM should be given a free hand to make identity cards and electoral cards (Kara 2007). Soro is of the opinion that SAGEM could be retained but its asking price of 50 billion CFA francs is too high. President Compaoré has argued that giving the contract to a new operator will delay the peace process even more (Yahmed 2007).

Redeployment of the administration

The Accord called for the redeployment of the administration and public service throughout the country under the authority of the prime minister; immediately after the removal of the 'zone of confidence' and the establishment of the 'observation points'. This was supposed to have happened from 23 April to 22 July 2007. On 5 June 2007 a presidential decree appointed 158 *préfets* and secretaries-general of *préfectures*, including four women. A second decree, on the same day, appointed magistrates for 45 jurisdictions for the planned mobile court operations; and the third decree, on 15 August, appointed 296 new *sous-préfets*, including one woman. The prime minister installed the *préfet* for Bouaké on 18 June 2007, but the majority of the *préfets* deployed in other areas returned to Abidjan immediately after their installation because of inadequate facilities and the poor living conditions in their respective areas of responsibility. As of 18 September, 26 *préfets* out of 28 had been installed in their areas of responsibility in the north, while 106 out of 296 *sous préfets* had been redeployed. In addition, some 85 mayors were also re-installed in August, during a ceremony held by the minister of the interior in Bouaké. The National Commission for the Redeployment of the Administration began payment of outstanding salary and allowance arrears owed to redeployed civil servants. This followed a spate of strike actions taken by civil servants in the west and north to protest against the government's delays in paying arrears. Meanwhile, the redeployment of the remaining 12,094 civil servants is yet to be completed (UN Security Council 2007).

The redeployment of the administration and public service is the subject of a recent political tussle between Prime Minister Soro and the minister of the interior, Désiré Tagro. Mr Tagro is considered the most trusted amongst the Gbagbo's trusted confidants. He was the head of the government delegation during the Ouagadougou negotiations. The tension between Soro and Tagro is about the redeployment of public administrators. The simmering tension became public knowledge during Mr Tagro's visit to Burkina Faso on 30 October 2007, during which he told President Compaoré that Soro was retarding implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Accord. He argued that the identification process and redeployment of public administrators had been slow because of the precarious security situation in rebel-controlled areas. Thus, the solution he offered was that government forces should be deployed in rebel-controlled areas to ensure security; or the mixed battalion of the Integrated Command Centre should be recomposed to secure the mobile courts and public administrators. That same evening (30 October 2007), Soro convened a meeting with Gbagbo during which he made it clear that no loyalist police or gendarme (except members of the mixed brigade of the Integrated Command Centre) would be accepted in the north before the end of the peace process. He did, however, promise to personally guarantee the security of public administrators (Yahmed 2007). The power of Compaoré to settle this difference is limited since his mandate is merely to give guidance.

Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration

Implementation of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process is one of the contentious issues delaying implementation of the Accord. According to the national disarmament commission and the terms of a series of disarmament deals signed in 2005 – the principles of which still hold, although deadlines have been repeatedly missed – the rebels have 42,564 troops. The deals state that all these troops are supposed to hand in their weapons and then each be paid 499,500 CFA francs (£518, US\$970) (Balint-Kurti 2007). The troops could also benefit from loans for small business start-ups, or farming, reaching a maximum of 430,000 CFA francs (£446, US\$830) (Balint-Kurti 2007).

Beyond the establishment on 16 April 2007 of the Integrated Command Centre responsible for leading the implementation of the military and security aspects of the Ouagadougou Political Accord; and the 'flame of peace' ceremony held in Bouaké on 30 July 2007 to launch the disarmament of the *Forces Nouvelles*, virtually nothing has happened. Prior to signing the Accord, the rebels argued that

they could not relinquish their weapons without first receiving their identification documents. It was then resolved that the identification process and DDR would be carried out concurrently. However, new issues have emerged that seem to have halted the DDR process. First, the *Forces Nouvelles* now argues that it prefers a simplified concept of DDR, which would enable those who are eligible to join the army to do so without having to disarm, while the rest of the *Forces Nouvelles* personnel would join the civic service programme (UN Security Council 2007).

