

Côte d'Ivoire: What's Needed to End the Crisis

I. OVERVIEW

On 4 March 2007, the two main actors in the Côte d'Ivoire crisis signed the Ouagadougou Peace Agreement (OPA). The deal initially produced a peaceful atmosphere. The demarcation line between the armed forces was dismantled, a new government formed and the groundwork laid for addressing the conflict's key questions: Ivorian identity and citizenship, and presidential legitimacy. Yet, more than two years later, the OPA is in deep trouble. The conflict will only be resolved if the commitments made in the Burkinabé capital are finally translated into action. Organising credible elections will not be enough to rescue Côte d'Ivoire from a decade-long crisis; substantial progress in the disarmament process and genuine reunification of the administration are also needed. President Compaoré's facilitation needs to generate new momentum, and other international partners must increase their pressure.

Political leaders have been pushed to the wall, with less than a half-year left to organise free and transparent elections as agreed and proceed with disarming thousands of combatants. Another postponement of elections would be a death blow to the OPA. If armed groups are not at least partially dismantled, there will be a severe risk of new unrest.

Electoral registration and identification were officially closed on 30 June, but the operation did not reach its initial aim. Launched in September 2008, the complex operation has been ill-conceived and mismanaged, its financing deliberately hampered by President Gbagbo, who has a vested interest in delaying the elections as much as possible. Following yet another postponement on 30 November 2008, the UN Security Council in January 2009 demanded that Ivorian leaders provide a realistic electoral timetable. In May, a new date for what is likely to be the first round of presidential elections was finally announced. But that date – 29 November 2009 – is still uncertain. To meet it, the institutions in charge of organising the vote still have a great deal to do and must dramatically improve their procedures.

Delays in the OPA's other priorities also give cause for concern. Disarmament has been limited to a few instances of small arms destruction. Both sides maintain significant forces and continue to import military

equipment, in violation of the UN arms embargo. This poses a real threat to the electoral process, since they can intimidate voters and possibly manipulate results or violently contest them. 5,000 Forces Nouvelles ex-rebel combatants are still awaiting integration into the new army, and the military zone commanders ("com'zones") in the formerly insurgent north retain personal protection units with hundreds of fighters. A 20,000-strong militia of Gbagbo loyalists is yet to be dismantled, and his "young patriots" networks in Abidjan have not been dissolved.

There has been only partial unification of the government administration throughout the country. On 26 May, the "com'zones" relinquished their administrative powers to government-appointed prefects, a symbolic step that needs to be followed up by giving the prefects adequate financial and logistical means to restore genuine civilian state authority. It is worrying that the "com'zones" have only lost their administrative responsibilities, while retaining their security powers, particularly since they no longer take orders from Prime Minister Guillaume Soro, the former insurgent leader, who is struggling to preserve the unity of his fractious movement. Moreover, Côte d'Ivoire's economy is in bad shape, due to poor governance as much as the global crisis. As poverty increases, thousands of young men are inclined to keep their weapons or even tempted to start a new insurgency.

The wider international community and the UN are weary and nearly helpless witnesses of these challenges. Excluded from the negotiation of the OPA – signed exclusively by African leaders – financial support is their only leverage. In view of the extensive delays and remaining difficulties of the peace process, some have started to question their continued involvement. France, for example, has already begun to repatriate a significant part of the troops it deployed under "Operation Licorne". The Burkinabé facilitation is in the thankless position of being almost alone to arbitrate disputes and create new momentum. With a rapid countdown to elections required, it must be firmer, particularly towards the "com'zones" and the ruling party's militias.

The following measures must be taken to advance peace in 2009:

- ❑ On the electoral process. Data processing, including opening the planned 68 data processing centres, must start as soon as possible. The Independent Electoral Commission and the commercial technical body that has been hired must present a detailed plan for distributing polling cards and launch an information campaign to give people precise information on where and how to get them. The prime minister must supervise the electoral process and surround himself with a more competent team able to coordinate it.
- ❑ On disarmament. Gbagbo and Soro must take responsibility to speed up the integration of their respective forces into the joint police and gendarmerie and to start reform of the national army, which is supposed to take in 5,000 ex-rebels. Both sides must finally engage in real disarmament by registering and giving up their weapons and ammunition in parallel.
- ❑ On administrative reunification. Prime Minister Soro should strengthen his cabinet with more experienced and competent staff. A single administration is needed in the entire country by year's end. Prefects and mayors must receive adequate financial and logistical means to restore civilian state authority in former rebel zones. The northern boundary should be secured by state police and customs officers, rather than former rebels.
- ❑ The UN Security Council should increase pressure on Ivorian leaders and France make resumption of full cooperation conditional on free and transparent elections and a peaceful post-electoral period. The Burkinabé facilitation should be reinforced and, with Soro's help, negotiate directly with each "com'zone" over their integration and work with Gbagbo to dismantle his various militias.

II. IDENTIFICATION AT A SNAIL'S PACE

On 4 March 2007, the two signatories of the APO made the question of citizenship a central issue in the potential resolution of the Ivorian crisis. They recognised that "The absence of clear and coherent identification represents a source of conflict".¹ But more than

two years after this recognition of reality, the technical resolution of the problem of Ivorian identity is yet to be fully implemented; like preparations for the election that is supposed to follow it, this process is running late, to a worrying degree. Young-Jin Choi, the United Nations Special Representative in Côte d'Ivoire, has commented that progress is "desperately slow".² But the delay is hardly surprising. Those who devised the inter-Ivorian agreement had not fully appreciated the scale of the task to be carried out; nor had they planned how this should be accomplished in operational terms. Much of the necessary organisation had to be improvised. Moreover, the shape of the APO has had to make allowance for the underlying motives of certain political figures.

A. A BADLY ORGANISED PROCESS

1. The unrealistic timetable set by the APO

The APO set out an election timetable that took little account of reality. The agreement envisaged that the first step would be the relaunch of mobile tribunal sessions. These hearings would issue certified copies of birth certificates to persons born in Côte d'Ivoire, of Ivorian or foreign nationality, but who were not already officially recorded in the population register. The hearings were supposed to begin two weeks after the formation of the new government and to last for three months. The new government having been formed on 7 April 2007, the mobile tribunal hearings were supposed to run from 23 April 2007 to 23 July 2007. In fact, they did not officially begin until 25 September 2007.

The second stage of the process was dependent on the mobile tribunal sessions taking place. The identification and registration of voters was supposed to begin one month after the court hearings had begun. Even allowing for the delay to the start of the hearings, the registration operation should have begun at the end of October 2007. Yet it was only on 15 September 2008 that President Gbagbo officially launched the voter identification process.³ This phase was forecast to last for 45 days. But at the end of June 2009 it had still not been completed.

¹For a full analysis of the APO and what is at stake, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°127, *Côte d'Ivoire: Can the Ouagadougou Agreement Bring Peace?*, 27 June 2007. For its evolution, see Africa Report N°139, *Côte d'Ivoire: Ensuring Credible Elections*, 22 April 2008. The complete

text of the APO is available at www.gouv.ci/autresimages/Integralite_accord_paix04mas2007.pdf.

²"Côte d'Ivoire: le retard dans l'identification des électeurs préoccupe l'Onu", Afrik.com, 28 October 2008.

³"L'opération d'identification et de recensement électoral est le dernier virage pour sortir de la crise", Xinhua, 16 September 2008.

The election timetable has been knocked completely off course by these repeated delays. The APO signatories were counting on the holding of a presidential election 10 months after the signing of the accord, ie, in January 2008. It very quickly became clear that this target date could not be met. In September 2007, the chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI), Robert Mambé Beugré, announced that the first round of the presidential election would probably be held in October 2008. Then the third supplementary Ouagadougou Agreement, signed on 28 November 2007, earmarked late in the second half of 2008 as the target election period. In April 2008, before voter identification had even got underway, a presidential decree set 30 November 2008 as the election date. And the identification process was still not finished on 14 May 2009, when President Gbagbo signed the decree setting 29 November as the date of the probable first round of the presidential election.⁴

2. The CEI at the heart of the problem

The administration of the voter identification and registration process is cumbersome and badly organised. The organisation has thousands of personnel, assigned to work at around 10,000 different locations. It is subdivided into five bodies: the CEI, the National Commission for Supervising Identification (CNSI), the National Identification Office (ONI), the National Statistical Institute (INS) and Sagem Defense Security.⁵ It

is a structure that functions without a “conductor”;⁶ there is no central coordination of the activities of the five different bodies.

