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**COTE D'IVOIRE: CONTINUED CRISIS**

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## 1 Introduction

Thousands of people have been displaced by the army rebellion that broke out in Côte d'Ivoire on 19 September 2002. Using security concerns as a pretext, the government has cleared shantytowns in Abidjan where thousands of migrant workers live, leaving more than 6,000 people homeless. Many foreigners who would like to leave Abidjan cannot do so because they are afraid even to leave their homes. The government says it wants to rehouse the “economically active” ones and repatriate the rest, and is even lobbying for European aid to rehouse the people whose homes it has destroyed.<sup>1</sup> Neighbouring countries are ill equipped to deal with a sudden influx of returnees, though so far, there has been a manageable steady trickle rather than a flood.

A key issue for humanitarian agencies will be dealing with population movements out of Côte d'Ivoire. This is less of a challenge for Mali and Burkina Faso, where returnees can be expected to disperse to their home areas – though they may need initial shelter, food and help with transport. Liberia, which has its own internal rebellion, is particularly ill equipped to deal with a wave of refugees. Guinea will be reluctant to take in more refugees after experiencing cross-border attacks linked to the Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts. Western Ghana is already acting as the main route between the rebel-held north of Côte d'Ivoire and the government-held south.

### 1.1 How the Crisis Arose

The roots of the current crisis go back to 1993 and the power struggle at the death of Côte d'Ivoire's founding president Félix Houphouët-Boigny. Though not especially democratic, he had created a multi-ethnic society, inviting migrant workers from neighbouring countries to come and develop the country's economy and agriculture.

When Houphouët died on 7 December 1993, the president of parliament, Henri Konan Bédié, declared himself president in line with the constitution, even though Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara was seen as Houphouët's designated successor. Ouattara resigned as prime minister and left the country, taking up a position as deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund, but in mid-1994 his supporters – northern Moslems, Abidjan intellectuals, young professionals – in his absence formed a new political party, the Rassemblement des Républicains (RDR).<sup>2</sup>

A 50% devaluation of the CFA franc regional currency in January 1994 turned the economy round and the country prospered, but while Bédié tried to emphasize his role as Houphouët's heir he did not seem entirely confident in his position. He introduced the concept of Ivoirité – Ivorian-ness – while rumours were spread that Ouattara, a Moslem northerner, was not a pure Ivorian. In 1994, Bédié's government passed a constitutional amendment specifically aimed at Ouattara, stipulating that only candidates with two Ivorian parents and who had lived in the country continuously for five years would be eligible to stand for president.

By 1998, donors were expressing concern about corruption and governance issues. International aid was frozen, accusations flew, and on Christmas Eve 1999, General Robert

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<sup>1</sup> London representative of Front Populaire Ivoirien. Personal interview, 7 October 2002

<sup>2</sup> Present author's personal information from RDR's founding news conference in 1994

Guei seized power, promising to deal with the mismanagement issues and find and pay back Bédié's missing millions. But Guei developed a taste for power and believed he could win the October 2000 presidential election, from which all serious opponents apart from veteran opposition leader Laurent Gbagbo were excluded. Gbagbo and Guei were believed to have agreed on a deal in which if Gbagbo lost he would be made president of parliament, but with no real national support base, Guei was defeated. When he attempted to declare himself the winner, crowds marched on the presidential palace to demand that Gbagbo be installed as president. Ouattara's supporters boycotted the election, and shortly after the vote 57 bodies of Moslem northerners were found at a site outside Abidjan, the "*charnier de Yopougon*". Eight gendarmes tried by a military tribunal for the killings were acquitted due to lack of evidence after witnesses refused to testify because of fears for their safety.<sup>3</sup>

Alassane Ouattara's RDR also boycotted parliamentary elections in December in which the former prime minister was barred from standing as a candidate, but the party did well in municipal elections in March and district council elections in July.