Also at the epicentre of the blocked DDR process are modalities for unification of the *Force Nouvelles* and the National Armed Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (FANCI). The *Force Nouvelles* argues that the military grades obtained by its army during the war should be maintained as it is integrated, and that personnel should receive the retirement benefits associated with that position. The government seems to be proposing a lump sum package without an offer of indemnity. Gbagbo, however, pointed out that the question of grades is a diversion and not a real problem since it involves just a few people and the solution is simply unification. In effect, every soldier who joined the rebellion will, on rejoining the national army, have the right to assume the same grade as fellow comrades who decided to remain in the army (if the latter has benefited from a promotion).

At its heart, the DDR dilemma is about numbers. The number game is important in determining the amount of money each combatant would receive for disarmament, but most importantly it informs their role in a united new army. There is uncertainty about the exact number of the *Forces Nouvelles*. Large troop estimate could give the *Forces Nouvelles* leverage during the bargaining process. By July 2006, the *Commission Nationale de Désarmement, Démobilisation et Réinsertion* (CNDDR) estimated that the *Forces Nouvelles* numbered about 42,564. The *Forces Nouvelles* proposed that 5-10 000 of its combatants should be integrated into the regular army. The national army currently consists of 16-18 000 soldiers. The government has not yet responded to this proposal because it is uncertain how the *Forces Nouvelles* will react. The *Forces Nouvelles* are already complaining that government soldiers receive better treatment than they do. (Yahmed 2007).

President Gbagbo and the Front Populaire Ivoirien

Gbagbo is back in the driver's seat after almost losing control of the peace processes because of international pressure and interference, specifically with reference to UN Security Council Resolution 1721. Just when it seemed 'the game was up', the Ouagadougou process gave Gbagbo a new lease on life by giving him almost complete control of the peace process. The Accord has sidelined a perceived hostile international community (towards Gbagbo), and broken the alliance between rebels and the political opposition, *G7*. The promotion of Gbagbo's close confidant, Désiré Tagro, to the ministry of the interior is clearly an attempt by Gbagbo to have the 'right man' in place – one who can be trusted available to do the most difficult job at a difficult time.

Gbagbo's incumbency affords him advantages such as having the largesse of the state at his disposal to build unity and cohesion within his party. The biggest challenges facing the party are: how to expand its political constituency beyond its traditional stronghold (the Bete region); and the need to enhance cohesion within the party. It must be pointed out that there seems to be some tension amongst the FPI leaders, especially between President Gbagbo and president of the National Assembly Mamadou Koulibaly over management of state affairs and the peace process (*Le Rebond* 2007b). Nevertheless Gbagbo has been playing a shrewd diplomatic game, both internally and externally. It is highly unlikely that his close confidant Désiré Tagro would fly to Burkina Faso to reproach the *Forces Nouvelle* without his tacit consent. The argument by President Compaoré that if Tagro's comment reflects the position of President Gbagbo then he would like Gbagbo to address them to him directly sheds some light on Gbagbo's strategy of using proxies to 'hamstring' Soro. The political expediency involved in this strategy is that if something goes wrong, Gbagbo can deny any involvement and argue that it was merely a personality clash between Soro and Tagro.

Externally, Gbagbo has been making some interesting friends, the most conspicuous of whom is Paul Biya, President of Cameroon. This friendship and its timing is interesting considering that Cameroon will assume the chair of the AU Peace and Security Council in January 2008. As such, it might be logical to speculate that Gbagbo is thinking that he might need Cameroon's diplomatic support at some point, especially in January because that is when the Ouagadougou Political Accord comes to an end and there will certainly be discussion about what to do next. In return, Paul Biya might use Gbagbo as an intermediary in a dialogue between Biya and the official opposition (the Social Democratic Front) because Gbagbo and Cameroon's official opposition have been friends for some time.

Guillaume Soro/Forces Nouvelles

The *Forces Nouvelles* is an amalgamation of three rebel groups: *Mouvement Patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire* (MPCI); *Mouvement pour la Justice et la Paix* (MJP); and the *Mouvement Populaire Ivoirien du Grand Ouest* (MPIGO). MJP and MPIGO allied themselves to the main, northern rebel group, the MPCI, under the leadership of Guillaume Soro. The *Forces Nouvelles* is also made up of *dozos* (traditional hunters) and army dissidents sympathetic to General Guéï.