The slow pace of the identification process is also explained by poor planning. The operation seems to have been put together on an improvised basis. It is being implemented without a clear financing plan in place.⁷ No fallback arrangement was planned to cope with any delay in the promised financing. In many places, the CEI worked without setting out a clear timetable for its personnel or for the local population. The transport of INS and CNSI personnel was not well organised; this meant that these two bodies were often unrepresented in the registration offices.

All representatives of the international community have complained about the “vague” nature of the identification and enrolment process and the absence of “serious interlocutors”.⁸ “Often, in the course of a single week, people bring me different figures for the same accounting category. Nothing functions logically. There is never any point in expecting a ‘clean’ work report”, commented one diplomat.⁹ This lack of transparency has fuelled mistrust among the international community, to such a degree that its representatives balk at approving the release of funds.¹⁰

The CEI has suffered serious financing delays, but the late running of the pre-election process is also caused by the behaviour of many officials. Identification and enrolment have become a lucrative “business sector” for many of the people employed to carry it out.¹¹ In no hurry to lose this fortuitous source of income, such people have deliberately held the process back. On 22 January 2009 the prime minister, Guillaume Soro, decided that the technical bodies charged with Côte

⁴If no candidate gets more than 50 per cent, a second round will be held 15 days later. But the decree makes no mention of the important question of dates for the legislative elections which are also due to be held.

⁵The CEI is charged with preparations for the election and, therefore, with identification and the enrolment of people on the electoral register, as well as the validation of this list. It is on the basis of the register, as validated by the CEI, that the government will enact a decree authorising the issue of the new national identity card to all those who are named on the list. The CEI, through its local offshoots, will ensure that voting cards are distributed to voters. The CNSI supervises identification and voter enrolment and the production and distribution of the new identity documents. The ONI is responsible for actually producing and issuing the new identity cards, with the support of Sagem Sécurité. Sagem is the technical operator appointed by the government to provide logistical support and the material assistance needed to actually make and publish identity cards and election documents. The INS, working with Sagem, ensures that people have been properly enrolled on the electoral register. Information on the respective roles of these bodies is available from the following websites: www.ceici.org, www.cnsi-ci.org, www.ins.ci, www.sagem-ds.com.

⁶Term used by several representatives of the international community that Crisis Group has met.

⁷In July 2008 the Ivorian finance ministry projected the cost of the election arrangements at CFA220 billion (€335 million). Besides the organisation of the elections, this allocation is supposed to finance civic service, the national programme for the reinsertion and rehabilitation (of former fighters) and emergency programmes. The Ivorian state is supposed to be responsible for CFA145 billion (€21 million) of this overall budget. The international community is supposed to finance the balance. The European Union is the main donor to the process, having committed itself to provide CFA16 billion (\$34 million).

⁸Crisis Group interviews, diplomats, Abidjan, January 2009.

⁹Crisis Group interview, diplomat, Abidjan, January 2009.

¹⁰“CEI, Ins, ... : un audit chaque semaine!”, *Nord-Sud Quotidien*, 23 January 2009.

¹¹Crisis Group interviews, diplomats, members of civil society, Abidjan, January 2009.

d'Ivoire's post-crisis arrangements should produce weekly expenditure reports, to give a clearer account of how they are using the resources allocated to them.

Moreover, delay and poor organisation have generated a tense atmosphere, that has damaged relations between these different structures. In late January the CNSI abandoned its official reserve to challenge the claims made by CEI chairman Robert Mambé Beugré, who had insisted that identification and registration could be completed by 28 February 2009. The CNSI pointed out that with only 3,395 of the planned 11,009 data collection centres in operation, this timetable was unrealistic. Two days later, the CEI hit back, arguing that the target date now being challenged had in fact been chosen "in a shared agreement between all the bodies involved in the operation".¹²

3. The technical challenges

Although pre-electoral arrangements have not been well managed, any potential damage has been partially offset by the public's enthusiastic participation in the identification process. In many different places, local residents have provided food and lodging for the personnel of the CEI and the other electoral registration bodies. In the Korhogo area, local citizens rented and then actually purchased power generators, so that election survey staff could use their computers in districts without electricity.¹³

The peaceful identification and enrolment of more than 6 million Ivoirians represents an encouraging step forward, an achievement of lasting value. But it is important to recognise how much more work still has to be accomplished. The selection of 29 November 2009 as the date of the first round of the presidential election remains, at this stage, no more than a plan. Under huge pressure, the CEI and other bodies responsible for election arrangements will have to improve the quality and efficiency of their work if they want to complete all the many preparatory steps for the election in just four months.¹⁴

Registration, the first of these steps, was finally completed on 30 June 2009, even if the original objective

was not met. The target date, published on 18 May in Ouagadougou, was six weeks later than the first date put forward by the CEI chairman on 3 April 2009.¹⁵ Following this completion of registration, and in order to hold to the various timetabling estimates made by representatives of the international community,¹⁶ the CEI will now have to manage several different tasks at the same time if the presidential election is to take place, avoiding any delay in the jobs yet to be carried out, and lowering some of its original targets.

The CEI has not reached the target it had announced several months ago of identifying 8.6 million persons. As the identification and registration of 2.5 million Ivoirians could not be completed in just a few weeks, the CEI has set itself the goal of enrolling several hundred thousand extra electors. Keen to see the elections held soon, the Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI – Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire)¹⁷ and the Rassemblement des Républicains (RDR – Republican Rally)¹⁸ agreed to halt registration at around 6.5 million voters.¹⁹ The Front populaire ivoirien (FPI – Ivorian Popular Front)²⁰ is also satisfied with a relatively short voters roll, fearing that a majority of those who are newly registered would come from regions where its electoral support is weak, such as the north or those southern areas with large numbers of immigrants.

In less than six weeks, between mid-May and the end of June, the CEI was supposed to register 400,000

¹⁵ Crisis Group interviews, diplomats, Abidjan, May 2009.

¹⁶ Crisis Group interviews, diplomats, Abidjan, May 2009.

¹⁷ Former single ruling party created by the founding father of the nation, Félix Houphouët-Boigny. The PDCI is currently allied with the RDR in the Rassemblement des houphouëtistes pour la démocratie et la paix (RHDP – Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace). This alliance, created in 2005 in opposition to President Gbagbo, also includes two other small opposition parties: the UDPCI (Union pour la démocratie et la paix en Côte d'Ivoire – Union for Peace and Democracy in Côte d'Ivoire), the party of the former president Robert Gueï, and the MFA (Mouvement des forces d'avenir – Movement of Forces of the Future).

¹⁸ Party created in 1994 by Alassane Ouattara in the wake of the political crisis that developed after the death of Félix Houphouët-Boigny and the split that this provoked in the PDCI. The RDR is generally regarded as the party that speaks for the interests of the inhabitants of northern Côte d'Ivoire.

¹⁹ "Ado: 'Il va falloir arrêter l'enrôlement...'", *Fraternité Matin*, 31 March 2009; Crisis Group interview, PDCI official, 8 May 2009.

²⁰ Party created in the 1980s by Laurent Gbagbo. Originally marxist and nationalist in outlook, this party was for many years the only opposition to the one-party system set up by Félix Houphouët-Boigny. The party is very well established in the south east of the country, its founder's home region.

¹² "La Cei répond à la Cnsi", *Fraternité Matin*, 26 January 2009.

¹³ Crisis Group interview, Korhogo administrator, Korhogo, January 2009.