Ethnic tensions in western Côte d'Ivoire and discontent in the military persisted, until in the early hours of 19 September 2002, rebel soldiers carried out more than a dozen co-ordinated attacks in Abidjan, the central city of Bouaké, and the main northern town of Korhogo. Former military leader Robert Guei and interior minister Emile Boga Doudou were killed. The government claims Guei died in an exchange of fire as he was heading towards the television station to announce a coup d'état, but he was killed with a single bullet to the head and was dressed in a T-shirt and jogging trousers – hardly the garb of a coup leader. The rebels are mostly low-ranking soldiers who were recruited into the army by Guei and were resisting Gbagbo's plans to demobilize them. They have given themselves a name, the Mouvement Patriotique de la Côte d'Ivoire (MPCI), and in mid-October named as their secretary general Guillaume Soro, a former head of the Ivorian students federation FESCI (Fédération Estudiantaire et Scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire). Soro, now 30, has said he wants an eight-month transition period to be followed by fresh elections. All the country's political parties would choose an interim president, and the United States and France would supervise the elections.<sup>4</sup>

The present crisis has a number of causes. One is resentment among northerners at their marginalization by the Ivorian governments that have been in power since the death of Houphouët-Boigny. With the exclusion of opposition leader Alassane Ouattara from successive elections, many have been unable to vote for their preferred candidate, and feel the Abidjan government does not represent them.

No significant political or financial backer of the rebels has come forward, but many analysts suspect one of the discreetly powerful and wealthy Dioula barons of northern Côte d'Ivoire, who have watched the political manoeuvring in Abidjan and the mistreatment of northerners with increasing distaste. They do not seek political power at a central government level for themselves, which is one reason why they remain in the background, but they would like an environment in which it is possible for them to pursue their business and regional political interests unhindered.

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<sup>3</sup> Human Rights Watch, *The New Racism: The Politics of Ethnicity in Côte d'Ivoire*, New York, 28 August 2001

<sup>4</sup> Quist-Arcton O, Ivory Coast Loyalist Forces Recapture Cocoa Capital, Rebels Lay Out Demands, *All-Africa.com*, 16 October 2002, <http://www.allafrica.com> [accessed October 2002]

The rebels include 750 mostly junior ranks who were recruited into the army by Guei and were resisting Gbagbo's plans to demobilize them. Known as the *zinzin* (crazy ones) and the *bahéfoué* (sorcerers), they had staged a number of previous protests. They joined forces with a group of more politically inclined, generally pro-Ouattara army deserters who took refuge in Burkina Faso after falling out with Guei. Warrant Officer Tuho Fozié, the rebels' commander in Bouaké and one of the leaders of the rebel delegation at the Lomé peace talks that opened on 30 October, belongs to this latter group.

The rebels control the northern half of the country, including the central city of Bouaké and the main northern town of Korhogo. They seized the western cocoa town of Daloa on 13 October, though loyalist troops took it back. The two sides agreed a cease-fire brokered by West African mediators in mid-October and French troops deployed in a buffer zone between the rebel-held North and the government-held South, where they are to remain until a West African force can be deployed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

## 2 Regions and Populations

Côte d'Ivoire is a highly ethnically diverse society. Around a quarter of the population are foreigners and the country has some 60 different ethnic groups of its own. Though the real numbers are thought to be rather higher, the 1998 census put the numbers of foreigners in Côte d'Ivoire as follows:<sup>5</sup>

Country of origin	Population
Burkina Faso	2.3 million
Mali	792,260
Guinea	230,390
Ghana	133,220
Benin	107,500
Niger	102,220
Nigeria	101,360

Côte d'Ivoire also houses 72,000 refugees, according to UNHCR figures, most of them Liberians.

The country's armed forces total some 18,000, of which 8,000 are gendarmes (paramilitary police). The gendarmerie are more reliably loyal to Gbagbo than the regular army, and tend to be used for operations such as burning of foreigners' homes and arresting opposition figures.<sup>6</sup>

Most of those likely to leave Côte d'Ivoire are "foreigners", even though they may have lived in Côte d'Ivoire all their lives, but there is also the possibility that the conflict could generate internal displacement of "native" Ivoriens. Ethnic Baoulé working in northern Côte d'Ivoire have already been recorded arriving in Mali for fear of attacks, and may need assistance to return to

<sup>5</sup> Institut National de la Statistique, Abidjan, 1998 statistics, quoted by *BBC Online*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/2323577.stm> [accessed 12 October 2002]

<sup>6</sup> Fall, E, Ce mal qui ronge la grande muette, *Jeune Afrique*, 21 October-3 November 2002

the government-held areas. Baoulé cocoa farmers in western Côte d'Ivoire may be driven out of their villages by the local Bété people. They may be able to return to their "home" regions in east and central Côte d'Ivoire, and be absorbed into their communities. The biggest problem is likely to be faced by Ivorians from the North who live and work in the government-controlled areas. In the present climate, any Dioula Moslem seems to be "suspect". Many are staying in their homes and keeping a low profile, as any attempt to flee to the North is fraught with risks. Therefore the number of such people potentially needing help is very difficult to quantify.

