

Trajectories of State Building and Peace
Building in Cote d'Ivoire

A Baseline Study

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Reframing Narratives of State building in Africa: The Case of Cote d'Ivoire

Introduction

One of the most unstable regions of the continent for decades, West Africa is slowly recovering from years of civil wars and/or severe crises in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and most recently Mali and Guinea-Bissau. The emphasis on peace building and, more broadly, state building, has therefore never been more pressing. These crises, which by ripple effect spared no West African state, raise important questions about fundamental governance issues and, more specifically, about how national emergencies are managed. Of course, this is even more relevant to states that have experienced protracted violent armed conflicts as a result of state building efforts that have gone awry. This only highlights the intimate connection, indeed the dialectic between a peace building process necessitated by a civil war ending and state, and nation-state building in which African states have engaged since their independence. The serious conflicts and, in cases such as Cote d'Ivoire, the complete breakdown in the form of a brutal civil war, are invariably the result of this uncharted state building process and the many challenges it entails. States that fell into the latter category abound. However, even among the intriguing case studies they present of the complete breakdown model, Cote d'Ivoire stands as a most fascinating illustration of the complexity of state/nation building as well as its interconnections with devastating conflict and with peace building.

This study is about exploring these relationships and their mutually reinforcing attributes in the context of national politics in Africa. Its purpose is to answer a number of related questions. The most critical of these is: To what extent, do particular forms of peace settlements lead to sustainable peace and state building?

In other words, what forms of political settlements have demonstrated potential for success or sustainability in terms of peace building and state building?

Subsidiary, but equally compelling questions to answer include: Who are the main actors in the processes of peace building and state building? How much has Cote d'Ivoire made use of the opportunity of its 'second-chance' to address fundamental issues of governance? To what extent have agreements reached after conflicts brought credible long-term peace?

In addition to what socio-political and economic dynamics led to the outbreak of civil war, this study is thus also about critically examining the process by which conflict was brought to an end and whether durable peace was achieved.

Since the study is built around the concept of state building process as ongoing 'national conversations', it takes a detailed look at the process of peace building and state building in Cote d'Ivoire with special focus on the periods where the national conversations took an ever worsening turn with the 1999 military coup, the 2002 civil war and the 2010 post electoral crisis. This baseline study focuses on three main issues as interrelated and central to understanding peace building and state building processes in Cote d'Ivoire. These are: (i) Political power: the deep historical roots of succession controversies and long standing elite competition over the control of the postcolonial state; (ii) The resentment resource scarcity and the challenges of sustainable and equitable economic development, economic downturns, and regional disparities created overtime; (iii) Identity and power: the concept of 'Ivoirité' and its impact on issues of citizenship in Cote d'Ivoire. This study posits that these three interconnected issues have been the underlying basis of state building 'dialogues' that have taken place in Cote d'Ivoire at least since independence, and consequently affected state building and eventually peace building processes over the years. Whether the tentative peace achieved since April 2011 with the end of the post electoral crisis endures will depend on the extent to which these issues are appropriately addressed during the ongoing conversations.

This Baseline study consists of five parts: First, it provides an historical background of Cote d'Ivoire socio-political trajectory by focusing on the various state building conversations that took place before the outbreak of the armed conflict; second, it analyses the civil conflict, concentrating on its various root causes, triggers and actors involved; third, it interrogates the issues surrounding the peace process and the different actors involved in the 'conversations' on peace building and state building; Fourth, it outlines the outcomes that emerged from the peace and state building processes whilst extracting the lessons learned from Cote d'Ivoire's particular context and experience. Finally, the fifth section identifies which propositions are to be empirically tested during the field research.

Historical Background: The evolution of the state in Cote d'Ivoire

Despite being unusual in the West African region, Cote d'Ivoire did share similarities with its West African neighbours. Indeed, the country also had artificial borders, its economy was highly dependent on primary exports and it was severely affected by external shocks. Despite these setbacks, the country remained stable despite the outbreak of violence across the region. Cote d'Ivoire stood out from its neighbours for so long precisely because its economic success went hand in hand with its political stability. Indeed, in the early 80s, the country was one of the few on the continent with a civilian regime having avoided the military takeover curse. Another significant difference from its neighbours was its legacy of French colonialism, which established more direct rule than British colonialism. France maintained close ties with the Ivorian elites and remained very much involved in its economy even after independence. This close relationship was also significant in the country's political troubles as France played a major role in the country's economy and politics throughout its history. There is thus much to be learned from the evolution of the state of Cote d'Ivoire and an important first step is to present its pre-colonial and colonial history.

What is known currently as the territory of Cote d'Ivoire is a creation of France's imperial conquest in West Africa, with the territory officially becoming a French

colony in 1893. Prior to that first colonial rule there was no centralized authority governing the vast area and its inhabitants.¹ The northern and southern areas of Cote d'Ivoire underwent very different historical processes. This was largely for geographical reasons, where the north was within the reach of the Sudanic empires, while the dense forest of the south prevented extensive political organisation.² There were six main political formations: the Malinke Empire of the Toure in the Odienne Region; the Kingdom of Kong of the Ouattarra Dynasty, in the North; in the East, the Agni-Ashanti Kingdoms of Bondoukou, Indenie and Krindjbo; and in Baoule Country the Sakasso Kingdom.³ What is important to note is that like many other political formations across the continent, these were autonomous and evolving at their own pace when that natural evolution was cut short, often violently, by colonial superimposition of foreign political, military, and cultural rule. This superimposition of alien agendas and methods was to have serious damaging consequences for the state building conversations that were to emerge over time.

In 1895 Cote d'Ivoire was made a constituent unit of the Federation of French West Africa and remained so until 1958. It was a colony and an overseas territory under the French Third Republic. Until the period following World War II, governmental affairs in French West Africa were administered from Paris. Most of its colonies, including Cote d'Ivoire, were highly hierarchical in nature and were subdivided into *Cercles*, *Subdivisions* and *Cantons* that were administered by their respective heads. The colonial infrastructure made indigenous leaders (chiefs and kings) *chef de Cantons*, and this eventually eroded their legitimacy,⁴ as bestowed by tradition. France's policy in West Africa was reflected mainly in its philosophy of 'association', meaning that all Africans in Cote d'Ivoire were officially French 'subjects' but really without any rights to citizenship or representation in Africa or France as the population was marginalized and excluded from any decision making process, particularly the future of the territory. The later stages of colonial rule saw the rise of the Ivorian educated elite and its urban middle class. This also saw the rise, in the 1940s, of young leader Felix Houphouet-Boigny and his party, the *Parti Democratique de Cote d'Ivoire-Rassemblement Democratique Africain* (PDCI-RDA). A

chef de canton and planter, Mr. Houphouet-Boigny went on to become a minister in French governments and play a major role in Franco-African politics between World War II and the independence era. Cote d'Ivoire became an autonomous republic within the French community in 1958 as a result of a referendum that brought community status to all members of the old Federation of French West Africa (except Guinea, which had voted against association). Cote d'Ivoire became independent on August 7, 1960 and Felix Houphouet-Boigny assumed the presidency.⁵ Cote d'Ivoire's contemporary political evolution is a direct result of Houphouet-Boigny's 33-year presidency. His vision and leadership also heavily influenced the state building conversations that emerged and shaped Cote d'Ivoire as we know it. The post-colonial state inherited most of the administrative and bureaucratic infrastructures of the French colonial state and its ties to France remained markedly strong.

