

Houphouet- Boigny to adopt a liberal policy towards migrant, drawing from several but poor neighbouring states.

The Ivorian economy is largely market-based and depends heavily on the agricultural sector. Between 60 and 70 per cent of Ivorian people are engaged in some form of agricultural activity. Of the more than 5 million non-Ivorians living in Cote d'Ivoire, one-third to one-half are from Burkina Faso; the rest are from Niger, Benin, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, and Senegal. In the Boigny period (1960-1993), land in Cote d'Ivoire belonged to the one that worked on it. Thus foreigners came to own large tracts of land, especially in the north of the country. Boigny disposed of sufficient resources to maintain domestic tranquillity and good neighbourliness by means of a skilfully managed patronage system.

France's colonial policy in West Africa was reflected mainly in its philosophy of 'association', meaning that all Ivorians were officially French subjects without rights to citizenship in Africa or France. The colonial economy was not underpinned by development of the colonies but rather of the French metropole. Hence, France maintained its control over the economy of Cote d'Ivoire and continued to exercise disproportionate influence on the

politics of the country. Ironically, France adopted a similar approach to Cote d'Ivoire's neighbours which themselves have remained its client states. The worldwide economic recession of the 1980s caused the prices of the country's primary exports, cocoa and coffee, to fall sharply, resulting in a significant economic slowdown. The recession abruptly truncated the growth of the economy and exacerbated tensions in the labour force, where underemployment and unemployment had become acute. Resource scarcity led to a narrow and exclusive nationalism which now seeks to define who is and who is not Ivorian. Besides seeking to establish new boundaries of citizenship and identity, Ivorian nationalism raises questions of national sovereignty in a manner that could undermine French imperial interests. As one delegate to the roundtable said, 'The crisis has to do with challenges in seeking to cut the umbilical cord with France. This could land Gbagbo in the same conundrum as Patrice Lumumba, and Sankara.'

In the independence period, the control over distribution of resources came to be central in the ruling elite's quest to stay in power. In the 1980s, popular manifestations of discontent with Boigny's rigid policies, decreasing exports, complaints about foreigners in the economy, and an atrophied one-

party political system continued. This was the soft underbelly of the enviable economic prosperity and political stability dubbed the Ivoirian Miracle. Cote d'Ivoire was a prosperous island in sea of regional poverty. As the economy declined from the late 1980s due to falling cocoa and coffee prices, the resources required for maintaining patrimonial relations dwindled. Internally, falling commodity prices led to the need for more land for cultivation and competition for land between Ivorians and immigrants intensified. Neither economic reform based on austerity measures nor the political changes that led to the first democratic elections in the early 1990s succeeded in addressing the fundamental problems: resource distribution and scarcity which drove centrifugal impulses and raised the national question.

At this point, the problem of the neighbours' dependence on Cote d'Ivoire needed to be resolved. If Cote d'Ivoire could no longer provide the largesse for funding civil service salaries and the lavish lifestyles of ruling elites in the neighbouring countries, it had to at least maintain its hospitality to millions of their immigrants. Their sudden return to their home countries would not only have disruptive effects on the countries' politics but it would rob these

countries of remittances from their diasporas in Cote d'Ivoire.

Internally, the lingering question was the resolution of the national or citizenship question, i.e. who is Ivoirian and when does a non-Ivoirian become Ivorian. For Ivoirian nationalists, Boigny's dictum of 'the land belongs to them who work on it' was a calculated compromise during prosperous times when labour was scarce. However, with the change in economic circumstances, there was a shift to giving land rights exclusively to indigenous Ivorians. This tendency had to contend with immigrants wanting to preserve their acquisition and secure an inheritance for their descendants – most of whom knew no other fatherland than Cote d'Ivoire where they were borne and raised. Boigny's successors, Henri Konan Bedie, Robert Guei and Laurent Gbagbo, failed to address these age-old questions brought to the surface by economic difficulties and the rise of radical Ivoirian nationalism driven by intellectuals and espoused by the disillusioned youth.

Boigny had used a combination of authoritarianism, patronage and cultural manipulation to avoid the national question. His critics were suppressed, exiled and some were killed. The military became a constant feature in civic life, albeit in a low-key

fashion. Political parties that challenged the status quo were sidelined and muzzled. Boigny appointed a number of Senegalese, Malians, Burkinabe and Ivorians of foreign parentage (like Allasane Ouattara) to his cabinet and other state positions as part of his manipulation of the nationality issue to maintain his rule. In the face of growing discontent among Ivorians over shrinking economic opportunities, Boigny's government under Prime Minister Ouattara introduced the Ivoirization policy through which it promoted preferential employment opportunities for Ivorians in the public service.

