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L'Afrique et les défis du XXIème siècle
Africa and the Challenges of the Twenty First Century
A África e os desafios do Século XXI
إفريقيا وتحديات القرن الواحد والعشرين

**Panel: The Political Economy of Resources and
Uneven African Development**

**DRAFT VERSION
NOT TO BE CITED**

**ECOWAS-AU-UN Relations with Special
Reference to the Côte d'Ivoire Crisis**

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5 - 9 / 12 / 2011

Rabat Maroc / Morocco

Introductory Background

The capture of erstwhile Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo in a bunker in the Presidential palace in Abidjan on April 11, 2011 by “forces loyal to Alassane Ouattara” backed by UN peacekeepers and French Special Forces brought an inglorious end to the episode of the “two Presidents, one country” (Obi 2011: 16) in Côte d’Ivoire. This incident had major significance for West Africa’s regional security, calling to question in some regards the efficacy of ECOWAS’s “advanced peace and security mechanisms” (Obi 2009: 119), its working relationship with the African Union and cooperation with the United Nations. It also brought to the fore, the issue of the role of external powers, ostensibly operating under the rubric of international peacekeeping and humanitarian intervention, in the affairs of their former colonies in Africa. At the core of the recent events in Côte d’Ivoire and more recently, Libya, lie the sensitive issue of the effectiveness of African institutions to, and their (in)capacity to act as equal partners of the UN (particularly the UNSC-P5: USA, France, Britain, Russia and China) in responding to regional peace and security challenges facing the continent in an emerging post-Cold War order.

The events of April 11 in Côte d’Ivoire have re-ignited the debate on the continent about the nature of Africa’s relationship with the United Nations (Murithi 2007: 2; Mbeki 2011, Adebajo 2011b). This debate is between those that see the roles of the ECOWAS, AU, and UN (and P5 member-states, particularly France) in the Ivorian crisis and post-election conflict as being consistent with the promotion of regional peace and security in West Africa and those that criticize it as being part of the “perverse and poisonous proceedings” (Mbeki 2011: 38) that have characterized the rather unequal relationship between Africa and the UN, particularly the ways certain P5 member-states use the UN framework to intervene in and influence Africa’s responses to conflicts, and manipulate such intervention to pursue and legitimise their hegemonic and strategic interests in the continent. Also related to Mbeki’s critique is the question of the UN’s neutrality in African conflicts, a point that also echoes in the accusation by the Russian President that the UN had taken sides in the Ivorian conflict, calling this a “very dangerous tendency” (Quoted in Anishchuk 2011).

The latter position sees ‘the politics’ of UN-legitimized international intervention in Côte d’Ivoire as reinforcing the case for the democratization of global governance system, arguing that the activities of multilateral organizations and global powers in the Côte d’Ivoire “have exposed the reality of the balance and abuse of power in the post-Cold War era, and put paid

to the fiction that the major powers respect the rule of law in the conduct of international relations, even as defined by the UN Charter” (Mbeki 2011: 38).

It is important to reflect on the immediate background to the Ivorian post-election conflict. Côte d’Ivoire once regarded as a “haven of peace in a turbulent West Africa” (Obi 2009: 128), descended into civil war in 2002 after a failed coup attempt against President Gbagbo. The war was itself underpinned by deep tensions within Ivorian society and a structural crisis of citizenship and nation-building (Bah 2010). The war pitched the Gbagbo’s government against the rebel Forces Nouvelles (New Forces), effectively dividing the country into the FN-controlled north and government-controlled south. After many unsuccessful peace negotiations involving the ECOWAS, AU, UN and France, efforts at peace eventually culminated in the March 2007 Ouagadougou Agreement facilitated by President Blaise Compaore of neighbouring Burkina Faso, providing for a transitional government based on a power sharing agreement between President Laurent Gbagbo and the erstwhile rebel New Forces, Guillaume Soro who became Gbagbo’s Prime Minister. The agreement provided for a merging of FN with the National Army, a DDR programme, and the holding of credible presidential elections (ICG 2007; Obi 2007: 5).

Apart from the formation of the transitional government, the other issues in the agreement became points of contestation between both sides in the rather complicated mediation process (Interview with Ambassador Osei, 2011) which stretched over a period of three years after the signing of the agreement. The elections in particular suffered from at least five postponements as both sides sought to leverage their interests at the negotiation table, with the incumbent President Gbagbo widely seen by a weary international community of using the prolongation of the mediation process (and the non-agreement on electoral reforms and DDR, or non-implementation of key decisions) to remain (beyond his constitutionally-defined first term in office) in power, and seeking to delay the process until such a time that he was confident enough that the chances were high that the conditions were most favourable for his re-election. On the part of the New Forces, the protracted peace process also gave them the time to consolidate their control of the north, particularly its economy and raise revenues to strengthen their power base and perhaps, re-arm.

The determination of the international community and ECOWAS to use elections to bring closure to a protracted conflict and an intractable mediation process meant that the fundamental issues in the Ivorian crisis were not fully addressed in the haste to use the ballot box as an ‘exit option’. It was in this state of flux that Presidential, followed by run-off

elections were held on November 28, 2010 in Côte d'Ivoire. Election results announced by the Ivorian Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) proclaimed Ouatarra winner and President-elect by 54.1 percent of the votes cast, as against Gbagbo's 45.1 per cent, which the latter rejected outright based on claims that the elections in the north were not free and fair. These results were endorsed by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Cote d'Ivoire, Young-jin Choi and upheld by ECOWAS, AU, UN, EU and France.