As mentioned above, in a region where many political systems were unstable, Cote d'Ivoire showed remarkable political stability, which lasted from its independence from France in 1960 until 1999. Felix Houphouet-Boigny remained President until his death on December 7, 1993, and Cote d'Ivoire maintained a close political allegiance to France and to the West more generally. Following his death, Henri Konan Bédié succeeded him until 1999. Henri Konan Bédié presidency struggled due to a combination of factors. The country was hit by fluctuating world market prices for cocoa and coffee (its prime export) as well increased debt and steep reductions in foreign aid in 1998 and 1999. His presidency started with a succession crisis and political tensions against the background of sharpening rhetoric around identity and the eligibility of Alassane Dramane Ouattara who run the country as Prime Minister while Houphouet-Boigny was ailing. It should be noted that there were also recurring mutinies in the army. These factors combined to culminate in the country's first coup on December 24, 1999.⁶ The coup only signalled the impasse conversations around these factors related to state building had reached by the end of 1999.

After thirty-nine years of political stability Cote d'Ivoire succumbed to its numerous contradictions caused by the strains of state building. Following the bloodless coup, General Robert Guei formed a new government of national unity and promised to hold open elections.⁷ A different state was being shaped as a new constitution was drafted and ratified by the population in 2000. However, this new phase in the Ivorian state building process was to be significant in leading to the ensuing conflict. Amid political tensions and various plots and coup attempts, a new constitution was drafted. It established rigid eligibility requirements for contesting political office, including that both parents of anyone wishing to run for president must be born in Cote d'Ivoire.⁸ Widely believed to be aimed at barring Mr. Ouattara from being able to run for office, the articles incriminated accentuated national divisions between North and South, and between Christians and Muslims.

Through what turned out to be turbulent and generally unfair elections in 2000, Laurent Gbagbo (the leader *Front Populaire Ivoirien* - FPI), the only major candidate allowed to run, became president, but only after violent demonstrations by Gbagbo to denounce Guei's attempt to confiscate power. Alassane Ouattara, the leader of the *Rassemblement des Republicaines* (RDR) and Guei himself eventually called for peace and recognized Gbagbo as president. The country would experience another bout of violence in 2001 with another coup attempt but despite the many challenges President Gbagbo formed a government of national unity that included the RDR party in August 2002. However, in September 2002 exiled military personnel and co-conspirators in Abidjan attacked government and military facilities in Abidjan, Bouake, and Korhogo. Almost immediately after the coup attempt, the government launched an aggressive security operation, in which shantytowns occupied by thousands of immigrants and Ivoirians were searched for weapons and rebels. Government security forces burned down or demolished a number of these shantytowns, which displaced over 12,000 people⁹. The coup evolved rapidly into a full-scale rebellion, which split the country in two, and escalated into the country's worst crisis since independence in 1960. The civil war that was to ensue decisively

changed the terms of state building conversations. It added the layer of efforts to achieve peace first, before those conversations could unfold.

Three main actors, the rebel groups, the Patriotic Movement of Cote d'Ivoire (MPCI), the Ivorian Popular Movement of the Great West (MPIGO) and the Movement for Justice and Peace (MJP), marched against the Gbagbo regime,¹⁰ and became the newest interlocutors in the new conversations. These rebel movements soon came to control the northern half of the country. Even though a ceasefire was agreed to, the country continued to experience sporadic violence.¹¹

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) intervened by placing approximately 1,500 peacekeeping troops from five countries on the ground beside the 4,000 French peacekeepers, after the French troops stationed at Port Bouet were put under UN mandate. The troop presence helped guarantee some semblance of stability. The peace building conversation began to take shape as the country's major political parties and the New Forces signed a French brokered a series of Linas-Marcoussis Accords (LMA) in which they agreed to a power-sharing national reconciliation, and a government to include rebel New Forces representatives.¹² This meant that all the parties were going to now work together on rebuilding the nation by modifying national identity, eligibility for citizenship, and land tenure laws. These areas were sensitive issues. They were the root cause of the eruption of conflict.

These conversations were not without their challenges; the process of rebuilding peace and stability was not an easy process. There were more episodes of sporadic violence throughout 2004, which led to the Pretoria Agreement in 2005. This new agreement, which followed other short-lived accords signed in Lomé, formally ended the country's state of war, and seriously engaged on issues of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration.¹³

In 2007, at the initiative of President Gbagbo, negotiations led by Burkinabe President Compaoré in Ouagadougou, President Gbagbo and the New Forces leader Guillaume Soro finally agreed to a peace agreement aimed at reunifying the country and holding new elections in 2010. Incumbent president Laurent Gbagbo and Alassane Ouattara were the main contestants, yet a number of different actors were involved in the lengthy process. From the government, the armed rebellion, the Côte d'Ivoire political parties, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), the International Organization of Francophonie to France and the United Nations (UN) were involved in the election. By the end of the second round Côte d'Ivoire had two winners, two governments and was once again on the verge of political collapse. Indeed, the Ivorian Independent Electoral Commission recognised Ouattara as the president with 54.1 per cent of the votes whilst the Ivorian Constitutional Council declared Gbagbo the winner. The UN and ECOWAS demanded for Gbagbo to step down with no avail. As Laurent Gbagbo stubbornly refused to step down, he rallied his young militia against pro-Ouattara supporters.¹⁴ This triggered a response by the pro-Ouattara rebel groups in the North, which descended into Abidjan in a swift counter-attack. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported that more than 100,000 people had then fled to neighbouring Liberia.¹⁵

Fierce fighting erupted once again when results were announced, both in the political capital Yamoussoukro, its financial capital Abidjan, as well as across the Northern part of the country. The ICRC claimed that about 800 had been killed since the start of the conflict, whilst Caritas suggested more than 1,000 deaths. The Red Cross teams were collecting up to fifty bodies a day, many of those being children and pregnant women.¹⁶ With few humanitarian agencies on the ground and with very low mobility across the affected areas, numbers were probably higher than reported. The November 2010 elections were meant to bring a peaceful end to the long-standing political insecurity in the country. Yet, after several months of political violence, killings, looting and massive internal displacement of people, Laurent Gbagbo was arrested, and was replaced as president by Alassane Ouattara.

After more than three thousand people died since the start of the conflict in December 2010, on the 11th of April 2011, Laurent Gbagbo was arrested. Many celebrated the arrest of Gbagbo and saw this as an automatic return to peace. However, according to Radio France Internationale, security did not return to the city of Abidjan as there were still reports of armed incidents in some neighbourhoods. Six months after the elections, Alassane Ouattara was inaugurated as president; major political and economic reforms were to take place. He was expected to bring back security, as well as to revive the economy. Politically, he assured many that his new government would include Gbagbo supporters in a bid to bring unity and reconciliation between the different groups.¹⁷

From a peace building perspective, one of the major challenges that faced the new presidency was to restore a united defence and security institutions. The new government had now to rebuild a nation destroyed by widespread ethnically and religiously based violence and prioritise reconciliation. Although Ouattara has had international recognition and is now officially the new president of Côte d'Ivoire, he faced a serious political and social crisis and fragile and divided security apparatus. In a country in dire need of a real change of political direction, whether he will be able to deliver is still very much an open-ended question more than half way into his presidency. To understand Cote d'Ivoire's transformation from a stable economic and political powerhouse to a failing praetorian and chronically unstable state, it is important to first provide an historical background of its developmental trajectory in terms of its politics, society and economics.

