Liberia Must Inform ECOWAS on the Ivorian Crisis

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"To know the present we must look into the past and to know the future we must look into the past and present"

> - A.M. Babu, former Zanzibar foreign minister and Tanzania economic planning minister

"Those who cannot imagine Death should take a cue from Sleep"

> - Akan Proverb, Ghana

1. INTRODUCTION

The military mutiny of 19 September in la Cote d'Ivoire that rapidly snowballed into a full blown war has caused enormous concern in many quarters and generated unending debate concerning exit strategies. The conflict, if not contained sooner rather than later, could pose serious threats to regional and international security.

Internationally, the potential consequences are twofold: the future of French engagement in Africa on the one hand and food and energy security on the other. Already the world markets are facing uncertain cocoa supply trends because of the turmoil in the world's largest exporter. Given the turbulence in the Middle East Africa, and to a large extent, the West African sub-region is becoming an alternative source of energy, and consequently, the strategic zone for the next battle for oil. Oil giants from the US and other Western countries are already busy prospecting and mining oil from Angola, the Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire and the Mano River Basin. Closer to home, the war in the second most powerful economy in the sub-region is already sending ripples across its borders into Mali and Burkina Faso through lost earnings, harassment and forced return of thousands of their nationals. Ghana, Senegal and Nigeria are bracing for a flood of refugees. The imminent collapse of a promising economy apart, prolonged hostilities in la Cote d'Ivoire would reproduce a great Lakes Region scenario with ethnic based massacres a la Rwanda and possible subsequent multiple invasions of the country by threatened neighbours, such as Burkina Faso, in a throw-back to the situation in the DRC.

This is a compelling reason for decisive intervention in the conflict by the Economic Community of West African States. ECOWAS is no stranger to interventions in the sub-region, having been actively involved in the conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau. As in those cases, ECOWAS is currently grappling with diplomatic trade-offs and logistics as it prepares itself for intervention in the Ivorian conflict. About 2,400 troops will be deployed initially to replace French troops in the buffer zone between the warring factions, following the shaky cease-fire brokered on 17 October.

It is hoped that ECOWAS has learnt the lessons of its involvement in Liberia, Guinea Bissau and Sierra Leone. This contribution provides a capsule analysis of the lessons from the Liberian conflict of the 1990s and it argues that if ECOWAS is to be successful in its proposed mission in Cote d'Ivoire, then it must go back and critically examine the lessons from its earlier interventions which, not only raised serious debates and a plethora of issues, but also provide a unique history in regional intervention globally. For the first time, a regional body intervened in an 'internal' crisis (Liberia) before its action being belatedly sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council. As will be examined briefly later, such a move risked undermining the legitimacy of the entire exercise, but it also led to a rethinking process about intervention, specifically in conditions of near state collapse.

In what follow, we intend to provide, first, a brief history of the origins of the Liberian conflict in specific relations to the crucial issues that were at stake, including the questions of citizenship, wanton insecurity and brutal character of Samuel Doe's presidency (1980-1990), which provided the trigger for the outbreak of the civil war in December 1989. Second, we discuss the outbreak of the war with specific reference to the composition and character of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), the response of the Doe regime as well as the responses of religious groups under the aegis of the Inter-Faith Mediation Committee ((IFMC) and civil society forces. In the third part of this contribution, we critically assess the international and regional responses to the conflict. As the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is the focus of this paper, we do a more detailed analysis of strategic issues that must be addressed in order for such interventions to become successful. In the final section, we outline the key lessons that could inform ECOWAS intervention in la Cote d'Ivoire.

I.   HISTORY

a.   Internal Administration – Citizenship

Since Liberia became independent on 26 July 1847, her history has been plagued by a multiplicity of issues related to nation building. She needed to build a nation in which all were citizens and equal before the law. However, up until 1904, indigenous Liberians could neither vote nor be elected into office with the exception of a few educated ones. Up to the 1970s, Liberia's Constitution and electoral laws disenfranchised women and those who did not own property.   Citizenship, one of the factors that are believed to be responsible for the current crisis in Cote d'Ivoire has, therefore, also been a contentious issue in neighbouring Liberia where, for more than a century, the issue manifested itself in the form of a political struggle between the Americo-Liberians and the vast majority of indigenous people. Closely linked with this is the problem of how to incorporate traditional or indigenous institutions of rule into the modern state that emerged during the first half of the 19th century. What became the Liberian state was not a marriage of the 'modern' and 'traditional' institutions of governance; the former predominated, leading to a long period of tensions within the society manifested by rebellions, wars of resistance and pacification.

b.   Insecurity and the Fight-back

The unresolved citizenship question meant that the vast majority of the Liberian people suffered from a great deal of insecurity in their own country, a situation not dissimilar to those of Guinea Bissau, a former Portuguese colony, the ex-British colony of Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire today. The majority were denied access to basic education, health care, broader political participation and access to justice. Moreover, they were subjected to various forms of repression by successive Liberian governments.

From the 1870s onwards, Liberia became a virtual one-party state under the True Whig Party (TWP). Opposition was silenced and often driven underground but by the 1970s, radical intellectuals of the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA) led by Togba-Nah Tipoteh, Amos Sawyer, Dew Tuan-Wleh Mayson, H. Boima Fahnbulleh,Jr., Nya Kwiawon Taryor and others began to challenge the existing state of things in the country in a more systematic manner. MOJA's mass educational work was instrumental in galvanising the Liberian people to challenge irresponsible governance and impunity. Workers, students and the peasantry openly challenged the order of things; even a sizeable section of the Liberian middle class covertly and overtly supported the movement for change in the country. This undermined the legitimacy of the Liberian state and clearly laid the groundwork for the coup of 12 April 1980. Unfortunately, as will be shown later, far from addressing the fundamental ills of the society, the mission of the military coup of 1980 was to destroy the movement for social change and thus, create the grounds for the civil war of the 1990s.

c.   The Samuel Doe Years a Trigger

When Master Sergeant Samuel Doe, an innocuous junior army officer and an indigenous Liberian, seized power in 1980, most people thought a new era of harmony and inclusiveness had dawned in Liberia but such thinking was flawed. Besides lacking any vision for national development, Doe failed to address the immediate butter and bread issues that had helped catapult him to power. Instead, his administration was marred by a high degree of insecurity and brutality. Immediately after seizing the reigns of power, he executed thirteen officials of the Government of President William Tolbert, Jr, Soon after, he carried out internal purges in the military, executed his deputy, Gen. Thomas Weh-Syen and four other members of the deposed TWP, drove leading members of the opposition into exile and threatened to kill student leaders. Friction with his Commanding General of the Armed Forces of Liberia, Gen. Thomas G. Quiwonkpa, was translated into a conflict between his (Doe's) Krahn ethnic group and Quiwonkpa's Gio and Mano people, the latter becoming the victims of new purges. By targeting leading Americo-Liberian figures of the True Whig Party, the Gio and Mano ethnic groups, Doe became the sworn enemy of a large section of the Liberian people. From a conflict between the vast majority of indigenous Liberians and the minority Americo-Liberians up to the 1970s therefore, Samuel Doe had transformed the conflict into a struggle not only against Americo-Liberian domination, but also an intra-indigenous war of attrition. Also, just like other West African countries, Liberia was home to people from different West African states. There were Sierra Leoneans, Guineans, Ivorians, Malians, Ghanaians and Nigerians. This situation has implications for Cote d'Ivoire today.