## 2.1 The North

Northern Côte d'Ivoire is overwhelmingly loyal to the main opposition party, Alassane Ouattara's Rassemblement des Républicains (RDR). Even if the present rebellion is settled quickly, there are serious doubts about how effective the government's authority will be in future in a region which has its own highly developed power structures. In Korhogo, the regional capital, local organizations such as the *dozo*, or traditional hunters, have joined forces with the rebels, who seem to command substantial popular support. This region is likely to become increasingly dependent on Burkina Faso, rather than Abidjan, but the population is likely to remain stable. The only thing that could cause real problems would be a really large-scale government offensive, but the Ivorian army is probably not capable of such an operation.

The risk of a division of the country along the present front lines has already been evoked, before the current crisis, e.g. by the RDR daily *Le Patriote*, in its edition of 4 December 2000. The paper published a map of the country divided in two at Bouaké, and recalled that Côte d'Ivoire's borders had fluctuated during the colonial era. From 1932 to 1947, present-day Côte d'Ivoire and what is now western Burkina Faso were one country.

Some 200,000 people fled Bouaké in a panic exodus in early October, but some Lebanese and West African traders were reported to be returning, complaining of harassment and racketeering in Abidjan.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.2 The West

There are long-standing tensions between the local Bété farmers and incoming Baoulé cocoa farmers who moved west after exhausting the soil in their own areas. (Cocoa is grown on cleared forest). More recently, with the rise of xenophobia in the country as a whole, there have been attacks on Burkinabè and Malian farmers, some of whom have been in Côte d'Ivoire for a generation or more. The incomers live in separate villages from the local people. There is potential for tension between the Bété and the Yacouba, the ethnic group of former military leader general Robert Guei, as well as fears that weapons and fighters could come across the border from chronically unstable Liberia.

Some 4,000 Burkinabè have been driven from their homes in the western Duékoué and Bangolo districts. A Burkinabè consular official told the French news agency Agence France Presse that at least seven Burkinabè had been killed in the village of Yrouzon and four more in the village of Blodi. Many of those driven out have sought refuge at the Catholic mission

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<sup>7</sup> United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks, *Thousands Flee Bouaké*, 14 October 2002

in Duékoué.<sup>8</sup> There are reports from Daloa (denied by the army) of summary executions of ethnic Dioulas by security forces. Hundreds of people have taken refuge in the town's grand mosque.<sup>9</sup>

With the cease-fire line running right through the cocoa region, agriculture will be severely disrupted. Harvesting of the main cocoa crop officially began on 1 October and should now be in full swing. Unless the cocoa can be got to port, farmers of all ethnic groups are likely to suffer significant hardship, ironically at a time when the price is at a 16-year high.<sup>10</sup>

### **2.3 The Centre and East**

Ethnically, this region is dominated by the Akan, who are related to the Ashanti in Ghana. Under Houphouët, Côte d'Ivoire's ruling class was dominated by the Baoulé, a powerful Akan sub-group. While the FPI is currently in power, the PDCI old guard still control key areas such as cocoa exporting bodies and have no interest in a northern-led revolution. The Centre and East will remain loyal to the government, but for UNHCR a major area of concern is the fate of foreigners in Abidjan. Since 19 September, the government has been clearing the shantytowns in which many foreigners live, initially with the pretext of looking for rebels, and more recently in the guise of urban renewal. UNHCR is already assisting more than 800 refugees in five accommodation centres in Abidjan. Some Sierra Leonean refugees are being assisted to return to Sierra Leone, but return to Liberia is a less attractive option.