For Boigny, Ivoirianness had a rather loose and elastic meaning, but when Konan Bedie took over office in 1993, Ivoirianness took on a conservative complexion. He employed the *Ivoirite* concept—coined by intellectuals seeking legitimate answers to the national question—to exclude immigrants from political life, especially his nemesis, Ouattara. For self-preservation and to secure his political legacy, Bedie sought to exploit public discontent over foreign control of the economy, especially in agriculture. This only sharpened the contradictions and problems, thereby polarizing the country along nationality and regional lines since most immigrants inhabited the north. The victimization sentiment and

discrimination and exclusion of immigrants grew, especially in the north. This led to the fomenting of a de facto north-south dichotomy in politics which political parties seized upon.

The coup in 1999 and the disputed elections in 2002 exposed the problem of a change of government without transforming the nature of the post-colonial state. This was a state that was deeply imbued with the personalized rule of Boigny and regional linkage politics. The problem that Ivorians have had with Bedie, Guei and Gbagbo is their imperial style of presidential rule (which is inherently authoritarian) and reluctance to convene a national dialogue to resolve the national question. Like Bedie, Gbagbo is accused of abusing his excessive executive power to promote xenophobia and victimizing the northerners.

The challenge is to transform the basis on which the present state and formal economy are founded. Ivoirian leaders are confronted with a fundamental question: given the fact that the nation state is a historical construct, how can the state be recast on a different social, political and economic foundation that is acceptable to 21st century Ivorians? The 2002 constitutional reforms failed to do this; instead it entrenched presidentialism and included ambiguous provisions on nationality

and electoral eligibility. It was evasive in addressing the question about when an immigrant becomes an Ivorian. It did not create credible institutions to assist with creating finality on national identity. The constitution devoted 24 articles to provisions about the President in contrast to 12 on the Parliament. According to this constitution, the President appoints the Prime Minister, the President of the Constitutional Council, the Supreme Court, Members of the Electoral Commission, the head of the Social and Economic Council, the Director of Central Administration, heads of social and cultural institutions, even the managers of major parastatals like the national cocoa and coffee boards. Thus, the reform replaced a presidentialist one-party system with a presidentialist multiparty one. As a result the incumbent President has spent most of his term fighting challenges to this status quo and in such a charged environment, innovative ideas like national dialogue and a new social charter could not materialize.

What can Cote d'Ivoire learn from Africa's transitions?

As it identified lessons that Cote d'Ivoire could learn from other transition experiences in Africa, the dialogue identified a few critical things that the Ivorian peace process has ignored. From transition cases presented, a key lesson

was that reform should be internally generated and managed. In Cote d'Ivoire, the problem is that opposition parties are not necessarily for transformation; their interest is rather in accession to power through elections or power sharing arrangements. 'We should avoid creating a situation where losers lose everything and the winner wins everything' urged one delegate. In a number of successful transition cases, the incumbent leadership had the courage to create space for a national dialogue by convening national conferences to discuss the vision for the future, draft the constitution and set up a transitional authority. Countries like Burundi sought formula for resolving the ethnicity issues in the make-up of state and non-state institutions.

Africa's experience with transitions shows that in some cases, the transition is used to open up the political and economic space, while in others the constitution is used to maintain the status quo. In Cote d'Ivoire, constitutional reform has been limited to piecemeal amendment under duress of sections of the constitution such as article 35 which disqualifies persons of foreign ancestry from standing for presidential elections. Transition should not be about the incumbent apportioning space to opposition at will as is the case currently. Rather it

should allow a complete redrafting through an inclusive national dialogue.

What went wrong with the South African mediation of the peace process?

It emerged that the recent mediation efforts have failed because of the weak peace framework: the French-initiated Linas-Marcoussis (LM) agreement. It provides for a power-sharing arrangement towards forming a government of national reconciliation and includes the rebel New Forces. The parties further agreed to work together on modifying national identity, eligibility for citizenship, and new land tenure laws. This document is inadequate as a framework for plotting the transition because it maintains the problematic constitution rather than allowing stakeholders to redraft it completely. The agreement is viewed as securing the interests of France, neighbouring countries and immigrants without paving the way for a national consensus on key issues.