Lesson for la Cote d'Ivoire

In the Ivorian situation, the xenophobic concept that was introduced by the Konan Bedie administration in the mid-1990s had the effect of disenfranchising and marginalising Ivorians from the 'Muslim' north by tacitly equating 'Ivorianness' to the predominantly 'Christian' Akan south. It must be

stressed, however, that the vast majority of Ivorians are neither Christians nor Muslims. Also, In terms of settler presence la Cote d'Ivoire mirrors Liberia on a much larger scale as its migrant communities are far larger and consequently, the concept of l'Ivoirité has posed direr consequences for non-Ivorians. The table below indicates the magnitude of the migrant presence in la Cote d'Ivoire.

Table One : West African Migrants in la Cote d'Ivoire

No.	Country	Migrants
1.	Mali	3 million
2.	Burkina Faso	2 million
3.	Ghana	1 million
4.	Nigeria	2 million
5.	Guinea	1 miilion
6.	Niger	1.5 million
7.	Liberia	Thousands of refugees
8.	Sierra Leone	A few hundred

This, together the threat of genocide, makes it imperative that the false concept of l'Ivoirité is debunked as a key precondition for resolving the Ivorian crisis. The net effect of all the things that happened in Liberia from 1822 (when the settlement of Liberia was established) onwards produced one of Africa's bloodiest civil wars, the effects of which are still being felt throughout West Africa. A similar war in Cote d'Ivoire will produce severer repercussions for the sub-region, given the country's strategic importance. Any serious war will certainly see the military intervention of Burkina Faso and Mali to protect their citizens who are income generators for millions back home. A partition of Cote d 'Ivore by Burkina Faso similar to Rwanda's annexation of eastern Congo for four years cannot be ruled out. If systematic human and economic right violations are to be avoided the conflict should be nipped in the bud now before it degenerates into a veritable regional war.

II.   **WAR BREAKS OUT**

a.   Composition and Character of NPFL – Local and Regional Forces
       (Soldiers of Fortune)
When the civil war broke out in Liberia, many Liberians thought that Samuel Doe's army would be a pushover and would fall within a few months or even days. His forces, Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), were partly Isreali trained and they held on to the presidential palace (The Executive Mansion) for years, despite the military pressure from the rebels. In the event, the war lasted seven years and triggered coups and civil wars in Sierra Leone, the Gambia and Guinea-Conakry. Even today, Liberia cannot be characterised as a post-conflict society given the fact that the war in the north of the country between Charles Taylor's troops and the combatants of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) continues to cause concern (LURD gets its arms from Guinea according to the UN Panel of experts on Liberia).

Most significantly, when the war broke out in December 1989, West African leaders were concerned for a number of reasons. As was widely argued, most rulers in the region were either military men who had usurped power through force or were civilian autocratic regimes. In East Africa, civilians under Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Movement/Army fighting from the Luwerigo Triangle (with Rwandese and few Kenyans) had fought and defeated the Ugandan armed forces in 1986. The West African leaders did not want the Museveni Factor replicated in the sub-region whereby Charles Taylor's armed civilian guerrillas - the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) – would take up arms against a military leader. The ECOWAS leaders had received intelligence reports indicating that Taylor's NPFL comprised West African nationals from Sierra Leone, Gambia, Cote d'Ivoire and elsewhere whose mission was to overrun Liberia and then spread the war virus to other West African states. It was therefore a multi-national force that required a multi-national response in order to nip it in the bud.

Table Two
Key West African Leaders in 1989

Country	Military	Civilian
Benin		Nicephore Soglo
Burkina Faso	Blaise Campaore	
Coted'Ivoire		F. Houphouet-Boigny
Gambia		Dawda Jawara
Ghana	Jerry Rawlings	
Guinea Bissau	Nino Veira	
Guinea	Lansana Conte	
Nigeria	Ibrahim Babaginda	
Mali	Moussa Touare	
Liberia	Samuel Doe	
Senegal		Abdou Diouf
Sierra Leone	Joseph Momoh	
Togo	Gnassingbe Eyadema	

The NPFL-instigated civil war in Liberia represented the first serious militarisation of politics in West Africa. It also marked the beginning of the phenomenon whereby militants captured resource enclaves to facilitate the exploitation and barter of natural resources for weapons, otherwise known as the conflict/blood diamonds business. Linked to the Blood Diamonds phenomenon has been the creation, purchase and reproduction of mercenary fighters who have become ready canon fodder for wars in the sub-region. The aim of these soldiers of fortune is not to liberate but to loot and live lavish life-styles after they have perpetrated systematic human and economic right violations. Significantly, by the time the fighting had reached the outskirts of Monrovia in 1990, the NPFL had already splintered into two, with the emergence of Prince Johnson's breakaway Independent National Patriotic Force of Liberia (INPFL). As the war prolonged, more factions emerged making the peace process even more complex and difficult.

Table 3

Rebel Factions in Liberia 1990-1996

No.   Rebel Moverment   Leader

1. National Patroitic Front of Liberia (NPFL)   Charles Ghankay Taylor
2. Independent National Patroic Front of Liberia   Prince Yormie Johnson
3. United Liberation Movement   Ulimo-K   Alhaji G.V. Kromah
4. United Liberian Movement   Ulimo J   D. Roosevelt Johnson
5. Liberia Peace Council (LPC)   Dr. George E. Saigbe Boiley
6. Lofa Defence Force   Francois Massaquoi

From the beginning of the war, it was clear to some Liberians that the NPFL was not up to any good in Liberia. This notwithstanding, many prominent Liberians supported Taylor's movement in the early months of 1990. Taylor's character and his quest for wealth coupled with his love for flamboyance meant that he was only interested in getting rid of Doe to begin from where the latter had had left off.