The Political Economy of State building and Peace building in Côte d'Ivoire

The main dynamics that have undergirded governance, politics, breakdown of stability, and the search for peace in Cote d'Ivoire relate to three factors: The fierce elite competition for power; the management of the economy and natural resources; and, most importantly how these two factors further amplified the citizenship and identity crisis and caused frustrations amongst Ivoirians. The centrality of these three factors to the analysis in this Baseline Study necessitates a brief discussion of how they have come to affect Cote d'Ivoire's descent into war and instability. The role of former colonial power, France, also needs to be examined. In effect, France has played a significant and chequered role in the country's trajectory throughout its history.

I. Nation Building: Elite Competition for Political Power

Many studies have linked the war and instability in Cote d'Ivoire to its complex political landscape, ethnic composition and an underlining a system of patron-client relations that have been in place since independence. The country like many post-colonial African states had a number of various identities, both in terms of ethnicity and religion. With nearly eighty ethnic groups, the country has also faced, in recent years, a divide between the minority Christian population mainly in the South and the majority Muslim population mainly located in the North. These differences were exacerbated during recent state building and peace building efforts.

Félix Houphouët Boigny, who ruled the country under an autocratic one party system, around whom much of the nation building and state building efforts were conducted, did not institutionalize democracy in Cote d'Ivoire. His absolute control over the state building process was such that Cote d'Ivoire was dubbed a "Houphouet state."¹⁸ His legitimacy came from his charismatic and traditional authority and the economic prosperity the country experienced under his leadership during the first two decades of independence. He also enjoyed France's

strong support. Houphouët Boigny was from the ruling elite of the Baoulé ethnic group, which he increasingly put forward as being above the other ethnic groups.¹⁹ Although in a muted way, political life became dominated, by ethnicity as Houphouët Boigny installed a system of ethnic quotas in government, where members of his group tended to get the lion share. At the time of his death, Houphouët Boigny had not prepared the country and its government for a successor.²⁰ The constitution was amended a number of times without settling the issue of succession. The politicization and manipulation of ethnicity for political ends was most notable during multi-party elections in the early 1990s when the La Baule doctrine forced multiparty elections on Francophone countries. Gbagbo and then Bédié used strategies comparable to Houphouët Boigny's to gain support from their own ethnic groups. These strategies were to become damaging for the country and ultimately laid the foundation for the destruction that was to come.²¹

When the Ivoirité was introduced into the political discourse, it morphed from an attempt to define Ivorian identity into a 'nationalist-qua-ethnic political stratagem disguised as patriotism'²². This concept was to be the demise of the nation both within its political leadership but also across the masses. The concept was being used by the intellectual and political elite, led by Bédié at the time, in hope of holding on to power. When General Guei overthrew Bédié, the concept simply continued to exist as the general also used it to favour his own ethnic group, the Yacouba, but also to keep Mr. Ouattara barred from running for the 2000 presidential election. The Ivorian political landscape and conversations related to state building became significantly dominated by ivoirité and ethno-politics, which also became the norm and the only strategy for garnering political support. As a staunch nationalist and originally against the dubious concept, once in power, Gbagbo did not go against this norm and instead played the ethnic card to the hilt. He increased the representation of his own ethnic group, the Bété, and other ethnic groups from the West, in the government.²³

Cote d'Ivoire's political trajectory was a complex one in which identity politics, a lack of resources with a failing economy led to its political elite survival mechanism to rely heavily on ethnicity as a means of ensuring popular support. This degenerated quickly and dangerously into intractable citizenship and related issues of who belongs or does not, affecting also the large numbers of foreigners living in the country. Soon it would lead to a violent and costly conflict.

II. Economic sustainability and access to national resources

Endowed with abundant natural resources, and having embraced an unabashed capitalist path to economic development, by the 1980s, as Azikiwe notes, Cote d'Ivoire had an economy that accounted for over 40% of the economy of Francophone West Africa, thanks in part to the cocoa boom.²⁴ Richard Crook, who has written extensively on West Africa, details a government policy that created 'a 'free-for-all' on land acquisition and labour migration [in which the cocoa boom's] political costs ethnically mobilised political conflict and freedom for the state to regulate land access through arbitrary, centralised patronage'.²⁵ A success story that would be short-lived as the cocoa prices fell with the worldwide economic recession at the beginning of the 1980s. There is also no doubt that the French government's unilateral decision to devalue the CFA franc (which was then pegged on the French Franc) by 50 percent in 1994, severely affected the economic wellbeing of Ivoirians. This happened as structural adjustment programs were being implemented as a condition for additional loans to an already heavily indebted Cote d'Ivoire, struggling to keep up. The country suffered two major economic crises prior to its civil war, which unleashed major social unrest.²⁶ The decline of cocoa prices in the 1980s was the reflection of years of parastatal laissez-faire policies and wasteful prestige spending that were the signature of Houphouët Boigny's control over Cote d'Ivoire's finances and economic policies.

The economic downturns due to poor economic policies and other structural causes were not the sole cause of the ensuing instability. However, the economic scarcity

they induced and the inability of the Ivorian state to continue its patronage and clientelistic policies were doubtlessly a significant cause for the tensions that led the elites to manipulate ethnicity as a means of appealing for the masses support for access to political power when the single party era was replaced by multiparty politics in the 1990s. The economic recession also meant that land as the main economic resource, became inextricably tangled with notions of identity and power. The scramble for power and legitimacy among the elites turned them blind towards the violence that was slowly creeping into Ivorian life.

III. Identity and Power

While in power, Houphouët Boigny encouraged foreigners from mainly Mali and Burkina Faso (with majority Muslim populations), to seek employment in the Ivorian cocoa plantations. The result was a country in which population migration and in-country migrants represented upwards of 25% of its population, residing mainly in the cocoa regions of the country. Knowing the importance of identity in Ivorian politics, the extensive migration from neighbouring Mali, Burkina Faso, and other West African countries is directly associated with the cocoa-growing agro-industry. The ensuing ethnic tensions became palpable during the crisis in the 1980s, and thereafter, in the ethnic violence of the 1990s and 2000s.²⁷

The impact of massive in-migration and emigration waves policies was strongly felt in the social and political foundations of the country as ethno-religious narratives were manipulated by successive heads of state to pit communities against one another,²⁸ when competition for resources, land in particular became intense. One example of this was seen in Houphouët Boigny's policy of 'the land belongs to those who develop it', which encouraged members of his ethnic group, Baoulé, to migrate to forested areas and plant cocoa.²⁹

Many saw the generous immigration policy as an outcome and illustration of the 'Ivorian Miracle.' However, it has a direct link to the rise in xenophobic sentiments

across Ivoirian society, as economic difficulties made immigrants an easy target for scapegoating. Houphouët Boigny's government actively and openly promoted immigration and migration to suit its own political and economic interests. Bédié followed suit and openly adopted Ivoirité as a political tool to fight his opposition. Gueï's leadership was short-lived, and despite promising to be different, ended up in similar fashion. Gbagbo's regime, sometimes referred to as the *régime de la refondation*, in reference to its claim to be committed to overhauling the neocolonial state, in fact exacerbated the issue and failed dismally in its attempt to redefine the nation when it wrestled power from general Gueï.

The case of Cote d'Ivoire illustrates how the causes of violent conflict are not always straightforward and cannot be attributed to one single factor. War and instability in this case were a result of the complex interaction between historical, social, economic and political factors characteristic of the Cote d'Ivoire's particular context. The next section looks in some detail into the different responses to the peace process once tensions degenerated into violence and outright civil war, the different actors involved and how the process affected national conversations on the way forward for the nation.

