

Examining the Role of Third-Party Mediation in Cote d'Ivoire's Conflict: Peacemakers or Spoilers?

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Introduction

Until recently, Cote d'Ivoire was considered one of the richest and most stable West African countries. However, in September 2002 crisis erupted in the country as a result of pressure on the economy and political ambitions of some individuals in the country. Consequently, the already fractious relations between *étrangers* (foreigners) of Burkinabe and Malian heritage and those who consider themselves as real Ivorians² became the scapegoats for pursuing such political ambitions. Hence, the term *Ivoirite*, meaning Ivorianness, was used as a political tool for exclusion. The effect of *ivoirite* was the emergence of a power struggle that ensued after the death of President Houphouët-Boigny in 1993. It also generated political crisis and instability that resulted in a coup d'état in December 1999 led by General Robert Gueï, who overthrew President Henri Konan Bédié.

The paper examines the role of third-party mediation in conflict, specifically Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), United Nations (UN), African Union (AU) and French mediation efforts in Cote d'Ivoire's conflict. It also assesses outcomes of their efforts. This paper argues that ECOWAS, as a third-party mediator, can become an effective platform for conflict prevention, management and resolution because it provides the basis for sub-regional diplomacy and based on previous experiences has adopted "Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security."³

The paper first of all provides a brief overview of the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire and a theoretical framework for this discussion. The third part of the paper reviews specifically the mediatory roles played by the ECOWAS⁴, AU, France and the UN. The fourth part deals with the assessment of the various mediatory roles played by the above mentioned organisations and country. The fifth and final part of the paper examines third-party mediation in Africa and Cote d'Ivoire specifically.

Theoretical overview of Third-Party Mediation

Conflict rarely involves two sides. There is usually support from third-parties either by direct or indirect intervention. The third-party may then have a direct or indirect impact on and interest in the conflict. More so, the majority of conflicts that have occurred have had the involvement of third-parties in resolving them. Much as third-party mediatory role is important both theoretically and practically, it is also the case that literature on the subject is scarce in Ghana. Majority of modern African countries lack the science and art of mediation essentially in the areas of its strategy, methods and structures⁵. Coupled with this is also the lack of skill, capacity and support.

It is also worth noting that the role of third-parties in conflict management has a long history, which begins with colonisation, attainment of independence from colonial rule to the present. The process also has different forms, dimensions and purposes depending on the nature of the conflict. The main point of concern for this paper however, is linked to the low level of trust between conflicting parties (necessitating a third-party involvement) as well as the position and

² See Cote d'Ivoire, threats hang heavy over the future, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index.engafr310132005> (accessed 8/052007)

³ <http://www.sec.ecowas.int/sitecedeo/english/ap101299.htm> (accessed 12 September 2007)

⁴ It is important to note that under ECOWAS certain African States participated actively in the process in Cote d'Ivoire and will therefore be addressed as such.

⁵ Nathan, L. "Mediation in African Conflicts: The Gap Between Mandate and Capacity", Africa Mediators' Retreat, 2007, p. 11

strategies that third-parties adopt that come to bear greatly on the conflict⁶. Thus the third-party becomes important based on his ability to balance power among conflicting parties, conflicting attitudes and distrust in facilitating a form of negotiation.

The changing nature of international politics and the responses to conflicts especially in Africa requires African efforts to develop sustainable and effective ways in mediating in conflicts.⁷ Many facilitated dialogues and mediation efforts fail because the facilitator or mediator is not qualified, lacks credibility with one or more sides to the conflict.⁸

Mediation is a process of intervention by a third-party or intermediary to facilitate or enforce a mutually acceptable settlement between disputants. From this definition, it is assumed that third-party mediatory role is a way of managing conflict with the sole aim of finding, proposing, negotiating or enforcing a settlement. Thus it is seen as a strategy to facilitate or impose a settlement even when the disputants are unable to reach an amicable agreement on their own.

However the imposition of settlement without the willingness of the disputants may lead to failure or cause the conflict to protract. Mediation is not based on the use of force; neither does it help any of the parties to win. State and intergovernmental mediators frequently deviate from the logic of mediation and resort instead to power-based diplomacy. The tendency for quick fixes in areas of deep rooted identity conflicts by mediators and interveners complicates the crisis rather than resolve it. Mediation is also a confidence-building exercise where a bridge is built between the adversaries. For a third-party mediatory role to be successful, it should have the following:

- be non-partisan;
- the consent of the parties to the mediation process and appointment of a mediator;
- have in mind that the conflict cannot be quickly and easily resolved;
- the disputing parties must have ownership of settlement(which is one of the strong points when it comes to Cote d'Ivoire);
- the mediators must be flexible and creative;
- mediators must be cautious in applying punitive measures;
- have high level of empathy and sensitivity to maintain trust, confidence and control over meetings;
- range of distinctions with respect to nature, timing and purpose have to be carefully examined; and
- have methods of facilitating good listening and ensuring that conflicting parties talk to each other and not past each other.⁹

A mediation process uses third-party or intermediaries (as they are sometimes called). They are people, organisations or nations who enter a conflict to try to help the parties de-escalate or resolve it.¹⁰ They generally do not take sides. A third-party can be formal or informal.

The role of mediation in either inter-state or intrastate conflicts in order to bring about a peaceful resolution is encouraged by theories as well as the international community¹¹. Theoretical

⁶ The role of the third-party in this case will be to understand these elements and be able to adopt the right tools for an effective resolution of the conflict.

⁷ Nathan L, *Mediation in African Conflicts: The Gap Between Mandate and Capacity*, Africa Mediators Retreat, 2007, p. 11

⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 12-18

⁹ Nathan, *Mediation in African Conflicts*

¹⁰ Burgess Heidi, 'Intermediaries', *Beyond Intractability*, Jan. 2004, Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, USA, http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/development_conflict_theory (accessed 25th April 2007)

approaches to conflict resolution treat the role of third-party mediation as important factors in escalating or de-escalating the conflict. Different sets of obligations and rights are accorded by the theory based on the partial or impartial position that a third-party officially or unofficially takes¹².

Mediation therefore, ranges from impartial and pacific (non-coercive) diplomacy to the imposition of agreements on the conflicting parties using political leverage and sometimes even force. Hence, the issues of partiality or impartiality or the extent to which a third-party enters a conflict is a significant indicator in the effective resolution of any conflict. It is also argued that in instances where a third-party is partial there is high proportion that that mediation will succeed rather than if the third-party remains neutral or impartial¹³.

In the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire the role of third-party mediation is both complex and multiple. As to whether these third-parties were legitimate and if their efforts were coordinated will be discussed later in the paper.