However, based on Gbagbo's protest, the Ivorian Constitutional Court (CC) cancelled some elections results from the north considered as being flawed, and then declared Gbagbo the winner by 51.5 per cent of the votes cast, as against 45.9 per cent for his opponent. Based on this CC decision, Gbagbo refused to hand over to Ouatarra. Ouatarra in turn rejected the new results announced by the CC insisting that the original results announced by the CEI (and endorsed by the ECOWAS, AU, EU, US and UN) declaring him winner were legitimate. Backed by the ECOWAS and international community, pressures were brought to bear on Gbagbo to accept the results declared by the CEI and step down for Ouatarra. But Gbagbo refused, first insisting on the legitimacy of the CC-endorsed results, and later calling for a re-count of the votes by an independent international commission. His request was turned down by ECOWAS and the international community which noted that the infractions cited were too minimal to alter the results of the elections and pointed to observer reports noting that the elections had been fair. Citing the intransigence of Gbagbo to accept the internationally-endorsed results declaring Ouatarra the President-elect, and the deteriorating security situation due to fighting between pro-Gbagbo and pro-Ouatarra forces in March and April 2011, the UNOCI peacekeepers, backed by French Forces and pro-Ouatarra Republican Forces (formerly Forces Nouvelles) used force to implement an UNSC Resolution 1975 (UNSC 2011) urging Gbagbo to "step aside" and "respect the will of the people and the election of Alassane Dramane Ouatarra as President of Côte d'Ivoire".

This paper raises certain fundamental questions: how well did the ECOWAS peace and security serve the organization in resolving the Ivorian crisis, to what extent did ECOWAS-AU cooperation with the UN reflect an "asymmetrical relationship" and on what basis should conclusions be drawn as to whether Africa-UN relations reflect a "hybrid partnership or a hybrid paternalism" (Murithi 2007: 7)? What challenges emerge from the 'hybridization' of the UN-Africa partnership and how can these be addressed? In setting about its task, the paper is divided into four sections. The first provides the background to the Ivorian case and raises some critical questions. It is followed by an analysis of the peace and security architecture of ECOWAS and the Africa-UN connection. The third section zero's in the

Ivorian crisis and analyzes ECOWAS partnership with the AU, UN and France in resolving the protracted crisis, including the Ivorian post-election conflict. In the fourth and concluding section, the prospects of Africa-UN partnership for the regional peace and security efforts of ECOWAS are critically examined and some recommendations made to address these issues.

ECOWAS' Peace and Security Architecture

ECOWAS has a highly regarded peace and security architecture that is the product of its experience in regional peacekeeping through the activities of the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in the 1990s which contributed to the return to peace in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire, its ability to adapt to changing national, regional and global contexts by linking regional integration and development to an evolving peace and security framework, and its ability to cooperate with other regional and multilateral organizations such as the African Union and the United Nations in promoting peace and security in West Africa (Obi 2009: 119-120). Apart from cooperating with these multilateral organizations, ECOWAS also set up mechanisms for engaging with extra-African regional organizations such as the European Union, as well as established and emerging global powers.

Regarding "ECOWAS' response to the changing nature of threats to regional stability" the President of the ECOWAS Commission notes that the organization responded to the new threats and challenging by enacting new statutes to reflect the new realities (Gbeho 2010: 5; 2011). These new statutes gave ECOWAS the legitimate right based on a consensus among member-state to intervene diplomatically and, or militarily in any member state embroiled in major conflict. As they its peace and security mechanisms evolved, ECOWAS sought for regional-global partnerships to legitimize and support its efforts.

This journey towards the new 'generation' of ECOWAS peace and security statutes was not altogether smooth. Founded in 1975, ECOWAS "began as a collective quest for self reliance, economic cooperation and development" (Obi 2009: 120). This was based on an early recognition of a linkage between regional peace on one hand and national development, stability and security on the other. This, along with some border skirmishes in the region, led to two protocols on defence and security: the Protocol on Non-Aggression (PNA, 1978) and that on Mutual Assistance on Defence (PMAD, 1981). Their principles among others,

provided for an emergency “Allied Armed Forces of the Community (AAFC),” but stopped short of providing for “a permanent ECOWAS standing army” (Aning 1999: 26-27).

However, as Aning (1999) notes, “by 1990, none of the procedural or integral decision-making aspects of the PMAD had been implemented.” This was underlined by doubts among Francophone states about Nigeria’s real intentions in proposing the initiative, as well as the limited capacity of the ECOWAS secretariat at that time. Due to the politics and intra-regional rivalries between two language-blocs in ECOWAS, the seven Francophone states (except Guinea) signed a separate non-aggression defence pact (ANAD) in 1977, which also provided for a regional standby force. It was on the basis of PMAD that ECOWAS, acting on an appeal from Liberia’s President Samuel in the face of an invasion of the country by the rebel National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and with the support of the Nigerian Head of State (in spite of opposition from some Francophone member-states) decided to mediate in the conflict. It established a Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) which called for a ceasefire and decided establish a Ceasefire Monitoring Group – ECOMOG. The challenges that ECOWAS/ECOMOG faced in mediating and intervening in the conflicts in Liberia and later on Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d’Ivoire is well known and will not be recounted here (Obi 2009: 119-135; Adebajo 2000; 2002, 2008; Aning 2000, 2007). What is important is that ECOWAS drew upon the lessons from its mediation and peacekeeping involvement in these countries to hone its peace and security architecture.