Responding To Armed Conflict

From the above analysis, it is clear that the issues at the root of the conflict are multifaceted and complex. The various aspects of the state building conversation — ethno-nationalism, the distribution of economic resources and access to power — would all need to be addressed in the peace building process if Côte d'Ivoire was to move from a situation of 'no peace, no war' to one on the path towards a consolidated, unified and peaceful nation. The following section will analyse this and attempt to assess the degree to which the peace process has contributed to furthering the state building conversation. It will do this by first identifying the leading actors, highlighting the role of international actors and their negative impact on issues of local ownership. This will be followed by an overview of the settlement process and the degree to which it addressed the identity issue as a key to state building. Thus, this analysis will set the stage for the next section, which will assess the outcomes of the peace building process.

Following the failed coup of 2002 and the outbreak of civil war, a ceasefire agreement separated the government controlled south from the rebel-held North. Dividing the country in two, the zone of confidence provided a concrete symbol for the discrepancy between northern and southern narratives of Ivoirian society. Following this, several attempts were made at negotiating a settlement. However, this would be a start-and-stop process where each subsequent settlement would face implementation challenges. The reasons for this include stalling tactics by elites, unfavourable circumstances and inherent problems in the agreement that made it difficult to sell to the population. The final settlement, the Ouagadougou Political Agreement, a largely home-grown process, seemed most promising. However, the country suffered through a second crisis in 2010, putting in question the largely positive response received by the Ouagadougou Peace Agreement. The second crisis was ended through military victory, making Côte d'Ivoire an interesting case study for the overall research project in which this study falls. Overall, the settlement process was a series of complex negotiations and events that

ranged from the standard blueprint for internationally (in most cases, regionally) driven peace processes, and more tailored talks that illustrated the ongoing, but still chequered, state building conversation in Côte d'Ivoire.

i. Leading Actors

The Ivoirian peace process played host to actors of multiple levels — national, regional and international. The role of international actors is important to note, particularly in juxtaposition to national actors and the different affects these actors would have on the peace process. France, notorious for maintaining close ties with its former colonies, played a significant role, first in the conflict through military intervention to stabilise the situation, and then in the settlement process as a facilitator. Yet, there was significant involvement of the international community in general throughout the peace process. ECOWAS supported the peace process through various means, most notably by providing a cease-fire monitoring mission — ECOWAS Forces in Côte d'Ivoire (EOCMICI).¹⁹ These forces were later incorporated into the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), when it was established in 2004.²⁰ The UN, then, supported the peace process by conducting peacekeeping, monitoring the implementation process and putting pressure on non-compliant Ivoirian leaders. Individual states at a regional and sub-regional level, also had an interest in, and supported the various stages of, the settlement process. Burkina Faso and South Africa, as mediators, are most notable.

Finally, at a national level, the two key protagonists were the Ivoirian government, led by Laurent Gbagbo, and the rebel forces, led by Guillaume Soro, in support of Allasane Ouattara. The *Forces Nouvelles* (FN) was an alliance of three smaller rebel groups — the Patriotic Movement of Côte d'Ivoire (MPCI), the Ivoirian Popular Movement of the Great West (MPIGO) and the Movement for Justice and Peace (MJP) — who hailed predominantly from the north and were against the doctrine of *Ivoirité*. The multiple and complex actions of these various actors would result in the

signing of over ten peace agreements and 12 UN resolutions.²¹ In the end, it would be the home-grown accords signed in Ouagadougou that would stick—until it unravelled with the 2010 presidential election.

ii. The Settlement Process

As a result of the heavy involvement of foreign actors, the internationally sponsored peace agreements and subsequent peace efforts largely followed the liberal peace model.²² This would generally include a ceasefire, a power-sharing agreement, a disarmament plan, and elections.²³ The last of these would receive significant attention but also remain one of the most challenging sticking points for the protagonists. Often times, unrealistic pressure would be placed on the state's administrative capacities and on elites to hold elections as soon as possible. This would often result in the building of tensions, increased inflammatory rhetoric in a bid to hold a support base, and, ultimately, the stalling of elections for several years. Throughout, the statebuilding conversation continued in other forums. The citizenship issue remained fractious, land and identity remained a source of inter-communal violence in the western regions and youth militia groups mobilised around religious, regional, ethnic and national differences in the urban areas.

The first successful negotiations took place in 2003 under the guidance of France, with the signing of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. There had been attempts to negotiate before this, under the auspices of ECOWAS, in Lomé. But these talks quickly broke down.²⁴ A key feature of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement was the negotiation amongst elites regarding the distribution of power. This led to a power-sharing agreement that would take form in a Government of National Reconciliation and in which FN would be given the key Defence and Interior portfolios.²⁵ The citizenship issue was addressed in an appendix, which detailed the identification process.²⁶ This appendix reaffirmed existing laws regarding citizenship, without adequately discussing the discord regarding who should be part of the political and national community. The laws had been interpreted in various and dangerous ways previously, and the agreement allowed these diverse interpretations based on *jus*

sanguinis or *jus soli* to remain.²⁷ In addition, this elite bargaining over power was not easy to sell at home, resulting in protests on the part of the Young Patriots, a militant group of young Ivorians who supported Gbagbo and his nationalist agenda.²⁸ At the same time, France's refusal to come to Gbagbo's aid at the start of the conflict and its recognition of the rebellion through the peace talks resulted in a loss of face on Gbagbo's part. This quickly led to Gbagbo backtracking and stalling the implementation process.²⁹

As a result, violence continued, particularly in the western regions, where land tenure issues are especially acute.³⁰ ECOWAS, in 2003, initiated further talks which led to the Accra II and Accra III accords.³¹ These, however, did little to stabilise the country. Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR), for example, was repeatedly stalled due to a lack of trust and movement on other aspects of the accords.³² In light of the situation, then South African President Thabo Mbeki, stepped in as mediator with the support of the African Union.³³ This led to a new set of accords, signed in Pretoria on 6 April 2005. One key feature of the Pretoria accords, that would have important consequences later on, was that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) was given the responsibility to certify the electoral process.³⁴ By this time, France had stepped back from the negotiating process as the patriotic narrative supporting the violence was only fuelled by the former colonial power's interest in the conflict.³⁵ These agreements, however, did not address the citizenship question, and focused on technical matters of disarmament and elections.³⁶ They then can be seen as increasingly failing attempts on the part of the international community to stabilise a deteriorating situation and more successful attempts by protagonists to stall a concrete resolution to the conflict.