Humanitarian agencies estimate that about 200,000 people have been internally displaced by the fighting, most of them from the rebel-held city of Bouaké. Many ethnic Baoulé have fled Bouaké for fear of being singled out by the rebels.

The refugees are living in very difficult circumstances, in overcrowded temporary sites with scarce water, poor sanitary conditions and worsening health problems. The refugees, mainly from Liberia and Sierra Leone, are afraid to be seen in the streets, where anyone speaking a foreign language is suspect. Several of them have been harassed in the streets. Some have been robbed. Yet others report that policemen have been asking them to pay 10,000 CFA (\$15) to avoid arrest as suspected assailants. According to preliminary statistics, 16 per cent of displaced refugees are children under five, while another 21 per cent are under 18. UNHCR's non-governmental agency partner, Save the Children UK, is taking care of separated children and a UNHCR community services officer is visiting the centres daily to evaluate the situation. On Friday night (4 October), a pregnant refugee died of haemorrhaging because she could not be transported to the hospital during the curfew.<sup>11</sup>

## **3 Regional Relations**

Côte d'Ivoire accounts for 60% of the GDP of the Union Economique et Monetaire Ouest-Africaine (UEMOA, the western CFA franc zone). Its disintegration into all-out conflict

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<sup>8</sup> Agence France Presse, Des milliers de Burkinabè déplacés dans l'ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire, 9 October 2002

<sup>9</sup> Agence France Presse, Les Dioulas de Daloa fuient leurs maisons par peur d'exactions, 22 October 2002

<sup>10</sup> Reuters, Ivory Coast Cocoa Shippers Worry about Quality, 23 October 2002

<sup>11</sup> UNHCR Concerned about Displaced People in Ivorian Hotspots, *UNHCR News*, 8 October 2002

would have catastrophic consequences for the whole region, in humanitarian and economic terms. It would shatter international confidence in UEMOA, which had been emerging as one of the more successful African regions, led by Côte d'Ivoire's own recovery.

The xenophobia already present in Gbagbo's government has been allowed a free rein since the start of the rebellion. State television has been broadcasting anti-foreigner messages, and when the Information Minister was asked about attacks targeting foreign journalists, he suggested they should report the situation more "positively".

### **3.1 Burkina Faso**

President Blaise Compaoré has little love for the Gbagbo government, which blames Burkina Faso for the rebellion. Compaoré has in the past supported rebels in Sierra Leone and Liberia, and has given refuge to Ivorian army deserters. Burkina Faso denies backing the rebellion, and Compaoré says Burkina has no interest in contributing to any further destabilization of Côte d'Ivoire. He said the presence of the Ivorian deserters was duly reported to the Ivorian authorities in 2001, but they showed no concern.<sup>12</sup> The best known of the army deserters, Ibrahim Coulibaly, known as IB, has – at least in public – denied all links to the rebellion, but said several of his comrades, including Tuho Fozidé, the commander of the rebels in Bouaké, and Corporal Omar Diarrasouba known as "Zaga-Zaga", thought to be among the rebels, had left Burkina Faso six months earlier to try to seek their reintegration into the Ivorian army.<sup>13</sup>

Compaoré made a point of attending a summit of ECOWAS in Accra on 29 September. He is a skilled diplomatic operator and likes to be seen to behave better to Gbagbo than Gbagbo behaves to him. His past support for Liberian President Charles Taylor brought him unwelcome scrutiny when the United Nations looked into support for Sierra Leonean rebels, and he will not want to make the same mistake again.

Many Burkinabè in southern Côte d'Ivoire are likely to be forced to return home, which will create a substantial shock for the economy, which will both lose their remittances, and struggle to find them jobs. Busloads have started returning from the south via Ghana – as otherwise they would have to cross the front line. The World Food Programme flew in 40 tonnes of protein biscuits on 15 October as an emergency supply for returning Burkinabè.