Some of these lessons influenced the 1993 Revised ECOWAS treaty which broadened the element of supranationality of organization. The 1999 Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Peacekeeping and Security and the 2001 Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, and the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons also built upon the new spirit of the revised treaty. Aning et al (2010: 9-10), note that the 1999 Protocol sought among others “to overcome controversies relating to the establishment of the establishment of the Standing Mediation Committee during the Liberian conflict” by setting up three key institutions: the Authority of Heads of State and Governments; Mediation and Security Council and the Executive Secretariat to provide organization support, improve decision-making and building wider support for ECOWAS mediation and peacekeeping. The Protocol and the Supplementary Protocol were put to good use in terms of dealing with crisis related to ECOWAS’ zero-tolerance for unconstitutional changes in government. This protocol also featured prominently in ECOWAS’ action in suspending Guinea and Niger, following military coups in 2008 and 2009, and suspending Côte d’Ivoire after Gbagbo refused to hand over power to the

recognised winner of the November 2010 run-off presidential elections—acting in all cases on the basis of a partnership with the AU and UN to ensure that constitutional rule was restored in its member-states in the pursuit of peace and security in West Africa.

In seeking to address emerging challenges, the Mediation and Security Council of ECOWAS on January 1, 2008, enacted the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF). Apart from being consistent with the evolution of ECOWAS' peace and security architecture, of which the ECOMOG experience was critical, the ECPF also contains fourteen components relating to conflict prevention, human security and aspects of peace-building, of which the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) is an important element (ECOWAS 2008: 14-16). So far the ECPF is yet to be fully operational, but it does suggest that ECOWAS has put in place a sophisticated framework for the promotion of peace and security. The ECPF was however not in place to deal with the Ivorian post-election conflict.

However, one of the main challenges facing ECOWAS is the gap between its sophisticated peace and security architecture and its limited ability to fully deliver in practical terms. Its record so far, is somewhat mixed reflecting its strengths and weaknesses, but not foreclosing its immense potential. While its most ardent supporters point to its modest successes in implementing a home-grown regional peacekeeping initiative, most also note the rather disturbing evidence of institutional weakness, poor coordination within ECOWAS, competing interests of member-states, inadequate financial, material and logistical resources, weak political will and capacities, that conspire to limit the effectiveness of the organization's in facing the emerging complex challenges to peace and security. The gap between rhetoric and reality underpins some of the contradictions that mark ECOWAS multilateralism and partnerships with the AU and the UN which have wider implications for the credibility and capacity of ECOWAS. The complex challenges that confront ECOWAS and other similar regional organizations in Africa are linked to the difficulties in reaching pan-regional consensus on certain critical issues and their inability to fully equip their frameworks of regional peace and security to engage complex configurations of global power in the context of post-Cold war international realpolitik from a position of advantage.

AFRICA-UN Relations: Emerging architecture of a 'hybrid partnership'?

A critical challenge facing Africa in the emerging post-Cold war order relates to whether the continent has the capacity to act as a co-equal partner of the international community. It is in this context that Murithi (2007: 2) made a case for interrogating the relationship between

Africa and the UN or what Adebajo characterised as “global apartheid” (2009). The history of Africa-UN relations has been studied in some detail and will not be repeated here (Ibid). What is important to note is that Africa is a relatively recent entrant into the business of peace and security and has been marginalized in the power politics of United Nations Security Council. This assumes some significance when it is considered that most African states were not foundation members of the UN, and are not well represented at the highest level of UN decision-making—the Security Council, particularly among the P5 which have the power of the veto. This in part explains why in Murithi’s view, “the early decades of the UN were defined by an asymmetrical partnership between the UN and Africa”.

The UN’s engagement with the continent in terms of promoting peace, though not entirely new, has increased in a post-Cold War following a spate of intra-state conflicts on the continent. According to Adebajo (2009: 20), ‘about 60 per cent of the UNSC’s deliberations focused on Africa, while by 2008 about 80 per cent of UN peacekeepers were deployed in Africa’. With regard to peacekeeping in West Africa, “the UN Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) was the first UN peacekeeping mission undertaken in cooperation with a peacekeeping operation already established by a regional organisation” (Ero 2009: 285). In 1999, “for the first time ECOWAS troops were transferred (or ‘rehabbed’, to use the UN term) into the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) 1999; into the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in 2003; and into the UN Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) in 2004” (Ero 2009: 286). The point is made that ‘period between 1993 and 1997 was strategic in UN-ECOWAS-Africa relations as it laid the foundation and framework for future partnership models between the world body and the continent”. Ero further notes that the collaboration between the UN and ECOWAS with regard to UNOMIL was based on “the agreement that the sub-region would take the lead politically in resolving conflict; and that ECOWAS would continue to be the principal peacekeeper in Liberia, with the UN playing a supportive role”. Even then the relationship between ECOMOG and the UN peacekeepers was not entirely unproblematic (Ero 2009: 287-288; Obi 2009: 131).