Overview of the Political Crisis in Cote d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire is located on the West Coast of Africa. Her immediate neighbours are Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso.¹⁴ After independence in 1960, the country enjoyed relative political stability and socio-economic prosperity under President Felix Houphouët-Boigny, its founding leader. The political stability and economic wealth of the country attracted foreign workers especially from her neighbours and some foreign investors, particularly from France. However, prior to his death in 1993, the country began to experience a decline in its economy partly because of the shocks from the global economy with which it was closely tied. Thus, like other African countries, this created the basis for economic crisis, which adversely impacted upon the relationship between the migrant workers and Ivorians but also the capacity of the political class to promote political and economic patronage. To some extent, the birth of *Ivoirite* can be traced to such economic crisis.

During Houphouët-Boigny's reign the political crisis became increasingly apparent but he managed to control such political uprisings through his one-party rule and the boom from economic prosperity. After his death, a political vacuum was created and as the economy began to decline and resources became scarce, attention was drawn to the concept of *Ivoirite* as a tool for exclusion. *Ivoirite* became an expression of the reinvention of the collective Ivorian persona, in reaction to the effects of economic openness, neutralising the expression of any specific identity.¹⁵ *Ivoirite* sowed seeds of paranoia, impoverished the foundations of community life, and produced an Ivorian society that was characterised by fear. Communities became afraid of each other on the basis of identities which became fixed.

Aspects of the crisis could be identified within areas of trade and economy. According to a report by *Global Witness*, Cote d'Ivoire is the world's biggest producer of cocoa and cocoa has played a

¹¹ Barseghyan, K. & Karaev, Z. 'Playing cat-and-mouse: conflict and third-party mediation in post Soviet space', *OJPCR: The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution* 6.1 Fall: 192-209 (2004), http://www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/6_1nk.htm

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Carment, D., Rowlands, D. 'The role of bias in third-party intervention: theory and evidence' http://bcsia.ksg.harvard.edu/BCSIA_content/documents/carment_oct01.pdf (accessed 11 May 2007)

¹⁴ Kamidza, L. Situation report, Cote d'Ivoire in Conflict Trends, Post-conflict reconstruction in Africa, ACCORD, 2006, Issue 1, p.26

¹⁵ Akindes, Francis. Cote d'Ivoire: Socio-political Crisis, 'Ivoirite' and the Course of History, *African Sociological Review*, http://www.codesria.org/Links/Publications/asr7_2_full/akindes.pdf (accessed 08/05/2007)

role in the conflict as one of the country's main cash crops.¹⁶ It is the country's main economic resource representing an average 35 per cent of the total value of Ivorian export worth 750 billion CFA per year (\$1.4bn). Ten per cent of the country's cocoa is grown in the rebel held north; the rest is grown in the government controlled south. Between 60 and 70 per cent of the Ivorian people are engaged in some form of agricultural activity, but mostly in cocoa. Under its first Prime Minister and later president, Houphouët-Boigny, Cote d'Ivoire exhibited "political stability" despite ongoing crisis and experimentations in its neighbouring states. During the 1960s and 70s, Cote d'Ivoire experienced the 'Ivorian miracle'.¹⁷ The average annual GDP grew by 11% between 1960 and 70, and by 7% between 1970 and 80. This miracle however began to decline putting pressure on the economy and Houphouët's successor, Henri Konan Bédié's presidency. The economy performed poorly in the 1980s and early 1990s, and high population growth coupled with economic decline resulted in a steady fall in living standards. Gross national product per capita was \$727 in 1996, but had fallen to \$669 by 2003.¹⁸ Government corruption and mismanagement led to steep reductions in foreign aid in 1998-99. This led to the first coup attempt on 24 December 1999.

The coup d'état led by General Robert Guéï to overthrow the then president Henri Konan Bédié resulted in political instability and some human rights abuses. The struggle for power was made worse over issues of nationality and eligibility to stand for elections. This led to the disqualification of Alassane Ouattara of the Rally of the Republicans (RDR). Mr. Ouattara seemed to have been favoured by the French. He may have been the right man to push the economic agenda of the West if it had not been for the concept of *Ivoirite* developed by his opponents as a political tool of exclusion. He was an economist and previously held positions in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the West African Central Bank. He also became a Prime Minister under Houphouët-Boigny from November 1990 – December 1993. Ouattara was indeed seen as a threat and an outsider. Concerns on legitimacy and eligibility became obvious in the October 2002 presidential elections. Due to disputes over the results of the elections, violent clashes between the two main conflicting parties, the government controlled south, led by Laurent Gbagbo and the rebel controlled north led by General Guéï ensued. A Supreme Court order declared Gbagbo as winner.¹⁹

Municipal elections were held in March 2001 and in October of the same year President Gbagbo initiated a policy of national reconciliation. He organised a forum to address the issues of contention including questions of nationality, land ownership, conditions of service of the security forces and disputed legitimacy of his government. This led to Accra I Summit meeting in Ghana out of which evolved a final communiqué. Among other things, they agreed to oppose undemocratic ways to power, professionalizing the security forces and improve general conditions of service. It was further agreed to create a broad based national electoral commission and a national body to address the question of land ownership as well as forming a new government of national unity.

Subsequently, a broad-based government was formed in August 2002 where all of Cote d'Ivoire's main opposition political parties were included in the new cabinet. The issue of Ouattara's

¹⁶ "Hot chocolate: how cocoa fuelled the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire", A Report by Global Witness, June 2007, http://www.globalwitness.org/media_library_get.php/428/Cotedivoire.pdf (accessed 23rd July 2007)

¹⁷ see <http://www.infoplease.com/country/profiles/cote-d-ivoire.html> (accessed 23rd April 2007)

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ see The First Report of the General Secretary on Cote d'Ivoire, s/2003/07, <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions> (accessed 23rd April 2007)

nationality was also resolved by a court order granting him a certificate of nationality on 22 July 2002.²⁰

Failure to address the controversies over nationality laws and eligibility conditions adequately exacerbated the struggle for power in September 2002. This disrupted the initial steps taken towards national reconciliation and reducing tensions. The popular demands were for the resignation of President Laurent Gbagbo, the holding of all inclusive national elections, a review of the constitution and an end to the continued dominance of southerners in the affairs of the country. The crisis re-emerged as a result of attacks on military installations in Abidjan, the capital and Bouake, the second largest city and in the northern town of Korhogo. There were allegations that the simultaneous attacks were attempts of a coup d'état with support from foreigners and not just a mutiny²¹. The attacks led to extreme harassment of foreigners including immigrant workers from Liberia, Sierra Leone and Burkina Faso.²² The destruction of their settlements led to the displacement of some 20,000 people in Abidjan.²³