The events leading to the Ouagadougou agreement are complex. A combination of war-weariness, international pressure and political calculations drove the parties of the conflict to seek another solution. The International Working Group, which was meant to oversee the implementation of the peace process had proven largely ineffective and was regularly circumvented by the conflict protagonists.³⁷ Similarly,

steps to implement the peace process were often undermined by inflammatory discourse. For example, when a pilot scheme was launched to begin the identification process, Gbagbo fostered distrust by stating fraud would take place in the rebel-controlled regions and the pro-Gbagbo press launched attacks on Ouattara.³⁸ In 2006, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1721, which limited Gbagbo's renewed mandate (as an unelected president) for only a year, and increased the powers of Prime Minister Charles Konan Banny, who was meant to implement the peace agreement.³⁹ In response, Gbagbo announced his plan for 'direct dialogue', stressing the need for Ivoirians to take ownership of the peace process.⁴⁰ The talks were initiated by Gbagbo himself, because he likely realised that the stalemate situation no longer favoured him, and included Gbagbo and Soro, with Burkina Faso's President Blaise Compaoré as facilitator.⁴¹ President Gbagbo seemed to have recaptured the national motto of "dialogue" (in this case intra-Ivoirian dialogue) once championed by and identified with the late Houphouët-Boigny, now revered (and whose wisdom was singularly missed) father of a drifting nation. The language of the new negotiations, highlighting dialogue, seem more in line with that of a nationally owned statebuilding conversation. The announcement also followed years of conflict where patriotic and inflammatory language was used to undermine internationally driven peace talks. President Gbagbo cleverly couched the need for such an intra-Ivoirian dialogue in anti-French nationalist rhetoric that found readily resonance among a mass of disillusioned and unemployed youth eager to find a scapegoat for their frustrations. This shrewdness, ability to manipulate rivals and partners alike, and determination to go to any length to remain in power served Gbagbo well for a decade. Sadly, these same character traits were to bring him down in the end.

The new agreement addressed various issues. With regards to political power, FN leader Soro was given the post of Prime Minister.⁴² Plans were also made for rebel forces to be integrated into the national army and for the northern part of the country to return under state control.⁴³ In addition, it was ambitiously proposed that elections be held within 10 months of the signing of the agreement.⁴⁴

Afterwards, the post of Prime Minister was given to Soro, and Gbagbo's powers as president were reinstated.⁴⁵ This then, provided a promising foundation on which to move forward with reconsolidating the state's political and security functions.

iii. Identity and Statebuilding in the Settlement Process

The implementation of this agreement was slow, but nevertheless succeeded where other agreements had failed. Some have pointed out that this is because it was a locally driven process that more directly addressed the identity issue.⁴⁶ Many actually viewed the Ouagadougou Peace Agreement as an overall success.⁴⁷ However, it still had several weaknesses. The peace process was primarily an elite activity, concentrating largely on issues of power.⁴⁸ However, the root causes of the conflict particularly that which drove the population, surrounded issues of identity and the distribution of resources, land in particular. While the agreement addressed this issue, the peacebuilding that followed did not follow-through on the citizenship question. It should have extended this dialogue to the population. This would then allow the country's citizens to decide on what terms they would relate to each other. However, the exclusion of civil society in the negotiation and subsequent phases made this challenging.⁴⁹ In reality, the reconciliatory talks that took place at the political level between leaders did not carry the same tone of dialogue and compromise when brought to the population. Rather, the press remained virulent and leaders easily resorted to inflammatory speeches when tensions ran high.

The agreement also made limited provisions to promote reconciliation and active dialogue about the conflict. The 'measures for reconciliation' focused primarily on practical issues such as provisions for amnesty, the reduction of arms and the free movement of people.⁵⁰ There was no provision for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission or similar mechanism that would promote dialogue. Nor was there mention of the highly contentious issue of land tenure. The civil war had aggravated existing land disputes by displacing people from their land.⁵¹ These issues are

central to the statebuilding conversation as they feed into the economic structures, access to wealth, which, beyond identity markers, are central to the citizenship debate. Indeed, structural inequalities, especially when combined with ethnic identity, need to be addressed as part of the root cause of the conflict.⁵² While it is perhaps not necessary (or possible) that all this be mentioned directly in the agreement itself, the fact that it was omitted meant allowing these issues to fester unaddressed. Rather, focus turned to preparing for elections, which were repeatedly stalled until the likely contestants, singularly president Gbagbo, felt they had a reasonable chance of winning (or retaining) power. The identification process, then, centred around how citizenship would affect electoral results, rather than on the determination of, and strengthening of the composition of the Ivoirian society and state.

Another identity marker that has not received enough attention in the Ivoirian case is that of gender. The Ivoirian constitution does, in principle, grant gender rights.⁵³ Similarly, Côte d'Ivoire has generally been perceived as progressive in these issues. For example, it was once referred to as a regional safe haven for homosexuals.⁵⁴ This does not mean, however, that discrimination on issues of gender did not occur. Women, for example, were still largely given subordinate positions in the household, the workplace and in politics.⁵⁵ Furthermore, many women were negatively affected by the crisis, both the war and the period leading up to it. The discourse of *Ivoirité* resulted in some women losing citizenship rights when their husbands' citizenship status was called into question. In addition, sexual violence was used as a strategy to denigrate 'foreigners'.⁵⁶ On the other hand, women were also active in pushing the *Ivoirité* agenda, exemplified in the inciting, religious rhetoric of First Lady Simone Gbagbo.⁵⁷ Finally, women's rights groups were active in campaigning for peace.⁵⁸ Despite this, women were not included in the peace negotiations.⁵⁹ Thus, while the UN regularly highlighted women's rights in its resolutions, the various peace agreements were glaringly silent on gender issues. And there was no significant gender representation on either side of the negotiations that reached them.

In general then, this final agreement more naturally addressed the state building conversation, in addition to peace building, due to its homegrown nature. However, it did not fundamentally change the orientation, the main actors, and critically, the finality (beyond avoiding a return to fighting) of the dual processes. The identity issue, as a root cause of the conflict, was given centre stage.⁶⁰ It did not resolve the matter completely by defining Ivoirian citizenship but did provide a way to move forward with the citizenship conversation.⁶¹ The agreement was able to improve the immediate security situation and eventually lead to elections.⁶² Yet, the identification process failed to gain significant traction, as a lack of trust and good will persisted amongst leaders and the population.⁶³ Thus, in light of the recent crisis, it is perhaps prudent to see the agreement and the talks that led to them as only a part of the conversation. Failure to continue the dialogue beyond preparing for elections resulted in a renewed crisis, a military victory, and the current, relatively stable but hardly peaceful, environment.

What Outcomes Emerged?

Thus, it is clear that the settlement process had both positive and negative components when viewed in terms of state building. We will now seek to assess the outcomes of this process on these issues. While many had high hopes for the peace process when elections finally came around in late 2010, the events that followed would dash many hopes that Côte d'Ivoire was on the path to recovery. After the second round of elections, Ouattara was declared the winner by the electoral commission and the international community, with more than 54 percent of the vote.⁶⁴ However, the Constitutional Council, which was loyal to Gbagbo, chose to overturn the results, in clear overstepping of its authority under the electoral law, declaring Gbagbo the winner. With two candidates, on opposite sides of the *Ivoirité* debate, both claiming to be the elected and legitimate president of the country, Côte d'Ivoire was thrown back into violent conflict. According to the International Criminal Court (ICC), the post-election crisis that followed resulted in approximately

3000 deaths, on both sides of the conflict.⁶⁵ The impasse came to an end when rebel forces captured Gbagbo with the assistance of the French military. However, the ease with which people mobilised around the ethno-nationalist discourses used during the crisis and with which armed groups were able to mobilise indicates that divisions at the heart of the conflict remained salient. It is yet too early to tell whether the military victory by Ouattara's supporters will result in a more coherent statebuilding direction. While for the moment, the country holds on to a fragile peace as the population seeks to move forward, there are some worrying trends that are indicated below.

i. Transformation of Identity Markers and Root Causes

A key indicator of whether identity markers shifted after the peace process is the electoral map of the 2010 elections. Just prior to the conflict, party support was achieved primarily through appealing to ethnic affinities. In general, this trend seems to persist. Gbagbo's support base remained concentrated in the western regions,⁶⁶ (And Abidjan) indicating the persistence and continued relevance of his ethno-nationalist strategy and the identity markers that predated the war. The votes won by Ouattara and Bédié also indicate a close correlation between voters' ethnicity and the ethnicity of the candidate.⁶⁷ In addition, when the situation took a turn for the worse after the election results were disputed, the western regions — where the land rights debate is most prominent — witnessed renewed inter-communal conflict between *autochthons* and those perceived to be 'foreign' or with northern origins.⁶⁸ Thus, during the elections, which are often used as a signal of peace in the liberal peace model, the discourses of militant patriotism, *autochthony* and ethno-nationalism were still strong. Yet, an analysis of the electoral map shows some positive developments with regards to identity. In the second round of the elections, a coalition of formerly divided ethnic and regional parties formed under the leadership of Ouattara and Bédié, so that Ouattara received a large portion of Bédié's votes in the second round.⁶⁹ This indicates that, while those identity markers that proved so divisive before the war still remained, there was the potential for those divisions to be bridged and moderated in the future.