Several developments within the UN in the post-Cold war period had implications for its relations with Africa. Following from a declaration of the UN General Assembly of December 1994 on promoting cooperation between the United Nations and regional arrangements or agencies (ARES/49/57) the UN adopted Resolution 1631 on October 17, 2005 (UNSC 2005), which among others, was to promote “the further development of cooperation between the United Nations and regional and sub-regional organizations in maintaining international peace and security, consistent with chapter VIII of the United

Nations Charter". Taking the process further, the UN and the AU dialogue resulted in the agreement between both organizations titled, *Enhancing the UN/AU Cooperation: Framework for the Ten Year Capacity-Building Programme* (Vogt 2009: 266; Ajayi 2008: 4)

In a related prior development, the Report of the Secretary-General to the UN General Assembly on July 28, 2005, identified the opportunities for "a more effective partnership operating in close cooperation with the Security Council, based on a clear division of labour that reflects the comparative advantage of each organization" (UNGA 2006). This partly echoed the views of former UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali whose Agenda for Peace, "acknowledged the capacities of regional organizations in the key areas of preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, peacemaking and post conflict peacebuilding" (Ajayi 2008: 2). This thinking also reflected systematic thinking that underpinned 'the Report of the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change, titled *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility* (2004) and Kofi Annan's report to the UN General Assembly in 2005, titled, *Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*.

The foregoing underscore the recognition by the UN that its pursuit of Chapter VIII of its mandate is best achieved in partnership with regional organizations that have 'a comparative advantage' in better addressing peace and security issues in their neighbourhoods. At the same some of these regional organizations such as ECOWAS and AU have demonstrated initiative, some level of effectiveness and regional comparative advantage in developing home-grown mechanisms and processes for addressing peace and security challenges in their vicinities.

The UN-Africa partnership opens up opportunities to build upon comparative advantages on both sides. Thus, Vogt (2009: 266) notes that "the new framework of the UN's relations with the AU is based on the premise that the two organizations need to cooperate to promote international peace and security, especially on the African continent, taking Africa's special needs into consideration". However, there is no doubt that an effective and equitable architecture of UN relations with Africa and its RECS, particularly ECOWAS though desirable remains work in progress. While Africa may claim ownership of regional initiatives, mechanisms and processes, its collaboration will to a considerable extent depend on logistics and resources from the international community to effectively ensure peace and security in the continent and its sub-regions. Can collaboration based on such dependence guarantee effective autonomy of action, and insulate Africa from the contradictions, competing interests and inequalities that characterize international politics? What kinds of negotiations, bargaining and consensus will necessarily define the emerging dialogue

between Africa and the UN along lines of a transformatory hybrid partnership? In the next section some of the challenges as shown by the case of post-election conflict in Côte d'Ivoire will be further explored.

The Côte d'Ivoire Crisis: ECOWAS, Africa-UN Partnership

As noted in the introductory section, the immediate trigger for the outbreak of civil war in Côte d'Ivoire was a mutiny that later developed into a coup attempt against the government of President Laurent Gbagbo (Almås 2007: 10). Some accounts state that the September 2002 mutiny was led by northern officers that were to be demobilized by President Gbagbo. Such accounts gained credibility when following the failure of the coup in Abidjan; the rebels withdrew and quickly took control of the northern part of the country.

However the background to the conflict lay in the country's history, the crises of succession within the political elite after the death of the country's patriarch and long-term ruler Houphouët-Boigny in December 1993; the 1999 military coup; the exclusion of some contestants in elections on grounds of non-eligibility laws/policies, particularly Alassane Ouattara, who had served as Boigny's Prime Minister between 1990 and 1993, on the basis of their origins (immigrants, mixed parentage, immigrant parentage) as non-citizens (based on the policy of *Ivorite*); and the "deterioration of economic conditions in the country," which followed the collapse of cocoa prices in the world market and an IFI induced structural adjustment program (Almås 2007: 19-27). The exclusion of Ouattara, branded a foreigner by his political opponents who alleged that he had immigrant parentage (Burkinabe), from elections in 1995 and 2000 was emblematic of the crises of citizenship that emerged in the country in the post-Boigny era, where those that considered themselves "true Ivorians" using the policy of '*Ivorite*' sought to exclude those they considered outsiders (from the north and neighbouring countries) from political power and the distribution of economic resources.

The rebellion in September 2002 was in part a reaction by 'excluded' Ivorians seeking to put an end to what they considered to be discrimination in terms of their national identity and renegotiate their marginalized position within the Ivorian nation-state (Obi 2007; Bah 2010: 598). The rebels initially called the Mouvement Patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire (MPCI) later became the Forces Nouvelles De Côte d'Ivoire /New Forces (FN), set up its headquarters in Bouake in Northern Côte d'Ivoire and re-mobilised for an attack on the South which was halted by as a result of the intervention of French troops. The FN rebellion was strengthened by the emergence of two other rebel groups – Mouvement Populaire Ivorien du Grand Ouest

(MPIGO) and the Movement for Justice and Peace (MJP) in the Western part of the country. It was believed that the FN was supported by Côte d'Ivoire's northern neighbour, Burkina Faso, while the western rebel groups were believed to be backed by Charles Taylor in retaliation against Gbagbo whom he accused of supporting MODEL rebels against his rule in Liberia.

The outbreak of war in Côte d'Ivoire against the background of ECOWAS intervention in protracted conflicts in the Liberia and Sierra Leone, Nigeria's decision to pay more attention to its domestic priorities, and French direct intervention and interests in its former colony made mediation by ECOWAS rather challenging. However ECOWAS' response to the conflict was swift as an emergency summit was called on September 29, 2002 and a contact group comprising: Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Togo, and the AU, was set up to mediate between the government and rebels. The mediation process yielded an initial ceasefire and peace talks in Lome, Abidjan and Dakar but later became stalemated by the non-cooperation of the government and NF with mediators. By December, ECOWAS noting that the unfolding scenario was complicated by divisions among ECOWAS member-states, including support for the FN by some states, particularly Côte d'Ivoire's northern neighbour, Burkina-Faso (with French support), called on the AU and UN to reinforce the process, and further advised that the matter be brought to the attention of the UNSC.