With hindsight, the Taylor-led rebellion in Liberia should have been dealt with in a more comprehensive way (by way of aggressive intervention combined with vigorous political and economic reforms to prevent the recurrence of the war) in Liberia and elsewhere. As it stands, the ordinary people of West Africa continue to bear the brunt of the impact of this experience.
Comparisons with la Cote d'Ivoire

On all the indicators discussed above, Liberia would pale into insignificance compared with la Cote d'Ivoire should the conflict gather steam there. La Cote d'Ivoire, by West African standards, is fabulously endowed resource-wise. If the rebellion gets entrenched in the cocoa/coffee/timber regions of the south, natural resources alone can keep the conflict going for a decade. As in Liberia, politically-marginalised intellectuals in the Ivory Coast are jumping unto the bandwagon of the rebellion, that clearly lacks any vision for transforming the country beyond asking for the resignation of the government. Not to be undone, veteran mercenaries from the Mano River and Great Lakes Region conflicts have been making their way to the rebels' stronghold in the north, while professional soldiers of fortune from South Africa and France have been swelling the ranks of loyal troops. Both sides are using the diplomatic skirmishes in Lome as a period for replenishing their armories. The scene is thus set for a long drawn battle. More worryingly, rebel groups in the northern town of Korhogo and elsewhere appear to have been marginalized in Lome peace talks. This is the precursor to the emergence of splinter armed groups in the country, a development that would further complicate negotiations and the war, as well as cause even greater humanitarian problems.

A cocktail for fractionalisation, internal squabbles and impunity is being brewed and it is the defenceless women, children, the elderly and foreigners who would soon be tasting it.

b.		Impunity and Civil Society Reaction

As soon as the news of the war broke out, Samuel Doe devised draconian measures aimed at putting down the rebellion. The troops that he sent out to crush the rebels turned instead on local residents, who they attacked and whose property was looted. Innocent civilians were killed in Nimba County and homes were burnt. This forced many people from that region, which borders Cote d'Ivoire, to join the ranks of the NPFL. In its turn, the NPFL abducted young people into their ranks, including hundreds of child combatants who became partly the feature of the NPFL tactics. They murdered scores of innocent people, mainly from the pro-Doe Mandingo and Krahn ethnic groups. As in the Ivorian conflict, ethnicity became a dominant factor in the prosecution of war. Not only were ethnic groups linked to faction leaders become legitimate targets for rights abuse, but they also served as the recruiting pools for the warlords.

The Inter-Faith Mediation Committee and Other Interest Groups

On its part, religious groups in the country, through the Inter-Faith Mediation Committee (IFMC) comprising Christian and Muslim leaders, tried to mediate the conflict. The first group of meetings convened in Sierra Leone among Liberians were held under the auspices of the IFMC. The refusal of the NPFL to negotiate a peaceful settlement to the war, however, rendered their efforts meaningless. However, this effort eventually led to a chain of events culminating in the sub-regional (ECOWAS) mediation efforts in Banjul, the Gambia (See Below). The Banjul meeting gave birth to the establishment of an interim government – the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) - and the launching of the ECOWAS intervention force for Liberia, the Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). Thus, a tangible outcome of the IFMC initiative was the introduction of dialogue between factions in the Liberian conflict. Another, more important contribution was the cross-religious makeup of the Committee, which ensured that religious animosity did not become an inflammatory factor in the conflict.

The Political Trade-Offs in Banjul

The need to resolve the conflict under terms and conditions acceptable to the belligerent forces generated interest among exiled politicians, interest groups and other civic groups. This led to the 1990 Banjul meeting at which IGNU was formed. The Banjul meeting was convened with the blessings of ECOWAS with Nigeria playing a dominant role. Nigeria was resented by the NPFL, which held the strong view that Nigeria supported the Doe regime. The other problem with Banjul was the choice of Amos Sawyer, an active opponent of the Doe dictatorship and head of the Constitutional Commission of 1985 as the Chairman of IGNU and as a consequence, the effective interim president of Liberia. Having previously agreed in Freetown, Sierra Leone, that Taylor should form a government, the latter was enraged by the fact that the very people who had urged him to do so had converged in Banjul to stop him

from being President. He felt emotionally aggrieved and maybe for good reasons.

The trade-offs in Banjul need to be looked at in terms of the existing climate at the time in Liberia. There was clearly a stalemate in Monrovia. Neither Taylor nor Doe wielded absolute control over the country. Anarchy and carnage had ensued, and both society and state structures had virtually collapsed. The real victims were the ordinary people, some of whom were West African nationals. Doe was still alive and was recognised as President of the country having, like President Laurent Gbagbo of Cote d'Ivoire, won controversial election in 1985. In the Liberian elections, the real winner was Jackson Doe, who was subsequently murdered (In la Cote d'Ivoire the main opposition leader, Alassane Ouattara, who stood to gain most from the elections in 2000, was barred on the grounds of citizenship). For the sake of peace, the Banjul trade-off was based on the principle that neither Doe nor Taylor should lead the country. This meant that Doe would step down and Taylor would not be allowed to assume the presidency because of his role in the war. Taylor would not accept this formula because his prime motive was to become President of Liberia. In order to enforce the imposed solution and contain the conflict, ECOMOG intervened and stayed in Liberia for six years.

III.   INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

Alongside ECOWAS, the United Nations (UN), the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the United States (US) responded in various ways to the conflict in Liberia.

a.   The Lukewarm Attitude of the United States and United Nations

At the beginning of the Liberian war, the US sent in troops to assess the situation and help Doe put down the NPFL invasion but with pressure from Congress, the US role shifted from direct intervention to that of evacuating their citizens and providing humanitarian assistance and support to the ECOWAS peace efforts in various ways. In Cote d'Ivoire, the French, US, British and Germans airlifted their citizens and other Europeans out partly through the Accra International airport in Ghana, while India sought the support of the Ghanaian government to evacuate thousands of Indian business persons. As to the Liberian people, they were in effect told by the State Department that the matter was purely internal and so they should seek an internal solution. As one Liberian academic put it, if the war had occurred at the height of the Cold War, there is no way that the US administration would have allowed Libyan-trained and backed rebels to march into Liberia to topple a regime which had been heavily supported by the United States for nearly a decade. Some analysts also observed that US preoccupation with the Gulf War at the time had also greatly downgraded Liberia on the US strategic interests scale.

The lukewarm attitude of the US administration had an impact on the way in which the UN treated the Liberian conflict. It took the world body an entire

year to issue any meaningful statement on the Liberian conflict. Even when it did, the engagement was limited to commending ECOWAS for intervening in the conflict. Later during the course of the war and peace process, the UN became more actively involved, playing second fiddle to ECOWAS. However, from the beginning of the peace process, the UN sent an Observer to every meeting on Liberia. The Secretary-General appointed Trevor Gordon-Somers as his Special Representative for Liberia and in 1993 by Resolution 866, the UN established the first ever joint UN/Regional peacekeeping operation in its history with ECOWAS and set up its Mission (UNOMIL) for Liberia.