In the end, ethnicity still influenced voting behaviour and the perceived interests of constituents. These interests persist today. In the western regions, where *autochthon* discourses and land tenure disputes combine with poverty to cause inter-communal tensions, violence has been particularly acute. The two regions of Cavally and Guémon, were particularly hard-hit by the electoral crisis, and violence continued more than two years later.⁷⁰ Rather than promoting reconciliation or the resolution of land conflicts in these regions, the government has relied primarily on a security crackdown while pursuing economic development at a national level. While it is important that security be restored and the state regain the monopoly of the use of force, this has not been done in tandem with a discussion on how to also restore the legitimacy of that state. The pursuit of national economic development may yet bear some fruit in this regard, if done in an equitable manner that addresses the key economic grievances of various groups.

Another identity marker is that of religion, which, as it overlaps with identity, remains divisive. Highly volatile religious symbolism was used in the run-up to the elections to mobilise first voters and then, when the elections turned sour, militants. Gbagbo's wife was particularly notorious for such statements.⁷¹ There were also incidents of violence targeting opposing religious groups.⁷² The conflation of religion and state is a conversation that has yet to be had. Article 30 of the Ivoirian constitution describes the state as 'indivisible, *secular*, democratic and social'.⁷³ Yet, the fact that religion remains a potent political tool indicates that Ivoirians, certainly their political elites, may not have entirely accepted this foundational prescription of the Ivoirian state.

With regards to gender, it appears as though there have been attempts to alter the dominant patriarchal structures. For example, Ouattarra's government tabled a new marriage law that would allow wives to be joint heads of the household, though it was met by opposition from other members in the coalition government (PDCI), resulting in a dissolution of the government.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, widespread sexual violence also persists and remains largely under-prosecuted. Police generally refuse

to investigate unless a medical certificate, which requires payment, is provided; even though this is not a legal requirement.⁷⁵

Thus, it seems that a gap remains between legal provisions for gender equality and perceptions amongst the population. In other words, the narrative embodied in the institutions and laws that exist, is not necessarily the narrative accepted by the population. A country's constitution is meant to be the foundational document that governs the social contract between people and state within a country. The Ivoirian constitution, which indicates that unity in diversity is the path to economic progress,⁷⁶ has not characterised the social and political relations in the country in the last two decades. It remains to be seen whether the new government will succeed in moving political dialogue from identity-based fixations to interest-based issues.

ii. Legitimacy and Societal Trust

The resort to violent action in 2002 was the ultimate indication that many in Côte d'Ivoire had lost faith in the legitimacy of the state and its institutions and decided to metaphorically raise the tone in the state building conversations that were supposed have been going on since independence. Various issues fuelled this lack of trust but in this section we must try to determine whether some of that societal trust has been restored. In other words, did the peace process restore the legitimacy of state institutions and the political process sufficiently to indicate that the state building conversation has qualitatively progressed.

Throughout the various negotiations of the peace process, several weaknesses remained. Perhaps the most glaring was the lack of any representation of civil society. By civil society, we refer to Ivoirian organisations and citizens that are not members of state institutions or sponsored by the government. In other words, there was no meaningful and purposeful representation of the various interest groups in the society, including women, labour groups, religious groups, representative of traditional institutions, and the like. As a result, the issues

discussed at negotiations centred on the interests and agendas of the elites at the table, those interests and agendas being primarily about the distribution of power and its spoils. The causes of the conflict, namely land tenure and citizenship, and equitable stake in economic development, were issues that were politicised and dramatised by leaders as a means to gain power or retain it. The core issues of interest to civil society and to the ordinary citizen did not affect directly the interests of those around the table as they did those of ordinary people. Thus, the elite-centred negotiations addressed the grievances and interests of the leaders (access to political power) but not, in a substantive manner, those of the people (access to economic resources and citizenship). Similarly, the sponsors to the various peace agreements also carried their own interests to the table. France, in particular, had invested economic and strategic interests in Côte d'Ivoire, which were likely threatened by Gbagbo's economic and political views. This affected France's attitude and explains its policies towards the *Forces nouvelles* and its refusal to come to Gbagbo's aid at the onset and throughout the crisis. These interests, as well as those of regional powers, were not congruent with the root causes of the conflict, detracting from the ability to discuss the same issues substantively, and associate all segments of Ivoirian society.

The various Linas-Marcoussis Agreements, the Lomé Accords, the Pretoria Accords and the Ougadougou Political Accords all highlighted elections (and intermediary power sharing arrangements) as the path to peace. Elections, as such, were almost fetishized as the solution to the crisis without ever going to the heart of what caused the conflict in the first place. Even the Ougadougou Political Accord, which gave more space to the citizenship issue, framed the identity debate within the electoral issue by providing for identification through the electoral roll. The issues of land and economic development, which were central to the dramatisation of the citizenship debate, were not addressed sufficiently by any of the agreements. No plan was laid out on how to restore the remarkable economic growth that alleviated so much the contradictions within Ivoirian society. This was important since it was an economic crisis that sparked conflict in the first place. Similarly, while there are mechanisms

to handle land disputes, these are often in contradiction with each other as they originate both from traditional land tenure systems and modern legal systems. No decision was made on which would take precedence, allowing the ambiguity around land tenure to remain as a potential source of future conflicts. Thus, the conversations that were going on during the peace building process were truncated primarily because, in essence, they excluded the key actors and core issues to the conflict and in so doing ended up stifling progress on comprehensive solution to the state building crisis.

The high electoral turnout, which was over 80 percent of the electorate,⁷⁷ was a sign that the peace process had restored at least some level of trust in the political system. It certainly indicated the eagerness of the population to do its part in trying to resolve the underlying dispute through the ultimate political means. The elections were supposed to end it by involving those in whose name the long running dispute is supposed to be fought so bitterly.

However, the elections also showed significant weakness in institutional legitimacy when, in a brazen political move, the electoral results from seven northern electoral circumscriptions were thrown out by the Constitutional Council, making Gbagbo the winner. The blame for the electoral crisis is generally placed on Gbagbo's refusal to give up power, even after the elections, as called by the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI), were certified by the United Nations SRSG. The subsequent crisis would highlight the gap between negative and positive peace. Elections were able to take place due to the relative stability that the peace process fostered. However, Gbagbo's ability to garner mass support after losing at the polls and the quick resort to violence showed that there was little buy-in to the electoral process. Even prior to the elections, there were signs of this lack of faith. In the west, rumours circulated that if one candidate lost the supporters of the other would be attacked. Such fears indicate a lack of trust both between opposing groups and in the state's ability and willingness to protect its citizens. In other words, the peace that had been achieved prior to the elections only set the stage for what should have been a deeper and longer state building process that would restore the social contract between citizens and the institutions that are meant to represent and protect them.