Several military operations by security forces to dislodge the rebel soldiers from seized townships were unsuccessful. By the end of September the rebel forces had taken hold of the northern part of the country. Their leader was Guillaume Soro and their movement was called Patriotic Movement of Cote d'Ivoire (MPCI). The main demands of the movement were the resignation of President Laurent Gbagbo, the holding of all inclusive national elections, a review of the constitution and an end to the continued dominance of southerners in the affairs of the country.²⁴

The conflict became complex with the emergence of two new armed groups, the Movement for Justice and Peace (MJP) and the Ivorian Popular Movement of the Great West (MPIGO). These armed groups captured the Danane and Man townships in November 2002. They were later formed into a unified group called *forces nouvelles* translated as New Forces. Their main objective was to avenge the death of General Guei who had been killed during the attacks in Abidjan. They also demanded the resignation of the President Gbagbo.²⁵

After several mediation efforts leading to the signing of a number of agreements and failure to implement them, the government of Cote d'Ivoire introduced direct dialogue in the implementation of peace. On December 19, 2006 therefore, 'President Gbagbo in his address to the Ivorian nation openly declared his intention to discuss directly with the leadership of the rebellion that controlled 60 per cent of the northern half of the country²⁶.' This decision however, did not come with its initial scepticism and pessimism.

In January of the following year, Guillaume Soro expressed similar sentiments in his New Year speech that, 'opposing groups should unite and prepare for a decisive move that would alter the face of peace in Cote d'Ivoire.'²⁷ Later on direct peace talks were announced as the new strategy for peace between President Gbagbo's FPI and Guillaume Soro's *New Forces*. In essence, the Ouagadougou Peace Accord was not any different from the other agreements that were signed. It however set itself apart in terms of the details and initiatives since the protagonists agreed to re-

²⁰ see <http://news.bbc.co.uk> (accessed 23rd April 2007)

²¹ Jaye, T. 'Armed Conflict in La Cote d'Ivoire: critical reflection', African Civil Society on the crisis in Ivory Coast, Forum on the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire, <http://www.cdd.org.uk> (accessed on 26th April 2007)

²² *ibid*

²³ <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions> (accessed 24th April 2007)

²⁴ See Background <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/minuci/background.html>, (accessed 23rd April 2007)

²⁵ See Background <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/minuci/background.html>, (accessed 23rd April 2007)

²⁶ See <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/EGUA-743M28?OpenDocument> (accessed 28th June 2007)

²⁷ *Ibid*

trace through time frames a road map to peace. It was also significant in terms of the fact that Burkina Faso's Blaise Compaore who was suspected to have supported the rebels hosted this meeting thereby establishing the element of trust needed in third-party mediation.

The major points contained in this accord were the complete dismantling of the buffer zone signalling the end of war including consensus on how to deal with the question of who is an Ivorian; engaging in electoral processes to end in December, 2007, merging of two armies; restoration of state authority nation-wide; implementation of frameworks and follow-up mechanism; consolidating peace; national reconciliation; security and freedom of movement. Essentially the Ouagadougou peace accord is as a result of an internal dialogue as against a victory of one camp over another which has brought hope of imminent peace. Third-party mediation was crucial in bridging the communication gap between the two groups. This led to the internal dialogue that preceded the Ouagadougou peace agreement.

Regional and International Mediation Processes in Cote d'Ivoire

The United Nations Security Council on seeing that the crisis posed a greater threat to the peace and security of the region, set up a political mission, United Nations Mission to Cote d'Ivoire (MINUCI) on 13th May, 2003.²⁸ The mission was to facilitate the implementation of the communiqué agreed to by the parties themselves and to complement the operations of the peacekeeping force of ECOWAS. This mission was later replaced by the United Nations Operations in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) whose mandate is to oversee and ensure the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Accord.²⁹

Mediation efforts carried out by external actors including ECOWAS, UN, AU and France have sought to halt the hostilities and to advance the peace process. The timely intervention in Cote d'Ivoire of ECOWAS sets it apart from other crisis in the West African sub-region. The Ivorian crisis on the surface may have been primarily internal; it however had regional and international dimensions when both the Ivorian rebel groups and the government of Cote d'Ivoire recruited mercenaries from Liberia to support their forces in the west.³⁰ In spite of these initiatives, a lot still remains to be done by third-party mediators and mediation processes in general in the Cote d'Ivoire crisis and the West African sub-region as a whole. Currently, there seems to be hope for lasting peace in Cote d'Ivoire with the signing of the Ouagadougou Peace Accord, the dismantling of the Zone of Confidence and the ceremonial burning of arms to signify the end of war.

In summary the third-party mediation processes involved the signing of the Linas-Marcoussis Accord (LMA) by representatives of government, major political parties and rebel groups in January 2003. It provided for the creation of a power-sharing government of national reconciliation, the disarmament and demobilization and democratic elections by October 2005. The Accra and Pretoria Accords sought to provide benchmarks and mechanisms for the implementation of these accords. Failure on the part of the disputants to implement key provisions of the agreements- such as voter registration and disarmament of the New Forces rebels and pro-government militias led to the cancellation of the October 2005 elections. Meanwhile, the constitutional mandate and legislatures of the president should have ended with the elections. The UN Security Council thus passed Resolution 1633, which maintained Gbagbo as

²⁸ United Nations Mission to Côte d'Ivoire, <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/minuci> (accessed 11 May 2007)

²⁹ <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unoci/index.html> (accessed 11 May 2007)

³⁰ Kirwin, M. The Security Dilemma and conflict in Cote D'Ivoire, *Nordic Journal of African Studies* (1): 42-45, 2006, Michigan State University, <http://www.njas.helsinki.fi/pdf-files/vol15num1/kirwin.pdf>, (accessed 11 May 2007)

President and Charles Konan Banny as interim Prime Minister. Resolution 1633 charged the Prime Minister with implementing the Peace agreement and organizing elections. Since March 2007, a series of direct dialogue between Gbagbo and Soro with the mediation of Burkina-Faso and exclusive of other signatories to the LMA led to the signing of the Ouagadougou accord. It proposed a revised timetable for the reunification, demobilization and voter identification processes resulting in elections by January 2008.