So far, however, the United Nations has been more active in the Ivorian crisis, and has sent in senior diplomats led by ambassador Amedou Ould Abdallah; special representive of the UN secretary general to the Ivorian peace talks. Ambassador Abdallah had predicted in October 1999 that a military coup would take place in Abidjan unless then President Konan Bedie stopped the negative politics of *'l'Ivoirite'*. He persuaded OAU secretary general Salim Ahmed Salim to discuss the situation with Ivorian authorities, but they did not act.

b.   The Hesitation of the Organisation of African Unity

The OAU's involvement in the Liberian conflict was initially limited to sending delegates hampered by its adherence to the letter and spirit of the anachronistic non-interference and territorial integrity clauses. It limited its involvement to attending ECOWAS meetings through efforts of Ms. Adwoa Coleman of the Conflict Management Centre. Later, however, it beacame bolder and was instrumental, with the help of Colonel Khahidda Otafiire of Uganda, in getting Tanzania and Uganda to send troops to Liberia under the auspices of the UN. The OAU also accredited former President Canaan Banana of Zimbabwe and former Zambian leader Kenneth Kaunda as special envoys of the secretary-general to the peace talks.

Now that the OAU has transformed itself into the African Union (AU), with apparently a greater mandate to deal with 'internal' crises of member-states, its resolve will be tested to the breaking limit by the current situation in Cote d'Ivoire. Its Interim President is Amara Essy who by coincidence is Ivorian, a devout Muslim and a former president of the United Nations General Assembly. How the AU reacts to this will tell us a lot about its future role in African affairs. So far its role in the current Ivorian crisis remains unclear, except for the attendance of Thabo Mbeki, current Chair of the AU in the Accra, Abidjan meetings on Cote d'Ivoire, where he insisted that reforms must take place within the body politics of the country.

c.   The Economic Community of West African States Steps In

Originally set up for economic integration in 1975 in Lagos, ECOMOG was forced to adopt a security role in the West African sub-region in the face of the Liberian crisis in 1990. Though prompted by many factors, not least ulterior motives of regional 'powers' such as Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, the sub-regional organisation had to come to terms with the realisation that

economic integration was impossible in the face of wars and generalised violence. Since Liberia, ECOWAS has intervened in Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau and in 2000, it established a Division on conflict management mechanisms under the directorship of the respected Malian General Cheikh Oumar Diarra.

Legitimacy

One of the issues raised by the ECOWAS intervention had to do with legitimacy. More specifically, it had to do with Liberian territorial integrity and sovereignty. For those who narrowly interpret UN Chapters 2/4 and 2/7, ECOWAS violated the territorial integrity of Liberia. For activists of peace, such narrow interpretation did not reflect the existing situation in Liberia. There was neither a territory nor a sovereignty to violate. The country had been carved up by competing warring factions and the human security of the ordinary people was left to the mercy of armed factions. Further, the war involved West African nationals, either as innocent victims or active participants in the ranks of the factions. There were scores of Burkinabe, Sierra Leonean and Ivorian combatants in the NPFL; others, from Guinea and elsewhere, shored up other factions. In this light, all talk about legality and legitimacy of the ECOWAS intervention was purely legalistic and showed no appreciation of the plight of the people, which called for a decisive intervention to halt the human right violations.

Strategic Issues

Strategy is about relating means to an end. Therefore, a strategic understanding of the ECOWAS intervention should be based on three key issues: politics, power (including military), and economics.

1.   Politics

At the time of its intervention in 1990, ECOWAS was a divided house occasioned by historical and strategic factors. Nigeria's Gen. Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida (IBB), who had seized power in 1985 from disciplinarian General Mohammed Buhari, was very close to President Samuel Doe, the beleaguered Liberian leader. Buhari had overthrown the civilian government of president Shehu Shagari on 31 December 1983. Babaginda led the dominant political and economic power in the region. This meant, on the one hand, that without its active participation, the ECOMOG intervention would lack any muscle. On the other hand, Nigeria's role from day one was suspect as it had set stall to assist a friend in need (Doe) to cling on to power and also prevent Taylor's cancer of civilian-led armed rebellion spreading eastwards. However, with the capture and assassination of Doe at the ECOMOG headquarters by Prince Johnson of the INPFL at the onset of the intervention, a key source of suspicion about Nigerian motives dropped from the equation.

Guinea and Sierra Leone had strong interests in the war in their Mano River Union. The flow of refugees across Liberian borders had worsened the

security and humanitarian environment in these neighbouring states; it had also become clear from the battlefields that their citizens were actively involved in the war on the sides of the factions.

Family ties through marriage, economic and strategic considerations had contrived to make Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire under Presidents Blaise Campaore and Felix Houphouet-Boigny respectively to hitch their carts to Charles Taylor's NPFL war machine. Not only did they covertly supply combatants for Charles Taylor, but their territories also served as transit routes for the resource-for-guns trade in support of the NPFL war efforts. Timber, diamonds and other natural resources from taylor-controlled territory in the war zone transited through the Ivorian ports for export while weapons from Libya reached NPFL forces via Ouagadougou and Abidjan. The reasons for Nigeria's reluctance to contribute troops to the ECOMOC effort in Cote d'Ivoire can be partly found in the support provided to Charles Taylor by Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso, which partly led to the death of thousands of Nigerians in Liberia and Sierra Leone, particularly following the invasion of Freetown in December/January 1999 by the Taylor-backed Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone. The military cemetery at Cantonments in Lagos bears concrete testimony to this.

These interests, and the historical Francophone/Anglophone divide that pitched Nigeria against Cote d'Ivoire and which rendered ECOWAS a community of blocs based on official language meant that from the onset, the ECOMOG adventure in Liberia was blighted by a lack of political cohesion and solidarity.

2.   Power and Military

Of the five countries that initially contributed troops, only Nigeria and Ghana had better experience of peacekeeping. Nigeria accounted for 75% of the ECOMOG force. The sub-region lacked any regional intervention experience and it was not prepared for the task it took upon itself. Before Liberia, Nigeria's real involvement in recent military intervention elsewhere had only occurred in the OAU-sanctioned intervention fiasco in Chad in the 1980s. Ghana's experience did not go beyond UN's traditional peacekeeping role (distinct from peace enforcement), particularly in Lebanon. Thus, though the protocols on ECOWAS security called for the establishment of a regional force, this was not done until the war in Liberia had broken out. ECOMOG was organised and deployed for enforcement by circumstances on the ground.

A major problem that ECOMOG faced was the lack of clear command and control structures. This was made worse by the fact that different units from different countries were answerable to their home countries and not the central command. In addition, the troops were trained under different military doctrines and this determined the attitude of the various units within ECOMOG. The lack of one clearly understood language also complicated interpretation and implementation of orders on the ground. Further, the lack of resources and equipment meant that apart from what Nigeria could provide

for the mission, ECOMOG had to rely upon non-African powers to supply them with equipment. Nigeria contributed most of the troops and after Ghana's General Arnold Quainoo's post was unceremoniously abolished following the capture and assassination of Samuel Doe before the startled eyes of ECOMOG forces, all Field Commanders were appointed from Nigeria. Quainoo, a Ghanaian general had first served in peacekeeping in the 1960s in Lumumba's Congo and was a friend and confidant of the then Nigerian leader, Ibrahim Babangida, as both trained together in India. This gave the impression that ECOMOG was a Nigerian force. This in some ways undermined the image of the force in the eyes of Francophone states, such as Cote d'Ivoire.