The impasse in the crisis partly contributed to the French-coordinated Linas-Marcoussis Peace Accord (LMA) of January 2003. The agreement was the outcome of a Roundtable (15-23 January) bringing together Ivorian stakeholders, and facilitators from ECOWAS, AU and the UN. The LMA, endorsed by all sides to the conflict, provided for a ceasefire and an inclusive transitional government of national reconciliation (including FN members), to plan and implement a DDR and election timetable. It was expected that the reconciliation government would take steps towards healing the conflict in the country and bridging the divides created by the politics of identity and citizenship. The LMA was endorsed by Gbagbo at the Summit of Heads of State in Paris on January 26, 2003 (Kleber Summit), where he reportedly asked for French support to ECOWAS peacekeepers that would monitor the ECOWAS-brokered ceasefire. Ero (2009) however points out that, "the peace accords were largely regarded as a legitimization of the rebellion, with many Gbagbo supporters affirming that this was evidence that France had masterminded the rebellion to protect French economic interests in the country".

ECOWAS followed up on its mediation efforts in Côte d'Ivoire by sending its fourth ceasefire monitoring mission, ECOWAS Forces in Côte d'Ivoire (ECOMICI), made up of

mainly Francophone West African countries: Senegal, Ghana, Niger, Togo and Benin operating alongside French Licorne forces and endorsed by the UNSC Resolution 1464 (2003). France's role gave it ample leverage to intervene in the Ivorian peace process, even though it was increasingly clear that it may not have been a neutral party to the conflict. However, the politics within ECOWAS and the lack of consensus on how to deal with the Ivorian crisis gave France ample room to manoeuvre. In May, with France playing a key diplomatic role within the UNSC, ECOWAS got some support from UN Security Council resolution 1479, which established the UN Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI) which sent seventy-six military liaison officers to support ECOWAS and French peacekeepers (Adebajo 2004: 3000).

Similar to the case of Guinea-Bissau, the ECOWAS peace mission to Côte d'Ivoire was largely underwritten with French (ex-colonial master) and international community support. In November 2003, following reports of improved coordination of operations between MINUCI, UNMIL and UNAMSIL and a report from the UN Secretary-General, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1528 (2004), which established the United Nations Operations in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), and the transfer of MINUCI and ECOMICI to UNOCI on April 4, 2004. It has been noted that UNOCI was "part of an emerging trend in UN peacekeeping in which the UN force is actually a hybrid of two or three peace operations," with three important keywords in mind "transformation (of ECOWAS forces) absorption (of MINUCI) and co-habitation (with the French Forces)" (Gberie and Addo 2004). These authors have noted that UNOCI forces "have been well-prepared for their mission," but "still faced some difficulties at the operational level."

As part of its support to regional organizations, the UN backed the efforts of the ECOWAS mediation in Côte d'Ivoire. These included the Accra II and Accra III agreements of March 2003 and July 2004, and the mediation of the African Union (also at ECOWAS' request), which culminated in the signing of the AU-brokered Pretoria Agreement of June 2005, and the Yamoussoukro agreement of July 2005 to implement the DDR process and renew the mandate of the transitional government. This continued ECOWAS engagement with the support of regional organisations and the UN was directed at building trust on both sides, and removing the political obstacles to peace in Côte d'Ivoire. However, ECOWAS mediation was flexible enough to accommodate informal and formal efforts by individual member states such as Togo, Ghana and Burkina Faso and the AU. In this regard, South Africa's Thabo Mbeki acting at the behest of the AU took over the mediation process and successfully facilitated the Pretoria Accords in 2005. However, Mbeki's mediation efforts

later floundered and collapsed in September 2006 after the FN expressed reservations about his neutrality and the ECOWAS proposed to the AU that he be replaced by the heads of both organizations, leading to Mbeki's stepping down as mediator. With his departure the Ivorian stakeholders stepped up efforts to dialogue among themselves.

In March 2007, President Gbagbo and Guillaume Soro of the rebel New Forces signed the Ouagadougou Agreement brokered by President Compaore of Burkina Faso, creating a new transitional government, signalling the formal end of war and the transition to national unity, reconciliation and post-war elections (Obi 2007: 5-6). The Ouagadougou Agreement and the Supplementary Agreements that followed were endorsed by ECOWAS, the AU and UN as well as the international community. On this basis UNOCI's mandate by UN resolution 1795 (2008) was extended, alongside the continued monitoring and support of the transition process by ECOWAS and the UN through the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General to Côte d'Ivoire and the regional office in West Africa (UNOWA), located in Dakar, Senegal. The resolution also provided that the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General would certify the elections to ensure that they complied with international standards.