¹⁴ These tasks are to: finish enrolment, process the data, publish the provisional version of the register, deal with disputes over this provisional roll, publish the definitive register, produce the voters' cards, distribute the cards, register candidates and stage the election campaign.

people. It was supposed to engage in a vast catching-up exercise, opening all the enrolment centres. Yet all these remained shut until the end of May.²¹ Some of the centres are in isolated areas.²² These operations should allow for the identification of 150,000-200,000 people. The CEI is also supposed to cater for Ivorians living abroad, who number 73,000 according to official figures. This operation began on 11 June, covering Ivorians resident in 23 foreign countries. Finally, the CEI had to complete the process of reconstituting citizenship rolls destroyed during the war – which should permit the enrolment of 150,000-200,000 people. This important stage of the identification process – which had been neglected for several months – was supposed to have been started at the same time as the mobile tribunal sessions, in September 2007. In fact, it did not begin until February 2009. Three months later, it is still difficult to confirm exactly how far it has advanced.²³

Up to now, the CEI and its satellites have carried out their tasks one at a time. They have proved unable to cope with two assignments at once or adapt their working procedures as they go along in response to the demands of the timetable. Thus, the computer processing of data – which was originally due to follow registration – should have been done at the same time, given the urgency of the situation. Yet data processing had still not begun at the end of June 2009, although data on more than 6 million people was already available. None of the 68 data processing offices had opened and no date for their opening had even been officially announced. Nor was there any detailed plan for bringing equipment to these centres – which are scattered all over the country. Some computer equipment was still in warehouses in Abidjan.²⁴

²¹ On 26 June 2009, the CEI and the prime minister issued a communiqué stating that the number of people enrolled by 22 June 2009 was 6.3 million.

²² Some 227 data collection centres that had not been able to open by 31 March were due to open in May 2009. On 22 May they were still shut. These centres opened in dribs and drabs during June, but the exact number now open is still not known.

²³ The judicial phase of the operation to reconstitute citizenship records was to have been completed by 20 May. This deadline was not met. In a communiqué issued on 26 June 2009, the CEI was still inviting “people covered by the process of reconstituting lost or destroyed civil identity records to contact their sous-préfecture [district administration] or municipality of birth to collect their written certificate, so that they can take part in electoral registration”.

²⁴ Crisis Group telephone interview, political official in the Ivorian opposition, May 2009.

This process of data collection, managed by Sagem and scheduled to last at least two and a half months, is supposed to bring together all the information gathered during the enrolment process. It has two main objectives: the identification and resolution of apparent duplications and inconsistencies, and cross-referencing with the “historical” files. Once the first task has been completed, Sagem is supposed to produce a list of duplicated or mistaken entries and present them to a joint commission of members of the CEI, the CNSI and observers from the ONI and the INS. At the end of June, this commission had still not been set up and no details of how it would operate had yet been agreed.²⁵

The cross-referencing of the provisional electoral register with so-called “historical” records is a delicate operation. This should make it possible to compare the data collected during the registration with the historical records of the state of Côte d'Ivoire, in order to verify the nationality of persons who are not listed on the 2000 electoral roll. But, as things now stand, there has been no consensus agreement on which historical records to use. All the political class has agreed on the use of the 2000 electoral register; but they have not agreed on the number or the status of the other records that should be used. The options include the records of the social security fund for workers and their families, records of naturalised citizens, records for holders of the green identity card, residence permit records, etc. The larger the range of records used, the greater will be the scope for disputes.

The progress of the planned distribution of identity and voting cards is also a cause for concern; this will be the final stage of the electoral process before the start of the campaign itself. These cards will be produced in France by Sagem, sent to Côte d'Ivoire and distributed to 6.5 million people. It is important to remember that one of the main problems in the enrolment process was that of reaching people living in the most isolated regions of the country. Without financial and logistical plans in place for distributing the cards, the same problems will reoccur and thousands of voters could be left without their cards. By the end of June, the CEI and Sagem had still not set out a detailed plan showing how the millions of cards would be distributed. By this stage, the Ivorian government owed Sagem \$90 million for its work in 2008 and \$60 million for the current year.²⁶ Unless this debt is settled soon, the progress of data processing, and the manufacture and distribution of identity and voting cards could be jeopardised.

²⁵ Crisis Group interview, diplomat, Abidjan, May 2009.

²⁶ Crisis Group interviews, UN officials, New York, June 2009.

B. POLITICAL GAMES

In retrospect, it is clear that it was unwise to link the identification process with the elections.²⁷ Plans to address questions of nationality, identity and citizenship alongside that of the government's legitimacy, in a single initiative, actually created a problem: political manoeuvres have complicated the pre-eminent challenge – identification.²⁸ Of the three big Ivorian political parties, the FPI is probably the one that has least interest in seeing the identification process rapidly completed. Because it is in power, the FPI is the group that has most to lose when a new head of state is elected; it is also advantaged by a more limited electoral register.

1. The Gbagbo camp

The strategy of the presidency has been, first of all, to interfere with financing arrangements for identification, in order to slow the process down.²⁹ It is the finance ministry that releases the bulk of the funding for the operations of the CEI on the orders of the president. "The presidency, which controls the finance ministry, has turned the financing tap on or off to suit its political interests of the moment. The tap has been open to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the level of the president's confidence in his chances of victory", commented one diplomat.³⁰ Deprived of new funding, the CEI and its associated bodies have repeatedly found themselves short of equipment, or unable to pay their staff, which has provoked strikes and halts in work.³¹

In slowing the process of identification, Laurent Gbagbo and his entourage have had several aims in mind. They hope to gain time until the electoral climate

is more favourable and to force other parties, who are keen for a vote to be held, to settle for an incomplete identification process. Their calculation is the following: their opponents, who control neither the public finances nor the mass media, risk losing momentum if the run-up to the campaign itself is wearing and drawn out. They have also sought to show their supporters, and other players, that Laurent Gbagbo remains master of the political scene, in control of the course of events.

Even so, there was some progress. Admittedly, this has been achieved slowly and sometimes chaotically; but there has been some undeniable forward movement. This is down to two factors. Firstly, President Gbagbo could not completely freeze the process, and he did not want to. He has probably not been aiming to overtly prevent elections taking place. Rather, he has sought to honour a bare minimum of the commitments made in Ouagadougou, over the longest possible time. Yet he wants to avoid being seen as the "gravedigger" of the process for ending the national crisis – an image that would have caused lasting damage to his standing in the eyes of the public.³² In mid-January 2009, Laurent Gbagbo finally allocated CFA4.6 billion to the CEI,³³ while insisting, several days later, that he intended to organise elections "in my own time" and that he would, if necessary, sign "20 supplementary Ouagadougou political agreements".³⁴

In tactical terms he has been constantly torn between his desire to move on to elections and his wish to remain in power. One possible option for him would be to halt the electoral process at the last moment, accusing Sagem of failing to do its job properly and complaining that the international community had not provided him with the financial resources to organise the vote. He could then decide to just stay in power.

Up to now, the FPI's electoral strategy has remained hard to read. It has sought to present itself as the vehicle for radical change, as incarnated by Laurent Gbagbo,³⁵

²⁷ Crisis Group interviews, diplomat, military commander, Abidjan and Bouaké, January 2009.

²⁸ The operation combines an identification process – to permit the issue of national identity cards to Ivorians who do not have them – with the census required for the preparation of a voters' roll, to be used in the forthcoming elections. The electoral registration process concerns Ivorians born before 1st April 1990, ie, those Ivorians that the electoral law regards as adult. The identification process is broader, covering all Ivorians aged 16 or more, because the law requires them to have national identity cards.

²⁹ Crisis Group interviews, diplomats, political party officials, a member of civil society, Abidjan and Bouaké, January 2009.

³⁰ Crisis Group interview, diplomat, Abidjan, January 2009.

³¹ "L'opération bloquée à Yamoussoukro", *Fraternité Matin*, 10-11 January 2009. "Identification à Bouaké, les agents de l'Ins bloquent l'entrée de la préfecture", *Fraternité Matin*, 17-18 January 2009.

³² Crisis Group interviews, diplomat, party official, Abidjan, January 2009.

³³ Prime ministerial statement, 15 January 2009.

³⁴ Broadcast of the President of the Republic's New Year speech, Radio-télévision ivoirienne (RTI), 21 January 2009.

³⁵ In a speech in Korhogo on 22 May 2009 Pascal Affi N'guéssan, the FPI's chairman, said: "We need a change in policy and Gbagbo came to change the country. Gbagbo went into politics and campaigned against Houphouët [Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the first president of Côte d'Ivoire from 1960 to 1993] until he became president, because he saw that there were too many problems in Côte d'Ivoire, that there were many people who are suffering because they don't have any money, while at the same time there were many others living in luxury".

while according favourable treatment to certain socio-professional groups.³⁶ The presidential party, whose main strength is in the south west and in Abidjan, has given few signs of how it hopes to broaden its electoral base. It has a much smaller network of local mayors and parliamentarians than its rivals.