The SA mediation failed, fundamentally, because of its restrictive mandate. It sought simply to unblock obstacles towards implementation of the LM rather than facilitate an open conversation among stakeholders on the resolution of the crisis, taking into account the internal and external interests, nationality and identity, the

distribution of resources and an appropriate government. In regard to its mandate, South Africa was successful and performed admirably. The Pretoria Agreement of April 2005 formally ended the state of war and addressed disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, the return of the New Forces to government and the reorganisation of the electoral commission. A follow-up agreement in June 2005 laid out another framework for disarmament, elections and the adoption of legislation required under LM. But this was not enough to cause the rebel movement to leave the resource-rich territory in the north under its control, hand over their weapons and let the immigrant elements in its forces demobilize without a proper identity document. Clearing the way for implementation of the LM did not provide a space for the resolution of the national question in an open, comprehensive and inclusive manner. Neither the neighbouring countries' interests regarding the fate of immigrants, nor the French need for assurances that its vested economic interests will not be harmed were adequately addressed.

Under these conditions, the opposition forces had more to lose than the government. It decided to undermine the mediation effort on the basis of growing suspicion that SA was too

closely aligned to the Gbagbo government. This was intended to create a strategic opening upon the imminent lapse of Gbagbo's term in October 2005, to declare a political vacuum and engineer a palace coup. Of course, President Mbeki spoke the same anti-imperialist and Africanist language as Gbagbo which the latter exploited to his advantage. People still vividly remember President Mbeki's expressing his disgust at French forces' destruction of the Ivorian air force planes in retaliation for a government aircraft bombing a French military installation in Bouake and his emotionless inspection of rebel target sites in the north bombarded by Gbagbo's government forces. SA's poor communication to the Ivorian public about its mandate, whether and how it was interacting with the neighbouring countries and rebels, allowed the spoilers to raise their credibility in their onslaught against its mediation. SA may have under-estimated the interests of neighbouring countries like Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali and Nigeria who have vested interest in the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire where they have large numbers of their own citizens as immigrants.

Has the UN take-over and appointment of the new Prime Minister advanced the peace process?

The failure of protagonists in the Ivorian conflict to respect their engagements in

various peace deals eroded prospects for the holding of credible elections on the 'magic date' of October 30 2005. Instead as this date drew closer the risk of an eminent boil over of the Ivorian conflict into a full-blown civil war became even more obvious. To avert this, regional and global diplomatic efforts intensified culminating in the passing of UN Resolution 1633 in October 2005, which amongst other things: proclaimed a 12-months transition period, thereby extending the incumbent government's term of office by the same; established an International Working Group (IWG) to evaluate, monitor and follow-up on the peace process; and more importantly, it prescribed the appointment of a powerful executive prime minister and a new transitional government to drive the process.

Although Resolution 1633 appeared to have averted the emergence of a political vacuum in Cote d'Ivoire, from the very outset its potential to deliver on a peaceful transition within 12 months was questionable. Fundamental issues that had repeatedly stalled the peace process in the past remained to be addressed. These included amongst others vexing questions of nationality and identification, evolving a new macro-economic framework for the country, a clear definition of the place of immigrants and neighbouring states in the country's politico-economic life,

security reforms and reviewing the country's constitutional framework. Clearly, fundamental as these issues are to permanent peace in Cote d'Ivoire, they will not be adequately addressed in the 12-months transition period.

The kinds of powers granted to the new PM by the UN resolution are not consistent with Cote d'Ivoire's French-inherited constitutional order that made the president of the Republic the most powerful individual in the land. The President is a chief executive with nearly unlimited powers to hire and fire his ministers, including the prime minister where and when this position was provided for. Evidently, UN Resolution 1633 was an unprecedented attempt to reorder the scheme of things in Cote d'Ivoire. Yet the expiration of President Gbagbo's mandate at the end of October 2005 and the ensuing divergent interpretations of the constitutional provisions that were supposed to address such a condition inadvertently created a situation of constitutional limbo in Cote d'Ivoire. The subsequent direct involvement of the AU and the UN in the domestic politics of the country epitomised by UN Resolution 1633 appeared to have put into abeyance Cote d'Ivoire's national constitution. The resolution in a way has become Cote d'Ivoire's interim constitutional order, considerably watering down the country's sovereignty

and that of its president, giving the country a status akin to an UN-administered territory.