### **3.2 Mali**

There are at least 790,000 and probably nearer one million Malians in Côte d'Ivoire. Any wave of returnees would converge on the town of Sikasso, where the local authorities have drawn up contingency plans but would need help with humanitarian supplies. Mali's Red Cross, in association with the ICRC, has moved quickly to assess the situation. According to UNHCR, some 2,800 people had arrived in Sikasso by 11 October.<sup>14</sup> People from southern Côte d'Ivoire who had been working in the north of the country have fled into Mali saying they feared being attacked by northerners.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Simon, C., Personne ne peut souhaiter une déstabilisation de la Côte d'Ivoire. *Le Monde*, 30 October 2002

<sup>13</sup> Agence France Presse, Le sergent-chef "IB" nie commander les mutins ivoiriens depuis le Burkina, 11 October 2002

<sup>14</sup> UNHCR Welcomes Government Decision, *UNHCR Briefing Notes*, 11 October 2002

<sup>15</sup> *ICRC News*, 10 October 2002



### 3.3 Liberia

Many of the Liberian refugees in Abidjan have lost their homes in the clearing of shantytowns and are in the care of UNHCR. Nearer the border, hundreds of Liberian refugees have headed back to Liberia's Nimba County through Gbinta, Hapleu and Dohouba border crossings. UNHCR said these returns seemed to have slowed following a series of meetings that UNHCR staff held with the frightened Liberian refugees in refugee settlements around Guiglo.<sup>16</sup>

Liberian president Charles Taylor has always been adept at turning regional instability to his advantage. One immediate benefit to him may well be that the international community, which showed a brief flurry of interest in his support for rebels in Sierra Leone, will now turn its attention to Côte d'Ivoire – unless of course international attention to West Africa is completely superseded by an impending war against Iraq. President Taylor was one of the late ex-president Guei's few friends in the region – Guei set up a training camp for Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia militia in 1990 near the Ivorian border town of Danané on the instructions of Gbagbo's old adversary Félix Houphouët-Boigny.

Eastern Liberia, where any refugees from Côte d'Ivoire would arrive, is not blessed with much infrastructure, and there is only limited humanitarian organization presence as the current fighting is focused on the west of the country. Even basic agriculture has suffered from Liberia's years of instability, and capacity building here could be vital. At least some cross-border raids into Sierra Leone by Liberian rebels are made in order to find food.<sup>17</sup>

It is possible that Liberia could be used as a transit route for refugees. Many Burkinabè seeking to leave Abidjan have passed through Ghana to avoid crossing the front line, and Burkinabè in western Côte d'Ivoire who want to leave the country would welcome a safe route through Liberia and Guinea. Logistically, though, this is far harder than passing through Ghana, as the region has few all-weather roads and little transport.

### 3.4 Guinea

Guinea has already dealt, not always successfully, with refugee influxes from the related civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Officials estimate that anything up to a million Guineans live in Côte d'Ivoire and their return in large numbers could prove disastrous, as Guinea is lacking in basic infrastructure. Many people blame Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees for problems like banditry and prostitution. They say refugees returning to Liberia before the 1997 Liberian presidential election destroyed crops on land that local people had allowed them to cultivate.<sup>18</sup> Sierra Leonean refugees have returned home, but there are still Liberian refugees in Guinea, some of them relatively recent arrivals fleeing fighting between Liberian government troops and rebels of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD). Some have had to be moved away from the border areas and settled inland to avoid conflict with local people.<sup>19</sup>

Guinea's president Lansana Conté, whose domestic opponents are becoming more outspoken, has made no comment at all on the rebellion, in spite of the large numbers of Guineans living

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<sup>16</sup> UNHCR Welcomes...

<sup>17</sup> Human Rights Watch representative in Sierra Leone. Personal interview, September 2002

<sup>18</sup> Guinean journalist. Personal interview, 15 October 2002

<sup>19</sup> Paranoid or What? *Africa Confidential*, 13 September 2002

in Côte d'Ivoire. He suffered an army rebellion in 1996, and almost certainly fears a spillover effect that could destabilize his isolated and rather oppressive government.<sup>20</sup>

### 3.5 Ghana

Ghana is in a better position to cope than some neighbouring countries, and in 1993 had the experience of receiving a flood of 15,000 returnees after attacks on Ghanaians in Côte d'Ivoire, following assaults on Ivorian soccer fans in Ghana the previous month.<sup>21</sup>