However, Laurent Gbagbo does benefit from his control of the media, particularly state television, and he is better resourced financially.³⁷ The presidency has built up an huge electoral war-chest, thanks to money from the two strongest economic sectors, cocoa and oil.³⁸ But this does not mean that its two competitors are without resources of their own. The RDR can count on the financial support of the big northern businesses, as well as both the subscription payments of its well disciplined party activists and parliamentarians and the substantial personal wealth of its leader, Alassane Ouattara. The former single ruling party, the PDCI, can draw on the personal wealth of several of its leaders, and what remains of the financial base that it built up over four decades in power.³⁹

2. The Soro camp

The prime minister, Guillaume Soro, is not a candidate in the next election, but he has to successfully implement the agreement that he signed with President Gbagbo. His long-term political future depends on this. For that reason, he must prove his ability to honour his commitments and satisfy his future electoral base, which is in the north of the country. A successful election following the identification process would allow him to honour a promise made to this section of the electorate when he first launched the rebellion. If he manages to ensure the full implementation of the APO he would then be able to claim that he had made the right decision in opting to negotiate – and thus to rebut those in his movement who still favour the military option or the status quo.

But his room for manoeuvre is extremely limited. He has sought to position himself as the referee of the process and avoid being drawn into playing the game of either the presidential camp or the opposition. His legitimacy as prime minister is linked to this neutral-

ity and his lack of immediate presidential ambition. For these reasons he cannot risk intervening too directly in developments. He cannot afford to overtly confront the president and risk shattering the consensus established by the APO. So Guillaume Soro has been moving forward cautiously, for example, deciding, when it becomes absolutely necessary, to supervise spending by the technical bodies charged with the identification process, or by sending his close colleagues out to air his own views.

Looking further ahead, Guillaume Soro will have to lead the transformation of the FN, which will pose a number of problems. If he winds up his movement or if it breaks up and disappears, he will be left without a party and he will have to join one of the big three Ivorian political groups if he wants to maintain a presence on the national scene.

The other option available to him is to transform the FN into a political party. But his group is a military movement, which cannot easily adapt to peacetime conditions. It would have to break away from the armed wing of the FN and forge a new political structure on a national scale. It is far from clear that the FN would be able to convert itself into a political party that was anything more than a regional minority group. The political and social demands of the northern population are already articulated through the RDR and it would be difficult for the FN to attempt to compete against Alassane Ouattara's party on its own ground.

The challenge is all the greater because many local FN leaders have become unpopular with the people of the regions under their control. Having started the war by presenting themselves as the defenders of the interests of northern Ivorians, today they are viewed by a large slice of the population as mere opportunists, who in the name of a "just cause" have organised the daily racketeering of thousands of citizens for seven long years. Moreover, some members of the movement have committed abuses against civilians, for example by carrying out summary justice.

3. The players excluded from the APO – Ouattara and Bédié

Excluded from the APO, the two big opposition parties have continuously called for the early organisation of an election. The PDCI and the RDR believe that President Gbagbo's FPI can be defeated and that they are in a strong position. These two political parties have a more extensive and older national base than the FPI and a wider ethnic constituency. They also expect to benefit from the poor economic track record of Laurent Gbagbo's administration. However, they

³⁶In May 2009, print media companies were exempted from the industrial and commercial profits tax and property tax. Furthermore, these companies' tax and duty payment arrears, up to 31 December 2008, were annulled. In the same month, the Ivorian state settled CFA49 billion (\$107 million) in payment arrears to its suppliers.

³⁷Crisis Group interview, diplomat, Abidjan, January 2009.

³⁸Crisis Group interviews, diplomats, Abidjan, January 2009.

³⁹Crisis Group interview, diplomat, Abidjan, January 2009.

have little influence over the process leading to elections: although three groups will be competing in the election itself, the APO entrusts electoral organisation to just two players.

The PDCI launched its build-up to the campaign very early on, with a tour by its candidate, Henri Konan Bédié, who travelled widely around the country.⁴⁰ Up to now, the PDCI's main aim has been to mobilise its ethnic base, the Akan community, the country's largest ethnic group. Besides this demographic advantage, the former single party has a number of cards to play. It has the benefit of a wide and longstanding local presence covering the whole country, and it has the largest number of parliamentarians.

Henri Konan Bédié's pre-campaign has been aimed at mobilising the Akan to the maximum, keeping Akan abstention to the minimum.⁴¹ He has also sought to show that, although he is aged 75, as a candidate he still has the strength to address several election rallies in the same week. Bédié's age nevertheless remains a handicap: the former single party will struggle to win the votes of the young, urban electorate, which does not relate to a man in his seventies and which has no memory of the lost era of prosperity to which his speeches hark back.

The age of the former president also poses an internal problem. The PDCI leadership faces a behind-the-scenes – but no less real – challenge from the party's youngsters. An activist in his thirties humourously summarises this debate within the party: "We still have a good horse, but its rider is too old". These divisions benefit the FPI which for some months has been trying to "buy" PDCI members of parliament.⁴² This strategy aims to deprive the PDCI of key bases in a number of places and to stir up its internal divisions.

Victorious in the March 2001 municipal elections, well entrenched in the north of the country and in towns with a large immigrant population in the agricultural south west, the RDR is both an adversary and an ally of the PDCI. But this party also faces problems related to the identity of its candidate. Years of argument over the validity of the nationality of its leader, Alassane Ouattara, have left scars.⁴³ The fact that

he is now a presidential candidate has helped to counter questions over his origins; yet he is still perceived by a segment of the Ivorian population as a Sahelian candidate. Moreover, frequent foreign trips, to France in particular,⁴⁴ expose Ouattara to the risk of being accused of being the candidate of the outside world; in a country where anti-French feelings still run strongly, this could damage his campaign. Against this background, the RDR will have difficulty in extending its electoral base beyond those regions where it already dominates for sociological reasons.

During its pre-campaign, the RDR has sought to tackle this weakness. Unable to launch an immediate open campaign for votes in the heartland of the PDCI – which is its ally in the Rassemblement des houphouëtistes pour la démocratie et la paix (RHDP – Houphouëtist Rally for Democracy and Peace) – the RDR has tried to win votes from the FPI. As a candidate Ouattara staged his first rally in Yopougon, an Abidjan district that is an FPI fiefdom.⁴⁵ Ouattara also plans a second big meeting in the south-western cocoa belt, a region strongly associated with the FPI but with a large number of Ivorian residents of northern origin.

This strategy could pay some dividends in the big cities, and Abidjan in particular, where ethnic boundaries are less distinct than in rural areas and where some young people feel they were neglected during the Gbagbo administration's years in power. But it is likely to prove much less successful in the countryside and in the small towns of southern and central Côte d'Ivoire, where Alassane Ouattara is still seen as a regionalist or foreign candidate.

The alliance between the PDCI and the RDR is fragile. It unites two men who were locked in violent confrontation in the mid-1990s and who have never really forgiven each other.⁴⁶ The two parties have been pushed into allying with each other in the RHDP more through their shared opposition to President Gbagbo than in the name of a common political and ideological programme. The RHDP has not agreed on a common manifesto for government and nor has it managed to agree on a single candidate. In a potential second round run-off against Laurent Gbagbo, the transfer of votes from RDR to PDCI or vice versa is far from assured. Alassane Ouattara's voters will see Henri Konan Bédié as the man who for several years stopped their

⁴⁰ During the early months of 2009 Bédié addressed election meetings in Dabou, Abidjan and Soubré, and in Sud Comoé, Moyen-Comoé, Bas-Sassandra and Zanzan.

⁴¹ Crisis Group interview, PDCI official, Abidjan, May 2009.

⁴² Crisis Group interviews, diplomats, Ivorian politicians, Abidjan, May 2009.

⁴³ Crisis Group telephone interview, RDR official, Ouagadougou, May 2009.

⁴⁴ The RDR president was received by France's President Nicolas Sarkozy in November 2007 and in February 2009.

⁴⁵ On Saturday 9 May 2009, the RDR attracted a crowd of several tens of thousands in Place Ficgayo in Yopougon, a poor district of Abidjan.

⁴⁶ Crisis Group interview, diplomat, Abidjan, May 2009.

candidate from participating in national political life. PDCI electors will hesitate to cast their ballots in favour of a “non-Ivorian”.