Another set of problems that besaddled the intervention related to the multiple roles enforced on the Group's operations on the ground. First, it was obliged to demonstrate a more aggressive posture towards Taylor's NPFL, which was the most organised and formidable force among the factions. The troops engaged in running battles with the factions and lost no less than one thousand troops in the process. This threatened the neutrality and open-handedness of the force. Second, lacking a civilian police component, ECOMOG soldiers had to switch between enforcement, peacekeeping and law and order duties at the same time, thus stretching the force's limited resources, morale and discipline. The force dabbled in local politics by supplying arms and supporting different factions in the war. It engaged in looting, summary executions, rape and prostitution. This spread diseases, increased insecurity and heightened tensions between the peacekeepers and locals. Many of the troops left behind so-called 'Eco-Babies'; the acronym ECOMOG was cynically interpreted by locals to read 'Every Commodity and Movable Object Gone'.

The difficulties notwithstanding, ECOMOG set a useful precedent in regional security practice and the experience it acquired learning on its feet in Liberia and Sierra Leone would be invaluable in a sub-region suffused with violence. Cote d'Ivoire would demonstrate whether the lessons from the past have been learnt and whether the Group has matured as a credible regional intervention entity.

3.   Economics

ECOWAS by itself could not underwrite the cost of the peacekeeping exercise, as it became evident that the body could not raise the full amount required under the Special Emergency Fund (SEF) established for the peace process. It was forced to rely heavily on Nigeria for the bulk of resources required, with the United States and UN also chipping in with modest contributions to the exercise. It is estimated that Nigeria spent at least US$1 million a day on the Liberian intervention, grossing approximately US$1/4 billion over the period of intervention. The amounts so raised from different sources still fell well short of projections. For countries whose economies were on the decline the Liberian intervention became an added burden. None of the contributing states had budgeted for the intervention and maintaining their troops abroad soon became a major headache. This impinged upon their

national security in the broader sense of the concept. Diverting much needed national resources to peacekeeping undermined their own tenuous hold on power at home and left governments vulnerable. Shorn of adequate resources, the Group was forced to embark on what some experts have dubbed 'lean' peace keeping.

This time round, however, ECOWAS seems to have specific donors to support the peace support operations in Cote d'Ivoire. According to General Cheick Oumar Diarra, Deputy Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, the size of the force earmarked for Cote d'Ivoire has been cut from the proposed 2,000 to 1,500, the bulk of them coming from Senegal, and also Togo, Benin, Niger and Ghana. France, Britain and the United States have pledged to fund the operation, with additional support   from Germany, Canada and the Netherlands. It is hoped that this will not lead to a 'lean' peacekeeping force this time. Given the size of la Cote d'Ivoire and the way in which the situation is developing in that country, debatable whether the above number of troops is adequate to keep any peace let alone enforce it.

IV.   LESSONS: ACT WHILE THERE IS TIME, AND ON ALL FRONTS

There exist clear parallels between Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire in terms of historical and mundane factors that triggered the crises as well as the internal and external reactions to them. Consequently, lessons from the attempts at conflict resolution in Liberia can inform the Ivorian crisis management methodology, even if only to avoid the obvious pitfalls that await stakeholders and policy makers.

As in the case of Liberia before the Doe coup, Cote d'Ivoire was held up as an oasis of calm in a turbulent sub-region until the death of President Houphouet Boigny in 1993 and the crisis of governance that confronted his successor, Konan Bedie, in the mid-1990s. The coup on Christmas eve 1999 only served to emphasise the myth of stability. For, beneath the façade of stability, the fabric of the society was being gnawed away by institutional graft and corruption. The military had next to no experience in war fighting beyond playing second fiddle to the French military presence as the latter extended a security umbrella over the political ruling class, crushing all signs of dissent from ordinary workers and peasants. Any attempt at political dissent was ruthlessly dealt with before it blossomed. The intellectual class, especially from the southern Akan enclaves, was living in the comfort zone. Peasants from the north and migrant workers from neighbouring states toiled in plantations to keep cocoa and coffee revenues flowing in; the French and Lebanese controlled the economy from the retail sector to the light manufacturing industries. The crunch came in the late 1980s with, on the one hand, the collapse of communism and the subsequent French downgrading of her engagement in Africa and, on the other, the growing assertiveness of ordinary people for open democratic space in Africa. In between, the economy had begun a free fall, spurred on by diversion of foreign loans and widespread protests by farmers, students and workers.

In summoning chauvinistic southern intellectuals to reconceptualise Ivorian citizenship and putting forward the concept of *Ivoirité* in the mid-1990s, President Konan Bedie was targeting two birds with one stone: First, to eliminate Alassane Ouattara, a former prime minister now labelled alien and the most formidable opponent to his tenuous rule in the then upcoming elections. Second, he sought to divert attention of the disillusioned and irate population from the misrule of his Parti democratique de la Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI) by offering them a new enemy – foreigners and northerners.

This is where to locate the genesis of the 1999 coup and the current rebellion. This understanding should inform the policies and actions of both the internal and external forces that are grappling with the conflict.

1.   To the Internal Stakeholders: No to Xenophobia, No to the Rebellion

In la Cote d'Ivoire, where religion is being forcibly pushed up the conflict agenda alongside ethnic hatred, the leaders of the diverse faiths have much to learn from the IFMC experience in Liberia. Also, this is the time for civil society groups, women's organisations and youth groups to stand up and be counted by categorically rejecting misplaced nationalism and resisting chauvinism. Together, these forces can generate a national momentum for peace whose force will become irresistible to the war-mongers and their sympathisers.

It is crucial that the Ivorian civil society and conscientious intellectuals begin the search for solutions by advancing two key slogans: No to Xenophobia and No to the Rebellion. This is the platform from which to initiate further efforts to resolve the conflict: Negotiations to end the rebellion, expulsion of mercenaries, the establishment of a genuine interim government of national unity, resolving the underlying causes of the conflict, constitutional reform followed by fresh free and fair elections. It is the Ivorian society that can set the agenda for comprehensive reform to eliminate the causes of the current crisis. These include the elimination of the development and citizenship gap that exists between the north, middle belt and the south; the prevention of marginalisation based on ethnicity or sex, constitutional reform for meaningful decentralisation, citizenship rights and a level playing field for all office-seekers and the electorate.

In these efforts, the religious groups from all confessions, traditional rulers from the north and south as well as women's groups, human rights bodies, the student movement and workers should take a leaf from the example of Liberia's IFMC (see above). Peace that is imposed from the outside without the population willing it, will only be tenuous at best – Sierra Leone and Afghanistan testify to this. This is the time for the Ivorian civil society to launch a peace movement that will set the agenda not only for the warring factions, but also forces from the outside working to resolve the crisis.