ECOWAS Mediation in Cote d'Ivoire

In the wake of the attempted coup on 19 September 2002, three countries, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo reaffirmed their total solidarity for the government and people of Cote d'Ivoire. Nigeria offered to send troops and war planes to support President Gbagbo.³¹ In support of that statement three Alpha jets belonging to the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) were deployed to Cote d'Ivoire to assist the government in quelling the mutiny by some 750 soldiers protesting against plans to demobilise them. At the same time they expressed their absolute rejection of all actions leading to the unconstitutional change of government in any country and strongly condemned the aggression perpetuated against the Ivorian government as it was against the norms and principles for which ECOWAS stands for.³² These were contained in a communiqué issued at the end of a closed door meeting between delegates from Ghana, Nigeria, Togo and the Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo and his government in Abidjan.³³

In the same vain, the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, condemned the coup attempt and the violence that ensued in its totality.³⁴ The heads of State and Government of ECOWAS came together to form six-nation mediation group to establish contact with the insurgents to help find peaceful solution to the crisis. The group made up of Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Nigeria, Niger and Togo also prevailed upon the rebels to cease all hostilities in order to restore normalcy to the occupied towns. This of course went unheeded.

Prior to the signing of the various agreements under ECOWAS namely the Abidjan Cease-fire, Lomé , Accra I, II and III, Pretoria I and II agreements; on 29 September the sub-regional organisation convened an emergency summit meeting in Accra (the Accra I Meeting) to prepare the ground for peace negotiations to take place. The summit aimed at investigating the possibilities of negotiating peace between the conflicting parties to bring the hostilities to an end. It was led by the ECOWAS Chairman and President of Senegal Abdoulaye Wade. Fifteen heads of State and Government were expected to attend the one day summit held to discuss the situation in Cote d'Ivoire.³⁵

Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Nigeria, Niger and Togo played specific and significant roles in the process under the auspices of ECOWAS. They formed the Contact Group that together with the AU sought to promote dialogue between the rebels and the government of Cote d'Ivoire. Their effort was however met with resistance from President Gbagbo's government in signing the Abidjan agreement on the basis that the agreement would legitimize the rebels and divide the already fractured country. President Gbagbo finally accepted the agreement signed by the Patriotic Movement of Cote d'Ivoire (MPCI) after mediation talks by Senegalese Foreign Minister Cheikh Tidiane Gadio, then Executive Secretary of ECOWAS Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas and Ahmedou

³¹ "Ghana hosts ECOWAS talks on situation in Cote d'Ivoire", *Daily Graphic*, Saturday September 28, 2002

³² <http://www.sec.ecowas.int/sitecedea0/english/ap101299.htm> (accessed 12 September 2007)

³³ "Three reaffirm support for Cote d'Ivoire government", Abidjan, *Daily Graphic*, Monday September 23, 2002, pp. 1& 3

³⁴ "Revenge attacks in Cote d'Ivoire", *Daily Graphic*, Tuesday, September 24, 2002, p. 5

³⁵ See Background. <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/minuci/background.html> (accessed 20/06/2007)

Ould-Abdallah, UN Secretary-General's Special representative to West Africa.³⁶ The Foreign Minister renewed the mediation efforts through talks with President Gbagbo in Abidjan and with MPCJ in Bouake which led to the signing of the cease-fire agreement of 17th October, 2002. This action reiterated the sanctity of the ECOWAS protocol on democracy and good governance, under which member states are committed to zero tolerance for power obtained or maintained by unconstitutional means.

ECOWAS spearheaded the signing of two agreements, namely, the 17th October Cease-fire Agreement in Abidjan and the 1st of November Lome Agreement in Lome, Togo. These efforts were led by the Foreign Minister of Senegal Cheikh Tidiane Gadio and the Late President of Togo Gnassingbe Eyadema respectively.

The Abidjan Agreement was then followed by the Lomé Agreement aimed at resolving the political differences between MPCJ and the Ivorian government. It however ended in stalemate, because the MPCJ insisted that President Gbagbo resign, the constitution be reviewed and fresh elections be held. President Gbagbo on the other hand also demanded for the disarmament of the MPCJ and commitment to preserving the territorial integrity of the country.³⁷

The Lome agreement saw to the deployment of ECOWAS and French forces and the creation of a buffer zone (Zone Of Confidence). Much as these agreements were undermined, they did secure temporary cessation of hostilities and further degeneration of the crisis.

After a meeting of the ECOWAS Defence and Security Commission, some 1,300 troops of ECOWAS together with 3,800 French forces, were deployed to monitor the fragile cease-fire ending the civil war that erupted on 19 September 2002.³⁸

The failure of the Abidjan/Lomé Agreements, the Accra I Meeting and the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Peace Accord in resolving the conflict led to the signing of the Accra II and III agreements. The Accra II agreement was chaired by President John Agyekum Kufuor of Ghana with representatives of ECOWAS, AU and prominent personalities including the special representative of French Speaking countries Organisation (OFI) in attendance.³⁹

While the Accra II Agreement (7th March 2003) sought to provide avenues of mediation and reinforce the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Peace Accord, the Accra III Agreement (30 July 2003) was aimed at reactivating these two latter agreements. The two agreements brought out the weaknesses that were identified in the Linas-Marcoussis. Failure to implement these agreements necessitated the mediation of Thabo Mbeki of South Africa under the auspices of the AU.

The African Union (AU) Mediation in Cote d'Ivoire

African leaders have recently, reformed the institutions and policies of the continent which saw the change of OAU to AU in 2002.⁴⁰ Unlike the OAU, the AU backed by the Constitutive act⁴¹

³⁶See Background, <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/minuci/background.html> (accessed 20/06/2007)

³⁷ Addo, P. "Peacemaking in West Africa: Progress and Prospects", KAIPIC Monograph No. 3, November 2005, p.50

³⁸ <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/minuci/background.html> (accessed 20/06/2007)

³⁹ One might want to ask, why a special representative of OFI? The implications for their representation at such a meeting will be discussed in the assessment part of the paper.

⁴⁰ http://www.au2002.gov.za/docs/summit_council/secprot.htm (accessed 20/06/2007)

⁴¹ Ibid.

envisaged a more integrated level of continental governance. Among other things, this act provided for a 15-member Peace and Security Council to replace the OAU's Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution.⁴² One of its aims is to facilitate the AU's responses to crisis in the region.