III. DISARMAMENT YET TO BE COMPLETED

The demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration into civilian life of former combatants are probably the most delicate stages of the peace process now underway, and thus a cause for considerable worry. Even estimates of the number of weapons and fighters still at large are hard to come by. And this is not solely down to flaws in the design and management of the reinsertion process. It also reflects a more fundamental problem: the loss of momentum in disarmament and reinsertion shows that confidence has not yet been restored between the protagonists – who, at heart, remain unwilling to reveal the military resources still at their disposal.

A. THE TECHNICAL CHALLENGES

The APO addresses disarmament and the fundamental reform of the national army only in vague terms. Without setting down an exact timetable or a target budget, the agreement envisaged that ex-fighters would be directed to three outlets: reintegration into the national security forces, reintegration into civilian working life or participation in a “national civic service”. But so far little progress has been made.

The National Programme for Reintegration and Community Rehabilitation (PNRRC), which was supposed to offer demobilised fighters employment in local development projects, broke down and has yet to be relaunched. According to figures from the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (ONUCI), 7,704 ex-rebels have opted for reintegration; new civilian roles have now been found for 675.⁴⁷ But in real concrete terms the initiative has turned out to be an inadequate response to the impatience and uncertainty felt by the majority of soldiers in the Forces Nouvelles Armées (FAN).

Moreover, financing for the programme has fallen short of expectations.⁴⁸

According to the terms of the APO, the “national civic service” was supposed to “receive young people who had become familiar with the use of arms for warfare, to provide a framework for training them for future civil or military employment”. Short of funds, the programme was launched on a tentative basis in May 2008 with training for 250 young people; then it was halted and officially postponed to 2009. At the end of June 2009 there was still no tangible sign of the national civic service starting operations in a meaningful way.

The fourth Ouagadougou complementary agreement envisages that from now on each combatant will receive a once and for all settlement of CFA500,000 (\$995). But at present the budget for this project remains unavailable. The terms of “Ouaga IV” state that the financing of this process “should come solely from the Ivorian people”. Even so, the FN hopes that the international community will help cover the cost of demobilisation allowances for its fighters.⁴⁹

Yet in private, some FN officials believe that the scheme raises too many questions:⁵⁰ What should be done with those who don't accept the CFA500,000 settlement? How far up the ranks will such a payment be deemed adequate compensation? Will junior officers agree to be paid the same amount of cash as ordinary soldiers? More broadly, the concept of a “once and for all” settlement may well be resented by a majority of soldiers – who will feel that they were used, when needed, and are now being cast aside.⁵¹ Moreover, the announcement of the settlement figure could easily produce a rise in the number of people entering the demobilisation process.

Finally, a new national army will probably not be created until the elections are over. The plan is that 5,000 former rebels will be integrated into a reformed army, over a two-year period and after passing a competitive entry procedure; the 5,000 is equivalent to only 15 per

⁴⁷The FN gives different figures: according to a military source in the movement, 11,000 former rebels have opted for the reintegration programme and 1,000 have actually found a job thanks to the scheme. Crisis Group interview, FN military official, Bouaké, January 2009.

⁴⁸The PNRCC programme has received only \$10 million from the Ivorian government, out of the \$32.5 million expected in 2008. “Nineteenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire”, January 2009.

⁴⁹To cover the costs of the operation, a senior FN official would like donor countries to set up a financing structure that is not channelled through the Ivorian state. Crisis Group interview, Bouaké, January 2009.

⁵⁰Crisis Group interviews, civilian FN officials and a civil society representative, Korhogo, January 2009.

⁵¹Crisis Group interview, civil society official, Bouaké, January 2009.

cent of the FN's claimed strength, but about 50 per cent of its real operational manpower.⁵²

The APO and its complementary agreements have produced several successful integration schemes, bringing together units from the two former rival camps. The deployment of soldiers from the Forces de défense et de sécurité (Defence and Security Forces – FDS) and elements of the FAFN on Côte d'Ivoire's frontier with Guinea on 7 January 2009, following Dadis Camara's putsch in Conakry,⁵³ was a success.⁵⁴ But such joint operations have so far been limited to small units.

The deployment of 8,000 men under the authority of the Integrated Command Centre (Centre de commandement intégré – CCI), launched on 5 May 2009, should use 4,000 FDS troops and 4,000 men from the FAFN; the aim is to provide security for the elections process. These units of police and gendarmes should, in theory, be evenly distributed between the former FN-controlled northern areas and regions that have remained under government control.

Yet from the outset, plans for their deployment were confronted by the realities of the situation. The FN does not have enough trained troops to provide the 4,000 men required for the joint force. The FN would be able to provide only 2,500 men in total to join the combined units.⁵⁵ The former rebel movement was supposed to provide 100 men on 5 May 2009, the first day of the force's deployment, but it only managed to provide about 40. Even 20 days after its launch, the force consisted of only 100 men, if that.

The most capable of the FN troops are among the 5,000 who are due to be integrated into the reformed army. Some 3,000 other soldiers make up the close protection force for the "com'zones", who have no interest in allowing them to leave. On the FN side, that

leaves several thousand fighters, who are too young, or badly trained, or physically unfit.⁵⁶

Finally, the financing of the joint force remains a problem. The cost of forming the joint police/gendarmerie units is projected at CFA40 billion (\$87 million), which is supposed to be paid out of state coffers.⁵⁷ This budget has still not been released. So the establishment of the full 8,000-man force – for which there is no set timetable – could take several months.

The true state of the demobilisation and disarmament of the pro-government militias is very difficult to gauge, given the absence of reliable figures. According to the UN, 20,000 members of self-defence groups are waiting to be demobilised. But this task is seriously delayed: the APO stipulated that the dismantling of the militias should begin two weeks after the formation of the government. The demobilisation of the pro-Gbagbo militias was halted in 2008 before it had produced convincing results; the process resumed on 31 January 2009, in line with the fourth auxiliary Ouaga agreement.⁵⁸ Since this date, no data on the rate of progress has been released.

If, as they often insist, the APO's signatories really wish to press forward, they should quickly make public the current scale of their military resources and the condition of their troops. They should publicly hand over their weapons and rule out the option of a return to violence as an element of their political strategy. This obligation of transparency also applies to the local authorities, in particular the "com'zones" who at present continue to preserve their military strength.

B. THE POLITICAL AND SECURITY STAKES

Disarmament is one of the great paradoxes of the route out of crisis. For the APO is based on a balance of forces between the presidential camp and that of Guillaume Soro. The disarmament of the FN is simultaneously a necessity and a risk. The disappearance of the FN's military structure could destroy the current balance of power. So disarmament has to be carried out at the same time by both camps, one step at a time. However, so far the handover and destruction of military weaponry has been limited to a few symbolic

⁵²The FN claims to have about 35,000 men. But diplomats and international military officials that Crisis Group has met believe that only about 10,000 are combat-ready soldiers. The others are too young, too old, badly trained or lacking sufficient physical fitness to be described as "combatants".

⁵³Following the 22 December 2008 announcement of President Lansana Conté's death, a military junta led by Captain Moussa Dadis Camara took power in Guinea.

⁵⁴Crisis Group interview, French military official, Abidjan, January 2009.

⁵⁵Crisis Group interviews, diplomat international military officials, Abidjan, May 2009.

⁵⁶Crisis Group interview, international military official, Abidjan, May 2009.

⁵⁷"Gare à vous!", *Fraternité Matin*, 9 and 10 May 2009.

⁵⁸"Le démantèlement des milices reprend lundi", Xinhua, 31 January 2009.

operations to impress the media following the signature of the APO.⁵⁹

More than two years later, thousands of weapons are still at large.⁶⁰ That demonstrates a worrying lack of confidence between the two signatories of the APO, who do not seem fully convinced that the road out of crisis will take a peaceful and democratic course. For both camps, violence remains an option. Weapons could serve as a defence against an attack by the other side or they could be used offensively, to “correct” the result of an election if the poll fails to produce the desired outcome.