Several developments however conspired to lead to the postponement of elections fixed for 2009. This included questions about the neutrality of appointed electoral officials, controversies trailing the voter registration process and arguments between both sides on the DDR process. The facilitator of the Ouagadougou Agreement, backed by ECOWAS, AU, and UN agreed to the postponement of elections and the UN Security Council extended UNOCI's and French peacekeepers mandate to July 2009. In January 2010, President Gbagbo dissolved the CEI based on his concerns about its neutrality, prompting immediate protest from opposition parties and their supporters. The situation however calmed down after Bakayoko from the opposition PDCI was appointed the new head of the CEI. However, the tensions over the electoral list between the government and the opposition and the non-conclusion of the DDR process right up to the elections in October 2010, and the run-off elections in November meant that the underlying causes of the conflict were unaddressed by an international community that perhaps felt the problems would go away with elections.

Thus, the elections were held in the midst of growing tensions between the government and opposition in October, and the run-off in November, with the Special Representative in line with UNSC Resolution 1795 endorsing the electoral process and the results proclaiming Ouatarra the President-elect. Gbagbo's recourse was to seek refuge in the nationalist position as he had done on occasions throughout the peace process when he felt that his interests

were threatened. Thus, he rejected the results as announced by the CEI and dismissed the endorsement of the results by the Special Representative. In its response, ECOWAS called an extraordinary session of Heads of State and Governments also attended by Young-Jin Choi, the UN Special Representative to Côte d'Ivoire, and Mahama Ouedraogo, the Representative of the AU President, in Abuja. In a communiqué released on December 7, 2010, ECOWAS condemned Gbagbo's refusal to accept the results as announced by the CEI, urged him to do so and "yield power without delay" (ECOWAS 2010). It recognized Ouattara as President-elect and on the basis of its Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance suspended Côte d'Ivoire from the organization. ECOWAS was to issue another statement on December 20th, condemning Gbagbo's ultimatum to the UNOCI and French forces to leave Côte d'Ivoire, calling on Gbagbo to "reconsider his confrontational stance towards the international community" (ECOWAS 2010).

On December 24 at another extraordinary ECOWAS Heads of State and Governments Summit in Abuja, it was decided drawing on the 1999 ECOWAS Protocol that "in the event that Gbagbo fails to heed (the) immutable demand of the ECOWAS (to hand over power) the Community would be left with no alternative but to take other measures, including the use of legitimate force, to achieve the goals of the Ivorian people" (ECOWAS 2010; Aning and Atuobi 2011: 2). On the basis of Article 22 of the 1999 Protocol, the Summit "after reviewing the situation in Côte d'Ivoire directed the ECOWAS Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff (CCDS) to commence planning for a possible military intervention to oust Mr Gbagbo should all other means fail" (interview, anonymous ESF General 2011).

The UN endorsed the ECOWAS position through the UN Security Council Resolution 1967 of January 2011, and further strengthened UNOCI with additional troops (from UNMIL) while condemning Gbagbo's anti-UN rhetoric and asking him to respect ECOWAS demands to hand power to Ouattara. In addition, UNOCI's mandate was extended to June 2011. Following the request of ECOWAS following its limited success in mediating between the opposing sides in the Ivorian crisis, the inability of Mbeki to make a head-way in a peaceful settlement of the conflict and his subsequent withdrawal, new efforts were made to involve the international community in the discussions. On its part, the AU appointed Raila Odinga to mediate in the conflict, but following accusations of bias by the Gbagbo side and a disagreement between Raila with the AU Commission after he addressed a press conference before briefing the summit, Raila withdrew.

On March 25, following Gbagbo's refusal to budge, another ECOWAS summit in Abuja called on the UNSC to "authorise the immediate implementation of the Authority decisions

of December 2010 (on the use of ECOWAS legitimate force to oust Gbagbo), asked the UNSC to strengthen UNOCI's mandate, and directed the ECOWAS President to support Ouattara's government. It also invited the AU Commission to implement the decisions of the AU Peace and Security Council of March 10, 2011 to dispatch a High Level Panel of Five Presidents (each representing each of Africa's sub-regions) assisted by a joint AU-ECOWAS facilitation team be despatched to mediate the Côte d'Ivoire crisis (ECOWAS 2011).

By the end of March it was obvious that the mission of the AU High Level panel of Five (later Four after Compaore withdrew) had also collapsed following Gbagbo's outright rejection of the High Level Panel's peace proposals. Gbagbo increasingly turned to national sovereignty and the Ivorian constitution to defend his refusal to give up power in defiance of ECOWAS-AU peace proposals. He also defied targeted international sanctions against himself and his inner circle, and stepped up anti-UN and anti-French rhetoric as the post-election crisis continued to fester. The security situation degenerated further as clashes broke out between Gbagbo and Ouattara's supporters, while the latter remained holed up in a hotel protected by UNOCI and French peacekeepers. Some UN peacekeepers were also attacked by pro-Gbagbo forces as tensions rose in Abidjan. It was in this context of the deteriorating security situation, attacks on civilians resulting in a humanitarian crisis marked by arbitrary killings, displacement and refugees streaming into neighbouring countries, that UNOCI, French peacekeepers and Republican forces routed Gbagbo's forces and captured him, paving the way for Ouattara's ascendancy to the Presidency.

Although both the ECOWAS and AU presented a united front in the Ivorian crisis, there were divisions under the surface of things that limited their effectiveness at the regional level. In ECOWAS, it was believed that while Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Sierra Leone supported Ouattara during the crisis, with Nigeria pushing for UN legitimating of the use of force, Ghana, Togo and Benin showed "ambiguous neutrality" (ICG 2011: 17-18; Martin 2011: 2) in resolving the Ivorian imbroglio. Within the AU, Angola and South Africa were reportedly in support of Gbagbo, a suspicion that was fuelled by their support for a power-sharing solution to the post-election conflict (ICG 2011: 17).