At a meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council, the International Working Group was formed on October 6, 2006 in Addis Ababa and endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolution 1633. Its mission was to evaluate and follow the transition in Cote d'Ivoire and provide the Ivorian government with the assistance necessary for continuing the peace process and holding elections before October 31, 2006.⁴³ Under the AU therefore, the South African President, Thabo Mbeki led a mediation process to put the peace process back on track and the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis and the Accra agreements. Speaking for and as a member of the AU, President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria said that the threat to Cote d'Ivoire was a threat to the AU especially when the AU had taken a decision to ensure the sustenance of democracy in each African country.⁴⁴

In the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire, Thabo Mbeki of South Africa joined forces with ECOWAS and the United Nations in applying pressure on both the Ivorian government and the rebel forces. President Thabo Mbeki emphasised the need for ECOWAS and AU to work together on the issue of Cote d'Ivoire. He said, "We need to act with speed to find a lasting solution to the conflict".⁴⁵ The Pretoria I and II Agreements were born out of this endeavour on 6 April 2005 and 29 June respectively. The Pretoria I Agreement sought to rectify outstanding issues of disarmament and dismantling of the militia throughout the entire territory that undermined the implementation of Linas-Marcoussis. It was the failure to address such issues as disarmament and demobilization that led to the signing of the second Pretoria agreement of the Declaration on the Implementation of the Pretoria Peace Agreement on the peace process in Cote d'Ivoire.⁴⁶ Among other issues that were reviewed and for implementation was the sanction to be imposed by the AU if either party failed to comply with the implementation of the agreement. Up until this point the rebel leader of the MPCI, Guillaume Soro had given up on African mediation effort in the crisis due to lack of trust and the supposedly biased stance some of the mediators had taken and called on France and the UN to mediate the peace process.⁴⁷

French Mediation Efforts in Cote d'Ivoire

French involvement in Ivory Coast has been apparent through colonial times till present. France provided all forms of support to the Houphouet-Boigny regime and had until 2002 managed to prevent any coup attempts⁴⁸. France became involved in Cote d'Ivoire since it became a constituent unit of Federation of French West Africa from 1904-1958. Initially governmental affairs were conducted from Paris, France. Under the French policy of 'association', Africans in

⁴² See http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/organs/The_Peace_%20and_Security_Council_en.htm (accessed 24/09/2007)

⁴³ See http://www.diplomatique.gouv.fr/en/country-files_156/cote-ivoire_191/iwg_4127/first-international-working-group-11.08.05_2458.html (accessed 20/06/2007)

⁴⁴ "ECOWAS Chairman calls for dialogue", *Daily Graphic*, Monday, September 30, 2002

⁴⁵ "ECOWAS Chairman calls for dialogue", *Daily Graphic*, Monday, September 30, 2002

⁴⁶ See http://www.africa-union.org/News_Events/Communiqu%C3%A9s/PSC%20Communique%2034e%20on%20Cote%20d'Ivoire%20Sirte%2003july05.doc (accessed 24/09/2007)

⁴⁷ "Cote d'Ivoire Rebel Head Calls for UN, French Mediation", http://english.people.com.cn/200212/24/eng20021224_108998.shtml, (accessed 20/06/2007)

⁴⁸ Cote d'Ivoire: trapped between two wars: violence against civilians in Western Cote d'Ivoire, Human Rights Watch, Aug. 2003, vol.15, no. 14 (A)

Cote d'Ivoire were officially French subjects without rights to citizenship or representation in Africa or France. This situation however changed and Africans were granted citizenship. Meanwhile the rights to politically organize all other forms of forced labour were abolished as a result of government reforms in 1946. With the 1956 overseas reform Act (*Loi Cadre*) powers were transferred from Paris to elected territorial government in French West Africa. It also argued for the removal of all voting inequalities.

When the crisis broke out on 19 September of 2002, France sent troops there to protect French and other foreign citizens. As the crisis became worse, it reinforced its military presence with an order to fire at anyone who obstructs their mission⁴⁹. The French also offered to hold peace talks in Paris while reaffirming support to African efforts. The head of the main rebel force, Guillaume Soro called for the involvement of France and the United Nations in mediating in the crisis that had lasted for three months. Soro was reported as saying that 'I no longer and not at all believe in African negotiations on Cote d'Ivoire. Nothing concrete has been produced for peace.'

At the onset of the crisis, France brokered a peace deal between Laurent Gbagbo and the rebels from the north in 2002-3. The talks led to the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement in which it was agreed, among other things, the establishment of an all inclusive government of national reconciliation with wide executive powers and with primacy given to President Gbagbo's government. The agreement gave more power to the rebel group than necessary at the expense of the ruling government. With this, the stage for Linas-Marcoussis was already set for failure. France sent in a large number of military contingents to separate the combatants as civil unrest broke out following the signing of the agreement.

The Licorne Force approved by the UN Security Council was deployed to Cote d'Ivoire to facilitate the implementation of the agreement on 6th February. It was there to also protect French nationals and interest in the country. Backed by the Security Council's Resolution 1464⁵⁰, the force was mandated to participate in the establishment of security within the border zone with Liberia and to provide security for foreigners and evacuate them when necessary.

The Linas-Marcoussis Agreement was borne out of France's efforts to mediate peace in Cote d'Ivoire's crisis, since it had economic interests and investments there. This interest needed to be protected. Thus, as long as the crisis continued, there was greater tendency that it would jeopardise the economic investments of France. Also important was the protection of French citizens who were resident in Cote d'Ivoire during the crisis. It essentially became the blue print in mapping out the way to peace and reconciliation in Cote d'Ivoire. The success or failure of its implementation was thus crucial to Cote d'Ivoire seeking an end to its political, economic and religious quagmire and to the effectiveness of mediation in the crisis as a whole.

The United Nations (UN) Mediation in Cote d'Ivoire

The United Nations' commitment to the Ivorian crisis became apparent with the arrival of the United Nations Mission in Cote d'Ivoire (MINUCI) on 13th May 2003 to assist the special representative of the UN Secretary General.⁵¹ This mission was deployed together with ECOWAS and French forces. The mandate of MINUCI was meant to facilitate, "the implementation by the Ivorian parties of Linas-Marcoussis agreement, and including a military component complementing the operations of the French and ECOWAS forces."⁵² The Council also approved the establishment of a small staff to support the Special Representative of the Secretary-General

⁴⁹ http://english.people.com.cn/200212/24/eng20021224_108998.shtml (accessed 20/06/2007)

⁵⁰ http://www.womenwarpeace.org/cote/docs/res_1464.pdf (accessed 20/06/2007)

⁵¹ See Background, <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/minuci/index.html> (accessed 23rd June 2007)

⁵² See Background, <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/minuci/index.html> (accessed 23rd June 2007)

on political, legal, civilian affairs, civilian police, elections, media and public relations, humanitarian and human rights issues, and the establishment of a military liaison group.⁵³

On 4th April 2004, MINUCI was replaced by a UN peacekeeping operation, the United Nations Operations in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI). UNOCI was established by Security Council Resolution 1528 of 27th February 2004⁵⁴ for an initial period of 12 months. The Council authorized UNOCI to use all necessary means to carry out its mandate within its capabilities and its areas of deployment. The mandate which was to be implemented in coordination with the French forces included:

- a) Monitoring the cessation of hostilities and movements of armed groups;
- b) disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration, repatriation and resettlement;
- c) disarmament and dismantling of militias;
- d) operations of identification of the population and registration of voters;
- e) reform of the security sector;
- f) protection of united nations personnel, institutions and civilians;
- g) monitoring of the arms embargo;
- h) support for humanitarian assistance;
- i) support for the redeployment of state administrations;
- j) support for the organisation of open, free, fair and transparent elections;
- k) assistance in the field of human rights;
- l) public information; and
- m) Law and order.⁵⁵

The United Nations played the fundamental role of backing decisions and agreements on paper and ensuring that those responsible carried out their necessary duties.