2.   To External Agents for Peace: The Principles of Diplomatic and Military Intervention

ECOWAS deserves praise for the timely manner in which they have set about getting to grips with the Ivorian crisis. For Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the new Executive Secretary for ECOWAS, Cote d'Ivoire represents his first major diplomatic test and so far he appears to be on top of the task. There are three levels of approach open to ECOWAS in dealing with the Ivorian crisis, each level being informed by the wealth of experience gathered from previous conflict interventions, some of which have been dealt with above. These are at the diplomatic level, military level and the nature and forms of collaboration and assistance to be sought from outside the region.

a. At the Diplomatic Level

i. The Warring Factions

First, it must be made clear at the stalled peace talks in Lome that the parties to the conflict are not equal before all existing relevant international legal instruments – the UN Charter, AU instruments and ECOWAS Protocols. One, Laurent Gbago's FPI remains the legitimate government of Cote d'Ivoire for now; the other, the mutineers represented by MPCI is seeking to usurp power by unconstitutional means and should not be allowed to achieve this goal as this will greatly undermine the democratisation process in the sub-region. Disarmament of MPCI and all other non-state/sub-state military formations should be a minimum demand for moving the process forward.

Second, it must be spelt out to the FPI Government that xenophobia cannot be allowed as a state policy in West Africa and the Government must take immediate practical steps beyond rhetoric to halt extra-judicial persecution of sections of the population and foreigners, if it is to enjoy the continued solidarity of ECOWAS.

Third, the FPI Government must accept an immediate to medium-term time-table for the establishment of a genuine and representative Interim Government of national Unity under the purview of ECOWAS. Such a government will deal with the immediate issues of constitutional reform, demobilisation and reintegration of non-state combatants, resolving key immediate causes of the war and organising for fresh elections.

Fourth, ECOWAS should take immediate proactive steps to mobilise and include representatives of cross-religious bodies, cross-ethnic civil society organisations including women, youth and students in the Lome peace process and processes in its aftermath.

ii. The West African Stake-Holder States

One of the lessons to be learnt from the ECOWAS intervention is the involvement of some ECOWAS states in the conflict by aiding and abetting warring factions. Thus, the involvement of States in the search for solutions to the conflict at the diplomatic and political levels must be predicated on impartiality, the rule of international law and the greater

interests of the sub-region. Already, the Ivorian Government has implicitly accused two of its neighbours - namely Liberia and Burkina Faso - as being the main supporters of this rebellion. The rebels have likewise accused Ghana of being on the side of the Gbabgo Government. Care must be taken so that the actions of neighbouring States do not become contentious and detrimental to the peace process.

iii. The Non-African Foreign Presence

The harassment and persecution of foreigners in the Ivorian crisis have not been limited to migrant workers from the sub-region but have extended to the French who are perceived as the protectors of Alassane Ouattara. Besides the French, the large Middle East community and in particular, the Lebanese, have been at the receiving end of popular southern anger. Unfortunate as these incidents are, they should offer food for thought to ECOWAS and the foreign communities in West Africa. France cannot extricate herself completely from the Ivorian crisis, given the policies she has pursued in Francophone West Africa since independence. She should carry out a self-examination of her policies and ask whether she cannot do more to right some of the wrongs of the past.

West Africa has seen a healthy Lebanese presence since before the independence years. This notwithstanding, few among this community have reintegrated into their adopted homes. The community controls the parasitic retail sector not only in Cote d'Ivoire but in all West African countries. However, it has given little back by way of contributing to infrastructure development. Worse, the Lebanese community has been a part of the problems that sparked fratricidal wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone by corrupting politicians, creating tax-evading and monopolistic cartels in the diamonds, arms, hotel and retail businesses. The rising anger against them as part of increasing ethnic and religious hatred in the sub-region should encourage them to do a soul searching and mend their ways before it is too late. Now that ECOWAS is fast-forwarding to a sub-regional common market, it is hoped that such issues will be taken on board in its policy documents.

b.   At the Military Level

i.   The ECOMOG Force

Based on our analysis above, any ECOMOG force that is sent into Cote d'Ivoire must operate under Chapter VI peacekeeping, that is, it goes in with or without the consent of the warring factions and should be prepared for enforcement operations. The unrealistic demands of the rebels for the immediate resignation of the Gbagbo administration is a ploy to stall the negotiations while rearmament takes place. The ECOMOG force must be given clear instructions under which the MPCI and other rebel factions agree to disarm peacefully or be disarmed.

The implications for this approach are quite obvious. First, States that do not share the position that the armed rebellion is illegal should not contribute troops. Second, a prior assessment of the potential of the rebel faction should be carried out in determining the manpower and logistical requirements for the mission. Third, the need for rapid intervention must be balanced by adequate preparedness of the ECOMOG troops for the task ahead. Care must be taken to avoid the repetition of the comedy of errors experienced in Liberia where, following from gross underestimation of the capabilities of Taylor's NPFL fighters, whole contingents of the hurriedly assembled ECOMOG troops arrived without proper uniforms and with guns that could not fire. The logistics must be right. Fourth, the intervention forces must be given crash courses in human rights and discipline. They must be made clearly aware that soldiers who commit atrocities, carry out rape and looting will be court-martialled. The importance of instilling respect and fear in the enemy in such operations cannot be overemphasised.

ii. Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration

Comprehensive disarmament is the oxygen of a post conflict society. Guinea Bissau according to a senior UNDP official could have been saved with two million dollars after the war in 1998. This amount could have helped in the restructuring of the national army and even 'buy' off the bad nuts. It was not done. Hence instability continues and the possibility of that country going to war with the Gambia cannot be ruled out. ECOWAS experts need to estimate the quantity of illegal weapons in the conflict zone, find out the pipelines for the weapons into the war zone and apply diplomatic pressure on the UN and the European Union to block fresh shipments. Effort must be made to collect every single wrongly held weapon in an ideal situation to avoid the upsurge in banditry after the war. It should be remembered that in Demobilisation, Disarmament and reintegration (DDR), women and children should be given special status and facilities.

The possible reintegration of some rebels into the national army and institutions should be carried out in a manner that would not lead to future coups as in the case of the reintegrated Guinea-Bissau General, Asumane Mane, who was killed by government troops in an attempted coup in 2001. Here, the excellent example of Mali, where the coup leaders of 1992 have remained as professional soldiers in the armed forces needs to be studied.

iii.   Mercenaries

Just as in the wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Casamance, soldiers of fortune have become prominent in the Ivorian conflict. French mercenaries who served under the notorious mercenary warlord in the Comoro Islands and Benin in the seventies are shoring up government forces; in addition, South African mercenary pilots are flying the newly acquired government helicopter gunships as loyal troops desperately try to dislodge the rebels. On the rebel front, veteran mercenaries from the Mano River Union conflicts – Liberians,

Sierra Leoneans and Burkinabe – are shoring up the MPCI ranks. This is a very serious development. As was seen in Sierra Leone, if these mercenaries and their employers are allowed to establish a stranglehold on resource enclaves in Cote d'Ivoire, not only will the war generate internal momentum but also no neighbouring State will be safe. Just as Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF/SL) rebels infiltrated into Sierra Leone in 1991 from Liberia, so are 'soldiers of fortune' capable of violating the porous borders of West African states to facilitate the transformation of grievances into wars. The need for West African countries to closely monitor their borders is, therefore, imperative.

