AFRICA CENTER
FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Côte d'Ivoire Case Study

Working Paper
(Preliminary Draft)

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1. Introduction

Throughout the first few decades of the post-colonial period, Côte d'Ivoire was a model of political and economic stability. Given its impressive levels of economic growth from the 1960s to the early 1980s, the country's success was coined the 'Ivoirian miracle'. Although this 'miracle' principally relates to its economic achievements, Côte d'Ivoire's sociopolitical stability during this period was equally impressive. a number of factors help to explain Houphouet-Boigny's relatively peaceful rule from 1960 to 1993, such as his overall approach to politics of embracing a culture of dialogue, compromise, rewards, punishment, forgiveness and reintegration; the unequivocal support of France throughout his rule; his use of economic incentives to co-opt and appease potential rivals; and his 'system of ethnic quotas' that served to ensure a balance between different regions and ethnic groups within state institutions. Although the end of the Ivoirian miracle in the 1980s contributed to heightening tensions and bringing about conflicts between host and migrant populations in the western cocoa regions and urban centers, Houphouet-Boigny's grip on political power did not waver. Inter-ethnic elite alliances and co-operation within the ruling party coupled with ethno-regional balances among the military forces provided a disincentive for a military insurgency or coup d'état.

The death of Houphouet-Boigny in 1993 and Bédié's succession to the presidency triggered a split in the ruling PDCI party as within months of his accession to power, a splinter group emerged from the party to form the *Rassemblement des Républicains* (**RDR**) under the leadership of Alassane Ouattara. Ongoing ethnic tensions and the new policy of "*Ivoirité*" or "Ivorianess" render the political environment untenable and Ouattara's exclusion from the 1995 presidential elections ultimately marked the beginning of Côte d'Ivoire's downward spiral of increasingly polarized politics. Throughout the late 1990s, the political climate continued to worsen as ethnic and regional divides rapidly sharpened.

After several coup-attempts and unfulfilled agreements, the 2010 presidential elections between incumbent Laurent Gbagbo and Alassane Ouattara led to a militaro-political crisis that resulted in the death of approximately 3,000 people and the displacement of over one million. Ultimately, with some indirect assistance from UN forces, and strongly backed by French troops, pro-Ouattara forces succeeded in capturing Gbagbo on 11 April 2011 after a 10-day siege on the Presidential palace. The democratic deadlock thus came to a halt after five months of protracted conflict between the opposing sides and, on 21 May 2011, Ouattara was officially sworn in as President.

With President Ouattara in office, Côte d'Ivoire, while remaining in a post-conflict situation, has begun a gradual phase of recovery through a significant improvement in the functioning of central government, the nationwide deployment of the administration and the adoption of macro-economic reforms that will assist recovery. However, Ouattara realized that the security

sector needs to be reorganized. In a two-pronged strategy, the president made the decision to embark Côte d'Ivoire on not only a security sector reform (SSR) but also on drafting a national security strategy (NSS).

2. National or Sectoral Security Strategy /Plan

Following the cessation of years of conflict between government troops and rebels, the Ivorian Government has committed itself since 2011 to the difficult task of restoring unity to the country, reconciling the divided society, and reforming the security sector. The government is committed to fostering peace and reconciliation in Côte d'Ivoire and insuring that those responsible for gross human rights violations are held accountable. Yet, the national security institutions lack the structural and human resources capacity to provide adequate protection to the population. The Government's ambitious 'Emergence 2020' strategy could not be implemented unless a comprehensive national security strategy is in place.

Having realized that the security and defense forces have become instruments that defend a regime, not the republic and the government finds itself held hostage by these forces who are aware of their role in keeping it in power, President Ouattara decides to break this infernal and vicious cycle by demanding a brand new national security strategy document. Drafters were asked to bear in mind that human security is the backbone of security in Côte d'Ivoire and the menaces facing the country should be identified and prioritized in that lime. In other words, the definition of security should go beyond the type of security provided by state actors and should encompass a broader role for civil society. Drafters were also reminded that the final product should allow such missions as integrating former combatant forces into a national army, right-sizing the security sector to adequately address the security challenges of a particular country and ensuring that limited national resources are responsibly divided between security and development priorities are current pressing concerns in the country.