An Assessment of Third-Party Mediation in Cote d'Ivoire

One of the most common factors why third-party mediation fails is that the third-party is perceived to be (im) partial. A third-party may be perceived to favour one side over another, or may be thought to be more interested in its own agenda rather than the interests and/or needs of the conflicting parties.⁵⁶ This aspect of mediation was identified in the case of Cote d'Ivoire. Initially Burkina Faso was seen by the President Laurent Gbagbo's government as party to the crisis and therefore could not participate in any mediation processes at the time. The French were also seen to be taking care of their interests rather than those of Cote d'Ivoire in the midst of crisis.

Another factor may be that the d-party does not have the necessary and adequate background to intervene in a conflict. The third-party may not understand the nature of the dispute well enough to be an effective mediator. They may also not understand the cultural biases, constraints or otherwise of the disputants. Problems with mutual understanding and trust become more pronounced where a mediator fails to grasp these concepts as important and crucial to facilitating effective mediation processes.

⁵³ See MINUCI Mandate <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/minuci/mandate.html> (accessed 23rd June 2007)

⁵⁴ See Background, <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unoci/background.html> (accessed 25th June 2007)

⁵⁵ See Background, <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unoci/background.html> (accessed 25th June 2007)

⁵⁶ Burgess Heidi, 'Intermediaries', *Beyond Intractability*, Jan. 2004, Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, USA, http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/development_conflict_theory (accessed 25th April 2007)

Another related factor is the extent of commitment that a mediator makes. A conflict may take a short time or a long time to evolve and escalate but it takes even longer to de-escalate. This means that conflicts that have gone on for many years take more years to resolve. Any individual or groups of individuals who enter into mediation process for a couple of weeks or months need to know who the disputants are, their cultures, essentially the immediate and remote causes of the conflict. They have to adopt a sympathetic approach so as to receive and maintain the continued trust of the disputants. Whenever and wherever an outsider enters into an on going conflict, the issues of mutual understanding, respect and trust are at the core of an effective mediation process.

Due to the dynamic nature of these conflicts, it has become imperative to look at third-party mediation as a tool to help prevent, manage and resolve conflict, more or less harness the areas of their strength for a holistic, systematic and consistent management of conflict. It is most often the case that one conflict that occurs in one African state affects the other or all of the African countries bordering it. A typical example is that of the Mano River Union (MRU) conflict. What started in Liberia in 1989 is linked to Sierra Leone and consequently to the fighting that broke out in Guinea.⁵⁷ Essentially, the mediators failed to identify the dynamic links as well as the interest behind it⁵⁸. In the case of Cote d'Ivoire, the conflict immediately posed both a security and an economic threat to its immediate neighbours like Niger and Burkina Faso and the broader West African sub-region.⁵⁹

Thus a third-party that intervenes in such a conflict to restore peace needs to take into account all possible scenarios and be prepared to take the necessary action. If a comprehensive approach is not adopted the mediation process may only succeed in reducing violence only for it to re-emerge and sometimes more violent than before.

Third-parties that intervene in a conflict to restore peace need to understand the root causes of the conflict in order to develop appropriate mechanisms for its resolution. Third-party mediators also need to remain objective and impartial in their attempt to bring about peace without being seen to undermine the autonomy of either conflicting party. As such, third-parties should not have any interests whatsoever that will detract from the main purpose of creating a state of peace between and among conflicting parties.

The Ivorian crisis is not one that should quickly and easily be resolved since the political, economic and ethnic issues presented are endemic and needs to be properly grasped. These include deep seated emotions and sentiments that cannot easily be put aside to allow for reconciliation and a peaceful resolution of the crisis. One of such underpinnings is the question of naturalization. Naturalization is endemic to the extent that it will take gradual processes and more importantly time to allow for true reconciliation to occur. In this case, there is also a strong element of trust or lack of it and suspicion. This is the attitude that has permeated the mediation process in Cote d'Ivoire and exhibited by the belligerents themselves. It explains, to some extent, why several agreements signed have failed in various aspects of its implementation as well as the cancellation of 3 scheduled elections.

⁵⁷ Timothy Docking, "Responding to war and state collapse in West Africa", Special report no.81, 1 February 2002, www.usip.org (accessed 20 march 2007)

⁵⁸ Gberie, L. "Bringing Peace to West Africa: Liberia and Sierra Leone", Africa Mediators' Retreat, Conflict Mediation in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities, (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and The Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation, 2007), p.65

⁵⁹ See <http://www.un.org/unowa/unowa/studies/report-ci.pdf> and also <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/IDEP/UNPAN010221.pdf> (accessed 30th July 2007)

ECOWAS has and continues to play a prominent role in the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire. Being the economic heart of the region ECOWAS saw the gravity of the Ivorian crisis, its implications (economic and humanitarian) and the security risks it posed to the stability of the region and responded swiftly.

Not only did ECOWAS make the first attempt at mediating a peace process on the onset of crisis in Cote d'Ivoire, but continues to collaborate with other organisations in seeking a lasting solution to the crisis and the subsequent signing of peace agreements that has so far seen the crisis in its current state where power is being shared amongst the conflicting parties as well as the cessation of hostilities.

ECOWAS however, could not meet the challenges of resolving the Ivorian crisis single headedly. It lacked the capacity, skills and resources. It was therefore backed by UN operations together with France. ECOWAS not being able to handle mediation processes from the beginning of the crises to its end permitted the influence of other external parties. It also may have caused the conflict to protract. To the belligerents, the move by the UN and France to intervene in the conflict could be read as loss of control on the part of ECOWAS. The same could be said for the African Union's mediation in Cote d'Ivoire.

On the surface it was able to gain the trust and confidence of the conflicting parties and continued to hold the same up until the point where the rebel leader requested for France and the UN to take over the process of mediating peace talks, since he could not trust ECOWAS or African Union mediators. At certain points during the mediation process, the credibility of ECOWAS and the AU was questioned by either the government or the rebels because some member States were seen as party to the crisis and could therefore not be trusted. It could have also been the case that such issues were raised by the belligerents as a way of stalling the mediation process.