It is imperative that the Ivorian Government is made aware of its responsibilities under the existing AU Convention against Mercenaries and the ECOWAS Moratorium on the Exportation and Importation of Weapons and made to immediately terminate the contracts of its mercenaries. Indeed, as Sierra Leone and Comoros Islands show, mercenaries are a double-edged sword and would easily turn against their employer should the price be right. In the current instability, Laurent Gbagbo himself is not immune to a palace coup and these mercenaries would facilitate such an outcome. The mercenaries in the rebel ranks should constitute a special target for the ECOMOG operation for capture and trial under anti-terrorist laws.

Finally, the recurrent mercenary problem in West Africa should serve as a wake-up call to ECOWAS, which should seriously consider the setting up of an ECOWAS Criminal Court as part of its integration efforts to deal with such issues.

c.   Assistance and Collaboration Outside ECOWAS Region

The Ivorian could not have arrived at a more similar historical conjecture as that of Liberia in 1990. Then, the US and the 'international community' were too preoccupied with Iraq and the Gulf oil pipelines to offer real assistance to peace efforts in Liberia. Today, the same forces are almost exclusively focused on Iraq and the War on Terrorism. So far, these powers have pledged financial resources to the Ivorian effort. However, without Nigeria willing to bankroll and add muscle to the Ivorian efforts, the support so far pledged will be incapable of producing the desired results.

It is maybe time and opportune for ECOWAS to look towards striking new strategic and tactical alliances with new external forces. The small to medium States in Scandinavia and elsewhere have built up substantial capital in peace support operations that comes with less political baggage. The Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Austria and Sweden have been helping African militaries, police and civil society with expertise and financial resources for some time now without much fanfare. Peacekeeping is a multi-task operation and for it to be successful, the civilian police and civil society components must supplement any military intervention.

For some time now, the Norwegian Government has supported Southern Africa with military and civilian preparations for conflict intervention through its Training for Peace (TfP) Programme. It involves training civilians, civilian

police and military personnel for comprehensive peace keeping services. Likewise, the Austrian Study Centre for Peace Research has been holding peace building workshops in Southern Africa for civil society organisations and governmental agencies. Both have expressed the wish to extend their programmes to West Africa and are in discussions with civil society organisations to facilitate the process. Perhaps this is the time for ECOWAS to explore these opportunities.

The multi-task forces required for intervention must be skilled in the multi-track approach to conflict management. The Ivorian conflict is more a political conflict than military. This call for the establishment of a group of experts behind the scenes advising stakeholders on such matters as child soldiers, weapons, mercenaries, conflict management, training for multi-ethnic police service, legal and constitutional reform issues and civil-military relations.

IN LIEU OF CONCLUSION – REGIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND POLICY OPTIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTION

The war in Cote d'Ivoire, just as the other on-going conflicts in the sub-region, is not an internal conflict but a regionalised war in the making within the borders of one country. If a full scale war breaks out, Burkina Faso and Mali will send in troops to defend their citizens in Cote d'Ivoire. The scenario would not be dissimilar to the Rwandese army's intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 1996. Such an outcome would exert an immense strain on the open society in Mali, where the existence of a strong social capital has made violent political problems lesser. This could destabilise the new administration of Amadou Toumani Toure (ATT). Already, violent crime is on the increase in the country following the repatriation of thousands of emigrants and criminal elements from the conflict zone. Demonstrations have been on-going for some time now against the mob violence in Cote d 'Ivoire.

Should Burkina Faso intervene militarily, such an outcome would widen the political space for President Blaise Campaore in the short run, but ultimately, it will destroy the fragile economy and the controlled democratic experiment.

Guinea-Conakry is another country tittering on the brink of collapse. President Lansana Conte's health is failing badly but is unwilling to travel abroad for treatment for fear of a coup. With no succession plan in place and the threat of insurgency from his opponents, any prolonged conflict in Cote d'Ivoire would plunge the country, and by extension, the Mano River Basin, into a new cycle of violence.

Ghana's cocoa industry and port facilities may benefit in the short term at the expense of Cote d'Ivoire should the war there show no sign of abating. However, any short-term gains would be ruthlessly eroded by the imminent inflow of refugees from her western border. With the predictable amassing of combatants, mercenaries and arms in Cote d'Ivoire, John Kufuor's administration itself would not be immune from military destabilisation, given Ghana's recent past. Already under pressure to deliver on its election

pledges, Kufuor's NPP Government would be forced to divert resources towards shoring up Ghana's defences.

Senegal remains the last bastion of 'tranquility' in Francophone West Africa, with the controlled war in the southern province of Casamance constituting its only headache. Before now, Abidjan shared that honour with Dakar. But all is not rosy in Senegal either. Restlessness is palpable among the populace. The recent Joola Ferry disaster that claimed close to two thousand lives had less to do with human error and more to do with governance and economic crisis. President Abdoulaye Wade, since being swept into power under the twin slogan of 'Sopi' (Change) and 'Alternance' (Alternation) some two years ago, has reshuffled his government several times without shuffling away the problems that paved the way for his government. A prolonged war in Cote d'Ivoire could just send an example to forces itching for action in Dakar.

The gloomy forecasts above point to one fact: As the sub-region is scrambling to put out the fires in one home, it is yet another reactive move by the sub-regional community. ECOWAS needs to develop its predictive capacities, and this can only be achieved by recognising a basic truth: The wars raging inside the individual countries can, in fact, adversely impact upon the entire sub-region. Their resolution, consequently, must be regional. Regional integration, ultimately, is the answer. It is only within the framework of a common economic and political space can the sub-region hope to overcome crunching poverty, religious and ethnic bigotry that underlie the conflicts of today. The issue of one common citizenship should no longer be considered a pipe-dream, but a concrete objective that governments and civil society must strive to fulfil.

Secure Democracy Project *(SecureDem)* is an evolving strategic think-tank for research, analysis and training dedicated to policy and change in the complex interrelationships and synergy between military/non-military security and the democratisation processes in West Africa in the aftermath of the Cold War. *SecureDem* strives to unearth and interpret the hidden factors and forces propelling events and phenomena in the security and governance spheres in the light of the unity and contradictions between ascendant Globalisation and resurgent Localisation in an authentic, scholarly and credible manner. It provides customised policy options and technical advise on transforming the factors and forces for positive outcomes to Governments, policy-makers, development agencies, research institutions, civil society organisations, the media and legal entities. Members of Secure Democracy come from diverse professional and multi-disciplinary academic backgrounds.