Lessons learning

Cote d'Ivoire's peace building process has had the singularity of having force of arms –not the implementation of a formal peace agreement-- resolve the long standing political dispute and the post electoral crisis stand-off that wrecked the final peace agreement the various Ouagadougou accords were supposed to be. The conversations for peace building and the larger state building that were jump-started were largely shaped by this singular fact. One side won, and the other collapsed to the point of not being there to even sign a formal surrender. Indeed, the defeat was not formalised in any sense, though major actors in the defeated camp more or less sincerely pledged allegiance to president Ouattara shortly after former president Gbagbo's arrest on April 11, 2011. Consequently, the conversations about immediate peace building and the larger state building continued in this context.

As for any other West African state that experienced constant instability for more than two decades and the trauma of a full-blown civil war, for Cote d'Ivoire, peace will have to mean more than just leaving behind the overt manifestations of murderous physical violence and attendant socioeconomic hardships that so victimised the Ivorian people. Although armed violence by more or less organised groups has markedly diminished since 2011, there are still instances of sporadic violence that are antithetical to peace in its simplest sense. Furthermore, peace building must also mean more than drastically reducing the symbolic violence that has become rife in the current political culture. This is evident in the vitriolic pronouncements of Ivoirian political parties and media editorials, singularly newspapers.⁷⁸ For Cote d'Ivoire, sustainable peace must mean resolutely engaging an irreversible process of banning as unacceptable, even inconceivable, the option of threatening, in any form, much less using violence as a part of its state building conversations. This objective cannot be conceived as an end product. It is a permanent process that conditions, sustains, indeed, melds within the broader process of state/nation building. Again, as for any other postcolonial African state,

the latter process is best characterised as the long-term purposeful venture of “creating the various institutions of a machinery of governance including the administrative, political and constitutional subsystems of the society with which the leaders exercise sovereign authority.”⁷⁹ Obviously, the record of the venture that started more than fifty years ago, the “machinery of governance” that was being put in place before the crisis of the late 1990s and so far in the post-electoral crisis era, suggests that the state building project is in need of adjustments to say the least. In other words, the conversations that contribute to shaping the current state of affairs need correction both in tone and in content. Since the end of the post electoral crisis, these conversations have somehow lost the virulent tone and violence that characterised them during the November 2010-April 2011 period.

As to the substance and the accompanying policies to carry on the peace building and state building endeavour, a review of a few of them can serve to illustrate. It should be noted that, to his credit, President Ouattara wasted no time tackling the daunting task of trying to pull Cote d’Ivoire out of the predicament it found itself in on April 12, 2011 when president Gbagbo was dragged out of the ruins of his bombed out presidential palace. Enjoying the legitimacy bestowed on him by the international community, and the reputation of an able economist with a long experience in IFIs and in bailing out developing countries in dire economic situations, he succeeded in mobilising billions to jump-start the economy with an emphasis on labour intensive infrastructure building projects, and tackle the pressing issues of security and reconciliation in a particularly trying environment. His focus on economic growth is starting to bear fruit as indicators show that Côte d’Ivoire is on the path to economic recovery, with a GDP increase of 9.8 per cent in one year.⁸⁰ A promotion of economic development is of course an important dimension in the state building process.

A Truth, Dialogue, and Reconciliation Commission was set up. Made up of eminent and respected personalities, it is headed by Charles Konan Banny, a former Prime Minister. It should be noted that one of its members is Didier Drogba, a famed

professional footballer in Europe, around whose name all Ivoirian have no problem rallying. This is recognition of the importance and potential of football in the peace building process. Indeed, events around this very popular sport has been used for reconciling and uniting Ivoirians, who fervently rally behind the national team, forgetting their many lines of division.⁸¹ The commission has been working since, reorienting somehow the national conversations on peace and state building. It revived and reinvigorated the exhausted concepts of “national reconciliation” and “dialogue” through a communication campaign and other activities throughout the country and in the Ivoirian communities in the Diaspora, though the hurdles remains staggering and the results still very limited. The tension between reconciliation (which 83 % of Ivoirians believe is possible and desirable), the need to move on, and the cries for justice from the families of the 3000 killed and other victims (numbering tens of thousands) of the post-electoral crisis have made for difficult conversations and made more complicated the mission of the Commission.⁸² However, there is no alternative to this approach despite the attempts from various corners to manipulate the commission and its activities in pursuit of political ends. In spite of its limitations, its symbolism and psychological effect are critical to the dialogue and post-conflict rebuilding of a sense of national community and healing.

The decisive irruption of the military and other security forces on the national political scene in December 1999 (after a creeping role that started arguably much earlier), of course, the extensive use of weapons during the conflict and the permanent role security issues have played in national conversations combined to make the need to attend to the security sector and its relations to democratic institutions and to the citizenry imperative in the post crisis environment.

As N’Diaye has argued, the crisis only exacerbated a long-standing deleterious situation for the security sector and the state more generally, with deeper and older roots that were never attended to when propitious opportunities arose.⁸³ The situation created by the rebellion and the subsequent division of the country also

added another layer, creating a veritable political economy of permanent insecurity in which only managed to thrive a small group of civilian and military elites to the detriment of the populations and state institutions, which nearly collapsed. The post elections crisis and its security dimensions in particular needed to be seized upon to identify avenues for Cote d'Ivoire and its partners to develop strategies and action plans to implement genuine security sector reforms (SSR) to tackle this legacy. After the crisis, such reforms were seen as the cornerstone of national reconciliation not the least of which is the reconciliation between Ivoirian civil institutions and citizens and their armed and security forces, given the widespread human rights abuse that occurred. These reforms are also the condition for long-term political stability (for Cote d'Ivoire and its neighbourhood), and a democratic state based on the rule of law. This seems to have been the analysis President Ouattara shared when he appointed a national commission with a mandate to submit within 3 months a detailed plan to carry out a genuine and holistic security sector reform. That commission's work, supported technically by the UN mission in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and France, fulfilled its mission and proposed a comprehensive plan to reform nearly all sectors of the Ivorian state, its society and economy that is affected by security broadly constructed. The commission proposed also a comprehensive demobilisation disarmament, and reinsertion plan, that will contribute to peace building as well as reduced one of the most direct causes of conflict youth unemployment and availability of weapons. The national strategy on security sector reform developed in Cote d'Ivoire is one of the most comprehensive and inclusive so far in West Africa. Notably, it features a gender dimension that was made salient by the disproportionate victimisation of women throughout the crisis, and the fact that in some security bodies such as the gendarmerie, there still are no women. The need to reform the security sector, professionalise members of the security forces and isolate them from politics and ethnic manipulation has become an integral part of the national conversations. This has served to highlight the urgent need to demilitarise and reduce a pervasive culture of violence from Ivoirian society and culture and insist on the rule of law for all.