It would seem that ECOWAS is able to get some of its members to comply with directives and not others. There is interference through power play by constituent member states which is also backed by national interest and suspicion. There is a gap between the initiative to act (or pay lip service) and actually taking up the challenge of acting on decisions and directives. This hampers the consistency of ECOWAS to achieve maximum result where mediating in crisis situations in the sub-region is concerned. Although the decision to resolve the crisis lay solely with the belligerents, ECOWAS being a force in the region didn't have any set standards for getting the government and the rebel group to comply with decisions and agreements that were reached.

Accordingly, Laurie Nathan argues that in accordance with the AU's Peace and Security Protocol, it has what it takes in theory to carry out effective mediation processes in Africa and indeed in the conflict in Cote d'Ivoire.⁶⁰ In practice, however, this has not always been the case. It is why this paper tends to argue for ECOWAS to seriously consider the theory and practice of mediating in conflict, since it already has an organized body that could constitute a framework for mediation. A coordinated and concerted effort between ECOWAS and the AU however should achieve the aim of combating crisis in the region.

There were also external interests that, to some extent, affected the mediation process in Cote d'Ivoire. Burkina Faso and Niger are the closest to Cote d'Ivoire, yet when the crisis ensued; it was Nigeria, Ghana and Togo that immediately took steps at calming the situation. Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger were already involved in the crisis since most of the so called "non-Ivorians" said to be the cause of the crisis were from these parts of the sub-region. If they had attempted or been part

⁶⁰Nathan, L., "Mediation and the AU's Panel of the Wise", in Peace in Africa: Towards a collaborative Security Regime, (ed) Field, S. Institute of Global Dialogue, Johannesburg, January 2004, pp. 63-80

of any mediation process at the onset, it would have been totally counter-productive or could have resulted in some form of inter-state conflict since there were already suspicions from all these angles. Indeed, the government of Cote d'Ivoire accused Burkina Faso of supplying arms to the rebels in fighting his government. It is, however, paradoxical that the final peace deal was hosted in Ouagadougou and signified the end of the crisis. It could also mean that suspicion has been cleared on the part of Burkina Faso and President Gbagbo, given the assurance that there will be no more troubles coming from those quarters.

Another possible explanation for Burkina Faso's cooperation and seeing to the end of the conflict borders on the resettlement of one of the largest groups of immigrants in Cote d'Ivoire, which lacks the resources to settle them. It is therefore in Burkina Faso's interest to see to it that issues are resolved once and for all and essentially for the concept of *ivoirite* (question of nationality) to be removed from the constitution of Cote d'Ivoire.

The fight for and control of natural resources is also at the root of the crisis. Peace talks and agreements have so far ignored the role of natural resources as well as the corruption and mismanagement within that sector. In times of civil unrest and war, the government of the day is not accountable for corruption and mismanagement. Political power and control allows for economic control and the benefits to be reaped from monopolizing through its main cash crop, cocoa. The North felt it had been deprived of some of these benefits for so long and thought it was time to demand its fair share of it. One could also readily suggest a form of federation in Cote d'Ivoire where the north and south had separate governments. But this form of federation will not work where only 10 percent of the country's cocoa is grown in the north and the rest in the south. The south is by far the richest both in cocoa and other produce. It is, thus, one solution that would not benefit the north and hence the need to take up arms and demand to be part of governance processes.

French Interests

According to Assie Lumumba and Lumumba-Kasongo⁶¹, "Cote d'Ivoire represents the immortal presence of France and its arrogance on African soil. Just as the Ivorian people rallied around the African Agricultural Union (*Syndicat Agricole Africain-SAA*) when it was created as a forum where they could express their opposition to the colonial situation, many are now expressing their refusal to see France continue its neo-colonial approach and process even when the people want a negotiated resolution to the problem". It goes without saying therefore that France's mediatory role in the crisis is highly suspicious.

French political and economic interests have made France a critical stakeholder in the Ivorian crisis. On the political front, France needs an individual who can consistently be used to monopolize French interest by ensuring that political decisions that are taken by the government of Cote d'Ivoire are in favour of the French.⁶² The struggle for political leadership is related to the actual or perceived protection of French control that the different Ivorian leaders can offer, to continue privatization and a preferential treatment of the French. The climate must also be right to ensure the security of the French and a prosperous economic investment. Once this political scene is set, then the exploitation of the economy can take place. These are important in understanding the driving force behind the power struggle and subsequently the crisis. This would explain why

⁶¹. A. Lumumba & Lumumba-Kasongo, (Eds), "Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) in the French and Global Capitalist System", *Africa Update Newsletter*, Vol. X, Issue 4 (Fall 2003):Conflict in Côte d'Ivoire (Pt. 2), <http://www.ccsu.edu/Afstudy/upd10-4.html> (accessed 29th June 2007)

⁶² Ibid

the OFI made sure it had representatives present anytime agreements were being negotiated to ensure that French interests were taken care of, otherwise that agreement was not to fall through.

The French operation was seen as a stand alone operation even though it had support from the ECOWAS forces. More so, the president did not regard the former colonial power as an honest broker leading to a deterioration of relations between the two countries and the peace agreement. To make matters worse, loyalist forces launched an offensive in the north killing French soldiers. Many acts of violence were meted out to the French community leading to their repatriation. France, on the other hand, responded by crippling what was left of Cote d'Ivoire's air force. This situation brought about fear and distrust on both sides.

According to Noel Mamere⁶³, a leading deputy of the Greens Political Party⁶⁴, the situation in Cote d'Ivoire is a result of France's Africa policy. Their policy did not allow for true democracy to take root in any of their former colonies. France is seen to be supporting dictatorial regimes in Africa over the years leading to exclusivity of certain political parties as has been seen in Cote d'Ivoire.⁶⁵

Elsewhere, it is argued that France cares little about the plight of Africans and especially when it comes to her former colonies.⁶⁶ It is rather in their interest to sow divisions among Africans on the basis of religion, nationality, ethnicity and resources (land), the root causes of most coups in Africa, Cote d'Ivoire included. France's initial stance, when the crisis occurred in September 2002, was to protect its interests and foreign nationals as well as some western nationals after which it called on the disputing parties to agree on a ceasefire and the resolution of the crisis through peaceful means. It was also interesting to note that in the wake of the uprising, Ivorians in the region where the French conducted their rescue operations were left to their fate.