This situation was serious enough to get the President of the ECOWAS to make a rather undiplomatic accusation at the presentation of the EU Election Observation Report of the Côte d'Ivoire Elections in February 2011 in Abuja that "certain countries have taken sides" noting that "the concern that we (ECOWAS) have is that apart from some geopolitical interests by some countries, there are others encouraging Gbagbo not to leave". He then went on to accuse South Africa of sending a warship to the coast of the Abidjan to

support Gbagbo, adding that “one is surprised that a distinguished country like South Africa would decide to send such a support at a time like this” (quoted in Udo 2011). However, South Africa was quick to deny the accusation noting that the “SAS Drakensberg was a supply ship undertaking a routine training operation in West Africa” (IRIN 2011). The issue however, was that at some point competing national and strategic interests, and inter sub-regional politics pitching West versus Southern Africa became factors adversely affecting regional intervention in the Côte d’Ivoire, and also impacting negatively on Africa-UN relations.

The other point relates to the appropriateness of ECOWAS’ threat to use “legitimate force” in getting Gbagbo to step down for Ouatarra, and the organization’s inability to follow through on this threat, leaving the task to UNOCI and French peacekeepers. While it is clear that the ECOWAS threat was well within the ambit of its peace and security mechanisms, the haste with which it was announced did not take on board certain differences of opinion among member-states, and the wider ramifications for its relations with the AU and its member-states. ECOWAS perhaps underestimated the institutional, logistical and capacity challenges that such an operation would pose (Interview with Osei 2011), which only became apparent much later, and contributed to the UNOCI and French peacekeepers stepping in to use “legitimate force”. It is rather early to grapple with the full ramifications of this development although it is clear that it did show that ECOWAS-AU relations need to be better defined and coordinated, and the governing elites need to devise ways of building consensus by creatively subordinating their personal and national to overarching pan-regional interests.

The UN role in Côte d’Ivoire has been criticized by some on the basis lack the neutrality of the organization (Mbeki 2011: 38), pointing to the manipulation of the UNSC by France. Ero (2009: 300), earlier alluded to this by arguing that “the role of the UN in Côte d’Ivoire could not live up to its full potential because of France’s partisan agenda”. There is no doubt that over time France’s real intentions in Côte d’Ivoire had been a source of concern to many, including Laurent Gbagbo and his supporters who saw French intervention as a neo-imperialist plot to continue to dominate the country. There also appeared to be a silent consensus by Western Powers to leave the Ivorian matter to France, as the country’s former colonizer. France on its part was keen to protect its nationals living in the country as well as its economic and strategic interests against perceived hostility from Gbagbo and his supporters in the Young Patriots. There is no doubt that France had considerable leverage in terms of the divisions within the Ivorian political class, its membership of the UNSC, and the

politics within and capacity deficits of the ECOWAS and AU. It was a leverage that it exploited to maximum advantage, perhaps, at the expense of Africa-UN relations.

At the end, ECOWAS, AU and the UN ended up on the same side—supporting the CEI-endorsed winner of the November 2010 elections, held under rather ‘imperfect conditions’ where two long-standing political opponents representing the divides in Ivorian contested nation-state and citizenship questions saw elections as another episode in a zero-sum contest for power. The lesson from Côte d’Ivoire is perhaps that “elections are not enough” (Obi 2011: 14-16), if the underlying causes of conflict and social tensions in the country are not comprehensively addressed primarily by the citizens of the country and its political leaders, and the international community. President Ouattara has a major challenge of holding out the olive branch and getting the FPI to reciprocating and building meaningful national reconciliation and a country-wide consensus for new inclusive and equitable participatory institutions. Such an initiative which requires the highest levels of statecraft and a new social bargain underpinned by economic reconstruction and redistribution will have to be supported by regional organizations that have developed capacities and resources to act decisively in unison, matching rhetoric with positive action.

What Prospects for ECOWAS, Africa-UN Partnership?

Within the space of over sixty years, the United Nations has moved from a position of marginality to become a partner of African regional organisations in addressing the peace and security challenges facing the continent. There is no doubt that the world, and Africa have changed a great deal in half a century. Part of this change has been the significant increase in the number of African states that have become members of the United Nations and the changing nature of complex conflicts on the continent. It is also clear that the ideals upon which the UN was founded face much greater challenges in an inter-linked and rapidly changing world, where emerging powers from the South are redefining the nature of international relations.

Africa, buffeted from all sides and from within by pressures for change, partly to respond to the forces and processes of globalisation and growing demands for democracy from below, also seeks to survive and respond to, adapt and develop in a highly complex and competitive post-Cold war world. In this struggle, Africa is somewhat caught between the Western configuration of global power—with its attendant historical legacies, economic and socio-cultural, political and strategic ties, the emerging powers that represent new

enchanting possibilities, but leaving unclear answers as to whether their emerging configuration of power would represent a viable alternative for the continent's empowerment.