One has to acknowledge Soro's achievements: he is just 35 years old and has defined the rebellion for five years. However, he is facing a real dilemma. It is imperative that he organise a free and fair election as a means to pull the country out of its present crisis. But organising free and fair elections would require giving northerners their nationality certificates. However, how can Soro deliver on organising free elections, giving northerners their nationality certificate without endangering the electoral ambitions of Gbagbo? Ensuring that northerners have their identification papers is a personal venture for Soro. He argues that the rebellion was for dignity, for northerners to get their 'nationality' and be treated equally to those in the south. Thus, it would be fulfilling to know that the revolt had accomplished its aim (Coulibaly 2007c, Soro, 2005, Balint-Kurti, 2007).

One of the basic threats facing the *Forces Nouvelles* is the probability of infighting. Infighting in the *Forces Nouvelles* is not new. The first sign of tension was Soro's struggle with Ibrahim Coulibaly (known as IB). IB was regarded as the godfather of the rebellion; he participated in the coup that brought General Guéï to power and, in 1999, he was backed by Burkina Faso. However, his continued stay in Burkina Faso while fighting was raging back in Côte d'Ivoire cost him his reputation. He was eclipsed by Soro who moved quickly to entrench his power by dismantling the rebel tax organization that was called Dirmob and controlled by 'IB'. Soro set up a tax and customs organisation called *La Centrale* in 2004 headed by economics professor André Ouattara (Balint-Kurti 2007). In June 2004 fighting broke out between the followers of IB and those of his rival rebel commander, Guillaume Soro, but Soro seems to have emerged victorious and now controls the *Forces Nouvelles*.

The *Forces Nouvelles* is under considerable strain. First the appalling socio-economic situation in the north might make people to question the rationale for the revolt, thus threatening the mobilizing power of the rebellion. Moreover, within the *Forces Nouvelles*, it seems there are divergent views about how to approach the peace process. Soro seems to side with moderates who argue that engaging in a peace process with the government is the only viable option because the military confrontation did not produce the right results and secession is not an option. Radicals within the rebellion are of the position that Gbagbo has shown that he cannot always be trusted so there is no added value in negotiating with him. The latter position could have informed an attempt on Soro's life in June 2007. Furthermore, the abrupt departure of Louis Dacoury-Tabley (the rebels' second in command) from the present negotiations in Burkina Faso might be interpreted as a continuation of discord within the rebellion. But how these divergent positions influence the lifespan of the rebellion is contingent on whether the rebellion is still united behind its original cause: respect and dignity for the north. The continued unity of the *Forces Nouvelles* is also contingent on whether Soro can keep the

military wing united. To a large extent this depends on the availability of resources to sustain the rebellion and the career prospects of the military commanders. The tussle over questions of grade and retirement packages for the rebels is definitely an attempt by commanders to secure their careers and futures. As such, Soro has vowed to President Compaoré that the *Forces Nouvelles* would never compromise on the grade of its rebels and on the elections (Yahmed 2007).

There is no doubt that the political leadership of the *Forces Nouvelles* wishes to play a major role in the post-transition period. Ouagadougou gave the political leadership an opportunity to achieve this by giving them a chance to build their own political profile rather than being associated with political parties who they believe have been making political gains from their struggle. It is within this context that, Sidiki Konate, spokesperson of the *Forces Nouvelles* stated that it did not seek the approval of the political opposition so there would be no problem if the armed militia left the G7 opposition grouping (International Crisis Group 2007).

Political opposition

The two big political parties *Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire- Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (PDCI-RDA) and *Rassemblement Démocratique de Republicain* (RDR) seem to be on the back foot for the time being. The Accord has greatly reduced their influence on the transitional process. But how can they condemn the Accord without being seen as not wanting peace? As for Bédié's PDCI, it is engaged in frantic efforts not to be associated or confused with the military struggle in the country. This is part of a broader strategy to keep its political constituency (Baoulé region) intact as they prepare for elections. Quattara's influence in the north seems to be waning and will probably continue to wane if Soro succeeds in meeting the northerners' demands for identification papers. It is within the context of this deteriorating influence and the prospect of eventual elections that the political opposition has decided to unify under an umbrella body called *Rassemblement des Houphouëtistes pour la démocratie et la paix*. The purpose of this coalition is to unify support to defeat Gbagbo in the case of an election.