Although the passing of UN Resolution 1633 could be seen as an exceptional measure directed at addressing an exceptional circumstance, it has been perceived differently by various players in the Ivorian conflict. Proponents of the resolution, including President Gbagbo's opponents have seen it as consisting of a compromise arrangement aimed at levelling the playing field for all political actors in Cote d'Ivoire and by so doing ensuring that the outcomes of the envisaged electoral exercise are more acceptable and less contested. And in spite of their initial objection to the resolution's extension of president Gbagbo's mandate, they have come to celebrate it as an arrangement that potentially erodes the advantage of incumbency hitherto held by president Gbagbo and that would therefore put him at par with all other aspirants to the office of the president of the country. On the other hand, President Gbagbo and his cohorts have seen it as a continuation of French-led Western machinations against his authority and the sovereignty of Cote d'Ivoire – very much in line with the spirit of the biased Linas-Macoussis Agreement. They have therefore consistently challenged the notion that Cote d'Ivoire is under a form of international administration. They have continued to

invoke the Ivorian constitution in all instances where there has been conflict of jurisdiction between president Gbagbo and the UN-AU backed prime minister. More importantly, President Gbagbo and his followers are yet to accept the fact that he is no longer the all powerful head that he was until the passing of the resolution. By appropriating the executive powers given him by the Resolution 1633, the Prime Minister was bound for a conflict of jurisdiction with incumbent president Gbagbo. In many ways the two-month delay in the appointment of the Prime Minister and the bloody mass protests against the IWG's call for dissolution of parliament in January 2006 demonstrated the fundamental complexities challenging the implementation of the UN resolution.

Yet the approbation of the new prime minister by all the parties in conflict amidst strong perceptions that in the polarised Ivorian politics it had become impossible to get any individual who could be objective and broadly acceptable, was indeed a feat for regional and global peace makers. It was interpreted in various quarters as marking a new beginning in the Ivorian peace process. However, the new PM's job was not going to be an easy one in any sense of the word. Besides, his short tenure and narrow mandate, he had the onerous task of trying to uphold

a chain of stalled peace pacts, plagued with ambiguities and all objects of contestation. Least of all was the challenge of taming the uncompromising rebel forces that had become too comfortable with the spoils of power they had acquired by virtue of controlling the Northern parts of the country. Therefore, three months in office, developments in Cote d'Ivoire have come to confirm the complex nature of the mission assigned to the new PM. Under these circumstances it would be difficult to argue that the direct involvement of the UN and the appointment of a new prime minister have actually advanced the peace process. If any thing, they could be said to have succeeded in bringing about a semblance of stability in the country. But like earlier arrangements, the current dispensation is plagued by incongruence and whether or not this state of affairs will continue remains a matter of conjecture.

Conclusion

The Ivorian crisis is more complex than the peace process has made us all to assume. The questions confronting Cote d'Ivoire are embedded in a particular colonial and post-colonial history. It has simmered under the surface for decades only to explode as with cataclysmic convergence of an economic decline and the rise of a militant Ivorian nationalism before the country had transitioned into

a fully inclusive, representative and nationally legitimate political dispensation. The successes of the roundtable highlighted the readiness of Ivorians to debate and resolve their matters on the table. It also raised directly a need for stakeholders to organize themselves into a monitoring mechanism to ensure that Cote d'Ivoire does not miss the current opportunity under UN tutelage. Any dialogue that is held on the Cote d'Ivoire will need to involve somehow regional players to take on board regional dynamics that have a strong bearing on the Cote d'Ivoire. While the framework defined by the UN Resolution 1633 attempts to accommodate most interests – including those of neighbouring countries, it would seem that it lays too much emphasis on having plural elections held in the country, than frontally addressing the issues that have stalled earlier peace initiatives. And in this regard, it may not be wrong to argue that the tasks given to the new Prime Minister are too daunting and some matters could be better resolved by a form of national dialogue than through the good offices of a supposedly neutral prime minister.

Recommendations

- 1) South Africa's long term goal should be to advocate a comprehensive conversation amongst Ivorian stakeholders

on the future of their country. Such national dialogue should be inclusive in participation and comprehensive in its content;

- 2) South Africa should ensure that neighbouring countries have their interests addressed in whatever process is put in place. These countries are currently benefiting from smuggling of copper and cocoa in the rebel-held territories, a new found economic benefit they will fight to retain;
- 3) French control of the Ivorian economy remains a sensitive and controversial issue. There is also fear in Paris that the Ivorian nationalist project could set the precedent for fuelling nationalism in other former French colonies where France still holds considerable sway. This would not only hurt the French economy, but will also loose France a sphere of political influence in the international arena. Any resolution of the Ivorian crisis must, therefore, include France and how their interests ought to be addressed;
- 4) The international community, particularly the UN, the AU and ECOWAS must remain hands-

on and vigilante to be able to see through the ongoing transitional arrangement. They must be willing to 'name, shame and sanction' any actor or group of actors seen to be bent on derailing the peace process;

- 5) Above all else, the key Ivorian role players must themselves be willing to make concessions, to give peace a chance. They must realise that holding firmly to their respective positions would only prolong the sufferings of their people and alienate the international community that is already experiencing what could be likened to 'mediation fatigue'.

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