*For further information, please contact **SecureDem** at*
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Chronology of Events

- 1960: Independence
- 1961: The Ivorian military created by 61-209 Law
- 1962: Attempted coup
- 1961: President Houphouet Boigny Signs defence pact with France, April 24
- 1963: Attempted coup/plans to remove government
- 1965: 248 French officers in the Ivorian armed forces
- 1969: Military used to suppress opposition
- 1971: French troops put down a rebellion by the Bete people, (Gbagbo's ethnic group)
- 1973: Attempted coup
- 1974: High ranking military officers brought into government
- 1980: 111 French officers in the Armed Forces, attempt a military coup
- 1985: Name of the country changed from Ivory Coast to La Cote d'Ivoire, October 14
- 1990: President F.Houphouet-Boigny orders the military under Colonel Robert Guei to suppress pro-democracy movement
- 1990: President Houphoet-Boigny meets mutinous troops, April
- 1990: French president Francois Mitterand refuses to put down a military mutiny, after the military occupies Abidjan airport, June
- 1990: Multi-party democracy introduced following mass protest
- 1991: Military suppresses university students demanding popular democracy
- 1991: Military goes on strike demanding higher wages
- 1991: Members of the military tortured after an alleged coup
- 1993: President Houphouet-Boigny dies
- 1993: Henri Konan Bedie sworn in as president, December 3
- 1995: President Bedie sacks General Robert Guei as joint chief-of-staff
- 1995: The army kills several people in the city of Gagnoa during chieftaincy struggles
- 1997: Ten members of the military detained over a coup plot
- 1997: French foreign minister tells the OAU summit in Burkina Faso that France would not 'be dragged into Africa's internal conflicts'
- 1999: OAU Condemns military coups at Algiers summit.
- 1999: Bedie removed from power by Coup led by General Guei, December 24: Coup masterminds are Boka Yapi and Ibrahim Coulibaly aka IB.
- 1999: Presidents Thabo Mbeki and Olusengu Obasanjo issue a statement, saying coup 'runs counter to the universal trend towards greater democratisation of governance and the advancement of the rule of law.'
- 2000: Attack on the residence of General Guei in Abidjan, September 17. Two Generals - Palenfo and Coulibaly – take refuge at Nigerian embassy. They had opposed Guei's decision

to stand for the presidency. (On assuming power a month later, President Laurent Gbabgo presses ahead with their trial despite a plea from Guei that they are innocent.

- 2000: Alassane Ouattara (from the north, former prime minister and leader of RDR party) barred from contesting forthcoming elections, accused of being non-Ivorian. Real reason – Democratic shift in favour of the north, places him in pole position in elections.

- 2000: October 22, Elections are held, setting off a chain of events: popular demonstrations against Robert Guei, who flees; Gbagbo declares himself winner and assumes office as President.

- 2000: Under President Laurent Gbagbo, hundreds of civilians killed by security forces in Yopougon neigbourhood in Abidjan. Scores of Burkinabes, Malians killed, raped and harrased.

- 2000: October, an attempted coup: 'the first overt seizure of power by the armed forces constitues the most important shift in civil-military relations. It is a step not readily reversed'. **Claude Welch**

- 2001: municipal elections held, April. RDR of Alassane Ouattara wins

- 2001: National reconciliation process starts.

- 2002: September 19, army mutiny erupts. Country de-facto partitioned - Rebels control central and northern regions while government clings on to western and southern regions.

- 2002: Cease-fire signed in Bouake on October 17

- 2002: Lome peace talks begin under the leadership of President Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo. In sending his delegation President Gbagbo told them "You represent the entire people of Cote d'Ivoire," tell them (rebels) what Cote d'Ivoire is saying ... The assailants must lay down their weapons. We want the integrity of our territory to be respected. We want our sovereignty to be respected. Then, and only then, everything can be discussed, everything can be negotiated."

- 2002: October, civil society groups form the Civil Society Collective for Peace. It plans to "conduct a massive campaign of sensitisation, throughout the national territory, to prevent and curb ethnic or religious conflicts",

- 2002: October 26, President Gbagbo meets religious leaders in Abidjan insisting he had done no wrong in his coming to power.

- 2002: A founder of President Gbagbo's party LouisBenoit Dacoury-Tabley leaves Paris to join rebels in Lome

- 2002: October 8, Rebel leader Guillaume Soro, the MPCI secretary-general leaves talks after the assassination of Dr Benoit Dacoury-Tabley in Abidjan. Soro states that "Gbagbo is only buying time. He is keeping us at the negotiating table while he is busy acquiring more arms, helicopter gunships and recruiting mercenaries to escalate the war."

- 2002: October. Mercenaries from South Africa, Bulgaria, France arrive to help Government forces with Helicopter Gunships, etc. Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, ECOWAS Executive Secretary calls for

- 2002: the observance of the Africa Union and UN protocols on mercenaries.
- 2002: November 10. French government sends an ambassador to support the Lome Peace Talks. President Wade, ECOWAS chairman states he would like to take over the peace talks from Togolese leader President Eyadema.
- 2002: November 19; Leader of the Youth wing of President Gbagbo's party calls on the French ambassador to leave the country and promises to organise marches to seize key opposition leader Alassane Ouattara from the French embassy. President Gbagbo calls for referendum on the Ivorian constitution in a nation-wide address on TV and radio.
- 2002: November 19; Pro-government newspaper publishes names of prominent Ivorian politicians from the north in transport business.
- 2002: November 20; Prominent business leader murdered in Abidjan

Cote d'Ivoire: Facts

Independent: 1960
Area: 322 463 km
Population: 14,300.000
Capital: Yamoussoukro, pop.130.000
Major cities :   Abidjan, Bouake, Daloa, Korhogho
Administration :   16 regions
Religion :   African beliefs 60 %, Muslim 27%, Christian 12%
Airports: Abidjan, Yamoussoukro, Bouake, Korhongho, Daloa,
Seaports: Abidjan, Saint Pedro,
ArmY: 6,800
Gendarmerie: 4,400
Navy: 900
Airforce: 700
Militia: 1,500
Presidential Guards: 1,100
Reservists: 12,000
Universities   2 and many institutions of higher learning
30% of Prefects in administrative districts were military officers in the 1980s

Corruption: 1990s

130 billion CFA Francs embezzled in the 1990s.

Cocoa

Leading producer of cocoa.

Elections

1990 : Not free and fair
1995: Not free and fair
2000: Not free and fair according to the United Nations. UN boss called for re-elections

Main Political Parties

Ivoirite: Ivory-ness, pure Ivorian people, xenophobic

1. Party Democratique de la Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI)
2. Rassemblement des Republicains (RDR)
3. Front Patriotique Ivoirien (FPI)
4. Patriotic Movement of Cote d'Ivoire (MPCI)

Main Musicians
Alpha Blondy
Ticken Jah Sakoly, Ayesha Kone, Ismaiel , Davie Tahiro, Tina Spencer,Zukolu (a musical group used by politicians to loot and attack the opposition)