Part of the national conversation has been the issue of impunity and justice for the victims of the various human right abuses since the start of the armed conflict in 2002. The sending of former president Gbagbo and his former minister of youth and fervent supporter, Blé Goudé, to the International Criminal Court in The Hague and the continued absence of serious persecution of any of the Ouattara side of the conflict (evidenced by more than 150 thus far of Gbagbo's supporters arrested or on trial and none from Ouattara's) have infused into the national conversations the notion of "victors' justice."⁸⁴ This new concept has dominated the conversations on the need for justice for victims and complicated the efforts to move forward in the peace building process. Beyond its immediate implications for the peace building because of the deep resentment it inspires president Gbagbo's supporters,⁸⁵ the issue of the ICC has become an important theme of the state building process since it goes to national sovereignty and to whether the Ivoirian state has built (or rebuilt) a judicial system up to the task of judging accused criminals independently of the political authority and the pressures of public opinion.

As indicated throughout this study, the Ivoirian political class has been prisoner of ethnic politics since at least the formal introduction of the concept of *Ivoirité* under the Bédié régime. This poisonous concept and the related loaded notions of "northerners" and "southerners" have not been extirpated from the political discourse and mindset of most political actors and ordinary Ivoirians. While the national assembly passed a law on nationality and land, the tensions that marked the debate even between the politically allied parties in power, President Ouattara's RDR and Bédié's PDCI, not to mention the vociferous opposition of Gbagbo's party, the FPI,⁸⁶ were a clear indication that much still needs to be done to ban forever these concepts not just from the formal conversations. With the 2015 presidential elections looming, disputes on the census, ongoing, ethnically or regionally based tensions still brewing under the surface, and political parties such as the FPI, not yet reconciled to having lost power, this unresolved politics of ethnicity is bound to remain a dangerous unknown. Even when one bears in mind Marina Ottaway's astute observation that "in much of Africa ethnicity is not a problem until it is made

a problem,”⁸⁷ as Brian Kaas has convincingly demonstrated, appealing to ethnicity has remained the surest mechanism for political leaders to mobilise followers and retain political relevance.⁸⁸ Despite the bitter lessons of two decades of turmoil directly traceable to this proclivity, the dangerous tendency may not have changed much. This is clearly one of the main challenges Cote d’Ivoire faces in the period leading up to the next election. Already, in Cote d’Ivoire, another concept, that of “*rattrapage ethnique*” presented by its critics, as smacking of *Ivoirité*, in reverse for northerners and its supporters as a needed affirmative action remedy to rampant *Ivoirité*, which for years deprived northerners from equal opportunity. Another, which was one of the contentious issues before and during the 2010-2011 crisis is the composition and attributions of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI). The latest compromise on its composition has been rejected by the FPI, which will doubtless hamper effort to hold peaceful and transparent presidential elections in 2015.

A critical dimension of the state building process breakdown that Cote d’Ivoire has experience, but which has not been scrutinised enough is the concentration of power in the office of the president. This institutional flaw that allowed President Houphouet-Boigny to rule the country as a “presidential monarch” for more than thirty year is, in part, what makes this function so attractive. It enables a president to carry out his most outlandish whims without any institutional break of the tendency of power to corrupt. This concentration of powers within the presidency was inherited from the French Fifth Republic institutional arrangements, which aimed to remedy the dysfunctions of the French Fourth Republic’s parliamentary system, and uncritically adopted for the fledgling new Ivoirian state in 1960. Other aspects of the constitution, particularly the articles on citizenship and eligibility to run for the office of president, even succession in the office (for example) have been rightly the subject of permanent, contentious conversations, and were more or less judiciously altered. Oddly, the issue of exorbitant powers in the hands of one man in the context of weak institutions, singularly those supposed to balance the Executive, poorly educated populations, and an embattled civil society has been mostly

ignored. There seems to have been no noticeable efforts to visit this concentration of powers as part of the conversation on state building and democratisation. This is likely to remain an issue that needs to be addressed in any serious conflict prevention and state building conversation in the future.

Tentative conclusion

Cote d'Ivoire's post electoral crisis conversations on peace building and broader state building are only in their 3rd year, which means that any overall conclusion on its direction and lessons can only be tentative. Though violence persists in various forms and the culture of violence has not disappeared, the resolution of the post electoral stalemate did contribute to reduce it and offer an opportunity to overhaul and reinvigorate peace building. Of course, the state building adventure is much older and a few patterns can be discerned. Therefore, some conclusions in the form of propositions can be teased out about these processes in a number of areas the foregoing analysis has identified as critical. These themes are at the heart of the crisis of state building in Cote d'Ivoire. They include gender, the role and place of civil society, that of the elites, their interests and identity fixations as drivers of conflict. They also include the role and place of the security sector, and how it can enhance peace consolidation and state building, the uncritical adoption and perpetuation of the colonial state model and elections as a panacea, for violence and tensions. Finally, the impact of the extreme concentration of powers in the presidency and the long-term involvement of external actors in the processes are equally important to consider to fully understand the peace building and state building endeavour saga in Cote d'Ivoire.

Propositions for Field Research

For this study to answer precisely the central research question and its ancillary questions, the following propositions, derived from the insights this baseline study affords need to be examined empirically and the questions they provoke fully investigated.

Proposition # 1: Gender: The post electoral crisis seems to have revealed that a large number of victims were women and girls: to what extent has this factor affected the conversations? Has a seemingly heightened awareness of gender dimensions of conflict, peace building and state building translated into more gender guided conversations and policies? Or, conversely, has the sidelining of the voice of women and other gender issues continued?

Proposition # 2: Civil society's actual role in the conversations. Though it has participated at various levels in generating/fuelling the crisis and later in searching for solutions, by and large, civil society has not been given a prominent place in state building and peace building processes. What effect has this marginalisation had on these processes? Has the role of Ivoirian civil society been fully mapped and critically evaluated to better assign it more prominent and more constructive role?

Proposition # 3: State building and peace building (and conflict making) have been almost exclusively controlled and conducted by Ivoirian political, intellectual and business elites and have mostly profited them to the detriment of ordinary Ivoirians. What mechanisms and safeguards need to be in place to make conflict unprofitable to the elites?

Proposition # 4: State building and peace building have been marred by violence by state security institutions as well as non-state security actors. To what extent did the dysfunctions of the security sector of Cote d'Ivoire (and their neglect) contribute to the breakdown? What could have been done to better integrate Security Sector Reform (SSR) in the peace agreements? Have the reforms being carried so far contributed to transforming the role and place of security institutions to make them supportive of peace building and state building?

Proposition # 5: The Westphalian model and colonial state model have been the unquestioned models for state building in Cote d'Ivoire (as elsewhere in Africa). To what extent have these models been critically re-examined in light of the failures witnessed over the last fifty years, and what alternatives can be considered?

Proposition # 6: Throughout the peace building phase and since the 1990s, elections have been fetishized as the cure-all to the crisis of development, state building, and of violent political conflict. To what extent did this focus on elections and their mechanics with the aim of holding "free and fair elections" contribute to exacerbate conflict instead, and complicate peace building and state building processes?

Proposition # 7: Peace building and state building efforts have not tackled the issue of the exorbitant powers concentrated in the executive and the need for more power balance between the other branches of government and even civil society. Assuming the overall institutional arrangement existing in the current constitution will remain, do Ivoirian see this oversight as a significant source of conflict, and do they consider a better balance between branches likely to curb the ambition among leading elites to want to be president at all cost?

Proposition # 8: Cote d'Ivoire's peace building process has been marked by the continued involvement of external actors (individuals, states, regional and international organisations). What assessment can be done of these actors? In the end, have they helped or harmed the peace building and ultimately the state building process?

Endnotes

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