But in the immediate future, the main risk of conflict is not between the two signatories of the APO but between elements of the former rebellion. The FN is riven by numerous internal divisions. A disagreement between FN leaders could produce serious new clashes, of the kind that broke out in 2008 in the towns of Vavoua and Séguéla.⁶¹ Furthermore, there are also tensions between officers and the ordinary soldiery. “At any moment, the troops may call to account their commanders – a leadership that, everyone knows, accumulated considerable wealth during the war”, one diplomat pointed out.⁶² And by continuing to seem like obstacles to the route out of crisis, the FN’s military leaders also risk being challenged by the population of the northern areas, who are tired after seven years of conflict.

The “com’zones” are in no hurry to lay down their arms. It is through force that they have maintained their power and they are determined to hang on to their

personal guard units. They are taking advantage of an ambiguity in the terms of “Ouaga IV”: this auxiliary agreement envisages that ex-combatants will be regrouped, for basic training, in “the Bouaké, Korhogo, Séguéla and Man military bases, under the command of the Forces Nouvelles general staff, supported by the Impartial Forces”. It seems that, under the pretext of the regrouping process, some “com’zones” are taking advantage of these terms to keep intact local forces that are personally loyal to them, which they built up during the years of war.

Some members of the international community are also worried about both the militias in the “wider west” and the various “patriotic” groups. The former are poorly controlled and little known; the area bordering Liberia and Guinea is still highly unstable.⁶³ Meanwhile, in Abidjan, while the Jeunes Patriotes (Young Patriots) have been keeping a low profile, they have certainly not disappeared from the scene. They represent a force that is currently dormant but is difficult to control at times of unrest.

The APO’s two signatories are still continuing to bring weapons into the country, in a “systematic violation” of the embargo.⁶⁴ The UN has revealed few details about the quantity and quality of this matériel, which is brought in across the highly porous frontiers with Liberia and Guinea; it stresses that on a number of occasions Ivorian military commanders have refused UN experts access to certain locations. This could concern cases imports of equipment to replace weapons now considered obsolete; this would be a case of smuggling in “quality” rather than “quantity”.⁶⁵ Weapons from southern Africa also still seem to be coming in, through Abidjan port.⁶⁶ The UN does not seem to have the resources to force a halt to this trafficking; nor does it seem to have the official authority to carry out an in-depth investigation.

For some months, the presidential camp has been seeking military support from Angola. In March 2009, the Angolan defence minister, Kundi Paihama, paid an official visit to Côte d’Ivoire.⁶⁷ At the end of his stay,

⁵⁹ Crisis Group Report, *Ensuring Credible Elections*, op. cit.

⁶⁰ Crisis Group interviews, military official from the international community, diplomats, civil society leaders, Abidjan, Bouaké, January 2009.

⁶¹ On Saturday 28 June 2008, soldiers close to the FN’s military commander, Zacharia Koné, who had been dismissed in May of that year because of an “act of indiscipline”, mutinied in the centre-west of Côte d’Ivoire, but surrendered a few hours later. This action, described by an FN official as a “combat situation”, started in Vavoua and then spread to the town of Séguéla. The assailants attacked their own general staff headquarters. Their motives remain unclear. Sidiki Konaté, the FN minister of crafts and tourism, said this was a case of a “command problem”. The official casualty toll of the double attack was four deaths. “Côte d’Ivoire: attaque d’ex-rebelles contre leur commandement”, Agence France-Presse, 28 June 2008. Some months later, on Monday 24 November 2008, unidentified armed individuals tried to take control of the munitions store of the FAFN command headquarters for Séguéla; they released a number of prisoners. The official toll from this attack was nine dead.

⁶² Crisis Group interview, diplomat, Bouaké, January 2009.

⁶³ Published in January 2009, the UN Secretary-General’s 19th report on the Ivorian crisis noted that: “between 1,500 and 2,000 Liberian ex-combatants were still present at the border with Liberia and needed to be closely monitored”.

⁶⁴ “Rapport du groupe d’experts sur la Côte d’Ivoire adressé au président du Conseil de sécurité de l’ONU”, 8 April 2009.

⁶⁵ Crisis Group interview, international military commander, Abidjan, May 2009.

⁶⁶ Crisis Group interview, diplomat, Abidjan, May 2009.

⁶⁷ “L’Angola veut ‘un accord de partenariat technico-militaire’ avec la Côte d’Ivoire”, *Fraternité Matin*, 13 March 2009.

the two countries agreed that they would soon sign a defence agreement and appoint experts to look at how it might work. Besides this promise of a military agreement, there have been frequent trips to Luanda by Bertin Kadet, the defence adviser to the president and also his nephew.⁶⁸

IV. ONE COUNTRY AND TWO ADMINISTRATIONS

Established by the APO as the number one priority, the “redeployment of the administration across the whole of the nation’s territory” is a task that has only been partly achieved. This element of the peace process is important for reasons that are both symbolic and practical. The division of the country into two zones and the FN’s establishment of a parallel administrative structure was the most graphic and widely reported symbol of the years of war. During the process of identification and voter registration, Côte d’Ivoire was an unusual kind of state, a sort of regional anomaly, whose population lived with two fiscal regimes, two armies and two police forces. Neither mutual confidence between the two parties to the Ivorian conflict nor the people’s confidence in their rulers will be restored without difficulty, as long as this division – so symbolic of the war – persists. On 26 May 2009, at a ceremony staged in Bouaké, the “com’zones” handed over administrative power to government administrators. This ceremony marked an important stage in the reunification of the country; yet it did not provide a clear response to the question of what powers each of the players really wields.

A. THE FN’S DOMAIN

1. Rule by the “com’zones”

The northern region controlled by the FN is divided into 10 zones. Each zone is administered by a “com’zone”, who acts as a military governor. He is responsible both for security in his region and administrative tasks, notably the collection of the taxes that fill the

FN’s coffers. Men answerable to him collect taxes on road travellers and customs dues on goods that cross the borders of the northern region. Local branches of the FN financial structures operate under his authority. The “com’zones” retain part of the fiscal revenues they have collected for themselves and their troops. Moreover, they control the flow of goods through the northern region.

It is on the basis of this dual power, military and financial, that the “com’zones” have built their current position. Weapons and money have allowed them to transform their areas into what amount to quasi-autonomous mini-kingdoms. The assessment of one source was that, in total, they share annual revenues of CFA30 billion (\$65 million).⁶⁹

After three abortive attempts to arrange a transfer of power – in January, then March and finally May – the “com’zones” finally handed their administrative powers over to the prefects on 26 May. But it is worth asking what this decision really means and how it translates into the reality on the ground. Indeed, most of the “com’zones” were not actually present in Bouaké for the ceremony marking the handover of responsibilities. They were represented by just one of their number, Martin Kouakou Fofié. The absence of those who were principally affected by the transfer may suggest that the change was imposed upon the “com’zones” without their consent and that some are in no hurry to see the prefects reestablished with full powers in their individual zones.

But the “com’zones” do not all feel the same way about surrendering their old positions. Some are more flexible than others. Issiaka Ouattara, alias Wattao, the FN’s deputy chief of staff, is loyal to Guillaume Soro; having served as the de facto “com’zones” for the Séguéla region since the removal of Zacharia Koné, he is ready to give up his position. This is also the case for Martin Kouakou Fofié – who is under pressure from UN sanctions – and for Morou Ouattara, Wattao’s cousin, who controls the Bouna region. But the other zone commanders will probably prove more reluctant to hand over their responsibilities. Chérif Ousmane, commander of Bouaké’s zone 3, feels that he has been charged with settling the problem of identity and citizenship – and he is not prepared to give up his prerogatives until the identification process has been completed and elections have been held. A number of “com’zones” are aiming to emerge from the crisis with their local base intact and in a position that will

⁶⁸ Crisis Group interview, diplomat, Abidjan, May 2009. Links between those in power in Abidjan and Luanda are not new. There is a longstanding friendship between the older generations in the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) and in the FPI, rooted in a common Marxist past. Indeed, in February 2006 Angola’s ambassador in Côte d’Ivoire, Carlos Belli Bello, declared that his country had the capacity to “squash the rebellion in 24 hours” if President Gbagbo made an official request for it to do so.

⁶⁹ “Au paradis des gradés et des com’zones”, *La Lettre du continent*, 23 April 2009.

allow it to develop while they reap the benefits.⁷⁰ The Forces Nouvelles have yet to develop a way of tackling these issues.