Burkina Faso

President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso understands and knows both Soro and Gbagbo extremely well. In the past, he had courted Gbagbo and has been accused by Gbagbo of being the 'guardian angel' of the *Forces Nouvelles*. While Compaoré implicitly supported the rebellion, he has always encouraged Gbagbo to speak to the *Forces Nouvelles* and has supported ECOWAS initiatives to promote peace. A stable Côte d'Ivoire would not only ensure the safety of about four million Burkinabés, it would also ensure a stable flow of remittances back to Burkina Faso. The successful implementation of the Accord and peace in Côte d'Ivoire would also boost Compaoré's diplomatic credentials, something he desperately needs following his support for Charles Taylor, Taylor's role in the crisis in Sierra Leone, and its implication in the 'war on terror' being led by the US. Being the chairman of the ECOWAS provided Blaise Compaoré with a window of opportunity to change himself from a villain to a peacemaker.

In an effort to counter Burkina Faso's influence in the Ivorian crisis, Gbagbo has offered lucrative oil deals to China because Burkina Faso is one of the few African countries to recognise Taiwan rather than China. Moreover, China has also been used to counter French influence in the Security Council. Gbagbo has also courted Angola to stave off Compaoré's influence in the Ivorian crisis. It should be recalled that Angola and Burkina Faso have had a rocky relationship in the past. Burkina Faso was accused of channelling arms and providing passports to the former Angolan National Union for the Total Independence of Angola "UNITA" rebels (United Nations 2000), while Gbagbo, by contrast, broke off relations with UNITA after taking over from General Robert Guéï in October 2000.

France

France's role in the Ivorian crisis has been ambivalent. France has tried to influence the outcome of the crisis by adopting a dual strategy. First, France has tried to use the UN Security Council to indirectly influence the conflict. For example, the precursor to the Accord, Security Resolution 1721 of 1 November 2007 was sponsored by France. Secondly, France has tried to influence the outcome of the conflict directly by implicitly siding with some of the belligerents. Both sides of the conflict have accused France of supporting the other. France has hardly made any explicit pronouncements on the Accord fearing it might fan anti-French sentiment in the country. This should not be interpreted as meaning that France is very happy with the status quo. All along, French strategy has been to maintain some form of influence in the country to sustain its economic interest which came under considerable threat (within the context of economic liberalization) from other countries, notably South Africa and the United States (Nanga 2005).

Since Gbagbo and Soro seem to be enjoying their political 'honeymoon', France is 'licking its wounds' from what it perceives to be betrayal by the *Forces Nouvelles* and Gbagbo. France is of the position that they are also a victim of the crisis considering their considerable economic loss since the beginning of the conflict. As a consequence, France expects some reward or at least some respect from *Forces Nouvelles* because it owes its existence to French protection. Thus, it is difficult for France to see why the *Forces Nouvelles* would make peace with Gbagbo without France playing a critical role. They see this as betrayal. Thus, while Gbagbo has at least had a handshake with the new French president, Nicholas Sarkozy, such pleasantries will certainly not be extended to Soro. However, it should be understood that the Accord provided an opportunity for the *Forces Nouvelles*, not only to distance itself from France and the rhetoric of imperialism but, more importantly, it gave it ample space to negotiate on its own terms.

As for Gbagbo, the French expected him to negotiate with them, not the *Forces Nouvelles* since they were the ones shielding the *Forces Nouvelles*. Thus, by negotiating with the *Forces Nouvelles*, Gbagbo is perceived to have successfully reduced France's leverage over him. But what infuriates France the most is that, by appointing Soro as prime minister, the prospect of France punishing Soro by indicting him for 'his war crimes' has been delayed or averted (Foungbé 2007b). Despite calls from radicals within the *Front Populaire Ivoirien*, for Gbagbo to sever diplomatic ties with France, he has adopted a more pragmatic approach by giving most of the lucrative contracts in the oil sector to Russia, the US and China (Foungbé 2007b). This is probably a strategy to befriend Russia and China as a measure to counter France's influence in the UN Security Council. China and Russia have not only prevented the Security Council from imposing targeted sanctions on Ivorian politicians, they have also been reluctant to endorse the principle of superiority of international agreements and instruments over the Ivorian constitution (Security Council Report 2006). Gbagbo has previously argued that he would not implement any aspect of a negotiated agreement or UN resolution that is in direct conflict with Ivorian constitution.