Regarding funding the strategy, lack of visibility in the national coffers did not permit relying on the government to finance its own security strategy. Consequently, partner countries that interfere in the post-election conflict on the side of Ouattara, provided technical assistance and money. Unfortunately, heavy reliance on outside financial support continues to render the national security strategy extremely difficult to fully implement. In the end, the document, which is public and online, synchronized quite nicely with previous sectoral security documents in order to avoid conflict and contradiction. There were several action plans that remain confidential and push for effective implementation.

3. Process (Development & Implementation)

In the very early days of his presidency, Ouattara decided to focus the security and political reforms on changing the relationship among politicians, security institutions, and the larger

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population, as part of a broader reconciliation process among Ivoirians themselves. The political agreement over SSR is supposed to determine at the strategic level what the new national security architecture of the country will look like. It will have to emerge from a national dialogue involving the population, security-sector actors, local authorities, and nonstate actors in a wider public debate on the reform and restructuring of the armed forces and other security-sector institutions. In terms of representation though, the NSS drafting period did not allow bringing onboard all the key stakeholders. The challenge was how to invite former enemies to the table to discuss national security matters. Not only was the mood within the Ouattara forces regarding involving yesterday's foes quite negative, but the trust level was not conducive to such cooperation. However, the president did initiate the process.

Drafters were heavily assisted by the United Nations, France and other partners. Participants consisted basically of loyal Ouattara forces/agencies and their support. It was deliberately discriminatory process at first. Civil society organizations and women were left at bay (might not have even accepted to join if asked). There was a clear division of labor and to some extent inter-agency coordination and collaboration did prevail. However, the make-up of the group did not allow for genuine comprehensive debate. Although, funding was extensively discussed with the sad reality that Côte d'Ivoire would have to trust its allies with the implementation. The final product, NSS 2014-2024, contains no section on performance monitoring nor on appraisal mechanisms. Only, subsequent decrees by the president imposed periodic audits, re-assessments and re-adjustments.

4. Oversight

In his forward message, President Ouattara reminds drafters of the necessity to not only involve Parliamentarians at the outset, but to also make sure they validate in the end whatever products come out of their work. While not intimately associated at the beginning, the commission on security and defense of the National Assembly seem early to have understood that the most important features of a democratic society are the subordination of government or state institutions to the laws approved by an elected parliament; guaranteed rights of the individual to due legal process and to the freedoms of speech, assembly and movement; a judiciary with sufficient independence of both parliament and executive to act as guardians of the law and of these individual rights. Unfortunately, until recently, the commission has been unable to fulfill its duties, due to lack of both political will to monitor a "friendly" regime and also to adequate resources.

Having been ignored at the outset, civil society organizations, women, the media, etc. have remain absent for a while from the debate on national security issues. Out of continuing resentment and disagreement over some key security and defense decisions by the Ouattara regime, scholars and politicians still loyal to former President Gbagbo offered only sporadic

criticisms of the product. It took some type of political overture with the release of some political prisoners, an overall political thaw and overall terrorist threats for politicians of opposite side to start exchanging on how to better protect the country. Consequently, without altering fundamentally the NSS, there are other such documents as the national maritime strategy and the national strategy on the fight against terrorism, to name a few, that have received a greater deal of cooperation from former "enemies."

In almost a consensual way, all sides are coming together, through the national dialogue framework, to re-explore how Côte d'Ivoire's security environment could be strengthened. It dawns on both incumbents and opposition that the stakes are too high to leave Ouattara and his loyalists to craft the NSS without any inputs from other key stakeholders. Hopefully, the ongoing thaw of the political environment will allow a more thorough and genuine dialogue likely to indeed provide the country with required re-adjustment and effective protection from a human security perspective.

5. Conclusion

Yes, Côte d'Ivoire has distanced itself from the violence and conflict that blighted so many lives and tore communities apart, thanks partially to the peace dividends that the United Nations has contributed to putting in place. However, there is an ongoing challenge to prevent these peace dividends from reversing. The country has enjoyed more than seven years of relative peace and security since a devastating post-election crisis in 2010-2011. However, many of the underlying tensions that drove past ethnic violence also remain unresolved, notably an incomplete national reconciliation process and continued competition.

Despite considerable efforts, the Ivorian government continues to face serious challenges addressing a longstanding culture of impunity, reforming the security forces, and strengthening rule of law institutions threaten the country's long-term prospects for peace and development. Neither a national security strategy nor an RSS national strategy has been able to fundamentally alter the political and security landscape of the country. Documents by themselves cannot right decades of wrongs, until human beings vow to renew with sustainable peace, security and economic development.