Several lessons can be drawn from the Ivorian post-election conflict in the context of Africa-UN relations. It shows that in spite of its track record, ECOWAS faced serious challenges in seeking to mediate the Ivorian crisis. Apart from the intractability of the conflict, competing national interests, institutional weaknesses and resource-deficits, it appeared that the gap between agreeing to and abiding with collective decisions has been a major problem. However, on the positive side, it showed that the Anglophone-Francophone divide that had weakened ECOWAS' early efforts at regional peacekeeping had become a thing of the past. It also showed the versatility of ECOWAS in thinking on its feet and using both formal and informal methods of conflict resolution and mediation to some effect. However, it also suggests that more work needs to be done on the ECOWAS peace and security architecture in terms of effective leadership, institutional capacity and coordination with other sub-regional institutions and mechanisms, particularly the AU. African organizations need to note the importance of avoiding inter-sub-regional rivalries to the extent that they impede the attainment of collective goals and interests.

It is difficult to fit the Ivorian case into 'hybrid partnership-hybrid paternalism' binary. While there is evidence to suggest that both the ECOWAS and AU are locked to some extent into asymmetrical relations with the UN and some P5 member countries, it should be pointed out that both organizations have had sufficient leverage to act within the continent and the sub-region. The problem it seemed had to do with the limited autonomy and capacity of African regional institutions when faced with competing national and personal interests. The open criticism of South Africa by the President of the ECOWAS commission was one example of some of the problems in ECOWAS-AU relations. It is not clear, when and how that incident was resolved, but it did send the wrong signals about the state of ECOWAS-Africa relations.

The evidence suggests that the Africa-UN partnership was partly successful, but it is not clear if this partnership was and is on Africa's terms. The decision of the ECOWAS summit to approach the UNSC to authorise the implementation of the ECOWAS decision to use legitimate force to oust Gbagbo, in a situation where the ESF was not operationally ready to carry out the task, and where the UN and French already had a hybrid peacekeeping force on ground operating on the basis of an ECOWAS and AU-backed UN mandate. While at some levels, it appeared ECOWAS tried to 'outsource' the legitimising of decisions that

could divide opinions within the sub-region to the AU and the UN, at other levels, its weaknesses and rather slow(er) response to the fast pace of developments on the ground meant that strategic ambiguities contributed towards reducing the legitimacy of ECOWAS in the very same country whose conflict it wanted to resolve, and gave the international community (UN and French peacekeepers) the leverage to take the required action while ECOWAS seemingly cheered them on from the sidelines.

The foregoing point relates to the rather difficult situation in which ECOWAS found itself late into the Ivorian crisis, where its scope of intervention had to a large extent been circumscribed by the internal challenges faced by some pivotal states, reducing their capacity to lead an intervention process, and the fact that there was a UN peacekeeping mission on the ground with little scope for the ECOWAS to provide leadership for, or takeover the intervention process. It is also instructive, as a top ESF official noted, that the “ESF was not given a mandate to intervene either by ECOWAS, AU or the UN” (interview 2011), which was hardly surprising given the presence of UNOCI and the capacity and operational challenges facing the ECOWAS and the AU.

Many observers have made a point about the neo-imperialist plot by France to continue to dominate Côte d’Ivoire (the crown in its former West African colonial jewel). It had been argued that France took advantage of its permanent membership of UNSC to intervene in the country, and ensure that it achieved an outcome that served its national interests. It is in this regard that the UN had come under criticism in some quarters for compromising its neutrality in the conflict between the warring sides in Côte d’Ivoire. By granting legitimacy to French Licorne forces, and collaborating with pro-Ouatarra Republican forces (formerly FN), the UN and UNOCI became directly involved in the war on the side of Ouatarra (considered the legitimate winner of the Presidential run-off elections) against Gbagbo. In their defence the French and UN point to the mandate granted to them by UNSC resolutions (supported by the ECOWAS and AU), the need to defend themselves from attacks by pro-Gbagbo forces, and to protect civilians who were being targeted and killed by both sides resulting in a humanitarian emergency. At a point what became visible in the Ivorian case was role of UN and French peacekeeping force, unlike the earlier cases in Liberia and Sierra Leone where ECOWAS peacekeepers made a strong showing.

In conclusion, it is clear that the UN cannot solve all the world’s problems, nor can it transform the world. But it can and should open up itself through the democratization of its apex decision-making body to take on board the interests and welfare of majority of

humankind. In another forty years, it is hoped that the UN will become more representative and effective in decision-making for collective security and peace. Principles of equitable participation, equality, and justice should underpin its partnerships with regional organizations. On the part of African regional institutions and ruling elites, democratization and development are central to actualizing 'African solutions to African conflicts'.

The democratic project in West Africa needs to go beyond the symbolic holding of elections to address underlying structural political problems regarding inclusive and equitable participation, citizenship rights and social justice. Democratization at the national and regional levels has to be taken seriously and reflect the current mood for political change on the continent and also connect an agenda for the democratization of global governance. The point is that without representation in the permanent membership of the UNSC, Africa will continue to lose out in terms of decisions taken at this apex body. It is also important to note that Africa needs to explore new ways of building consensus at the regional level and building strategic selective alliances at the global level in pursuit of its collective interests.

Africa needs to connect its political and economic integration project to a process of transformations at the levels of production, governance and economic redistribution in ways that address the widening gaps between the rich and the poor, and a whole range of social problems that will defy old solutions in a rapidly changing world. The prospects for sustainable peace and security in Africa ultimately lie in the capacity of African elites and people to democratically transform their national and regional institutions, in a way that connect with, and reinforce the long overdue reform of the United Nations to better address the challenges of the 21st century.

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Acknowledgements:

The following interviews used in this study were conducted by Ms Linda Darkwa of the Legon Centre for International Affairs (LECIA), University of Ghana.

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