Continuation of the status quo

Despite some fissures in the Gbagbo Soro union, it is likely that the status quo will continue. It is important to reiterate that Gbagbo and Soro were once close allies against Houphouët-Boigny. Gbagbo and Soro need each other, with or without elections. To address his legitimacy crisis, Gbagbo needs Soro to justify his continued stay in power. More than three years after the expiration of his mandate, Gbagbo's legitimacy depends (to an extent) on him implementing the peace process. Without the union, there is no peace agreement to implement. Also in case of an election, the last thing Gbagbo would want to see is the prospect of facing a united northern vote. Thus, even if elections are held, Soro can provide Gbagbo with a crucial portion of the northern vote.

It is a certainty that presidential election will not take place before the end of 2008, if they take place at all. However, for legitimacy purposes, both parties might need to come up with a mechanism that prolongs implementation of the Accord, thus justifying the union and their continued stay in power. Though the fourth Evaluation and Monitoring Committee meeting in Burkina Faso has failed to sign a complementary accord setting out a new timeline for implementing the Ouagadougou Political Accord, it is most likely that a supplementary accord will eventually be signed, not just to justify continuation of the status quo but also as an attempt to find ways and means to negotiate the differences between both parties. Moreover, it is likely that there will be a cabinet reshuffle as an attempt to re-energise the government but also to solve *personality issues*, specifically between Prime Minister Soro and Mr Tagro, the minister of the interior, but more importantly as a means to accommodate pro-Gbagbo supporters and advocate negotiations with the rebels within the FPI, considering the perceived tension in the party. Continuation of the status quo would greatly frustrate the political opposition, which feels alienated from the transitional process. As such, the opposition's only recourse might be to try to rally its supporters on the street in an attempt to force Gbagbo into elections.

Rupture of the Gbagbo–Soro Union

A rupture of the Gbagbo–Soro partnership is an expensive scenario. The rupture could be caused either by a quarrel between the two or divisions within the *Forces Nouvelles*. The latter option will most likely compound the political mess in the country but would give Gbagbo an advantage. If the rupture is caused by differences between both parties, it is highly unlikely that parties will try to push for a military solution. Time and again, government forces have shown that they cannot beat the rebels, despite the government's superior weaponry. The rebels' comparative advantage lies in their superior number. Thus, even in the case of a rupture, a military confrontation is unlikely because of the UN and French presence but, most importantly, because it would heighten political uncertainty within both camps.

In case of a rupture and eventual violence, the resulting ripple effect might affect the fragile security situation in Guinea and vice versa. It was against this backdrop that Ivorian intelligence operatives visited Conakry during the height of the January and February riots to express their concern about the potential implications of the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire. It should be recalled that in July 2005, Guinean authorities reported an exchange of fire between their troops and elements of the *Forces Nouvelles* pursuant to attempts by a faction loyal to Ibrahim Coulibaly to recruit fighters in Guinea (United Nations, 2005). Moreover, Gbagbo had used Guinea as a refuge for his army's helicopters (International Crisis Group 2005).

Elections

There will definitely not be elections come the end of January 2008. However, in the case of a presidential election at the end of next year, Gbagbo is in a strong position to win. It is imperative to him and his party that he wins in the first round (knockout stage) because of the probability of facing a united political opposition in the run-off stage. This is where Soro might come in as a 'king-maker' because any successful implementation of the Accord will definitely bolster his political credentials at the expense of Quattara. Within the northern region, Soro will definitely be seen as a hero who has liberated the northerners. As a consequence, even after the elections, it is possible to expect a continuation of the Gbagbo–Soro union.