Nor has the transfer of administrative responsibility to the prefects addressed the question of disarming the "com'zones". The latter are still in charge of security in the zones that they control and they still lead personal militias. The joint forces deployed in northern areas are not large enough to constitute a credible alternative. Finally, a question mark hangs over the time and the resources available to the prefects as they seek to recover and then exercise the authority now vested in them. Many are starting from scratch. In January 2009, the only work resources available to the prefect in Bouna were a telephone and a pen. In his office, there was no secretary and no computer, nor even a typewriter.⁷¹

2. What does Soro's power amount to?

Prime Minister Guillaume Soro is poorly placed to impose his will on the powerful "com'zones". While remaining firmly in charge of his own camp, he does not want to be held responsible for the eventual failure of that part of the post-crisis process for which he is directly answerable.⁷² For some months he has been holding talks with the dissident elements of his movement's military wing.⁷³ However, he has struggled to win them over and progress has only been made very slowly. By signing the APO and becoming prime minister, Guillaume Soro lost the capacity to impose his will through violence or physical threats. Furthermore, he has to satisfy conflicting demands, while trying to maintain the cohesion of his movement.

The situation is further complicated because, besides the 10 "com'zones", the prime minister's entourage includes dozens of sector commanders and autonomous warlords, who do not always obey the orders of their nominal superiors. And the recalcitrant members of the FN are not the only obstacle to the reestablishment of the administration. The population, which has got into the habit of no longer paying certain taxes, sometimes

passively resists the restoration of state revenue collection.⁷⁴

Guillaume Soro also has to cope with dissent among some members of his political team. In mid-April, after a meeting in Bouaké, the general delegates of the former rebel movement called on the prime minister to resign, as a protest against the slow pace of preparations for the election and the president's "manoeuvres". Their appeal was rejected out of hand by the prime minister's spokesman. But it did expose the rifts that have developed between the premier and his close entourage, who favour compromise, and some middle-ranking FN officials, who see no reason to relent from the fight they have been pursuing for the past seven years.

Besides the question of the redeployment of the administration envisaged under the APO, Guillaume Soro's movement faces a wider political challenge, that of maintaining the cohesion of a movement that is in fact disunited and fractured until the post-crisis transition has been completed. It is becoming very difficult to maintain a meaningful FN political structure while the military facet of the movement is being wound up.⁷⁵ The FN's cohesion is important in both political and security terms. Guillaume Soro and his inner circle – the movement's political face – are engaged in a high-risk balancing act as they seek to maintain pressure on the "com'zones" and the movement's military chiefs. The terms of the APO oblige them to facilitate the return of the national administration to the north; but they also have to ensure that the internal debate within the FN does not degenerate into armed combat.

B. BAD GOVERNANCE IN ABIDJAN

In the regions of Côte d'Ivoire administered by the official government, the state machine functions in a chaotic manner, aggravating an already fragile economic situation. The manner in which the Ivorian state is currently organised works against any efforts at effective management. The presidency concerns itself only with politics and preparations for the election and it neglects the economy and social issues. The personnel in the prime minister's office are young, inexperienced and notoriously inefficient.⁷⁶ "When Soro is away,

⁷⁰ Crisis Group interview, diplomat, Bouaké, January 2009.

⁷¹ Crisis Group interview, local administrator, Korhogo, January 2009.

⁷² Crisis Group interviews, diplomat and civil society leaders, Abidjan, Bouaké, January 2009.

⁷³ "Les 10 jours qui vont tout changer", *Nord-Sud Quotidien*, 26 January 2009.

⁷⁴ "Le fisc peine à reprendre pied dans le Nord ex-rebelle", Agence France-Presse, 6 March 2009.

⁷⁵ Crisis Group interview, civil society representative, Bouaké, January 2009.

⁷⁶ Crisis Group interviews, diplomat, political and military leaders, members of civil society, Abidjan and Bouaké, January 2009.

there is no prime minister's office," was the blunt comment of one diplomat, expressing a view that is generally shared among those members of the international community that Crisis Group has met.⁷⁷

Guillaume Soro was motivated by two aims in choosing the members of his team. On the one hand, he insisted on surrounding himself with trusted and obedient colleagues who represented no threat to his own security. Ever since he was the target of an assassination attempt on 29 June 2007, Guillaume Soro has feared for his life. On the other hand, the prime minister does also have a long-term political strategy and the composition of his office team reflects this: he is in the process of building his own "political clan" who, he hopes, will support his developing career. So he has selected a youthful team of aides, who he hopes will feel obligated towards him in the years to come.⁷⁸

In their work, members of the government seek to favour the interests of their political parties rather than the good of the nation. The agriculture minister, Amadou Gon Coulibaly, recently criticised this dysfunctional situation by citing a specific example: his ministry has established an "emergency rice plan" to counter the impact of rises in the price of this basic essential. To support a bid for foreign donor cash for this action plan, he needed a formal statement from the secretary general of the government, confirming that the cabinet had in fact given its consent to the initiative. Without this document, he has no hope of securing the foreign aid; yet he has been waiting for the document for six months.⁷⁹

The poor functioning of the state machine has consequences that go beyond the – extremely slow – implementation of the APO. It also compounds the negative impact on Côte d'Ivoire of the global economic crisis. According to the Ministry of Planning and Development, the proportion of people living below the poverty line in the country has risen from 49 per cent in 2002 to 62.45 per cent in 2008.⁸⁰ Important sectors, notably cocoa, are in difficulty. The cocoa plantations are too old and they were not adequately maintained during the crisis years, so their production has fallen.

In October 2008, output was down by 35 per cent compared with the preceding year.⁸¹

Understandably, the current economic crisis engenders frustration and resentment at all levels of society, and not only among the least well off. Over recent months Côte d'Ivoire has seen protest campaigns by hitherto privileged social groups – such as doctors, lawyers and even mayors – who do not normally express their grievances in this way.⁸²

V. RISING TO THE CHALLENGE, ENDING THE CRISIS

A. STICKING TO THE ELECTORAL TIMETABLE

If the target election date of 29 November 2009 is to be met, the bodies responsible for organising the vote will have to dramatically improve and adapt their working methods to cope with the requirements of a demanding timetable. With the knowledge that more than six million Ivoirians have already been registered to vote, the CEI and Sagem should start processing all their data without delay. So that this work can begin, it is essential to open the 68 data processing centres and ensure that they are fully equipped, in technical terms, as soon as possible.

Before this work can start, a detailed plan for the distribution of voting cards has to be worked out and published. The plan needs to state the date and the locations concerned and set out a clear list of resources and costs. The distribution of voters' cards needs to be preceded by a public information campaign to tell members of the public exactly where they will have to go to collect their cards. Moreover, the Ivorian government should settle its dispute with Sagem as quickly as possible and start to pay part of the \$90 million which it owes to the company for the work carried out in 2008.

For the moment, the most important task for ONUCI is to work with the Ivorian integrated military command to oversee the security arrangements for the election campaign and the vote itself. This task will re-

⁷⁷ Crisis Group interview, diplomat, Abidjan, January 2009.

⁷⁸ Crisis Group interview, civil society leader, Bouaké, January 2009.

⁷⁹ "Suspension de salaire – La liste des 11 ministres concernés", *Fraternité Matin*, 11 March 2009.

⁸⁰ These figures were released at a seminar held on 6 January 2009 in Grand-Bassam.

⁸¹ "Ivory Coast's cocoa industry faces a bleak future", *Financial Times*, 15 janvier 2009.

⁸² "Les avocats ivoiriens arrêtent leur grève", *Les Afriques*, 6 December 2008; "Les mairies en grève pour réclamer le reversement de recettes", Agence France-Presse, 16 December 2009; and "La grève des médecins largement suivie", Xinhua, 19 February 2009.

quire the participation of the majority of United Nations forces deployed in Côte d'Ivoire, who number about 7,450 in total. The ONUCI contingent's task in ensuring election security will be rendered more difficult by the departure of part of Licorne.⁸³ Officially, the French are only present to provide support to ONUCI troops; moreover, the commanders of Operation Licorne stress the back-up nature of their role.⁸⁴ But, informally, a number of soldiers point to the military superiority of the French and question the likely effectiveness of the UN soldiers if serious unrest arises.