France was also seen to be escalating its armed presence in Cote d'Ivoire a little more than five years after she had declared a new African policy aimed at ending direct military intervention in Africa. France's role and aim has changed each time it needed to send in more troops for enforcement. Initially it was evacuation of French civilians, then logistical support to the government and recently enforcement of a ceasefire agreement.⁶⁷

France's concern over developments in Cote d'Ivoire is not only politically motivated but military and economic as well. The former colony has for a long time been the key investment platform for French companies in West Africa. France is the biggest single trading partner, defence supplier and bilateral aid donor. Paris also has military bases in the country. In light of the political, economic and military interest France has in the region there is cause for concern when it comes to France playing a genuine role in mediation processes in Cote d'Ivoire.⁶⁸

This perception is also not helped by the fact that French troops formed a large percentage than any other country contributing troops to the UNOCI mission. They also operated independently of UNOCI. French troops acted alone and did not come under the authority of UNOCI. Coupled with these, the French *force Licorne* (Unicorn Force) main role was to protect its population and

⁶³ Nabakwe, R. "French-Africa Policy 'Partly to Blame' for Ivorian Crisis", *Pan African News Agency* 2000, <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/27c/382.html>, (accessed 18/05/2007)

⁶⁴ A partner in the ruling coalition of the French Socialist-led government

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Moorhead, M. "Why did U.S and French Troops invade Ivory Coast?" *Workers World*, 10 Oct. 2002, <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/27c/385.html> (accessed 18/05/2007)

⁶⁷ Richburg, Keith B. "France Abandons Hands-off Policy on African Conflicts: Some fear Ivory Coast Quagmire", *Washington Post*, Saturday 4 Jan. 2003, <http://www.harford-hwp.com/archives/27c/375.html> (accessed 18/05/2007)

⁶⁸ Deen, T. "French Role in Cote d'Ivoire Under Spotlight", Wednesday, November 10th, 2004, http://www.world-crisis.com/news/1051_0_1_0_C/, (accessed 28/05/2007)

economic infrastructure, while to a smaller extent, to prevent another image staining humanitarian crisis. French role in Cote d'Ivoire may be seen to have exacerbated the crisis. France is seen to have legitimised an armed rebellion. Their effort, though it provided much needed support in terms of capacity and resources, were seen as stand alone and not collaborative nor coordinated. As far as this assessment is concerned therefore, the French played supportive roles other than mediation processes in Cote d'Ivoire's crisis.

Contradiction in Mediation Processes

There is also a case of contradiction when it comes to how ECOWAS, AU and the UN deal with zero tolerance against unconstitutional change of power. At the onset of the crisis, these organizations spoke against the unconstitutional means used by the rebels to attain power and attempting to unseat a constitutionally elected government. In the same vain, they asked that a peaceful means, through mediation should be pursued to resolve issues and restore peace to Cote d'Ivoire. It was obvious that the rebels disrupted a constitutionally elected government, committed acts of human rights abuses and held the rest of the country hostage. In spite of this, the Linas-Marcoussis gave so much power to the rebels at the peril of the ruling government. It is not surprising that President Gbagbo refused to comply with his end of the peace deal. At the end of the day, President Gbagbo has somehow managed to carve out a good portion of the political cake to see him in control by virtue of the Ouagadougou Peace Accord.

Conclusion

The policies of governments in of Cote d'Ivoire were essentially responsible for the crisis in that country. It tribalised the discourse on ethnicity and nationality laying down the ground rules for the mode of participation in the political affairs of the state. It also meant the redistribution of scarce resources (jobs, property, power, etc) within the country. The internal dynamics of the politics in Cote d'Ivoire was thus blamed on the migrants who for years were used by Houphouet-Boigny to build a vibrant economy and had for the same political reasons and ambitions become *étrangers*. The real foreigners mostly French, occupied, owned and controlled various sectors of the economy at the expense of the Ivorian. It is therefore, no doubt why these "non-Ivorians" became the scapegoats for various forms of exploitation rooted in political and economic justifications.

The crisis is essentially rooted in the structure of the economy and also, the importance placed on the economy over and above the distribution of political power in the country. This therefore, acted as a catalyst for the disintegration of Cote d'Ivoire. There was, as it were, a new construction of citizenship and Ouattara was an example of such underlying realities on the question of nationality. The crisis was tied more to the economy than to politics; whoever wielded political power had ultimate power, control and leverage over the economy in terms of its management and negotiating for the best gains.

Mediation efforts in Cote d'Ivoire for a long time, failed to achieve the desired results for the above stated reasons. The issues were addressed from a political angle, the parties did not feel that they owned the process and didn't see themselves as having any control or leverage over the outcome of the process only until the Ouagadougou Peace Accord. There was thus, a low level of confidence between the belligerents leading to a consistent faltering of trust for the various mediators.

The mediation process in Cote d'Ivoire suffered from verbose mandates and mission statements and peace deals, ambiguity and lacked clearly defined goals leading to the setting of unrealistic time-frames. Existing gaps between aspirations and the realities on the ground suggests that more consultation is necessary between actors from the sub-region and external supports. Such

communication is needed to prevent unnecessary duplication of effort and to ensure that limited resources are applied to areas of real and overwhelming need, which should be identified before or during mediation processes.

National interests and influence will continue to intrude on mediation processes and have far-reaching consequences, even to the extent of contributing to the escalation of the crisis; it is however up to regional bodies like ECOWAS and the AU to manage and limit their impact on mediation processes since it is increasingly being faced with the challenge of securing a safer West Africa and Africa as a whole.

There exists power dynamics and power play when it comes to external mediation in African conflicts more so by the West and especially where they have a greater interest. It also goes to show that the nature or gravity of the issues involved in the crisis and what interests are at stake determines the outcome of the mediation process.

The conflicting parties through the help of some international and regional bodies took steps to negotiate peaceful settlement of the conflict and bring the hostilities to an end. These steps first began with Nigeria, Ghana and Togo, The signing of the LMA, Accra I, II and III, Pretoria I and II and finally Ouagadougou Peace Accord. In this case it is impressive to note that African leaders can take up the challenge to settle their own issues if they so choose. It also, to some extent, demystifies the role the international community of states has to play in order to resolve conflicts in Africa.

The implications of the Ivorian lessons for third-party mediation indicates that, African mediation efforts will continue to fall short of the desired result for as long as there is no consensus (on set standards, rules of procedure and principles) and collaboration in backing decisions and directives by all member States.

It also means that mediators ought to be committed once they take on the responsibility of intervening in crisis situations. Realistic time frames ought to be set and all efforts to meet deadlines must be undertaken.

It is also important in future to have readily available, and credible mediators who can bring fresh perspectives and solutions to resolve conflicts. The tendency for a mediator to become complacent should be taken into consideration where a conflict occurs over a protracted period.

Finally, it is important to stress that the West will continue to sit on the fence and jump at the least opportunity to exploit any situation that serves their own interests and advantages under the pretence of helping Africa resolve its numerous crises. The case of Cote d'Ivoire verifies this assumption. From the above, it is also clear that third party mediators have a critical role to play in conflict management and resolution.



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