If an election is held but the elections are not seen as free and fair, another front in the Ivorian crisis might open up. Thus, the Ivorian peace process will not stop with the proclamation of election results. The announcement of the result and management of the 'after-effects' will need to be carefully managed. Any form of election will certainly provide much needed legitimacy for the eventual

winner but they will also inform international engagement with Côte d'Ivoire. Some international partners will decide to disengage and some will choose to stay engaged. Critically, even after elections, some form of government of national unity should be formed in order to avoid feelings of exclusion.

Political parties are already campaigning, albeit in a subdued manner. The two major political parties, PDCI-RDA and RDR, have also agreed to form a coalition in case either of them fails to win the election in the first round. Even if these two political parties fail to win the presidential elections, their continued coalition during the parliamentary elections could pose an even bigger problem to Gbagbo. The last thing Gbagbo would want is cohabitation with a powerful prime minister, who could use the national assembly to paralyse his government. This situation is reminiscent of the political squabble in Niger between President Mahamane Ousmane and Prime Minister Hama Amadou, a situation that presented Colonel Ibrahim Maïnassara Baré with an excuse to stage his military coup.

Firm datelines

Both parties to the Ivorian crisis must commit themselves and speed up the peace process. One way of doing this is to set strict deadlines for implementing the Accord. Strict deadlines will certainly put pressure on the belligerents to reach a consensus.

Empower President Compaoré

It is imperative to strengthen the mandate of the chair of the Evaluation and Implementation Committee. For the time being, President Compaoré can only make suggestions related to the practical and necessary measures for the implementation of the Accord. Strengthening the hand of the president to do more than advise or give suggestions on certain issues will accelerate implementation of the process. For example, giving him the powers to pronounce binding decisions on issues like the mandate, function and powers of SAGEM in the identification process could speed up implementation of the peace process.

The constructive inclusion of opposition political parties and civil society in every step of the peace process is imperative. The Accord has been heavily criticised for excluding the political opposition and civil society. These are very important institutions in Ivorian politics. Thus, in order to build consensus and refute allegations that Ouagadougou is designed to accommodate the political interest of government and *Forces Nouvelles*, the political opposition and civil society should be involved.

Constructive participation by the international community

The international community has effectively been excluded from the transitional process in Côte d'Ivoire. The appointment of a new UN Special Representative, Mr YJ Choi, is welcome but the international community needs to be given a much bigger role with regard to oversight so as to put pressure on parties to the Accord to implement what they agreed to.

Avert a split within the Forces Nouvelles

A split within the *Forces Nouvelles* should be averted at all costs. A split would definitely have a negative effect on the security situation because factional fighting could result. However, while a split would strengthen Gbagbo's position, it would complicate any efforts to negotiate an end to the conflict.

Resource mobilisation

Implementing a peace process is usually a very expensive exercise. There is no doubt that there is a price tag to every peace process, especially with regard to issues such as DDR. As such, it is imperative that the international community should mobilise resources to support the peace process. The EU has done a good job so far but it needs to do better.

Electoral system

As a long-term solution to the Ivorian crisis, it might be pertinent for Ivorians to revisit their chosen electoral system. The crises in Côte d'Ivoire highlight the limitations of the presidential system and centralisation in a very diverse society. This situation has been compounded by an electoral system that is based on the 'winner takes all' principle, thus making Ivorian politics a zero-sum game. An interesting idea might be to institute an electoral system based on proportional representation so as to allow the participation of every ethnic group with regards to questions of who gets what, and how.

The slow implementation of the Accord signed by the *Forces Nouvelles* and the government in March 2008 is the result of the lack of political will by all participants. Implementation of the Accord will definitely be a watershed in the country's political landscape. To ensure political security, the various political actors in the country are jostling for control of the transitional process and related institutions. As such, successful implementation of the Accord will depend on whether Gbagbo and Soro find mechanisms and strategies to accommodate their interests without hurting each other. For the time being, Ivorian electoral logic makes it very difficult for both parties to accommodate each other without somebody losing out. Within this context, the present Gbagbo-Soro 'marriage' is bound to continue albeit with some friction and tension. This might not be a 'marriage' made in heaven but both parties stand to lose a lot if there is a divorce.

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1 Note: The CFA franc has a fixed exchange rate to the euro: 100 CFA francs = 1 French (nouveau) franc = 0.152449 euro; or 1 euro = 655.957 CFA francs.