The government has made contingency plans for the evacuation of its nationals, though so far it is seeing a steady trickle of returnees, rather than a flood. Defence Minister Kwame Addo-Kufuor said a naval vessel and buses had been put on standby for the evacuation of Ghanaian nationals if necessary and that the National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO) is working closely with security, health and relief agencies to ensure that contingency plans are in place. NADMO has put together a response team, tents to accommodate up to 3,000 people, blankets, foodstuffs and other basic needs for the refugees.<sup>22</sup> The minister has also said that some 500 Ghanaians were stranded in Bouaké.<sup>23</sup>

The Ghana Refugee Board has been non-operational for two years, leaving the country with no official mechanism for screening refugees or managing camps. The two main refugee camps in Ghana – the Liberian camp at Gomoa Buduburam in the Central Region, and the Sierra Leonean camp at Krisan in the Western Region – have long been centres of ethnic tension between refugees and the surrounding communities.<sup>24</sup>

A first meeting of UN agencies to co-ordinate responses to the crisis was held in the Ghanaian capital 17-18 October, called by OCHA, hosted by United Nations Development Programme and bringing together representatives from UNICEF, World Food Programme and the Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs' regional support office for West Africa. Plans were already under discussion to relocate UN personnel, and a headquarters building in Accra has been identified. Negotiations for additional residential accommodation for UN staff were in train when the rebellion broke out.<sup>25</sup>

## 4 International Relations

France is in a difficult situation. It has close diplomatic and economic ties to its former colony, the CFA franc is underwritten by the French Treasury, and France keeps 600 troops in Côte d'Ivoire under a 1961 defence pact. France is providing logistical support to President Gbagbo, and has sent in 200 reinforcements and established a tactical headquarters. French troops have established positions on the main road south, preventing the rebels from taking Yamoussoukro and marching on Abidjan. One priority for France in this is to ensure that the situation in Abidjan does not deteriorate; evacuating its nationals from the city would be

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<sup>20</sup> Whose Army? *Africa Confidential*, 11 October 2002

<sup>21</sup> Reuters, Ghanaian Exodus from Ivory Coast Winding Down, 24 November 1993

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Defence Minister Kwame Addo-Kufuor, *Daily Graphic* [Accra], 11 October 2002

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Defence Minister Kwame Addo-Kufuor, Ghanaian Broadcasting Corporation, 7 October 2002

<sup>24</sup> Ghanaian journalist. Personal interview, 21 October 2002

<sup>25</sup> United Nations official. Personal interview, 21 October 2002

virtually impossible.<sup>26</sup>

The international community is obliged to back Gbagbo as the elected president, but his arrogant behaviour towards the ECOWAS mediators makes this a difficult task. Already with the defeat of the French Parti Socialiste Gbagbo has lost valuable allies in Paris, and the Côte d'Ivoire crisis is being seen as a test of President Jacques Chirac's policy towards Africa, now that he is no longer hampered by "cohabitation" with a Socialist-dominated parliament.

Gbagbo himself, after coming to power in complicated circumstances, had to demonstrate that he satisfied basic democratic and human rights principles prescribed for the European Union's dealings with Africa. EU governments last year insisted that the government take a number of measures related to human rights before either EU or bilateral aid – including French aid – was restored. Eventually, Gbagbo did satisfy these requirements, and Paris now feels that it would undermine the whole principle of insisting on democratic legitimacy and rejecting accession to power by coup d'état, if it supported a rebel seizure of power in Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>27</sup>

The United States sent troops to Côte d'Ivoire to evacuate its nationals and is watching the situation closely, but otherwise remaining on the sidelines.

## **5 Conclusion: Overview of Likely Outcomes**

### **5.1 Best Case Scenario**

Mediation by the Economic Community of West African States could bring about a cease-fire. In negotiations so far, the rebels have asked for an amnesty and reintegration with the national army. In order to retain any kind of hold on the North, the government would probably need to agree to a timetable for fresh presidential and parliamentary elections to be held earlier than 2005, when they are scheduled. Safeguards would need to be built in to prevent the government going back on its promises, but if a cease-fire could be negotiated, the country could still salvage some of the economic progress of the past two years. The International Monetary Fund and World Bank were negotiating a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility to be put in place in 2003, as well as significant debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative. Donors would be keen to keep this programme on track to support social cohesion. Further population movement would be minimal, as anyone who has not yet fled in fear would be unlikely to do so after a cease-fire. From an aid agency point of view, a cease-fire now would mean that Côte d'Ivoire's neighbours would need no more than a strengthening of existing capacities.