Some members of the Ivorian opposition are worried about the impending departure of the French troops;⁸⁵ they do not understand why France, present in the country since the start of the Ivorian conflict, is opting to withdraw "at the last moment". They, too, fear that the UN's troops will not be up to the task. Licorne's withdrawal is primarily motivated by financial considerations: it was costing about €150 million a year to sustain the force, when it was 1,900 strong. This military disengagement is accompanied by an official desire to normalise political relations between Paris and Abidjan. France wants to move away from a link that is special and distinct to a position in which it will be one among other members of the international community. At present, France is having difficulty putting this new talk into practice, because it is still hostage to its past – five decades of close human, political and economic relations with Abidjan, with thousands of French citizens living permanently on Ivorian soil. Nevertheless, the transformation of this relationship has now begun.

B. ACCELERATING DISARMAMENT

Any durable exit from crisis will require the disarmament of the Ivorian factions. For the moment, the main players in the crisis are choosing to remain vague about this. Côte d'Ivoire has yet to see the return of confidence between the two signatories of an agreement whose equilibrium is based on a balance of mili-

tary strength. So it will be very difficult to secure complete disarmament during the six months to come. Still, the two protagonists do need to start on the partial and simultaneous run down of their respective arsenals – and to prove this is happening by, for example, organising public ceremonies for the destruction of military equipment. Such gestures of goodwill will have the effect of reinforcing the climate of confidence established through the APO and creating a more stable electoral environment, by reassuring the public and those political groups that are not armed.

There is still scope to make serious progress towards the integration of the two armed forces and the demobilisation of fighters before the election. For the moment, this process is still in its early stages, but it is already producing some important results. The integration of FDS and FAFN into common police and gendarmerie forces should be accelerated. Laurent Gbagbo and Guillaume Soro should put their personal credibility on the line here and assume their responsibility for ensuring the success of this process. The reconstitution of the national army, integrating 5,000 former rebels, should begin as soon as possible. The programmes to integrate demobilised fighters into civil and professional life should be relaunched on a serious basis.

The joint police and gendarmerie units should be deployed in the northern regions while the "com'zones" should step aside and their personal militias should be dismantled. To achieve this, the Burkinabé mediators and the prime minister should embark on direct negotiations with each "com'zone" to work out acceptable – and lasting – arrangements for their departure and the disbandment of their forces. They could be promoted to posts in the security forces or in government in Abidjan. In return for disarmament of the "com'zones", the presidential camp should provide tangible proof that its own militias are being disarmed and it should facilitate the deployment of some FN troops into its own area of influence – under the aegis of the joint forces, of course.

From now on ONUCI could start strengthening its arrangements for monitoring the arms embargo. In particular, this would mean assigning one or more arms experts to ONUCI's embargo unit.⁸⁶ ONUCI should also strengthen its surveillance of the Guinean and Liberian borders and Abidjan port, the routes through which arms come into Côte d'Ivoire.

⁸³ On 28 January 2009, the French Prime Minister François Fillon announced the withdrawal of 1,100 of the almost 2,000 French troops based in Côte d'Ivoire. At the beginning of June 2009, Licorne's commander, General Philippe Houbron, said that French troop numbers had been halved, to leave a 900-strong force.

⁸⁴ Crisis Group interviews, French military commanders, Abidjan, 12 January 2009.

⁸⁵ Crisis Group interviews, political leaders, FN military official, members of civil society, Abidjan, Bouaké, January 2009.

⁸⁶ Request submitted in "Rapport du groupe d'experts", *op. cit.*

C. IMPROVING THE ADMINISTRATION

In the northern regions, prefects need to be rapidly equipped with the practical material they need in order to do their work properly. Local mayors also need to take up their full responsibilities once again and regain access to all the communal tax revenues to which they are entitled. Customs and police units will initially be deployed in several symbolic locations, starting with the two frontier posts situated in the far north of the country. For almost seven years, the frontier posts on the borders with Burkina Faso and Mali have been run by FN troops, who do not require travellers to obtain a visa to enter the country. The reestablishment of normal frontier controls at these two key land border crossings would have great symbolic impact, signalling the restoration of a single national administration from one end of the country to the other.

The prime minister should fully assume his designated role as “conductor of the orchestra”, by recruiting a team fully capable of coordinating all the various operations that have to be carried out in the run-up to elections. His current office team needs a fundamental shake-up; he needs to choose more experienced and competent staff. In January, Guillaume Soro set up arrangements to monitor the finances of the government’s technical departments. He could use this as a model for a small unit tasked with improving the coordination of the operations that still have to be carried out.

D. BURKINA FASO, THE FINAL ARBITRATOR

By excluding the principal players in the international community from settlement of the Ivorian conflict, the APO has left Burkina Faso to referee the process of recovery from crisis and spur it on. The success of Burkinabé mediation remains important for both Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso, whose political and economic destiny is linked to that of its neighbour. Success in this mediation and in restoring peace to Côte d'Ivoire is equally crucial for the stability of other neighbouring states. Like Burkina Faso, Mali is a poor Sahelian state, economically dependent on Côte d'Ivoire. Meanwhile, Guinea and Liberia are politically unstable and would be directly threatened by any resumption of the Ivorian conflict. President Compaoré has so far managed to referee the process fairly, notably by sponsoring the signature of four auxiliary agreements that have facilitated successive relaunches of the post-crisis process. However, he has not applied pressure with sufficient force to accelerate the process.

The departure of Foreign Minister Djibril Bassolé in September 2008 left a void in the organisation of

Burkinabé mediation.⁸⁷ Burkina’s president should reinforce the facilitation team and should fill the gap left by Bassolé’s departure as quickly as possible. The new minister, Alain Yoda, is inexperienced in diplomacy⁸⁸ and seems to be taking a much less active role than his predecessor in the management of the Ivorian dossier. The weight of mediation work now falls entirely on the president himself and his special representative in Abidjan, Boureima Badini. Although he is very active, President Compaoré cannot devote all his time to the Ivorian portfolio. And Boureima Badini appears short of resources, particularly personnel, to cope with the massive task entrusted to him. He is supported by a team of political advisers and a secretariat that seems too small to cope with the workload.

Burkina Faso, the mediator, has longstanding relations with the former rebellion. It is best placed to put pressure on FN military commanders to stand aside. Blaise Compaoré does have the means to coerce some elements of the former rebel movement. Several FN commanders have made substantial investments in Ouagadougou, a city which they are in the habit of visiting frequently. A freeze on their assets and a clampdown on trips to and from Burkinabé territory could make a big impact in winning them round. The mediation team also needs to start a direct dialogue with Laurent Gbagbo to ensure that FPI militias and the Jeunes Patriotes (Young Patriots) networks in Abidjan are dismantled; these constitute a dangerous threat to the prospects for a peaceful electoral process.

VI. CONCLUSION

There is no denying the APO’s success in forging a peaceful climate over the past two years. But it is equally undeniable that, up to now, the implementation of this political agreement has been poorly organised. The delay that has now built up in implementing all its important themes threatens the very survival of

⁸⁷ Djibril Bassolé had a comprehensive knowledge of the Ivorian dossier and the protagonists. He had followed the conflict from its outbreak in September 2002 and as internal security minister – a post he held from November 2000 to June 2007 – had “managed” the awkward question of rebel presence on Burkinabé territory. He subsequently played an active role in negotiating the APO. His military and diplomatic experience – he holds the rank of colonel – earned him the respect and attention of numerous key Ivorian players, particularly in the army. Crisis Group interview, diplomat, Abidjan, January 2009.

⁸⁸ Alain Yoda had previously held a string of ministerial portfolios – transport and tourism, commerce and crafts, and then health.

the agreement. Time is short if the implementation of the APO is to be relaunched, avoiding a slide back into open conflict. For today Côte d'Ivoire finds itself caught between war and peace, a worrying position where the outlook is uncertain.

The prospects for a happy outcome now depend heavily on the honesty of the protagonists in the Ivorian crisis and their realisation of the dangerous nature of the current situation. For these reasons, they should urgently change their behaviour and no longer prolong the current status quo. They should stop resorting to false promises and speaking with forked tongues to obfuscate their position. The months ahead are crucial for Côte d'Ivoire. During this period, the preparatory work essential for the holding of an election must absolutely be completed.

Dakar/Nairobi/Brussels, 2 July 2009

APPENDIX A

MAP OF COTE D'IVOIRE