Humanitarian aid agencies would need to concentrate their efforts on Abidjan, where thousands of people have been made homeless by the clearing of shantytowns. Many of them will need assistance to return to their original homes, but some will have been in Côte d'Ivoire for many years and will not find resettlement easy.

### **5.2 Worst Case Scenario**

So far, the performance of the Ivorian army suggests that civil war is unlikely, as the government side is just too weak to resist the rebels, but with the recent arrival of Angolan

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<sup>26</sup> Whose Army?

<sup>27</sup> French foreign policy specialist. Personal interview, 22 October, 2002

weapons, this may change. Gbagbo has eliminated his rival, Defence Minister Moïse Lida Kouassi, and taken personal charge of the defence portfolio, signalling his determination to fight. Kouassi had repeatedly announced an all-out assault on the rebels, then failed to deliver, to the point where it was starting to look embarrassing for the government. The removal of the high-profile minister not only provides a scapegoat but also enables an increasingly concerned Gbagbo to take charge of the crisis himself. The recent arrival of South African mercenaries on the government side may herald a new offensive.<sup>28</sup>

But with a weak government army, a conflict pitting the rebel-held North against the government-controlled South could drag on for years, like the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. There are numerous mercenaries and arms traders already active in the region. The rebels could fund their conflict through cocoa exports, provided they can either capture San Pedro port or organize an export route, perhaps through Liberia.

A long-running civil war would need a major long-term commitment on the part of humanitarian agencies, inside Côte d'Ivoire and in its neighbours. If the situation deteriorated sharply, bringing in aid supplies could cause problems, as ports in neighbouring Ghana are already swamped with cargoes diverted from Abidjan. Liberia and Guinea are very poorly equipped to cope with refugees, and the whole region would suffer economically from the loss of its motor economy. Aid agencies would need to plan for long-term involvement with refugees and IDPs in Côte d'Ivoire and in its neighbours. International IGOs and NGOs might themselves become a target. The French are widely resented. The rebels blame them for preventing them from marching on Abidjan, and the government feels they have not done enough to support them. Thus, any French-speaking white person, including humanitarian staff and journalists, can become a target. French schools were closed after the French military base in Abidjan was subjected to a violent demonstration on 22 October.<sup>29</sup> French newspaper reporters and a BBC correspondent in Abidjan have already been harassed and threatened. French papers have been accused of complicity with the rebels, for the way they reported on the conflict. National radio has broadcast lists giving the addresses of French newspaper correspondents in Abidjan and inviting locals to "visit" them; the pro-government nationalist *Le National* newspaper has accused President Jacques Chirac and the French press of plotting against the country and trying to destabilize it.<sup>30</sup>

### 5.3 Most Likely Scenario

The international community will impose some sort of peace deal on Gbagbo, but the Abidjan government will have only nominal control of the northern half of the country. Political unrest will be commonplace, and efforts to put it down will be violent. Neighbouring countries will struggle to absorb returning migrant workers, exacerbating the region's problems and further undermining stability. The government will lose much of this year's cocoa income, and debt relief will be postponed again, creating hardship that will only serve to increase instability.

One key question is where the rebels will go. A peace deal would probably provide for reintegration of at least some of them into the army, but not all of them will want this option.

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<sup>28</sup> Reuters, Embattled Ivory Coast Leader Flies In Mercenaries, 30 October 2002

<sup>29</sup> Agence France Presse, Fermeture des écoles françaises à Abidjan après une manifestation violente, 22 October 2002

<sup>30</sup> French foreign policy specialist. Personal interview, 22 October 2002

Burkina Faso sheltered army deserters before 19 September and may do so again, or some rebel leaders may remain in the far north of Côte d'Ivoire. Gbagbo will trust the army less than ever, and will continue to favour the gendarmerie, exacerbating existing divisions between the two forces.

As well as supporting existing capacities, for example local Red Cross organizations, IGOs and NGOs will have to remain alert to the prospect of further flare-ups of violence that could drive foreigners from their homes.

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